2008

Leading change: the role of the principal leading school improvement through implementation of the Iowa Professional Development Model

Pamela Armstrong-Vogel

Iowa State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/rtd

Part of the Curriculum and Instruction Commons, and the Educational Administration and Supervision Commons

Recommended Citation

Armstrong-Vogel, Pamela, "Leading change: the role of the principal leading school improvement through implementation of the Iowa Professional Development Model" (2008). Retrospective Theses and Dissertations. 15790.

https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/rtd/15790

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Iowa State University Capstones, Theses and Dissertations at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Retrospective Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.
Leading change: The role of the principal leading school improvement through implementation of the

Iowa Professional Development Model

by

Pamela Armstrong-Vogel

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Education (Educational Leadership)

Program of Study Committee:
Barbara L. Licklider, Co-major Professor
Joanne Marshall, Co-major Professor
Gary J. Ratigan
Mack C. Shelley II
Carl R. Smith

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
2008
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

| LIST OF FIGURES                  | vi  |
| LIST OF TABLES                  | vii |
| ABSTRACT                        | viii|

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION
- Context for Reform
  - A Nation at Risk
  - No Child Left Behind
  - Changing the context
- Professional Development and School Reform
- Landmark Legislation- the Inception of the IPD Model
  - What leaders are expected to know
  - The changing paradigms and roles of leaders
- Second-Order Change
- Requirements of Educational Leadership
- Statement of the Problem
- Implementation of the IPD Model
  - Process to determine implementation of the IPD Model
  - Data that demonstrates IPD Model implementation
- Purpose and Rationale
- Significance
- Delimitations
  - Site selection
  - Description of site
- Limitations
  - Researcher involvement
- Definition of Terms

## CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW
- School Reform and Accountability Systems
  - Loose coupling
  - Key factors in school reform
  - Professional learning for staff
- Rationale for the IPD Model
- Foundations of the IPD Model
- Operating Principles of the IPD Model
- Components of the IPD Model
  - Collecting and analyzing student data
  - Goal setting
CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY 62
Methodological Approach 62
Qualitative research 62
Philosophical framework 63
Context and Interpretive Research 64
Trustworthiness 67
Transferability 67
Dependability 68
Confirmability 68
Credibility 69
Case Study Design 71
Study Participant 72
Study Setting 74
Data Methods 76
Interview data collection and analysis 77
Observation data collection and analysis 79
Document data collection and analysis 82
Ethical Considerations and Researcher Obligations 89
Summary 91

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS 92
Collection and Analysis of Student Data—IPDM 1 93
Goal Setting—IPDM 2 96
Selecting Content—IPDM 3 99
Designing Process for Professional Development: Creating the Plan—IPDM 4 103
## Training/Learning Opportunities—IPDM 5
- Time for theory, demonstration, and practice 104

## Collaboration/Implementation—IPDM 6
- When leadership teams meet 109
- How collaboration is organized 111

## Ongoing Data Collection: Formative Data—IPDM 7
- Formative reading assessments 114
- SSR program data 116
- Teacher implementation data 118

## Program Evaluation: Summative Data—IPDM 8
- Ongoing Cycle: Reviewing the Process—IPDM 9 122

## Operating Principles of the Iowa Professional Development Model: Focus on Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment—IPDM 10 127

## Participative Decision Making—IPDM 11 134

## Simultaneity—IPDM 12 138
- Multiple approaches to improve reading 139
- Other simultaneous elements 140

## Leadership—IPDM 13 142
- Affirmation—McREL 1 143
- Change agent—McREL 2 146
- Communication—McREL 3 150
- Contingent rewards—McREL 4 154
- Culture—McREL 5 156
- Discipline—McREL 6 159
- Flexibility—McREL 7 161
- Focus—McREL 8 165
- Ideals and beliefs—McREL 9 169
- Input—McREL 10 176
- Intellectual stimulation—McREL 11 179
- Involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment—McREL 12 182
- Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment—McREL 13 185

## Monitor/Evaluate—McREL 14 189
- Optimize—McREL 15 193
- Order—McREL 16 194
- Outreach—McREL 17 198
- Relationships—McREL 18 201
- Resources—McREL 11 205
- Situational awareness—McREL 20 210
- Visibility—McREL 21 216

## Emerging Themes
- Time factor 220
- Competing initiatives 223
  - Additional content areas 224
  - Behavioral issues 225
  - Teacher preparation 226
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Iowa Professional Development Model 16
Figure 2. Data Coding for Categorization 87
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. The gap between what leaders know and what they do 59

Table 2. Code Mapping—Levels of Categorization and Analysis of Data 86

Table 3. Percentage of High Plains Middle School students scoring at proficient or above levels on Iowa Tests of Basic Skills for 2006-2007 123

Table 4. Areas of Strength—IPD Model Components and McREL Responsibilities 241
ABSTRACT

In 2004, all accredited public schools in Iowa enacted a research-based program to increase student achievement. The Iowa Professional Development Model has outlined a sequence of steps that those in schools should follow. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover and understand the behaviors and practices of one school principal in a high-implementation school as he worked with a staff using the Model. Understanding how a principal led staff as the Model was implemented should help to inform others regarding the development of capacity and new knowledge and skills that are needed by those in schools.

Data were collected that related to the behaviors and practices demonstrated by the principal during implementation of the Model. Data included observations of professional development sessions, leadership team meetings, principal interviews, document analysis, and field notes.

In this dissertation, the IPD Model was the process used to first code the principal's actions and behaviors. Leadership responsibilities were further defined through the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) meta-analysis research study, as all 21 principal responsibilities have been identified as unique behaviors that represent important knowledge, skills, and practices for principals to emphasize to positively impact student achievement.

This study found there were 16 specific practices and key factors enacted by the leader which contributed to the teachers’ implementation of research-based practices and professional development. A principal needs to be able to help colleagues understand how school improvement can be integrated into the building and provide the supports necessary.

As the research was conducted to gather data on the principal’s behaviors and practices, additional data were revealed that showed the IPD Model and McREL research do not encompass all of the issues with which school leaders contend. These issues generally cannot be addressed solely by the principal, but rather are systemic issues that require collective efforts.
Professional learning that results in student achievement is challenging for those who view school improvement as an externally initiated reform. Implementation of the Model can be done effectively when the principal plays a key role; however, it requires highly effective leadership.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Professional development is at the center of the practice of improvement. It is the process by which we organize the development and use of new knowledge in the service of improvement...We are now at the stage of understanding that schools and school systems have very different responses to pressure for performance, depending on the knowledge and skills embodied in their teaching and administrative staffs, their capacity to create a strong normative environment around good teaching, and their ability to muster and manage the resources required to begin the long process of raising the level of practice. (Elmore, 2002a, pp. 32-33)

In recent years, education has come under scrutiny and pressure with more accountability being demanded from schools. Like other public and private organizations in society, the expectations are that those who work in schools should be able to demonstrate what they contribute to the learning of students and engage in continuous professional growth and improvement of practice and performance over time.

Context for Reform

A Nation at Risk

In 1983, the seminal call for school reform, A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education), declared that the nation was at risk because of education’s steady decline. The report quoted that “for the first time in the history of our country, the educational skills of one generation will not surpass, will not equal, will not even approach, those of their parents” (A Nation at Risk, April 1983, Section, ¶ 17). Public attention shifted focus to a crisis of low academic expectations, mediocre instructional practice, and intrusive foreign competition.

One of the recommendations from the report was for citizens across the nation to “hold educators and elected officials responsible for providing the leadership necessary to
achieve these reforms” (A Nation at Risk, April 1983, Recommendations section, ¶ 1). The report went on to say that:

Principals and superintendents must play a crucial leadership role in developing school and community support for the reforms we propose, and school boards must provide them with the professional development and other support required to carry out their leadership role effectively. The Commission stresses the distinction between leadership skills involving persuasion, setting goals and developing community consensus behind them, and managerial and supervisory skills. Although the latter are necessary, we believe that school boards must consciously develop leadership skills at the school and district levels if the reforms we propose are to be achieved. (A Nation at Risk, April 1983, Recommendations section, ¶ 2)

By the mid-1980s, the movement in public education was for greater flexibility and less regulation of schools and school systems in return for more tangible evidence of results, primarily in terms of student achievement (Elmore, 1997).

No Child Left Behind

Under the more recent No Child Left Behind (NCLB) federal law (2002), schools have faced even greater and more stringent accountability. Some policy analysts and reformers have argued that public school districts are dysfunctional institutions that lack the capacity to lead, design, and implement needed improvements (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Hess, 1999; Hill & Celio, 1998). As anxiety about the performance of schools has become more public, a number of schools have instituted well-intentioned approaches for reform to increase student achievement. New accountability ideas have been introduced; however, not all are based on sound or comprehensive knowledge regarding how to improve (Fullan, 2005). In general, schools have been attempting to comply with the federal law by providing evidence of student learning to parents and community while dealing with sanctions for low performance. However, these actions by themselves do not fix school problems. As Elmore
(2000) points out, a big part of the dilemma is that those in schools often do not know what specifically is required from them to be able to fix the problems (p. 20).

According to Elmore (2000) and Fullan (2005), traditional teaching methods taught in classroom settings that lack collaboration between teachers and departments, combined with management style leadership, make schools less able to respond to diverse student populations with increased academic needs. Schools have an urgent need to demonstrate increased learning for more, if not all, students. New capacity and actions are required for change and improvement to occur (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Elmore, 2000; Fuhrman, 1999; Fullan, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2005; Schmoker, 1999, 2006).

**Changing the context**

Fullan (2005) says if context is everything,” then changing systems means changing the context within which people work (p.16). He reports that for schools to improve the entire system must demonstrate a shift from traditional teaching and learning to one that identifies the specific needs of the students it serves. Isolationist teaching must become collaborative. Curriculum and methods must be communicated and aligned with the goals for student learning. Leadership should shift from one of management to that which is instructional. To understand how to manage this new way of doing things, educators throughout the organization would demonstrate abilities to work in a unified manner. Fullan (2005) states that this entire context is a significant change from how schools have functioned historically.

Gladwell (2000) identified context as “the ‘tipping point’…the power of context says that what matters is the little things”, such as creating a community where new beliefs can be
practiced and nurtured so that people’s behaviors change (p. 150). Gladwell believes that when traditional ways of school operation make way for systemic changes to benefit learning for all, big changes occur. Helping people to change behaviors in this new context requires support and assistance that is ongoing and non-threatening. Interaction within and across levels must be both increased and purposeful for support and knowledge to be shared.

Abelmann, Elmore, Even, Kenyon, & Marshall (1999) state that “a strong normative environment inside the school, based on a belief in the capacity and efficacy of teachers and principals to influence student learning, coupled with the knowledge and skill necessary to act on those beliefs are prior conditions necessary to the success of strong external accountability systems” (p. 44).

Improvement occurs by raising the capacity of key relationships in the instruction core, simultaneously increasing teachers’ knowledge of content and their knowledge of how to connect the content to specific students (Cohen & Hill, 2001). There is no other way to enhance capacity than by investing in the knowledge and skill of teachers and students to do the work of learning (Alsbury, 2004; Corcoran & Lawrence, 2003; Desimone, Porter, Yoon, & Birman, 2002; Elmore, 2000, 2002c). Therefore, the school and the institutional structure that surrounds it should be used as a mechanism to deliver resources and supports to teachers and students to enhance learning. Schools should become places dedicated to adult and student learning (Elmore, 2000).

**Professional Development and School Reform**

As school leaders facilitate the improvement of instruction, professional development that affects teaching practices is fundamental to the reform effort (Corcoran & Lawrence,
As professional development aligned to the needs of the staff is planned, there are barriers to consider and moderate in the quest for improvement. As demands for research-supported staff development have increased, resources to schools have continued to decline (Alsbury, 2004). Also, few school districts historically have treated professional development as part of an overall strategy for school improvement (Elmore, 2002d). These fundamental issues are ones with which school leaders must contend as staff development is constructed.

Also essential for staff development is inclusion of the criteria in the *No Child Left Behind Act* (2002), which defined professional development as activities that:

- Improve and increase teachers’ knowledge of the academic subjects the teachers teach, and enable teachers to become highly qualified;
- Are an integral part of broad school-wide and district-wide educational improvement plans;
- Are high-quality, sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused in order to have a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction and the teacher’s performance in the classroom; and are not one-day or short-term workshops or conferences;
- Advance teacher understanding of effective instructional strategies that are scientifically-based research; and strategies for improving student academic achievement or substantially increasing the knowledge and teaching skills of teachers. (*No Child Left Behind Act*, Title IX, Sec. 9101 [34])

Each of these elements requires a broad paradigm shift for educators who have perceived staff development as either an individual activity or not relevant to the process of comprehensive school improvement (Iowa Department of Education, 2002, 2005a, 2005b)

As schools embark upon a collective professional development focus that relates to student population needs, the question becomes: What professional development content and design will affect significant learning for teachers and, consequently, their students? Elmore
(2002a) explained professional development as “the set of knowledge and skill building activities that raises the capacity of teachers and administrators to respond to external demands and to engage in the improvement of practice and performance” (p. 13). Professional development is effective only to the degree that it engages educators in large-scale improvement. This is the process by which external demands are translated into structures, processes, norms, and practices (Elmore, 2002a).

Determining how schools vary in their response to large-scale improvement is strongly associated with existing school and teacher capacities, which helps to grow the entire school organization through the internal workings of the system (Fuhrman, 1999). Elmore (2000) writes that incorporating building-wide professional development necessitates focusing directly on the capacity issue—on teacher competencies that affect improvement efforts. “We transform dysfunctional relationships into functional ones, not by continuing to do what we already know what to do more intensively and with greater enthusiasm, but by learning how to do new things and learning how to attach positive value to the learning and the doing of new things” (p. 19).

Studies suggest that more highly focused forms of staff development targeted specifically to address what is lacking for educators in a school and aligned with the learning needs of the students in that particular site may be the only type that result in change to teachers’ instructional practices (Alsbury, 2004; Desimone et al., 2002; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001). This research concluded that the staff development must be driven by the goals for student learning established by the organization, and the staff development design, context, and content must be driven by identifying knowledge and skills needed by staff. Teacher and administrator knowledge and skills can be enhanced with increased interaction across all levels and incorporation of new beliefs.
School personnel respond to accountability more successfully as they remove or dispel the barriers associated with staff development and integrate the criteria for professional development as outlined in NCLB (Joyce & Showers, 2002). Accountability systems seem to be most effective when multiple measures are used when there is involvement by those in the school who are affected, and when appropriate resources and support systems are provided for staff development (Thomas, 2000).

Accountability for increased student learning requires multi-faceted, somewhat complex processes that involve both teachers and administrators, and a commitment of adequate time and funding to support the proposed changes (Elmore, 2000, 2003; Fullan, 2005; Joyce & Showers, 2002). This requires a focus on specific goals for each particular school based upon the deficits that appear in student achievement data and providing teachers with the skills and knowledge needed to teach and help students to meet higher learning standards. These are the foundations of research-based professional development that impact school improvement (Iowa Department of Education (DOE), 2002, 2005a, 2005b). These same foundations led to the conception of the Iowa Professional Development Model (IPD Model).

**Landmark Legislation- The Inception of the Iowa Professional Development Model**

In May 2001, the Iowa General Assembly passed legislation that identified professional development as a key component of school reform in Iowa (Iowa Administrative Code SF 476). As stated in Senate File 476, the intent of the Iowa General Assembly was to create a student achievement and teacher quality program to acknowledge outstanding
teaching as a key component in student learning and success. The Student Achievement and Teacher Quality Program (SF 476) was designed to increase student achievement through focusing and supporting the improvement and acquisition of the knowledge and skills of teachers through professional development. The program aligned with the expectations outlined in NCLB (2002), which required public schools to implement research-based professional development programs.

The Student Achievement and Teacher Quality Program, legislated by the Iowa General Assembly, required the Iowa Department of Education (DOE) to identify career development practices for teachers that produced a link between professional development and improved student learning. This program set standards for planning, providing, and evaluating this professional development for Iowa’s teachers.

In order to help Iowa schools to implement quality research-based professional development that met the requirements of NCLB, the Iowa Professional Development Model (IPD Model) was created. From 2001-2003, Dr. Beverly Showers, a national expert in school improvement efforts, along with an Iowa stakeholder group that represented the various educational state agencies, met to plan the Model aimed at accelerating student achievement.

The IPD Model, also referred to as the District Career Development Plan (DCDP), is a research-based school improvement process that focuses on improving student learning by engaging all teaching staff, including both teachers and principals, in collective professional development (Iowa DOE, 2002, 2005a, 2005b). The IPD Model was developed to provide guidance to local school districts to use when designing, implementing, and evaluating professional development. It was also designed to guide and
support the training of teachers in aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment to increase student learning, primarily by increasing peer collaboration.

The Iowa DOE has required the inclusion of the IPD Model as a part of the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP), as it is aligned with research that supports effective professional development as the key to school improvement (The Student Achievement and Teacher Quality Program, 2001). The IPD Model provides guidance to schools by establishing a cycle for implementing district and school-wide professional development and related practices to accomplish gains in student achievement by addressing district student achievement goals (Iowa DOE, 2002, 2005a, 2005b).

The IPD Model has been proposed for the State of Iowa for several reasons. First, the legislature’s intention was that professional development supports “best teaching practice” to increase student learning in all areas. Both the Iowa Student Achievement and Teacher Quality Program legislation (2001) and the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) specify the use of research-based content to increase the probability of increased student learning. As reported in the Literature Review in Chapter 2, the IPD Model has identified that its elements have this research-base. Secondly, student achievement most frequently results from schools’ collective focus on specific student learning outcomes (Elmore, 2002a; Fullan, 2001b; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Schmoker, 1999, 2006; Slavin, Madden, Dolan & Wasik, 1996). The IPD Model is designed as a structure for school professional development and improvement efforts operating under the umbrella of district goals and leadership.
What leaders are expected to know

The research currently lacks an evaluation of how the IPD Model is being implemented in Iowa schools. According to Marzano, Waters, & McNulty (2005), reforming a system necessitates that leaders monitor and evaluate the system, demonstrate knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and provide teachers with the necessary staff development opportunities that will directly enhance their teaching. Leaders must also help establish high, concrete goals and expectations for all students and, at the same time, provide teachers access to one another within the system to work through problems and learn from one another’s solutions (Zmuda, Kuklis, & Kline, 2004). All of these elements relate to leadership and are included in the IPD Model.

The changing paradigms and roles of leaders

Danielson and McGreal (2000) state that a major part of school reform and restructuring involves the changing roles, responsibilities and relationships between teachers and students and between teachers and administrators. Collaborative decision making, participatory management, consensus strategies, and school improvement practices demand that educators rethink common views of professional development and be willing to break away from more traditional views of evaluation. Successfully linking these areas requires that monitoring and evaluation systems be aligned to the mission of the district, be viewed as a continuing process, emphasize student outcomes, receive adequate resources, and employ school leaders who have a deep understanding of teaching performance as well as techniques and procedures for assessment of instruction (Iowa DOE, 2002, 2005a, 2005b).
According to the Office of Public Instruction in Washington, DC (cited in Shannon & Bylsma, 2004), effective leadership is at the core of improved school districts. Leaders in improved districts were described as dynamic, united in purpose, involved, visible in schools, and interested in instruction. They provided encouragement, recognition, and support for improved student learning (p. 8).

In these same improved schools, change was viewed as a long-term multi-stage process and improved districts were either provided or brokered high quality professional development programs that were intensive, ongoing, focused on classroom practice, and included on-site coaching. Districts focused their support for professional development based on the teaching and learning needs of the school. Professional learning communities were developed and supported to build teacher knowledge and skills and to change instruction across the system.

Complex issues inherent in school improvement require educational leadership that responds to the demand for accountability and large-scale improvement (Donaldson, 2006; Elmore, 2000; Fullan, 2001a, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2004; Marzano et al., 2005; Reeves, 2004a, 2006). School leaders need to master skills associated with productive planning and implementation of school improvement plans (Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Schools best prepared to respond are those with strong principals willing and able to nurture and develop a common vision (Abelmann et al., 1999).

According to Elmore (2002a), professional development is at the center of school improvement; it is the process by which one organizes and uses new knowledge in the service of improvement. At the same time, it is essential that professional development be connected to clear and specific district and building goals for student achievement to
increase. In order to more fully understand how a building leader impacts professional development that targets increased student learning, the research question addressed in this study is: *What behaviors and practices does this principal exhibit that are related to school improvement as defined by the IPD Model and McREL?*

**Second-Order Change**

As Iowa schools implement the IPD Model, a fundamental challenge to organizational patterns occur. However, according to Evans (2001), when the goals of school improvement are so much more demanding and ambitious than on previous occasions, culture and organizational change in schools should be seen as self-evident. The key is to transform the purposes, perceptions, and practices of educators. This requires second-order change (Evans, 2001; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003).

Second-order change requires people not just to do old things differently, but also to change their outlooks and their belief systems. Second-order change can alter everything from instructional roles to governance, which is much more complex than the large-scale efforts of the past. Some of these changes overtly seek to change the culture of the school and others require [italics added] culture change in order to succeed (Evans, 2001).

It is important to understand that the professional culture, including rules, roles, and relationships within the school district, affect the school’s capacity to improve instruction (Corcoran & Lawrence, 2003). Evans (2001) suggests that culture in schools is likely to be harder to change than that of other organizations and, although reform in schools is not impossible, one needs to counter naïve assumptions about innovation and assert that reform must accept the realities of human nature. Positive, constructive changes that can make a
significant difference in a school’s performance can become embedded at a deep level and change the culture; however, these require time and are always incremental (Evans, 2001; Fullan, 2005). Shared leadership, attention to resources, and on-going assistance need to be appropriated to guide teachers through the change process. The sense of community and commitment is enlarged and the collective capacity of people to change systems is advanced (Fullan, 2005).

**Requirements of Educational Leadership**

Effective educational leadership makes a difference in improving learning. There’s nothing new or especially controversial about that idea. What’s far less clear, even after several decades of school renewal efforts, is just how leadership matters, how important those effects are in promoting the learning of all children, and what the essential ingredients of successful leadership are.

M. Christine DeVita, President of the Wallace Foundation (as cited in Leithwood et al, 2004, p. 3)

To ensure fundamental change in the way a school operates, leaders must understand and change the culture of the school to help lead and facilitate the pedagogy necessary for sustainable learning (Fullan, 2003a, 2005). At the same time, success with school change depends on the motivations and capacities of leadership (Elmore, 2000; Evans, 2001; Fullan, 2002, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2004). School leaders must understand the purpose of the reform efforts and act upon what is required to implement the program(s) for the benefit of students (Evans, 2001). The practice of improvement requires understanding how good work can be supported and propagated in schools (Elmore, 2000).

Those who lead implementation of school improvement processes in their buildings must be able to help colleagues understand how an externally initiated reform can be integrated into local improvement efforts and provide the necessary supports for those whose
practices must change (Abelmann et al., 1999; Elmore, 2000, 2003, 2004; Fullan, 2003b, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). In a 2004 Wallace Foundation major research project that focused on advancing the knowledge base about effective educational leadership, researchers sought evidence to answer these five questions:

1. What effects does successful leadership have on student learning?
2. How should the competing forms of leadership visible in the literature be reconciled?
3. Is there a common set of “basic” leadership practices used by successful leaders in most circumstances?
4. What else, beyond the basics, is required of successful leadership?
5. How does successful leadership exercise its influence on the learning of students? (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 4)

A review of the findings from schools revealed that successful leadership can play a highly significant and frequently underestimated role in student learning (Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). The findings substantiated two claims: (a) Leadership is secondary only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school, and (b) leadership effects are usually largest where they are needed the most (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 5).

To illustrate these claims, studies of schools in high-poverty districts that have demonstrated success in raising student achievement did so with a focus on instruction, professional development, and leadership (Snipes, Doolittle, & Herlihy, 2002; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Findings from a multi-year study of low-achieving urban elementary schools revealed that principals’ leadership in the area of professional development influenced three key dimensions of school organizational capacity: (a) teachers’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions, (b) professional community, and (c) program coherence (Alsbury, 2005). In each of these studies, leadership was identified as crucial to success.
Elmore (2000) says that as school administrators and teachers implement professional development, they learn to change the conditions of work by trying new ideas in the context of specific curriculum content and specific instructional problems. Professional development and accountability are “reciprocal processes that demand high engagement in both policy and practice. The long-term objective of investing in the skills and knowledge of educators is to increase the capacity to solve the problems existing in schools through the application of practice” (p. 12).

Research conducted through the Wallace Foundation (Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003) has indicated that high-quality leaders impact student learning by:

1. Setting directions—charting a clear course that everyone understands, establishing high expectations and using data to track progress and performance;
2. Developing people—providing teachers and others in the system with the necessary support and training to succeed;
3. Redesigning the organization—ensuring that the entire range of conditions and incentives in districts and schools fully supports rather than inhibits teaching and learning. (Leithwood et al., 2004. pp. 8-9)

Setting directions is foundational in the IPD Model and is the starting point for the elements that follow. The Model’s purpose is to develop high quality educators—teachers who with leadership from administration are able to enact the Model elements through the training they receive. Through implementation of the Model’s elements, the school organization can be redesigned. The end result is that the conditions and incentives support quality teaching and learning that results in increased student achievement.

These three areas cited by Leithwood et al. are embedded in the IPD Model and must be evident as leaders establish high, concrete goals and expectations that all students will try to attain. Each of these three leadership areas focus on skills and knowledge that can be
connected and lead directly to the improvement of instruction and student performance (Figure 1).

The Iowa Professional Development Model

Student Learning—
The Center of School Improvement and Staff Development

Operating Principles

- **Focus on Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment**
- **Participative Decision Making**
  - **Simultaneity**
  - **Leadership**

Figure 1. Iowa Professional Development Model
Statement of the Problem

Knowing the right thing to do is the central problem of school improvement. Holding schools accountable for their performance depends upon having people in schools with the knowledge, skill, and judgment to make the improvements that will increase student performance. (Elmore, 2000, p. 19)

Through their meta-analysis of research, Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) has synthesized information that provides strong guidance on specific leadership behaviors for school administrators. The research also reveals the well-documented effects on student achievement. Among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn, leadership is second only to classroom instruction (Marzano et al., 2005).

While studies substantiate the leadership is essential to increased student achievement, research findings also indicate that there is much to be learned about how leaders successfully meet the educational needs of the diverse student populations that exist in today’s schools (Leithwood et al., 2004). At a minimum, the findings suggest that to increase the achievement of diverse populations, leaders should assist their staffs in implementing the school and classroom conditions warranted by the research, with ‘school leaders as policy implementers’ (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 11). According to this study, the major shortcoming in much of the research is that it had not identified specific leadership practices that are successful in improving conditions in the school and classroom suggested by this research. Without this information, each leader is left to wade through the complex and not altogether coherent body of research evidence to determine which practices to implement (Leithwood et al., 2004).
The IPD Model provides guidance for schools to improve teaching and learning. However, understanding the specific skills and behaviors that need to be demonstrated is fundamental to the successful adoption of the IPD Model. As explained in the following section, data have shown that some Iowa educators have been deliberate in their attempt to ensure that each of the Model’s elements have been addressed; other educators have been less systematic regarding implementation of school improvement and are unable to provide evidence of the elements being used (Hansen, Knight, Showers, & Chadwick, 2005).

**Implementation of the IPD Model**

The IPD Model was to be in place and started in each Iowa school district at the beginning of Fall 2004 (Iowa Administrative Code SF 476). Therefore, as a state, Iowa remains in the early stages of understanding how schools are operationalizing the Model. Because research findings provide information on the inherent role of leadership in successful implementation of any school improvement initiative, it is essential for this study to know more about the role of leadership in a school where staff uses the IPD Model to increase building capacity and learning for teachers and students. Learning about the behaviors and actions of the building leader in a school reported to be ardently implementing the Model will help to understand more about the role of a principal as he/she leads school improvement.

Some research has been conducted to determine the extent to which the IPD Model is being implemented in schools. In 2004, schools were first required to include a description of the District Career Development Plan, or the implementation of the IPD Model, in their district CSIP. A few months following the submission to the DOE of each district’s CSIP,
meetings took place across the state in an effort to understand how educators in Iowa schools were implementing the IPD model.

