4-2016

Using RTP (Responsible Thinking Process) as a Lever For Improving School Culture: A Case Study of an Alternative Secondary School’s Implementation Of RTP

Andrew D. Rynberg
Western Michigan University, andrew.rynberg@yahoo.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/dissertations

Part of the Curriculum and Instruction Commons, Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons, and the Educational Methods Commons

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/dissertations/1401

This Dissertation-Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate College at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact maira.bundza@wmich.edu.
USING RTP (RESPONSIBLE THINKING PROCESS) AS A LEVER FOR IMPROVING SCHOOL CULTURE: A CASE STUDY OF AN ALTERNATIVE SECONDARY SCHOOL’S IMPLEMENTATION OF RTP

by
Andrew D. Rynberg

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Educational Leadership, Research and Technology
Western Michigan University
April 2016

Doctoral Committee:
Jianping Shen, Ph.D., Chair
Patricia Reeves, Ed.D.
Marcia Kaye, Ph.D.
There is an urgent need to improve our K-12 system. How to implement and sustain educational change, however, is a challenge facing the K-12 arena. This qualitative case study was intended to examine a six-year educational change initiative in one alternative secondary school. The study helped us gain knowledge on implementing and sustaining educational change by addressing the following three research questions:

1. What were the staff members' descriptions of disciplinary issues before and after the RTP intervention?

2. Based on staff descriptions, what were the factors associated with the successful implementation of the RTP program?

3. Based on staff descriptions, what were the factors associated with the successful sustainability of the RTP program?

Two interview protocols were used to collect data from 12 educators who represented two different groups of participants. Data were then analyzed via an a-priori framework of six implementation and six sustainability factors. The analysis revealed a strong affirmation of the six factors associated with successful implementation, as well the six factors associated with successful sustainability of a program. The six factors for
effective implementation included: (1) resources, (2) professional development, (3) local vs. state/federal, (4) self-analysis (i.e., data reviews), (5) technical know-how, and (6) district and school leadership commitments, while the six factors for achieving sustainability included: (1) resources, (2) consistency of effort, (3) commitment to excellence, (4) self-analysis (i.e., data reviews), (5) coaching, and (6) conviction.

The findings of this study provide an image of what is possible for the successful implementation and sustainability of educational change. In particular, the findings point to the importance of a systematic approach to implementing and sustaining educational change, with attention to multiple factors. The findings of this study also suggest the reform model currently popular in educational change may be based on a fallacy, and advocate for the renewal model instead.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Jianping Shen, and committee members Dr. Patricia Reeves and Dr. Marcia Kaye, as well as my wife, Heidi Rynberg. Although a long journey, I appreciate each of you and your help and support along the way. To Dr. Shen, your guidance has helped me to be a better administrator. I use what you have taught me to help thousands of people. I thank you for your leadership and never ending support. Dr. Reeves, I still remember your guidance in one of my classes. Wow, what I didn’t know then. Your patience and understanding for me while you supported my lack of understanding in education has always been helpful. I respect you for being a great teacher. To Dr. Kaye, we have learned a lot together during the past several years. Your constant support is never ending and I am in a better place for having worked with you. You are always there to support me. To my wife, Heidi, life would not be what it is without you. You keep me grounded and your love and encouragement is never ending. Thank you all!

Andrew D. Rynberg
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .................................................................................................................. ii

LIST OF TABLES .......................................................................................................................... x

LIST OF FIGURES .......................................................................................................................... xii

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY .......................................................................................... 1
   Historical Background of Problem ......................................................................................... 1
   Problem Statement .................................................................................................................. 4
   Purpose of the Study ............................................................................................................... 5
   Research Questions ................................................................................................................. 6
   Significance of the Study ......................................................................................................... 6
   Responsible Thinking Process ............................................................................................... 8
   Definition of Terms ................................................................................................................ 8
   Assumptions and Limitations ................................................................................................ 11
   Summary .................................................................................................................................. 12

II. LITERATURE REVIEW ........................................................................................................... 14
   Necessity for the Behavioral Support Program ..................................................................... 14
   Characteristics and Major Components of Behavioral Support Programs ...................... 17
      Relationship-Listening Programs .................................................................................... 20
      Confronting-Contracting ................................................................................................. 23
      Assertive-Control .............................................................................................................. 28
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coercive-Legalistic</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible Thinking Process (RTP)</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of RTP: Leadership, Learning Organizations, and PLCs</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Organizations and Implementation of Behavior Programs</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of Effective School Leadership and Student Behavior</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change Leadership</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levels of Understanding</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Organizations and RTP</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Learning Communities, PLCs, and RTP</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributive Leadership</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitation Skills</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structured Conversations</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating Logistics</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating Longevity</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overlapping Responsibilities</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying Implementation in Schools</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-wide Implementation: Achieving Scale</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District-wide Implementation: Achieving Scale</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Implementation: Key Points</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table of Contents—Continued

### CHAPTER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Sustainability</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Sustainability: Key Points</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual Framework</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### III. METHODOLOGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions Addressed by this Research Study</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria for Sampling</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling Process</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of the Researcher</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Source: Interviews</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Protocol</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring the Reliability and Validity of the Findings</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Treatment and Analysis</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correspondence Between Research Questions and Data Sources</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six-Steps for Treating and Analyzing Qualitative Data</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 1 Qualitative Analysis: Post-hoc</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions 2 and 3 Qualitative Analysis: A-priori</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER

IV.  RESEARCH RESULTS ............................................................................................................. 88

Research Questions .................................................................................................................. 89

Participants ................................................................................................................................. 89

Overview of the Educator Participants ...................................................................................... 91

Findings ....................................................................................................................................... 91

Research Question 1: Group A Educators............................................................................... 92

“Horrible,” “Laidback,” and “Chaotic Culture” Before RTP ................................................. 93

Student Disengagement Before RPT ....................................................................................... 95

Adult Management Systems Before RTP ............................................................................... 96

Summary of Group A Perceptions of Situations Before RTP .................................................. 98

Group A Perceptions of Cultural Changes After RTP ............................................................. 99

Group A Perceptions of RTP’s Impact on Student Thinking and Behavior .......................... 100

Group A Perceptions of Improvement in Student Learning after RTP ................................ 101

Group A Perceptions of Improvement in Adult Thinking after RTP ..................................... 102

Group A Perceptions of RTP Seven Years Later .................................................................... 104

Research Question 1: Group B Educators............................................................................. 106

Group B’s Positive Experience with RTP ............................................................................... 106

Group B Perspectives on Classroom Usage, Classroom Instruction, Student Learning, and Student Behavior .......................................................... 107

Group B Perceptions of the Impact on Adult Thinking ............................................................ 113
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group B Perceptions of Program Comparisons</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group B Perceptions of RTP’s Impact on the School and Classroom Settings</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summative Results for Research Question 1</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 2</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factors Influencing RTP Implementation</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local vs. State/Federal</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-analysis (Data Reviews)</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Know-how</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District and School Leadership Commitment</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summative Results for Research Question 2</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 3</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-analysis (Data Review)</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency of Effort</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to Excellence</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conviction (Enduring and Evanescent)</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of Contents—Continued

CHAPTER

Summative Results for Research Question 3 ..................................................149

V. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION ........................................................................151

Purpose of the Study ..........................................................................................151

Summary of the Findings ....................................................................................152

Research Question 1 ............................................................................................153

Research Question 2 ............................................................................................154

Research Question 3 ............................................................................................154

Overall Summary ...............................................................................................155

Discussion ..............................................................................................................157

An Image of the Possible: A Case of Successful Implementation and Sustainability of Educational Change .................................................157

The Systematic Approach to Implementation and Sustainability of Educational Change: Paying Attention to Multiple Factors ..............158

Moving Toward the Renewal Model: A Proposed Paradigm for Educational Change .................................................................159

Recommendations for Future Research ..............................................................163

Concluding Remarks ..........................................................................................164

REFERENCES ......................................................................................................166

APPENDICES ........................................................................................................173

A. Interview Protocol ..........................................................................................173

B. Informed Consent Document/Invitation to Participate .................................178
Table of Contents—Continued

APPENDICES

C. HSIRB Approval......................................................................................................................181
LIST OF TABLES

1. Correspondence Between Research Questions and Data Sources ........................................ 83
2. Group A Perceptions of School Culture Before RTP .......................................................... 93
3. Group A Perceptions of Student Disengagement Before RTP .............................................. 95
4. Group A Perceptions of Adult Management Systems Before RTP ........................................ 96
5. Group A Perceptions of Cultural Changes After RTP .......................................................... 99
6. Group A Perceptions of RTP’s Impact on Student Thinking and Behavior ......................... 100
7. Group A Perceptions of RTP’s Impact on Student Learning ................................................ 102
8. Group A Educators’ Perceptions of RTP’s Impact on Adult Thinking after RTP .............. 103
9. Group A Perceptions of RTP Seven Years Later ................................................................. 105
10. Group B Overall Positive Perceptions of RTP ................................................................. 106
11. Group B Perceptions of Classroom Usage ........................................................................ 108
14. Group B Perceptions of the Impact on Student Behavior .................................................. 110
15. Group B Perceptions of the Impact on Adult Thinking ....................................................... 113
17. Group B Perceptions of RTP’s Impact on the School Setting ........................................... 116
18. Group B Perceptions of RTP’s Impact on the Classroom Setting .................................... 116
19. Factors Influencing RTP’s Implementation: Emergence of Themes ............................... 120
20. Resources ......................................................................................................................... 121
List of Tables—Continued

21. Professional Development ........................................................................................................................................123
22. Local vs. State Decision ........................................................................................................................................125
23. Self-analysis (Data Reviews) ..................................................................................................................................126
24. Self-analysis (Data Reviews): One of Seven Staff ..................................................................................................127
25. District and School Leadership Commitment .........................................................................................................129
26. Factors Influencing RTP’s Sustainability: Emergence of Themes ..........................................................................134
27. Resources ..................................................................................................................................................................135
28. Coaching Opportunities for Students .....................................................................................................................137
29. Coaching Opportunities for Parents .........................................................................................................................139
30. Self-analysis (Data Reviews) ..................................................................................................................................140
31. Consistency of Effort and Commitment to Excellence .............................................................................................144
32. Conviction .................................................................................................................................................................147
LIST OF FIGURES

1. Responsible thinking process (RTP): Student interventions of support.................. 9
2. Degrees of seriousness continuum of behaviors...................................................... 18
3. Discipline pathway.................................................................................................. 19
4. Continuum of community function........................................................................ 43
5. Confronting conditions that undermine learning................................................... 44
6. Facilitating learning, logistics, and longevity............................................................ 53
7. Factors present for successful implementation....................................................... 64
8. Factors present for long-term sustainability............................................................. 71
9. Conceptual framework: School improvement......................................................... 72
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Historical Background of Problem

Jon Doe began his first few days as an assistant principal as many other administrators do when they show up for their first day of work. He was enthusiastic about his new role in the district, feeling ready to make a difference in the lives of the students in ways never before done, perhaps he was a little over confident, his ego pitched on a high note. Then, of course, two weeks later, a reality check knocked at his door. It started slowly. A student or two exhibiting disruptive behaviors in the classroom were sent to his office. “Nothing major,” he thought. “I’ll talk to them, maybe even scare them a bit, call home and speak to their parents.”

As time went by, Jon became overwhelmed with the number of students who needed his attention. Three months into his new role, of which he once was excited, he began to reconsider whether leaving the classroom was the right choice for him. Late nights at work, reflecting on ways to address student misbehavior, he considered the enormity of his problems. He was inundated with frustrated teachers demanding that he do something, angry parents upset with his decisions, and multitudes of students serving suspensions. His job seemed hopeless. If that were not enough, he routinely met with police regarding serious student crimes, was required to attend court ordered appearances to testify on a variety of offenses, and participated in numerous student expulsion hearings with school board members, grieving parents, and students begging for yet another chance. Was he prepared for this? Probably not! It is safe to say that stories like this are common. How do I know? I was Jon.
Student misbehavior has negative impacts on those working in schools. In fact, teacher attrition, those leaving education altogether, is a significant problem in America. Nearly 50% of new teachers leave the profession within five years (Watlington, Shockley, Guglielmino, & Felsher, 2010). Student misbehavior is often attributed as the reason why many leave education as a profession. Of those that leave education and move on with their life, 44% have cited negative student behavior as a reason for their unhappiness (Hancock & Scherff, 2010).

Teachers leaving the profession create problems for those of us left behind with the job of educating students. Student achievement and financial concerns often plague schools when teachers leave the educational system. A recent research study titled, “The High Cost of Leaving: An Analysis of the Cost of Teacher Turnover,” revealed that “when high quality teachers leave the classroom, the effect on both student performance and school and district fiscal operations is significant and deleterious” (Watlington et al., 2010). Just how significant, you might ask, are these costs? According to Hancock and Scherff (2010), the financial responsibility to recruit and train replacement teachers for our nation’s school systems cost U.S. taxpayers $7 billion dollars annually.

Teacher attrition in education is problematic and so is school principal turnover. According to Education Week:

Recent research has linked principal turnover to teacher turnover and suggests that the stability of the principal in a school is a prerequisite to stability in school improvement efforts (UCEA 2008). A Chicago Public Schools report on principal turnover documented a negative effect of turnover on schools, stating that it “affected the ability of school leadership, faculty and staff to stay on a steady track in
terms of initiating, supporting, and sustaining their restructuring efforts” (Oberman 1996). (Stoelinga, 2011, Principal Turnover section, para. 1)

As one can surmise from the above quote, teacher and principal attrition is having a direct impact on our nation’s school budgets and our students’ academic achievement. Student misbehavior in school is having an adverse impact on the adults who are tasked with educating them. Looking for ways to reverse the trend is important to all educators and to society.

Some feel it is time to get tough with our kids. In fact, during a 10-year period of time during the 1990s, there was a dramatic increase in the promulgation of zero tolerance in school discipline policies (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Zero tolerance policies depend on school suspension and/or expulsion as a means to punish students for their misbehavior; however, it appears these get-tough policies are not working to successfully change misbehavior. Even so, many schools continue to employ them as a deterrent to address disorderly student conduct. Often they are adopted for “their symbolic value, attempting to reassure administrators, parents, and teachers that strong actions are being taken in response to a perceived breakdown of school order” (Skiba & Peterson, 2000, Ineffective School Disciplinary Practices section, para. 2). Finally, a study completed by the National Center for Education Statistics indicates “schools that rely heavily on zero tolerance policies continue to be less safe than schools that implement fewer components of zero tolerance” (Skiba & Peterson, 2000, Ineffective School Disciplinary Practices section, para. 4).
Problem Statement

As those who watch television news would attest, it seems violence is everywhere. There appears to be no boundaries for violence. It appears to be affecting everyone. When that violence enters our schools, we want action. In fact, with widely publicized school shootings, as well as other identified student school concerns, the public has demanded get-tough school policies. As a result, politicians, not wanting to appear soft, have introduced and passed legislation in favor of zero-tolerance.

Zero-tolerance policies normally include some form of punitive discipline that includes probation, suspension, and/or expulsion from school (Adams, 1992). The removal of students from school, however, has been shown to create an assortment of other problems. These problems include an increased propensity for theft, destruction of property, drug use, gang affiliations, and other crimes (Adams, 1992). Regardless, “zero-tolerance has become the tool that school administrators use to justify the overuse of suspension” (Martinez, 2009, p. 155). In fact, school administrators en masse have been shown to adopt zero-tolerance policies as a one-size-fits-all, quick fix solution to curbing discipline problems with students (Martinez, 2009). Despite their increase and support, there is little evidence to show that zero-tolerance procedures actually work to increase school safety and student behavior (Skiba & Peterson, 2000).

Students who are removed from the school with suspensions and or expulsions are not just a school problem. In fact, the longer a student is out of school, the further his or her estrangement from the school. This increases the likelihood of falling behind instructionally and dropping out (DeRidder, 1990). In addition, the more suspension is used affected students are often labeled and ostracized by peers and school. An end result
of students being suspended and expelled is unsupervised youth roaming the community. This has shown to produce an increase in criminal behavior, which further burdens communities (Adams, 1992). The cost associated with having students placed on probation, incarcerated in jails, and/or in prisons is very expensive. Therefore, there is a strong need for educators to look for ways to address the problem at the school in other ways.

**Purpose of the Study**

The need to look proactively for ways to address student misbehavior, thus keeping them in school and suspending them less, is important to all. This qualitative case study examines how the Responsible Thinking Process (RTP) was used as the lever for improving student behavior in one alternative secondary school in northern Michigan. To do so, the study acknowledges staff perceptions of the school, prior to and after the implementation of RTP, as well as detailing the factors associated with the successful implementation and sustainability of the RTP program to proactively address student misbehavior. Prior to the implementation of RTP, students routinely struggled with appropriate responses about how to behave within the school and how to solve their problems. Although teachers were cognizant of their at-risk students’ needs, they had a limited awareness of effective methods/models to correct their behavior. In some ways, this further exasperated implementing an effective solution.

As the basis for my research, it is important to understand the intervention and its impact on the school. To do so, we will need to review the school’s statistical data and trends for student misbehavior prior to the intervention, the staff’s perceptions as it relates to the impact of the RTP interventions on students, as well as having an impact on the teachers work, which in turn leads to the improvement of student outcomes.
Research Questions

Three research questions were posed to guide the collection of data for this study:

1. What were the staff members’ descriptions of disciplinary issues before and after the RTP intervention?

2. Based on staff descriptions, what were the factors associated with the successful implementation of the RTP program?

3. Based on staff descriptions, what were the factors associated with the successful sustainability of the RTP program?

To answer these questions, it was necessary for the researcher to explore the perceptions of the teachers, administrators, and support staff that experienced the RTP process in their school. In addition, when possible, an attempt was made to gather data from those who worked at, or attended, the school prior to the RTP implementation. To gather this information, I conducted in-depth interviews with the school staff that met this criterion.

Significance of the Study

Increased levels of accountability such as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation reduced funding to educate students, and the societal costs associated with at-risk student school estrangement are a few reasons that signify the need for this research study. At-risk students present unique needs that should be addressed in order for them to experience academic success in our schools. Given the nature and effects at-risk students pose to our society, the need to understand and support these students is critical. Schools are not the only ones interested in maladjusted behaviors. According to (Stewart, 2003):
Criminologists have long studied the relationship between school-related variables and delinquency. A variety of these school-related variables have been consistently linked to delinquent behavior, commitment to school, involvement in school, attendance at school, school social bonds, and a school's climate. (p. 1)

The intent is to understand misbehavior and ways we can help students. If RTP has been effective, should it be continued and expanded as a lever to improve school culture and student behavior? This is the sole premise of this research study.

The findings from this study may be useful to many stakeholders in the field of K-12 education. To date, there are more students than ever being referred to alternative educational settings. Alternative education programs are created for a variety of reasons; however, “Rarely are alternative education programs available as a proactive choice to students or parents before serious problems develop” (Leone & Drakeford, 1999, p. 86 as cited in Tobin & Sprague, 2000, p. 177). Increasingly, they are viewed as programs for disruptive youth. The student population that attends these alternative programs often is described as high school aged, with many being identified as disabled (Foley & Pang, 2006).

Within the past decade, there has been a significant increase in the number of alternative programs. From 1993 through 1994, there were 2,606 alternative schools. From 2000 through 2001, seven years later, the National Center on Educational Statistics reported that number had grown to 10,900 alternative schools serving approximately 612,000 students nationwide (Foley & Pang, 2006). In 2008 that number had grown to 645,500 students. Given the fact that large numbers of students are now attending these schools and the potential ramifications to our society at large, it is imperative that we educate them in ways that are beneficial to all. The significance of this case study aims to
acknowledge the teachers’ perceptions of RTP in this alternative school as the lever used to improve student behavior. This would support the need for schools to develop a process to help students learn to solve their own behavioral problems in a positive school culture. The researcher believes that an important benefit of this process would be improved student efficacy and achievement. Teachers will be able to teach and students will be able to learn.

**Responsible Thinking Process**

RTP is a process that is dedicated to a framework of structured support for student misbehavior. A student’s choice, and how they respond will determine the intervention of support for them. Figure 1 depicts RTP’s overarching framework for support. It demonstrates the interventions students will receive depending upon which direction they select as the best path to get back on track. Severity of misconduct and student willingness to work with teachers and staff are the determinant factors for the two possible directions of student support. Figure 1 represents RTP's student intervention of support.

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms are defined in the context in which they are used in this dissertation.

**Alternative Education.** Alternative education is a term commonly used to describe a non-traditional education or educational setting. Various philosophies offer a multitude of approaches to teaching and learning that are often different than the mainstream traditional educational system. Most emphasize the value of small class size, close familial relationships between teachers and students, and a strong sense of community connectedness. Although many are charter schools, several are created by their traditional home district school systems. What they teach and how they teach varies upon the
Figure 1. Responsible thinking process (RTP): Student interventions of support.
rationale for their creation. Their effectiveness is mixed, but their numbers have been growing nationally on a rapid trajectory.

**No Child Left Behind.** No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was signed by President George W. Bush shortly after he entered office. NCLB supports standards based education. By setting high standards, with measurable goals, the belief is that individual outcomes in education will improve. Each state is required to assess its students in selected grade levels in reading and math to continue to receive federal funding for their schools. Although the federal government expanded its role in education with this law, the Act does not require a national achievement standard. Standards with incremental improvement requirements are set by each state.

**Perceptual Control Theory.** “Perceptual Control Theory, or PCT, asserts that the function of behavior is the control of perception. Perceptions are controlled when they are brought to and kept near dynamically specified internal reference levels despite the effects of other factors that tend to disturb those perceptions. Control systems behave purposefully, setting goals, taking action to bring about those goal states, and taking further action to maintain those states against opposing forces” (Powers, 1973, 1978, 1990, 1992; http://users.ipfw.edu/abbott/pct/, para. 1).

**Responsible Thinking Process (RTP).** The Responsible Thinking Process (RTP), created and developed by Edward Ford is a school wide discipline program that teaches students how to reflect on their existing perceptions. RTP is based on Perceptual Control Theory (PCT), developed by William T. Powers and holds that our behavior is best understood in terms of how we control our perceptions.
**School Culture.** School culture can be defined as the historically transmitted patterns of meaning that include the norms, values, beliefs, ceremonies, rituals, traditions, and myths understood, maybe in varying degrees, by members of the school community (Stolp & Smith, 1994). Depending on how people perceive these meanings for themselves determines how they act.

**Assumptions and Limitations**

One of the most difficult tasks with researching school culture is associated with the fact the term *school culture* is interchangeably used to mean a variety of things to different people. It is important to understand RTP addresses perceptions regarding individual beliefs, norms, traditions, and myths students use to control their lives in school culture. For the purpose of this research, a major assumption is made that the term school culture, in this context, refers to student behavior and how it is handled.

A limitation of this study centers on the fact that the sample size is one school. Alternative programs are generally small. The number of staff employed by alternative schools is often less than 15; therefore, the number of people associated with this research was also small. The alternative secondary school in this study is located in Northern Michigan. The community population was 6,086 in 2009. The school is chartered by the local area intermediate school district (ISD). It was specifically created to serve the needs of the county’s at-risk student population. Students attend by choice and/or are referred by one of the four area traditional school district programs. Students come and go, move in and out, and their attendance is irregular. The school allows program enrollment twice per year.
Another limitation of the study is that the researcher began his work with the school as a consultant leadership coach in August 2007. The school chose to address school culture as their first priority. RTP was selected as the initiative to improve school culture. The process program was introduced to students mid year, December 2007. Of the staff interviewed for this research, all of them were employees of the school prior to RTP’s implementation, and employed by the school for at least one year after the process began.

**Summary**

Chapter I provides background information regarding the effects of student misbehavior in schools. Given the costs associated with teacher and administrative attrition alone, there is cause for alarm. In addition, how this affects student achievement and the performance of the school as a whole is significant. Yet, schools are not the only institutions facing the concerns of maladjusted behavior. Court systems are routinely called upon in an attempt to punitively address it. Regardless, zero tolerance has not been found to be an effective deterrent for changing behavior. The problem appears to be getting worse. The number of alternative schools has significantly increased nationwide. Moreover, many of these programs have been created to provide placement for students with behavioral problems without effectively dealing with these issues.

The purpose of this study is to report out the impact of this school’s implementation of RTP as the lever for improving behavior and school culture within the building. The research questions, by design, shed light on the school’s statistical data with regard to student behavior prior to and after the implementation of RTP; staff perceptions of the school culture prior to and after the RTP intervention; and teachers’ thoughts on the how
implementation of the RTP process affected their work which, in turn, led to improvements in student achievement.

At-risk students pose a litany of unique questions for educators to address. Given their needs and the impending problems associated with them, it is important for all educators to seek out solutions, support, and assistance. RTP is the lever used to address student misbehavior in this school. This study is designed to shed light on their story.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter II contains a review of the research on why there is a need for schools to focus on behavioral support, the characteristics and major components of behavioral support programs with expected outcomes, the characteristics and importance of effective school leadership in regard to student behavior, and the characteristics of learning organizations. In addition, the literature review will address successful implementation strategies, and how schools have shown to incur sustainability when instituting programmatic change. Lastly, a review of the research will show there are several behavioral support programs used to address student misbehavior. Lacking is research on the Responsible Thinking Process (RTP) and its impact on student behavior when implemented in an alternative secondary school setting. To better understand the RTP process and its impact on student behavior, it is important to first identify key components of commonly used school discipline behavioral programs along with those of RTP. Characteristics and major components and correlations of RTP and other student behavioral programs will be explained, along with the processes educational leaders utilize to implement educational initiatives effectively within the schools.

Necessity for the Behavioral Support Program

Why do students obey rules? What actions should be taken when rules are broken? What discipline strategies can educators use to support students? And, how important is a democratic classroom environment? According to Wolfgang and Kelsay (1995), these are the key areas school behavioral support programs address with students. Wolfgang, a nationally and internationally recognized trainer of discipline for 25 years, states students
obey rules because they either have a “fear of authority” or have “feelings of social responsibility” (Wolfgang & Kelsay, 1995, p. 175). Additionally, he adds that, as a collective body of people, for us to have a democratic society children must move into adulthood with “feelings of socially responsibility” (Wolfgang & Kelsay, 1995, p. 176).

Wolfgang and Kelsay (1995) further indicate that fear of authority is generally the first moral understanding of “young, preschool children (two to seven years of age), who obey parents’ rules out of fear of losing their parents love” (p. 175). Right and wrong at this stage of moral development has more to do with reprimands and punishment for not following the rules, rather than an insightful understanding regarding how their actions impact others. Unfortunately, for some students and young adults, there are those who “physically grow up,” but never move from fear of authority to that of being socially responsible (Wolfgang & Kelsay, 1995, p. 175). They continue to break the rules, lie, cheat, and steal. Their actions are “destructive” and “self-centered” (Wolfgang & Kelsay, 1995, p. 175). If it were not for an authoritative figure such as a principal, policeman, or judge to hold them accountable, their actions would continue to affect our democratic society.