**Process to determine implementation of the IPD Model**

Iowa DOE staff facilitated meetings that were held at each area education agency (AEA) and used a process to gather and analyze data from each Iowa district. The attendees were AEA representatives who, through their professional work and contact with schools assigned to them, had specific knowledge of the plans they were reviewing (Hansen et al., 2005). The process was a comprehensive one designed to analyze each school district’s progress with all components of the IPD Model. The purpose was to determine areas of need for schools by looking for trends in strengths and areas of concern. Each school was given a “score” on various elements of the Model based upon the CSIP and IPD Model plan as well as information provided by the AEA member(s) working with the school. The final data were then aggregated. This process was not intended to be scientific, but rather, was to be used to help inform AEA staff members about districts’ needs with implementing the Model and to identify specific technical support that should be developed to assist school staffs.

**Data that demonstrates IPD Model implementation**

According to the data derived from the AEA study (Hansen et al., 2005), specific areas that proved to be challenging for district educators included: (a) finding time for teacher collaboration to plan and guide instructional programs, (b) establishing formative data collection for both program implementation and student learning, and (c) establishing a focus and priorities for specific areas most in need of improvement.
Some school districts have been recognized for demonstrating progress with the IPD Model implementation. Of the 365 school districts in the state of Iowa, less than 10 schools have been case study sites. Many of these schools volunteered to be interviewed and examined more closely by the Iowa DOE for IPD Model implementation. The majority of these case study schools were already included in the Iowa Association of School Boards’ Lighthouse Study. However, the majority of Iowa school districts have not had assistance from an outside agency or organization. For that reason, case study schools that received assistance from an entity other than an AEA should not be considered representative examples of Iowa schools.

As a member of the group involved with development of the IPD Model this researcher had discussions with representatives from local education agencies (LEAs) and AEAs from across the state and inquired about IPD Model implementation since the time of its inception. Inquiries were made through conversations with DOE, AEA, and LEA personnel during meetings and workshops that focused on providing support for IPD Model assistance in schools. The Iowa DOE and AEAs have provided numerous technical assistance meetings to both LEA and AEA personnel to garner ideas and further implementation. However, based on observations and discussions with LEA and AEA staff, implementation of the IPD Model appears to be inconsistent and, in some cases, clearly lacking.

At the time of this study, there was no gathered or tangible evidence to demonstrate how schools are currently implementing the components of the IPD Model. Each school has not been required to provide evidence of progress with the components of the IPD Model.
The assumption was that schools reporting increased student achievement in their federal Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) report and their Annual Progress Report (APR) to the community were implementing the IPD Model. However, a causal relationship cannot be made between one or two years of student learning growth and implementation of the IPD Model by a school. Student learning growth could occur without relational cause for a number of reasons, such as population change, a particular group of students, or other fluctuations.

Currently, there is little data to show how the IPD Model is being used and how school leaders are implementing the Model more successfully in the school to affect improvement. Therefore, a study is needed to determine what practices and behaviors a principal utilizes to aid in the successful implementation of the IPD Model. Thus, in this research, it was necessary to deeply explore to find challenges that exist and study what has been done to address those challenges so other educators may be able to replicate successful practices and benefit from these findings.

**Purpose and Rationale**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to discover and understand the behaviors and practices of a school principal as he/she implements the IPD Model with his/her staff. This was done by exploring and describing the specific behaviors of this leader. This involved studying the actions taken during implementation of the IPD Model, which was designed to positively impact teaching and student learning and achievement. At a national level, research on school leadership, professional development, and the connection with
student achievement is at the forefront. Therefore, understanding the behaviors and practices of an educational leader in Iowa in schools that implement a systemic and research-based model for improvement might provide relevant and significant information for stakeholders both inside and outside the school.

According to Elmore (2002d), one consequence of leaving decisions about content and performance to states and localities is that neither have developed the institutional capacity to monitor the improvement of teaching and learning in schools, to support the development of new knowledge and skills of teachers and administrators, and to develop measures of performance that are useful to educators and the public. In response to the absence of these necessary elements and procedures, Iowa has made a bold effort to enact a research-based program to improve all schools through the use of the Model. Because leadership is an essential element of school improvement, understanding how a principal leads staff as the Model is implemented should help inform others regarding the development of capacity, as well as new knowledge and skills that are needed by those in schools.

The IPD Model outlines a sequence of steps that those in schools should follow to help increase student learning and achievement. How those in schools have followed the process has not yet been studied. By studying the actions and behaviors of the principal, knowledge can be gained that can provide a clearer picture of the processes and implementation necessary to result in large-scale school improvement.

**Significance**

There is consensus that powerful leadership is essential for successful school improvement (Elmore, 2000, 2003; Fullan, 2002, July 2003, 2005; Lambert, 2002;
Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). The need for effective instruction has received much attention; however, the role of school leadership has been neglected. For schools to demonstrate increased achievement for students, how leadership impacts the implementation of school improvement initiatives needs to be understood (Leithwood et al., 2004; Marzano et al., 2005).

A report prepared for Iowa’s State Action for Education Leadership Project (Howell, 2006), a collaboration of the Wallace Foundation, the Council of Chief State Officers, School Administrators of Iowa, and the Iowa DOE, reported site reviews of those schools identified as schools in need of assistance (SINA). In 2006, those principals in SINA schools addressed what they had learned about themselves as leaders and their roles in improving student achievement. Interviews with principals concluded that these individuals:

- Articulate a clear vision;
- Communicate higher expectations for student learning;
- Promote a positive learning environment;
- Cope with change;
- Share leadership;
- Use data to drive decisions, set direction, and determine actions;
- Draw on technical assistance;
- “Do the plan”;
- Promote collaboration;
- Use data to monitor, adjust, and evaluate implementation of professional development and learning of students;
- Celebrate learning (pp. 2-3).

Research from 18 California and Nevada schools with high numbers of at-risk students and poor test scores showed dramatically improved student achievement when common principles drove improvement (Almanzaín, 2005). Building principals in these schools identified a clear focus, which enabled the schools to write a plan that the staff could use as a road map. Professional development was held on-site, was ongoing, and provided
time for teachers to collaborate. These schools changed their definition of professional
development to include data analysis, professional reading, dialogue, and joint evaluation of
student work.

All accredited Iowa public schools must follow a research-based model for
professional learning as the conduit for school improvement (Iowa Code, 281—83.6(284)).
Examining a principal and the practices and behaviors he/she exhibits in the implementation
of the statewide IPD Model could provide information for other educators and stakeholders
who have a vested interest in understanding the fundamental challenges associated with
leading a school staff in a model that results in the improvement of teaching and learning.

Leithwood et al. (2004) revealed a “sense making approach” to understand how district
and school leaders, as contrasted with scholars, make sense of the standards and accountability
systems in which they work. It is a process that is “situated in related values, past practices,
cognitive limitations, organizational culture, and organizational inertia” (p. 33). When teachers
or administrators are confronted with a new policy, their interpretations of the new policy
determines whether they engage in significant change, incremental change, or resistance (Gold,
2002; Louis & Dentler, 1988). As principals in schools negotiate a new accountability system
through implementation of the IPD Model, a sense-making approach also takes place.

As leaders decide how they will interpret and respond to new policies, capacity building
throughout the system must be developed at each level for a system to change (Fullan, 2005).
This includes how teachers interact with each other and with principals. Additionally, school
leaders must be committed to interacting laterally with other school leaders to learn from each
other as they keep the larger purpose of education reform to increase student achievement in
mind. Discovering the specific actions and behaviors the principal exhibits through involvement
in the components of the IPD Model could provide an example for districts as they hire or train leaders, by consistently focusing on increasing knowledge and skills that directly impact school improvement and ultimately raise student achievement.

In Iowa, following a model is a relatively new way of thinking for school leaders. Because of this, studying a school administrator as he/she is immersed in the IPD Model is also new to the research in Iowa. Consequently, those educators who are immersed in the IPD Model make their own meaning of their experiences. Through interviews and documentation from a building principal, one could expect that the uniqueness of these experiences to be evident. Patton (1985) explained:

Qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as a part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting—what it means for participants to be in that setting- and the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting...The analysis strives for depth of understanding. (p. 1)

The use of case study methodology for this study was the result of the need to examine and understand the process a school leader used to implement an improvement model and the meaning derived from that implementation. This research study is an interpretive case study that was conducted to understand how the school leader was involved and made meaning of a process. Sense-making was utilized as words and pictures, rather than numbers, were gathered from observations and interviews as well as documents, to convey meaning. Thick descriptions, narratives, quotations from the participant, and analysis were used to tell the story of the experiences and relationships between the principal and staff members during implementation of the IPD Model.
Reeves (2006) says it is imperative that those in schools focus on change initiatives that have the greatest effect on student achievement (p. 100). He connects principal behaviors with the success of change initiatives and says that these behaviors can be observed in a measurable fashion and reported with the same consistency and rigor as with student test scores or teaching behaviors (2004a). This study attempted to describe and connect the principal behaviors and practices so that relevance to the professional practice and school improvement efforts and results in the school might be determined.

As a fundamental moral principle, no child in any school will be more accountable than the adults in the system. Similarly, it is a moral principle of leadership that no teacher or staff member will be more accountable than the leaders in the system…In holistic accountability, leaders embrace the opportunity to be accountable. They identify various aspects of their approach to their work, such as specific behaviors in their coaching of colleagues, the way that they use their discretionary time, and the manner in which they implement their values. (p. 20)

**Delimitations**

This study focused on one principal in an Iowa school district. However, the study is applicable to other principals as they lead staff through a school improvement process to improve student achievement. For the purpose of this study, building leadership was the focus.

**Site selection**

This study focused on a principal in an Iowa school district where the school leader and staff demonstrated a high degree of implementation of the IPD Model. The study was designed to focus on this school leader for two reasons. First, the principal is the primary leader in the building and the implementation of the IPD Model occurs at the school or
building level. Second, the IPD Model stresses the importance of the leadership, particularly that of the building leader, to achieve successful implementation.

The High Plains School District was selected as the site for the case study because it was recommended by the AEA working with that region as a school more fully engaged in the IPD Model than other area schools. At the 2005 Iowa Association of School Boards annual conference, this district presented a session on how the staff implemented the Model. This school is not an Iowa DOE case study school and receives no external assistance beyond that of most other Iowa schools.

**Description of site**

There are approximately 625 students in the High Plains School District. Most Iowa schools enroll 500-1,000 students. The district employs three administrators, two who share administrative responsibilities with more than one position or building. These kinds of shared administrative duties are also representative of other schools of this size. High Plains is a district quite similar to many other Iowa school districts, with regard to numbers of students, teachers, and administrators. The middle school has 145 students, with 10% of the students of a minority race. All but one of the minority students is Hispanic. The reported free and reduced lunch percentage for the building is 18%.

**Limitations**

While focusing on one principal may be considered a limitation, the study revealed connections to the current leadership research on school improvement and implementation.
This study uncovered some additional information about system-level leadership through various interview questions, observations, and documents.

**Researcher involvement**

This researcher had firsthand involvement, as a member of the team that created the Iowa Professional Development Model (IPD Model). Since 2001, meetings of the 38-member stakeholder group from across the state have occurred approximately 10 times over a three-year period. The purpose of this stakeholder group was to examine the research and apply the IPD Model to align with the intent of the Iowa Student Achievement and Teacher Quality Program legislation, as well as come to agreement on how the Model should be defined and communicated. This researcher also assisted with the development of technical assistance materials for schools and AEAs.

A limitation associated with this involvement could be the existence of pre-conceived ideas about implementation of the Model. Personal involvement with the development of the Model has given this researcher additional time and opportunities to consider how it could be used in schools. This researcher has also been a school administrator in an LEA in Iowa and has been personally involved in helping to lead implementation of the Model in that school district.

Nevertheless, the purpose of this study was to listen, observe, and learn about the practices of a principal at one school to better understand the leader’s role in implementation of the IPD Model and school improvement practices, not to establish determinations or opinions on correct or incorrect means regarding the implementation in the building. Throughout this study, attempts were made to eliminate personal opinion or bias as this
research was conducted and analyzed by focusing specifically on the IPD Model components as defined by the Model itself (Iowa DOE, 2002, 2005a, 2005b) and by identifying specific leadership behaviors and practices as defined by the McREL research (Marzano et al., 2005). Comparisons between this principal and other school leaders, as well as the Model implementation at High Plains Middle School compared with other schools, were avoided, as neither of these were the intent of the study.

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms were defined for use in this study:

*Annual Progress Report:* The yearly report filed with the state DOE and the U.S. DOE for the purpose of providing data in compliance with *No Child Left Behind*.

*Annual Yearly Progress:* The yearly report shared with the community and filed with the Iowa DOE for the purpose of providing data on student attendance and achievement in compliance with Chapter 12 of the Iowa Code.

*Area Education Agency:* Regional educational agencies assigned to schools for the purpose of oversight and support with school improvement.

*Behaviors:* The actions or reactions of persons or things under specified circumstances.

*Building Professional Development Plans:* Plans based upon the IPD Model, but with more specificity for each particular school building. These plans are not mandated by law and are intended to facilitate the CSIP professional development initiatives.

*Capacity:* The ability or potential of a staff for growth, development, or accomplishment.

*Collaboration:* Staff development that improves the learning of all students by providing educators with time to collaborate to share knowledge and skills.
**Data-driven**: Disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement.

**Design**: Learning strategies for the staff appropriate to the intended goal in the school.

**District Career Development Plan**: The Iowa Student Achievement and Teacher Quality Program requires each district to submit a district career development plan as part of the CSIP. By September 2004, the teacher evaluation and professional development plans were to be fully established in each local district and school.

**Evaluation**: Multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact.

**Individual Career Development Plan**: For each career teacher in the district, the individual teacher career development plan is developed in cooperation with a teacher’s supervisor. The individual plan must be based on the Iowa Teaching Standards appropriate to the student achievement goals of the district and the teacher’s needs. Ideally, the goals for individual teacher career development plans and the district career development plan will be very closely aligned. The individual teacher career development plan for the career teacher may be congruent with the district career development plan, and the process described in the Iowa Professional Development Model (IPD Model) may be used simultaneously to implement both. During the 2005-2006 school year, districts were required to have individual teacher career development plans in place for all career teachers.

**Learning Communities**: Adults in the school who are organized in a manner to meet and discuss actions that address goals of the school and district.

**Practices**: A habitual or customary action or way of doing something. Repeated performance of an activity to learn or perfect a skill. The condition of being skilled through repeated performance. The act or process of doing something.
**Provider(s):** Those individuals, agencies, or organizations that serve the district by providing long-term, ongoing support of the district career development plan.

**Quality teaching:** The outcome of effective staff development deepens educators’ content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards, prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately, and improves the learning of all students.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to review selected literature related to the implementation of school improvement and the role of principal leadership that is enacted in this process, as well as professional development and the impact it has on the school improvement process, particularly the theory underlying the IPD Model conception and intended implementation. This chapter reviews related literature pertinent to the study of leadership, specifically the role of the building principal as he/she focuses on increasing student learning. Research regarding behaviors and practices of the building principal as he/she implements accountability measures through the use of the IPD Model as the school improvement process is reviewed.

School Reform and Accountability Systems

Schools are almost always engaged in some kind of change, but they are only rarely involved in any deliberate process of improvement, where progress is measured against a clearly specified instructional goal. (Elmore, 2000, p. 7)

In recent years, the focus on state standards and accountability systems has driven local decisions and policies in ways that are unprecedented (Leithwood et al., 2004). For schools to focus on increased student learning and achievement in this new era of accountability, the objectives for teachers and students need to be clear and understandable (Fuhrman & Elmore, 1990). According to Fuhrman (1999), the imposition of a new accountability system does not unleash hidden capacity from staff within schools, even in schools where the targets are presumed to be clear and the outcomes motivating.
**Loose coupling**

Setting priorities is a significant challenge for many schools under pressure to improve student achievement. Weick (1976) described the lack of connection between what needs to be addressed and how it is addressed as “loose coupling”. This view posits that the decisions about what should be taught, how it should be taught, what students should be expected to learn, what they should be required to do to demonstrate knowledge, and how their learning should be evaluated has resided in individual classrooms, not in the organization of the school (Elmore, 2000). According to Elmore (2000), because teaching is isolated work, instructional improvements occur as a consequence of “purely voluntary acts among consenting adults” (p. 7). While extensive research-based programs have been developed over the years, loose coupling can explain why successful instructional practices that grow out of exemplary practice are not manifested in more than a small proportion of classrooms and schools (Cuban, 1984).

**Key factors in school reform**

In a study of three California districts focused upon reform, McLaughlin and Talbert (2002) found that educators in these districts focused upon establishing a clear focus on teaching and learning, providing instructional support for schools, and being accountable based upon recorded data. The schools focused their systems on instructional reform, provided more support to buildings, established fewer, clearer, and more specific goals, increased investment in professional development, and focused more attention on the work of principals (Corcoran & Lawrence, 2003).
Corcoran and Lawrence (2003) found that key factors that affect a school district’s capacity to engage in sustained efforts to improve instruction are:

- Leadership focused upon results and committed to instructional improvement;
- A focus on improving instruction that is sustained over multiple years;
- The alignment of critical policies to guide practice and to support improvement;
- The provision of resources to implement the reforms;
- Clear expectations about classroom practice;
- Support for teacher learning and investments in professional development;
- Development of communities of practice in central offices and schools that share a common vision of good practices and beliefs about teaching and learning;
- The use of data and evidence to drive decisions and revise strategies. (p. 12)

Fullan (2005) describes this new arena of learning, which involves leaders immersing themselves in work at the individual and system levels, as a mixture of technical and adaptive work. Heifetz (2004) defines a technical problem as one in which the approach and the solution are generally known. An adaptive problem is defined as one in which the approach and the solution are generally unknown. These require the deep participation of the people with the problem and they are more complex, thereby requiring more sophisticated leadership. As educators acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to align instructional practices with student learning goals, adaptive work is involved. This adaptive work, according to Heifetz (1994, 2004), enables colleagues to realign their beliefs, behaviors, and relationships to be able to respond to the needs that arise within the school.

**Professional learning for staff**

Staff development has undergone a long, arduous evolution from prescribed “training” sessions to staff-initiated agendas where information sharing, skill building, and professional growth can occur (Louis, Kruse, & Bryk, 1995). Unfortunately, these sorts of
activities are rare, often relegated to one of five or six whole-day sessions during the contract year. According to Donaldson (2006), some schools have woven half-day sessions throughout the year where student assessment and planning occur synergistically and where long-term improvement efforts can be sustained. Others have lengthened staff development calendars to include time for planning and teamwork. Darling-Hammond (1997) found that educators have learned that the professional tone and student-centered focus of these kinds of collaborative gatherings make them rich opportunities for both principals and teachers to engage in leadership.

**Rationale for the IPD Model**

According to NCLB (2002), all districts and all instructional staff are to use a research-based model for professional development as a means to increase instructional skills of teachers and increased achievement of students. Iowa’s response to this requirement was the development of the IPD Model. The Model includes components that guide school improvement, as it is not only about the content of professional development, but also attends to context and process (Iowa DOE, 2002, 2005a, 2005b). As stipulated by the Iowa Student Achievement and Teacher Quality Program (SF 476, 2001) and advocated by the National Staff Development Council’s Standards for Staff Development (NSDC, 2001), the purpose of the IPD Model is to increase student learning. As educators implement the components of the Model to reach desired instructional results for students, adaptive work is required.

The Model is based upon four “Constant Conversation” questions which represent the school improvement cycle:

1. What do data tell us about our student learning needs?
2. What do/will we do to meet student learning needs?
3) How do/will we know that student learning has changed?
4) How will we evaluate our programs and services to ensure improved student learning? (Iowa DOE, Iowa Professional Development Model Technical Assistance Manual, Introduction section, ¶ 14).

Foundations of the IPD Model

In recent years, research has identified the variables that consistently improve student achievement. Student achievement improves when many factors and variables are integrated into a broad plan of action (Cohen & Hill, 2001; Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 2000; Elmore & Burney, 1999; Joyce & Calhoun, 1996; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Loucks-Horsely et al., 1998; Schmoker, 1999). The basis of the IPD Model, developed for the purpose of fully integrating professional development with effective school improvement practices to increase student learning, integrates these factors and variables.

The Model includes:

- The importance of using data to drive school improvement and student achievement goals;
- The alignment of assessment with curriculum and instruction;
- The provision of quality staff development with research-based content;
- The necessity for learning communities that study what is effective and work collaboratively to learn and implement new knowledge;
- The study of the implementation of planned change;
- The formative and summative evaluation of planned change for its impact on student learning; and
- The guidance of strong leaders—teachers, principals, central office staff, superintendents, and school boards—operating collectively and collaboratively to govern the staff development/school improvement system. (Iowa DOE, 2002, p. 4)

Operating principles of the IPD Model

As defined in the Model (Iowa DOE, 2002, 2005), four clearly defined principles guide ongoing professional development:
Focus on Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment: A clear focus on instruction is essential. Deliberate alignment of instruction, curriculum, and assessment increases the likelihood that professional development efforts will be effective. If the goal is increased student achievement, use the most powerful tools over which the school has control.

Participative Decision Making: Collective action requires a democratic process. Teachers are engaged in decision making and planning for professional development that is aligned with identified student needs. Communication and governance processes are in place to increase the likelihood that decisions made about staff development are binding. When professional development decisions affect a group (rather than an individual), group members must participate in those decisions.

Leadership: Strong leaders are essential for successful professional development efforts. Leaders facilitate the engagement of all faculty members responsible for instruction, address time and resource issues and balance both the pressure and support required to sustain professional development efforts as a priority. For leadership to be pervasive and intense enough to make things happen at the district, building, and classroom levels, it must be distributed through the organization— involving the school board, central office administration, building-level administration, and teachers. Collective professional development aimed at student learning goals requires focused leadership.

Simultaneity: Schools and districts often have to attend to multiple concerns simultaneously. Professional development efforts balance the resources directed toward and the efforts invested in content, context and processes. To accomplish student achievement gains, focusing on new content is the priority but issues of context and process may also need to be simultaneously addressed. Schools must select a priority in which to invest professional development time and resources and then seek ways to integrate other concerns without losing focus on the major initiative. If multiple initiatives receive equal effort, the probability of succeeding with any of them is reduced. (Iowa DOE, Iowa Professional Development Model Technical Assistance Manual, Introduction section, ¶ 37-40)

Components of the IPD Model

The defined components of the IPD Model are to be enacted sequentially by educators in Iowa schools. At the same time, as Iowa educators analyze implementation and student achievement data, some adjustments in both with pace and sequence may need to be made so that the goal of increased student learning is met (Iowa DOE, 2002, 2005a, 2005b).
Collecting and analyzing student data

Data collection is the starting point in a school or district to determine student learning needs. In Iowa, the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) and the Iowa Tests of Educational Development (ITED) are used as indicators of skill development. These tests are intended to provide a measure of a student’s current levels of understanding and proficiency with respect to same-age comparison groups at a school, district, state, and national levels. Teachers, principals, and central office personnel are all to be involved in the process to examine and interpret data (Iowa DOE, 2002, 2005a, 2005b). While ITBS and ITED are the primary sources of student achievement data in this state, additional tests of student skill development also should be reviewed for analysis. All relevant and reliable data should be included for consideration as student achievement data analysis is to drive the established goals and subsequent professional development to follow. Examination of multiple sources of data will help those in schools and districts to determine the current status of student learning, identify needs for improvement, and provide means for long-range and annual improvement (Bernhardt, 1998; Bottoms, Fry & O’Neill, 2005; Shannon & Bylsma, 2004).

Goal setting

Once data are analyzed, the next component of the Model focuses upon determining student achievement goals in reading, mathematics, or science. When a district determines achievement needs to be improved in one or more of these areas, the goal that is established is to be both specific and measurable. The desired outcome centering around the goal area is to increase student achievement and for schools to meet or exceed AYP goals in the No Child Left Behind Act (2002). Specifically stated student achievement goals are to enable the
school staff to decide on a professional development target that would include the implementation of a program or strategies to address the goal (Bernhardt, 1998; Rosenholtz, 1989; Schmoker, 1999).

The IPD Model recommends that district and school staff focus on only one or two initiatives at a time. The rationale behind this is that learning new curricula, instructional strategies, and the assessments to guide their use and determine their effectiveness requires significant amounts of time. Currently, most schools are not structured with the resources to support multiple initiatives at any one time (Iowa DOE, 2002, 2005a, 2005b).

Selecting content

Selecting the content for professional development should be based upon analysis of student achievement data and the specific goals established for improvement. Choices are to be made based upon several considerations including the research-base on the efficacy of the program for the stated goal, the technical assistance necessary for support of implementation of the program or strategy, and the match between the potential program and the school. A school staff is to select the instructional program or strategies based upon their school’s data and the history of student results that other similar schools have experienced with the program or strategies (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999; Calhoun, 1994; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Kennedy, 1999; Schmoker, 1999; Slavin & Fashola, 1998).

Once content for the professional development and process for the training are decided, the training provider is to be determined. Providers must apply for approval from the State of Iowa DOE. All of the AEAs in the state have this approval status; therefore, any
personnel employed by the AEA can be a provider to a school (Iowa DOE, 2002, 2005a, 2005b).

**Designing process for professional development**

The IPD Model specifies that all site and district personnel responsible for instruction are to participate in professional development focused on increasing student learning (Iowa DOE, 2002, 2005a, 2005b). Designing the process includes how data are collected and analyzed, how collaboration is organized and embedded in the structure of a school, and how staff receives this specific training throughout the year. The specific design of the professional development is to enable the teaching staff to use the new learning in classrooms with students. The professional development is to include theory, demonstrations, and practice. The training and learning opportunities should enable the teachers to implement the skills in their classrooms as they develop new curricula, instructional strategies, and assessments. These factors must be present if implementation in the classroom is to be possible (Joyce & Showers, 1981, 2002). Consideration should be given to ensure that adequate time and supports exist for leadership teams to meet, for teachers to learn and implement new curricula, and for collaboration to occur (Elmore, 2000; Joyce & Calhoun, 1996; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Rosenholtz, 1989; Slavin et al., 1996; Wallace, Young, Johnston, Bickel, & LeMahieu, 1984; Wallace, LeMahieu, & Bickel, 1990).
Training/Learning opportunities

Professional training and learning opportunities are times established for the teaching staff to meet and learn the content that has been selected to address the building’s student achievement concerns. The IPD Model specifies that for the new program or strategies to be implemented in classrooms with students, a commitment of substantial time is required (Iowa DOE, 2002, 2005a, 2005b). As referenced in the IPD Model (2002, 2005a, 2005b), any previously existing paradigms or practices regarding professional development as stand-alone workshops or in-services need to be abandoned.

For staff to be able to transfer new instructional strategies/programs into the classroom, educators need to understand the theory behind the instructional program, observe expert and peer demonstrations of the program, collaborate and plan the new practice with colleagues, and have opportunities to integrate the program or strategy into classroom practice (Showers et al, 1987). Times are to be established for teachers to engage in reflective discussions regarding the new program or strategy so questions that arise from implementation efforts can be resolved (Iowa DOE, 2005b, p.19).

The ability of the teaching staff to engage in collaboration and peer observations and adapt the program to fit the needs of the curriculum and students while maintaining fidelity to the program will impact the training design the school creates. When content of professional development is new or complex, greater time will need to be allocated to training sessions (Iowa DOE, 2002, 2005a, 2005b). The relative amounts of theory, demonstrations, and opportunities for practice will vary from group to group, but the expectation is that the program or strategy will be implemented consistently and with fidelity
when learned correctly (Joyce & Showers, 1983, 2002; NSDC, 2001; Odden, Archibald, Fermanich, & Gallagher, 2002; Wallace et al., 1990).

**Collaboration and implementation**

The research of Joyce and Showers (1983) reveals two consistent findings: (1) much of the content of training is never implemented in classrooms, (2) successful implementations use the power of collaborative work as teachers negotiate changes in curriculum and instruction. This research documents that teachers working to implement changes in their classroom practice need the support and feedback of colleagues familiar with the same program to be able to solve the problems inherent in learning new programs and practices in their classrooms.