With proper training, Wolfgang and Kelsay (1995) state that students can be educationally motivated to move from a moral position of fear for authority to that of being socially responsible. The developmental process of moving to a position of social responsibility occurs in a variety of settings and social engagements such as at school, home, and church. As children move through life, they are provided social experiences, which can add to their repertoire of how to live positively in a democratic society, whereby they should exhibit social responsibility. Proper training is needed to move children towards social responsibility.
Brain development is complex. Within the last decade, advances in technology, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), and our knowledge of the brain’s growth and change from birth to full developmental capacity have become clearer. There is now a growing body of longitudinal neuroimaging research that has indicated that brain growth and change continue into adolescence. These research findings provide us evidence that the adolescent brain continues to mature well into the 20s (Johnson, Blum, & Giedd, 2009). Giedd (2008) acknowledges that before MRI research, the study of biology and behavior within the adolescent brain was largely inaccessible. This is because with the brain protected by bone, fluid, and membranes, the ability to be able to study it had been unavailable. Prior to the MRI research, therefore, there had been "longstanding opinions and assumptions that growth and change stopped at puberty" (Johnson et al., 2009, para. 1). MRI testing provides a clearer understanding of the biological growth of the brain. Advancements in MRI testing have provided us an ability to conduct brain research in ways that had been previously unavailable. This research has shown that the frontal lobes of an adolescent brain are among the last areas to mature. The frontal lobe consists of the "neural circuitry that underlie executive functions, such as planning, working memory, and impulse control" (Johnson et al., 2009, “Hot” and “cold” cognition section, para. 1).

With the advancements of MRI testing, Yurgelun-Todd (2007) states “adolescence is a critical period for maturation of neurobiological processes that underlie higher cognitive functions and social and emotional behavior” (p. 251). In summary, students will experience difficulty with attention, processing abstract reasoning, discrimination of emotional skills, reward evaluation, response inhibition, and goal directed behaviors. From
a societal and biological standpoint, the necessity to work with students’ behavioral needs is necessary during adolescence.

**Characteristics and Major Components of Behavioral Support Programs**

When rules are broken, our democratic society is tested. How parents, teachers, and principals address students’ misbehavior is critical to their development. According to Wolfgang and Kelsay (1995), adults address misbehaviors with either a logical consequence or a punitive response. In considering which action is an appropriate response to a student’s misbehavior, the principal or teacher should consider the severity of the incident; however, depending on the response, the student’s reaction could be very different. Actions that are punitive, such as paddling and detention, require little action and effort by the student. Often, they can grin and bear through the discomfort. Other students might have feelings of resentment, anger, or even play the role of martyr. Logical consequences, in contrast, are tied directly to the actions of the misbehaving student, are routinely viewed by the student as educationally supportive, but can take more time to implement.

Not all misbehavior is equal, nor is its impact on others. Discipline strategies that address student misbehavior vary from process to program. Which strategy should you use? Depending on the misbehavior, Wolfgang and Kelsay (1995) indicate there are different processes/programs used to address student misbehavior. Which program to use is based upon the “degree of seriousness” (Wolfgang & Kelsay, 1995, p. 177). They plot student misbehavior on a continuum of seriousness of the crime. Coming to class late, not turning in homework, and chewing gum are far less serious infractions then smoking pot,
fighting, stealing and weapons violations. For example, see Figure 2 Degrees of Seriousness Continuum of Behaviors chart.

1. Chewing gum in class  Swearing  Stealing
2. Late homework  Graffiti on walls  Weapons
3. Tardy to class  Skipping  Drugs

*Figure 2. Degrees of seriousness continuum of behaviors. (Adapted from Wolfgang & Kelsay, 1995, p. 178).*

According to Watchtel (2003), President of the International Institute for Restorative Practices, "punishment in response to crime and other wrong doing is the prevailing practice, not just in just in criminal justice systems, but throughout modern society" (p. 1). He states that how we choose to address students is critical to their development. Those “who fail to punish naughty children” are often labeled as permissive, and how we view our responses to student misbehaviors, to punish or not, could be viewed on a “punitive–permissive continuum” (Watchtel, 2003, p. 1). He adds that a more useful view of social control should look at the interplay of the two comprehensive variables: control and support. Glasser’s (1998) earlier work, how we approach social control, identifies four general areas: neglectful, permissive, punitive/retributive, and restorative. Wolfgang and Kelsay (1995), in Figure 3, address social control on a discipline pathway continuum.
School disciplinary programs generally can be viewed as falling into one of the four identified areas shown in Figure 3 (Wolfgang & Kelsay, 1995). Of the four areas, Relationship-Listening requires the least amount of power, control, and authority over the student. In contrast, Coercive-Legalistic has the maximum power and authority allowed staff when working with students. It should also be noted that how we choose to address student misbehavior is not always as simple as saying or doing this, or that, or merely buying a program. Not everyone cited within the research has an identified program to purchase and implement in a school. Those identified in this research have developed strategies, methods, and processes, which they recommend we use to achieve a desired student behavioral outcome (Wolfgang & Kelsay, 1995).
Strategies, methods, and processes that address student misbehavior are not always conveniently packaged into a program to be purchased and implemented in our schools. The work identified in this research consists of a culmination of strategies, methods, and processes recommended by those who developed them, to be used at the different levels of the disciplinary pathway continuum (Wolfgang & Kelsay, 1995). Generally speaking, all student misbehavior cannot be resolved with one respected method or approach. Students are individuals and each presents a host of different circumstances and state of mind. The discipline pathway represents a continuum of minimum to maximum power of strategies and methods. Some programs embody processes that, if used with fidelity, have the potential to elicit positive student behavior.

Relationship-Listening programs and/or processes represent minimum power and control. At this level, Wolfgang and Kelsay (1995) state students are provided a high degree of autonomy and control towards resolution and understanding. Moving across the discipline continuum, the adult’s autonomy to use power and control is increased at each level. Whereas relationship-listening programs provide students a high degree of control, coercive-legalistic discipline programs involve the highest forms of adult authority and control. Students in coercive-legalistic programs can be restrained and often have their civil liberties reduced.

**Relationship-Listening Programs**

Mentioned earlier, relationship-listening programs represent the minimum power and control (Wolfgang & Kelsay, 1995). Strategies, methods, and processes that encompass these ideals provide students with the most autonomy and control when seeking to resolve misbehaviors. Teachers who use these processes do so by expressing an attitude that they
are sensitive to students’ needs by establishing a supportive relationship with the student. They talk with the student and work towards resolution on those issues or situations that create student stress. This type of relationship with the students requires more listening than providing advice, warnings, or preaching.

Examples of relationship-listening programs and or processes would be T.E.T - Teacher Effectiveness Training (Gordon, 2003), I’m OK You’re OK (Harris, 1969), and Values and Teaching (Raths, Harmin, & Simon, 1978). Each of the three processes has several core aspects that interconnect them. To begin, each takes the position that the person has the innate ability to control him or herself with support. Gordon (2003) creator of T.E.T, Teacher Effectiveness Training, identifies his program and the processes associated with it as one of quality interpersonal relationships, which is inclusive of students, parents, and administrators within the school setting. He believes that these relationships directly affect how well they can facilitate learning and manage their classrooms. Initially, his work derived from being a professional school counselor. He describes parents bringing their students to him in tow to be fixed in his office. As a result of parent frustration and apathy for their child’s misbehavior, he “learned how parents, inadvertently yet inexorably hurt children and youth” (Gordan, 2003, p. viii) by their words and or actions in his office. As he describes their behavior as “pathological or sick,” he describes parents as being uninformed with the knowledge and principles associated with having “effective human relationships, honest interpersonal communications, or constructive resolution” (Gordan, 2003, p. ix). To provide support to address these concerns, he developed a course P.E.T. – Parent Effectiveness Training. The success and delivery of this training to thousands of parents led to the influence of a large number of

Core aspects of T.E.T. include relationships between the teachers and their students, a definitive model for teachers to reflect upon on what those effective teacher relationships look like, what teachers can do to when students are experiencing problems, how teacher communication and or responses has an effect on their students, and the importance of active listening and how it impacts the students and makes them feel to be heard and understood. Gordan (2003) acknowledges that not all students will behave correctly. He recognizes that adults can become frustrated when working with students. As a result, he provides a collection of strategies and techniques on what teachers should, and should not, do, and why, when students present themselves as behavioral problems in their classes. His processes weigh heavily on healthy relationships and established classroom atmospheres and settings that contribute to this ideal.

Thomas Harris, author of the 1969 book, I'm OK, You're OK, describes three ego-states: parent, adult, and child. He describes these as the basis for both the content and quality of our interpersonal communication. To be more descriptive, his work centers on understanding the transactional analysis of how stimulus and response between individuals is transacted between them. For example, the transaction between individuals consists of a “stimulus by one person and a response by another, which response in turn becomes a new stimulus for the other person to respond to” (http://selfdefinition.org/psychology/harris-thomas-im-ok-youre-ok-in-html/i'm-ok-you're-ok.htm, Analysing the Transaction section, para. 1). He states that the “purpose of this analysis is to discover
which part of each person – parent, adult, or child – is originating each stimulus and response” (Harris, 1969, p. 68).

To explain this interpersonal relationship more closely, Harris (1969) describes positions of thinking that range from birth to maturation of your person as follows:

1. I’m not OK – You’re OK
2. I’m not OK – You’re not OK
3. I’m OK – You’re not OK
4. I’m OK – You’re OK

As with each position of thinking about oneself a deeper reflection of one’s personal feelings and how one feels they relate to another is the central focus of his work. Harris (1969) indicates that most people are in state number three: I’m not OK – You’re OK. When working with people, he says games work best to move people from this state of thinking (Harris, 1969, p. 54). Like Gordan’s (2003) work with T.E.T, Harris’ (1969) work could be classified as Relationship-Listening. With a supportive relationship, Harris (1969) is able to work with people to move them from one state of thinking to another.

**Confronting-Contracting**

What happens when a student won’t listen to reason? Even worse, what if they are not in a mental position to start working with you? It is one thing to have a healthy relationship with someone, but what if that relationship is one-directional? Simply having a good relationship with a student only to have him/her abuse/use this against you is not healthy, but it is a sign of counter control (Powers, 1992). Then, what do you do? Do you send them to the principal’s office? As the teacher considers what to do next, they find themselves making a judgment call. Doing so, they evaluate for themselves whether they
have “offered a reasonable amount of time, if the students behavior does not improve, or if it becomes more difficult.” (Wolfgang & Kelsay, 1995, p. 179).

Child psychiatrist Rudolph Dreikurs, whose book, *Discipline Without Tears*, provides insight on how to teach students positive behavior (Dreikurs, Cassel, & Ferguson, 2004). Although students may undoubtedly end up in the principal’s office, it will be their choice. His strategies for addressing student misbehavior could be categorized as logical consequences vs. punishment. According to Dreikurs et al. (2004), students are social beings that have an intrinsic need to belong. Whereas, Relationship-Listening programs rely heavily on interpersonal reflection alone, Confronting-Contracting program methods stress encouragement and cooperation, while maintaining firm control. In addition, Dreikurs et al. (2004) poses the idea that an alliance between parents, teachers, and children is necessary for success.

Allen Mendler (2009), educator, school psychologist, parent of three children, and co-author of *Discipline With Dignity* has worked for years with children of all ages. Looking for ways to have challenging students succeed, he and Richard Curwin developed strategies to be implemented by educational practitioners. In doing so, they have transformed thinking for many who work with kids. Their process of support has four core fundamental beliefs. They are:

1. Schools are for children, not the staff, teachers, and administrators who work there.

2. Students must always be treated with dignity.

3. Teaching students how to be responsible should be the core of any discipline program.
4. All students are equally important, even the most difficult ones. (pp. xiii-xiv) A very thoughtful and intriguing idea for their work lies with the following statement: “How we treat our best students shows our aspirations; how we treat our most challenging students shows our values.” (Mendler & Curwin, 2009, p. 1) To support this thinking, these educators offer us five principles to keep in mind as we do our job.

   Principle 1: We are responsible for teaching all students.

   Principle 2: View difficult behavior as opportunities to educate for change; reserve leverage for excessively disruptive or dangerous situations.

   Principle 3: The more we motivate, the less we discipline.

   Principle 4: Discipline is just another form of instruction.

   Principle 5: Have numerous strategies and lots of heart for success. (Mendler & Curwin, 2009, pp. 7-11)

A summation of their work suggests that students need to know the three “Rs:” reading, writing, and arithmetic to be successful, but they advocate they cannot learn them until they learn responsibility (Mendler & Curwin, 2009). Therefore, they believe “the most fundamental and important goal of schooling is teaching the tools of responsible behavior” (Mendler & Curwin, 2009, p. 13) As a program that includes components of Confronting-Contracting, teachers and students are taught how to be responsible. Students need a sense of remorse for their poor behavior. Therefore, unlike the relationship-listening programs, there can be consequences for misbehavior in this model.

William Glasser, who wrote several books on effective classroom management in our schools, provides us with strategies and processes that are also identified as Confronting-Contracting methods (Wolfgang & Kelsay, 1995). In his book *Choice Theory in*
the Classroom (Glasser, 1998), he states, “all of our motivation comes from within ourselves” (p. 17). He goes on further to say that an individual’s behavior in school is an attempt to satisfy one or more of the five basic needs that are a part of our genetic structure. Unlike machines, he mentions that humans work constantly to meet one of those needs. He disagrees that stimulus and response drive human behavior. He uses the example that you don’t stop a car alone because the light turned red. You do it because you value one of your basic needs, that being survival. An explanation of how Glasser (1998) describes control theory is as follows:

What goes on in the outside world never stimulates us to do anything. All of our behavior, simple to complex, is our best attempt to control ourselves to satisfy our needs, but of course, controlling ourselves is almost always related to our constant attempts to control what goes on around us. (p. 17)

The five basic needs that drive us all and are, as Glasser (1998) would describe it, a part of our genetic structure are simple and easy to understand. They are: (1) to survive and reproduce, (2) to belong and love, (3) to gain power, (4) to be free, and (5) to have fun.

There are several current confronting-contracting programs. Some of which are used in schools and in the general society at large. One particular school-based program that has grown exponentially in the United States in the last five years is the Restorative Justice Program (Gonzalez, 2012). According to Gonzalez (2012), the program is one that is broadly defined as an approach that engages all parties, which have been affected by an issue or behavior, to work together to resolve the conflict between them. As a process to resolve conflict, teachers, students, families, and communities can look for ways to move past the conflict that occurred, promote academia, and ensure a safe school environment.
by working together for everyone. Although the program promotes non-punitive measures for resolution, accountability and emotional healing can come in several forms.

Using non-affiliated volunteers affected by the issue or behavior is an important aspect necessary for this process to work. Volunteers work with those involved to assist with restoration. A survey of the reparative board of volunteers, for the state of Vermont that assisted with restorative processes in their state found these members to be strongly in favor of the program. According to the members, reparative contracts between the parties often included apologies, restitution, and community service (Karp, Bazemore, & Chesire, 2004).

Some have criticized the effectiveness of this restorative process. They say the process erodes the legal rights of the victim and can have the effect of trivializing crime, and lead to vigilantism. As a result, studies on this topic have ensued. One such study, using data obtained from the Juvenile Probation Department of Maricopa County, Arizona, looked at offenders who were processed using the restorative system from January 1999 through June 2001. Those included in the study were compared to other eligible offenders who did not use the restorative process. The results of the study indicated that those who participated in this process were less likely to recidivate than those who did not participate and benefit from the inherent support provided. Criminals with minimal charges and girls benefitted the most (Rodriguez, 2007).

Another program, Capturing Kids Hearts, created by the Flippen Group also embodies several of the aspects Wolfgang and Kelsay (1995) state are core to confronting-contracting programs. According to Quillen (2011), teachers project a gentle tone when
addressing student misbehavior. Doing so, they ask the errant student to answer four questions.

1. What are you doing?
2. What are you supposed to be doing?
3. Are you doing it?
4. What are you going to do about it?

The process is expected to resolve disciplinary issues by having students reflect on their behavior at the time it occurs. This, along with the requirement for teachers to do several simple but purposeful directives, attempts to build relationships through understanding and respect (Quillen, 2011).

**Assertive-Control**

Depending on the student, the need to move towards steps that increase school staff control, which provides less autonomy for the student, is determined by the student’s individual outcome. If the student did not turn around his or her behavior, it might be time to introduce methods that are more assertive. Programs and/or processes that adopt these measures often send a clear message to the students that they will receive either a negative or positive consequence depending on their specific student behavior. If the behaviors are what we want to see, the response will be positively reinforced. Likewise, negative behaviors will result in a predetermined negative consequence (Wolfgang & Kelsay, 1995).

Assertive Discipline (Canter & Canter, 2010) is one such program adopted by thousands of educational leaders around the world to address classroom management. Teachers and school leaders are taught how to be effective in the classroom. The process is as assertive as the name implies. To be effective with this process, a teacher must develop a
“teacher voice” and establish the class expectations with no backing down. To be fair and effective, Lee and Marlene Canter advocate 100 percent compliance by students to the teacher directions 100 percent of the time. Therefore, for students to be successful, the teacher must define and be clear about both the classroom rules and the corrective actions that will be used to establish compliance. Teaching students how to manage their own behavior is a key component to this program’s effectiveness. Canter then expands on what begins in the classroom and provides methods for developing a school-wide assertive discipline program. By implementing at the school level, Canter would advocate that the school’s behavioral climate would change for the better.

Not everyone agrees with Canter and Canter’s (2010) approach to school-wide assertive discipline. Mendler and Curwin (2009), authors of *Discipline with Dignity for Challenging Youth* state, “discipline is less about punishing and more about teaching responsibility” (p. 13). Their approach is far more aligned with that the confronting-contracting models (Wolfgang & Kelsay, 1995). Mendler, school psychologist, and Curwin, San Francisco State University professor of education, describe teaching students about how to behave responsibly as “the most fundamental and important goal in schooling” (Mendler & Curwin, 2009).

Differentiating from assertive-control models, Curwin and Mendler take issue with processes like Lee and Marlene’s Assertive Discipline behavior program. They state, “let the buyer beware” of programs like the Canters’. Curwin and Mendler (1989) describe the Assertive Discipline program as “little more than an attractive, well-marketed behavior modification program” (p. 83). They advocate programs that support teaching responsibility as a better approach. As far as they are concerned, “Any system that gives all
of the power to those in charge, along with the premise that those who are not will submit (even if the leaders are benevolent), is doomed to eventual failure” (Curwin & Mendler, 1989, p. 83).

James Dobson (1992), author of “Dare to Discipline” (which has sold million copies), also endorses assertive discipline for parents and teachers. Inspired by scripture, Dobson (1992) indicates that the Bible provides direction on how to raise children. He states that the “primary purpose in writing New Dare to Discipline was to record for posterity his understanding of the Judeo-Christian concept of parenting” (Dobson, 1992, p. 18). He outlines five underpinnings to common sense child rearing. They are:

1. Developing respect for parents is the critical factor in child management.
2. The best opportunity to communicate often occurs after a disciplinary event.
3. Control without nagging.
4. Don’t saturate the child with materialism.
5. Establish a balance between love and discipline.

To develop respect, Dobson directs parents to be assertive, letting children know who is in charge. He states that when a child defiantly challenges an adult, the adult should win at all costs; however, he cautions parents that kids need to be treated with respect, when addressing them. So, while parents should be assertive in their posture with their children, they should not be “harsh and oppressive.” For example, adults should not feel the need to spank children every morning to show who is in authority, or require boys to sit with their legs crossed in the living room just because adults have the power and authority to tell children what to do. “Whimsically punishing kids, swinging and screaming at them when they don’t know what they are doing wrong” (Dobson, 1992, p. 51), does not produce
healthy, responsible children. Being firm, establishing clear expectations, and holding them accountable requires the adult to be respectful as they address them.

**Coercive-Legalistic**

There are times when student behavior is so outrageous and extreme that it endangers themselves, peers, faculty, and school property. Students are bringing weapons to school with the intent to harm or kill. Behavior that elicits illegal activities, such as bringing weapons to school, drug usage, delivery, and/or sale are the types of behavior that require adults and legal authorities such as police or psychological services, to be actively engaged (Wolfgang & Kelsay, 1995).

School use of corporal punishment, which is still used in some American schools today to address these types of behaviors, is discouraged. According to Wolfgang and Kelsay (1995), “corporal punishment teaches the offender that someone with more power, be it physical or social power, can hurt others who have less power” (p. 181). As a result, appropriate behavior by the student is due to fear of those in power, not because the student has a sense of social responsibility or empathy for others. Coercive-Legalistic programs are used for the most severe students who choose to misbehave in our society. They are commonly referred to as Crisis Intervention Programs.

Couvillon, Peterson, Ryan, Scheuermann, and Stegall (2010) conducted a review of crisis intervention training programs for schools. Due to the severity of their behaviors, students are referred to these programs. While in the program, civil liberties are often curtailed and overseen by those in charge. With some students, physical restraints have been used as a means to control them. As a result, injury to students such as falls, punches, kicks, and or bites have been noted. Unfortunately, death has also occurred. Undoubtedly,
some have questioned the programs themselves, calling for congressional hearings, and/or
federal legislation to oversee the use of physical restraint. Although federal oversight exists
to monitor medical, psychiatric, and law enforcements use of physical restraints, schools
are not governed in this manner. “Schools, however, are largely governed by state
education agencies” (Couvillon et al., 2010, p. 7). As a result, guidance on how to address
physical restraint varies greatly, with some offering only minimal advice on the subject.

Crisis intervention programs, more often than not, limit individual civil liberties.
That said, they do teach students how to behave. Using Positive Behavior Intervention
Supports, PBIS, crisis intervention programs focus on three key aspects:

1. Teaching students how to behave appropriately
2. Increasing reinforcement for appropriate student behavior
3. Using data to design and monitor behavioral interventions and supports

PBIS based programs have been found to have the greatest effect with at-risk students
when they are applied universally both at school and at home. In the classroom,
playgrounds and even in the hallways, matching interventions and supports result in
success; therefore, crisis intervention programs often apply them holistically for everyone
within their care.

**Responsible Thinking Process (RTP)**

Edward Ford created the Responsible Thinking Process (RTP). It is used in many
school locations in America, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, and elsewhere around the
world (Ford, 2004). The author of several books on this process, Ford advocates teaching
educators and parents how to teach students to look within themselves. Doing so, students
will have decision-making authority for the things they want, thus restructuring their own
thinking for the sole purpose of getting what they want without violating the rights of others.

Reviewing the categories Wolfgang and Kelsay (1995) addressed earlier, RTP bears similarities to the ideas addressed with other Confronting-Contracting programs. For example, confronting-contracting programs require teachers to tell the child to stop, confront the student about the misbehavior, and guide the student through a “series of cognitive what questions: What are you doing? What is the rule about...? What will you do to change?” (Wolfgang & Kelsay, 1995, p. 180). The RTP would not confront the student and demand that inappropriate behavior stop, nor would it have the teacher be descriptive with regard to the behavior of the student; however, it would require the teacher to address the student with RTP’s six cognitive questions (Ford, 2003). The six questions are:

1. What are you doing?
2. What are the rules?
3. What happens when you break the rules?
4. Is that what you want?
5. What are you going to do about it now?
6. What happens if you break the rules again?

Let’s face it, not all students will methodically answer the teacher’s cognitive questioning process. Ford (2004) indicates that one must have deeper understanding of the process and how to correctly implement it. Further, Ford (2004) says there are several factors required for his process to work. Teachers must know when to use the questions - or not, how to use them in different settings and situations, with whom to use them, and in what context? He also describes, with taped role-plays, what to do when the questions do
not work. With a variety of supports in print and DVD, that are designed to assist educators, Ford addresses how to correctly implement his process. He indicates that for this process to work correctly, everyone needs to do it, with fidelity, as it was designed. Changing the process to one’s own liking and understanding are strongly discouraged. Correct usage of the process, coupled with understanding of RTP by everyone involved and consistency of implementation in the school, Ford would say, are critical program attributes (Ford, 1999).

Implementation of RTP: Leadership, Learning Organizations, and PLCs

According to Ed Ford (2004), program fidelity is critical for the success of RTP in schools. Books, DVDs, and professional development are some of the resources available to schools that want to implement RTP as a student management behavioral process. It is an understatement to say that a school improvement is complex. Merely buying a program or instituting a process to improve schools, sounds simple; however, if buying a program, watching a DVD, and attending a workshop were all that we had to do to improve schools, we would have improved education a long time ago. To effectively implement a program like RTP in schools it is critical that the schools address three critical factors:

- Instructional leadership (principal and team)
- Becoming a true learning organization
- Developing effective professional learning communities.

Professional learning communities must be developed so that staff can work together to implement the program to fidelity. It is important to point out that a program, like RTP, will not, by itself, improve the instructional core of a school. For this school improvement program to be effective, those involved should address how they plan to implement and sustain the work overtime. Thinking about the work, prior to beginning the work, sets the stage for successful
outcomes. A review of the research recommends school improvement should include decisions that are data driven, coordinated with planned implementation strategies, and guided by a continuance of noted sustainable efforts for them be impactful and effective for our students.

**Learning Organizations and Implementation of Behavior Programs**

Thus far, a review of the research indicates that there are characteristics of learning organizations that must be acknowledged prior to, during, and after the implementation of a program. As a reminder, Platt et al. (2008) defined the conditions that undermine learning. Lipton and Wellman (2012) and Allen and Blyth (2004) outlined what strategies are necessary for the facilitator to deliver effective professional development. Patterson (2003) frankly discussed what it would take to truly address cultural organizational change. McDonald, Mohr, Dichter, and McDonald (2007) emphasized the need to have structured conversations (i.e., protocols) to do the work within professional learning communities. Reeves (2009) described how to lead change effectively using the resources, and Ewan (2003) identified the ten traits principals should possess to be effective leaders. Shen and Cooley (2012) acknowledged areas of consideration for school leaders to work on, and Shen (2013) with his most recent work acknowledged that there are levels of learning associated with program implementation.

Ford (2004), creator of the RTP program, argued that successful implementation of his behavioral program requires attention to the process in which it is implemented. As indicated earlier, to have success with interventions like RTP, those involved should place a high degree of forethought on the planning prior to, during, and after professional development of staff. What does successful implementation actually look like in the school setting? According to Lendrum and Humphrey (2012) “implementation refers to the
process by which an intervention is put into practice” (p. 635). They also acknowledge that research studies across multiple disciplines, including education, demonstrate that interventions are rarely implemented as they were designed. Further, they indicate that the variability with implementation is directly tied to the variability in achievement to the expected outcomes for the intervention. Simply put, implementation matters.

Lendrum and Humphrey (2012) also noted program ineffectiveness can be attributed to barriers that occurred during the professional development of the programs implementation or to intentional adaptations to the program. They suggest that success or failure of program implementation is a complex mix of multiple factors that include the program, implementation, and organizational influence; however, they indicate there is a limited understanding of how these factors interact to influence implementation and the achievement of outcomes. Yet, they agree that more and more journals in the United States are requiring researchers to include data on implementation in papers that report the outcomes of interventions

**Characteristics of Effective School Leadership and Student Behavior**

For many years, school leaders have provided safe and secure environments for students. In many respects they were building managers. However, that role has changed. With high stakes testing and the demand for schools to show improvement, our leaders are needed to provide instructional leadership. For student achievement to improve schools must have an effective student behavior program within a positive school culture. This will make it possible for students to learn and teachers to instruct to a higher degree. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the qualities of an effective school leader to implement
change. What do instructional leaders do? What makes them different? McEwan (2003) identifies 10 traits effective leaders should possess. They are:

1. The Communicator – having the capacity to listen, empathize, connect, teach, present, and motivate
2. The Educator – a self-directed leader with a depth of knowledge in curriculum, instruction, and learning that motivates intellectual growth
3. The Envisioner – focused on the vision of what schools can be
4. The Facilitator – building strong relationships with parents, teachers, and students
5. The Change Master – flexible, futuristic, and realistic; one who can motivate change
6. The Culture Builder – communicating and modeling a strong, viable vision
7. The Activator – motivate and mobilize people, have energy, and enthusiasm
8. The Producer – results oriented
9. The Character Builder – a role model for values, words, deeds, trust, respect, and integrity
10. The Contributor – priority is making contributions to the success of others

Principals need to embody these qualities and critical attributes McEwan (2003) identified as necessary to lead effective school improvement; however, that alone will not drive school improvement. Organizations are bodies of people too. They have traits and qualities. In fact, every member of the organization has an impact on the organization's effectiveness. Therefore, it is important to understand the qualities of the people within the organization, where they are coming from, how they learn, and how the leader can best lead them. According to Patterson (2003), organizations possess a culture of beliefs and norms that are core to who they are, what they value, which will drive them forward, hold
them back, or cause them to stay where they are. Leaders may have the best intentions in
mind to lead an organization, but if they are unaware, don’t care, or hold value to the
beliefs that identify with the organizations culture, beliefs, and norms they may find
themselves building organizations resilient to change, and not that of building bridges.
Patterson (2003) acknowledged that leaders should be clear that improving an
organization is hard. Organizations, good or bad, are often entrenched in their core beliefs.
In fact, he states there are 12 harsh realities leaders should be aware of, if in fact, they are
going to positively impact organizational change. The 12 realities of people in an
organization are:

1. Most people act first in their own self-interests rather than in the interest of the
   organization.
2. Most people do not want to genuinely understand the what and why of
   organizational change.
3. Most people engage in organizational change because of their own pain, not the
   merits of the change.
4. Most people expect to be viewed as trustworthy but mistrust the motives of
   those initiating the change.
5. Most people opt to be victims of change rather than architects of it.
7. Most organizations are wired to protect the status quo.
8. Most organizations initiate change with an event driven mentality rather than a
   value driven mentality.
10. Most organizations expect the greatest amount of change with the least amount of conflict.

11. Most people and organizations deny that the other ten realities, in fact, are their own reality.

12. Most people and organizations have the capacity to develop resilience in the face of the other eleven realities.

**Change Leadership**

If an organization can be resilient to change, how do we then instill a commitment to build bridges, accomplish results, and/or conquer any myths that might be out there? Let’s be honest, changing organizational culture can be difficult. Organizational cultures, beliefs, and norms are developed over time. Reeves (2009) addresses in his book *How to Lead Change*. He advocated first creating the conditions for change. Reeves (2009) indicated that we must first be willing to personally assess ourselves and acknowledge our organization’s willingness to change. Failure to do so could end up being a waste of time and resources. If the conditions are right and the organization is willing, then, and only then, should the leader plan for it. Planning should include both how to implement improvement and how to sustain it over time.

Lipton and Wellman (2012) and Platt et al. (2008) addressed strategies leaders should embrace with learning groups for them to be effective. Acknowledgement of appropriate group size, structure, composition, and length of time working together all play a role with effectiveness. Kline and Saunders (1998) state that there are actual steps a learning organization must keep in mind when seeking to improve schools. Similar to Patterson (2003), Step 1 requires the organization to assess its learning culture. Kline and
Saunders (1998) indicated leaders should not move forward with an idea, goal, or vision if the organization is unwilling, fails to see the need, or lacks the desire necessary to move forward with an idea, goal, or vision; however, leaders can promote the traits necessary for learning organizations if they are aware of them. Here are the ten steps leaders should know, work on with their organization, and keep in the forefront as they create a system of thinking/learning/growing:

1. Assess the organization's willingness to learn.
2. Promote the positive – wherever possible.
3. Create safe environments for thinking/learning.
5. People are resources. Help them to see the value in each other.
6. Learning is powerful. Build upon it.
7. Map a vision – don’t just state it.
8. Bring the vision to life – assess it, value it, look at it often.
10. Get moving – get the show on the road.

**Levels of Understanding**

School leaders and their organizations are complex learning institutions. More often than not, competence as described by Platt et al. (2008), illustrate the effectiveness an organization will have is largely based upon organizational competence. Therefore, the knowledge of every member in the organization has an impact on the system's capacity to improve. Likewise, and equally important, is the capacity of which the organization can be prepared and/or professionally developed that will determine the success for school
improvement. Shen and Cooley (2013) in their resource book for improving principals, identify seven dimensions of a learning centered principalship. Knowing what to identify, where to spend time, and how to go about it, relies heavily on organizational competence. Shen and Cooley (2013) acknowledged that these seven dimensions are the first element of the conceptual framework. What does it take to have a deeper understanding for our work? We are all at different levels of understanding. Dependent on the topic, we are all influenced by our experiences, education, and/or training. Knowing how to prepare people for success, having a deeper understanding of where they are, and an understanding of what needs to be done to improve the organization. Sanzo, Myran, and Normore (2012) discussed successful leadership practices and development. In their research and corresponding edited book, they along with a group of educators, addressed levels of leadership. In chapter six, Shen and Cooley (2012) addressed the second element that is needed for principals to have for the seven-dimension conceptual framework to work. The second element addresses the individuals and organizations levels of learning. According to them, leaders need to know where their organizations are in reference to five levels of learning. The five levels are:

1. Experiential (knowing what is important and why)
2. Declarative (knowing what to do)
3. Procedural (knowing how to do it)
4. Contextual (knowing when to do it)
5. Evidential (knowing what to look for and how to make adjustments)

These levels “represent a systematic approach to school improvement.” Successful implementation of the seven dimensions is inter-related with the levels of learning noted.
above. If an organization wants to improve student achievement, successful school improvement with the implementation of the seven dimensions is “dependent on content knowledge as well as the breadth and depth in implementation of them” (Shen & Cooley, 2012, p. 123).

**Learning Organizations and RTP**

Unlike manufacturing, which uses raw materials to create products, schools are constantly changing and adapting human learning organizations. To effectively implement and sustain programs like RTP, it is necessary to understand how organizations function, the role that belief systems play when people work together, and knowledge of the conditions that undermine them. Exposing attributes of learning organizations can contribute to effective implementation and sustainability of the RTP school behavioral program.

Schools are intricate organizations made up of people. Identified earlier, the research noted many of the characteristics of effective school leaders. Leaders are faced with a multitude of challenges that must be overcome to lead effectively. Platt, Tripp, Fraser, Warnock, and Curtis (2008) in their book, *The Skillful Leader II*, confront the conditions that stifle learning organizations. They indicate that before we can look at the symptoms of a mediocre learning/non-learning organization, we must “acknowledge three key assumptions” (Platt et al., 2008, pp. 11-12).

1. Organizational or institutional learning is a means to a goal, not an end.

2. An emphasis on organizational learning is only useful if it helps skillful leaders scale up improvement efforts.
3. By leaders we mean everyone with a recurring opportunity to affect the caliber of learning in schools and classrooms.

Along with these assumptions, they delineate five common areas that block or undermine an organization's ability to learn. With respect to these areas, the five areas that need further consideration before learning can improve in a school are (Platt et al., p. 13):

1. Broken, clouded, or cockeyed lenses
2. Organizational ADD
3. Operating by the law of the jungle
4. Knowing/doing gap
5. Feedback failure

Although an examination of each area is required for school improvement, more often than not, a closer review of any one of the five areas, “may uncover another; improving and changing one may have a positive effect on another.”

Organizations may well look at themselves and say they are a learning organization. Comments like, “We get along here and everything is fine” are common. According to Platt et al. (2008), how school communities’ function together can be placed on a continuum. See Figure 4, which depicts a continuum of community function.

![Figure 4. Continuum of community function. (Used with permission from Platt, A. D., Tripp, C. E., Fraser, R. G., Warnock, J. R., & Curtis, R. E. (2008). The skillful leader II. Acton, MA: Research for Better Teaching, Inc.).]
Ranging from a toxic, adult-oriented community whereby the adults do not work together to the point of back biting and even arguing in meetings, to that of a highly accountable, student-oriented community where students are placed first and school improvement that supports them is ranked above the adults’ needs and preferences. Most organizations would like to think they’re an accountable community; however, Platt et al. (2008) state they these type of organizations are rare. Based on their work, accountable student-oriented community organizations address the 3 Cs: Conviction, Competence and Control. See Figure 5, which depicts confronting conditions that undermine learning.

*Figure 5. Confronting conditions that undermine learning. (Used with permission from Platt, A. D., Tripp, C. E., Fraser, R. G., Warnock, J. R., & Curtis, R. E. (2008). The skillful leader II. Acton, MA: Research for Better Teaching, Inc.)*

With regard to school improvement, conviction is the degree to which an organization will respond to challenges, be willing to tackle hard to address problems, and be willing to look at the lack of success when trying to improve. Although groups must have
conviction for the work, it can be empty rhetoric if the organization lacks the skills to take action. Competence is the degree to which an organization possesses the necessary skills to improve. Simply doing tasks, even if they feel good, for the sake of doing something without a competent laser-like focus on student achievement will ensure organizational ineffectiveness. Even so, there are organizations that are committed to improvement, take time to be learning centered to build competence, but lack the necessary control to accomplish the work. Let’s face it, most educators have worked in a place where they wanted to do something, were willing to give up their time and effort to do it, even had the knowledge about how to do it, but lacked the authority to make it happen. Control is the degree of influence and authority those involved need to get the job done. To be a learning organization, adequate structures must be in place to facilitate effective learning.

Resources, both financial and otherwise, must be made available to support improvement, and the necessary authority and influence must be available to carry it forward. Of the 3 Cs conditions that Platt et al. (2008) indicate are needed for school improvement, facilitation competence is the area leaders must possess to oversee effective sustainable organizational school improvement. They indicate organizational conviction will wane over time, if leadership lacks the skill of/or competence to facilitate group thinking and learning. School improvement, then, will falter.

**Professional Learning Communities, PLCs, and RTP**

To build competence for the work, educators like Platt et al. (2008) and Lipton and Wellman (2012) provide school leaders with a wealth of effective facilitation strategies to lead their organizations via professional learning communities. What are learning groups? What types of group structure enhance the opportunity for an organization to be
considered accountable? Lipton and Wellman (2012) describe what a learning group should consider when looking to be effective. They indicate, “Effective design choices increase a learning group’s capacity to address hard-to-talk about topics and shape thoughtful dialogue and productive discussion” (Lipton & Wellman, 2012, p. 32). To support effective organizational learning groups, purposeful designs maximize efficiency of time and the quality of the interactions that lead to results. According to Lipton and Wellman (2012), group size, an area often over-looked, greatly affects the success of the group. Although many group sizes are used, they find pairs, trios, and quartets to be the most active and safe environment for success. Of these, pairs offer the most intimate of discussions.

Group composition is another area described in their work. The degree of expertise, years of experience, and work style support a groups’ diversity. A further consideration, they contend, is the length of time groups should be allowed to work together. They indicate that performance can be affected if either too little or too much time is allocated; therefore, facilitators should vary the length of time groups’ work together and regroup them periodically. Doing so, they would say has the effect of strengthening the larger learning group’s working relationships.

Group structure is another important aspect to consider when looking at how groups interact together. Being mindful of structure, they would say, has the potential to increase productivity and engagement. Lipton and Wellman (2012), like Platt et al. (2008), recommended that groups control structure by looking at factors such as the space in which they will work, the materials they will use, and the processes facilitators use to create thinking and learning. To do so, facilitators should use a repertoire of strategies and
protocols to enhance thinking and learning to generate success and satisfaction. Large group facilitators should also use small group facilitators to support them, identify recorders, appoint material managers, assign reporters, and keep track of time to support the work of the organization. Additionally, these authors advocate the use of chart paper to actively record group input for everyone to see and explore.

How groups work together is critical. As a school organization moves along the continuum from a toxic, adult-centered program to one of accountability that emphasizes student-centered tasks, it becomes clearer to see accountability built within the system (Platt et al. 2008); yet, without purposeful acknowledgement to appropriate group set-up and structure, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, for groups to move towards accountability. How we educate ourselves as individuals then, is as important as how we do it collaboratively, together, as a group. According to Platt et al. (2008), a deeper understanding of how effective learning groups work is vital to establishing learning competence. They describe learning competence, with regard to group learning, as “having and using a repertoire of skills and substantive knowledge about effective collaboration and adult interaction; having and using problem-solving skills to address student-learning needs” (p. 41). Building a learning groups awareness, knowledge, and skills in the areas of effective collaboration will help them with:

1. Tackling the Tough Stuff
   a. Dealing with conflict
   b. Confronting the “elephants” – unpromising practices and brutal facts
   c. Communicating in difficult situations

2. Developing Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Skills

47
a. Helping the group get smarter – progressive conversations

b. Knowing and using problem-solving processes to arrive at collective action

c. Knowing and using “step-back” or checking strategies

3. Anchoring the Work

a. Using standards and data

b. Establishing and enforcing norms

4. Sustaining Transparency

a. Making practice public

b. Examining one’s practice with curiosity and vulnerability

**Distributive Leadership**

Who is going to lead these groups, holding them accountable for their work, deciding what needs to be worked on first, and determining the assessment process for the work? These are just some of the questions asked by educators with program implementation. More often than not, the principal was hired to be the instructional leader for the school. According to Shen and Cooley (2013), principals have the power to make a difference in their school. The question, however, is what should a principal be working on with the staff? Principals probably understand the importance of academic achievement. They may have an understanding of Lipton and Wellman’s (2012) recommendation for effective group structures. Most are excellent communicators, but what should be included in the school improvement process? Where do we start, and better yet, where should we spend our time to be effective?
According to Palmer (2013), distributive and empowering leadership principles have been studied for the past several decades. Distributive leadership embodies the sharing of leadership for school-based decision making with the school principal and staff. Depending on the school and district, mixed approaches using shared leadership for instructional support and managerial tasks have varied. In addition, there have been mixed results and amendments to the concept over the years as when to use it and how. Several agree that there are benefits to the instructional core for students when teachers are more involved with instructional teacher leadership. Sharing leadership with teacher leaders has been shown to support teachers with “facilitated instructional sustained development, supported, and school-embedded opportunities to learn about the technologies of teaching” (Palmer, 2013, p. 102). As a result, now in the second decade of this century, school leaders have embraced distributive leadership practices to “empower teachers and engage in school renewal” (Palmer, 2013, p. 102). Distributive and empowering leadership in schools has the opportunity to “identify, promote, and sustain teacher leaders” (Palmer, 2013, p. 103).

Although the research bears out that shared and distributive leadership are important variables, they still are indirectly related to student success in schools. The power of the process comes from ensuring that certain teacher activities occur, which include how teachers organize themselves in professional learning communities, PLCs, how they reflect and discuss amongst themselves, and how they collectively take on the responsibility for student learning (Palmer, 2013). According to Palmer (2013), “shared leadership and instructional leadership are not ‘either/or’ strategies,” but are complimentary of each other and are necessary for improvement to occur (p. 105).
Facilitation Skills

What are the facilitative instructional activities needed for an effective PLC? What does good discussion look like, and how does the leader develop collective buy-in for the work to improve student growth? These are important concerns for any program or process to take hold, work, and advance student achievement in schools. Lipton and Wellman (2012) described the need to have a repertoire of protocols to support good facilitation. According to them, doing so, promotes understanding, buy-in, and support for the program or process to be used in the school building. Protocols ensure that educators can communicate with one another successfully and productively. McDonald, Mohr, Dichter, and McDonald (2007) provide what they refer to as an educators guide to better practice. Their book, *The Power of Protocols*, offers a rationale for protocol-based learning, and also provides the reader with 34 detailed examples of protocols that educators can use to support good facilitation strategies. The authors indicate that groups that use protocols provide opportunities to tackle the hard problems, look at student work, review their instructional practices, and discuss professionally a multitude of educational programs and practices within the school. Their belief is that the utilization of protocols creates an environment rich of transparency, which leads to greater enrichment of learning between staff. Protocols promote “social construction of knowledge” (McDonald et al., 2007, p. 7).

Allen and Blythe (2004) also address the topic of protocols in their book, *The Facilitators Book of Questions*. Good facilitation doesn’t just happen. It is planned. This begs the question then “What Do Facilitators do? The Big Picture.” (Allen & Blythe, 2004, p. 33). To facilitate learning, Allen and Blythe (2004) indicated we must use well-defined protocols that establish what we want the learners to do, process, and learn. The outcome
is not always known, but the process for group learning is clearer when protocols are used. To most fully benefit from the use of protocols, educators performing as facilitators need to be aware of, and address, the major responsibilities inherent in this role. These are referred to as, *thinking dispositions* educators must cultivate in order to be effective. To make protocols powerful learning opportunities, facilitators need to attend, or see that someone does, to the following three areas of responsibility:

1. The learning of the group
2. The logistics of meetings
3. The longevity of the work within the school or district

These areas are described in more detail in Figure 6. The circles depicted in Figure 6 demonstrate the overlap in spheres. These overlaps, according to Allen and Blythe (2004), illustrate that facilitation responsibilities have interactions between and within the three sphere areas noted in the graph. A brief description of these three areas of responsibility followed by a detailed graphical analysis follows.

**Structured Conversations**

Protocols provide individuals and group learners an opportunity to learn from each other. Effective facilitation requires the presenter to shape the process for learning prior to, during, and after the professional learning opportunity. Helping learners to develop their own understanding for the purpose for their work together is a critical facilitation skill that the presenter works to shape.

**Facilitating Logistics**

Anyone who has ever led a meeting quickly realizes that there are numerous logistics that need to be addressed to ensure the group can work effectively and efficiently.
Allen and Blythe (2004) acknowledged there are questions that must be addressed when planning a meeting, workshop, or conference. Typical questions include: Where will the professional learning meeting be held? Who will insure the groups’ materials are photocopied and prepared in advance? Who will insure that everyone knows where to go? What time do the participants need to arrive? Who will take care of the refreshments? These are just a few of the questions that need to be addressed.

**Facilitating Longevity**

School administrations play a key role with facilitation of longevity. Administrators promote the work, allow time for it to develop, and build opportunities for it to shape itself and grow. Protocol-guided conversations need to be used on a regular basis during meetings so that thinking/learning can mature; therefore, longevity for the work can be stifled if school administrators are not consistent.

**Overlapping Responsibilities**

With each of the three areas, overlapping responsibilities often occur. No one person should carry out the three roles alone. Division of labor is helpful, if not required, for effective and efficient facilitation. By dividing the responsibility for the tasks, we can “avoid the all-too familiar feeling of being overwhelmed and getting burned out” (Allen & Blythe, 2004, p. 36). The following diagram, Figure 6, illustrates the overlap between learning, logistics, and longevity.
To summarize, successful professional learning communities (PLCs), are complex human group organizations. Being aware of the aspects associated with highly functioning PLCs, leadership teams will be able to utilize the tools necessary to lead their staff. Previously stated, programs do not change people. People change people. RTP will thrive or fail based on the implementation and sustainability strategies incorporated by the school staff.

Figure 6. Facilitating learning, logistics, and longevity. (Adapted from Evidence Project Staff. (2001). *The evidence process: A collaborative approach to understanding and improving teaching and learning.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Project Zero.)

**Implementation**

Implementation
Studying Implementation in Schools

According to Lendrum and Humphrey (2012), “The study of implementation is an examination of the process of ‘put[ting] an innovation into use’ (Rogers, 2003, p. 20) or ‘how well a proposed programme or intervention is put into practice’ (Durlak, 1998, p. 5)” (p. 637). Studying implementation is important; however, as the researcher for this work, I found it difficult to find research that reviewed the process of implementation. There are literally tens of thousands, if not millions, of studies done on the overall effectiveness of a program or process; however, as indicated in this research how a program or process is implemented has a lot to do with the effectiveness of its outcome. Utilizing an initiative like RTP as a school wide process to address student behavior is as important as the attention that is given to the implementation process. A deeper understanding of theory and practice, along with program implementation, are necessary attributes for us to gain a thorough knowledge of human development along the continuum of learning. Thus far, the research suggests that leaders looking to implement programs or processes should have a deep understanding of how to advance school improvement. As Platt et al. (2008) indicated, conviction, competence, and control are necessary attributes needed to improve schools. Regardless of the program or process implemented, it is important to identify the leadership actions or behaviors that contributed to their success with educational reform in their school.

Many factors influence the implementation process. The Rand Change Agent Study, a five-year study between 1973 and 1978, indicated there were several ways people thought about affecting planned change in education (McLaughlin, 1990). The project noted that although there were federal program guidelines and methods for implementing a program,
effective projects were actually “characterized by a process of mutual adaptation rather than uniform implementation, and that local factors, rather than federally mandated guidelines, dominated the projects outcomes” (McLaughlin, 1990, p. 11). The study, of 293 projects, funded by four federal programs, involved 18 states, resulted in a significant shift in thinking in the ways policymakers, practitioners, and researchers thought about planned educational change. For example, the study recognized that a school’s adoption of a program for change was only part of a program’s success. Staff buy-in should be considered one element of the process, but adoption by staff alone does not ensure success. Rand also found that successful implementation of a program does not necessarily result in long-term continuation of the program. In addition, the study concluded that the investment of federal dollars does not always guarantee successful implementation or continuation. The study did identify local factors, not federal guidelines, to be a significant factor when determining success with long-term program outcomes. Identified below are characteristics that affected the outcomes in the project study (McLaughlin 1990, p. 12)

1. **Educational Methods** – used by a project determined its implementation and continuation only to a limited extent. “What a project was mattered less than how it was carried out.

2. **Project Resources** - did not predict outcomes. Expensive projects were no more likely than less costly efforts to be successful.

3. **Project Scope** - was an important consideration. Ambitious efforts were more likely to stimulate teacher change and involvement than were modes, narrow projects.
4. **Active District Commitment by Leadership** – was essential to project success and long-run stability.

5. **Implementation Strategies** – on how to put a project into practice dominated the outcome. To a large degree, the educational institution determined local implementation choices. Effectiveness was determined by the expertise, capacity, motivation, management style, and sophistication of the projects implementation. Effective strategies that were especially effective, when applied in concert:

   - Concrete, teacher-specific and extended training
   - Classroom assistance from local staff
   - Teacher observation of similar projects in other classrooms, schools, or districts
   - Regular project meetings that focused on practical issues
   - Teacher participation in project decisions
   - Local development of project materials
   - Principal’s participation in training

Educational policy on the national level can have an impact. Local control and how a project is developed locally play a significant role. Cohen (1990) provides an analysis of what can happen when one classroom teacher, Mrs. Oublier, changes her instructional practice with a new math project. Her story is an example that illustrates how instructional policy and teaching practice can work in concert. In the 1980s, California launched an effort to revise the teaching of math. In general, their goal was to replace mechanical memorization with reasoning and understanding. Utilizing a variety of teaching approaches
that included individual self-reflection, small and large group cooperative work, and cognitive and kinesthetic methods, Mrs. Oublier was able to have academic success in a community experiencing high poverty, a sizable minority, in prefabbed classrooms, lacking school district financial resources.

**School-wide Implementation: Achieving Scale**

Although the application of implementation is as, or more, important than the program or process to be implemented, most of the research I reviewed centered on the effectiveness of the program, absent of the process for implementation. For example, a project, program or process of interest was implemented. The end result was evaluated for effectiveness. Unfortunately, my research evaluation of the literature found that the process used to implement desired programs, to support research-based practices, was often overlooked; however, I was able to find studies that identified aspects of the implementation process.

Miller, George, and Fogt’s (2005) case study research looked at how Centennial School of Lehigh University, an alternative day school for students with emotional and behavioral disorders, was able to successfully implement and sustain research-based practices. Concerning implementation and sustainability, the results of their study found “The use of such practices, in conjunction with organizational and systemic change, led to the virtual elimination for the need to use physical restraint and exclusionary time-out in the school, as well as an increase in pro-social behavior” (Miller et al., 2005, p. 553). To begin their work, based upon their own experiences with research, the researchers identified five principles for sustaining research-based practices in a school setting. They included: (1) the importance of a key individual, (2) control of resources, money for
program implementation, and time for teacher professional development, (3) accountability for student outcomes, (4) tolerance for initial implementation difficulties, and (5) recognition of accomplishments. They also identified five additional elements for creating and sustaining systems change within schools. These five additional elements included: (1) shared vision, (2) establishing appropriate student expectations, (3) developing a curriculum to teach and reward social skills, (4) teaching and rewarding positive appropriate behavior, and (5) instituting a comprehensive system of behavioral support.

Centennial School is operated and governed by Lehigh University and provides educational programming via adaptations and modifications, speech and language support, adaptive physical education for children ages 6 to 21 classified under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as emotionally disturbed or autistic (Millet et al., 2005). Students are referred to Centennial by area district multidisciplinary teams who have deemed they lack the local resources of support to adequately educate these students. Centennial's population is comprised of 80 to 100 students from nearly 40 different area school districts. The majority of the student body is Caucasian (76%), followed by African-Americans (13%), and Hispanics (11%).

Prior to implementation of any program or process, Centennial recognizes the need to clearly articulate and identify a problem (Miller et al., 2005). Doing so, they are able to be transparent, identifying what is working, when it occurs, how often, with whom, and why. They are also able to clearly see, as a group, what is not working, where that occurs, with whom, and why. To obtain this information, they conduct classroom observations,
interview school staff, and examine on-going practices within the school. The process used
developed a deeper understanding of their problem of practice.

Solutions followed their assessments (Miller et al., 2005). To begin, the researchers
recognized the need to utilize an easily understood coherent process for implementation of
a systematic change. Connecting with Tilly’s (2002) work on four basic problem-solving
elements, they addressed:

1. Assessing the educational environment
2. Introducing research-based practices
3. Evaluating implementation
4. Making adjustments for improving outcomes – when necessary

These elements helped guide their assessments for their current realities, evaluation of
themselves prior to, during, and after implementation. Doing so, they allowed themselves
to make adjustments to their practice, when necessary. This was especially important when
they were asked to reflect on their own assumptions about “the probability of student
behavioral chance and how their beliefs and behaviors may be inadvertently contributing
to the problem” (Miller et al., 2005, p. 556).