Collaboration occurs when teachers have time dedicated to meet and discuss the goals and outcomes for student learning. As the Model states, educators in schools need to develop a plan for how teacher collaboration will occur (Iowa DOE, 2002, 2005a, 2005b). This collaborative work includes ongoing learning of the program or strategy, planning and developing lessons and materials, analyzing student work, and solving problems. To ensure that teachers are implementing often and accurately, implementation data need to be collected and analyzed. This informs the school as to the frequency and fidelity of implementation and leads to understanding the connections between teacher usage and student learning (Guskey, 2000). The teacher implementation data then are used to inform future professional development decisions.

To help provide the framework for the implementation of the Model, leadership teams that include teachers and administrators together are highly valuable (Iowa DOE,
It is recommended that collaborative teams plan their use of the new strategies and document their use weekly using a structured form that they submit to the leadership team following each meeting. The leadership team is to provide frequent feedback to the entire staff on what is being implemented and what needs additional effort or attention (Iowa DOE, 2002, 2005a, 2005b). As cited in the research (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Joyce & Calhoun, 1996; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Little, 1997; Rosenholtz, 1989; Showers, 1982, 1984, 1985; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Showers, Joyce, & Bennett, 1987; Slavin et al., 1996), when the objective is implementing new content for the purpose of increasing student learning, the collaborative work of teachers should focus on thinking, planning, designing lessons, generating instructional materials, and studying student responses to these efforts. As specified in the IPD Model (2002, 2005b), teacher collaboration requires time and clarity of purpose (Showers and Joyce, 1996).

**Ongoing data collection (formative data)**

As school staff implement new curricula and instructional strategies targeted at improving student learning in specific areas, they need tools for collecting information about student responses to changes in the instructional program (Bernhardt, 1998; Desimone et al., 2002; Iowa DOE, 2002, 2005a, 2005b). Data are used continuously to improve instruction and advance student learning. Ongoing and frequent data collection regarding both student work and implementation of the strategy/program should address the questions: Are students responding as we predicted? Should we increase/modify our use of certain interventions? Do we need to modify the professional development? (Calhoun, 2001; Hertling, 2000; Yap, Aldersebaes, Railsback, Shaughnessy, & Speth, 2000).
**Ongoing cycle**

The cycle of planning and delivering training, studying data from implementation, and making decisions about how to refine the training and adjust collaboration structures is repeated many times as a professional development effort is implemented. The information gathered in studying implementation and as part of the formative evaluation informs the planning and design of all learning opportunities. These data are used to make adjustments such as increased opportunities to learn theory, as well as more demonstrations and time for practice (Iowa DOE, 2002, 2005a, 2005b).

**Program evaluation (summative data)**

While ongoing, formative data collection entails frequent measurement of targeted outcomes and guides professional development training decisions and adjustments, summative program evaluation addresses the questions: Did this intervention work? Did we meet our student achievement goal? Summative data generally measure program effectiveness less frequently than formative data. This data is also in accordance with the time schedule the district/school has established for evaluating its progress toward student achievement goals (Bernhardt, 1998; Guskey, 2000; Joyce & Showers, 2002).

Concentrating on results does not negate the importance of process. Schmoker (2006) advocates that processes exist for results and results should inform processes. Wiggins (1994) states, “We fail to regularly adjust performance in light of results” (p. 18). The IPD Model specifies that collected data be used in the school’s decision-making as it plans next steps of the CSIP cycle. Schools in Iowa generally use the summative student data from the
ITBS and ITED to determine annual growth; however, additional assessment instruments are to be utilized to determine changes in student learning (Iowa DOE, 2002, 2005a, 2005b).

**Results connected to accountability**

Only when school personnel regularly monitor the impact of processes will educators learn about the impact of the innovation or program (Schmoker, 1999). Schmoker states that those in schools have avoided the difficult and yet promising task of analyzing what we are doing against the results we are getting and that (a) most schools do not conscientiously examine the number of students who can do such activities as problem solve, analyze, calculate, and compose and then, (b) adjust the instruction and programs accordingly (p. 6).

Schmokers’ (1999, 2006) work shows that informed changes in practice can produce timely and incremental advances. Those in schools can move beyond a limited view of achievement to one that embraces both standardized testing as well as the recent advances in alternative assessment. Results should be understood as a “thoughtfully established, desired end-product, as evidence that something worked—or did not work” (Schmoker, 1999, p. 3). Schmoker believes that all results, whether good or bad, are ultimately good, as they can guide educators as to what to do next and how the program can improve.

The building leader is crucial to implementation of the IPD Model as school improvement and accountability processes. Research cited in the implementation of this study and the following section of the literature review demonstrates this key role.

**Leadership that impacts Large-scale Improvement**

Leadership is to this decade what standards-based reform was to the 1990s. Put another way, if you want to boost achievement scores from poor to good
levels, a strong standard-based reform strategy can take you so far; but if the aim is to accomplish deeper, continuous improvement, leadership at many levels of the system is required. (Fullan, July 2003, ¶ 1)

There is extensive research regarding what effective leaders do. Elmore (2002b) believes effective leaders make their own questioning, and “hence their own ignorance” visible to those with whom they work (p. 25). They ask hard questions about why and how things work or don't work, and they lead the kind of inquiry that can result in agreement on the organization’s work and its purposes. Effective leaders model for others what it means to exercise control over the conditions of one's own learning and to make that learning powerful in the lives of others (Elmore, 2002b).

Reeves (2006) uses “complementary leadership” to describe the areas in which effective leaders should have expertise (p. 28). These include instruction, data analysis, and motivation. However, Reeves (2006) states that the leader who is masterful in these areas may lack some emotional intelligence skills or strengths in other areas. The complementary leader who recognizes this operates within the system to utilize people with different skill sets, intelligences, and behaviors to more fully compensate for what might otherwise be deficit areas in the system.

**Enacting Leadership**

**Communicating the vision**

Leadership is crucial in responding to the demand for accountability and the most complex educational issues. Abelman et al. (1999) noted that the schools best prepared to respond are those with strong principals who are willing to develop and nurture a common vision. Wheatley (1994) ascribes to the belief that vision alone does not translate into purposeful and collective action that cause results:
Unfortunately, the spirit of many organizations, regardless of their written vision statements or beliefs, reveals a lack of critical density. Into this vacuum can rush rumor, mistrust, and negativism. The organization becomes aimless—a mass of contradicting fields…a jumble of behaviors, with no clear purpose. (pp. 56-57)

Reeves (2006) draws an analogy between architecture and leadership by explaining that vision is a necessary, but an insufficient condition for effective leadership, and says that a structure cannot be built by the leader alone. The architectural leader makes connections and knows that he/she must skillfully assemble the diverse talents to do the work to make all of the pieces fit together. This leader knows that “everything is connected, and there is no such thing as a ‘non-academic’ class, assembly, or experience. The faculty is not divided between those who are accountable and those who are not. Every staff member supports a common focus on improving teaching and learning” (p. 30). Schmoker (1999, 2006) acknowledges that while principals play a central, symbolic role in schools, they do not implement programs themselves. He says that change has a much better chance of going forward when principals team up with teachers who help to translate and negotiate new practices with faculty.

It is the leaders’ task to establish the norms that highlight so that “together we can attain more than we can in isolation,” according to Donaldson (2006, p. 110). He advocates that leaders provide ways of sharing feedback on performance and enable the group to resolve issues they see in that feedback. Leaders clarify and emphasize the ways in which people’s work is interdependent with the work of others. Leaders trust collective decision-making and model their faith in the school to solve its own significant challenges. Leaders also nurture a widespread sense of collective efficacy through putting before the staff the
dilemmas and challenges that arise from their own work, both internally with students and each other and externally with the community.

Fullan (2003b) substantiates this by saying that a school cannot have highly effective principals unless there is distributive leadership throughout the school and that “fostering leadership at many levels is one of the principal’s main goals” (p. 24). He supports how fostering leadership can occur when he states that “leaders have a responsibility to invest in the development of organizational members, to take the chance that they will learn, and to create environments where people will take risks, tackle difficult problems, and be supported in this endeavor” (p. 67).

**Relational trust in schools**

Schmoker’s (1999) research finds that school administrators occupy a unique position as “keepers of the focus”. He agrees that, while leadership is essential to substantive and enduring progress, the literature reveals a lack of strategic leadership that focuses on improving instruction. “It is the rare principal who can take a faculty and single-handedly communicate, create, and realize the vision of higher achievement” (p. 116). Simultaneously, Schmoker emphasizes aspects that the principal must attend to ensure that the staff has a collective focus in improving student learning.

The new culture of schools should encourage and expect that a principal will orchestrate a program that includes measurable goals… Without a common set of goals, schools will not be able to sustain their efforts, hope will dwindle, and low expectations may set in. With it, the entire school community can work as one. Collaboration will not happen if the goals are too numerous, superficial, or unmeasurable. (p. 113)
Fullan (2003b) believes that leaders must establish a climate of relationship trust where tough issues are tackled and critical aspects of school improvement require joint problem solving among teachers. School improvement is a long-term process that demands sustained adult effort.

In a longitudinal study of over 400 Chicago elementary schools, Bryk and Schneider’s (2002) research demonstrates that the principal’s actions impact school reform when they develop and sustain relational trust in their school communities. Bryk and Schneider define relational trust as that in which each party in a relationship maintains an understanding of their obligation and holds each party accountable to these obligations. Relational trust is “forged in daily social exchanges…trust grows over time through exchanges where the expectations held for others are validated in action” (pp. 136-137).

These mutual dependencies are embedded within the school community; in other words, all participants, regardless of how much formal power any individuals have, are dependent on each other to achieve the desired outcomes and feel empowered by their efforts.

In the Chicago elementary school studies by Bryk and Schneider (2002), effective school principals established both respect and personal regard with their staff through specific practices. They describe how coupling the principals’ behaviors with communication of the school vision advanced the vision. Simultaneously, advancing the schools’ visions translates to supporting others willing and ready to assist the reform agenda.

Given the asymmetry of power in urban school communities, the actions that principals take play a key role in developing and sustaining relationship trust. Principals establish both respect and personal regard when they acknowledge the vulnerabilities of others, actively listen to their concerns, and eschew arbitrary actions. If principals couple this with a compelling school vision, and if their behavior can be understood as advancing this vision, their integrity is affirmed. (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 137)
As principals seek to initiate change in their buildings, not everyone is necessarily affirmed, nor is everyone afforded a similar voice in shaping the vision of reform. Teachers who are unwilling to take on the hard work of change and align with colleagues around a common reform agenda must leave. Only when participants demonstrate their commitment to engage in such work and see others doing the same can a genuine professional community grounded in relational trust emerge. Principals must take the lead and extend themselves by reaching out to others… They must also be prepared to use coercive power to reform a dysfunctional school community around professional norms… (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 138)

Reeves (2004a) says that great leaders develop systematic ways to catch teachers doing things right, document those successes, make those successes the focal point of faculty meetings and professional development sessions, and leverage those successes when confronting failures and challenges (p. 10). A school that has “student centered accountability” or “holistic accountability” refers to a system that includes not only focuses on academic achievement scores, but also on curriculum, teaching practices, and leadership practices. It is the responsibility of the leader to point the staff in the direction of a student centered system, one that includes a balance of qualitative and quantitative factors, and is the story behind the numbers (p. 6).

Donaldson (2006) cites that principals have legal and organizational responsibilities that cannot be easily shared. Because the principal’s role has been to manage multiple responsibilities, these circumstances make it very difficult for some principals to spend time to help nurture the belief of a common vision and purpose in others. Yet, principals need to come to terms with their positional authority and must be comfortable explaining to colleagues why they have made decisions and how their decisions are guided by the common vision (Donaldson, 2006). The principal must remain accountable to staff, as well as all staff being accountable to each other. “How principals carry the inevitable mantle of authority spells their true belief in the judgment, skills, and action of others” (Donaldson, 2006, p.
The principal and collaborative efforts

The research supports that changing beliefs and behaviors can be arduous (Elmore, 2000, 2002a, 2002c; Fullan, 2001a, 2003a, 2003b; Reeves, 2006). Donaldson (2006) states that whether they seek to be collaborative or not, principals are still often caught in a top-down role. “Often the sins of principals past…are visited upon the heads of new principals. Principals who try to collaborate may find that staff members refuse to accept collective responsibility for whole-school matters and instead regard them as the principal’s obligation” (p. 119).

Schmoker (1999) states that while teachers can guide themselves in many meaningful ways, principals have a responsibility to reinforce individual and collective effort. “Establishing goals is a manifestation of leadership, but it is only the beginning of a results—oriented framework” (p. 112). As effective leaders, principals connect their schools to professional development that concentrates on instruction and student outcomes, provide opportunities for feedback and assistance in teachers’ classrooms, and ensure sustained and continuous support (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1996).
For strategies and programs to be well implemented, attention needs to be drawn to the critical role of lead teachers who are given release time to enable them to coordinate and lead professional development learning teams and act as mentors, coaches, and lead learners (Fullan, Hill, & Crevola, 2006). It is incumbent upon the principal to ensure that leadership and coordination are occurring with the team and lead teachers and that the principal is allocating sufficient time and resources (p. 95).

Instructional quality also can be enhanced when principals create regular meeting times for teacher teams to focus on instruction, planning, aligning professional development with school goals, promoting trust among the staff, facilitating the practice of teacher empowerment, shared decision making, and other forms of distributed leadership (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamone, 2001). These same concepts are articulated in the IPD Model:

Principals are broadly acknowledged to be a pivotal factor in successful staff development and school improvement efforts. As gatekeepers of the school culture, principals maintain a focus on teaching and learning, work collaboratively to develop collective goals aligned with district goals and standards, and assist with data collection, analysis, and use. In successful school improvement efforts, principals model learning and are active participants in staff development. They are creative and flexible in their use of resources and adopt a problem-solving stance when obstacles are encountered. The principal leader balances pressure and support to ensure the implementation of planned change so that the goal of increased student learning can be realized. (Iowa DOE, 2005b, p. 13)

**Principal behaviors: The important and the essential**

While much is known about the general kinds of leadership initiatives principals must undertake when getting to large-scale improvement, one missing piece of research in the literature has been the fact that the major national standards for school leaders do not
distinguish between which leadership behaviors are important and which are essential to improving student achievement.

**Cotton’s research**

The results of Cotton’s (2003) study, published in *Principals and Student Achievement: What the Research Says*, focused on post-1985 research and looked at principals’ behaviors in relation to one or more student outcomes. The report is considered to be more representative than exhaustive and endeavored to include the work of researchers who were cited as experts by their peers. Of the 81 reports, all but seven were conducted in the United States, and more than half focused on low socio-economic status minority students’ schools. She used narrative rather than quantitative analysis to look for patterns and trends. Fifty-six of the reports dealt with the influence of principal leadership on student achievement, 10 dealt with the effect of principal leadership on student attitudes, eight with student behavior, 15 with teacher attitudes, four with teacher behavior, and three with drop-out rates. Cotton identified 25 categories of principal behavior that positively affect the dependent variables of student achievement, student attitudes, student behavior, teacher attitudes, teacher behaviors and dropout rates:

1. Safe and orderly environment;
2. Vision and goals focused on high levels of student learning;
3. High expectations for student learning;
4. Self-confidence, responsibility, and perseverance;
5. Visibility and accessibility;
6. Positive and supportive culture;
7. Communication and interaction;
8. Emotional and interpersonal support;
9. Parent and community outreach and involvement;
10. Rituals, ceremonies, and other symbolic actions;
11. Shared leadership, decision making, and staff empowerment;
12. Collaboration;
13. Instructional leadership;
14. Ongoing pursuits of high levels of student learning;
15. Norm of continuous improvement;
16. Discussion on instructional issues;
17. Classroom observation and feedback to teachers;
18. Support of teachers’ autonomy;
19. Support of risk taking;
20. Professional development opportunities and resources;
21. Protecting instructional time;
22. Monitoring student progress and sharing findings;
23. Use of student progress for program improvement;
24. Recognition of student and staff achievement;
25. Role modeling.

While Cotton did not quantitatively estimate the effect of principal leadership on student achievement, this study concluded that principal leadership does have an effect on student outcomes, albeit an indirect one.

…In general, these researchers find that, while a small portion of the effect may be direct—that is, the principals’ direct interactions with students in or out of the classroom may be motivating, inspiring, instructive, or otherwise influential—most of it is indirect, that is mediated through teachers and others…(p. 58)

**Wallace Foundation Research**

In 2004, Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom conducted a synthesis study that also employed a narrative approach and concluded that leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn in school. Leithwood et al. identified three basic practices as the core of successful leadership. These are: (a) Setting direction—a set of practices aimed at helping staff members establish and understand the goals of the school and the foundation for a shared vision for those in the school; (b) developing people—building the capacity of those within the school and using their strengths; associated behaviors are offering intellectual
stimulation, providing individualized support, and providing appropriate models of best practice and beliefs considered fundamental to the organization; and (c) redesigning the organization—changing those organizational characteristics that might “blunt or wear down educators’ good intentions and actually prevent the use of effective practices” (p. 6-7).

Practices associated with this category include strengthening the school culture and building collaborative processes.

**McREL’s research**

Marzano, McNulty and Waters (2005) conducted a large-scale, quantitative meta-analysis with principal school leadership as the domain of interest. Any and all available studies that met the following conditions were considered:

- The study involved K-12 students;
- The study involved schools in the United States or situations that closely mirrored the culture of U.S. schools;
- The study directly or indirectly examined the relationship between the leadership of the building principal and student academic achievement;
- Academic achievement was measured by a standardized achievement test or a state test, or a composite index based on one or both of these;
- Effect sizes in correlation form were reported or could be computed. (p. 28)

The research study included 69 studies, spanning 23 years from 1978-2001. There were 2,802 schools represented in the studies.

This large-scale research study not only found a strong link between effective school leadership and student achievement, but also helped define effective leadership by identifying 21 leadership “responsibilities” linked to higher levels of student performance:

1. Affirmation: recognizes and celebrates accomplishments and acknowledges failures;
2. Change agent: is willing to challenge and actively challenges the status quo;
3. Communication: establishes strong lines of communication with and
among teachers and students;
4. Contingent rewards: recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments;
5. Culture: fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation;
6. Discipline: protects teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their teaching time and focus;
7. Flexibility: adapts his or her leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent;
8. Focus: establishes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school’s attention;
9. Ideals/Beliefs: communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling;
10. Input: involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies;
11. Intellectual stimulation: ensures faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school’s culture;
12. Involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment: is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices;
13. Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment: is knowledgeable about curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices;
15. Optimizer: inspires and leads new and challenging innovations;
16. Order: establishes a set of standard operating procedures and routines;
17. Outreach: is an advocate and spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders;
18. Relationships: demonstrates an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff;
19. Resources: provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs;
20. Situational awareness: is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems;
21. Visibility: has quality contact and interactions with teachers and students (Marzano et al., 2005, pp. 42-43).

A total of 652 principals from across the country responded to questions designed to assess the extent to which they emphasize the 21 responsibilities in their leadership and the magnitude or “order” of the change efforts they are leading.

First-order change is a by-product of the daily operations of the school; second-order change requires a different approach to leadership, as it is associated with implementation of
a new innovation. First-order change is perceived as an extension of the past; second-order change is perceived as a break with the past. First-order change is consistent with prevailing norms and values; second-order change conflicts with prevailing values. First-order change can be implemented with the existing knowledge and skills; second-order change requires the acquisition of new knowledge and skills (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 113).

Depending on the characteristics an individual ascribes to an innovation, the individual will perceive the innovation as first or second-order in nature. Within one school, different individuals or groups may view an innovation differently. Some may see the innovation as first-order—an innovation that is not difficult to implement. For staff who perceive the innovation to be difficult to implement and one that will require a good deal of effort to significantly change their practices, then this change will be second-order.

When implementing an innovation, the principal can assess whether the planned change will be considered first-order or second-order by staff. All of the principal responsibilities identified in the McREL research are associated with student achievement. Research also showed that certain responsibilities should be demonstrated more than others when innovation occurs and the change is considered second-order according to the school staff who will be implementing.

Waters and Grubb (2004) summarized the three key findings that emerged from the McREL research study:

1. All 21 leadership responsibilities are unique behaviors. McREL researchers found no significant intercorrelations among the 21 responsibilities that would support grouping them into a smaller number of categories. This lack of intercorrelation led researchers to conclude that all 21 leadership responsibilities represent important knowledge, skills, and practices that principals need to emphasize to positively impact student achievement.
2. All 21 responsibilities appear to be essential for leading day-to-day changes. McREL found that all 21 leadership responsibilities were positively correlated with *first-order* [italics added] changes. This finding suggests that all 21 leadership responsibilities are important for guiding first-order changes in schools.

3. Eleven leadership responsibilities appear to be particularly important when guiding difficult *second-order* changes. Seven were positively correlated with second-order change: (a) change agent, (b) flexibility, (c) ideals and beliefs, (d) intellectual stimulation, (e) knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, (f) monitor and evaluate, and (g) optimizer. Conversely, these same leaders tended to give themselves lower ratings on these four responsibilities: (a) communication, (b) culture, (c) input, and (d) order. These findings suggest that when engaged in second-order changes, teachers are likely to view their principal’s performance lower in these four areas.

The McREL meta-analysis indicates specific principal responsibilities that can affect increased student academic achievement by the extent to which the principal is engaged in these.

**The principal’s current reality**

While many research studies show the importance of leadership’s affect on school improvement and reform, specifically the actions and behaviors of building principals, there are gaps that exist between what research has found needs to occur and what actually takes place in schools. Fullan (2003b) says that most principals do not currently have the capacity to operate by visualizing a starting point and a path that needs to be traveled.

To expect great leadership in the absence of capacity is to squander an opportunity and resources. Some principals are not even on the continuum of school development. They are managers, at best running a good shop. We need, instead, organizational development so our continuum starts with actions that are directed at schoolwide instructional development. (p. 74)

The North Carolina Center for School Leadership Development (2001) conducted a study of educational leaders that revealed the chasm between what educational scholars know to be important and how leaders actually behave. According to Reeves (2004b), this gap
provides clear evidence of the “knowing and doing gap” (p. 3). Table 1 demonstrates the gap between principals’ perceptions of the importance of leadership functions and whether or not those functions are performed.

Reeves (2004b) believes that, while one might be critical of North Carolina leaders when reading these data, “many other states continue in a pattern of leadership analysis and evaluation in which they ignore glaring deficiencies. The responses by our national sample of leaders were strikingly consistent with the North Carolina findings, with the worst ratings related to the specificity of the evaluation and the relevance of the evaluation to improving student achievement” (pp. 3-4). The results from the North Carolina Center for School Leadership Development are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The gap between what leaders know and what they do (Reeves, 2004b, pp. 147-150).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP</th>
<th>Percentage who “Strongly Agree” that they perform this function</th>
<th>Percentage who “Strongly Agree” that this function is important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visionary Leadership</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presents evidence that the vision is a shared vision</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses the vision to guide and define decisions</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintains a steady flow of two-way communications to keep the vision alive and important</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Curriculum Design and Development</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leads the faculty and community in a thorough understanding of the relationship between the learning needs of students and the NC Standard Course of Study</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensures that there is a logical alignment between the school’s curriculum and the state’s accountability program</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensures that appropriate differentiated curriculum and instruction are available to those students with exceptional needs</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instructional Effectiveness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manages time to be an instructional leader as a priority</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides targeted and challenging professional development activities designed to improve teachers’ strengths in reaching all students</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arranges for teachers to teach in settings and circumstances that draw on their strengths and highest abilities</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment and Evaluation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses the data collected from state and local testing and assessment programs to develop formative instructional strategies to improve the effectiveness of daily classroom instruction</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitors student achievement throughout the year, using both classroom and testing data to assess progress</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitors classroom performance on a regular basis, offering pathways to improve student performance through improved teaching practices</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Results Oriented</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produces student achievement results that are commensurate with basic principles of the state’s accountability system</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicates the results of his/her leadership to appropriate audiences and constituencies</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Leadership</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develops with faculty leadership a set of performance indicators which enable the school to monitor and benchmark its performance and progress among similar clusters of organizations</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses student performance data to effect changes in school programs as well as the attitudes within the school family about needed changes</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These data support other research findings regarding principal leadership. It becomes inherent that more is known and understood regarding how principals impact the system through their attitudes, beliefs, behaviors and practices that result in collaborative reform and increased student learning.

Bryk and Schneider’s (2002) link between relational trust and school improvement demonstrates the relationship between leadership and the system. When leaders address the complex factors in a system that impact the school’s ability to focus on students and learning, this can have a profound impact on the staff’s belief in their collective power. This adaptive work enables colleagues to realign their beliefs, their behaviors, and their relationships to respond to the school’s challenge to meet new needs that arise (Heifetz, 1994).
Summary

This researcher’s study attempted to identify the behaviors and practices of the principal when implementing change using the IPD Model. At the same time, these practices were correlated with the most recent research from McREL to understand and ascertain which specific responsibilities most influenced teaching practices, school change, and ultimately large-scale reform for improvement—all of which impact student learning.

Leading change with implementation of the IPD Model is the reform process that principals in Iowa will need to meet the challenges of No Child Left Behind (2002). As the current study was conducted, data were gathered on principal behaviors and practices related to the components of the Model. These practices and behaviors were cross-referenced and aligned with the leadership responsibilities found in the McREL research to guide second-order change and focus on school improvement and student achievement.

Extensive research exists to suggest ways schools can and should improve and increase student learning. The IPD Model is intended to bring this about for all students in Iowa schools. Developed in 2001-2003, it was included first as a part of each school’s CSIP and submitted to the state in the fall of 2004. As year three unfolded for schools, understanding how the IPD Model is implemented and how principals are leading change is important to interpret and understand.

The next chapter will describe the case study methodology applied to examine a principal in an Iowa school and the experiences as the process with the IPD Model took place, with a focus on improved classroom practices and enhanced learning and increased student achievement in the school.
CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the qualitative research methods used to examine the behaviors and practices of a school leader as he assists his instructional staff with implementation of the IPD Model. To accomplish this purpose, this chapter discusses research methodology, the study context, data collection methods, data management, and analysis procedures.

Methodological Approach

Qualitative research

Qualitative research can be used to better understand phenomena about which little is known (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Little is known regarding how a building principal behaves and constructs his/her interaction with staff as the IPD Model is implemented; to date, no such formal studies have been conducted. The key to this qualitative research study lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by those in interaction with their world (Merriam, 2002). To understand practices and behaviors required to assist staff with implementation of the IPD Model, the principal needed to be the focus of the study. Statistical research is not able to take full account of the many interfaced effects that occur in social settings (Cronbach, 1975); thus qualitative research is better suited to gain a deep understanding of the principal’s interactions and their meaning.

In this study, the key concern is understanding the phenomenon of interest from the emic, or insider’s perspective—that of the building principal—as opposed to the etic, or outsider’s, view. Only through the emic perspective can the principal’s practices and behaviors be understood. Since qualitative research is an effort to understand situations
and the uniqueness of this experience (Patton, 1985), the interviews, observations, and documentation enable a greater depth of understanding.

The effectiveness of qualitative data to describe a phenomenon more fully is an important consideration not only from the researcher’s perspective, but from the reader’s perspective as well. For readers to develop a better understanding, they must have the information provided in a form in familiar context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Those who attempt to effectively deliver instruction and lead in Iowa schools have knowledge of structural and procedural components that affect change, such as collecting student and teacher data, setting goals, and establishing expectations for professional learning. Through this study’s findings, those in Iowa and nationally who have a vested interest in understanding the challenges of school improvement can be provided a clearer conception of principal leadership practices through the experiences of the participant in this study.

**Philosophical framework**

Philosophical ideas must be combined with broad approaches to research and implemented with specific procedures or methods (Creswell, 2003, p. 4). The epistemology of constructionism rejects the notion of objective truth and allows attention to be paid to the different ways in which people construct meaning (Crotty, 1998). Further, it is assumed that “individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (Creswell, 2003, p. 8).

Use of interpretivism as the theoretical perspective supports constructionism. This study focused on the principal’s behaviors and practices; interpretivism was used in seeking to understand the principal’s experiences and the meanings he constructed.
Constructivist researchers “recognize that their own background shapes their interpretation, and they ‘position themselves’ in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural, and historical experiences” (Creswell, 2003, pp. 8-9). Consequently, the techniques and procedures that were followed included interviews and observations of the principal along with data from various related school improvement documents. To seek meaning of the experiences of the participants required that “the more open ended the questioning, the better,” with the researcher carefully listening to what was said and done in the participant’s setting (p. 8).

The case study linked the methodology to the outcomes by using the qualitative approach. This allowed the researcher to explore a program or event, activity or process in depth, bounded by time and activity. Therefore, the qualitative approach was determined most suitable for this particular research study (Creswell, 2003).

**Context and Interpretive Research**

A basic and interpretive qualitative study exemplifies the characteristics of qualitative research, as the researcher in interested in understanding how participants make meaning of a situation or phenomenon, when the strategy is inductive and the outcome is descriptive (Merriam, 2002, p 6). This type of case study presents a complete description of a phenomenon within its context as it covers the scope and depth of the case being described. It necessitates capturing the essence of what constitutes behaviors related to the focus of the study to define the relevant data collection. Unanticipated findings are not precluded. Revelatory or important information found that appears to extend beyond the research question is collected and analyzed (Yin, 2003a, p. 26).
This study was descriptive of the behaviors and practices and multiple issues faced by the principal as he led the instructional staff with the IPD Model during the 2006-2007 school year. Analyzing the behaviors and practices was accomplished in a descriptive manner, with initial sorting of data occurring by using the elements of the IPD Model and McREL’s 21 leadership responsibilities as categories. These elements and responsibilities were not exclusive, as additional themes surfaced throughout the study and categories emerged. This researcher believed these emerging categories to be significant, as the categories could be interpreted as those which contribute to the challenges of improving schools and increasing student achievement. The secondary themes that emerged in this study were (a) the time factor, (b) teacher preparation, (c) competing initiatives, (d) small districts, and (e) preparation for the principalship.

Using the IPD Model as a process for school improvement, led by school leaders, has been a recent development in Iowa. In accordance with the Student Achievement and Teacher Quality Program (2001), the IPD Model process was to begin in all Iowa schools during the fall of 2004. The process has been in place in schools less than four years. In 2005, several schools underwent one-day staff interviews with Dr. Beverly Showers and personnel from the Iowa DOE to gather ideas for other Iowa schools to consider or adopt as they undertook this work. It should be noted that these schools were identified primarily for the purpose of sharing workable ideas to implement the Model and were not intended to be sites of scientific studies. Dr. Showers and DOE members studied three schools more closely during the 2003-2005 school years to determine team and leadership behaviors and processes. Information from all of these brief case studies was shared during statewide conferences and posted on the DOE website as a resource for other schools and
educational agencies. While these case study schools provided worthwhile information as models for replication for other school district personnel to know and understand, the specific practices and behaviors of the principal and his/her leadership have not yet been studied.

Understanding the process by which the IPD Model is implemented when led by a school principal could be studied only through fieldwork. Studying the principal’s behaviors and practices and analyzing specific responsibilities that lead to or affect positive change in a school requires a close look at the job of the principal and his/her interactions in the school. It is the responsibility of this researcher to collect the data and then to “make sense” of what is collected, through interviews, documents, and observations (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

This study sought to understand how the study participant made meaning of a process and the perspectives of the people involved; the meaning was mediated through the researcher, the inductive strategy used, and the descriptive outcome. Guba and Lincoln (1994) describe interpretive research as that which is fundamentally concerned with meaning and seeks to understand social members’ definition of a situation. They also state that meaning-focused research in the interpretive tradition is assessed in terms of trustworthiness criteria—including credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. This study addressed these criteria as the principal’s role in the IPD Model’s school improvement process was researched.
Trustworthiness

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the basic question addressed by the notion of trustworthiness is, “How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?” (p. 290). Criteria necessary for qualitative research include transferability, dependability, confirmability, and credibility (p. 300).

Transferability

By describing a phenomenon in sufficient detail one can begin to evaluate the extent to which the conclusions drawn are transferable to other times, settings, situations, and people. (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Transferability existed through thick description and purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990).

With purposeful sampling, subjects are selected because of some characteristic. Purposeful sampling occurred when the subject to be studied was carefully selected due to his high engagement in school improvement and the leadership demonstrated with helping staff implement the IPD Model.

Transferability is also improved through thick description. Thick description of the experiences of the principal was provided throughout this study. In this research study, words gathered from the observations and interviews, as well as the documents, were assimilated to convey the meaning the principal derived from his experiences. To tell the story of the experiences and relationships between the principal and staff members required thick descriptions, narratives, quotes from the participants, and analysis to understand the specifics of what occurred.
Dependability

Showing that the findings were consistent and could be repeated occurred through external audits. Peer examination of the data was accomplished from read-throughs of the collected and interpreted data by two colleagues who have been principals and understood the IPD Model outside of the research process examining the process and product of the study. The purpose was to evaluate the accuracy and evaluate whether or not the findings, interpretations and conclusions were supported by the data. This peer examination was intended to check for clarity and meaning. An example of this occurred when one read-through showed more detail was needed to clearly link some of the more discrete principal’s behaviors with the IPD Model. The writing was cross-referenced again with transcripts and edited to ensure clarity.

Care was taken to make all aspects of the analysis process open to public inspection, thereby constructing the audit trail and creating the chain of evidence and strengthening the dependability and reliability of this research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Documents were filed both by paper copies and electronic means and cross-referenced with interview and observation data. All transcripts were filed and electronically stored by date and source. Through creation of the audit trail, triangulation of the data, and peer examination of the data and analysis, this researcher strove for dependability.

Confirmability

Confirmability is determined when the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest. Triangulation of data sources helped to produce clear understanding of data. Interviews, observations, and documents
provided triangulation of data necessary for the study’s confirmability. Through this process, triangulated data identified the most robust findings.

Triangulation occurred through methods—checking the consistency of findings generated by different data and collection methods—and was accomplished by using various data sources. In this study, the primary data sources used for analysis were interviews from the case study participant, field notes taken during observation sessions of various staff groups, reflective notes recorded by the researcher, and documents collected over the course of the study. After each interview and observation, all handwritten notes were entered into the computer. Assistance from a hired secretarial typist was utilized to expedite the interview transcription process. Interview transcriptions and field notes were dated and coded according to the type of data source. Each transcription was reviewed for accuracy. Once the interview transcriptions were reviewed, comparisons were made between these and the researcher’s notes, as well as any supporting documentation that was collected.

Triangulation of sources occurred through examining the consistency of different data sources from within the same method at different points in time. Interview and observation data were obtained at various times of the day and occurred over a five month period of time. The audit trail is also a way to obtain confirmability. This is a transparent description of the research steps taken from the start of a research project to the development and reporting of findings. These records were kept regarding what was done in this research study.

Credibility

Credibility occurs when there is confidence in the “truth” of the findings. Prolonged engagement—spending sufficient time in the field to learn or understand the culture, the
social setting, or phenomenon of interest—helped to demonstrate credibility in this study. Involvement with the participant took place over a period of four months and included four interviews and five different group observations. Long-term involvement with the school and principal provided more and different kinds of data to help exclude “spurious associations and premature theories” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 110). Visits to the school began in October 2006. The final visit to the school occurred in February 2007. This timeframe enabled collection of rich data that were detailed and varied to provide a clearer and more accurate understanding of the phenomena.

Triangulation involves using multiple data sources in an investigation to produce understanding. Information collected from interviews, observations, and documents yielded rich data that, together, resulted in corroborating information. During all phases of data analysis, the researcher paid attention to signs of any discrepant information, either through interview transcripts, document data, or observation notes. Analysis determined that comparisons between and within all data sources supported each other.

Member checks were done both formally and informally as opportunities for member checks may arise during the normal course of observation and conversation. Member checks occurred as the principal reviewed this researcher’s data analysis to check for confirmation of information. Throughout the study, questions this researcher had regarding transcribed data were clarified by the principal through a telephone call or by email. During and at the conclusion of the study, a copy of the collected and categorized data was mailed to Sean, who confirmed that he agreed with this researcher’s interpretation. Thus, sufficient credibility and plausibility checks were carried out to ensure that the case matched the constructions of individuals and groups in the context (Lincoln, 2001, pp. 34–35).
After observations and interviews, along with comparisons against document review, it appeared that all of the information that could be yielded to answer the research question had been exhausted. Because the information was not discrepant and indeed, supported all of the existing data, it was determined that data collection was complete in answering this study’s research question. Transferability, dependability, confirmability, and credibility were addressed through triangulation of data, cognizance and attempted avoidance of researcher bias and reactivity, use of long-term and intensive involvement with the participants, rich data, respondent validation, search for discrepant information, and comparison (Maxwell, 2005).

There were new data that emerged which did not provide answers to the research question. These data were related to challenges associated with the various types of responsibilities expected of the principal. These data were included in the findings as they appeared to be relevant to school improvement and student achievement. Further detail for all research findings will be explained in Chapter 5.

Case Study Design

When “how” and “why” questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context, case studies are the preferred strategy (Yin, 2003b). This study focused on one principal, which categorizes this as a single-case study, and it is bounded by one school. The rationale for this single case is that this particular school represents a unique case, where experts in the field know the IPD Model is being applied by the administrators and teachers. An interpretive case study was used as the research strategy to learn about
the behaviors and practices of a principal as the IPD Model processes were implemented. Additionally, studying the behaviors and practices of one principal over a portion of one school year would enable this researcher to determine how or if these changed over time.

In doing a case study, the goal is to expand and generalize theories and not to enumerate frequencies (Yin, 2003b, p.10). The actions may be generalizable to Iowa schools and leaders using the Model to increase teacher efficacy and student learning. Generalizability will be evident if other school leaders reach common conclusions regarding the principal’s behaviors and practices. Eisner (1991) points out that more than abstractions can be generalized—skills and images can also. We learn a skill in one situation and transfer it to another. “For qualitative research, this means that the creation of an image—a vivid portrait of excellent teaching, for example, can become a prototype that can be used in the education of teachers or for the appraisal of teaching” (Eisner, 1991, p. 199). Merriam (2002) discusses that probably the most common way generalizability has been conceptualized in qualitative research is as “reader or user generalizability”, whereby readers themselves determine the extent to which findings from a study can be applied to their context (p. 28). Firestone (1993) refers to this as a ‘case-by-case transfer’ when the reader asks what specific application can be made in his or her present situation. In order to facilitate the reader transferring findings from a study to his or her present situation, the researcher must provide enough thick, rich description of the study’s context so that comparisons can be made (Merriam, 2002).

**Study Participant**

The principal in an Iowa middle school who was the focus of this case study was
given a pseudonym to protect his anonymity. “Sean” began his educational career by teaching science to students in grades 8—12 in the High Plains district. During this time, he attended graduate school to obtain a principal license. Shortly after Sean acquired his administrative endorsement, he was asked to take the principal position at the newly constructed High Plains Middle School for students in grades 6-8. He has been a principal for the district for the past four years.

In his first year as a principal, Sean continued to teach science half time at both middle and high school levels. For the three years to follow, he has taught one college credit science class at the high school. During these same three years, he also has had a dual leadership responsibility, as he has been assigned as principal to both the High Plains Middle School and one elementary school in the district.

In this case study, a pseudonym was also used to identify the school district and other school leaders and personnel for purposes of maintaining confidentiality. The “High Plains” Middle School is located fifteen miles from a city and is situated in a rural area. Approximately 650 students attend the district and 120 of these students are in the middle school. One elementary is located in one town, another elementary in the second town, and the middle and high schools are joined together in one building located between the two communities. The superintendent also serves as the principal for one elementary. There are three administrators in the district: the case study principal; the superintendent, who also serves as a principal for one elementary; and a high school principal for grades 9-12. All administrators share instructional leadership responsibilities, with the superintendent assuming the major compliance and regulatory reporting duties.

This research study focused primarily on Sean’s leadership as principal in the
middle school setting. However, since his elementary leadership experiences and high school teaching responsibilities are referenced in interview and documentation data, any data related to school improvement and leadership practices in these contexts have been included.

**Study Setting**

For the purpose of this study, this researcher identified a district that was attempting to improve instruction through the use of the IPD Model. In this study, the school and principal were selected because of the criteria met for implementation of the Model. This researcher established the criteria to be used based upon knowledge of districts throughout the state derived from personal involvement in the AEA Analysis of District Career Development Plans (Hansen et al., 2005), and Iowa DE technical assistance sessions for AEAs to help facilitate the IPD Model. In both venues, specific components of the Model were recognized as causing districts difficulty with implementation. As this researcher searched for schools using the Model, the goal was to identify those demonstrating effective processes in these challenging areas.

The search for school districts that would meet these criteria, conversations with personnel from the Iowa DOE, Iowa Association of School Boards, and three different AEAs took place through face-to-face meetings and phone calls. Contacts were made with eight personnel working with the IPD Model and with professional development and school improvement at these agencies. Two of these AEAs represent the most student-populous regions of Iowa and, hence, represent a larger number of school districts when compared with the remaining eight AEAs in the state. This principal was selected for this study because this district was recognized by the AEA as one that was following the IPD
Model and met the established criteria. No information regarding whether or not the principal demonstrated exemplary instructional leadership was known prior to this study. However, the principal was known to be involved in leading his staff as they followed the IPD Model for school improvement. The questions used to identify an appropriate school for this study can be found in Appendix C.

Patton (1990) stated that purposeful sampling seeks information-rich cases that can be studied in depth. The school that was selected for this research study met specific criteria first derived from responses to the questions in Appendix C, then those in Appendix D. The latter were formulated based upon the IPD Model components: (a) collecting and analyzing data; (b) goal setting and student learning; (c) selecting content; (d) designing process for professional development; (e) training and learning opportunities; (f) collaboration and implementation; (g) ongoing formative data collection; and (h) summative evaluation. In questioning education personnel at the AEAs and state educational agencies and reviewing the AEA data regarding implementation of the DCDP (Hansen et al., 2005), this researcher observed that two particular components of the IPD Model, collaboration processes and involvement by all staff in looking at both student and teacher formative data, were less attended to by many districts. Instructional staff in this case study school utilized a method to collect and analyze teacher formative data and also had regular teacher collaboration. This researcher made the determination to focus this case study on a district where the principal and staff were known to use time and personnel in these areas, since making meaning of the behaviors and practices of a principal in a school that uses the IPD Model means attending to all aspects of the Model.
In the initial phase of the research study, once the school district was identified, the district superintendent was contacted to determine which building and leader could be considered for selection. Criteria for inclusion in the study were explained. These criteria were that the principal leads a staff with the IPD Model as the school improvement process and attends to all elements of the Model, including the criteria included in the questions listed in Appendix D. The superintendent affirmed that these criteria were being met; she agreed to have the district considered for participation in the study and that selecting one of the principals for this study could be pursued.

Because the superintendent also serves as a principal for one building in the district, it was her belief that the study should be centered on a building leader who did not share the district leader role. The superintendent stated that the middle school principal was very involved in the Model implementation and recommended that this principal be contacted for participation in the study. This agreement was obtained over the phone and a follow-up email was sent to the principal following the initial conversation (Appendix E).

**Data Methods**

The characteristics of case studies as studies of events within their real-life context have important implications for properly designed field procedures (Yin, 2003a, 2003b). This case study focused on the principal who was interviewed and observed. Also, documents were obtained that related directly to the IPD Model and school improvement. Throughout these data collection procedures, the researcher sought evidence of the principal’s role in implementing the IPD Model.
Interview data collection and analysis

This study employed four in-depth interviews with the building principal that took place at the school building. Each interview sessions was audiotaped. These were scheduled for a time conducive to his schedule and were each approximately three hours in duration. This fit with the interpretivist perspective of the study because it enabled the researcher to focus on how the principal constructed meaning, central to the interpretive approach (Maxwell, 2005, p. 22).

Interview questions were developed (Appendix D) using semi-structured protocols designed to probe responses to the main research question. Referencing DOE protocols enabled the questions to reference specific sub-tasks embedded within elements of the IPD Model. All protocols were intended to provide information related to the IPD Model components and school improvement processes. To provide an example, in the IPD Model the first component is “Collecting and Analyzing Student Data”. One of the interview questions became: “How often does your building analyze student performance data in student reading?”

Building upon and synthesizing technical assistance documents from the Iowa DOE helped to construct the interview protocols. Referencing the IPD Model component “Collecting and Analyzing Student Data”, one technical assistance document cited that “data analysis must involve school faculties as well as central office staff so that understanding of student need is developed” (Hansen et al., 2005, p. 7). Therefore, an interview question was: “Please describe who is involved in analysis of data to identify specific problem areas in student reading.”

While the initial protocols were created before data gathering, the researcher
adjusted the protocols in an iterative manner, making changes to address emerging gaps. An example related to an adjusted protocol for “Collecting and Analyzing Student Data” was when the question “How do you know that all teachers understand student data?” was asked of the principal.

The interview questions were piloted with an AEA school improvement consultant who had an understanding of the components of the Model. Revisions were made to the questions following the pilot. Before the initial interview, the principal was told the purpose of the study, what would happen with the interview transcriptions, and about his opportunity to member-check the transcriptions. He was informed about audio-taping and note-taking as a means of gathering data for this study. The principal consented to his involvement in the study.

To understand leadership behaviors and tasks, several questions elicited descriptions of the school and instructional improvement goals. Related questions prompted the principal to provide “thick descriptions” of the leadership tasks involved in identifying, communicating, and implementing leadership tasks. In addition, these questions afforded the principal the ability to describe the relationship among various responsibilities and the desired aims of the various tasks. Examples of these questions were: 1) How does communication regarding student learning occur with parents? 2) How do you know specific students who are not reading proficiently? and 3) What programs are in place to improve students’ reading skills?

To understand how leadership was distributed among educators in the school, certain questions prompted identification of individuals or groups of individuals responsible for initiating school improvement activities, those involved in the decision-making or
implementation of activities, and those who influenced change in instructional practice. Examples were: 1) Please explain how the leadership team was selected and the specific tasks they have; and 2) Who leads professional development in the building?

Each interview was recorded and transcribed for later analysis. Notes were taken during the sessions to serve as a memory aide when the field notes were constructed. The evening of each day of fieldwork interview and observation notes were reviewed. This researcher’s field notes were then checked against interview and observation data, as an additional check for confirmability.

Follow-up interviews were less structured, addressing discrete questions that emerged during the data analysis process. Examples of some of these questions were: 1) How was the amount of time for the reading consultant determined? and 2) Now that the teachers have seen the new data, how do you plan to communicate your expectations to the teachers?

**Observation data collection and analysis**

Observational data were used for the purpose of describing settings, activities, and people. Observation can lead to a deeper understanding because it provides the context in which events occur. The researcher may be able to view situations and experiences that participants are not aware of or are unwilling to discuss (Patton, 1990).

This researcher asked what observations could take place that would involve the principal in instructional leadership tasks such as meetings or group sessions where instructional topics were being discussed and decisions were being made. The principal suggested whole-staff meetings, instructional leadership team meetings, and professional
development opportunities. The tasks were noted and observation dates were established. The observation notes for this research occurred during and after the school day when the staff and principal were engaged in some aspect of the IPD Model and related school improvement initiatives. Additional observation notes were recorded during interview sessions when the principal would break from the interview to perform tasks. Observation of the principal in his work environment was used in tandem with interviewing.

The five formal observations, that occurred over the span of four different days, were of team or group interactions and included the principal. These observations consisted of three three-hour sessions, one seven-hour session, and a one-hour session. Two of the observations took place during planned professional development sessions with the staff conducted for the portion of the school day after students were dismissed. These professional development sessions focused on the Question-Answer-Relationship (QAR) reading strategy and how staff would utilize these in their content areas.

Two of the sessions were of district leadership team meetings that addressed the IPD Model work and took place during the school day. The purpose of one session was to determine agreement from the team on the scope and sequence for reading standards and benchmarks, as well as specific benchmarks that would be considered “critical” and those to mastered at each grade level. Another session was focused on analysis of student achievement data and discussion around whether or not the current programs were meeting the students’ academic needs.

An additional all-staff meeting was designated to focus on implementation of the reading strategies and how staff perceived their needs to support continued focus on student learning.
These observations took place predominately at meetings that provided opportunities to examine leadership practices centered around enacting components of the IPD Model. Some of these practices consisted of leading discussions about student reading and teacher implementation data, analyzing ITBS scores, planning professional development, and planning how to assist struggling readers. Other practices involved listening to leadership team members and staff, engaging others in thought provoking questions about the goals of the school, and helping staff to problem solve issues. All of these contexts provided rich data to corroborate or dispute interview and documentation data.

During these various meetings, detailed observation notes were recorded, documenting what leadership practices these tasks entailed, those involved or interacting with these tasks, and how leadership around these tasks was relative to context. Following each of these meetings, field notes were transcribed for later analysis.

Several types of observations occurred as the research was conducted: (1) passive presence, being as unobtrusive as possible and not interacting with participants; (2) limited interaction, intervening only when further clarification of actions was needed; and (3) exercising more active control over the observation, as in the case of a formal interview, to elicit specific information. These strategies each had certain advantages, disadvantages, and concerns for the researcher (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). For example, when leadership teams and staff meetings were observed, passive presence was used. This was advantageous in allowing detailed notes to be taken. It was disadvantageous from the standpoint of being able to ask questions at the time when they arose for the researcher. Therefore, additional notes were made and discussed with the principal following the meetings. As observations were conducted, the researcher noted carefully the types of observations that took place.
Document data collection and analysis

To answer the research question, this researcher explored documents with four purposes in mind. First, an examination was conducted of the descriptions of instructional leadership tasks, such as specific school activities and initiatives that constituted efforts to improve instruction. Second, documents were examined to determine involvement or responsibility within the general operation of the school for leading activities and initiatives. Third, indications of how the school was organized were considered. Fourth, documents were examined for potential ways they influenced enactment of leadership distribution.

This research study used several documents as sources of information to study. This researcher explained to the principal the documents needed to assist in understanding the data. In most cases, documents were obtained from the principal. When the principal did not have easy access to these, the documents were obtained from the central office. These included:

1. The District Comprehensive School Improvement Plan, which contained student achievement goals—including the reading goal that the school was trying to reach through the use of the IPD Model. It also contained how the school is specifically applying the Model to achieve its goals;

2. The Annual Progress Report to the community and to the state, which reported the student achievement data for each year to the community and state, including reading;

3. Sub-group data analysis of ITBS, which enabled this researcher clearer understanding of the student reading performance for each grade level and sub-group;
4. A Tier III plan of assistance for a teacher, which provided information on performance of staff that is aligned to instruction and student learning;

5. Scope and sequence for the district reading program, that showed the product of the leadership team’s work and expectations for each grade level teacher;

6. Professional development agendas and handouts used with staff and were a part of the IPD Model work;

7. Copies of teacher implementation logs that contained data showing the frequency of teachers’ implementation of the reading strategies used to improve reading skills for students, the student achievement goal;

8. Community newsletters that contained communication to parents and community on middle school information, including student achievement information;

9. Board minutes communicating student achievement and teacher professional development information; and

10. Copies of any forms regularly used by staff and relevant to the work associated with implementation of the IPD Model.

Issues involved with self-reporting and discrepancies between other means of data were considered. Instructional staff members often have been the personnel who completed school improvement documents, such as collaboration minutes, implementation logs, and professional development handouts. Reporting from a number of persons could have been discrepant in the degree and type of information offered. Therefore, it was important to explore information thoroughly in the documents and to
consider questions of the documents’ authors to understand and make meaning of the artifacts.

An example of this were the documents used for professional development. These were created by the leadership team and disseminated to the staff at professional development sessions. Sean was a member of the team, however, he was not always involved in creation of the documents and instead the team shared and explained these documents with him prior to the session. When this occurred, this researcher obtained information to unanswered questions from members of the leadership team as well as Sean. This was to ascertain that the correct meaning was derived from the document and the principal’s role with content and processes.

Confidentiality was protected with certain documents, by removing the name of any persons from those particular documents. Protected documents included teacher evaluation forms, teacher implementation logs, and student achievement data that included students’ names. However, documents such as the community newsletter, the CSIP, the APR, and board minutes were available for public review.

The document collection and analysis helped to inform subsequent data gathering collection. These documents were scanned into digital files for later analysis.

The most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources (Yin, 2003b). Examination of documents should include attention to information that may be discrepant and could impact the validity of the study (Maxwell, 2005). In this research study, a close examination was made of the previously named documents. It was important to validate information that could be either corroborating or discrepant and explore these further for validation of actual meaning. The documents
corroborated the data from interviews.

As research artifacts were produced, constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used to make the data manageable and to see emergent themes. This process aided in identifying patterns, coding data, and categorizing findings. Code mapping (Seidel, Kjoiseth, & Seymour, 1988) was used to label and understand the data. This occurred with cross-references to interviews, observations, and documents. The process of analysis then began. As each document was viewed on the computer, a common categorical search was conducted by color-coding words and phrases associated with five levels of analysis. These categories facilitated coding used to interpret text meaning.

Sean’s transcribed words coded into categories. The five levels of analyses were conducted as shown in Table 2. At each level of analysis, common categories were grouped together with like sections and dated according to the time of data collection.

The first level of analysis was conducted using the IPD foundational principles, followed by the next level of analysis using the components of the IPD Model. The third level of analysis was conducted by using five emerging themes for groupings. The fourth level of analysis used the 21 McREL responsibilities as coding categories. Finally, the fifth level of analysis was conducted with additional emerging themes; some of these themes were extensions of the third level of analysis, however included more specificity.

Interview, observation, and document data were all coded and categorized in the same manner which allowed for constant comparative analysis to occur. The final process involved reorganizing and analyzing the prominent characteristics of the initial themes to form more succinct categories (Table 2) (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). The levels of data coding that was used in cross comparative analysis is shown in Table 2.
Table 2. Code mapping—Levels of categorization and analyses of data

**First Iteration: Foundational Elements of IPD Model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I) Participative decision-making</th>
<th>III) Leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II) Focus on curriculum, instruction, and assessment</td>
<td>IV) Simultaneity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Second Iteration—Components of IPD Model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A) Collecting-Analyzing Data</th>
<th>C) Selecting content</th>
<th>E) Ongoing cycle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B) Goal setting</td>
<td>D) Designing process</td>
<td>F) Formative evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>G) Summative evaluation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Third Iteration—Additional Emerging Themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I) Cultural Issues</th>
<th>II) Positive Influences</th>
<th>III) Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IV) Competing Initiatives</td>
<td>V) Wishes/Desires</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fourth Iteration—McREL Principal Responsibilities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1) Affirmation</th>
<th>8) Focus</th>
<th>15) Optimizer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2) Change agent</td>
<td>9) Ideals/Beliefs</td>
<td>16) Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Contingent rewards</td>
<td>10) Input</td>
<td>17) Outreach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Communication</td>
<td>11) Intellectual stimulation</td>
<td>18) Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Culture</td>
<td>12) Involvement in curriculum, instruction, assessment</td>
<td>19) Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Discipline</td>
<td>13) Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, assessment</td>
<td>20) Situational awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Flexibility</td>
<td>14) Monitoring/Evaluating</td>
<td>21) Visibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fifth Iteration—Additional Emerging Themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>i) Time Factor</th>
<th>iii) Teacher Preparation</th>
<th>v) Small Districts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ii) Competing Initiatives</td>
<td>iv) Focus on Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment</td>
<td>vi) Preparation for Principalship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As data were being coded, the responses were compared within and between categories. Figure 2 shows text coded following a transcribed interview that shows several levels of analysis:

**Pam:** “What are some of the things that the staff will do and you will do to try to ensure that improvement in reading goes up as you look down the road?”

**Sean:** “You know, first off by participation in this by the general staff and it’s beyond the point of cheerleading. I’m tempted to make the point that if you do not get your logs in when they’re asked for, you know, it’s no different than getting your grades in when they’re due. You’re going to get, you know, I’m tired of this crap. You know, and the other thing, too, there hasn’t been a back and forth, you know, there really hasn’t been a whole lot of questions as far as, you know, and I don’t know if this is the way that we presented it or what, but the teachers have kindly basically just, they’ve basically just taken what we’ve given them and gone with it. There hasn’t been any, ‘Well, why are we doing this? What are we doing?’ You think that when we started this, I was the only one asking that question because I saw us going from strategy to strategy without any connection. You know, I think I mentioned that before. I had a hard time with that and finally I asked the question, and it disappoints me that they don’t.”