Mindful of the fact that they needed to incorporate research-based practices within
their program, this became the second part of their solution towards improving the school
(Miller et al., 2005). Reviewing several behavioral support models, Centennial staff adopted
a school-wide model that had been successfully implemented in Fern Ridge Middle School
in Veneta, Oregon. Adoption of this model was based upon research-based, best practice
approaches for improving behavior, and the acknowledgement of Fern Ridge’s success with
the program. This model was introduced and accepted by school staff, made transparent
with parents and caregivers, which increased parental contact that emphasized positive student behaviors. The staff also created a handbook for parents and students that clearly communicated expectations for appropriate behavior and how to have success, focusing on what they should be doing. Parent and caregiver meetings were held twice per year. In addition, a parent advisory council for school activities and governance was created along with a newsletter that focused on student successes. This, along with a newly created honors program that celebrated high achievement and accomplishments with parents and staff, contributed to their success.

The third area, which they identified, that contributed to their implementation success dealt with having a creative and supportive organizational structure (Miller et al., 2005). Early on, the school noted several impediments to implementation. They identified areas of concern in communication, staff development, allocation of fiscal resources, and staff attrition. Teacher attrition was as much as 50% per year. To address these areas of concern, the staff adopted a teaming approach. The approach was adopted to bring together small groups of stakeholders for information gathering with the goal of improving implementation. They found that this placed the problem solving aspects of their concerns in the hands of those closest to the problem. They found this to be the most beneficial way of uncovering the problem and those involved then looked for effective ways to resolve any difficulties they were having with implementation. According to Senge et al. (2000), such an approach “builds group commitment amongst staff that establishes a collective sense of organizational purpose – elements that are critical for effective change to occur.” Working in this manner the staff were able to evaluate themselves in a manner that allowed them, in an ongoing way, to evaluate their school program implementation. As identified in
McLaughlin (1990) of what works with successful implementation, local control was evident. The educational methods selected, availability of resources, scope of the work to be completed, commitment by leaders, and an acknowledgement of how to successfully implement program strategies were all acknowledged with their work.

**District-wide Implementation: Achieving Scale**

Sanders (2011) conducted a study to understand what reform leaders did in four school districts when they implemented the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS), a framework for school, family, and community partnerships. This qualitative case study looked at four member NNPS school districts, with minimum membership of five years, which reported high levels of leadership for family and community engagement. Districts were studied over a three-year period of time. Using Coburns (2003) multidimensional conception of scale, reform leaders were found to have influenced progress in the four interrelated dimensions of depth, sustainability, spread, and ownership. The study found positive relationships with key people in NNPS, but each district experienced variations of effectiveness.

Sanders (2011) findings highlighted that positive relationships influenced effectiveness. Variance of success was dependent upon strong relationships. His study concluded that the impact of relationships was critical to experiencing effective outcomes. He suggested more targeted studies on relationship maintenance and development over the different stages with the NNPS district wide reform. Although each of the leaders was selected for their success with NNPS implementation, they experienced variances with it. Saunders’ (2011) research concludes not all leaders in the study appeared to deeply understand the reform principles for scaling up a process to ensure long lasting school
change. As noted in the Centennial example, McLaughlin (1990) acknowledged what successful implementation strategies look like. Project effectiveness with NNPS implementation was determined by several local control factors. NNPS leaders who possessed a high degree of expertise with building and sustaining healthy relationships, coupled with utilizing capacity building techniques that motivated people, experienced success with NNPS implementation.

Studying the impact of how a program affects change in schools is important. My research addresses two factors: (a) what are the impacts of the RTP behavioral program in this alternative secondary school, and (b) how did they implement the RTP program to achieve the desired outcomes? Studying the impact of RTP with students in this alternative setting is important. Students exhibiting troubling behaviors impact society in a variety of ways. Equally important, an understanding of how to implement RTP correctly is vital to the overall program's success and long-term impact. According to Lendrum and Humphrey (2012), the introduction of an intervention “passes through several stages between initial identification of a problem to be addressed and the broad dissemination of the programme into routine practice” (p. 637). Educators generally are unable to replicate the favorable conditions and do not have access to the technical expertise and resources available to researchers and program designers. Lendrum and Humphrey (2012) suggested these are some of the reasons educators are unable to achieve the same successes due to quality of implementation. This research study will document the impact of the RTP program to address student behavior in one alternative secondary school. According to Lendrum and Humphrey (2012) implementation variability is inevitable, “partly due to contextual characteristics, and in order to determine what works, for whom and in what
circumstances” (p. 638) is important; therefore, this study acknowledged the
implementation process with staff perceptions.

**Summary of Implementation: Key Points**

A summary of this section brings forth the main points concerning the successful implementation of a program. Likewise, RTP will thrive in an organization that supports the needs of those who work in it. Leaders that provide supportive organizational structures that acknowledge the needs of their staff should increase the success for implementation. As previously stated, successful learning organizations embody the tools reviewed in this literature review. Oddly, it cannot be overstated; buying a program alone will not change an organization. How an organization professional learning community learns is critical for their overall the success with implementation. Before a program like RTP is implemented, the authors of the idea should review the following areas to ensure the likelihood of success. I have summarized the preceding work on implementation with the following key points listed below and presented in Figure 7, Factors Present for Successful Implementation.

1. Resources – Time and Money
2. Professional Development
3. Locally Driven vs. State/Federal
4. Self Analysis – Data Reviews
5. Technical Know-how
6. District/School Leadership Commitment
Figure 7. Factors present for successful implementation.

**Sustainability**

Based upon the literature review, building consensus among stakeholders, knowing how to effectively implement school improvement initiatives, and having leadership with the knowledge, skills, and ability to bring school improvement efforts to fruition, are all necessary attributes. Like successful implementation strategies, how organizations address sustainability as a professional learning community will determine the viability and long-term outcome for their work. Educational change is hard work. As Hargreaves and Fink (2003) noted, educational change is “rarely easy, always hard to justify, and almost impossible to sustain” (p. 693). We live in a changing world. Educational mandates are constantly changing, and come from different points. As a result, research is being
conducted on both the implementation and sustainability of school improvement initiatives. In their article, Sustaining Leadership, Hargreaves and Fink (2003) addressed the key principles of what is necessary for educational change to be sustained over time. Their research draws upon the knowledge obtained from two different studies. One study examined a five-year program of school improvement among six secondary schools in urban and suburban districts in Ontario. Another study, funded by the Spencer Foundation, included eight high schools in Ontario and New York State.

According to Hargreaves and Fink (2003), change agents and theorists of educational reform “have been concerned with how to move beyond the implementation” (p. 694) phase of school improvement, to one of how to sustain it over time “without compromising the development of others in the surrounding environment, now and in the future” (p. 694). They defined the meaning of sustainability with three overarching ideas. First, “sustainable improvement is enduring, not evanescent” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003, p. 694). In other words when the excitement for a new idea is lost, funding and working on it does not quit. Sustainability requires conviction. Consequently, conviction determines if an idea will have endurance vs. evanescent. Second, sustainable improvement must acknowledge that there are resources available to develop and maintain it. Doing the work requires an investment of time and money. Developing sustainability cannot outpace the resources. Finally, those who embark on this type of work should “cultivate and re-create an educational ecosystem that can stimulate ongoing improvement on a broad front” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003, p. 694). They are aware of what needs to be developed further, and know when something is not working and needs to be reworked and/or let go. Not everything is worth keeping, even if we know how to implement it, sustain it, and provide
the resources to grow it. In sum, Hargreaves and Fink (2003) acknowledged five key and interrelated characteristics:

1. Improvement that fosters learning, not merely change that alters schooling;
2. Improvement that endures over time;
3. Improvement that can be supported by available or obtainable resources;
4. Improvement that does not affect negatively the surrounding environment of other schools and systems; and
5. Improvement that promotes ecological diversity and capacity throughout the educational and community environment. (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003, p. 695)

**Supporting Sustainability**

Klingner, Boardman, and McNaster (2013) addressed what is required to scale up and sustain evidence-based practices. Their work found that long-term change is unlikely to occur with a teacher or even with one school without the support of district partners. In fact, they state:

It no longer makes sense for researchers to gather with one another to identify what they think is important problem, write a research proposal, obtain funding to support their research, find schools, identify teachers to participate in their study, and conduct their research without substantial collaboration with the educators and leaders in their school districts. (Klinger et al., 2013, p. 195)

Klingner et al. (2013) defined scaling up as the process by which educators and or researchers implement an intervention on a small scale, validate it, and then implement it on a larger scale in a real-world setting. To do so, they recommend that being aware of, studying, and thoughtful conviction for what it takes to expand and sustain an intervention
in these real-world settings is also required if the desired school initiative is to continue. In addition, they indicate there are four phases to scaling up and sustainability. The components are: (1) emergence, (2) demonstration of capacity, (3) elaboration, and (4) system adoption and sustainability. System adoption requires consistency of effort in several areas. Professional development of staff is a key component to insure the adoption takes hold and is sustained over time. According to Desimone (2009) effective professional development increases teachers’ knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are related to the new practices, which in turn lead to changes in instruction, which positively affect and lead to improved student learning. Highly functioning PLCs play an intricate role in increasing teachers’ knowledge, skills, and attitude for their work.

Consistency of effort via professional development of staff ensures conviction will be enduring vs. evanescent. According to Fullan (2005) in his book, *Leadership and Sustainability*, there are eight elements of sustainability. When looking for solutions on how to sustain an initiative, Fullan (2005) indicated organizations should review the eight elements at the school, district, and system levels. Doing so, takes consistency of effort to commitment to excellence. Each of the eight elements is supported differently at the various levels, but according to Fullan (2005), each is necessary if sustainability is to be achieved:

1. Public service with a moral purpose
2. Commitment to changing context at all levels
3. Lateral capacity building through networks
4. Intelligent accountability and vertical relationships
5. Deep learning
6. Dual commitment to short-term and long-term results

7. Cyclical energizing

8. The long lever of leadership

Similar to Desimone (2009), Fullan (2005) cited professional development as an area that has been shown to build capacity over time with school leaders. If educators lack the skills, are expected to change, but are unsure of what to do, then we need to develop them. Developing staff and providing them with the tools to do the work has been a part of educational practice for decades; however, recently, school leader and teacher coaching has been added as a means of additional support to augment professional development. The additional support ensures a commitment to excellence. Coaching takes professional development to another level. It supports putting theory and practice into reality. Allen (2008) in his book, Coaching Whole School Change, described coaching as a professional practice. To be an effective coach, Allen (2008) argued that effective coaches must manage a number of tensions. They must:

1. Be an insider when working with the school, but maintain a critical and informed perspective of an outsider.

2. Be able to work with many people, but also be able to provide close attention to individuals.

3. Be able to work simultaneously at the individual and organizational levels.

4. Model action while supporting others in acting.

5. Be able to think with a long-term perspective while productively working in the short term.
Reeves (2009) reviewed how to lead change. He recommends that we must first create the conditions in which successful change can occur and plan for it by selecting the areas that will focus on the greatest results with the right administrators and teachers. Indicated earlier, professional learning communities can play an active role in creating the conditions necessary for successful change. Reeves (2009) also supported coaching to build capacity to do the work to close the implementation gap. Although knowing what to focus on is important, he acknowledged the power of short-term wins in order to build toward long-term, sustainable change. In addition, he stated leaders should ask themselves “if funding evaporated and administrative mandates were withdrawn, would the change endure” (Reeves, 2009, p. 123)?

To have sustainable excellence, Reeves (2009) noted that schools must adopt a culture of commitment for all students, not just with those who are struggling. An all hands on deck mentality is pervasive in schools of excellence. Staffs in these schools have clearly established expectations and curricula for all grade levels. Reeves (2009) indicated schools that exhibit excellence over time are dedicated to consistency of effort with a commitment to excellence. Consistency of effort to a commitment of excellence reduces variation in teacher expectations with their curricula; thus providing less confusion for students. In addition, schools use a variety of common assessments to validate what kids are able to do and say. Professional learning communities via the commitment to excellence could discuss what assessments are to be used, how the data will be reviewed, and the consistency of effort by which it will be monitored. Assessments could be homegrown or externally created. PLCs could make decisions, as a department, grade level, or school. In addition to consistency, Reeves (2009) noted schools that have sustained a commitment to excellence
set aside three hours of sacred time each day for literacy. This time is not to be used for pullouts or any other peripheral activity that takes time away from reading and writing in English. The idea for sacred time for literacy for all students equally applies to sacred time for all teachers time to be able to collaborate. This time is to be used to focus on student achievement, content, and teaching strategies. Lastly, highly effective schools have been shown to enforce standards of professional responsibility. Bottom line: Inadequate teaching performance is not allowed or tolerated. Teachers are put on plans of support to help them or they are let go.

Knowledge of sustainable efforts is important, but Duke (2010) with his work in *Differentiating School Leadership* argued that sustaining success may sound easy and even sound simple to some on the surface, but he has found that we cannot just keep doing what helped to achieve initial improvements and expect to see success. According to him, data on this topic suggests that initial successes in student achievement may level off or even reverse themselves. What it took to turn the school around is often different than what it takes to continue the success. In short, maintaining success is a challenge for school leaders; however, Duke states that some of the challenges are predictable and therefore should be addressed by the system. They include: (1) ensuring continuity, (2) coping with complexity, (3) moving beyond basics, (4) addressing the needs of underperforming groups, and (5) detecting weaknesses in school culture.

**Summary of Sustainability: Key Points**

A summary of this section brings forth some main points concerning sustainability. Successful PLCs, similarly with implementation outcomes, can contribute to the viability and long-term sustainability of a program. Leaders should be aware of sustainable
attributes. Before programs like RTP are implemented the authors of the idea should review the reality of sustainability over time. When the excitement of a new program is gone, and if funding for it dries up, there is a high probability the program will stop; therefore, the motives for the projects implementation should be reviewed. To ensure success with sustainability, based upon the research I noted, I have summarized the preceding work on sustainability with the following key points listed below and presented in Figure 8, which depicts factors present for long-term sustainability:

1. Resources – Time and Money
2. Consistency of Effort – Curricula and Professional Development
3. Commitment to Excellence – Administrative and Instructional
4. Self Analysis – Data Reviews
5. Coaching – External and Internal
6. Conviction – Enduring vs. Evanescent

Figure 8. Factors present for long-term sustainability.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is depicted in Figure 9. The framework illustrates the overarching conceptual framework for this work. It is important to point out
that a program like RTP will not by itself improve the instructional core of a school. For this school improvement program to be effective, those involved should address how they plan to implement and sustain the work overtime. Thinking about the work, prior to beginning the work, sets the stage for successful outcomes. A review of the research recommends school improvement should include decisions that are data driven, coordinated with planned implementation strategies, and guided by a continuance of noted sustainable efforts for them to be impactful and effective for students. Figure 9 in the following chart conceptualizes this research work.

Figure 9. Conceptual framework: School improvement.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative case study was intended to examine how the Responsible Thinking Process (RTP) was used as a means to address student misbehavior in one alternative secondary school in northern Michigan. As educators, we are aware that student disruptions to the learning environment have a negative impact on school culture. Students who routinely disrupt the learning process are usually asked to leave the classroom. In particular, schools tend to address chronic student misbehavior with suspension and expulsion. These types of punitive methods of discipline have contributed to an estrangement from school (Adams, 1992). According to Bock, Tapscott, and Savner (1998) suspension from school has shown to increase the potential for failing grades, more suspensions, and dropping out of school. Moreover, DeRidder (1990) noted that students experiencing removal from school have shown a higher propensity of quitting school all together.

As the basis for my research, it is important for us to better understand the RTP intervention and the implementation process used to proactively affect the school’s culture. To do so, the researcher documented educator perceptions as it relates to the RTP interventions impact, as well as educator perceptions of the implementation and sustainability of the RTP process.

Questions Addressed by this Research Study

1. What were the staff members’ descriptions of disciplinary issues before and after the RTP intervention?
2. Based on staff descriptions, what were the factors associated with the successful implementation of the RTP program?

3. Based on staff descriptions, what were the factors associated with the successful sustainability of the RTP program?

Criteria for Sampling

The alternative secondary school in this study is located in northern Michigan. Since 1977, the school has offered an alternative public education program for middle and high school students. The school’s program was designed to meet the individual needs of every student. As an alternative secondary school, their mission is to provide an alternative option for students who have struggled to finish school traditionally. It provides education to students in grades 8-12. The student/teacher ratio is 18:1. The school’s vision is to provide a personal approach offering a small student/teacher ratio, utilizing technology, and a curriculum that builds student confidence while supporting the students’ social, emotional, and academic needs. Students can attend by choice, and many are referred based upon a variety of factors; however, several are referred based upon acting out and exhibiting disruptive behavior at their referral school.

In this study, as the researcher, I examined the perceptions of two groups of staff working in this alternative secondary school. The first group consisted of those who worked prior to and after the implementation of RTP. The second group consisted of those who were hired after the RTP implementation, but have experienced and used the intervention program in the school. Documenting their thoughts on the disciplinary issues associated with their student population prior to and after the behavioral program intervention, as well as how the RTP process was implemented, was the criteria for this
research. In addition, baseline student discipline data reported on behalf of the school to the state prior to and after the RTP intervention was documented.

**Sampling Process**

A qualitative approach was used in this research study. According to Creswell (2007), a case study describes the meanings of an individual or that of several individuals and their lived experiences. Conducting in-depth interviews allowed me to discover critical factors of their experiences prior to, during, and after the implementation of RTP.

Staff recruited for this research worked for the school, in some capacity, between 2007 and 2013; however, since 2007, the majority of those who selected RTP and initially used the program are no longer working for the school. In fact, of the 11 original staff that worked for the school in 2007, only one staff member remains the same. This is important to note when documenting fidelity and sustainability with the program, because a majority of staff initially involved no longer work there.

Since the school’s inception in 1977, the school has averaged 90 to 120 students in regular attendance. The staff associated with supervising, teaching, and supporting students is equally small. Depending on the year, a consistent average of 11 full time staff work to provide administration, instruction, and/or support. As the researcher, recruited and interviewed staff members who were working in the school prior to and after RTP’s implementation. Although I had not maintained personal contacts with many of the staff, I had the ability to connect with a few staff that had connections with former and present peers. As a result, recruiting and interviewing a large populace of former and present staff was available to provide rich responses. This afforded the researcher with sufficient staff experiences and perceptions with regard to the school’s behavioral culture prior to, during,
and after the intervention. In addition, the researcher was also able to explore why staff continues to use the program, and how they have sustained and maintained fidelity of it over time. A primary purpose for this research was not only to look at the RTP intervention as a lever for change, but also the leadership process utilized to implement the intervention with fidelity, thereby keeping it going as a part of the systemic culture. Staff recruited for potential interviews, therefore, had to have used RTP. Interviewees were recruited from the following areas: administrative, teacher, guidance/social worker, and support staff who worked directly with students.

Staff recruited for this research was based upon the following two criteria: (a) worked at the school prior to, during, and after the implementation of RTP, or (b) worked at the school after the implementation of RTP. As a point of interest, the RTP intervention continues to be the student behavior program in this school. It is also important to note that, to date, with the exception of one staff, the majority of the staff has changed since the introduction of the intervention to the school. Yet, the RTP program continues.

**Data Collection**

**Role of the Researcher**

According to Bogdan and Biklen (2003), there are multiple ways of interpreting experiences available to each of us through interacting with others. This researcher’s task was to record the perceptions of each staff member’s experiences with the RTP intervention, school culture, and implementation process utilized to deliver the program. As the researcher, it should be duly noted that I was contracted by the local intermediate school district to support the school leadership and staff. Contracted as the school’s leadership coach, during the period from August 2007 to September 2012, I served to
support the schools transformational process to improve academic achievement for a total of five years. During that time, I was contracted to work full days, twice per week, for each of the five years. Consequently, in carrying out this study, it was not only important for me to understand their work as a researcher, but also as a practitioner to support their work with the school improvement process. Therefore, as the researcher, I conducted the interviews myself because of familiarity with the school and access to student data associated with the school.

**Data Source: Interviews**

Participants in this study were divided into two groups. Groupings were based upon tenure with the RTP process. Those hired prior to the implementation of the RTP program were in one grouping, and those hired after the original implementation met the criteria for the second grouping. Questions specific to implementation were not relevant to the latter group, and therefore omitted. Questions selected for this research became a part of an interview protocol, which is attached as Appendix A and discussed in the Interview Protocol section below.

**Procedures**

This research has reinforced the notion that programs introduced into schools for the purpose of improving schools cannot happen without acknowledgment of, attention to, and thoughtful follow-up of the implementation process used when introducing them to the stakeholders in the school’s community. Sustainability of a program after implementation requires direct action and involvement to ensure fidelity and longevity for the work. Educators recruited for an interview were contacted to discuss their willingness to participate in this study and discuss these issues. Before they were interviewed, a letter
detailing the agreed upon time, estimated length of the interview, questions, and copy of
the consent form to review and sign were sent to participants. The researcher reviewed the
study with them, its purpose, and commitment to preserving their anonymity and
confidentiality of interview responses. A brief conversation ensued, along with verbal
acknowledgement to participate. The researcher followed up with an email, which included
the interview protocol research questions (Appendix A), and the formal invitation to
participate (Appendix B). The participants were informed of their right to voluntarily stop
the interview at any point and withdraw from this study.

Utilizing one of two interview protocols, an account of each educator's perceptions
was recorded. All participants had an opportunity to discuss their perceptions of student
behavior, as well as identify any of the factors contributed to the program's success with
implementation and sustainability. Due to the fact that many of the participants now live
hundreds, if not thousands, of miles from each other, the interviews were conducted with
different methods. Several of the interviews were conducted in person at a location
comfortable for them. FaceTime, Skype, and telephone interviews were conducted for
many of the other participants. All participants were aware the researcher was recording
their conversations to ensure accuracy of their descriptions. Individual interviews varied in
length, ranging from 40 to 65 minutes. Variations in time were due to participant
responses. One participant's schedule prohibited him from one of the other meeting
formats; however, he wanted his descriptions to be accounted for in the research, and
therefore responded to the interview protocol in written format electronically.
Interview Protocol

In *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, Creswell (2007) noted five questions are appropriate for an in-depth interview. Although five would be deemed appropriate, this researcher introduced more questions in an attempt to bring forth the feelings, sentiments, and perceptions of those involved with this work. Appendix A lists the questions used with participants in the study. Questions were divided into two categories based upon the tenure of the staff: (a) staff who were hired prior to and worked for two years after the intervention, and were involved with selecting the original implementation, and (b) staff who were hired after the original implementation and have kept it going. Interview questions were adjusted for each group to represent their perceptions. Specifically, Interview Protocol A explored student behavior prior to the RTP implementation. Examples of questions from this protocol include, “Please think back to before the implementation of RTP and describe the general state of student behavior in the school,” “During the time before implementing RTP, how was student misbehavior addressed,” “Please describe what you remember about how RTP was implemented as a school-wide initiative,” and “It has now been seven years since RTP was implemented in your school. In your most recent experience in the school, how would you describe the status of the RTP program in the school?” Interview Protocol B explored student behavior after RTP implementation. Examples of questions from this protocol include, “What has been your experience with the Responsible Thinking Process, commonly referred to as RTP,” “If you have worked in another school setting, how would you compare the effectiveness of the program used within that school with what you now
know of RTP,” “Why do you believe the school continues to use the process to address student behavior,” and “How does the school address sustainability of the RTP program?”

**Ensuring the Reliability and Validity of the Findings**

As with all research, it is important that the data obtained is collected and analyzed in a reliable and consistent way. Failure to do so would constitute a lack of credibility for the research findings. Unlike quantitative research that utilizes statistical procedures for data analysis to determine data significance, qualitative research utilizes reliable methods and procedures to ensure credibility (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, how data is treated and analyzed is critical to the outcome of the research’s validity. Steps taken to ensure data collection, treatment, and analysis were an important concern for this research and are described in data treatment and analysis.

**Data Treatment and Analysis**

Creswell (2007) and McMillan and Schumacher (2000) described verification processes to ensure and enhance the trustworthiness of the interview process. These processes include peer review, triangulation, negative case analysis, and clarification of researcher bias, member checks, and external audits. According to Creswell (2007), qualitative researchers should engage in at least two of these processes in a research study. To ensure trustworthiness of the data in this study, the researcher employed member checks and clarification of researcher bias to ensure accuracy. Member checks involve having the participants provided with an opportunity to review their interview responses to ensure accuracy. All participants were informed the interviews would be recorded to ensure the integrity and meaning of their responses. To ensure quality and capture the meaning of their thoughts, participants were provided written narratives of their
interviews to ensure this researcher captured the meaning of their thoughts. Participants were allowed to modify any and all of their narratives related to my transcriptions and summaries. To capture their thoughts, this researcher created two interview protocols as shown in Appendix A. Dependent upon a participant’s tenure with the RTP process, the researcher selected the appropriate interview protocol to use with each participant. Interview Protocol A for Staff Involved with the Original implementation of RTP was used with staff that made the decision to implement RTP as the lever of change to improve school culture. Interview Protocol B for Staff Hired After the Implementation was used with staff members that have had experience with RTP, but were not a part of the original team of staff that brought RTP in to the school. They have, however, chosen to continue the usage of RTP and sustain its fidelity over time.

The researcher also addressed clarification of researcher bias in this study. With clarification, the researcher addressed his former leadership-coaching role with the school, potential biases, unforeseen prejudices, and other orientations that could unknowingly shape the interpretations of this research.

Accuracy of data collection and coding is important to qualitative research. According to Creswell (2007), qualitative data analysis requires a systematic examination, review, and organization of our data collection processes. For data to be reviewed as a reliable collection of information for research it must be looked at in such a way that allows us to form meaning; therefore, how we collect data, transcribe and code it, are all necessary attributes for the validity of our research. To have reliable data collection, transcription, and coding researchers have found that the process for doing this work is multi-layered
and viewed as cyclical in nature (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Creswell, 2007.) The data is collected, reviewed, coded, organized, and reorganized based upon patterns and themes.

Creswell (2003) described six steps for completing data analysis. The steps covered later in detail are: (1) data collection, organization, and preparation for analysis, (2) review of the data, (3) coding of the data, (4) emergence of themes, (5) narrative description for each finding, and (6) presentation of findings. Using this six-step process, the data collected during the interviews will be analyzed. In addition, this researcher acknowledges there are two distinct groups of staff interviewed with one of two interview protocols shown as exhibits in Appendix A. As stated, these groups included: (a) staff that were hired prior to, selected, and used the RTP intervention, and were involved with selecting RTP as the lever for improving school culture, and (b) staff that were hired after the original implementation, that have used RTP as the lever to improve school culture, and have agreed to its usage over time. During the interviews, the researcher acknowledged their tenure with the school and used either Interview Protocol A or Interview Protocol B questions with each of the participants based upon their tenure with the RTP process.