(IInterview – 12-7-06)

Figure 2. Data coding for categorization.

In the text shown in Figure 2, the themes that emerged were *focus on curriculum, instruction, and assessment* (pink highlight- level 2), *collecting and analyzing data* (green font- level 2), *leadership* (blue highlight-level 1), *ongoing cycle of school improvement* (purple font-level 2), *designing the process of professional development* (blue font-level 2), and *challenges and competing initiatives* (grey highlight- level 3).

All data sources with corresponding quotations, themes, and categories were organized and printed for another level of interpretive analysis. This enabled each document’s coded theme and category to be reread to ensure the analysis was clear and accurate.
In answering the research question, *What behaviors and practices does this principal exhibit that are related to school improvement as defined by the IPD Model and McREL?*, relationships that existed between elements of the IPD Model and leadership responsibilities emerged and appeared to be well established. There were several categories that emerged that had no direct relationship to leadership responsibilities. However, these categories were included as it was determined by the researcher that this information provided insight to issues that affect leadership behaviors and practices. These were initially categorized by the categories listed in the third iteration in Table 2. Subsequent categorization reorganized these categories into the following categories listed in the fifth iteration in this table and communicated in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5:

1. The time factor;
2. Competing initiatives;
3. Teacher Preparation;
4. Focus on CIA;
5. Small Districts; and
6. Preparation for the Principalship.

The goal of research, including qualitative research, is to present a viable interpretation of the findings. It was essential that this researcher documented actions associated with establishing internal validity (triangulation), theme development, and the relationship between the research questions and data sources (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). Through careful analysis of data using code mapping and constant comparative analysis, member checks, and making all aspects of the analysis process open to public inspection, the findings resulting from this study were confirmed.
Ethical Considerations and Researcher Obligations

The Iowa State University Committee of the use of Human Subjects in Research reviewed and approved this research study. A copy of the human subjects approval is included in Appendix B.

Qualitative research is not concerned primarily with eliminating variance between researchers in the values and expectations they bring to the study, but with “understanding how a particular researcher’s values and expectations influence the conduct and conclusions of the study and avoiding the negative consequences” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 108). Because naturalistic researchers are asking participants to “grant access to their lives, their minds, [and] their emotions,” it also is important to provide respondents with a straightforward description of the goals of the research (p. 25).

This researcher followed these expectations through the following means. First, she communicated her background associated with development of the IPD Model and that every effort would be made to avoid any bias that may be present regarding its implementation. This occurred by treatment of this school leader and his behaviors and actions as an individual case and by not making comparisons to other school leaders known to the researcher.

Confidentiality for the respondents was also ensured. The principal, as the focus of this study, was provided a document outlining the purpose of the study and the plans for observations, interviews, and documentation. Assurance of confidentiality was included in this agreement.

Additionally, researchers are more likely to gain successful access to situations if they make use of contacts that can help remove barriers to entrance, avoid wasting
respondents’ time by doing advance research for information that is already part of the public record, and treat respondents with courtesy (Lofland & Lofland, 1984). This researcher made efforts to ensure that the interview times were not in conflict with other educational activities that could draw on the principal’s time. Several interview and observation times were rescheduled, as previously scheduled sessions were later found to be not conducive to a time for the principal. Documents were obtained during group sessions as these documents were being shared with staff or, when these were not made available at meetings, from the superintendent, so as to avoid requesting additional time from the principal.

The process of conducting a case study begins with the selection of a “case” that is done purposefully, as the person, site, program, process, or bounded system exhibits characteristics of interest to the researcher. While the issue of generalizability “looms larger” in case studies than with other types of qualitative research, much can be learned from a particular case (Merriam, 1998). The colorful description in a case study can create an image—“a vivid portrait of excellent teaching, for example—can become a prototype that can be used in the education of teachers or for the appraisal of teaching” (Eisner, 1991, p. 1999). Further, Erickson (1986) argued that since the general lies in the particular, what we learn in a particular case can be transferred to similar situations. It is the reader, not the researcher, who determines what can apply to his or her context. Stake (2000) explained, “Case researchers, like others, pass along to readers some of their personal meanings or events and relationships—and fail to pass along others. They know that the reader, too, will add and subtract, invent and shape—reconstructing the knowledge in ways that leave it…more likely to be personally useful” (p. 442).
Summary

This chapter addressed research design, a description of the study participant, data collection methods, and data analysis methods. A case study design was used to examine the behaviors and practices of the principal in a school as he led the staff with implementation of the IPD Model and to determine specific responsibilities demonstrated by the principal that advanced the Model’s processes. The next chapter will report the findings from this interpretive case study.
CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

If those in Iowa schools are to be implementing a research-based model for professional development and school improvement, then having a clearer picture of the principal’s actions and behaviors assists in understanding how a school leader creates an environment that supports increased student learning. During the time spent conducting the interviews, observations, and review of documents, this researcher was able to form a much clearer understanding of the actions and behaviors that Sean demonstrated as a principal who was leading in a school that embraced the IPD Model. Understanding the “sense making approach” (Leithwood et al., 2004) is vital to learn more about the system itself—the one in which the principal operates. Interpretations, how meaning is made, have universal implications and may shape the practices of others.

This interpretive case study focused on a single middle school principal in a small rural public school district. The exploratory question that guided this study was, *What behaviors and practices does this principal exhibit that are related to school improvement as defined by the IPD Model and McREL?* This study was conducted in order to identify and describe those leadership behaviors and practices. As the principal in High Plains Middle School led his staff through the IPD Model components, the immediate context of the school was one in the midst of change, as planned practices were implemented to positively impact student learning. The principles of the Model form the foundation for these changes in the school context.

Findings from this study were organized by:

1. The principles and components of the IPD Model; and
2. The 21 leadership responsibilities identified in the McREL research.

Since all districts and instructional staff in Iowa are to use a research-based model for professional development as a means to increase instructional skills of teachers and increased achievement of students, the IPD Model is the process used to first define the principals actions and behaviors.

Leadership responsibilities were further defined through the McREL research, as all 21 principal responsibilities are unique behaviors that represent important knowledge, skills and practices that principals need to emphasize to positively impact student achievement by the extent to which the principal is engaged in these. Categorizing using both the foundations and components of the IPD Model and then by the 21 principal responsibilities enabled all aspects of the principals behaviors and actions to be carefully described and understood.

The headings were derived from the IPD Model components and the McREL principal responsibilities. Because the data were driving the headings, if practices or behaviors were not observed in particular areas, this was stated. To assist in following the organization of the findings, the IPD Model (IPDM) is numbered beginning with the first component and the 21 McREL principal responsibilities are ordered alphabetically.

**Collection and Analysis of Student Data—IPDM 1**

As defined by the Iowa Professional Development Model, the first component for school improvement is centered on data. Data are the starting points to provide information to determine students’ learning needs and to begin to establish goals for student learning. Teachers, principals, and central office personnel are all to be involved in the process to examine and interpret data.
The practices and behaviors demonstrated by this principal related to *data collection and analysis* were:

- ensured that teachers reviewed and interpreted the data;
- involved with data analysis;
- communicated data results to students and parents; and
- helped staff to understand that data directed any changes needed for instruction.

Sean was involved in reviewing and discussing data with staff, as observed during three of the observations. He stated he believes that the middle school teachers understand how students are performing based upon their review of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) data and the Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) data—both annual sources of data. Sean reported that when the leadership team met, they also regularly discussed student progress using classroom data. During two of the observations which included Sean and members of the leadership team, these staff members referenced the classroom, NWEA, and ITBS data and were planning strategies for professional development and student scheduling based upon these data. During one observation where the entire middle school staff was present, these same data were shared and discussed, although one teacher questioned the proficiency data based upon student population, which indicated that not all teachers comprehended the data to the same degree as members of the leadership team. Through interview data and review of the professional development calendar, it was evident that staff members have established meetings designed to discuss student data and curriculum and instruction based upon these data.

Students who performed in the non-proficient range on the ITBS reading comprehension test were given additional reading instruction in the Secondary Support
Reading (SSR) program and teachers in these classrooms analyzed the Basic Reading Inventory (BRI) data several times throughout the year to provide more ongoing and up to date information on student progress. During interview sessions, Sean said students in the SSR program understood their reading performance, as teachers shared the BRI results with each student in the program. When meeting with both the leadership group and the staff as a whole, Sean stressed the fact that all of the student data indicated that students’ reading scores and data were not what they should be and “we need to do better”.

Sean indicated that he would like to see more data communicated with students and parents:

> It’s kind of an outgrowth of what we do as a district. We look at what kids are doing, where they need help...I know that if you’re struggling to read, that you know that to begin with...I’ll go to an IEP meeting with the charts and the graphs...Here’s how they did in fourth grade, fifth grade, sixth grade, and so forth. And that helps the parents quite a bit. But regular ed. kids—we send the ITBS scores home, and we report them like we’re required to. But beyond that, not really.

He said that 40 of the 150 students, or more than one-fourth of the middle school students, received extra help with reading because of non-proficient scores on ITBS. Students in SSR were those students not receiving special education services. Students in special education were provided additional reading support through the resource room classroom, as well as the leveled or guided reading program offered in Seminar class.

Because Sean was involved with data review and analysis and worked with the staff during these processes, this provided a model for teachers to also stay focused on student data. He expected that data would be reviewed regularly, not only for an aggregated group or grade level of students, but also for each individual student. His emphasis on staff knowing how students were progressing was consistent. This knowledge and involvement of
assessment is a behavior that required time and effort as he focused on helping the staff to realize that student achievement that is below expectations is the basis for change.

During one afternoon’s observation of ITBS data review by the teachers, it seemed evident that all teachers had a basic understanding of the data. One teacher questioned the percentages of the ITBS assessment, based upon student population in the school, so it appeared that there was opportunity to help all teacher develop a deeper knowledge of data. The leadership team members had a solid grasp of the student data, probably due to the fact that they have had more opportunities to analyze data.

**Goal Setting—IPDM 2**

According to the research cited in the IPD Model (Bernhardt, 1998; Rosenholtz, 1989; Schmoker, 1999), after the first step of analyzing data, targeted goals should then be established for improved student achievement. The focus for those in schools should be one or two instructional priorities and should be clear statements of high expectations for student learning. The goals should align with the district goals included in the CSIP. Specifically stated student achievement goals would then enable staff to decide on a professional development target that would include the implementation of a specific program or strategies to address the goal.

The principal’s behaviors and practices related to the component goal setting were:

- assisted staff in establishing targeted goals for instruction;
- articulated clear statements to the staff regarding high expectations; and
- aligned the building’s goals with those of the CSIP.

The CSIP and District Annual Progress Reports communicated the reading comprehension goal that the High Plains Middle School staff established for the past three
years. Sean stated that the goals were established as the student achievement data were analyzed and it became clear that too many students were reading poorly. The administrators and teachers, with input from the community members on the School Improvement Advisory Council (SIAC) and the Board of Education, collaboratively determined that reading needed to be the primary focus for students in the district.

These plans were incorporated into the district’s five-year CSIP that was submitted to the DE in the fall of 2004. It was Sean’s responsibility to communicate these goals to the teachers in his building. The overarching goals for middle school students were: (1) improve reading comprehension, especially targeting low socio-economic students, students with IEPs, English language learner students, and males in grades K-8; (2) improve vocabulary acquisition for students in grades 7-12; and (3) improve reading comprehension for all students. The first targeted goal for teachers for the five-year CSIP period was to ensure that students would establish independent comprehension on a grade-level passage by the spring assessment. The staff understood that the reading goals were the basis for the professional development program, as these goals were discussed at staff and professional development meetings.

As evidenced by the student achievement data, the scores at High Plains Middle School did show improvement in reading comprehension in 2005-2006 when the percentage of students proficient in the eighth grade on the ITBS went from 54% in the previous year to 74%. One of the additional benefits, according to Sean, was that mathematics scores also improved. He and the staff attributed this gain to students being better able to read the math word problems.
In the fall of 2006, Sean said his staff believed that reading scores and achievement were on the upward trend. This belief was based on the formative and ongoing reading assessments such as the BRI and classroom grades that Sean and the teachers reviewed. Discussions about these data occurred with the leadership team, as the leadership team members, comprised mostly of reading and special education teachers, indicated that the majority of students were showing growth in reading. Sean said that, if this trend continued in the 2006-2007 school year, mathematics would then be the next area of focus, as analyses of mathematics scores showed this to be the second content area most needing improvement. Since High Plains is a small school district, focusing on two different content areas simultaneously would have most likely been challenging.

In October of 2006, Sean gave positive comments regarding the professional development program and its effect on teacher learning, as well as the 2005-2006 improved students’ reading comprehension skills on both the ITBS and Basic Reading Inventory data. He explained the rationale behind the sequence of focus for selecting the school’s goal areas and determining the cycle with reading, mathematics, and science:

With the math leadership team, we sat down and put together a curriculum cycle...We started with reading and now that reading [curriculum cycle] is done and up, we are not inventing [a new program]. We are just lubricating the bearings basically. We are just keeping [the reading strategies program] going and training people and making sure they are doing it. Then we looked at...the next subject we need. Well, what does No Child Left Behind look at? At reading and math. So math was next. And our science scores...were always really high...So then we picked up math because it is part of our curriculum cycle and the need was there.

Sean’s discussions regarding the professional development and assessments showed a depth of knowledge regarding goals for student achievement in reading and math. He continued to emphasize to staff the importance of paying attention to how students were progressing and
whether or not student achievement goals were being met. A significant amount of his time as principal centered around communicating the goals that were established and why these goals were selected, so that teachers were consistently reminded of the focus for students at High Plains Middle School.

**Selecting Content—IPDM 3**

The specific content that teachers select for professional learning is to be based upon the analyses of student data and the targeted goals established for improved student achievement. The IPD Model specifies, in compliance with *No Child Left Behind*, that professional development choices need to be determined by the research-base for a considered program, the technical assistance necessary to support a program, and the match between the program and the school. Selecting content means choosing a program as well as choosing a provider for the professional development.

The behaviors and practices that Sean exhibited for *selection of content* were:

- spending time reviewing student data, the approach needed to improve reading skills, and identifying the match between the approach and students in his school;
- being involved with the leadership team as the reading strategies and programs were selected and the assistance necessary to support the teachers’ learning of these strategies was planned;
- collaborating with the leadership team to develop the SSR program for students who needed additional reading support;
- assisting in the attainment of consultant services and plans for how those services would be used for staff professional learning;
ensuring that the reading strategies selected as teachers’ learning content were included in the district’s CSIP and that the content aligned with the goals for the district; and

• having discussions with the leadership team to articulate how the strategies would be used and what follow up curriculum and instructional changes were being planned.

During interviews, Sean discussed that once the building staff had determined the focus would be on reading comprehension, the High Plains Middle School teachers agreed they all would learn and use certain scientifically-based research reading strategies. This agreement was evidenced during observations when the teachers and Sean were engaged in discussions regarding the QAR strategies and each person provided input regarding how the strategies were being implemented in their classrooms and developed additional questions that could be used with students in each content area. In the spring of 2005, the building leadership team, including Sean, decided that there was a need to use another approach to increase reading, so the SSR program was developed as a means for additional support for students who were scoring in the non-proficient range on the ITBS reading comprehension test. The SSR program was in its second year and the content for the program had been developed by the leadership team with the principal’s involvement.

To understand how selecting new content for reading was developed to improve achievement for students, one needs to understand the programs offered prior to the new content selection and adoption. According to interview data, all middle school students had reading classes at High Plains for 42 minutes each day. However, Sean admitted that prior to the time when there was an emphasis on the new content to increase reading skills, the
middle school did not focus on the process of reading when compared with how reading is
taught at the elementary level. Since Sean has also been serving as a building principal at one
of the elementary schools, he said he tried to “rectify in his head” how staff should teach and
improve reading comprehension at the middle school. Traditionally, secondary programs
have had a tendency to focus more on content area teaching as opposed to reading
comprehension in content areas, so Sean’s discussion about the dichotomy between what he
was observing between the two schools was consistent with this trend.

Going down to the elementary as an administrator who had not taught elementary—not even been associated with an elementary until I got that job—I look at elementary as a teaching process. You’re teaching the process of reading, the process of math, the process of all these things and especially the further down [the grades] you go. Out here, there’s more content when you talk about the discrete sciences we teach each year—in the different math courses and social studies and the like. And what we are trying to do is to incorporate more process into the general education classroom. So, what we are focusing on in the middle school is “every teacher is a reading teacher”. I don’t care if you teach math; you are a reading teacher.

Because of these recognized differences between elementary and middle school
teaching, Sean was even more deliberate in helping staff to understand the significance of the
focus on comprehension and the rationale behind the need for all teachers to help students to
increase reading skills.

Interview and CSIP data showed that the school district contracted with an external
reading consultant to be the provider for content delivery. Sean reported that he and the other
principals believed it was important to utilize the consultant to meet with the building teams
who were assigned to assist with reading and plans for how professional development would
be delivered as he and the other principals did not believe they possessed the expertise in
delivery of scientifically-based research reading programs to fully explain the theory behind the practice.

Sean believed that for small districts such as High Plains, having the technical assistance from the reading consultant has been very important. He said he relied on the consultant’s background and knowledge of the content and skills necessary to help staff understand how they could improve student learning since the district did not have this level of expertise within the staff.

Not all schools use reading consultants. However, Sean had input in the High Plains District determining that this support was needed. This was also reiterated during a meeting with the building team, Sean, and the superintendent when they gave input into the consultant’s allotment of time for the following year. During interviews, Sean discussed how the reading consultant had helped the elementary staff with implementation of a number of research-based strategies. Based upon the success the elementary staff had with these strategies, the reading consultant suggested strategies to the middle school leadership team. The leadership team agreed to the adoption of the strategies, which could be used by all teachers in their classrooms. Prior to the fall of 2006, the staff had learned the “think-aloud”, “read-aloud”, and “summarization” strategies. The staff was beginning to learn the question-answer-relationship (QAR) strategy in October 2006 when this research study began.

Selecting the program match for the High Plains students was observed to be seriously considered by the leadership team at planning meetings and professional development sessions. When Sean shared decision making with team members and the consultant in deciding the reading program and strategies, he let the staff know that the work the group was undertaking would be accomplished collaboratively. When teachers saw their
principal engaged in this stage of school improvement and asking questions to learn and understand, this helped establish credibility and trust among the staff.

**Designing Process for Professional Development: Creating the Plan—IPDM 4**

According to the IPD Model, once the research-based program has been selected, designing the process for how professional learning will occur includes planning (a) how data are collected and analyzed; (b) how staff receives ongoing training throughout the year; (c) how adequate time and support will exist for leadership teams to meet; (d) how teachers will learn and implement new curriculum; and (e) how collaboration will occur. Planning for this ensures that schools include opportunities for theory, demonstration, and practice (Joyce & Showers, 1981, 2002).

Specific elements of the IPD Model component “Designing the Process for Professional Development” are: (a) training and learning opportunities; (b) collaboration and implementation; and (c) formative assessment. Information that is gathered regarding implementation is a part of the process that informs how professional development should be adjusted or refined.

**Training/Learning Opportunities—IPDM 5**

According to the research underlying the IPD Model, for staff to be able to transfer new instructional strategies/programs into classroom practice, educators need to understand the theory, see expert and peer demonstrations, plan together and provide feedback, and have opportunities for practice. There are a number of factors to be considered in planning for effective training and learning. These include a commitment of substantial time, abandoning stand-alone workshops, giving staff time to learn the theory and transfer the programs into
the classroom, observing expert and peer demonstrations of the program, and providing time for staff collaboration and reflective discussion regarding the program or strategy (Iowa DOE, 2002, 2005a, 2005b).

In planning training and learning opportunities, Sean demonstrated these practices and behaviors:

• piloted the reading strategies the first year, along with the other members of the leadership team;
• met with the other members of the leadership team and the reading consultant to plan the professional development sessions for teachers;
• ensured that professional development sessions included pedagogy and scaffolded learning for staff;
• communicated to staff that the goals for instruction were to implement the reading strategies with specific frequency; and
• was involved in the professional learning time with the teachers when a new strategy was introduced and discussed.

Time for theory, demonstration, and practice

Sean reported that he and other members of the leadership team initiated the reading program by implementing the strategies with their own students for the first year. The following year, the strategies were taught one at a time to the other teachers. The training for teachers to learn to use the strategies occurred during the early dismissal in-service time when all gathered around one table and went through the discussion of the strategy, the purpose, the process, and necessary elements for implementation of the strategy. Sean spoke
favorably about how this professional learning time was planned and utilized. During these meetings, the team was also engaged in determining specific sessions when strategies would be presented to staff for professional development. He and other members of the leadership team planned for some of the professional development time to be reserved for the teachers to rehearse the strategy before it was used with students in the classrooms.

Sean said that the teachers who have served with him on the building team have had a clear idea of the “big picture” for the staff’s professional learning, but he did not believe that the entire staff had this same understanding. During the spring of 2006, the leadership team, Sean, and the consultant met to clarify the questions expected from staff: “Where are we going with this? Are we ever going to get done? What is the whole point of professional development?” Each member of the team said they needed to be able to clearly communicate this for the staff, so Sean and the team discussed the consistent message to be delivered.

During interviews, Sean reported that he had explained to the staff that they were learning one strategy and then another because different situations required different techniques, “and…the whole point is that…we’re putting all these different tools in your toolbox, and it’s up to you as a professional to decide…which one is appropriate and to use it when you see that it’s necessary”.

Over a period of two years, staff would demonstrate implementation of the strategies in the classrooms, learning one strategy at a time. Sean said his role was to model leadership and implement these practices in the same way that teachers did. He said he recognized that he was not a reading expert and needed to rely upon the consultant to provide the initial training; he would provide the backup support and encouragement for the staff as they implemented.
During meetings with the leadership team, the reading consultant discussed ways to strengthen the reading curriculum. The purpose was to ensure that it was aligned and articulated. In January 2007, the team met to determine how they would assure that all benchmarks were being addressed at each grade level and in which content areas. The team agreed that a checklist would be the best tool to serve this purpose.

Subsequent professional development sessions with the entire staff focused on both the QAR reading strategy and how teachers would commit to being responsible for teaching specific benchmarks. During one observation, this researcher observed as he asked all teachers for a copy of the benchmarks that each grade or course level teacher agreed they would have responsibility for instructing. Through this request, he demonstrated to teachers that he expected accountability for what each had said they would teach.

Sean tried to be present for half of the professional development trainings, as he made certain he attended the site where a new strategy was being discussed. He alternated his attendance for professional development sessions between the elementary and the middle school buildings. The buildings are 10 miles apart; therefore, it was not feasible for him to be present for the entire session in both buildings in one afternoon. He said that having the assistance of the reading consultant and the leadership team has been instrumental in assuring teachers had clear expectations and their questions get answered.

When asked if all of the teachers had fully “bought into” use of the reading strategies, he said that according to the implementation logs, they were all implementing. He said he had not been able to “…watch more than a few of them do it and evaluate [the strategy]. And [those observed] do it true to form; they follow the implementation.”
Sean said that learning the new reading strategies has been fairly well accepted by the middle school teachers. He believed that this might have been due to the fact that many of the teachers are younger and more open to teaching new concepts. He also said there has been no open questioning about why this was being done. He thought that the staff believed it was everyone’s job to help teach students to improve reading. The staff was observed at two different professional development sessions as they learned and practiced a new strategy. The teachers listened attentively as the teacher leaders facilitated the sessions. The teachers made application to their content areas, asked relevant questions, and seemed to understand how the strategy would be used in their classrooms.

Sean explained to the staff that implementation was expected and that record keeping of usage would continue to occur through the implementation logs. He stated his belief that it was essential for all teachers to implement the strategies on a regular and frequent basis, so that students would become well versed in the strategies. Sean spoke about the regularity he expected from staff:

*You’re going to—we’re going to—do this job every day, and if we can do it consistently and properly, we don’t have to make a huge, grand statement every time we’re going to do something. We just need to be consistent.*

The focus on improving reading through regular and frequent implementation of the research-based strategies was apparent. During interviews, professional development meetings when reading strategies were the focus, and team leadership meetings when the group centered discussions on strategies, improving the reading program to increase student achievement was the central focus of discussion among Sean and all teachers.

This researcher had the opportunity to participate in and observe many professional development and staff meetings in various schools. It is rare to consistently see meetings that
operated with as much focus as those at High Plains Middle School. Sean’s meetings and professional development sessions with staff had clear targets, time was used efficiently, and staff consistently behaved professionally with no side-barring or diversions from the topic.

Sean’s perceptions regarding teacher beliefs seemed accurate, as observations during staff discussions appeared that staff were respectful and interested in the reading program. All staff members appeared engaged and on-topic during meetings and professional development sessions. When teachers realized the principal had the same expectations for himself as he had for them, more opportunities for collaborative and professional relationships seemed to form. Positive and professional relationships were observed when Sean and the staff were together.

**Collaboration/Implementation—IPDM 6**

Collaborative work includes ongoing training, planning and developing lessons and materials, analyzing student work, and solving problems. Teacher collaboration requires time and clarity of purpose. The IPD Model states that those in schools should plan for and specify how teacher collaboration will occur (Iowa DOE, 2002, 2005a, 2005b). Leadership teams that include teachers and administrators together often facilitate collaboration time. As stated in the IPD Model, rarely does collaboration require complex and/or lengthy training to enable teachers to work together professionally and productively (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Joyce & Calhoun, 1996; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Little, 1997; Rosenholtz, 1989; Showers, 1982, 1984, 1985; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Showers et al., 1987; Slavin et al., 1996).
Sean demonstrated *collaboration* and *implementation* when he:

- scheduled times and met with the leadership team regularly;
- provided adequate time for the leadership team to plan together;
- expected the leadership team to develop clear plans for the teachers regarding the use of the strategy;
- provided time for the reading teachers to collaborate and discuss the effectiveness of the reading program; and
- established collaboration time for the grade 6 teachers.

**When leadership teams meet**

The leadership team was comprised of the three middle school reading teachers and Sean who met with the consultant on a regular basis. Sean reported that, by early October 2006, the leadership team had already met five times to plan for the 2006-2007 school year. They met during the morning about every six weeks. This type of schedule is fairly typical for leadership teams. Teams should meet as often as needed to communicate regularly about student achievement and then establish or adjust programs based upon data (Iowa DOE, 2002, 2005a, 2005b).

In order to dig deeply into data and establish plans for programs, leadership teams need to be allowed enough time to meet. Time for meetings should be dedicated specifically for this purpose and need to be well planned. Team meetings will have less than positive results when time is short-changed.

A few years ago, Sean and the high school principal agreed to try a meeting arrangement in which the middle school team met for the first two hours of the morning,
followed by the high school team for the second two hours. Sean reported that this time was too rushed and did not allow the leadership team members time to really organize and prepare. On October 5, 2006, the school had their first professional development day that started by having the team meet and prepare in the morning, followed by all staff members meeting together in the afternoon. This time structure proved more productive for the team.

During the interview with Sean in the late morning of that same day, he related that he had just checked his email and the leadership team had sent the facilitation guide to him. He commented that it was a fuller document than usual and this did not provide him much time to read the material ahead of the professional development session at 1:00 pm when the staff would convene. However, he said that, by structuring the day in this manner, the leadership team had more time to plan and would be better prepared. Each time the team planned for professional development, they prepared an agenda and a packet for all of the staff members to use. The packet included information about the strategy, practice opportunities for the reading strategy, implementation data and analysis, and any pertinent information for that day. This type of prepared material was used at each professional development session with the staff. As the staff was observed using the material, it appeared that the handouts were easy to follow and included a variety of processes that engaged the staff. Most teachers accumulated and organized these documents, bringing them to the sessions so as to have all of the materials accessible as each new strategy was to build upon the one previously learned.
How collaboration is organized

According to the IPD Model (Iowa DOE, 2002, 2005a, 2005b), collaboration time should occur frequently and regularly for training and for discussion of the strategy, as well as frequent discussion about implementation, feedback about strategy use, demonstration and practice of the Model, and ongoing discussion about student learning. Sean was asked how often professional development occurred and how the teachers collaborated. Did the staff have training on a regular basis? How often were they able to meet and discuss student data and the success of the strategies? Sean said that these are areas that have been difficult to build into the High Plains school day on a frequent or regular basis and that having more time for training and collaboration would probably make the teachers more effective:

You know it’s hard. In other jobs I have been in, if you had to get additional training they would just pull you off the line, you go do your training, your work would still go on…and then you’d go back with your new skills and that would be the focus of that day. But here, since the kids are still going to come and it’s one teacher for one class, what are you going to do? You know we do a lot…I wish we could find a way to somehow do professional development removed from a school day.

The staff tried to have a teaming time for all middle school teachers; however, the only group that has been able to meet regularly is the grade 6 teachers, due to scheduling of classes. The grade 6 teachers use their preparation time to meet together.

When we first started the middle school, I made the expectation clear that everybody would meet so many days a week and discuss whatever—and my 6th grade group has maintained that. Now my 7th graders—they all go to an exploratory third hour, but the problem with that is, some of my 7th grade teachers are either shared with the high school and one of my 7th grade teachers is teaching an exploratory. We’re so small that that just can’t work.

It was clear that Sean made serious attempts to provide the necessary time needed for the leadership team to meet, as well as the 6th grade teachers. However, the daily schedule for teachers made it nearly impossible for teachers to find time to meet
regularly to discuss strategy implementation and student progress on a frequent basis. Particularly in a small school with fewer staff, teachers taught a number of different classes, which required additional preparation time. Also, a seven or eight-period school day leaves only 50 minutes a day for teacher planning. It was difficult to establish a regular and structured collaboration schedule when available teacher time was in short supply.

Collaboration did occur with staff during professional development sessions when they had opportunities to see the strategies modeled and to discuss these. Sean also said that the three reading teachers on the leadership team, along with one of the resource room teachers, met once each year to plan how students in the SSR classes would be grouped. During the school year, these teachers collaborated quarterly as they discussed student growth based upon BRI data and the program’s effectiveness. They also discussed any program modifications that could be considered and met with Sean to discuss their findings and recommendations. The request to have the team members meet to group the students came from Sean, as he understood that these teachers had a strong knowledge base of reading and knew the students.

Sean recognized barriers that inhibited collaboration. He wanted to find a way for his seventh and eighth grade teachers to find a common time to meet, but was unable to find a solution.

The process of designing professional development must include planning sufficient time for teachers to collaborate and have opportunities for practice and feedback. At High Plains, professional development sessions occurred about every two weeks. However, the time for professional learning was from 1:00 until 4:00 for most sessions. Cumulatively, the
number of hours in the school year for teachers to engage in professional learning was less than Sean desired. Without more frequently structured collaboration opportunities for all of the teachers to meet, either by grade level or by shared planning time, Sean’s ability to know and understand how teachers were actually implementing the strategies was impaired. This became a concern later in the professional development process.

**Ongoing Data Collection: Formative Data—IPDM 7**

As stated in the IPD Model, in order to ensure teachers are implementing often and accurately, implementation data need to be collected and analyzed. This informs the school staff as to the frequency and fidelity of implementation and understanding the connections between teacher usage and student learning. These teacher implementation data are then used to inform future professional development decisions.

Ongoing and frequent data collection regarding both student work and implementation of the strategy/program addresses the questions: “Are students responding as we predicted? Should we increase/modify our use of certain interventions? Do we need to modify the professional development?” (Calhoun, 2001; Hertling, 2000; Yap et al., 2000).

When considering formative ongoing data collection, Sean:

- ensured that students in grades K-8 had assessment data collected in a folder and that this data followed the students through the grades;
- provided opportunities for teachers to review the student data;
- reviewed the data with the leadership team and all teachers;
- used data to help the leadership team decide accommodations and programs for students;
helped develop the assessment schedule;

• used the online assessment system to analyze student performance data;

• grouped the students in the reading programs according to the student reading data;

• determined the expectations for implementation of strategies with the leadership team;

• communicated implementation expectations to the staff;

• collected the teachers’ implementation logs;

• used teacher logged data to inform how often the reading strategies and reading programs were being implemented.

**Formative reading assessments**

Sean stated that the leadership team used meeting time to review and discuss the student reading data that was collected throughout the school year. These formative assessments were administered to inform teachers how students were progressing since baseline student achievement data were collected. Teachers were observed discussing formative assessment data during both a leadership team meeting and a professional development session. Sean said that having staff look at results on a regular basis and analyzing student performance was a new way of doing business for the teachers.

He said that he would like staff to rely more upon data to make instructional decisions and that previously the understanding of student progress by staff has been more a “qualitative one, rather than a quantitative one”. He explained that teachers have traditionally discussed their opinion about whether or not students were improving based on
perception rather than actual numbers. Sean said that as a leadership team, they were trying to help staff interpret the data in order to make good instructional decisions.

To help teachers learn to use data to make instructional decisions, Sean had his secretary give folders to each of the elementary teachers to collect student achievement data. The folders were to follow the students from grade to grade. Sean said that these folders would have data added each year to show students’ longitudinal growth over time. He stated that teachers were to review the student folders to whatever extent was needed to determine the deficit areas for students who perform poorly in reading. Sean said that he believed the elementary staff had a better idea of their students’ progress throughout the year than the middle school teachers. He continued to explain that in the past, elementary teachers used perception more than data when describing student reading performance and growth. However, he now believes that these same elementary teachers know exactly how students are performing and this information is now based on specific formative data. These data then provide information on what and how to teach:

So we look at a lot of that... to decide what we need to do and the first step then is to use our at-risk person [at the elementary] or one of our aides to provide a little supplemental instruction... If it is kindergarteners and they don’t know the letters yet—to work with them. We will write a plan that says “for 15 minutes a day or 10 minutes a day, so and so is going to sit down and review their letters—and we’re going to do this for four weeks and at the end, this is the assessment—we are going to see if they learned their letters.” And, if there is no improvement, then we will move towards a more intensive plan. And again we will do the same thing, but instead of working with a group of kids on their letters in that class, we will work with an individual student. And then, if that student doesn’t [improve] then we will talk about an IEP. That is what that team does there—and every teacher, the Title 1 reading teacher is there, as well—so on the building level team, that is how reading is done at [the elementary].

Because Sean saw that reading instruction at the elementary was based more on formative data, he and the middle school leadership teachers planned how their formative
assessments should be administered. The group developed a schedule for giving the district-wide NWEA MAP assessment, deciding that the MAP would be given in the spring and the ITBS in the late fall, with the teachers proctoring the tests. The MAP test was administered to students for the first time in the spring of 2005; therefore, this provided only one year’s comparison with the 2006 testing period. Sean reported that there was growth from the beginning of the 2005-2006 school year compared to the spring 2006 assessment results for grades 6, 7, and 8. The test was administered with six weeks of school still remaining. Sean said he felt confident there was likely more growth that occurred by the end of the school year, but this was not measured due to the time of testing.

**SSR program data**

Sean explained that the students whose scores fell in the non-proficient range on the ITBS were placed in the SSR program. There were four groups of students, with 12-15 students of mixed grade levels in each group. The teacher provided reading instruction that focused upon fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Students were grouped based on their reading levels as determined by lexile scores, rather than percentile scores from the ITBS. Students read books at their current level with the goal to advance levels over time. This program was designed by the reading teachers in the 2004-2005 year and first implemented in 2005-2006. The class met on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays and focused on improving reading.

To determine how students were progressing in the SSR classes, the BRI was administered four times during the year as the formative assessment. Sean grouped the SSR
students by analyzing the MAP data. He explained the process he used with the area education agency online assessment system:

*I was able to put in my search parameters, take all that data out, put it on an Excel spreadsheet, organize it in ascending order so I can see who is what and where and what the proficiency line equals. I pick proficiency off the ITBS measure and then I group, based on how they have also done on math. So we are kind of using both assessments to put these groups together.*

Sean was very comfortable using data and because he worked with student data himself and could see firsthand which students were proficient in reading, he acquired important knowledge that he used to communicate with the others on the leadership team and staff. All of this rich information helped the teachers to stay informed about student progress.

Using data, Sean said he and other team members determined the need to change Seminar class. In the first year of Seminar, the middle school included only those students who were proficient on ITBS reading comprehension and did not include students in special education. However, by sorting the data in this manner, the number of students in the SSR class was greater than both the teachers and Sean felt was appropriate to be able to provide individualized instruction. Students in special education were then served in Seminar class during Year 2, allowing the number of students in SSR class to decrease to 12-15 students per group. He shared how data has helped determine student placement in the SSR program:

*Since my reading teachers teach SSR, I think they have a really good understanding of who’s where and who needs what. You know, I’ve had conversations where, “This kid’s in my SSR—and why? I know he [scores] much higher. So again, they have an understanding.*
The topic of teaming arose as he discussed that middle school teaming enabled teachers more opportunities to have discussions about students and their progress. He said that although the staff members have not had the same time for formally scheduled collaboration, the teachers consistently tried to make time for informal discussions about students and learning:

*There is informal discussion of this kid or that kid. You know where they are at and what they are doing. I am very pleased that our reading teachers are focused on data driven decisions. I am a science guy, so if you can’t show me numbers, it doesn’t exist.*

**Teacher implementation data**

During interviews, Sean related that the leadership team met and discussed that the teachers were to keep implementation logs that showed the frequency of strategy use by teachers. Sean determined that he would be the one responsible for communicating this to the staff and that they would then submit these records monthly. The leadership team members decided that the staff would stay with one strategy until the implementation records indicated that at least 75% of the teachers were using the strategy correctly over a given period of time. This was determined to be necessary for the team to have assurance that most of the teachers were implementing a strategy with ease and regularity, prior to learning a new one. Once teachers were comfortable with the use of a strategy, a new one would be introduced. By November of 2006, the teachers were using their fourth strategy. The expectation from the leadership team was that, while more strategies would be introduced over time, staff members would build upon previous strategies and continue to use all of these in the appropriate teaching situations.
In previous years, the staff had been using both a frequency log and an integrity log to track implementation. The integrity log was designed in a way so teachers could prove a strategy was being used as it was intended. The implementation log was a recording of the number of times the strategy was used and in which classes. Sean, as in his teacher role, was also submitting both of the implementation logs. Once he gathered the logs, he shared them with the members of the leadership team, who reviewed them and provided feedback to each teacher. Sean said he experienced some frustration himself when he received some of his own implementation logs from the team:

*For a while...I was getting my implementation logs back saying “you’re doing it wrong”, so in a way that was difficult, and you could see the teachers were getting a little frustrated.*

Initially, Sean said the teachers also were trying to keep implementation logs for all of the strategies they were using. Sean expressed that moving from one reading strategy to another has been challenging because the teachers were trying to keep implementation records for each strategy. The instructional staff met and discussed the fact that keeping records for all of the strategies was time-consuming and confusing. In the 2005-2006 school year, the staff collectively made the decision to keep implementation records only on frequency data and for the strategy most recently learned. This proved to take less time for teachers and demonstrated to the staff that Sean and members of the leadership team listened to their input regarding the reading program and professional development.

Sean compared teachers using reading strategies with students to the work he did repairing jet engines in the Air Force. He explained that in the service, he had many tools to use, but once he learned how to effectively use one, he would move on to learning another. He said he believed that in this same manner, it was not necessary for teachers to keep
implementation records on a strategy once they became proficient using it. He believed that once the teachers met the goal of implementation with a strategy, it was time to move on to the next one.

Staff members submitted the implementation logs to Sean through email each month and he collected and viewed these to be certain that teachers were implementing the strategies as discussed. Through interviews and during an observation, it was learned that the leadership team reviewed the data as a part of their monthly meeting:

Again, the expectation is, in a given period, that you do one [strategy] to show that you can do it right and then from there you just do [record] frequency… [to] know that they are using it, to know if there are any difficulties using it. If we don’t meet our goal as far as implementation, we will try to figure out what [teachers] need. Do they need more collaboration time? Do they need the [reading] teachers to take them through teaching QAR again? Those types of things. Again, there is no way we can, in the short six-week period, measure how the strategy has impacted the kids that well. As a scientist, I feel there are too many variables in too short of a time.

Because a number of the teachers saw the same students more than one class period a day, the students commented on different teachers using the strategies. Sean viewed these as positive because it meant that teachers were using the strategies in their classrooms:

The kids would be like, “Oh man, we just did one of these in Mrs. Thompson’s class!”…It’s not like we have a handful of teachers on a team doing it…with 500 kids, where occasionally they do it. So part of it, too, I think, is when the kids see these strategies enough, they incorporate these themselves. So, you know, we’ll see how our scores look…when we get our scores back.

In January 2007, the leadership team and the reading consultant were observed beginning to determine specific reading benchmarks that teachers would assume responsibility for through the use of a checklist. They also discussed how implementation logs were used and for what purpose. The consultant emphasized that the purpose “is not
‘check it of—there, I did it’, kind of thing,” but instead, to make certain that staff was intentional in planning the lesson and was reflective with what occurred in the teaching and learning process. The implementation logs were to be used as a way to improve lessons. The consultant said she fully recognized that teachers did not like filling out logs, but that logs would help the lesson go more smoothly if they were used as a planning tool.

Sean frequently communicated his expectations to the staff. To track student progress in reading, the expectations were that student reading formative assessments would be administered and reviewed regularly. Sean also made it clear that all teachers were to use the logs to demonstrate the frequency of strategy implementation, not abandoning strategies previously learned, and that the logs were to be a true reflection of strategy use. It is commendable for a school staff to intentionally plan for this data collection and to adhere to these practices.

While implementation data for the teachers’ usage of strategies was reported on written forms, Sean said that he had not observed all of the teachers when they practiced the reading strategies with students in classrooms. It seemed uncertain whether implementation occurred as Sean expected. It became apparent at a later time, when student achievement scores declined, that this might have been a problem area. Following the recognition by staff that the ITBS scores has declined in some grades, Sean recognized the urgency of more observations and walkthroughs in the classroom to observe all of the teachers as they used the strategies.

Keeping one record at a time on one strategy lightened the record keeping workload for teachers. Also, because the staff abandoned keeping records on strategies already learned, the assumption made by Sean and the teacher leaders was that all teachers were continuing to
use all learned strategies with regularity. This could not be proven, however, since there was no documentation to support this assumption. The dilemma for school leaders is how to balance record keeping for accountability purposes with the time that is involved and takes away from instructional time. This is a significant consideration for all types of formative assessment, both for student and teacher records, and something that the principal and staff need to reconcile.

**Program Evaluation: Summative Data—IPDM 8**

Summative data generally measure the effectiveness of a program on a less frequent basis when compared with formative data. However, it is generally the measure that the school or district has established for evaluating progress towards student achievement goals. Summative evaluation addresses the questions: Was the intervention implemented with fidelity? Did we meet our student achievement goal? Measures of program effectiveness occur at regular intervals, taking stock of progress towards goals. Data are used in the school’s decision-making as it plans next steps in the ongoing cycle (Iowa DOE, 2002, 2005a, 2005b).

As *summative data* is considered, Sean:

- involved staff in determining the schedule for summative assessment;
- reviewed the summative data with the leadership team members and responded to the data by comparing the data to that of previous years; and
- communicated the summative data with the staff and discussed “next steps”.

Through test data documentation and interviews, the leadership team determined that the district would use both the NWEA MAP tests and the ITBS for summative data. The MAP was given in the spring and the ITBS was given in the late fall.
During an interview, Sean shared that in the early fall of 2006, he and the middle school teachers discussed when to schedule ITBS for their students. The high school had finished giving the ITED in early October and with shared staff between the two buildings, teachers were questioning why the tests were not given at the same time. Sean said he communicated that he believed giving these tests to middle school students in the first or second week of November, still in the fall norming period, would allow the students another month of instructional time that should hopefully result in more positive test scores. The middle school students were assessed in November of 2006.

In late January of 2007, when the 2006-2007 ITBS data results came to the district, Sean said that he and the leadership team reviewed the results and realized that the percentage of students who had scored in the proficient range had dramatically decreased in grades 7 and 8 (Table 3).

An interview and observation followed in early February of 2007 when subsequent plans were made by Sean and others on the leadership team. The data in Table 3 were discussed by Sean and his instructional staff.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITBS Reading Comprehension</th>
<th>High Plains School 2006-07</th>
<th>Goal numbers (NCLB)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>72.9%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 7</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 8</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Percentage of High Plains Middle School students scoring at proficient or above levels on Iowa Tests of Basic Skills for 2006-2007.

When asked how Sean planned to discuss the data with the teachers, his response was
that he was going to be very direct with the staff in discussing the latest results because he had “the necessity and the reason to do it”.

*I don’t know how more direct I need to be or they can’t say, “Oh, well our numbers are fine”, or “Why should I do this; I want to teach whatever.” You know, all that nonsense is not an excuse anymore.*

Summative assessments were administered and analyzed in the manner defined by Iowa Testing Services. Yet, the new data were disappointing and very unexpected, especially in light of the programs that the school had put in place. It caused Sean to express strong feelings about the fact that he planned to be very direct with teachers and not listen to excuses.

While the ITBS may not be the only indicator of student achievement, it is a very significant indicator and the one reported to the stakeholders and DOE. Teachers and administrators need to have accurate knowledge of how students are progressing. Therefore, formative assessment data that are ongoing and more frequent than summative must have accurate information for benchmarking progress. When formative assessments are aligned with instruction and the results obtained from these assessments are considered reliable, staff should have a better indication of how students will perform on the ITBS summative assessment. The 2006-2007 ITBS results were a wake-up call to Sean and the staff that adjustments were necessary to improve student achievement in reading.

**Ongoing Cycle: Reviewing the Process—IPDM 9**

The cycle of planning and delivering training, studying the data from the implementation, and determining how to adjust and refine the training and collaboration structures may be repeated several times as professional development and new learning and
implementation occurs. Selection of content may need to be modified as data are collected (Iowa DOE, 2002, 2005a, 2005b).

In the IPD Model, the purpose of the *ongoing cycle* for professional development is to review the process and determine any adjustments to be made. As principal, Sean:

- convened the leadership team in a timely manner to respond to the data;
- was involved with the leadership team and superintendent in determining how to modify the reading consultant’s time to work with teachers; and
- requested assistance from the consultant to consider ways to improve the reading program for both teachers and students.

In January 2007, when the High Plains Middle School reading comprehension scores were analyzed by the leadership team, they determined that a change in the process design needed to be considered. Sean said that Jane, the superintendent, requested that he convene a meeting with the leadership team and the consultant so that both Sean and Jane could talk about the test results with them. Jane asked the team if the middle school teachers felt the need to see the district reallocate the reading consultant’s time by shifting some of her time and focus to the middle school and spending less time at the elementary buildings. Sean and the leadership team agreed that this would be helpful. The consultant also agreed that this could prove beneficial, as it would provide her more opportunities to meet and work with both the team and the teachers. She expressed that, because her time was currently divided between levels, she was providing more planning ideas for the building team members, but not working directly with teachers as she would prefer.

As plans were being made for the February 1, 2007 staff meeting to share ITBS data and possible changes to the program, Sean asked if the consultant would meet with the
leadership group to help them “tighten up” the planning for the meeting. The superintendent, Sean, the reading consultant and leadership team all gave input as to how staff should be grouped for that session. Sean stated that he preferred the staff to be grouped by content area and this was provided. Due to schedules teachers shared between middle and high school, Sean obtained substitute teachers so the consultant and the reading teachers could meet with other middle school teachers to discuss the reading strategies and implementation in the content areas.

Changes in the SSR program were also discussed. Sean and other members of the team decided that the SSR class would occur daily beginning in mid-February. He said he expected all teachers to teach the Seminar consistently and that he would be doing more walk-arounds to check to see that all students were engaged. He also discussed moving away from a pass-fail system to a grading system in the hope that this would help students be more accountable for their work.

The leadership team and the consultant discussed fidelity of implementation, as well as the logs for recording strategy use. A few members of the leadership team commented that they did not think all teachers used the strategies consistently or that the logs were accurate reflections of implementation. This did not seem to be surprising information to Sean and the consultant. Fidelity of implementation is difficult to determine unless teachers are observing each other or if teachers are being observed frequently either with walk-throughs or observations by the principal.

During follow-up interviews, when asked how he would express his expectations to staff regarding implementation logs, Sean said:

[Teachers] are pretty lighthearted about implementation logs, but I am going
to proceed—just like getting grades in on time… things will be much more closely monitored. There is something that we are not doing despite our efforts, so let’s press on.

It’s beyond the point of cheerleading. I’m tempted to make the point that if you do not get your logs in when they’re asked for, you know, it’s no different than getting your grades in when they’re due.

It was clear that Sean was disappointed, however, he was not discouraged. He had full intention to “press on” and communicated this to the staff during the professional development session that day.

The summative assessment results facilitated important discussions between Sean and his staff. There was no indication that blame was placed, but rather the reading program and processes were collectively considered and changes were planned in several areas. Sean conveyed his disappointment with the ITBS results, but made it clear that he and the staff would continue to find additional ways to assure that students would show gains in reading.

Sean has been actively engaged in all facets of supervision and the IPD Model processes and did not expect these results. Some school leaders might place blame on others or excuse the results as a problem with the ITBS assessment. Sean did neither of these. Because he had been highly invested in all of the programs and processes in his building, he assumed part of the blame himself and was more determined than ever to not have these results repeated.

**Operating Principles of the Iowa Professional Development Model:**
**Focus on Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment—IPDM 10**

The primary focus of professional development in the IPD Model is on the classroom, the curriculum that students are expected to learn, and the instructional strategies that make the curriculum accessible and comprehensible. In Iowa, districts develop content standards
for basic subjects and align the assessment measures to their standards. Districts are required to administer a norm-referenced standardized measure to assess how well students learn what is outlined in the standards. The IPD Model operates under the premise that individuals, schools, and districts will attend to data from the local assessment systems to determine what is taught and how it is taught—curriculum and instruction—in their efforts to increase student learning (Iowa Dept. Ed., 2005a, p.11).

As a principal in a school with a focus on curriculum, instruction, and assessment, Sean:

- stated to staff that the focus of the school is to improve students’ reading skills;
- made clear the expectation that teachers would select particular strategies appropriate for their content area and that he would check implementation records to ensure teachers used the strategies with specific frequency;
- supported the leadership team as they led professional development and helped him push forward with program implementation;
- expressed in the importance of staff knowing and understanding the student achievement data, and used charts and graphs to demonstrate longitudinal data for students in special education; and
- engaged in professional development sessions and was a part of the activities by discussing how he used the strategies when teaching science.

According the CSIP, the professional development calendar, and team notes and interviews, nearly all of the professional development sessions focused on curriculum,
instruction, and assessment. Sean stated that most professional development sessions focused on reading strategies and implementation data.

When asked if staff members fully understood the need to support advancing students’ reading skills, Sean’s response was that because the school is supporting a supplemental reading program and focusing their efforts on reading strategies, he and other school leaders have made the school’s focus very clear.

Sean said that in the high school science class he taught, he used some of the same strategies with his students as the middle school teachers. He stated that he taught the concepts of good note-taking and organization. He also used concept webs and graphic organizers when reviewing science. In his role as a teacher, he believed he had a deep understanding of the relevancy of the strategies in various content areas.

His said that his expectation for teachers was that they would select particular strategies appropriate for their content area and that as principal, he would make sure teachers used the strategies. Sean said that he did not need to hear a teacher explicitly stating the name of the strategy as long as he could walk into a classroom and see the strategy being used. He believed that this should be a part of regular classroom practice. However, he also stated that the frequency or use of the strategy could depend on the subject matter and that certain content areas were more suited to some strategies than others:

*In the past there were questions [from teachers] because we had two logs. We had a frequency log and an integrity log. And the integrity log was designed in a way that they could prove that [teachers] were actually doing the think-aloud the way it was supposed to be—and then the implementation log...you could see the teachers were getting a little frustrated. Then you get the “I’ve got all these other things to do and I got lots of plans and tests and all that.” I said, “Yeah, I know you are busy, but until you are busier than me, I don’t want to hear you complain,” and [the complaining] kind of went away. I don’t know if they went off and complained to somebody else, but I think there were
a few people that may have drug their feet initially, but they realized this is what we are doing and this is how it is going to be done...I think it is the theory—the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. I do think that we built that momentum among the staff...Following the elementary and seeing the success that they had really helped give credibility to what we are doing. It was the same reading consultant, and it was the same model and it was some of the same strategies. And the teachers went along with it.

Sean said he began using the IPD Model the second year he was at the school. He said that it wasn’t difficult for some staff, and he shared examples of a second year middle school teacher and an elementary teacher who moved to the middle school, both who accepted the reading strategies immediately. However, the high school staff was less accepting of the Model. He described this by saying, “At the high school, it was holy war for awhile.”

Sean explained this by saying that he thinks that teachers believe that teaching reading is different for elementary because everyone at this level teaches reading as a subject area. However, at the secondary level, the more departmentalized the school becomes, the more difficult it has been to help staff understand the need to integrate the reading strategies.

In the fall of 2006, he questioned if the staff would continue to focus on strategy implementation once they became accustomed to doing these:

I wonder, when we finally get to the end of all these strategies, what will happen then. [Teachers] say that, “Yeah, yeah, I can do this,” and they do it for a while, but then it goes away. And...to keep it consistent...the reading teachers are great because they’re using new strategies all the time, and it’s part of the curriculum. But for the other teachers, to keep that going along is very challenging.

Sean recognized that “keeping that going” would not be easy. It was interesting to see the kind of intuition he showed; however, because of his suspicions that teachers might not
adhere long term to these guidelines without some kind of continued pressure, he could anticipate and plan for this.

There has been a distinctive focus on assessment results. Sean talked about the importance of staff knowing and understanding the student achievement data. He said that while the teachers were continuing to struggle with raising middle school reading scores, he believed this was the nationwide trend, as well.

During an October 2006 observation of the professional development session with staff, Sean spoke about the SSR results. After this, he reflected on the session and said he began the meeting by sharing the SSR student achievement data first because these were positive. He said that after viewing the number of student eligibility letters this year, he felt that the staff had a better system in place for keeping him informed of students who were failing and those who were passing.

He also said that finding time for all middle school staff to meet regularly to focus on curriculum, instruction, and assessment has been difficult. Only grade 6 had a schedule conducive to teaming and frequent collaboration. Sean said he has been trying to find additional time from one special education teacher’s day to allow her to meet with members of the sixth grade team and be able to discuss students’ progress with reading.

Sean discussed how charts and graphs were used to demonstrate longitudinal data for students in special education and that this kind of formative data had been very helpful to the parents. At the same time, he said that communication to parents of students in regular education on formative progress is one of the school’s shortcomings. The school had followed the requirement to share ITBS data, but few other data measures had been used or
communicated frequently. This was not very different from the assessment practices and reporting of other schools, but it was clear that Sean felt it needed to be improved.

Based on interviews and observations, it was evident that Sean was a viable team member when he was able to attend middle school professional development sessions. The protocol was for the teacher leader of the team to review what was accomplished the last time the group met and to discuss the various QAR examples and how they were to be used with students. As the teachers followed along with the requests made from the leadership team, so did Sean. To an outside observer who did not know the positions held by the team members, he appeared to be one of the teaching staff.

The professional development sessions were structured and organized to include many of the elements in the IPD Model. All of the teachers and Sean were involved and appeared to be interested in the activity. There were no sidebar conversations during the activities when teachers were individually determining strategies that would be used in their content areas and classrooms.

During one professional development session, the middle school staff referenced the Rigor and Relevance Framework used in many Iowa high school reform efforts. Sean said that this was done to help staff members understand the connection between two state initiatives and the building QAR focus. The group then did an activity in which teachers referenced ten questions they wrote, selected three of these questions, and rewrote them in a way which would make them fit into Quadrant D of the Rigor and Relevance Framework. This activity helped people to think about not only the types of QAR, but also how to develop questions that cause and initiate critical thinking. Several teachers had questions regarding the task, and the teacher leader answered these. After a period of time, the team
determined that, although not everyone had completed the designated number of questions, they would proceed to discuss as a group the work that had been accomplished.

One teacher in the group gave an example of how she used the QARs with a special needs student. This stimulated discussion about how other teachers have used the QAR activity. Sean also engaged in the discussion about QAR content questions regarding science content. It appeared that the teachers viewed him as a teacher colleague as well as a principal. The group spoke among themselves as they discussed how they wrote the questions and matched them to the content they taught. Some teachers commented about the value of the plans for QAR, speaking positively about the strategy. Then they viewed a chart to see how the QAR aligned with other professional development in the school district, as the team leader helped the staff make the connection. As teachers responded to team questions, so did Sean.