An interview protocol was used to ensure consistency of questioning by the researcher for this study. Responses were recorded and transcribed. Transcription included coding and classification of the data was based upon responses. The interview protocol included data coding classifications for each category and subcategories. Responses by participants were coded based upon responses. Using the six-step analysis process Creswell (2003) described, data received was handled accordingly.
Correspondence Between Research Questions and Data Sources

The following table illustrates how the various sources of data were used to answer each of the research questions for this work. Utilizing Table 1, RQs are shown with their corresponding data sources.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1 - What were the staff members’ descriptions of disciplinary issues before and after the RTP intervention?</td>
<td>Interview Protocol A, questions 1, 1A, 1Ai, 1Aii, 1Aiii, 1B, 3, 3A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview Protocol B, questions 1, 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 3, 3a, 3b, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2 - Based on staff descriptions, what were the factors associated with the successful implementation of the RTP program?</td>
<td>Interview Protocol A, question 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview Protocol B, questions (Protocol B staff were not associated with the implementation process)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ3 - Based on staff descriptions, what were the factors associated with the successful sustainability of the RTP program?</td>
<td>Interview Protocol A, questions 3Bi, 3Bii, 3Biii, 3Biv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview Protocol B, questions 5a, 5b, 5c, 5d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six-Steps for Treating and Analyzing Qualitative Data

Step One included data collection, organization, and preparation for analysis. This researcher collected data via one-on-one interviews with each of the participants. Interviews were recorded for accuracy. Prior to coding and analysis, participants had an opportunity to verify the integrity of their responses and make modifications as needed. Any corrections to the data were made at that time.

Step Two included a review of the data. The researcher reviewed and formulated a general overview of the data looking for emerging primary and secondary themes that arose from the initial review of the data.
Step Three involved coding of the data. The researcher noted any common themes based upon participant responses. After several reviews of the data, themes that exhibited similar ideas and responses were collectively coded. These are reviewed in Chapter IV.

Step Four explored the emergence of themes. Based on the tenure of staff, interview protocol questions were adjusted to acknowledge the participants’ ability to answer the questions. For example, staff hired after the implementation of RTP could not speak to the implementation process; therefore, questions centered on the implementation process were not a part of their interview. Interview Protocols A and B described earlier list the actual interview questions (Appendix A). The emergence of themes from each research question formed the findings of this study. The researcher provided the appropriate protocol for each participant.

Step Five involved narrative description for each finding. The descriptions are supported by the responses reported in the interview protocol, transcribed, coded, and categorized by themes. Findings are discussed in Chapter IV.

Step Six is presentation of findings. Findings presented by this researcher are provided in Chapter IV and discussed in Chapter V. There are four research questions being supported by this study. Based upon the research question to be answered, data was handled accordingly.

**Research Question 1 Qualitative Analysis: Post-hoc**

1. What were the staff member’s descriptions of disciplinary issues before and after the RTP intervention?

Research question 1 is a qualitative research question. Typically, data in qualitative analysis is analyzed either in an a-priori or post-hoc coding system. For this question, the
researcher will utilize the post-hoc approach. Post-hoc coding acknowledges that the codes will emerge from progressively reading the transcripts. Research question 1 is a general question that can be answered with the responses by the participants. Essentially, themes on the possible differences before and after the intervention were formulated after progressively reading and analyzing the transcripts.

**Research Questions 2 and 3 Qualitative Analysis: A-priori**

2. Based on staff descriptions, what were the factors associated with the successful implementation of the RTP program?

3. Based on staff descriptions, what were the factors associated with the successful sustainability of the RTP program?

Research questions 2 and 3 are also qualitative research questions. These questions involve confirming, not confirming, or adding to the knowledge. Data analyzed in this manner is completed with an a-priori coding system. A-priori coding allows for an analysis of the data to confirm, deny, or add to the body of knowledge. With regard to research questions 2 and 3 on implementation and sustainability, this researcher also summarized staff perceptions based upon which factors are present, not present, or are new based upon an a-priori coding system.

Based on the literature review, the coding scheme for research question 2 on factors associated with the successful implementation of the RTP program are follows: (1) resources, (2) professional development, (3) locally driven, (4) self-analysis, (5) technical know-how, and (6) district and school leadership commitments. These factors were derived from the literature review and are depicted in Chapter II, Figure 9.
Based on the literature review, the coding scheme for research question 3 on factors associated with the successful sustainability of the RTP program are follows: (1) resources, (2) consistency of effort, (3) commitment to excellence, (4) self-analysis, (5) coaching, and (6) conviction. These factors were derived from the literature review and are depicted in Chapter II, Figure 9.

**Summary**

Creswell (2007) indicated that the analysis of data in a qualitative study is an inductive process. This process is referred to as inductive reasoning. There are no prescribed formulas for analyzing data similar to quantitative analysis. Qualitative research involves a reasoning process that seeks to establish strong evidence for a conclusion. Absolute proof is not possible with qualitative research; however, the process of qualitative research requires inductive reasoning, which supplies strong evidence for the truth of the conclusion. Inductive reasoning supports the probability that an argument is likely based upon the evidence. Utilization of the interview protocol categories of questioning along with the coding system for transcription was used to support this type of reasoning in this study. In addition, using the interview protocols, all participants were informed that the interviews would be recorded to ensure the integrity and meaning of their responses. Transcription of their responses for accuracy was a part of this process. To ensure quality, and capture the meaning of their thoughts, participants were provided written narratives of their interviews to ensure this researcher captured the meaning of their thoughts. Participants were allowed to modify any and all of their narratives related to my transcriptions.
For years, school-wide interventions have been used to address student misbehavior. As indicated in the literature review, these interventions can be categorized based upon their methods. As with other methods, schools have adopted them and have experienced mixed results with their effectiveness. Based upon the desired effect for their usage, adherence to successful implementation strategies and consideration of long-term sustainability, schools can insure they will get what they are looking for when they use them. Like other methods, RTP is a program. The RTP process is only one part of the intervention. The implementation and sustainability processes and procedures are just as important. The goal of this research was to acknowledge the substantive points of the RTP program, while acknowledging what is necessary for successful implementation and sustainability.
CHAPTER IV
RESEARCH RESULTS

According to Creswell (2007), case studies are used to describe the meanings an individual or several individuals attribute to their lived experiences. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine how the Responsible Thinking Process (RTP) was used as a means to address student misbehavior in one alternative secondary school. The central focus of this case study was to account for perceptions, or as Creswell (2007) indicates, lived experiences, of staff that used RTP as the intervention to address student misbehavior. In addition, the study reports the factors associated with the successful implementation and sustainability of the RTP program.

The data gathered for this case study involved personal interviews with staff to document their perceptions of RTP. To do so, the researcher utilized one of two interview protocols to ensure all participants were afforded a similar opportunity to account for their perceptions. As the researcher, I examined the perceptions of two groups of staff that worked for the school. The first group consisted of those who worked prior to and after the implementation of RTP. The second group, although not part of the original implementation, has used RTP and has agreed to continue its usage as the school’s intervention to address student misbehavior. The interview protocol, as shown in Appendix A, was used with both groups; however, the questions varied slightly to account for their tenure with RTP. Regardless of the protocol used, questions were constructed to allow for open-ended responses so participants could elaborate on their perceptions. In addition, probing questions were embedded within the protocols to ensure rich responses. Participants were afforded the opportunity to review the interview protocols several days
in advance of their personal interviews. This provided an enriched opportunity for participants to individually reflect on their perceptions of RTP in advance of their personal interviews with this researcher.

Staff recruited for this research worked for the school in some capacity between 2007 and 2013; however, since 2007 the majority of those who selected RTP and initially used the program are no longer working for the school. In fact, of the 11 original staff that worked for the school in 2007, only one staff member remains the same. Staff turnover has been a concern for the school; however, they continue to use RTP as their intervention.

**Research Questions**

An analysis of the data from the interview protocols was used to answer the three questions of this research. The following are the specific research questions answered from the collection of data for this study:

1. What were the staff members’ descriptions of disciplinary issues before and after the RTP intervention?

2. Based on staff descriptions, what were the factors associated with the successful implementation of the RTP program?

3. Based on staff descriptions, what were the factors associated with the successful sustainability of the RTP program?

**Participants**

In completing the literature review of the research, it was noted that the number of alternative schools is on the rise across the nation; however, the student populations that attend these schools are generally smaller than traditional secondary schools. The school identified for this research employs an average of 11 employees. Since the school’s
inception in 1977, the school consisting of these 11 staff members has supported academic instruction for an average of 90 to 120 regularly attending students. As indicated, turnover of staff is constant, and has been over time. Of the 11 staff hired in 2007, only one remained in 2013. Several factors contribute to staff turnover; however, staff turnover is not a part of this research. The focus of this research is on the use of RTP as the lever to improve school culture.

Twelve staff agreed to participate in this research. Seven of the participants met the criteria of being interviewed with Protocol A. Interview Protocol A was used with staff that were a part of the original decision to implement RTP as the lever to improve school culture. As indicated in the preceding paragraph, turnover of staff has been constant. Yet, the replacement of staff is essential to the continuance of ongoing instructional programs for students. In addition to the seven staff interviewed with Protocol A, five additional participants met the criteria of being interviewed with Protocol B. These five were not part of the original implementation, but were subsequently employed by the school, used the RTP process in their classrooms, and agreed to comment on their perceptions of RTP as the lever to improve student misbehavior. Participants within this group could also speak to the ongoing efforts to maintain the sustainability of the program.

Regardless of the participant status for this research study, all participants were eager to explain their perceptions in great detail. For this research, participant names have been changed to Educator. Prior to use of the interview protocols to obtain educator perceptions, all interviewees were asked the following:

1. Role with the School
2. Total Years in Education
3. Tenure with the RTP Program

4. Usage of other Disciplinary Systems

**Overview of the Educator Participants**

The participants for the research were diverse. An analysis of their positions/roles with the school, total years in education, degrees obtained, tenure with the RTP process, and whether or not they have utilized another school-wide method for addressing discipline yielded the following information.

The 12 participants included individuals who have served as Administrators, Deans of Students (school disciplinarians), Math, Science, Social Studies, English Language Arts, and Elective area teachers. Several teachers taught both middle school and high school courses. Total years in education ranged from 3 to 16 years, with a mean average of 9.16 years. The 12 participants had a combined total of 110 years of educational experience. Of the 12, 11 had used another school-wide disciplinary program in their career. The research covers the six-year time period from 2007 to 2013. The mean average of experience with RTP program under examination in this study was 3.8 years.

**Findings**

As the researcher for this project, I found personal value in documenting the perceptions of staff related to the interview questions. The initial round of data analysis revealed well-rounded, open-ended responses. As stated, this research explored the individual perceptions, implementation process, and sustainability efforts used with the RTP program in their school. After further rounds of data deduction, emergent themes arose that allowed the researcher to address the three research questions. Data from the interviews was coded, based on the factors identified with implementation (Chapter II,
Figure 7) and sustainability (Chapter II, Figure 8). Direct quotes and the usage of summative statements are presented in tables throughout this chapter to illustrate their descriptions.

**Research Question 1: Group A Educators**

1. What were the staff members’ descriptions of disciplinary issues before and after the RTP intervention?

In Chapter II, the literature review revealed an ongoing need for behavioral support programs to proactively address student behavior. Arguably sound, providing school administrators and teachers with the tools necessary to proactively support student learning with strategies on how to resolve conflict, conduct oneself, and behave in a school setting has shown beneficial for students, and society too. The greater the number of days students are removed from school, the increased likelihood they will not finish school. Students who have been removed from school are a potential burden for communities. Their propensity for getting involved with theft, destruction of property, gang affiliations, drug use, and other crimes increases. Therefore, looking for ways to keep students in school is best for everyone.

Educators 1 through 7 were interviewed with Protocol A and educators 8 through 12 were interviewed with Protocol B. Questions regarding descriptions varied between the protocols due to a participant’s tenure with RTP. For the purposes of data evaluation, those interviewed with Protocol A will be referred to as Group A. Group A educators were a part of the original implementation of RTP. Those interviewed with Interview Protocol B will be referred to as Group B. Group B educators were not a part of the implementation efforts to
bring RTP to the school, but have agreed to continue using the RTP process to address school culture.

To get a description of the perceptions educators had of the school’s culture prior to the program’s implementation, Group A participants were asked a series of questions to support a clear portrayal of the disciplinary issues in the school. The interview protocol questions asked educators to think back to a time prior to RTP in order to describe the general state of student behavior in the school.

“Horrible,” “Laidback,” and “Chaotic Culture” Before RTP

Table 2 depicts Group A’s responses regarding their perceptions of school culture before RTP.

Table 2

*Group A Perceptions of School Culture Before RTP*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question: Please think back to before the implementation of RTP and describe the general state of student behavior in the school.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Chaotic, out of control, lots of suspensions, kids in charge of the building, adults putting out fires, violence between students, drug issues, vandalism, lack of respect to staff, and safety was a concern.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Adults were placating students and offering them freedoms we thought were needed to build relationships, which turned to anarchy, and not a culture of being able to read and write.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Didn’t know what was good/bad. There were defiance issues. Students disrespected adults. Students lacked a culture of learning.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Sense of survival, survive the day. Sense of pride, but a mixed concept of whether that pride was good. Sense of how many students we could get to quit. The number of fights was significant. The demographics seemed urban even though it was a rural school. Students were sent to the school vs. choosing to come. Students were bullied and came to get away from somewhere else. Also, it was the teacher’s job to write and deal with student behavior referrals. It was my first job at 22 years of age. My knowledge was limited.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2—Continued

**Question:** Please think back to before the implementation of RTP and describe the general state of student behavior in the school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educator</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 3</td>
<td>&quot;We were not a school of learning. There were a lot of suspensions of students. We did not have a set discipline program. We were flying by the seat of our pants. It was chaotic, if not toxic.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 4</td>
<td>&quot;Behavior was definitely a problem. We were a love and logic school. We treated every individual incident that required one with an individual response. Inconsistent management of behavior. Students never knew what to expect. Chaos was evident.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 5</td>
<td>&quot;General state...laid back. There was a lackadaisical atmosphere to learning academics. Many wouldn’t show up. It was a transient population.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 6</td>
<td>&quot;Three camps of kids... 1. Some wanted an education 2. Some, middle of the road kids, were on the fence, and would sometimes not work hard. 3. Some were bored, and had to be there. (I.e. courts/parents) There was an average of 15 to 20 minutes of real teachable time out of 55 minutes of class time.” &quot;Core group of kids that disrupted. We were really good at building relationships. I was proud of it. It was a hurdle for us to establish a culture that promoted book learning. We taught them stuff, but not necessarily science, etc.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 7</td>
<td>&quot;The general state of student behavior before the implementation of RTP was horrible. Well, not horrible, but I felt like I did more babysitting than teaching. There was no consistency to anything and students would play staff members.” &quot;The school’s culture was not good, and almost on a toxic level. As a staff we were rude to each other because we didn’t want to have to deal with someone else’s shortfalls. It was easier to be rude, then to help solve things. We had very little energy to put towards anything other than trying to keep everyone safe.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Characterized in their responses, the dominant theme regarding the general state of the school’s culture was described as horrible, laidback, and chaotic, with a lack of overall dedication to student learning emerging as evidence of an unhealthy school environment. For example, Educator 2 described finishing the school day as a sense of survival, and Educator 4 identified student behavior as being a definite problem. Educator 1 described student behavior as being out of control, whereby there was a feeling kids were in charge
of the building. Drug issues were evident. Lack of respect to staff and an overall feeling of helplessness were prevalent. Educator 7 described just getting safely through the day as an accomplishment. Educator 3 described the school as one absent of student learning. Others expressed this viewpoint too. Educator 6 recalled an average of 15 to 20 of 55 minutes of real teachable time. Educator 7 viewed her role more as a babysitter than a teacher.

**Student Disengagement Before RPT**

When educators were asked to be more specific about student learning in the school, they often described little to no student engagement in the learning process. Table 3 details their perceptions regarding student disengagement in the learning process.

**Table 3**

*Group A Perceptions of Student Disengagement Before RTP*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educator</th>
<th>Perception</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 1</td>
<td>“There was no student engagement. Students were totally checked out of the learning process. There was a lack of structure in the school, cursing was frequent, and tardiness was prevalent.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 2</td>
<td>“Students learned at their own leisure. Time on task was low with both staff and students. Rigor was significantly lower than it should have been.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 3</td>
<td>“Ten percent of the students were learning. Ninety percent had to be there and didn’t see the connection to learning. Students needed social learning before they could academically learn.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 4</td>
<td>“Very little time on task. We were happy if 20 minutes was on teaching subjects. There was a variation of how we addressed misbehavior. Teachers perceived this as unsupportive to their teaching environment.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 5</td>
<td>“It was different day to day. Sometimes they were willing and open to learn. Whereas on other days they were closed with their thinking and unwilling to learn or do anything.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 6</td>
<td>“Prior to RTP, we built really good relationships with kids. However, kids in third camp, those that were bored and didn’t want to be there, could take over a class. Disrespect to teachers, and other kids happened often. Classroom instruction time was reduced.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to the educators, student engagement for learning was not an emphasis. The dominant theme expressed was that time on task for teaching was minimal. For example, Educator 4 indicated that teachers were happy if they had 20 minutes of a 60-minute class period to teach subject matter. Educator 3 described student learning with 10% of their students. Educator 7 described the teaching environment as chaotic, and Educator 2 simply said students learned at their own leisure. Student engagement was perceived as low, and the ability to engage students with rigorous lessons was described as a concern. Furthermore, educators described the opportunity to teach being reduced due to chronic student misbehavior.

**Adult Management Systems Before RTP**

Table 4 provides examples of Group A’s perceptions pertaining to the adult management systems before RTP, which they believed had an impact on the school’s culture.

Table 4

**Group A Perceptions of Adult Management Systems Before RTP**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educator 1</th>
<th>“Administrators addressed misbehavior in a haphazard kind of way. Often, it was based upon mood. We were not equitable. There was no rhyme or reason.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Teachers tolerated some behaviors so they could teach them, whereas others would send them out of class in order to teach those who wanted to learn.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3—Continued

Educator 7  “It was a chaotic environment, and I was counting the days down until I could leave it at the end of the school year. The worst part was, that while we all had similar basic classroom rules, we were all doing our own thing when it came to discipline and the students knew that there was no consistency amongst staff.”
As shown in Table 4, educators reported several concerns regarding the adult management systems used to support the educational program. Several construed the
administration’s response to student misbehavior as inconsistent and potentially erratic, appearing without reason or clear justification, rhyme, or reason. The inconsistencies described by the group appeared to contribute to their overall dissatisfaction of how they perceived the effectiveness of student learning in the school. For example, Educator 1 described these inconsistencies as based upon the adults’ moods at the time. Educator 4 further declared that the mood of the educator dictated whether or not a misbehaving student stayed in class, received instruction, and how they were addressed by the administration too. Educators 5 and 7 described student behavior as being the teacher’s job, with Educator 4 indicating if the teacher was angry, the student would be sent out of class. With regularity, educators responded by identifying several factors, which they believed contributed to the overall negative school culture. The dominant theme described by these educators was adult management systems appeared haphazard, not equitable, and with no real rhyme or reason.

**Summary of Group A Perceptions of Situations Before RTP**

Group A educators had an opportunity to work in the school prior to and after RTP was put into practice. Their perceptions for both periods of time are important for this research. With regard to their perceptions of the school before RTP, they described the school’s culture as one wherein there was a lack of student learning within the school. They indicated that the school’s culture was chaotic and toxic, and not conducive to providing rigorous instruction.

After the implementation of RTP, these educators had an opportunity to experience the impact of the RTP program’s use in the school. The major themes of the impact of RTP are presented in the following sections.
Table 5 captures Group A’s perceptions of the cultural changes after RTP.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question: Do you think the school culture changed after implementing RTP? If so, how?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The salient theme that appears dominant in Group A’s responses in Table 5 is that RTP was viewed a success. Educators saw significant change in student behavior and how teachers handled incidents, as well as an increase in student learning. For example,
Educator 3 described feeling like they were no longer working in a detention center. Educator 2 stated, “It saved the school,” and Educator 7 indicated that the school was no longer “A place to just go to screw around.” How they all saw the change was slightly different, but the emerging thought repeatedly expressed was that the school now exhibited a different atmosphere for learning with the use of RTP.

**Group A Perceptions of RTP’s Impact on Student Thinking and Behavior**

Group A educators were asked to provide their descriptions on the impact RTP might have had with student thinking and behavior. Table 6 reproduces detailed thoughts regarding these perceptions.

**Table 6**

**Group A Perceptions of RTP’s Impact on Student Thinking and Behavior**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question: Do you think RTP impacted student thinking and behavior? If so, how?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown in Table 6, the dominant theme, which appeared a number of times and in a variety of ways, was that RTP was viewed as a reflective process. It required students to think about their actions, the causes for them, and how they might do things better. Staff acknowledged that with RTP, students were taking charge for their thinking regarding individual misbehaviors. According to the educators, this had a positive impact on student behavior. For example, Educator 1 stated students could reflect on their goals and missions for themselves. Educator 3 reflected on how students had to think now before they acted. As a result, the observed student discipline went down.

**Group A Perceptions of Improvement in Student Learning after RTP**

According to Group A, there was an overall improvement in student behavior within the school. Group A educators were asked to describe how the improvement with student behavior played a role with student learning. As illustrated in Table 7, the educators perceived an overall improvement in student behavior, which increased student learning opportunities.

As shown in Table 7, Educator 2 observed 85 to 90% more time dedicated to instruction since implementation of RTP. Educator 4 noted an increase from 20 to 55 minutes dedicated to instructional time after the program's implementation. Educator 7 indicated that without RTP in place, almost zero learning would be happening. The
dominant theme expressed by all was that there was a direct correlation with the improvement of student behavior and increased learning opportunities for students.

Table 7

*Group A Perceptions of RTP's Impact on Student Learning*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question: Do you think RTP impacted student learning? If so, how?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 1: “Countless kids have come to me and said that the system has allowed them to reach their potential as a student and a learner.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 2: “Time on task for learning went up to 85 to 90% of the class time.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 3: “More time for learning and less disruptions.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 4: “It had too. Classroom observations showed me that we went from 20 minutes of instructional time in an hour to 55 minutes of instructional time. Our statewide achievement scores in ELA and Math reflected it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 5: “I know RTP impacted student learning. Our students were passing the MME statewide assessment. Data showed us that they were continually improving.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 6: “It seems to me that if you double teachable time it is going to impact the opportunity for them to learn. Kids would tell me they were learning more. Students realized that they now had the control to stay, leave, or get back into class.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 7: “I know that without RTP in place, almost zero learning would be happening.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Group A Perceptions of Improvement in Adult Thinking after RTP*

Up to this point, educators were asked to describe their perceptions regarding student behavior and learning prior to and after the RTP implementation. Table 8 represents an account of Group A perceptions on the impact of RTP on adult thinking. Their responses are important. Prior to RTP, the staff had attempted to address student behavior with an assortment of supports, without much success. The interviews produced responses which illustrated adult thinking had changed too.
As indicated in Table 8, educators eloquently described how their thinking had changed with the use of RTP as the lever for changing school culture in their school. For example, Educator 1 described situations between adults and students as a lot less volatile. Additionally, the educators indicated they were in more control of their own behaviors. They recognized increased student learning in the classroom, and less time allocated to
addressing student misbehaviors. Educator 3 noticed they had more opportunities to build relationships with students. Educator 5 noticed a shift in their thinking about their role as a classroom teacher towards teaching academics vs. disciplining students. Educator 6 described this shift as a teacher empowerment. They now wanted to help students with their behavior vs. disciplining them. The dominant theme Group A members depicted was an emphasis on teaching academics, with an emerging awareness that social skills could be taught too. This appeared to have an impact on their beliefs about their roles as teachers, and the roles of their students as well.

**Group A Perceptions of RTP Seven Years Later**

It has now been seven years since RTP was implemented in the school. Educators in Group A had the unique opportunity to work in the school prior to and after the implementation of RTP, and unlike Group B participants, are uniquely positioned to provide descriptions of the school's culture and climate for both periods of time. They described the school's learning environment prior to implementation of RTP as toxic and chaotic. They further indicated that the school has since benefitted in a variety of ways with the implementation of RTP. Student behavior has gotten better, time on task for learning has increased, and opportunities to provide rigorous instruction have improved for students across the school. Of the seven who participated in this part of the research, each identified RTP as a best practice to improve student behavior, which provided them with additional opportunities to teach. They also suggested that their behavior and belief systems on how to address student misbehavior had changed too. They identified success with the program; however, according to Group A the program's use has changed over
time. Although sustainability of the RTP program will be addressed with research question 3, Table 9 captures Group A’s experiences with the program seven years later.

Table 9

**Group A Perceptions of RTP Seven Years Later**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question: It has now been 7 years since RTP was implemented in your school. In your most recent experience in the school, how would you describe the status of the RTP program in school?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The four educators who addressed the question each described variations of concern for the program’s usage at this time. They attributed a lack of training for new staff contributed to a lack of knowledge on how to use RTP and why it works. For example, Educator 7 indicated RTP was slightly different now. This participant perceived it is more difficult to get new staff members to buy-in to the program. Educator 3 indicated that new staff might not have been fully trained enough to use it effectively. Overall, the four participants who responded to the question noted a lack of or the need to have more training with the program.
Research Question 1: Group B Educators

Group B educators worked for the school too, but were not part of the original decision-making process to bring RTP forward as the lever to improve school culture. They have, however, agreed to continue the program’s use with students. Equally important to note, of the 11 original staff employed that selected RTP as the school’s lever for change, only one remains employed at the school. Ten staff members have moved on with other life plans. Turnover of staff continues to be an identified concern; however, the current educators continue to use RTP as the lever for proactively addressing student behaviors.

Group B’s Positive Experience with RTP

Five educators met the criteria for being a part of Group B’s interviews. They were asked to reflect on use of RTP in the school. Answering a series of questions embedded in Interview Protocol B, educators provided detailed responses. The interviews began with educators providing general descriptions of their experiences with RTP. Table 10 presents these perceptions of RTP.

Table 10

Group B Overall Positive Perceptions of RTP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question: What has been your experience with the Responsible Thinking Process, commonly referred to as RTP?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 8: “Very positive. I very much like RTP. With the types of demographic the school teaches, it created an atmosphere of non-confrontational conflict resolution with students. The negotiation process is non-emotional. It removes it - the emotional aspect of it. It tries to help students see the choices they are making and how it impacts them.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 9: “It seems like a good approach. It worked for me as a classroom teacher. I used the RTP steps that were posted in my room. I used it as I was taught in the training to address negative behaviors.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10—Continued

**Question:** What has been your experience with the Responsible Thinking Process, commonly referred to as RTP?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educator</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 10</td>
<td>“I think it works well. It allows students to look at what they do vs. adults responding with knee jerk reactions to students acting out.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 11</td>
<td>“From my experience, it worked. It helped them to take a time out, reflect, and think about what they did for their misbehavior. It helped by making them see what they did. It helped level them off and check back in. One teacher I observed did a really good job with it to help them. This helped them to recognize what they were doing wrong. It helped me too.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 12</td>
<td>“My experience with RTP began when I was hired as a long-term sub for the 2nd half of the 2010-11 school year. That year, my exposure to RTP training was limited. Our school’s RTC Student Services Coordinator provided me a list of the questions, as well as some training. I initially felt uncomfortable using RTP, hoping that my bag of tricks for classroom management would be enough. The following summer, I participated in a more formal RTP training session. I committed more fully to RTP for the following school year and have been using it with fidelity ever since. I think it works for students.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As depicted in Table 10, educators viewed RTP positively overall. Educator 11 stated RTP helped students “recognize what they were doing wrong.” He further added that it had helped him, too. Other educators indicated the same. Educator 10 described how the program reduced adults’ knee jerk responses to student misbehaviors. Educator 8 indicated a similar response. This educator described the program as an opportunity to reduce emotional tensions between teachers and misbehaving students. Educator 8 further perceived RTP as a cognitive thinking process, which afforded students an opportunity to reflect on the impact of their choices. In their own ways, each educator indicated the process helped students and teachers to respond better in the school.