The next discussion focused on “Proposed Instructional Flow,” a method designed to provide teachers concrete ways to implement the QARs in their classrooms. Teachers were asked to use a checklist to determine whether they were addressing what needed to be considered with QARs. Ideas were offered for specific strategies students could use as they read and used QARs. Sean talked about reviewing and analyzing implementation data. He also talked with teachers about making certain they were entering their implementation records on the server and his expectation that each staff member would record the questions they used with students twice each week as evidence of implementation.

The team leader explained how to fill out the implementation form. She offered to fill out one as an example so others would be clear on the process. The group looked at the High Plains General Reading Scope and Sequence and then modified this to convert it to a scope
and sequence for struggling readers. The team members spent time identifying specific benchmarks essential for struggling readers to address. The team leader emphasized that reading must be viewed as a process and not a course.

For this study, Sean was identified as a building leader in one of the most highly engaged schools in Iowa. Therefore, his ability to keep the staff focused on curriculum, instruction, and assessment and to communicate high expectations in these areas contributed to engagement by the staff. The IPD Model was followed to a high degree because he emphasized keeping the focus on teaching and learning processes through actions and words.

**Participative Decision Making—IPDM 11**

In the IPD Model, governance is described as an issue that should be addressed by those in the school since these are the people who must make many decisions to operate within the Model. These decisions include setting a goal, selecting content and providers aligned with the goal, designing structures for collaboration and the study of implementation, among others. Many of these decisions require district coordination and support. To prevent decision-making processes from becoming the focus, school leaders need to determine how they will make decisions and what is required for them to make binding decisions, prior to beginning professional development and use of the IPD Model. When professional development is intended to impact what is taught and how it is taught, democratic decision-making becomes highly relevant. When addressing students’ learning needs by implementing new teaching programs and assessment techniques, the input of the school’s faculty is essential (Iowa DOE, 2005a, pp. 11-12).

As Sean worked with those in the school to further participative decision making, he:
• helped to develop the leadership team;
• met with the leadership team members and the reading consultant on a regular basis to make decisions together;
• gave the leadership team permission to determine what needed to be done to ensure better strategy implementation and communicate this information to him;
• trusted the leadership team to develop the reading program and class lists;
• supported middle school teachers who were trying to meet outlined expectations;
• asked for input from all teachers during staff meetings and professional learning sessions; and
• communicated with teachers that the focus was to increase reading skills for students.

Participative decision-making was evident during observations and through interviews conducted at High Plains Middle School. The leadership team members and the reading consultant met on a regular basis to develop the plans and materials for professional development sessions with the staff. Sean tried to attend at least a portion of these planning sessions, as his schedule allowed. He described a typical professional development session:

 Basically the way we do it today in our middle school professional development, I will participate; I’ll be in the meeting. My building leadership team will run the meeting, teach the strategy, the whole thing—and then I’m basically the muscle. When it comes to the implementation goals, how to fill out the form, when they’re due, those types of things—I give the instructions because the teachers on the team aren’t too comfortable telling other teachers they have to do something.

Sean expressed his belief that the middle school teachers were united in wanting students to improve their reading. He stated that if the teachers did not meet the goal that had been established for implementation, they would figure out together what else needed to be
done, whether that would include more time for collaboration or more time to review the strategies. Through his statements, Sean made it clear that the decision regarding next steps included the teachers.

The four teachers who were teaching the SSR program developed the program for students who needed extra reading assistance and support. The consultant hired by the district provided direction. Sean met with the team and designed the schedule, while the teachers wrote the 75-page plan that outlined the program. Sean planned to meet with the special education teacher to brainstorm ideas that would allow her schedule to include time to collaborate with sixth grade teachers.

Sean stated that he has been a strong proponent for teachers to lead and that he wanted all of his staff to be empowered. He said that he trusted teachers to try to do what is best and that he would prefer they try new approaches and then modify or “fix” it and try again. His words were: “I don’t want to control everything.” As he discussed the leadership team in his building, he said, “My role is to let the experts do what they are to do and let the teachers do what they are supposed to do and then support them as much as I can in this capacity.”

He said that the initial hurdles of people not wanting to work together have passed. He attributed part of this to the fact that the staff at the middle school has been comprised of young teachers, relatively new to the profession, and there has been little turnover of staff in that building in the last few years. Therefore, these teachers were now accustomed to working together. At the elementary where he is principal, Sean said there were some initial problems with staff not working as a group to follow the IPD Model. One staff member in particular, balked at working collaboratively with colleagues. Several of the other staff
members responded to this teacher by saying, “I’m going to do it; you’re going to do it”.

Sean remarked that this staff member still tends to complain about the professional development time spent on reading. However, Sean said his approach with this individual has been to disarm him with humor. In staff meetings, his question to everyone was, “Okay, I am ready for comments, complaints, and editorials,” and he looked directly at the two teachers who were generally skeptics and allowed them their time to speak. He said this seemed to help lend some humor to the meetings and kept the focus on everyone working together toward a common goal.

Sean expressed that his belief that a great deal of his time and his role was dedicated to “negotiation”:

*I negotiate with the staff to do what they are supposed to do. I negotiate with parents to make them believe that we know what we are doing and we are doing right and we care about their kids and all these sorts of things. So a large part of [my job] is negotiation and the other part of it is PR. And I think those things work hand in hand. You need to convince people that you are doing right and explain it in a way that sounds right.*

The consultant, leadership team, and Sean were observed as they met at the end of January 2007 to further plan the reading program and professional development sessions. The consultant asked Sean if she and the reading teachers had his permission to tweak the content for reading and language arts classes if they discovered there were benchmarks included that should be modified, added, or removed. Sean replied, “You guys are the experts; go for it.” He suggested, too, that these teachers would determine the class lists that needed to be constructed for student groupings.

While collaboration occurs, Sean says that participative decision-making is not as strong as he would like it to be. He said he believes an underlying reason for this may be that
not all secondary staff teachers see themselves as reading teachers. During the January 2007 planning session between the reading consultant and the leadership team, Sean emphasized that teachers would need to help colleagues through more in-classroom modeling and peer coaching. These kinds of approaches had not previously been incorporated in the school and were to begin in the second semester of 2007.

It was clear that participative decision making was enacted at this middle school. The teachers on the leadership team were not the individuals to state specific expectations in terms of frequency and reporting of strategy use. However, they were very knowledgeable about the strategies and spent time preparing for professional learning sessions. Sean listened to and valued their input and included their ideas as programs were developed.

Sean listened to input from other staff members. When teachers came to him with concerns, he attended to these. When it was more feasible or appropriate for a teacher to handle the situation, Sean helped that teacher think through the processes that needed to ensue, still allowing the teacher to be the one to address the issue. The culture at High Plains appeared to be very collaborative, which facilitated staff input and two-way communication.

**Simultaneity—IPDM 12**

The principle of simultaneity governs professional development efforts aimed at increasing student achievement (Iowa DE, 2005a, p. 12).

Sean demonstrated the following to ensure that simultaneity occurred when he:

- helped the leadership team learn the processes of working together, at the same time keeping the focus on reading;
- implemented multiple reading programs in the middle school; and
• kept the focus on the reading instructional programs while still attending to additional areas, such as evaluation of teachers, teachers’ questions and needs, and student and other school-related issues.

Multiple approaches to improve reading

The middle school staff members, along with both elementary and high school staff, have been focused on improving students’ reading comprehension. According to interview data, documents and observations, in addition to the professional development sessions that have dedicated time for teachers to discuss reading strategies, the middle school conducted the SSR program for students whose reading assessment results have been in the non-proficient range.

Sean requested that the teachers who taught the SSR classes meet four times during the school year to review the SSR student data and to discuss what adjustments may be needed for improvement. In the 2005-2006 year, the SSR program was for students who were receiving special education services and students not proficient on the reading comprehension portion of the ITBS. In the 2006-2007 school year, the team determined that students in special education classes were already receiving additional reading support with the special education teacher, so the SSR class time would be provided for students in regular education who were not proficient in reading comprehension. The SSR class had been providing an extra 27 minutes of reading three times each week. This was changed mid-year to five days a week, when student data results were not showing the expected growth. Sean said he supported all of these changes, as they were necessary, according to the student data.
Simply developing and sustaining a leadership team requires time and attention from the principal and the staff. Through this researcher’s observations, it appeared that Sean managed to continue the leadership team concept and help the reading teachers learn the processes of working together and leading as a team. Incorporating the concept of simultaneity, the team focused on reading programs and strategies that teachers learned and used at the same time that the team learned how to work together. This group seemed to manage both well.

Other simultaneous elements

As principal of both an elementary building and the middle school, simultaneity appeared to be a way of life for Sean. Listening to him discuss his schedule, his day depended on numerous factors ranging from special assemblies and student activities to specific tasks that needed to be accomplished in each building.

While the focus for the middle school has been on raising student achievement in reading, Sean said he must also spend a significant amount of time on other tasks associated with the job, including evaluating teachers and other staff. He reported that using the Iowa Teaching Standards to determine a teacher’s growth has made the evaluation process an improved one, but one that is also time consuming.

During interviews, he discussed that staying abreast of student data has been ongoing since the school develops an eligibility list every two weeks. It is Sean’s job to gather the grades from teachers the day prior to making the list and then to write letters to all parents of students receiving an “F”. Students in grades 7 and 8 who receive an “F” are ineligible for sports and extra curricular activities for two weeks. He talked about phone calls from parents
that required attention, regular communication through phone or email regarding booster club activities, students who were sent to the office for disciplinary matters, and a number of additional tasks that may seem minor, but that still required much of his time and attention.

The school district has an email system that he said has “been a lifesaver” because, as principal of two buildings, he was able to check his in-house email from other sites, whether he is in a meeting away from the district or at the other school building. Throughout our interviews, a specific sound would notify him that he had received an email from a teacher. He said he tried to “stay on these” so that when immediate attention was needed, he could respond.

Sean mentioned he used whatever time is available to him as he worked through the day. He ate lunch in his office while he manned the phones and prepared for the class he taught. He used some of his lunchtime to step out of his office if he had something he needed to communicate to teachers. These behaviors were witnessed during all of the observations.

He said that his schedule for any given day has also been affected by staffings for students in special education programs and by administrative and staff meetings. The middle school staff usually had a monthly staff meeting. When there was an extra half hour at the end of the professional development day, he said he tried to use this time rather than find another time for the staff meeting.

Sean spoke about some of the additional projects that require time. For example, he spoke of the crisis plan being addressed, one that would enable the staff to be prepared for any kind of emergency that could befall the school. He had been examining this plan and would be reviewing this with all middle school staff to go
through it formally. This plan required a significant amount of his attention, yet he understood that it was an area that was necessary.

Sean said that both he and the superintendent were very aware of the demands that all educators have on their time. When the ITBS scores were returned to the district in January 2007 and a meeting was called by the superintendent with Sean and the leadership team, the superintendent said she did not want this to be a “you are to blame thing”, as she stressed that she believed teachers had been “working very hard” to help students, particularly with reading comprehension. Jane said she wanted the staff to know that administration believed they were all trying to focus their efforts to change and improve things for students.

**Leadership—IPDM 13**

The importance of leadership at all levels cannot be overemphasized for the success of school improvement efforts in which increased student learning is the goal. The leadership of teachers, principals, district administrative staff, and school boards—working interdependently—is critical if the IPD Model is to drive increased achievement for all students (Iowa DOE, 2005a, pp. 12-14).

The 21 leadership responsibilities identified from the McREL study (Marzano et al., 2005) and the practices associated with these were used as a basis to categorize facets of leadership and learn more about this principal’s actions and behaviors as he led school improvement through implementation of the IPD Model. As the McREL meta-analysis has indicated, specific principal practices can affect increased student academic achievement by the extent to which the principal is engaged in these 21 responsibilities. Therefore, using these responsibilities as a means to sort through the myriad of principal behaviors and
practices helped lend order to the findings. At the same time, because this is the most recent research that correlates principal behaviors and practices with specific responsibilities that affect student achievement, it seemed relevant to use these categories as a means to discern specific actions and behaviors as these impacted the school improvement process, which included the elements of the IPD Model.

**Affirmation—McREL 1**

According to the McREL research, affirmation is the extent to which the leader recognizes and celebrates school accomplishments—and acknowledges failures. At the core of affirmation is a balanced and honest accounting of the school’s successes and failures (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 43).

Affirmation is also related to some of the leadership behaviors identified by Collins (2001) in his research on businesses that have gone from “good to great.” Cottrell (2002) stated that one of the biggest challenges facing school level administrators is directly addressing performance issues—both positive and negative. He explained that both must be explicitly addressed. He stated, “You simply cannot ignore performance issues and expect your superstars to stick around very long” (p. 40).

Specific behaviors and characteristics associated with the responsibility of *affirmation* as found in the McREL meta-analysis are:

- Systematically and fairly recognizing and celebrating accomplishments of students;
- Systematically and fairly recognizing and celebrating accomplishments of teachers; and
- Systematically and fairly recognizing the failures of the school as a whole. (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 44)
Sean demonstrated the practices and behaviors of *affirmation* when he:

- held meetings with staff and discussed the successes and disappointments with student achievement;
- talked with the staff about student achievement data and reinforced that the staff would all be working together to change the status quo;
- acknowledged teachers who were working in accordance to help students increase learning and reading skills;
- talked directly with teachers and affirmed that they were acting in accordance with the focus to improve student learning;
- developed Tier Three teacher assistance plans for teachers who demonstrated sub-standard teacher practices according to the evaluation process; and
- counseled teachers out of the district who were not meeting the expectations outlined in the CSIP and the evaluation plan based on the Iowa Teaching Standards.

As principal, Sean said that he used meeting time with staff to share the successes and disappointments with student achievement in his building. Last fall, he shared a presentation with the Board of Education and discussed it with the staff the following day. When the most recent data showed a decline in student achievement, Sean was observed immediately talking with the staff about these data not being acceptable and reinforced the concept of the middle school staff working together to positively change the current status. He said that the focus in the building has changed by using data to help teachers understand improved methods of instruction. He stated, “*What we're doing just isn't working. Look at our scores; we need to do better.*”
Sean said he believed his role was to set the expectations that, “this is what we do and this is how we will do it.” This sent the message to teachers that performance issues would be attended to and those who choose to not focus on student learning and the goals of the school would need to find employment elsewhere.

Sean spoke about those times when he needed to counsel a couple of teachers out of the district. Sean described one teacher as being “successful in getting kids through school,” but one who did not treat students respectfully. The teacher had a level of resistance with implementation of the reading program with which Sean said he could not agree. This teacher was encouraged to retire at the end of that school year. Sean said the teacher had the attitude that, “I teach industrial technology and am not teaching reading”. Sean said he explained to the teacher that in the Air Force he fixed airplanes for a living and also spent a significant amount of time having to read about how to fix airplanes, that “it was not all pictures”.

Sean made a Level II assistance plan available that specified the conditions and instructional practice that would have to be met for the teacher to continue to hold a teaching position in the district. Sean said that he is continuing to meet with the teacher to observe growth and improvement.

When people tend to behave like they’re not understanding, then I let them know. But I don’t get up there and read the mission statement and think that’s the only way kids will acquire the necessary skills. Maybe it’s because I worked elsewhere before I came into education, but a lot of those things, I think, are just understood.

Sean acknowledged teachers who were trying to improve themselves professionally, as he spoke about one teacher who is using the strategies “head and shoulders above what
she was doing before”. He also stated that his sixth grade team demonstrated the ability to form a teaming system that very much supported students and increased learning.

Sean’s honesty and candor has been apparent. He encouraged teachers to do their best, yet addressed those things that needed to be changed. Some school leaders would prefer to avoid conflict and can be uneasy or unwilling to tackle difficult or challenging issues. During observations and through document review, it was apparent that potentially problematic issues were not allowed to fester before they were attended to. Recognition and attention to the negative is simultaneously affirmation of the positive.

**Change agent—McREL 2**

The responsibility of *change agent* refers to the principal’s disposition to challenge the status quo. It is not uncommon for those in a school or organization to keep certain practices in place and unchallenged for years simply because of historical status. Underpinning the responsibility of acting as a change agent is the leaders’ willingness to temporarily upset a school’s equilibrium (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 44). Silins, Mulford, and Zarins (2002) provided a different perspective, as they noted that effective change agents are leaders who “protect those who take risks” (p. 618) and that effective leadership involves “the extent to which staff feel empowered to make decisions and feel free to experiment and take risks” (p. 619).

Specific behaviors and characteristics associated with the *change agent* responsibility and identified in the McREL meta-analysis are:

- Consciously challenging the status quo;
- Being willing to lead change initiatives with uncertain outcomes;
- Systematically considering new and better ways of doing things; and
• Consistently attempting to operate at the edge versus the center of the school’s competence. (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 45)

The responsibility of *change agent* was shown when Sean:

• led the change initiative in his building and did not abandon any of the reading programs that had been determined to be beneficial for students;

• communicated to teachers that they all have the will and desire to accomplish what needed to be done;

• took action when he identified an area to be fixed or changed;

• helped staff to understand the reasons for making the proposed changes;

• nudged and helped staff to move forward to stay with the initiatives that were agreed upon; and

• communicated to staff that the choice to change is theirs and that, if they choose to not comply, that he would take action that would result in undesirable consequences.

When Sean spoke about change, he said he didn’t think he had ever managed status quo. He said that everywhere he has been has involved change; change did not make him uncomfortable:

> And then when something new comes along…you know, we are going to institute a behavior leadership team…we are going to do this…that is just another thing that you put before you to keep moving along. And if I feel like we are continuing to move forward, I feel like we are successful.

Sean said that one takes action because something needs to be fixed. He believed that if we think of evolution as slow change and revolution as fast, that school reform primarily must engage in evolution and “just doing what is right. And if what we find out what we are
doing is wrong, we work to change the paradigm in the building”. He said that he has nudged, pushed, and kept repeating the same expectations to continue forward:

The teacher who said ‘he was not going to do this; this doesn’t fit my class’...is no longer with us. There were other things like lesson plans and all these other things he didn’t feel he had to do that [he thought] didn’t pertain to his subject area. He was the same way with reading. And because [the high school’s] professional development is very similar to ours...we sat down and counseled him formally. We were moving towards a Tier-3 evaluation plan, so he resigned and went elsewhere...We made enough of an example out of it...he was that far outside the norm that he was basically thinking that he was going to draw this line in the sand and we weren’t going to go through with this. I took that as a challenge almost. And, you know, I think that’s kind of let everyone know that, you know, if effort isn’t made, something will be done.

I think a large part of my job is negotiation, and you just negotiate that change. People aren’t going to change unless they see an advantage. So you kind of have to show them that it’s either going to get better or the kids are going to do better—and go from there.

Sean said he did not feel that the reading program was a fast change; it occurred because the staff saw the data. He said that going forward was a matter of educating people on the district’s philosophy, about deciding what was important and proceeding with what was necessary to do:

I think that when you’re making a change, you don’t make it personal. This is just the way it is. And we’ve got a teacher down [at the elementary] that, well—arguing about what we’re doing, and it’s like a polar bear arguing about how cold it is. It’s cold! This is what we do! It’s the environment in which we live. We need to learn to do this properly and efficiently, so it isn’t such a bother. And why argue about the rain? Get an umbrella!...I think that you lose when you argue or when you discuss...You either do or you don’t do; the choice is yours. And whenever you make the choice, you have to be willing to accept the consequences.

When the 2006-2007 data revealed the unexpected and disappointing student achievement results, Sean made the commitment that he would spend more time in the classroom because now he had the “necessity and reason to do it”. He expected all teachers
to participate fully. During an interview following the meeting with his staff when the student achievement results were shared, Sean expressed his feelings:

*It's beyond the point of cheerleading. I'm tempted to make the point that if you do not get your logs in when they're asked for, it's no different than getting your grades in when they're due...I'm tired of this crap. You know, they've just taken what we've given them and gone with it. There hasn't been any, “Well, why are we doing this? What are we doing?” You think that when we started this, I was the only one asking these questions because I saw us going from strategy to strategy without any connection...You know...I don’t know how more direct I need to be or they can’t say, “Oh, well our numbers are fine!” or “Why should I do this; I want to teach whatever.” You know, all that nonsense is not an excuse anymore.*

There are aspects associated with the school that Sean said currently make some elements difficult, such as time for teaming and collaboration. He stated he would like to make more changes if opportunities allowed this:

*You know if we were bigger and I could set up the perfect school, you know in Utopia USA, I would set up that team environment...*

Sean talked about instilling a change next year by making the Seminar class a part of eligibility to play in sports and activities. For students and parents, this could cause some negative reactions. However, he did not hesitate to state that this was a possible means to help ensure the students would become more proficient readers.

Sean credited the superintendent with helping to initiate the focus on reading, yet Sean was responsible for leading the change initiative in his building and did not consider abandoning any of the reading programs or losing faith in the belief that together he and the staff could succeed. Through data obtained in interviews, observations and documents, he demonstrated the commitment of time and resources to help support new and better ways he and his teachers could do whatever was required to benefit student learning.
**Communication—McREL 3**

Communication refers to the extent to which the school leader establishes strong lines of communication with and between students and teachers. Specific behaviors and characteristics associated with the responsibility of communication as defined in the McREL meta-analysis are:

- Developing effective means for teachers to communicate with one another;
- Being easily accessible to teachers; and
- Maintaining open and effective lines of communication with staff.

(Marzano et al., 2005, p. 47)

The behaviors Sean demonstrated that are associated with communication are:

- encouraged teachers to use email or to speak with him during and outside of meeting times;
- scheduled regular staff meetings;
- met as often as needed to discuss student referrals;
- emphasized relationships, communicated in a straight forward manner, and understood and used negotiation skills when needed;
- communicated to staff members that they could come to him if they had questions or problems;
- communicated his beliefs about students and learning and shared these with those in the school; and
- kept the information flow going in the school and district.

Accessibility was important to Sean. The district had two email systems that enabled him to check email from one building to the other. He was observed using this for quick
communication. He said that teachers emailed him because they knew they could reach him using this system if they were unable to access him during their prep hour.

Sean scheduled regular staff meetings, but held these only as needed. He said that it was easier to him to access the grade 6 teachers because they met as a team. He and the teachers frequently used this time to discuss students or situations. He said it was more of a challenge to reach his seventh and eighth grade teachers, so he requested that his secretary make an announcement for the staff to meet when the need arose. He described how he communicated with most teachers:

*We meet informally. I work in my office during lunch so if there is something that needs to be said or something that needs to be worked through, I will just pop up and talk to people at lunch. I think you get more done.*

The middle school scheduled Child Study once a month or more frequently as needed. Sean said he would not wait a month for a meeting when there was a student who had immediate needs. Child Study focused on any student who was having difficulties—behaviorally, emotionally, or in any manner apart from the norm. Sean talked to all parties involved before the meeting to determine if any particular student should be discussed. Sean met with the High Plains school counselor, the AEA school psychologist, the AEA school social worker, and the special education teachers to discuss any student referred by the teachers or by parents. During the discussion, an intervention was planned. Sean said that frequently the need existed to assist a student by helping him/her to learn ways to complete their work or organize themselves and that the process was helpful with obtaining services for students:

*In a way, it’s kind of our attempt to mirror the decision-making model that [the AEA] gave us a few years ago where you provide a supplemental plan to*
get [the student] back—and then if supplemental doesn’t work, then intensive, and then if that doesn’t work, then we work towards an IEP or 504 plan.

Sean emphasized relationships and negotiation. He compared schools with the expectations that were placed upon him and others in the military. He said he has learned to communicate in a straight-forward manner, but has been careful to communicate in ways that would not offend students or staff because he remembered some of the ways his administrators or supervisors communicated with him:

This is what we need to do; this is why we need to do it. Here’s how I think we should do it. Now you guys, you’re the professionals—now let’s do it… I don’t think you can make someone change by telling them how to change… everybody is different. I think I learned that in the Air Force where they tried to make everybody the same. You know we wore the same clothes, we had the same bad haircuts, we wore the same boots, and you ate the same disgusting food and on and on. But you know everyone still did things a little differently and I think they wasted a lot of effort and time trying to make us all be the same.

Now obviously you can’t have a military that is run on complete individuals. Then you would have the Peace Corps or something…I think most everyone that I have had the benefit of working with, with the exception of a few that aren’t with us anymore, were in it because they thought they were doing right. I guess that is the big thing… to find that commonality. You know you want to do right by the kids and I want you to do right by the kids—here is how we should do right by the kids. And when you can convince them or negotiate that this is the right thing to do, then they go right ahead and do it.

This straight forward, yet tactful communication was observed during professional development and staff meetings. He talked about how he communicated with one or two teachers who have repeatedly come to him to ask advice on how to handle situations with students. Sean said that many of these requests have centered on how to communicate with a student or parent. He advised one teacher to “put it in a positive way. Put the PR spin on it. And at the bottom, put on it, if you have any questions, you can give Mr. O’Neil a call”.

Sean also remarked that he believed that he had to be consistent and that if staff members had a question or a problem, that he would be approachable, communicate with the staff, and would try to help solve it:

*If people feel like they can come talk to me, then those little problems don’t become big problems.*

*Maybe it’s [attention deficit disorder]; I hate not having information. Any more in today’s world, if you want information and you can’t get it, it’s not because it’s not out there; it’s because it’s your fault that you can’t find it. And I would like to keep the information flow going, so that’s where I think communication plays a very important role. You know, with teachers—and I saw it when I was teaching—if there’s a problem and there’s no response, then people start to come up with their own reasons or solutions or whatever. That could be so far from the truth that you might as well get on it right away. I know in the Air Force they always said that the appearance of impropriety was impropriety. So if something was wrong, somebody’s going to figure it’s wrong. And if you keep going, it’s going to become reality. I try…I probably over communicate sometimes, because that’s my personality.*

Sean said that he operated under the premise of letting people know when they were doing wrong, but he believed that when people know their job, one needs to let them do their job. When people behave as though they do not understand, he let them know this. He said that he and the staff have talked about these things, but that generally, he has “*got a pretty good bunch, where all it takes is just a gentle reminder rather than a letter or reprimand*”. He said he has not been shy about his opinions. He said he has learned to be diplomatic and constructive, but that he was not going to say something that he did not believe.

*Communication is one of the principal responsibilities that requires attention when an organization or school is going through second-order change. Staff want to feel they are kept apprised of what is taking place in their building. Communication was observed to be one of Sean’s stronger traits. He recognized that he needed to keep the flow of communication going and that he perhaps “over-communicates”, although most staff members would most
likely believe that this is a very good thing as it keeps them informed about students, their progress, and day to day issues that affect student learning.

Contingent rewards—McREL 4

Contingent rewards refers to the extent to which the school leader recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments. Singling out individual teachers for recognition appears to be rare in education, as some believe in the “egalitarian” culture of K-12 education, where everyone must be considered equal regardless of competence. (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 46)

Kouzes and Posner (1999) emphasized that contingent rewards send messages to both teachers and administrators:

In recognizing individuals, we sometimes get lost in the ceremonial aspects. We think about form, but we forget substance. Recognitions are reminders; quite literally, the word recognize comes from the Latin word “know again”. Recognitions are opportunities to say to everyone, “I’d like to remind you one more time what’s important here. Here’s what we value.” (p. 19)

Specific behaviors and characteristics associated with this responsibility and identified in the McREL meta-analysis are:

• Using hard work and results as the basis for rewards and accomplishments; and
• Using performance versus seniority as a primary criterion for rewards and recognition. (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 46)

The responsibility of contingent rewards was observed as Sean:

• provided additional personal assistance to those teachers who demonstrated effort and commitment to the goals of the school; and
• demonstrated a commitment to a high level of standards from teachers.

When Sean spoke about contingent rewards, he said that he let teachers and other staff members know about the quality of their performance through his actions, his interactions, and comments he gave:
I think through my actions where I say, “You’re valuable, and whatever you need, I’ll do it. Get in my car; I’ll drive you up there.” You know, those sort of things—or where people need a little extra time... My one teacher, her car died on the highway... she’s a single parent and works two jobs... teaches during the day and works at night... And she was like, “I don’t know what to do. I’m stuck here.” I’ve got a buddy that works in Lake City, so we got the car started and the custodian and I drove it up there. And somebody else drove her up there after school to get it. It’s stuff like that... that’s the way that I’d rather reward people than, “This is a certificate” that I’m going to put on the wall of my bathroom or somewhere.