**Group B Perspectives on Classroom Usage, Classroom Instruction, Student Learning, and Student Behavior**

The initial impressions of all Group B educators indicated RTP had a positive and proactive effect on student thinking, behavior, and learning. Questions were embedded in
the interview to capture how the program was used, the role it played with instruction, and how influenced student learning. Group B provided rich responses to these questions. Minimal probing on behalf of the researcher was required. Group B educators appeared easy and comfortable in describing the benefits RTP provided for their students.

Four tables were created to illustrate their descriptions. Table 11 depicts Group B’s use of RTP in the classroom. Table 12 provides descriptions of the educators’ beliefs on how RTP affected classroom instruction. Table 13 delineates examples of RTP’s perceived impact on student learning, and Table 14 captures educators’ sense of how RTP affected student behavior.

Table 11

*Group B Perceptions of Classroom Usage*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educator</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 8</td>
<td>“I use it often. I use it to create trust with them. I use appropriate body language as I used it. It does help them understand their behavior and its impact with their long-term goals.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 9</td>
<td>“At first, I did look over some of the smaller infractions. As the year progressed, I addressed them more with RTP.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 10</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 11</td>
<td>“It was working and I saw the children were responding well to it. There were charts and cheat sheets created that helped you to use it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 12</td>
<td>“I use RTP whenever there is a behavior that is disruptive, disrespectful, dangerous, defiant, or the other “D” I can never remember. During classroom orientation at the beginning of semesters, I stress the DISRESPECTFUL one; however, I feel that any behavior that falls under one of the other categories ultimately comes back to respect for self and others.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 12

**Group B Perceptions of the Impact on Classroom Instruction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question: How does RTP impact classroom instruction?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I think that it definitely helps to increase classroom instruction. This classroom management program style gives time to teach. Kids are more engaged in their own learning.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It helped a lot. Using the RTP process eliminated the behavior problems.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It increases the ability for students to learn, because it allows for the misbehavior to be removed from the classroom. The teachers can then teach their lessons.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps: “It eliminates the Shh, Shh, be quiet, and you individually telling them to be quiet.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinder: “Sometimes you would lose your teaching moment by having to stop teaching to address them. It took time to get use the process. In the beginning it takes time away from lessons. This was an initial challenge for me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“This is the area I struggle with the most. Any disruption that requires the questions interrupts instruction. That interruption is lengthened with the addition of RTP. However, with use of RTP early in the school year, interruptions decrease throughout the semester, which I attribute to RTP.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I spoke to this a little bit in the last response, but I do feel it ultimately helps my ability to teach content, especially as the year progresses and a tone has been set with consistent the early usage of RTP.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 13

**Group B Perceptions of the Impact on Student Learning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question: How does RTP impact student learning?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They get a vision of why they should be learning. They take responsibility for their learning. They get used to asking objective questions.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It helped it. The students could rely more on the teachers to take care of the problems. They liked the fact that teachers would take time to take care of the problem so the rest of them could learn.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Students are learning more because the students that misbehaved have left class. Those that stayed are engaged with the lesson.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 13—Continued

**Question:** How does RTP impact student learning?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educator</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>&quot;It seemed like when you were doing the instruction it helped if you did the questions once with a student. It set the tone. They knew you meant business. You were able to teach your lesson. It removed the problems, too.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 12       | "Students who are truly committed to learning aren't the typical RTP "targets." However, they still benefit by having those other disruptions removed. Student learning comes as a result of a number of variables. RTP allows a fair avenue to turn the variables in favor of student learning, for those students who want to learn."

"A decrease in distractions will always lead to improved student learning. However, students who aren't interested in learning simply comply...they aren't necessarily complying for the sake of learning, but for the sake of not having to go to RTR classroom."

Table 14

**Group B Perceptions of the Impact on Student Behavior**

**Question:** How does RTP Impact Student Behavior?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educator</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 8        | "They have a deeper understanding for how their behavior will impact them if they continue to misbehave."
| 9        | "For the students who were getting good grades, I don't feel those students always benefited by RTP. However, I feel it may be that I wasn't always using it correctly with all students too. I was a new teacher with the RTP process. It worked well for minor behaviors. The negotiation/reflection process with students...I didn't take it seriously. I feel I didn't take enough time with that part of it. Others did a much better job with that part of it."
| 10       | "It adds a different level of thinking for those students who misbehave. It requires you to make choices about what you are going to be doing or not doing. With students who misbehave, it increases the amount of positive choices they make and decreases the intensity of their inappropriate behavior too."
| 11       | "Students know they needed to stop their misbehavior. They were required to reflect on their bad behavior. The process gave them words to talk about their behavior. They had time to reflect."
| 12       | "Undesired behaviors can be decreased significantly with a commitment to RTP. It targets those behaviors. Student behavior is definitely improved over time."

Example—cell phone use. "Early in the year, cell phones are constantly out as kids adjust to being in school again. With the use of RTP, those phone-related questions decrease over time, and as the year progresses, cell phones are seen much less often."
Table 11 presents Group B’s descriptions of their use of RTP, including how they used the program, as well as an acknowledgement of what they perceived were some of the benefits of using the program. For example, Educator 8, referring to students, stated, “It does help them to understand their behavior and its impact with their long-term goals.” To help further this aim, Educator 11 indicated that the school created charts and cheat sheets to assist the teachers with using the program.

Group B was asked to describe the impact the RTP program had with classroom instruction. Table 12 provided examples of educator descriptions. For example, included in Table 12’s narrative responses, Educator 8 stated, “I think that it definitely helps to increase classroom instruction.” Educator 9 added, “Using the RTP process eliminated the behavior problems,” and Educator 11 said, “It eliminates the Shh, Shh, be quiet, and you individually telling them to be quiet.” Although Group B expressed several benefits to using the program to positively affect instruction, they did express some reservations for the program’s use too. The dominant theme expressed was that RTP provided opportunities to proactively impact classroom instruction; however, educators indicated that those who are considering using the program should be willing to dedicate time at the beginning of the school year to train staff and students for it to work effectively. While they indicated this would result in a loss of instructional time with core academics, most felt the loss was minimal. In fact, they indicated the lost time due to teaching RTP actually produced more instructional time throughout the year. For example, in Table 12, Educator 12 stated:

“This is the area I struggle with the most. Any disruption that requires the questions interrupts instruction. That interruption is lengthened with the addition of RTP. However, with use of RTP early in the school year, interruptions
decrease throughout the semester, which I attribute to RTP. I do feel it ultimately helps my ability to teach content, especially as the year progresses and a tone has been set with consistent early usage of RTP.”

Group B clearly described how RTP’s reflective process supported an improvement with student behavior in the classrooms. As a result, explanations of how the program supported the students’ education ensued. RTP was acknowledged as a support, which provided enhanced teaching and learning opportunities for all students. For example, Table 13 illustrates Group B’s beliefs on the impact on student learning. Educator 8 indicated that students get a vision of why they should be learning and how they should take responsibility for their learning. Educator 9 stated that students could rely more on the teachers to take care of the problems. According to this educator, students appeared to appreciate the fact that teachers would take time to take care of the problem so the rest of them could learn. Educators acknowledged that RTP removed disruptive students from classroom instruction. They believed this positively affected those who were there to learn. For example, Educator 10 indicated that students are learning more because the students that were misbehaving have left class. Those that stayed are engaged with the lesson.

Group B described positive benefits for students that misbehave and have been removed from the classroom them too. For example in Table 14, Educator 8 stated that this process has provided for increased opportunities to develop a deeper understanding for behaving appropriately. Educator 10 added that it requires students to think about their choices and what they should be doing or not doing. This educator further noted that the RTP process has positively affected the numbers of students making better choices with their lives, as well as decreased the intensity of inappropriate behaviors.
Group B Perceptions of the Impact on Adult Thinking

Throughout the interviews, Group B identified how the process had improved student behavior, classroom instruction, and overall student learning. Additional questions were used to address perceptions of how the process affected adult thinking and behavior. Descriptions of their perceptions are included in Table 15. The dominant theme expressed by three of the five educators indicated that their behaviors directed towards students had changed too. The educators acknowledged that RTP’s process reinforced their ability to proactively respond to student misbehavior in the classroom. This resulted in educators addressing students differently with RTP. Using the process, they were less inclined to direct negative responses to students who were misbehaving. For example, noted in Table 15, Educator 9 stated,

It took the anger and feelings out of it. I think the teachers won’t want to admit they put their emotions in it. Sometimes, teachers do fly off the handle. The RTP process stops them from losing it. It was a huge self-reflection process. It required adults to reflect on how they could handle things.

Table 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question: How does RTP impact adult thinking and behavior?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 15—Continued

**Question:** How does RTP impact adult thinking and behavior?

Educator 11  “It gave you back control of the situation.”

Educator 12  “Our staff’s commitment to RTP creates a school-wide environment that revolves around respect and making the right decisions. RTP rubs off on the staff, when others see it being used. It reinforces your own use. I really enjoy seeing our office staff using RTP. Seeing RTP extend all throughout the school really shows how it can change not only a class culture, but the schools’ as well.”

**Group B Perceptions of Program Comparisons**

Four of five of Group B’s educators worked in educational systems prior to this school. Having used other disciplinary programs, these educators were able to provide program comparisons. They were asked to describe differences related to the disciplinary programs they had used throughout their teaching careers. Table 16 provides descriptions of their perceptions. These educators indicated the RTP program provided positive, consistent benefits for students. When asked if the program was more or less effective in the school setting than what they had used in their previous school, they all indicated the RTP process was more effective.

Table 16

**Group B Perceptions of School Disciplinary Program Comparisons**

**Question:** If you worked in another school setting, how would you compare the effectiveness of the program used within that school with what you now know of RTP? Please describe the differences.

Educator 8  “I have worked in two other schools. They did not use RTP. I believe RTP would be beneficial in any school. One of the schools, a private school, of which I had worked in had good families where kids were taught to respect authority. These kids learned responsibility at home; however, there were a few students that RTP would have helped them tremendously. Students in that school were sent to the principal’s office. The principal was an excellent administrator; however, the principal would assign a detention, have them write a paper, or require the student to call their parent. In that school, that was the worst punishment. Students didn’t reflect on what they were doing.”
**Table 16—Continued**

**Question:** If you worked in another school setting, how would you compare the effectiveness of the program used within that school with what you now know of RTP? Please describe the differences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educator</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 9</td>
<td>“The other school I worked in didn’t use RTP. I feel that schools that do not use a consistent process like RTP allow for chaos in their school. Schools need systems. There is no follow through or process. Schools that use RTP will benefit by using this process to address misbehaviors.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 10</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 11</td>
<td>“Different population of students, but I definitely think they could have used it. In public schools, I feel there are a lot of rules to address misbehavior; however, in other schools I found there was no consistency. At this school, RTP gave the teacher the consistency that made it effective.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 12</td>
<td>“The only other school setting I have been in was during student teaching. This middle school setting operated similarly with regards to the intent of RTP. Their goal was to harbor good decision-making. Misbehavior would be brought to the student’s attention, and after repeated misbehaviors, the student would be sent to the office; however, they didn’t have to reflect like RTP.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Group B Perceptions of RTP’s Impact on the School and Classroom Settings**

Educators were asked to further describe how the RTP process affected the school and classroom settings. Their overall responses indicated RTP had a proactive impact on students. In Table 17’s descriptions of how RTP impacted the school setting, a variety of their impressions were captured. For example, Educator 9 simply stated, “More effective.” Others elaborated with specific examples of how the program was more effective than what they had experienced in other schools. Additionally, Group B further described how they believed the program affected the classroom. Included in Table 18 are descriptions of Group B’s beliefs on the potential role and impact of the program in classroom instruction. Similar to the responses identified with school setting, Group B indicated the RTP disciplinary programs process positively affected classrooms more so than what they had experienced with other methods used in other schools.
Table 17

*Group B Perceptions of RTP's Impact on the School Setting*

**Question:** Would you say this program is more or less effective to address student misbehavior than what you experienced before in the school setting?

| Educator 8 | "At another school I worked, there was a variation of how we sent kids home. It wasn’t consistent. In that school small class sizes contributed to helping us with student engagement. We had up to ten kids per class. This made it easier for us to manage them. With the school we all do the same." |
| Educator 9 | More effective. |
| Educator 10 | N/A |
| Educator 11 | "There is consistency in this school, lunchroom, outside, hallways, etc. That wasn’t always the case in other schools I worked." |
| Educator 12 | "It honestly depends on the clientele. With students more inclined to comply, it was equally effective, as they wouldn’t want to be removed from class anyway. With students who aren’t concerned with complying, by calling out the behavior using RTP, they are given a chance to think about their actions. Over time, this can be more effective when and if the student finally buys-in and wants to change."

"I don’t see a big difference out of the classroom. I think before school, in between classes, and during lunch, students’ relationships with their peers take over much more so than in the classroom."

Table 18

*Group B Perceptions of RTP's Impact on the Classroom Setting*

**Question:** Would you say this program is more or less effective to address student misbehavior than what you experienced before in the classroom setting?

| Educator 8 | "More effective." |
| Educator 9 | "More effective." |
| Educator 10 | N/A |
| Educator 11 | "Yes, because of the consistency across the board. It is a great tool to address misbehaviors and get back to your instruction. At another school I worked, I felt like I fumbled a bit to figure out how to address misbehavior. With RTP I knew what to expect because it was consistent." |
Table 18—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question: Would you say this program is more or less effective to address student misbehavior than what you experienced before in the classroom setting?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 12 “In the classroom, RTP provides a level of consistency from one day to another. Without RTP or something similar, teachers run the risk of targeting certain behaviors one day, and then letting them pass others.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summative Results for Research Question 1**

Research question 1 focused specifically on the perceptions of two different groups of educators. The first group, referred to as Group A educators, were hired prior to the implementation of RTP and had knowledge of adult and student behaviors that affected the school’s culture of learning for that period of time. They were provided an opportunity to weigh-in on their perceptions of the school’s climate, both before and after the implementation of the program, why the program was chosen, and how they perceived its impact on adult and student behavior. The second group, referred to as Group B educators, was hired after the implementation of RTP. Their knowledge of school’s culture of learning was based on their lived experiences with the program already in place. Unlike Group A, Group B lacked historical background experiences with the culture that led to bringing RTP to the school; however, they have benefitted from the perceived effect Group A created with the implementation of RTP to positively influence student learning. As a result, it was important to denote each group’s perceptions regarding the factors associated with the successful use of the program.

Reviewing the data, four prominent findings appeared with both groups’ participant responses. First, all 12 participants thoroughly saw the value in the program and readily spoke to the positive impact it had on student behavior. In their own words, they provided
rich descriptions of how the program proactively changed student behavior. Their descriptions provided a multitude of examples whereby students were required to think, reflect, and recognize their transgressions.

Second, as a byproduct of student change in behaviors, adults recognized the benefits the program provided for students via its cognitive reflection process. Moreover, participant descriptions of their belief systems on how to address negative student social behaviors changed too. Some wished they had knowledge of the program earlier in their career. One described a sense of sadness for the students they served prior to RTP. Many continued to use the RTP process in other areas of life. Some had moved on to other schools, yet, they continued to use the tenets of RTP’s cognitive reflective processing. Clearly, as a result of school-wide improvements with student behavior, the 12 participants’ belief systems had changed.

The third finding for research question 1 was that student improvement in behavior along with a change in how the adults responded to negative behaviors had a positive impact on the school’s overall culture. The school’s culture, which was initially identified as toxic, chaotic, and out of control, turned around to one of students taking responsibility for their actions, with adults supporting them via a reflective learning process.

Finally, and most important, the data revealed an increase with instructional minutes per class. As a result of the improvement with student and adult behaviors, participants recognized and described how teaching time had changed too. Several perceived the increased number of minutes dedicated to teaching academics significant and noteworthy. Students benefitted academically as a result of this change. According to the participants, students produced better results on statewide assessments; specifically,
they acknowledged that the academic improvements supported in making adequate yearly progress (AYP), as defined by No Child Left Behind.

**Research Question 2**

2. Based on staff descriptions, what were the factors associated with the successful implementation of the RTP program?

Chapter II’s literature review identified six factors shown to influence the implementation process. These factors are depicted in Figure 7, Factors Present for Successful Implementation, and as shown consist of: (1) resources, (2) professional development, (3) local vs. state/federal mandates, (4) self-analysis (i.e., data reviews), (5) technical know-how, and (6) district and school leadership commitments. Participant educators in this research described their perceptions of the implementation process used to bring RTP to the school in relationship to these factors. Seven participant educators who were interviewed met the criteria of having this knowledge. Their descriptions were used to determine dominant and emerging themes for these findings. Interview Protocol A was used to gather their responses.

With regard to the implementation of RTP, a common theme expressed by staff was that the implementation of RTP was effective. Table 19 illustrates the factors needed for successful implementation. Included in the table are responses from the seven educators who were identified as a part of the original implementation of RTP. An “X” in the educator’s row in the following table indicates a strong affirmation that the factor was present. As noted in Table 19, seven of seven educators strongly identified with five of the six factors associated with influencing implementation efforts in schools in their responses. A “\" in the educator’s row in the following tables indicates a casual affirmation by the
participant that the factors had some influence with implementation. An “L” or an “S” was used to denote whether the RTP initiative was locally driven by the school or by some state or federal requirement.

As stated, educators identified the school’s culture prior to RTP as toxic. Additionally, they identified a need to finding solutions to resolve it. These seven educators agreed to have RTP be that resolution. To do so, worked collaboratively to ensure the implementation was effective. They were committed to making it work. They agreed to routinely meet to review data, discuss how to make it better, and participated in professional development within a variety of settings to ensure fidelity of implementation. A commitment to excellence was observed within their interviews. Table 19 summarizes the seven educators’ acknowledgments of each of the six factors denoted in the literature review in regard to having an influence on implementation.

Table 19

*Factors Influencing RTP’s Implementation: Emergence of Themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Professional Development</th>
<th>Locally Driven vs. State/Federal Mandate</th>
<th>Self-Analysis (Data Review)</th>
<th>Technical Know-How</th>
<th>District and School Leadership Commitments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>\</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>\</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 3</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>\</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 4</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>\</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 5</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>\</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 6</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>\</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 7</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>\</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Factors Influencing RTP Implementation**

**Resources**

As indicated in Table 19, seven of seven educators described various contributions of resources to implement the program. Several acknowledged the administration's continued commitment to address school culture as a component to support effective classroom instructional practices. They indicated that this support helped them to be successful with the implementation of the program. Additionally, six of the seven educators, as indicated in Table 20, described a variety of resources the school used to assist them with RTP’s implementation. The resources included time, which was set aside to receive professional development to learn more about the program and to discuss best practices on how to use it correctly within a variety of settings. Educator 5 indicated staff had summer trainings too. Acquisition of trainers to provide professional development, as well as the purchase of books and materials to assist with learning more about RTP was also noted. Educators 1 and 5 identified the school’s commitment and dedication of additional personnel to oversee the responsible thinking classroom too. Table 20 provides samplings of their descriptions as it relates to resources.

**Table 20**

*Resources*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educator</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“Administrations set aside time for us to work together to discuss how to make it work. There were books and tapes on how to use the program too. The school had a Student Services Coordinator to support the program. He played a key role in helping others see the results. He was our RTC person/teacher. He worked with students in the RTC room. We also had a leadership coach that helped us to get it going. There was an immediate impact in student change in behavior. It was somewhat of a miracle for us.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 20—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educator</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>&quot;There were weekly and sometimes bi-weekly staff meetings. Professional development occurred often. It helped us work out the kinks. The time to work together allowed us to practice doing it. We could see the results.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>&quot;The time to work together and look at how we were doing helped a lot. Staff had a constant forum to discuss issues during the implementation of RTP.&quot; (Once per week for 20 minutes after school)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>&quot;PD time that was set aside by the school during the summer to train helped me. These conversations and mock scenarios helped us all to understand it. The RTC teacher helped us a lot. He took the time to learn it and help us with understanding it.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>&quot;Time to work together was valuable. It gave us an opportunity to role-play. We learned a lot working together. The buy-in. Staff meetings dedicated once per week with role-playing scenarios. I do, You do approach.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>&quot;Working together helped us a lot. Implementation of RTP was difficult in the first couple of years just because it was a different way of thinking. However, having constant time set aside to learn and understand it helped tremendously.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Acknowledged within Table 20, educators described a variety of supports they believed assisted and contributed to their success with implementation. Throughout the interviews, educators described several perceptions they believed contributed to their successful implementation of the program. For example, they described having weekly meetings as a valuable resource. Weekly meeting times were provided to discuss, role-play, and receive additional professional development training on the program. Summer trainings were held too. In addition, the schools administration set aside a classroom for RTC. They also agreed to hire additional personnel to perform RTC teacher duties. Students who were removed from the general classrooms for misbehaving were sent to the RTC classroom to work with the RTC teacher. Students who are supported in the RTC classroom receive RTP’s tier two support. Books, DVDs, tapes, etc. were also identified as a resource.
Professional Development

According to the seven educators, initial buy-in for the work was in the majority, but not with 100 percent of staff. Total buy-in was developed over time. Continuous weekly professional development provided the staff with an opportunity to understand RTP and how it was affecting the school. Utilizing weekly meetings, staff discussed the impact on classroom instruction and overall student engagement to learning. During the staff meetings, staff analyzed school behavioral data and other anecdotal data to determine how RTP was working. This appeared to support their work. Educators indicated that peers regularly shared experiences, both successes and failures, regarding the program’s perceived impact on classroom instruction. Staff indicated this helped them to see and hear what others were experiencing. In addition, they identified role-playing scenarios as beneficial learning experiences for everyone. Table 21 provides descriptions that support this analysis.

Table 21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educator</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“Having time to talk about it helped us a lot. We met often to discuss the program and how it worked. Shared key stories of how it could work in staff meetings. Our Student Services Coordinator played a key role. He was our RTC teacher too. He helped us train with it. We talked a lot in staff meetings on how to make it work and what it looked like in another school. We went to other schools to see how it worked too.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“Continuous discussion, talking about scenarios in weekly/bi-weekly staff meetings. When we talked about it in our staff meeting, we solved the worst-case situations with students. This was a support. There was PD Time to work out the kinks. We practiced a lot. It helped us to see and hear results. The RTC teacher gave me individual support.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 21—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educator</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>“Consistency...it worked when we used it consistently and appropriately. Student behavioral referral sheets helped keep us informed on how it was working. Staff troubleshooting the program and role-played scenarios with other staff. There were many opportunities to work together to discuss and figure it out.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>“There was a lot of training on the program. These conversations helped us to figure it out. I attended PD training during the summer too.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>“The buy-in. Staff meetings dedicated once per week with role-playing scenarios. I do, You do approach. We discussed with them what happened in the RTP classroom. We discussed the negotiation part and how to do it well. This helped with implementation. Seeing success also helped. As we worked with the process, we learned more about it. This developed buy-in. We got better and better at using it. After we agreed to implement it, we all agreed to do it right.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>“It was easy to start to buy-in to the process knowing that students were learning, and not just showing up every day. Implementation of RTP was difficult at first, but the trainings helped us to understand and use it correctly.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similar to the positive influences educators identified with resources, all seven of the educators perceived they were provided with a variety of professional development supports. Table 21 provides samplings of their descriptions. Their descriptions acknowledge a plethora of professional development supports and trainings, which were provided to them. Overall, they were very happy with the support, and they talked at length about it. They indicated that the amount of support and variety of opportunities assisted them with their understanding of how to use the program. Although they acknowledged buy-in for the program was not initially 100 percent, they indicated it had improved overtime. Professional development was identified as a key facilitative factor that increased buy-in with all staff for the program.
Local vs. State/Federal

Six of the seven educators recalled the decision to bring RTP to the school as a locally driven decision led by the schools administration; however, one individual, Educator 4, recalled the fact that the state had applied pressure on the school to improve itself academically, thus forcing the locally driven decision to initiate change. Table 22 describes the educator’s recollection for the introduction of RTP as a local decision.

Table 22

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educator</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>“We were identified as a persistently low achieving, PLA, school because our kids were not learning ELA and Math that satisfied the state. State sanctions kicked in that required us to change. One option was to have a Leadership Coach assigned to our building. Coach worked with us to see our culture was chaotic. As a result, learning could not occur. The coach was able to convince the Director (Administrator) to work on culture. Coach and Director visited schools to see what others were doing that was working. They visited one rural and one urban school in Grand Rapids. The Director made a decision and brought it to us on what to do.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Self-analysis (Data Reviews)

The district’s commitment to professional development, including opportunities for staff to work together and data reviews, were identified as contributions to the school’s implementation process. Educators interviewed described seeing increased time on task in the classroom. According to the educators, individual self-analysis concerning success with the program, along with continuous school behavioral data reviews during staff meetings, contributed to the school’s success with implementation. Table 23 portrays staff descriptions with self-analysis and data reviews.
Table 23

Self-analysis (Data Reviews)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educator</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“We had a successful implementation. Staff no longer wanted to work in fear. It blossomed quickly. We looked at data often. Our RTC teacher showed us how it was working.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“We had a lot of mini meetings to discuss how to do it right. This helped a lot. We adapted it along the way to fit our needs. This helped us to be more effective. Teachers had opportunities to discuss what they were experiencing.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“We could tell it was positively impacting our instructional time. The percentage of teaching time went up an additional 40-50%.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>“Teacher talk in the meetings was helpful. We all were having success with it. “Very successful. Biggest indicator was time on task. We went from 20 to 55 minutes of teaching time on task in that first year.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>“In staff meetings, we would talk about it and the best way to resolve problems with it. Those staff meetings and discussions solidified the program. We had staff meetings once per week using the full hour on school culture and RTP. (Before school and on Wednesdays). Discussions on how to use the program helped us to implement it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>“There was success with it. During the time I was there it went really well. Teachers saw success. Academic learning went from 20 minutes to 40 minutes of teaching time very quickly.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>“It helped to practice it, watch others struggle with it, and watch others be successful with it. It really helped to watch the classrooms become areas of learning rather than chaos.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As noted in Table 23, seven of seven educators indicated the school regular utilized self-analysis as a factor to determine how they were doing with the program. Additionally, the times they worked together helped with understanding of the program, which assisted with their implementation too. One of the seven educators admitted that initially he did RTP “To keep my job;” however, opportunities with continued professional development, combined with the educator’s own self-analysis and reviews of school behavioral data.
during staff meetings contributed to his change in thinking too. Table 24 depicts this educator’s description with the educator’s transformation in thinking about the program.

Table 24

*Self-analysis (Data Reviews): One of Seven Staff*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educator</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2        | "Initially, I wanted to keep my job. I realized the school was going to use RTP. I knew using it or not would reflect on my evaluation. I wanted a job. So, I used it. However, I began to notice time on task for student learning improved too. So, my thinking about the program changed over time. I felt more confident with it as I used it and received training with it."

"I found that if you were very strict with the RTP process in the beginning with students, you could level off as time went by. I noticed time on task for instruction increased a lot."

"I think staff was cautiously optimistic. Initially, I think there were different levels of buy-in. A few staff were sent to another school that used RTP. Later that year, several attended a RTP mini-conference. As time went by, we were more comfortable with it because we saw time on task for learning increased. I felt more confident with it as I became more proficient with it too. It seemed to be more difficult for experienced teachers who had other ideas of what to do."

---

**Technical Know-how**

At times, the researcher noted staff perceptions with regard to leadership’s capacity to address the school’s culture. Overall, educators characterized the school’s leadership as collaborative, but at times top-down and directive. Educators acknowledged the administration’s willingness to find a resolution to solve the school’s cultural problems; yet, they freely expressed frustration with not being able to find solutions to fix it too.

Those who worked for the school for a number of years reported a number of attempts to address the toxic culture. Each attempt involved a different approach, which included several solutions to address student behavioral concerns. These programs of support, however, provided minimal improvements to the school’s culture. Also, collectively these educators acknowledged that there was a lack of understanding on how to address
problems correctly. They indicated there was administration commitment to address the problem, but they also perceived a lack of knowledge on how to proactively address it.

The above perceptions concerning leadership’s capacity to address the school’s culture reflect technical know-how. The factor technical know-how, describes knowing “who, what, where, when, and how” to do work effectively. For this school, educators described a lack of understanding with regard to technical know-how to effectively address the school’s culture. Although they acknowledged a lack of surety on how to address it, they agreed to work with outside support systems to assist them. To support their movement forward, the school’s leadership worked closely with their intermediate school district and retained the services of a leadership coach to broaden the scope of their understanding and work in order to proactively address their concerns. Of the six factors identified to have an influence on implementation, educators identified with this factor the least. Outside supports appeared to assist them with this particular area of influence instead.

**District and School Leadership Commitment**

The interviews produced rich discussions from the participants. Their responses were perceived by the researcher to be genuine and forthright, with a conviction to tell their story. Like their previous responses on the other topics associated with the factors shown to influence implementation, all seven educators spoke to the district’s and school’s commitment and leadership to address school culture to improve student achievement. Several of the educators described the staff trusting their administrator. According to them, the administrator, using his positional status accompanied by staff’s open frustration with the current school culture, encouraged the initial buy-in to use RTP. Specifically, this administrator used a staff meeting to review the school’s data, discuss what could be done,
consider the RTP program, provide an opportunity to ask questions, determine consensus, and move forward.

The overall consensus that came from that initial staff meeting was to try RTP. Table 25 provides examples of the administrator’s commitment to bring RTP forward as an idea for consideration, in conjunction with his ability to utilize effective cooperative leadership skills centered on data decision-making. Several educators openly expressed frustration with the current school culture. Additionally, some openly expressed a willingness to quit working for the school if student misbehavior was not addressed. During the interviews, frustrations emerged concerning the educators’ overall descriptions of the school’s culture, prior to the implementation of RTP, and knowing what to do to proactively address it. The participants described the impact it was having on student achievement.

Table 25

*District and School Leadership Commitment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educator</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1        | “I recall investigating a few different systems with the Leadership Coach. It was an Administration/Leadership Coach decision. It was not a lengthy decision. We then brought it back to staff to discuss it.”  
“Staff meeting/In-service day led by myself and the Leadership Coach. We had staff put on paper the top ten changes we would address if we could. Almost everyone said student behavior was the main problem.” |
| 2        | “Teachers were not a part of the initial selection of RTP. We got a crash course. We were provided index cards to carry around to help with memorizing the six questions. There were a number of books on RTP. We wanted to change the culture, but didn’t know what would work.” |
| 3        | “Administration was pushing it a bit. However, we all had a final say. We knew we needed to do something. Everyone was involved to select it after it was presented as a problem. School culture was problem and we all knew it. We didn’t pick the program, but we had a chance to say yes after it was presented to us. We were allowed to tweak it for our school too.” |
As illustrated in Table 25, educators described several examples of the district’s commitment to address frustrations with the school’s toxic culture. For example, Educator 7 indicated that some had threatened to leave if the status quo continued, and Educator 4 recalled one teacher saying they didn’t care what they used, but that they do something. Clearly stated, educators were stressed, but they agreed to work together for a common cause. Their collective unhappiness assisted with propelling them to move forward as an organization. One educator additionally indicated that their willingness to work together actually helped them to overcome issues along the way.

**Summative Results for Research Question 2**

Reviewing the data, the researcher acknowledges three important results related to implementation. First, it is clear that all six factors identified in the literature review as having an association with successful implementation of a program, were clearly evident in
my study. Analyses of the educators’ responses confirmed an association for each of the six factors identified in the literature review. Again, the six factors associated with successful implementation are illustrated in Figure 7 and included: (1) resources, (2) professional development, (3) local vs. state/federal mandates, (4) self-analysis (i.e., data reviews), (5) technical know-how, and (6) district and school leadership commitments.

Secondly, although all the factors were present, five of the six were strongly identified as attributes, which contributed to the success of implementation. The factor, technical know-how was not. The five factors identified as having a strong presence (i.e., resource availability, professional development opportunities, local vs. state decisions, self-analysis (data reviews), and district/school commitments) were often mentioned in their responses.

With regard to the sixth factor technical know-how, educators reported there was limited knowledge on how to effectively address the school’s toxic culture. The educators indicated that this lack of knowledge contributed to years of trying this or that to address negative student behavioral concerns. The factor district and school commitment appeared to further support the idea that there was a lack of knowledge associated with knowing what, when and how to fix the problem; however, the district’s and school’s commitment compensated for their lack of knowledge. In turn, solutions unfolded as they worked towards a resolution.

Lastly, no other factor beyond the six identified in the literature review was revealed with the successful implementation of this program. Overall, educators articulated the role that these six factors contributed to their success. They viewed the implementation of the RTP program as a success. The framework of six factors, based on a comprehensive
literature review, appears to capture the important factors for successful implementation of educational initiatives.

From a policy perspective, which will be discussed further in Chapter V, it is important to note that though the six factors associated with successful implementation of a program are necessary for success with a program, they may occur with differing levels of depth in the organization. For example, with this school, the educators admitted a lack of knowledge around technical know-how; regardless, the district and school’s commitment to address the problem appeared to support their lack of knowledge with technical know-how practices.

**Research Question 3**

3. Based on staff descriptions, what were the factors associated with the successful sustainability of the RTP program?

Chapter II’s literature review identified six factors shown to influence sustainability. To address research question 3, participant descriptions of the facilitative factors that contributed sustainability for RTP were analyzed. Twelve individuals were interviewed for this part of the research. Educators 1 through 7 were interviewed with Protocol A and Educators 8 through 12 were interviewed with Protocol B. Questions regarding sustainability varied between the protocols due to participants’ tenure with RTP. Group A educators were a part of the original implementation of RTP. Group B educators were not a part of the original implementation efforts to bring RTP to the school, but they have agreed to continue using the RTP process to address school culture.

The participants’ interviews produced rich and descriptive responses regarding the sustainability efforts of RTP. The overall sentiment depicted in their responses show an
association with several of the factors identified with sustainability; however, the two
groups provided differing perspectives regarding the sustainability efforts used to continue
RTP. The factors, as illustrated in Chapter II, Figure 8, included: (1) resources, (2)
consistency of effort, (3) commitment to excellence, (4) self-analysis (i.e., data reviews), (5)
coaching, and (6) conviction.

Educators made a variety of descriptions that suggested the factors associated with
sustainability existed. As indicated, the researcher noted variations in their responses
regarding the factors that influenced sustainability. Educators interviewed with Protocol A
perceived a stronger affirmation with more of the factors that influenced sustainability
than those interviewed with Protocol B. Table 26 illustrates the 12 participants’
acknowledgement of the factors that influenced sustainability of RTP. An “X” in the
educator’s row in the following table indicates a strong affirmation by the participant that
the factors influenced sustainability. An “\” in the educator’s row indicates a casual
affirmation. A “—” indicates the participant made very little to no affirmation that the
factor influenced sustainability. With regard to the coaching factors, a “P”, “S”, and an “A”
were used to signify if there were supports for parents, students or adults. Adults described
in the context of this analysis refer to staff assigned to work in the school. Table 26
summarizes the 12 educators’ acknowledgements for each of the six factors denoted to
have an influence on sustainability in the literature review. A sampling of educator
descriptions for each of the six factors for both Groups A and B follows.
### Table 26

**Factors Influencing RTP’s Sustainability: Emergence of Themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Interview Protocol A</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Consistency of Effort (Curriculum and PD)</th>
<th>Commitment to Excellence (Administrative and Instructional)</th>
<th>Self-Analysis (Data Review)</th>
<th>Coaching (Parent, Student, Adult)</th>
<th>Conviction (Enduring vs. Evanescent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>P, S, A</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>P, S</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 3</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>P, A</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 4</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>P, S, A</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 5</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 6</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>P, A</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 7</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interview Protocol B**

| Educator 8                       | X         | X                                        | X                                                           | —                          | P, S, A                           | X                                    |
| Educator 9                       | X         | \                                        | \                                                           | —                          | S, A                              | X                                    |
| Educator 10                      | X         | \                                        | \                                                           | —                          | P, S, A                           | X                                    |
| Educator 11                      | X         | \                                        | \                                                           | —                          | S, A                              | X                                    |
| Educator 12                      | X         | \                                        | \                                                           | —                          | P, S, A                           | X                                    |

### Resources

Twelve of 12 educators addressed the allocation of resources to the RTP initiative. There was a strong affirmation by all 12 that the school dedicated resources to support the RTP program within the school. The school’s dedication of resources has contributed to the sustainability of RTP since 2007. Several resources were mentioned in their responses. The school’s RTC teacher was indicated often. Many described this individual as valuable or
vital to the success of RTP. In fact, 11 of the 12 educators identified the RTC teacher as an identifiable resource for students and staff. Individual descriptions and perceptions of the school’s RTC teacher were highly favorable. They respected the RTC teacher’s support and work efforts. This, along with professional development training opportunities to receive support, was the dominant theme.

Table 27 illustrates examples of all 12 educators’ responses as it relates to resources. Included in the comments was discussion of an RTC staff assigned to work with the students, informal and formal discussions at staff meetings, professional development training opportunities that occurred at different times of the year, as well as books, DVDs, and other materials.

Table 27

*Resources*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group A</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 1</td>
<td>“The cost to do the program was minimal compared to what we got out of it. We had one staff member to oversee the program, as well as a room for them to do RTC. We purchased books and tapes and sent staff to trainings too. There probably was a cost for materials and staffs time to do the work, but other than that it wasn't too much.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 2</td>
<td>“Person to do the RTP job. Professional vs. Para-professional salary was paid to get a RTC Teacher. You also need a room for RTC. This room cannot be used for anything else. You need to dedicate time to teach staff the process.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 3</td>
<td>“Set aside time for PD. Regular discussion amongst teachers. Administrators provided ideas on how to use it, how it was working, and supported it. New staff watched videos on how to use the process too.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 4</td>
<td>“PD on RTP. Formal training at another school. Informal training - 20-minute staff meetings in each staff meeting. Cost of time. Resources fairly minimal except for full time staff member. Space for RTP room. Paper for student negotiation plans. Negotiation with teachers was during teacher time - 2 minutes maximum. Someone had to put data together to help staff understand where/how it was working or not...RTC Teacher”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 27—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group A</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 5</td>
<td>“One-hour weekly meetings. Support staff had additional PD with their peers. Teachers got PD - one day formal training. In house communication supported the process. RTC Teacher”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 6</td>
<td>“Buy books 1 and 2. Read them too. Consistency with staff increased buy-in. Consensus - having leaders that everyone respected. Having someone who is willing to use it and to answer questions. PD time for different groups to be able to meet/discuss and to learn. RTP coordinator.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 7</td>
<td>“Time set aside to professionally develop staff. Money to run the program. We had a staff member, who worked as the RTC teacher, who worked with the students.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group B</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 8</td>
<td>“On-going PD with new staff. Student Services Coordinator is our RTP teacher. He is vital! It would be hard to exist without him.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 9</td>
<td>“The Leadership Coach helped me. RTP teacher is a valuable resource.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 10</td>
<td>“RTC teacher. Professional development with students and staff. Support materials, like posters, that display the RTP process are displayed around the school. Books are available on RTP. We have videos on how to use the program effectively. Outside trainings at other schools. Staff attends these trainings during the summer and during the school year.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 11</td>
<td>“The school provided me a substitute teacher so that I could see it being used in other classes. Student Services Coordinator - RTC teacher. PD to use and understand the process. Meetings with RTP teacher to see modeling and role-playing. Individual PD with RTP teacher. PD outside of school too. Literature on RTP. School has created a manual to use the process. This helps to understand it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 12</td>
<td>“All staff’s rooms have the RTP posters clearly presented. We have easy access to the D5 forms. These forms help us to be able to use it.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Coaching**

Coaching, another factor addressed in the literature review, has been shown to influence sustainability. Coaching occurred both formally and informally within the school. Educators described role-playing, small group sessions, one-on-one trainings, and individual opportunities to observe others in their classrooms as providing them with
several coaching opportunities to learn RTP. The school’s administration also contracted with a leadership coach to support their work.

In addition to the support offered to teachers, educators described training and/or awareness opportunities for students and parents. These supports assisted students and parents with information on how RTP worked, the rationale for the program, and how it helped students educationally. These were viewed as coaching opportunities. Educators and students were used to formally and informally coach students and peers with the RTP process. Opportunities to learn RTP occurred in a variety of settings and formats. Educators in both groups identified opportunities for students to understand RTP. This included RTP training during whole-school student orientation group meetings, as well as individual class teacher trainings that included role-playing exercises. Older students, those with knowledge of RTP, were used as ambassadors to coach peers about the program. Additionally, the RTP process was transparent and posted throughout the school. Table 28 illustrates the educators’ perceptions of coaching opportunities for students.

Table 28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Group A</strong></th>
<th><strong>Comments</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 1</td>
<td>“There are visual reminders of the six questions, a help guide, and cheat sheets for staff to help them with the six questions. The new culture was easy to see. New students caught on rapidly. Current students were ambassadors of the program for new students (i.e., introduction to the RTP program, how it worked/what to expect). Adults were all agreeing to use it too.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 2</td>
<td>“New students adapted to the culture quickly. Existing students helped to set the tone. We use them as guinea pigs to show the new students what to expect.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 3</td>
<td>“They followed it. They knew what was expected and did it. Those that didn’t went to pasture.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to working with students and teachers, the school utilized opportunities to involve parents and provide them with knowledge of RTP. This included mandatory meetings with the school’s administration upon enrollment with the school, discussions with the RTC student services coordinator, student handbook, and the school’s website.
The interviews provided varying knowledge of what was done to support parents. Clearly, it was evident that the support to parents occurred at the administrative level. Teachers were not a part of this process. In fact, several were unaware of the details or that anything was being done to support parents. Table 29 illustrates the perceptions of staff regarding coaching opportunities for parents.

Table 29

*Coaching Opportunities for Parents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group A</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 1</td>
<td>“Parents were required to visit with the administrator when signing up their new student to attend the school. They needed to know what they were signing up for and agreeing to as a new student. RTP was introduced to them at that time. It is also on the school web site.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 2</td>
<td>“Open house to explain to the parents. Administrators explained it to them when they became students. They also addressed a plan to deal with frequent flyers.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 3</td>
<td>“Not really sure. Administration talked to students and parents...I think. Student Services Coordinator explained the process to parents...I think.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 4</td>
<td>“Orientation with new families. One-on-one interview with an administrator. It was in the handbook. RTP booklet was sent home to families.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 5</td>
<td>“I don’t recall ever addressing the parents.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 6</td>
<td>“We tried to include the parents. We had parent meetings. Some showed up. As kids went through the process, we really tried to keep the parents involved with knowing where their child was at with their minor infractions. The parents could see the completed student plans too - in a positive way.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 7</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group B</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 8</td>
<td>“At the beginning of the year a letter is sent home to the parents on what RTP was and how it was being used with students. Student Services Coordinator - RTP Teacher, worked with parents on some of the more specific details of RTP.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 29—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group B</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 9</td>
<td>“I don’t know.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 10</td>
<td>“Beyond the introduction/intake program for new students, we provide very little support. However, parents are informed of how the RTP process works when we call them to discuss their students’ misbehavior. Other than that, there is no formal method.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 11</td>
<td>“Good question...I don’t know, but I think it would be good knowledge for me to have as a teacher. Build the awareness for all.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 12</td>
<td>“RTP is outlined in our school handbook. It is explained at open houses/conferences.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Self-analysis (Data Review)**

Group A indicated they used staff meetings to discuss how they were doing with RTP. For them, looking at data occurred often, especially early on with the implementation of the program, as noted by Educator 1. Educator 2 stated that this helped him to be more effective. Self-reflection in particular helped them to move forward. It also shed light on where RTP was working or not. Through this process, the successes with the program were evident. As a result, this motivated them to continue with the program. Table 30 provides further examples that support this analysis for Group A.

Table 30

**Self-analysis (Data Reviews)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group A</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 1</td>
<td>“We looked at how we were doing often. We noticed we were having success. The data supported our thinking. The RTC teacher showed us how it was impacting kids.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 2</td>
<td>“We had a lot of mini meetings to discuss how to do it right. This helped a lot. We adapted it along the way to fit our needs. This helped us to be more effective.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“This helped us to look at what we were doing and it provided opportunities to discuss what others were experiencing.”
Table 30—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group A</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 3</td>
<td>“As I mentioned, we could tell it was positively impacting our instructional time. The percentage of teaching time went up an additional 40-50%.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 4</td>
<td>“Teacher talk in the meetings was helpful. This helped us to see how we were doing. We were able to recognize our success with it. Very successful. Biggest indicator was time on task. We went from 20 to 55 minutes of teaching time on task in that first year.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 5</td>
<td>“The meetings helped me. In staff meetings, we would talk about it and the best way to resolve problems with it. Those staff meetings and discussions solidified the program. We had staff meetings once per week using the full hour on school culture and RTP before school and on Wednesdays. Discussions on how to use the program helped us to implement it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 6</td>
<td>“Teachers saw success. Academic learning go from 20 minutes to 40 minutes of teaching time very quickly. Staff meetings to look at how we were doing helped me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 7</td>
<td>“We practice it often. We looked at how we were doing it too. It helped us to practice it and watch others struggle with it. It was nice to hear how others were having success with it, and watch others be successful with it.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Group B educators did not respond to the factors self-analysis, as shown in the summary column of Table 26. Consequently, a corresponding table was not used here in this section. Minimally, or not at all, did educators in Group B describe opportunities to look at data or complete a self-analysis of how the school was doing with RTP. As the researcher, it was clear to me there was a conviction, or maybe even a requirement for these educators, to use RTP as the school’s program to improve school culture.

As stated, professional development related to RTP was provided; however, opportunities to view others using RTP was sporadic and not made available to everyone. Staff meetings were increasingly being dedicated to other things. An effort to review data appeared to be becoming a thing of the past. Staff turnover was a relevant concern, thus, there was an attempt to train new staff with RTP; however, the number of trainings as well
as the rich discussions surrounding the usage and rationale for the program was slowly reduced overtime. To this researcher, it appeared that the school had moved on to other things to address academic concerns.

To summarize, the knowledge base of understanding why RTP, how to use RTP correctly, and how it positively affected student thinking, learning, and behavior appeared to be subtly diminished as the program continued over time. This researcher thus identified that Group A had a deeper understanding of RTP's overall program of support than Group B.

**Consistency of Effort**

With regard to the factors consistency of effort and commitment to excellence, educators often described instances of the two as one thought. Their responses and perceptions of the school’s consistency of effort and a culture that embodied a commitment to excellence indicated a relationship existed between them.

Group A identified RTP as a main school improvement goal. This group was a part of the original implementation of the program. They responded at length as to why they wanted the program, what they wanted to achieve with it, and how they went about working together to use it. Group B, not a part of the original implementation, did not have a learned opportunity to experience the culture prior to RTP. Their perceptions of the school’s rationale for the program and the efforts used to support consistency varied from their Group A peers.

An analysis of Group A and B’s responses in Table 31 provides examples of how Group A perceived professional development to be required, more often, and within a variety of settings that involved informal staff meetings, as well as formal professional
development opportunities. The trainings were held during the school year and during the summer. Educators also had opportunities to visit other schools to see the program working and speak to the school staff in that school.

Group B acknowledged a conviction, if not an expectation, to use the program; however, their responses did not include some of the strongly worded affirmations given by Group A. For example, Group A Educator 1 indicated the school was committed to RTP, and that RTP was a frequent topic of discussion in their staff meetings. Further, Educator 1 described numerous opportunities to learn about RTP, and to be trained correctly on the program. Educator 3 indicated staff knew what was expected by administration. Moreover, Educator 2 described RTP as the administration’s first focus; that is to get the school culture corrected. RTP therefore became a requirement for all. Training was available, and it was often. Educator 1 indicated the director ensured RTP was a frequent topic of discussion. Educator 1 indicated that the RTC teacher helped too. Educator 7 indicated there was a lot of professional development.

Educators 8 through 12, Group B educators, indicated a slightly different perspective on consistency of effort and commitment to excellence. Educator 9 indicated they did not have enough training. Educator 10 cited having periodic training on RTP once every two months. Educator 12 stated new staff received training, although Educator 12 didn’t recall any formal training for himself. Table 31 provides further examples of the perceptions these two groups had regarding consistency of effort and commitment to excellence to sustain the program. Due to the fact these two factors are intertwined, participant responses are included together.
Table 31

Consistency of Effort and Commitment to Excellence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group A</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 1</td>
<td>“As I said, the Director ensured RTP was a frequent topic of discussion in staff meetings. They wanted to “Keep it Fresh.” To do so, there were a lot of trainings on the program. The RTC person helped too. He kept us on track.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 2</td>
<td>“We all agreed to use the program. Administration made it a point to use the process correctly. This helped a lot in the beginning. Turn over of staff happened a lot in the school. Training on RTP kept us all working together. This has helped with consistency too.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 3</td>
<td>“Administration helped - staff knew what was expected. I went to two day training two times with returning/new staff. Constant discussion on how it worked. It became expected that you use it. Student Services Coordinator worked with new staff to help them understand it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 4</td>
<td>“We read about it, saw it, did it, and got feedback. This loop kept it alive and provided support to use the program. We wanted to do it correctly.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 5</td>
<td>“There were weekly one-hour staff meetings. How we were doing with student behavior was a regular topic of discussion.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 6</td>
<td>“We had a lot of success with the program. Discussing how we were doing each week kept us motivated. We saw the results. We enjoyed the trainings on it. It allowed us to understand how it worked and go deeper with it too.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 7</td>
<td>“Administration ensured there was a lot of time for professional development. As I said, it happened often. Trainings were mostly informal, but we had formal training too.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group B</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 8</td>
<td>“New staff received training on RTP. The RTC teacher was the Student Services Coordinator. The RTC teacher did a lot of the informal trainings. He was responsible for the education of the program. I think we had online modules too.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 9</td>
<td>“Personally, I don’t think enough was done to train new staff. I could have used more time with PD on RTP. Although we did discuss it often in staff meetings. I could have benefitted from more RTP training. As a new teacher I received one formal day of training on it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 10</td>
<td>“We had periodic PD once every two months.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group B</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 11</td>
<td>“I wasn’t always sure how to use it correctly. Teachers did role-play with each other during our staff meetings. They modeled how to use the process. The school also supplied me a sub so that I could see others using it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 12</td>
<td>“New staff was trained by the RTC supervisor/teacher. I don’t recall there being many formal trainings.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Commitment to Excellence**

As illustrated in Table 31, both Groups A and B denoted consistency of effort and commitment to excellence examples within their responses. They acknowledged the leadership’s willingness to use the program, as well as the professional development opportunities that were provide to support them. Group A’s educators did identify with having more opportunities, along with a greater variety of types than Group B’s educators. As a result, their understanding of why they selected the program, how it worked, and what they needed to do to make it work was evident. Group B educators were not a part of the implementation, were not a part of the original thinking to bring the program in the school, and appeared to lack some of the deeper knowledge and appreciation for the program that Group A’s educators had indicated in their responses. At present time, Group B’s educators have agreed to use the program; however, their use of the program in relation to its intent could be changed overtime to be something other than Ed Ford’s Responsible Thinking Process.

Program fidelity is critical for the success of RTP in schools (Ford, 2004). Books, DVDs, and professional development are some of the resources available to school leaders that want to implement RTP as a student management behavioral process. It is an understatement to say that a school improvement is complex. According to Ford (2004),
merely buying a program or instituting a process to improve schools, sounds simple; however, if buying a program, watching a DVD, and attending a workshop were all that we had to do to improve schools, we would have improved education a long time ago. To effectively implement a program like RTP, school leaders and staff need to be committed to excellence. To do so, they must address three critical factors:

- Instructional leadership (principal and team);
- Becoming a true learning organization; and
- Developing effective professional learning communities.

Professional learning communities must be developed so that staff can work together to implement the program with fidelity. It is important to note that a program like RTP will not by itself improve the instructional core of a school. For a school improvement program to be effective, those involved should address how they plan to implement and sustain the work overtime. According to Ford (2004), change could affect the sustainability of the program’s purpose and viability long term. An analysis of the two groups provides differing perceptions with regard to consistency of effort and commitment to excellence. For example, whether knowingly intentional or not, overtime the type of professional supports have changed. Opportunities to receive both formal and informal professional development support have changed. This may or not have an impact on the long-term intended purpose, fidelity, and sustainability of the program.

**Conviction (Enduring and Evanescent)**

Both Groups A and B confirmed conviction as one of the dominant factors associated with having an influence on sustainability. To these participants, the emergence of the
factor conviction contributed to the presence of other five factors. Table 32 provides examples for each of the groups’ perceptions regarding conviction.

Table 32

Conviction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educator</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator 1</td>
<td>“Administration ensured RTP was a frequent topic of discussion in the staff meetings. “Keep it Fresh” We read books on it, watched training videos about the process, discussed how it was functioning in classrooms, and continued to send new staff to RTP trainings. We ensured there was a RTP point person too, to keep us all on track.” “Time, money for materials, and trainings for staff contributed to keeping it going.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 2</td>
<td>“Administration required staff to use the process. They set the tone. Administration’s first focus was to make sure that new staff knew the process. Staff turnover can be an issue. Some staff stayed on and you need to get new staff on board. There have been only two RTP coordinators during this period of time. This has helped with consistency too.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 3</td>
<td>“Administration helped - staff knew what was expected. I went to two day training two times with returning/new staff. Constant discussion on how it worked. It became expected that you use it. Student Services Coordinator worked with new staff to help them understand it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 4</td>
<td>“Having a champion - person who carries the banner that RTP is what we do. Having the read about, see it, do it, and get feedback loop kept it alive.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 5</td>
<td>“Administration required weekly one-hour staff meetings. Student behavior and RTP was a regular topic of discussion.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 6</td>
<td>“Administration set aside time for weekly sessions with time blocked out for RTP. Five to 20 minutes depending on the situation. This would lead to deeper discussions about the process. Going to training in the fall helped me too.” “Just having so much success with it helped the teachers want to do it. Keeping people motivated was a key point the 1st year and half for them to keep doing it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 7</td>
<td>“Administrations ensured time for professional development regularly occurred with staff. We also used peer staff to teach new staff the process.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Groups A and B acknowledged there being a school-wide conviction to address the school’s culture. Using an interview protocol that allowed for open-ended conversations on questions, educators spoke freely and not always within the context of the question. Often, their answers took them in a variety of ways. Doing so, they often unknowingly mention one or more of the factors shown to influence sustainability for each of their answers.

Reviewing the data in Table 32, both groups provided perceptions regarding conviction for the work. Additionally, both Groups A and B identified with affirmations for conviction by their school’s administration. For example, Group A’s Educator 5 stated, “Administration required weekly one hour staff meetings,” whereby RTP was a regular topic of discussion. Educator 6 further clarified that the weekly staff meetings blocked out
five to 20 minutes to discuss RTP dependent upon the situation. Educator 5 indicated that this allowed them all an opportunity to go deeper with their understanding of RTP. Group B educators also acknowledged conviction too. For example, Educator 10 indicated the administration set aside time for training. Additionally, Educator 11 indicated the administration provided a substitute teacher for their class so that they could watch peers use the process in their rooms.

**Summative Results for Research Question 3**

A summary of the data for sustainability reveals several key findings. First, all of the participants indicated they used RTP, expressed satisfaction with it, and were able to describe what helped with using the program. Moreover, an analysis of their descriptive responses revealed all six factors identified in Figure 8 of the Chapter II literature review (i.e., (1) resources, (2) consistency of effort, (3) commitment to excellence, (4) self-analysis (i.e., data reviews), (5) coaching, and (6) conviction) as having an association with the successful sustainability of the program. This was clearly evident in the study. Furthermore, no other factor beyond the six identified in the literature review was revealed as having implications for the successful sustainability of the RTP program.

Second, resources and self-analysis, which were identified in the literature review as necessary factors for success with both implementation and sustainability of a program, were shown evident in the analyses of both implementation and sustainability in this study. The second result also revealed, however, that not all six factors needed to be strongly evident to have success with implementation. The factor conviction appeared to mitigate a lack of knowledge associated with knowing what, when, and how to fix the problem in the school’s culture, along with variances of existence for the other factors too. In turn,
solutions unfolded, and the participants were able to work towards resolutions. Clearly the factor conviction supported varying degrees of existence for the other five factors.

Finally, the third finding was indicative of participants’ descriptions of the factors conviction, commitment to excellence, and consistency of effort. These three factors revealed important subtleties. With regard to sustainability of the RTP program, conviction for the RTP program was perceived strongly by staff; however, their commitment to excellence said otherwise. Participants described fewer professional development opportunities as compared to corresponding years. Furthermore, participants provided examples of the new administration’s attempt to make programmatic changes.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Increased levels of accountability such as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, reduced funding to educate students, and increased societal costs associated with at-risk student estrangement from school are a few signifiers of the need for this research study. The 12 educators interviewed for this research all viewed the RTP process as a successful program initiative that had shown to have a positive impact on the school’s culture, which has led to increased student outcomes on state assessments. Additionally, educators identified with experiencing all of the factors associated with implementation and sustainability as indicated in the literature review.

The results of this research analysis are important for all educators. At-risk student behavior in school poses concerns to society as a whole. Students who misbehave have an increased likelihood of involvement in crimes, which leads to incarceration. According to (Stewart, 2003):

Criminologists have long studied the relationship between school-related factors and delinquency. A variety of these school-related factors have been consistently linked to delinquent behavior, commitment to school, involvement in school, attendance at school, school social bonds, and a schools climate. (p. 1)

Purpose of the Study

The intent of this study was to understand how the RTP program affected one alternative secondary school in northern Michigan. Why and how the staff selected the program, how they implemented it, and what they have done and continue to do to support RTP as their school-wide initiative to improve school culture is important to others who
might consider using it. Participants of this study reported that prior to the implementation of this program, students routinely struggled with appropriate responses about how to behave and solve their problems, both in the classroom and school setting. This led to disciplinary violations, many of which led to student suspensions from school. Teachers were keenly aware of the need to proactively address student misbehavior. In fact, many participants indicated they tried several approaches to encourage students to behave prior to the RTP initiative; however, they found little success with other interventions.

The participants of this study indicated that use of RTP resulted in significant and positive changes in their school’s culture. The researcher, therefore, was able to gain an understanding of participants’ perceptions of the role RTP played in affecting student and adult behaviors, and how this in turn affected student learning. In particular, the research explored how the initiative was implemented and what has led to the program’s effectiveness and sustainability many years later. Again, the program was viewed a success by everyone interviewed. The 12 educators interviewed for this research believed RTP played a role in improving the school’s culture, which in turn led to increased student achievement on state assessments, as well as improvement in core academic content areas.

Summary of the Findings

The RTP program is a reflective process student disciplinary program, which requires students to proactively address their thought processes while addressing the negative impact of their misbehavior. To complete an analysis of how the program affected the school, the researcher examined the perceptions of two groups. The first group, Group A, consisted of those who worked prior to and after the implementation of RTP. They had knowledge of the school’s culture prior to RTP, why they chose the program, how they
implemented it, and how they sustained the program. The second group, referred to as Group B, was not part of the original implementation of RTP and lacked experiences with the school’s culture prior to RTP, but have continued to use the program to proactively improve the school culture. The subsections below present the results of the research questions used to fulfill the purpose of this study.

**Research Question 1**

1. What were the staff members’ descriptions of disciplinary issues before and after the RTP intervention?

   As the researcher, I noted several big ideas from the findings for research question 1. First, all participants spoke eloquently in support of the program. They provided clear descriptions as to the relevance and impact it had on the school's culture. For them, RTP was described as a lever to improve the school's culture.

   Secondly, educators understood the change in school culture was a byproduct of the changes in student and adult thinking around their behaviors. Their descriptions provided examples of how student behaviors were different, as well as how and why the adults now addressed student behaviors differently too.

   The final finding, as a direct result of the other two findings, provided examples of how improvements in instruction in the classroom were made as a result of RTP. Specifically, participants indicated that time on task, associated with an improvement with minutes per class, led to increased opportunities for student learning. This, according to participants, led to annual improvements with the school’s statewide student assessment results.
Research Question 2

2. Based on staff descriptions, what were the factors associated with the successful implementation of the RTP program?

An analysis and overall summary for research question 2 provided three overall summary findings. First, the six factors identified in the literature review were confirmed in this research. Additionally, no other factor was found to be relevant outside of the six. The six factors associated with success with implementation are: (1) resources, (2) professional development, (3) local vs. state/federal, (4) self-analysis (i.e., data reviews), (5) technical know-how, and (6) district and school leadership commitments.

Second, it is possible to have all six factors present, yet not equally present. For example, participants acknowledged a lack of skill around the factor technical know-how. However, the factor district and school commitment appeared to mitigate a lack of knowledge associated with knowing what, when, and how to fix the problem. As a result, strength in the district and school commitment factor compensated for skills lacking in technical know-how.

Finally, the third major finding of this study was that schools could improve regardless of having a strong association with the factors associated with implementation. Critically speaking, more likely than not, schools will provide support for the six factors at differing levels within the organization. Yet, success with implementation can nevertheless be achieved as long as there is district and schools commitment.

Research Question 3

3. Based on staff descriptions, what were the factors associated with the successful sustainability of the RTP program?
A summary analysis for research question 3 produced three key findings. First, all factors associated with sustainability were clearly evident. The six factors for achieving sustainability were: (1) resources, (2) consistency of effort, (3) commitment to excellence, (4) self-analysis (i.e., data reviews), (5) coaching, and (6) conviction. No additional factors were evident in the participant responses. Included in the participant responses were a plethora of examples whereby their perceptions supported the existence of the six factors.

Second, with regard to the six factors associated with successful implementation and sustainability of this program, the participants perceived that the factors resource and self-analysis were important for both implementation and sustainability. Participant descriptions included evidence that the resources for and self-analysis of their work made the implementation of RTP possible, which in turn provided support for the sustainability of the program. Equally important, participants were able to describe the impact of these two factors.

As with implementation, the third major finding for sustainability revealed that all six sustainability factors were not equally presented in the analysis. The factor conviction, however, appeared to mitigate a lack of knowledge associated with using the program. Participants provided examples whereby a lack of program knowledge existed with newly hired peers; yet, they have been able to move forward as a result of overall conviction.

**Overall Summary**

There are three major points that need to be highlighted from this research study. First, one could reasonably determine that the RTP program has had a positive influence to be a lever for change to improve school culture. Participants articulated changes with student and adult behaviors, which led to an overall improvement with student attention to
academic learning. Therefore, from the perspective of educational change, the study provides an image of the possible for successful educational change. It dispels the myth in educational change that the more we change, the things remain the same, and that we have to reform again, again, and again.

Second, the factors associated with successful implementation and sustainability of a program were confirmed with this research study. Additionally, no other factors were shown to be present in this analysis. In other words, based on the literature and my empirical study, it seems that we have good frameworks of factors related to successful implementation and sustainability. Successful implementation and sustainability relies on a set of important factors.

Finally, differing levels of involvement for the factors associated with implementation and sustainability were evident. However, this research indicates variations can exist so long as there is a strong affirmation for the factor district and school commitment for doing the work.

Behind the combination of the factors for successful implementation and sustainability identified in this study is the commitment to school renewal. Staff turnover will happen, technical know-how will be vague at the beginning and needs to be strengthened along the way, even high-level leadership will experience turnover, but all of these obstacles can be overcome with commitment. This illustrates the need to go beyond the reform model, which is simply to employ a so-called “research-based” or “evidence-based” practice, and to move toward the renewal model, which advocates a dynamic learning process to ensure successful implementation and sustainability.
In the following section, I will discuss the implications of these three major findings for educational policy and practice, with a particular focus on educational change. I will draw upon both my professional experience and the empirical findings to develop this discussion section.

**Discussion**

**An Image of the Possible: A Case of Successful Implementation and Sustainability of Educational Change**

From a personal perspective, I have worked as a teacher, school principal, leadership coach, and as senior executive leader for several school districts during the course of my 19-year career. Doing so, I have experienced the educational system from a variety of perspectives, which is inclusive of school districts in Arizona, Michigan, and Florida. During those years, I have witnessed vast attempts to implement programs and strategies to support student achievement.

Generally speaking, school improvement goals are the same. Educators want to improve upon what is perceived to not be working, or at the very least, they want to make it better. As the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction for 18,000 students in my district, this researcher has seen first hand observed the daily commitments of teachers, principals, school and district employees, and volunteers have for students. Clearly, adults have good intentions.

Likewise, as a point for discussion, participants’ interviewed for this research provided numerous examples of their commitment to improve this school. In addition, they identified changes with student and adult behaviors, which they found improved their school’s culture. To that end, these improvements allowed for increased opportunities with instruction and student learning in this alternative secondary school. Moreover, the 12
educators positively perceived the RTP program. Passionately, they described a plethora of examples with student success.

As stated in Chapter I of this research, chronic student misbehavior normally leads to negative school discipline consequences such as probation, suspension, and expulsion. These types of punitive discipline methods have contributed to an estrangement from school (Adams, 1992). As a result, students are more likely to fall behind because they miss invaluable classroom instruction and are often subjected to “labeling” wherein adults interact with them differently. The use of the RTP program is a movement away from traditional negative school disciplinarily consequences, to one that proactively holds students and adults accountable for their behaviors.

From the perspective of everyday practice, this study provides a clear example of successful educational change. In the face of staff turnover, this school has had setbacks. More than 90 percent of the staff has turned over during the six-year analysis of this study. Yet, they continue to sustain the program years later with different staff, all the while students are continuing to achieve and have success. Successful educational change is possible. For this school and the community it serves, students attending this alternative secondary school are benefitting from their efforts. They are a beacon of light reflecting what can be done when there is commitment to action, which is associated to the factors identified with successful implementation and sustainability of a program.

The Systematic Approach to Implementation and Sustainability of Educational Change: Paying Attention to Multiple Factors

The RTP program, by itself, will not work. People make programs work. Implementation and sustainability factors are as critical as the program itself. Interestingly, during the course of my review of the literature, I noted very few instances whereby
researchers reported on the implementation and sustainability efforts of a program. What I observed was that research analyses, more often than not, confirm or disconfirm the effectiveness of a program. Essentially, the research analyses typically report outcome findings.

My study acknowledges 12 participants' perceptions of the RTP program. All 12 indicated there were positive changes in both student and adult behaviors. So, beyond the program itself, what else contributed to their success? An analysis of their implementation and sustainability methods concludes that the processes used for putting the program in the school and how they have kept it going for several years, are associated with the factors identified in the literature review for successful program implementation and sustainability, respectively.

From a practitioner's perspective, the RTP program has shown to be a powerful reflective process, which has supported positive student and adult outcomes in this school. Furthermore, this study acknowledges that there are six factors, identified in the literature review for implementation and sustainability that have shown to be important and relevant for those considering school improvement efforts. Their existence varied, but all were present. School leaders should take note of this analysis. Successful program implementation and sustainability efforts should be inclusive of the factors identified in this study.

**Moving Toward the Renewal Model: A Proposed Paradigm for Educational Change**

For eight years in my career, I served as an educational leadership coach for school transformation and turnaround. Considered a leader, I supported more than 25 different school organizations. No one school or district was alike. Each displayed areas of strength,
but each school also displayed areas for growth. Let’s face it. Staff will turnover. People retire, move on, or experience health related concerns or death, which prevents them from continuing to work. Bottom line, educational change is constant and ongoing. Likewise, the schools that I have worked in addressed educational change differently.

The best thing I learned from my work as a leadership coach is that we all have facilitators and barriers that can potentially assist or debilitate our efforts for school improvement. Too often, I hear educators looking for research-based models to improve their schools. For many, the silver bullet lies with having one or more so called evidence-based program models in the school. They believe success will happen if they entertain implementing another one.

Nevertheless, those that have worked in schools long enough with tell you loud and clear that these new programs will come and go. You will hear them say, “Trust me I have seen it before. Just sit back. This one will be gone too. Just wait you will see. Been there done that.” All too often, many have become jaded with educational change efforts. There is no one program associated with improved student achievement. Research clearly shows that it is the teacher, not the program that makes the difference in regard to student achievement and success. However, there are research-based leadership practices that have been identified to ensure that student achievement is not just another thing we do, but that it is about improving what we do for the betterment of student success.

Schools use a variety of programs to support student success. Programs are like recipes. Recipes are a makeup of ingredients. Collectively, the combined assortment of ingredients plays a role in the overall smell, taste, and texture of the food. Similarly, those looking to put a program in place to improve their school must also incorporate the
effective processes provided in this study to accomplish it. These processes must be inclusive of the factors associated with successful implementation and sustainability of programs. This study illustrates that although the program is important, the process of implementation and sustainability have shown to be even more important.

Shen and Burt’s (2015) recent work with school renewal illustrates the differences between two models for school improvement. The Research, Development, Dissemination, and Evaluation (RDDE) process, which is representative of school reform that is considered to be top-down, linear, and with a strict adherence to goals, was shown in their study to not be as effective as the Dialogue, Decision, Action, and Evaluation (DDAE) process for school renewal. The DDAE process, referred to as the Renewal Model, is one whereby school improvement is not a prescriptive process. Instead, this process is non-linear and implemented by those who are embracing it. There is creative tension with this style of school improvement. In fact, both internal and external tensions are to be expected in the renewal model. It is organic. The factor district and school commitment, associated with success with implementation, and the factor conviction, associated with success with sustainability, supported the DDAE process in this school. The participants’ descriptions supported their school improvement effort as being non-linear, non-prescriptive, with the existence of both internal and external tension. Additionally, these two factors appeared to mitigate variances of weakness associated with the other factors.

The participants in this study reported that RTP was implemented with fidelity in this school. There were creative internal and external tensions involved with the implementation of the program. Equally important, the participants described a lack of technical-know-how; yet, they were active participants with the implementation of the
program to solve their own lack of understanding. As a result, the process for implementation was non-linear, and described as organic. They learned as they went along. Their descriptions support Shen and Burt’s (2015) research and findings for successful school improvement efforts, which utilize attributes identified in the Renewal Model.

Included in Chapter two’s review of the literature are sections dedicated to characteristics of effective leadership practices. Similar to Shen and Burt’s work, Reeves (2009) indicates that leaders need to assess their own, and their organizations, willingness to change. Failure to do so could end up being a waste of time and resources. Reeves indicates that their must be a heightened level of individual and organizational commitment in order to impact school improvement. The value and desire to do the work will hold them back or move them forward. Commitment is vital for school improvement. This research supports that summation too.

Patterson (2003) also indicated that leaders should develop a deeper understanding of their staffs’ belief systems. Doing so validates who they are and what they value. Identifiable values define both individual and collective staff commitments. With regard to school improvement, and what was revealed in the literature review, conviction is the degree to which an organization will respond to challenges, be willing to tackle hard to address problems, and be willing to look at the lack of success when trying to improve. The importance of commitment, which was identified by Patterson, was evident with RTP’s implementation and sustainability efforts.

Furthermore, a review of what was learned during the literature review illustrated that effective leaders possess certain traits. McEwan (2003) identified ten traits leaders possess. Of the ten, the envisioner is defined as one that is focused on the vision for what
can be. With regard to school improvement, they are committed. They display conviction and tenacity. McEwan identified nine other traits; however, conviction, which was found to be the most important factor with this research analysis, was presented in Chapter II’ review of the literature.

From a policy perspective, to ensure success with school improvement efforts, school leadership should be made aware of the characteristics associated with effective leadership practices, which were identified in Chapter II. Staff should receive professional development, along with being provided a deeper understanding of the Renewal Model. Doing so ensures a greater likelihood of success for implementation and sustainability of programs.

Finally, a summation of the key characteristics identified provided the researcher with guidance that led to the identification of the six factors associated with successful implementation and sustainability that were used in this analysis. The six factors identified for effective implementation included: (1) resources, (2) professional development, (3) local vs. state/federal, (4) self-analysis (i.e., data reviews), (5) technical know-how, and (6) district and school leadership commitments, while the six factors for achieving sustainability included: (1) resources, (2) consistency of effort, (3) commitment to excellence, (4) self-analysis (i.e., data reviews), (5) coaching, and (6) conviction.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This researcher would propose three important recommendations for future studies. First, further studies should be done to confirm the factors identified in the current study. Rather than a discipline program, future studies could address academic content areas, being curricular or instructional in nature. Future studies would then be able to
validate whether similar factors are associated with successful implementation and sustainability for programs other than discipline. Additional studies should be conducted to investigate the relationship among the six factors for implementation and sustainability, respectively. It would be particularly interesting to inquire into whether there is a hierarchical relationship among the factors.

Second, researchers should conduct prospective studies using the factors associated with successful implementation and sustainability identified in this study to guide an educational change initiative, as well as to study the effectiveness of the educational change initiative. Doing so would again provide further evidence to validate the factors associated with successful implementation and sustainability.

Third, this study is qualitative. Quantitative studies could be completed to investigate whether the extent to which factors are present is associated with the level of success in implementation and sustainability. Quantitative studies provide a different perspective, which could further validate the factors identified in this research.

**Concluding Remarks**

It is time for us to evaluate best practices from educational research and to transfer them to the school and district level. Student misbehavior has an impact on us all. How we address students who misbehave has real implications, which transcend to all areas of society. The RTP program’s reflective process and its impact on student misbehavior have shown to be a positive impact on this high school’s culture. Educational change in this area is sorely needed, but we have to pay attention to both the content of the program and the process by which we plan to incorporate the educational change process.
This study acknowledges the RTP program as a lever for changing school culture. More importantly, it recognizes the factors associated with successful implementation and sustainability efforts. It acknowledges the existence of these factors and provides further guidance for educational change. We have much to learn. Further research could potentially validate these findings, and provide further insight into other aspects of schooling, such as curricular and instructional programming.
REFERENCES


Appendix A

Interview Protocol
Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol A for Staff Involved with Original Implementation

Initial Questions – Prior to RTP Implementation – Student Behavior

1. I am interviewing you today because I am interested in how the Responsible Thinking Program, RTP, has impacted your school. Please think back to before the implementation of RTP and describe the general state of student behavior in the school (give time for response).

   Probe: Please describe how students behaved in the classroom.

   Probe: If you had to sum up the school’s culture during that time, how would you describe it?

   A. During the time before implementing RTP, how was student misbehavior addressed by:

      a. School administration

      b. Classroom teachers

      c. Support staff?

   B. What do you feel was working or not working to positively address the school’s culture before implementing RTP?

2. Now, let’s talk about how RTP came to be implemented in your school.

   Please describe what you remember about how RTP was implemented as a school-wide initiative.

   Probe: How do you remember the decision making process that led to adopting RTP?
Probe: Who was involved in the decision and how did those who led the decision-making process engage or involve staff?

Probe: How would you describe the level of staff buy-in initially...as time went by?

Probe: What stands out in your memory that led to staff buy-in and/or helped achieve implementation?

Probe: How successful would you say the implementation of RTP was in the first years? As time went by?

Probe: What either hindered or helped achieve successful implementation?

3. It has now been seven years since RTP was implemented in your school. In your most recent experience in the school, how would you describe the status of the RTP program in the school?

A. How is/was your school different after the implementation of RTP?

Probe: Do you think RTP impacted adult thinking and behavior – if so, how?

Probe: Do you think RTP impacted student thinking and behavior – if so, how?

Probe: Do you think RTP impacted student learning – if so, how?

Probe: Do you think the school culture changed after implementing RTP – if so, how?

B. In your time at the school, what was done to sustain the RTP program?

   (i) staff

   (ii) students

   (iii) parents
(iv) resource allocation

Probe: What either helped or hindered sustaining the program?

Interview Protocol B for Staff Hired (After) the Implementation – Responsible for Keeping it Going

Initial Questions – After RTP Implementation – Student Behavior

1. I am interviewing you today because I am interested in how the Responsible Thinking Program, RTP, works in your school. As you are aware you were not a part of the original discussion to implement this program in your school. Your knowledge of the program is based upon your experiences using it. I am interested in documenting your perceptions with this program. What has been your experience with the Responsible Thinking Process, commonly referred to as RTP? (give time for response). How do you currently use it in your classroom? How would you describe the current level of use in your school?

   Probe: Please feel free to be descriptive with your impressions.

2. How would you assess RTP as an initiative to impact:

   (a) Classroom instruction

   Probe: How does it help or hinder your ability to teach your content?

   (b) Student learning

   Probe: What has been the impact on student learning?

   (c) Student behavior

   Probe: How would you describe the impact on student behavior?

   (d) Adult behavior

   Probe: How has this initiative impacted how adults respond?
3. If you have worked in another school setting, how would you compare the effectiveness of the program used within that school with what you now know of RTP?

   Probe: Please describe the differences.

   Probe: Would you say this program is more or less effective to address student misbehavior than what you experienced before?

   (a) in the school setting

   (b) in the classroom setting?

4. To this point, questions have been asked regarding your perceptions of the RTP program as the lever to address student culture. The school has now used the RTP program for seven years. Why do you believe the school continues to use the process to address student behavior?

   Probe: What are reasons you continue to use the RTP program?

5. How does the school address sustainability of the RTP program with:

   (a) staff, (b) students, (c) parents, and (d) resource allocation.

   Probe: What either helped or hindered sustaining the program?
Appendix B

Informed Consent Document/Invitation to Participate
You have been invited to participate in a research project entitled “Using RTP (Responsible Thinking Process) as a Lever for Improving School Culture: A Case Study of an Alternative Secondary School’s Implementation of RTP.” This research is intended to study how RTP was used as a lever to improve school culture in your school, the implementation process used, and how the staff has sustained it over time. This project is the dissertation project of Andrew D. Rynberg, a Doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Leadership.

This case study is qualitative in nature. You will be asked to respond to questions defined in an interview protocol for this research. The interview will last between 30 to 60 minutes in length, with Andrew Rynberg. The interview will be conducted in person or by telephone. You will be provided the interview protocol questions in advance. The first part of the interview will be to get to know you, your role within the school, duties performed, years in education, level of education, and tenure with the RTP process. The second part of the interview session you will be asked questions identified in the interview protocol.

As in all research, there may be unforeseen risks to the participant. If an accidental injury occurs, appropriate emergency measures will be taken; however, no compensation or treatment will be made available to you. In addition, you may at any time remove yourself from this research project for any reason. You may also have your responses removed for this work.

As an individual, you may benefit from this activity by having the chance to talk about your work with the RTP process. You will also have the opportunity to review the research analysis that comes from this work, to continue your growth and support for this process. What others think about the RTP process, how you have all supported it, and how you continue to sustain it overtime should validate your efforts as a staff.

All of the information collected from you is confidential. That means your name will not appear on any papers on which this information is recorded. The forms will be coded with alias, and Andrew Rynberg will keep a separate master list of those who participated and their respective alias’s and responses. Once the data is collected and analyzed, the master list will be destroyed. All other forms will be retained for at least three years in a locked file in the researchers possession.

You may refuse to participate or quit at any time during the study without prejudice or penalty. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact Andrew Rynberg at 231-450-0013. You may also contact the Research Compliance Coordinator at 269-387-8293, or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298 if questions or problems arise during the course of the study.
Your signature below indicates that you have read and/or had explained to you the purpose and requirements of the study and that you agree to participate.

Participant Printed Name: ___________________________

Signature of Participant: ___________________________ Date: _______________

Consent obtained by researcher: ______________________ Date: _______________

Andrew Rynberg
Appendix C

HSIRB Approval
Date: December 11, 2014

To: Jianping Shen, Principal Investigator
    Andrew Rynberg, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: Approval not needed for HSIRB Project Number 14-12-19

This letter will serve as confirmation that your project titled “Responsible Thinking Program” has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB). Based on that review, the HSIRB has determined that approval is not required for you to conduct this project because you are analyzing a program and not collecting personal identifiable (private) information about an individual.

Thank you for your concerns about protecting the rights and welfare of human subjects.

A copy of your protocol and a copy of this letter will be maintained in the HSIRB files.