In our discussion about rewarding teachers, Sean said that this is probably the thing that he is “not the best at, because he assumes a lot”. He said that many times his praise is very informal. “I guess if there are people that want unconditional, positive reinforcement, they’re not going to get it from me; that’s just not the way that I am. I keep the heat on.”

While Sean recognized that he was not one to provide a great deal of positive reinforcement, it was observed that he was highly regarded by his staff and that the respect between staff members and Sean was mutual. His actions and comments spoke volumes. When Sean met with members of the leadership team and told them that they were empowered to make decisions and that he trusted and supported them because “they were the reading experts”, it was their hard work and performance that yielded this response. When teachers demonstrated accountability for carrying out the established expectations in the building, Sean recognized this at meetings. He was not one to provide tangible rewards for hard work and performance; however, he showed respect for colleagues who gave their best efforts for students.
Culture—McREL 5

Culture can be a positive or negative influence on a school’s effectiveness. An effective leader builds a culture that positively influences teachers, who in turn, positively influence students.

The behaviors associated with the responsibility of culture as a result of the McREL meta-analysis are:

- Promoting cohesion among the staff;
- Promoting a sense of well-being among the staff;
- Developing an understanding of purpose among the staff; and
- Developing a shared vision of what the school could be like. (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 48)

The responsibility culture was demonstrated through the manner in which Sean:

- believed that a positive culture was important in a school;
- communicated regularly at board meetings;
- strove to develop relationships with students, teachers, and parents;
- supported teachers to help them gain more confidence in themselves;
- sought to “do the right thing” and have positive outcomes for students and others in the school; and
- believed and shared, with staff, the importance of modeling the qualities they want for students.

Sean credited the superintendent as the initial person responsible to develop the shared vision of the school with the community and Board of Education. He said that this communication with stakeholders has helped to make the community more aware of what the school does and that this has helped him to continue this communication. He remarked that the superintendent and board have spent a lot of time looking at the district’s policies and this
has helped the board understand the role of the teachers and administrators and the purpose
of the school. Board minutes documented that Sean communicated regularly at board
meetings to inform board members about activities taking place with students and teachers.
This information sharing assisted with helping others understand the school’s vision, which
influences the school’s culture.

Sean said he perceives that many parents still focus on grades so students can be
eligible for activities, which he believes is unfortunate. However, he said he has used this to
the student’s learning advantage and to help parents and students better understand the
purpose of the school:

Yeah, it is kind of sad because you only want to pass so you can play football,
but heck, you want to pass—so let’s start. And you know, the school board has
been behind that. That was a policy…we brought it before them—they
approved it; they defended it.

Sean said he also believes that the existing culture in a school affects the outcome for
students. If the staff members do not work cohesively and hold the belief that students can
learn, the battle is lost. He shared that schools should be positive learning environments
where students learn through interaction:

Like at a study hall where [the teacher] expected kids to be at each of their
desks and studying and not talking. If, in your reality, kids were working
together and getting things done, I think that a positive culture is very
important...Schools are social creations...it’s not a factory where everybody
goes and stands at a machine or everyone stamps holes in something they
make. You know; they interact...I think that communication sets up everything
else.

Sean stated that developing relationships has been very important to the culture in the
school. He did not see his job as one to punish people, although he stated he could be good at
that approach, because that was the method he was taught in the military. He said that
someone told him in college that the objective of education was to “lead somebody into the light” and he has tried to lead with this principle in mind.

In previous years, the culture in the middle school was for the principal to be the authority in making management decisions. Sean saw his role as being supportive of the teachers and helping them gain more confidence in themselves, which he said was an important element for teachers to learn to be leaders themselves and to be a part of a new and different kind of culture.

In deciding what the right thing to do is, Sean said he has tried to look at the ethical aspect of things. He asked these questions of himself: What’s the proper thing to do? What would be the optimum outcome? Where do we want to go? He said he works backwards to get to his goal. Emphasizing that at the school’s core is caring about people, he remarked that the school “isn’t a nuclear power plant” and he “isn’t the guy to push the buttons to launch the space shuttle”:

I guess…it’s more just wrapping your mind around the problem and letting [teachers and parents] know that whatever is happening, is not the end of the world. In the long run, the best thing usually happens. It’s not like this is life and death. Like I said, it’s not like we’re running a nuclear power plant here. We’re teaching kids, and if we model the same qualities we want the kids to have, like respect for one another, fairness, justice, truth and the American way, you know, all those things, we’re going to be fine. And that seems to have worked for me.

Just as communication is very important in a school undergoing change, so is attending to the culture. Sean recognized the importance of a positive culture and expected himself and staff members to contribute to this. A major factor in a positive culture was holding staff and students accountable and having high expectations. Establishing goals for staff and students allowed everyone to continuously understand the direction that the school
set for itself. At the same time, the human element was always apparent as he consistently reminded staff that High Plains was a school that cared about students.

**Discipline—McREL 6**

Elmore (2000) explained that “school leaders are hired and retained largely based on their capacity to buffer teachers from outside interference” (p. 7) and that “buffering consists of creating structures and procedures around the technical core of teaching” (p. 6). Discipline refers to protecting teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their instructional time or focus. The authors of the McREL research prefer the word “discipline” to buffering or protection because it conveys the message that this responsibility is a natural consequence of attending to the primary work of schools—which is teaching (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 48).

Specific behaviors and characteristics associated with discipline as identified in the McREL meta-analysis are:

- Protecting instructional time from interruptions; and
- Protecting teachers from internal and external distractions. (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 49)

Sean practiced the responsibility of discipline as he:

- tried to proactively control the environment to handle potential intrusions to teachers and instructional time;
- planned professional development and teacher meeting time to include only the group involved in the topic;
- grouped students to avoid disruptions and behavioral problems in classrooms; and
• believed in the need for structure and communicated this to teachers and students.

Sean saw his role to be the person to protect teachers’ instructional time:

*I am always there to deal with the angry parent and we’ve had some of those. I think in a way, I look at my job overall here is to deal with those types of situations and do all of the nuts and bolts things. So it’s not an impediment to the teachers. I try to control the environment and get out of their way and let them do their work because I can’t teach every class, even though I want to.*

When the middle school staff needed to meet to plan ways to ensure the reading strategies and SSR program were being instituted, Sean arranged for a time when the high school teachers would not need to be present in order to protect the time for both the middle and high school teachers.

Sean discussed the past year when the group of fifth grade students coming to the middle school was considered to be a behaviorally challenging group. Sean and the teachers met together and grouped the students for grade 6, being very strategic with student placement. This action was intended to avoid disruptions and behavioral problems. He believed that, because he and the teachers together took the time to go through this process, this contributed to a more successful year with fewer student behavior problems.

Sean believed strongly in the need for structure and said he communicated this to the students, as he described this in a specific incident that he shared:

*You know, when I taught [middle school], I’d hear some kids say “Well, you’re mean” or “I don’t like your rules”. “Okay, so how would you like it if I came in tomorrow and started talking about the test and then ten minutes into that lecture, the day before that test, started talking about my apple tree in my back yard—and five minutes into that, I got angry—I got angry at someone for no reason and walked out of the room for two minutes and came back. How would you feel?” “Well, I wouldn’t like it.” “Well, why not?” “Well, because it would be uncomfortable.” “Why? Because you want structure. Everybody creates structure and so forth and that’s what I am trying to do here.”*
He spoke about the manner in which he tried to manage problems and issues. He remarked that if he fixed things only when they are broken, then he was crisis managing. If he responded to things as they were happening, he believed that he was managing proactively and little problems did not become large ones. By managing proactively, he tried to prevent interruptions to teachers and instructional time. He said he “looks at his job as creating and defending an environment where the teachers can do their job with the least amount of interruptions possible”.

The environment that existed at High Plains Middle School had very few student discipline problems, teachers who expected and had routine in their day, and attention to order. It was a positive and happy environment with structure. This contributed to the time for teachers to focus their efforts on students and their learning.

Flexibility—McREL 7

Flexibility refers to the extent to which leaders adapt their leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and are comfortable with dissent. Lashway (2001) emphasized the acceptance of diverse opinions and notes that effective leaders “encourage and nurture individual initiative… and must protect and encourage the voices of participants who offer differing points of view” (p. 8).

Specific behaviors associated with flexibility and identified in the McREL meta-analysis are the following:

- Adapting leadership style to the needs of specific situations;
- Being directive or nondirective as the situation warrants;
- Encouraging people to express diverse and contrary opinions; and
• Being comfortable with making major changes in how things are done. (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 49)

The responsibility of flexibility was practiced when Sean:

• shifted between directive and nondirective approaches with staff, using the style the situation warranted;
• encouraged teachers to make decisions on their own, to take risks, and try new approaches in the classroom;
• organized his time for specific tasks in his job, adjusting his time for the specific situation;
• demonstrated flexibility in his approach with student issues, believing that the student’s situation should be considered when determining a course of action; and
• tried new initiatives in the school, such as increasing the number of days for reading classes and new reading programs.

Sean spoke of his job as principal as being “a lot of improvisation”. He also remarked that he tried to use a nondirective approach with staff; however, if the situation warranted a more directive one, he shifted to that leadership style.

…I am of the mind that if you fulfill your contract and you do your job—you know, you get 27 minutes of duty free lunch…if you can get to Mars and back in 27 minutes—go…You know—I don’t really care…If you are late, or consistently late, we might have to have a talk…I want [teachers] to feel like they can make decisions on their own. You know, if they want to take risks in the classroom and do something different—fine…don’t do something stupid. These are adults who have gone to college—and if we can trust them enough to put them in a room by themselves with a group of kids, then I think they can decide simple issues…If we put them through school and made them do practicum experiences and student teach…and we trust them to teach [students] to read and write, I think we can trust them to decide whether or not [students] can wear boots to go outside.
Sean recognized that there are teachers in his building who wanted more direct assistance. He said he preferred to challenge them to try to think independently as they looked for a solution. He realized that this was uncomfortable for several of the staff to problem solve in this manner:

*Just to let [the teachers] do more and more … and I think it was uncomfortable for them, which made it uncomfortable for me, to just let them figure it out on their own... and know when to say, “No, you can. I trust you. You can figure this out”—and just let them be. And you know, I think every year we have cut down on the number of teachers crying in my office.*

Sean said that he believed sometimes he was the one at fault when he did not recognize when assistance was needed by staff, such as when he did not ask certain questions sooner when he realized that the staff was not understanding the connections between the reading strategies. Sean himself had questions regarding the reading program. However, he did not address the subject as soon as he wishes he had.

In order to be flexible and adapt to situations, he has changed the way he has organized his time for specific tasks in his job, adjusting his time for the specific situation:

*The second year I took over [at the elementary], I rationalized over in my mind—my mode of operations is—if I am going to do something, if I am going to write an evaluation, or work on the schedule or whatever I am going to do, I am going to try my hardest at that point in time to give it a finite piece of time—45 minutes, a half an hour, whatever. And I am going to live in that moment.*

Sean said, that while demonstrating flexibility with all student issues does not necessarily directly correlate with methods that affect student achievement, he has taken a stance regarding the need to consider each student situation on a “case by case” basis, as he believes this is a philosophy that permeates what staff believes and affects students emotionally and behaviorally in the classroom. Regarding discipline, some staff members
have expressed that all students should receive the same punishment. Sean stood firmly on this issue, communicating to staff that each situation needed to be individually considered and that rewards or punishments should be based on the student’s current situation and background. He stated he recognized that students have varying degrees of responsibility to a situation and that he, as principal, also had a role in being pre-emptive:

*If Student A punches Student B in the face... then what I [determine to be the punishment] to one student might be different than what I give to that other student, just based on the situation... If [the other student] is a regular ed kid and knows better—and is expected to do better, he’s going to get a more severe punishment than [the other student] just because it’s my fault that we didn’t write a plan that helped prevent that from happening.*

When Sean was involved in meetings with staff, he said that he had to be cognizant that he was clear with teachers regarding the task to be accomplished. When plans were written for students, he was direct in writing what would be done, such as explicitly writing in the plan that “the teacher will work with the student for one hour a day in a specific area related to the student’s learning goal”. He attributed this directness to his background and years in the Air Force.

Sean demonstrated a willingness to consider new approaches and ideas for the middle school. As observed in the leadership team meeting, Sean increased the number of days for reading classes by allowing the advisory program to be changed, a program that he personally wanted to be implemented, but admitted needed to be adjusted to allow for more reading time. He tried to seek ways more teachers could find time for teaming. He was flexible with adjusting programs to be responsive to student needs. Through his willingness to listen to staff offer “comments, complaints, and editorials” at meetings, he encouraged his
staff to express diverse opinions regarding the operations of the school. These efforts have likely contributed to the staff's ability to make significant changes in the school.

**Focus—McREL 8**

A common finding expressed by researchers is that schools are often willing to try new things, perhaps, too much so. Elmore (2002c) explained, “The pathology of American schools is that they know how to change. They know how to change promiscuously and at the drop of a hat. What schools do not know how to do is to improve, to engage in sustained and continuous progress towards a performance goal” (p. 1).

The responsibility of *focus* refers to the extent to which the leader establishes clear goals and keeps these goals in the forefront of the school’s attention. Effectively doing so provides a safeguard against expending vast amounts of energy and resources on school improvement initiatives that do not produce results.

Specific behaviors and characteristics associated with this responsibility and identified in the McREL meta-analysis are:

- Establishing concrete goals for curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices within the school;
- Establishing concrete goals for the general functioning of the school;
- Establishing high, concrete goals, and expectations that all students will meet them; and
- Continually keeping attention on established goals. (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 50)

As principal, Sean’s demonstrated *focus* by:

- keeping the goal of improving reading at the forefront for teachers and students through implementation of the reading programs and strategies;
- defining his expectations to staff regarding the learning environment for the
school and students;

- knowing and operating under the belief that each teacher needed varying levels of support to be able to meet the goals expected of them;
- analyzing where the staff was in helping reach the goals of the school in relationship to where he thought the staff needed to be;
- articulating to the staff the progress being made in reaching building goals with student achievement, particularly reading goals;
- communicating to parents their role in helping their students academically; and
- adjusting the existing schedule or the structure to enable teachers to keep the focus on improving reading skills for students.

Implementation of the reading program was the focus for the middle school. Sean expected the staff to implement the reading strategies that they were learning to use in professional development. He believed these to be important tools for teachers to use. This was evident in the documents used with the leadership team during meetings and with staff during professional development sessions, as all of the documents augmented the focus on assisting students with better reading comprehension.

He stated that if he put together a system with defined expectations for teachers and students and these were implemented in a fair and reasonable manner, he helped to establish an environment that let everyone know the framework he was trying to create and one within which teachers could operate. Sean remarked that different teachers required different things and one could have different conversations, but the expectations for all teachers were the same:
It’s just the support you give to allow [teachers] to get there, I think, that is different. But it’s all the same; we’re all going to the same ball. I’m sure there’s some Buddhist statement that we all walk different paths, but we’re all going to the same place.

In a discussion about student work with special education teachers, Sean explained that the staff needed to use homework as a vehicle for students to improve reading skills. In the past, he saw special education teachers using time in the resource classroom for students to simply “catch up” with work from regular classes. He expressed that this type of assistance would not make the student’s reading skills improve, but instead kept the parents happy because it enabled the students to get “decent grades and graduate”:

[Catching up] doesn’t make them a better reader—so what we will do is the talk-alouds, the think-alouds—all those sorts of things are tools that the resource teacher uses when they give a test question. And if the student’s IEP says they can use the book on the test, then we teach them how to find the information in the book. Let’s work on this meta-cognitive skill to figure out how to do this for the student to be a better learner all the way around. That’s the best I can come up with without completely pulling the kid out of regular ed and working on reading for two hours a day or something.

There was also focus placed on how some students perceived and took the reading tests. Sean said the staff was following student performance and when student results on one of the annual MAP tests seemed unusual, Sean followed up by interviewing all of the students with suspect scores, discovering that several said they “simply pushed the buttons on the computers”.

As observed at staff meetings, he did not give teachers the option of whether or not they would be involved in the reading program. It was his expectation that everyone fulfilled his or her commitment. He said he “sets the goal out there” and “tries to walk the dog back to see where we are and what we need to do to get there”. He said that a part of this may be due to his “force of will personality that he can’t give up”.
He discussed the professional development session held in December 2006 and the expectations he would lay out clearly to the staff:

*I will make the expectation that, “You know, we’re getting kind of sloppy. Last year, we did a good job and met all our goals, and this year—we’re not.” And just make it clear that this is not something that we’re asking you to do voluntarily; this is an expectation just like giving tests and giving grades and preparing lesson plans.*

The focus was emphasized to an even greater extent during an observation in February 2007, when Sean communicated to the staff that “we can’t be having kids reading so poorly; we need to do something different” and that it was his job to make staff understand that this would happen.

Sean said that keeping staff focused on helping students improve reading skills would be accomplished—some through leveraging and the other part through his authority. He said that there is a sense of urgency to let the teachers know that “this is what we need to do and this is what we will do”.

Sean felt strongly that parents needed to play a role in helping students keep the focus on reading:

*They ask me, “Well, what do I do with my kid? How are they going to do better in school?”...But, you know, I just tell them, “Sit at a table for 45 minutes every night with your kid. If you can’t, make someone else do it. Make them do homework. If they don’t have homework, if they swear they don’t, just stick a book right out in front of them and make them read. Because they need the structure—they need to know that if they goof around and say that, “Well, I don’t have any homework, or I forgot it at school”, you’re going to get them something. Throw War and Peace in front of them; read that for 45 minutes and they’ll be willing to wash the cat...and I wonder how many parents actually follow through with that.*

When the middle school student data results from ITBS were analyzed in late January 2007, the superintendent, Sean and the leadership team determined that the focus would
continue to be on reading with additional interventions to begin within a few weeks. Adjustments were made to the master schedule to increase reading time for students at the middle school. Sean said that he would be communicating the message to the staff immediately that implementation records and more classroom visits and observations would be the expected norm. This communication was accomplished, as observed during the staff meeting in February when Sean clearly stated that the focus on implementation of reading strategies would be the top priority in the building.

During observation of teachers, leadership team members and Sean in various meetings, the focus for student learning was consistently named. Ensuring that students succeeded, primarily through increasing reading skills, was the main focus. Yet, attention to the well-being of students was also discussed by Sean during meetings and interviews. It was quite evident that the welfare of each student was a top priority and one that Sean expected all teachers to take very seriously. Sean introduced and led a number of these discussions with teachers, so that the importance of attending to the needs of each student would not be forgotten.

**Ideals and beliefs—McREL 9**

Bennis (2003) placed well-articulated ideals and beliefs at the core of effective leadership. Cottrell (2002) echoed this position by offering this to school leaders: “Guard your integrity like it’s your most precious management possession” (p. 52). Fullan (2002, 2003b) said it is the principal’s responsibility to help establish the moral purpose of education and change the context for teachers and students to learn.
Specific behaviors and characteristics associated with ideals and beliefs and identified in the McREL meta-analysis are:

- Possessing well-defined beliefs about schools, teaching, and learning;
- Sharing beliefs about school, teaching, and learning with the staff; and
- Demonstrating behaviors that are consistent with beliefs. (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 51)

Sean demonstrated ideals and beliefs, when he:

- empathized with and advocated for students who have less support, fewer resources, or have difficult situations with which they cope, and understood that student engagement is affected by external forces;
- communicated to staff that students are to be treated as equals, regardless of income level or other factors;
- ascribed to the belief that teachers and administrators must identify skills students are lacking and replace these with new and desirable attributes;
- shared his belief with staff that “every one kid can learn” when a structured system to meet students’ needs is in place;
- communicated his belief that it is the responsibility of all teachers and himself to help students find an avenue for their “world view” or to change it through experience in order for students to be successful;
- ensured that each student, regardless of socioeconomic status or other factors, fits in at school;
- reminded staff of the responsibilities that have been agreed upon and his expectation that these are to be carried out;
• communicated to teachers everyone’s responsibility to model and expect respect;
• talked to students about treating others with respect and care;
• placed all students in a reading class to avoid having students stigmatized;
• created an environment where he first trusted staff to do things independently and then provided help, if needed; and
• performed any job necessary within the school.

Sean’s ideals and beliefs were observed to be communicated through his actions, as well as his words. He recounted some of the stories that affected his belief system. Having grown up in a single parent home, he was able to understand students who face challenges. He talked about discipline and the ability of students to learn. His leadership behaviors are based on the ideals he has held:

*When I was in high school, people yelled at me a lot because my sense of humor in high school didn’t mesh. All I learned was to think they were a jerk—and I got to a point where I just thought that, well, that was the rule and if that was the line—let me see just how far I can hang my toes over the line before I get caught.*

Sean commented on how he conducted himself as a student and said it was not what he wanted for the students at High Plains Middle School. He stated that he wanted the students to know that this is their school and their community and that they need to respect the building and respect and treat each other well.

He said the students who come to him may have issues, but that at their core they are decent young people:

*They’re perfect when they’re born and we just mess them up… if it’s not something organic, like a learning disability, a behavior disorder or something, it’s programming that they’ve gotten from the world. And if we can, in a way, find them an avenue to help them either take that world-view*
that they’ve gotten and make it more compatible with being more successful in
the world, or change it through experience, that’s my job. It isn’t to punish.
We’ve got some kids that are incredibly poor, and I don’t want them to feel
left out…I’ll do anything to, you know, make sure that they feel like they fit in.
They are the kids that have the hardest time fitting in to begin with…I could
understand being poor and feeling like you don’t fit. All the attention you get
is only negative, so you’re going to act out.

Sean said he believes too many parents do not demonstrate to their children that they
really care and that this is a frustration for him. He said this is particularly stressful to him
since he now has his own child: “Why would [a parent] have a kid and have so little
regard?”

During an observation of the middle school teachers’ meeting to discuss the progress
of several students who were having difficulty, Sean referred to his notes from a Child Study
team meeting. One student in particular was having trouble with homework completion. Sean
reminded staff of the responsibilities they had agreed on by the group and said that it was his
expectation that these would be carried out. He encouraged teachers to find ways to help
troubled kids “hook into something. … I told [the student] that I know what it’s like to not
have a father and he started bawling. I may be in over my head, but we need to help him”.

During an interview, Sean shared these same beliefs:

_Everybody who shows up at your door has the right to an education. And not
only does that come from reading or math or science, it comes from
behavior…somewhere in his life, they didn’t teach him how to behave
properly. So what we’re going to do is, we’re going to teach him how to
behave properly. If you get a student sent to your classroom for not being able
to read, you don’t give him detention; you teach him how to read. If you get a
kid sent to you from a family that doesn’t bother to give you a call if they can’t
make a meeting, you don’t punish him for that; you teach him and you replace
those skills with those that the parents didn’t give him to begin with…But
again, that all goes back to every one kid can learn. Every kid can learn…if
you put together a system with defined expectations and they’re implemented
in a fair and reasonable manner._
Sean said that the school has lots of programs in place that can help students and that these needed to be considered to help and support students “without getting down on the kids.” Respect and helping students to understand appropriate behavior in our society have been fundamental values he has emphasized with students and staff:

*Even if I might have been at [the elementary] that morning when it happened—and I would see them three hours later and 200 feet away from the problem—I was supposed to fix [the student] or extract a pound of flesh and go put it on [the teacher’s] desk for them. And that’s not me. I mean I can be that way…I was a challenging student in school and whenever they tried to beat it out of me it would just make me more stubborn. So I didn’t want to do that. If a student doesn’t know how to read, you don’t send them to my office. You teach them—you give them supplemental instruction, you put them in a special class. If a student doesn’t know how to behave properly, you teach them how to behave…You have a kid pushing someone in line in second grade, you pull him aside and you talk to him. You talk to him about respect and caring and “Was that the right thing to do and how could you have done it better—and how disappointed will your mom be, if I have to call her and tell her that you do this all the time?” And when they stop crying, you put them back in line, and off to lunch they go.*

His words to students have been to “treat everyone else the way you want to be treated” or “treat them the way that you would treat your grandmother”. Sean shared a strong belief in helping students be considered as equals, regardless of income level or other factors that could discriminate.

As Sean helped the leadership team structure the SSR classes, he did not want to stigmatize the students who were not proficient on the ITBS. He did not want students sitting at lunch and ridiculed because the students in SSR were in a reading class and other students were not. To promote a sense of fairness and avoid stigmatizing SSR students, all students were placed in a reading class. Sean and the teachers believed that more reading opportunities for all students promoted greater instructional growth. While having the school identified as being on the “watch list” with the federal government and having their name in
the paper was not something Sean wanted, he said that this did not bother him as much as “having kids not able to read”.

In January 2007, as the leadership team met to plan the professional development session and share the news with staff regarding decreased test scores and determining ways staff would keep the focus on reading, Sean made a point to tell the leadership team that he would be the one to start the afternoon’s discussion. When time came for the professional development session, Sean’s initial words included, “Three reading teachers cannot do this on their own”. He went on to emphasize that perhaps staff and everyone have been “pretty lighthearted” about implementation logs. However, he stated he planned to proceed by monitoring these much more closely. As some of the teachers questioned the percentages of students in the non-proficient range by saying that the school’s percentages were affected more because of the low numbers of students in a small school, Sean’s response was, “It doesn’t matter whether we have 35 kids in the class or 55 kids in the class—this is the percentage of kids who are not proficient”.

In an interview, he stated that his belief that if teachers teach properly, they have to give of themselves. “If you can’t leave a little bit of yourself in that classroom everyday, you’ve got no business being there.” As he spoke about helping achieve the goals for the school and students, he said that he felt that staff was working to get the school to a place where it should be and the challenge would be keeping it there. He used an analogy between improving a system and growing plants:

I think [the superintendent] and I have had this discussion—you know, there are days when she feels like she is bailing out the ocean. And, you know, I don’t look at it that way. I look at it more like—you plant a garden. I love to garden so, you know once you get the plants in there and they are growing like they should, you know in this analogy, the plants could be the teachers,
And then, as you continue to cause that to go on, you just weed the garden. And I guess the fewer weeds I see, the more successful I feel.

He spoke about one of his colleagues who was asked to develop his philosophy of administration in his graduate program and how it caused him to think about his:

As I was driving up to Lake City to pick up my daughter and take her to her final checkup, I was thinking, ‘What was mine?’ And I think it’s more that I would like to create an environment where people can succeed… I would like people to motivate themselves first. And then if there’s a problem with someone needing a little pep, then I’ll go and see what’s going on. Is there anything I can do? You know, it’s trying to create an environment where people can work.

Raised by his mother, living in a large urban city, and being a challenging student in school, Sean said he believes that he sees the world differently than some other administrators:

I’m no better or worse than anybody else; I’m just the guy they gave the keys to and a nice office… If something needs to be done, if something is spilled on the floor, I’m going to be there just as soon as somebody else. And I would, looking at somebody I would work for, I would respect that person more than I would respect somebody that is very hierarchical.

Sean discussed that he grew up with few resources and he understood firsthand how students in similar situations could feel. He was a challenging student who did not see the value of school. After high school, he enlisted in the Air Force, with no intentions of attending college. His life took a different direction when one of his supervisors spoke with him about his potential and expressed a belief in him that he could accomplish more and needed to consider college. Because someone he respected in his adult life had a belief in him and shared this, he began to believe more in himself and what he could offer others, so he began to pursue his interest in science education. It was clear that Sean’s background was
atypical from many people who enter school administration, but it certainly allowed him to have a perspective that would be invaluable to his staff and students.

It was extremely gratifying to listen to and observe Sean as he communicated his beliefs about teaching and learning. He practiced his beliefs that each student can learn, that each should be treated with respect, and that it was the responsibility of those in the schools to recognize and help address each student’s social, emotional and academic needs. He would speak very openly with staff when discussing student situations and planning for how the staff would do whatever possible to make certain that students felt they belonged, regardless of their personal or family situation. All of these deep-seated beliefs seemed to guide his work. It seems that leading with heart is what drives effective leaders, as other practices will follow, but being passionate about serving students begins with these kinds of ideals and beliefs.

**Input—McREL 10**

As defined by McREL (2005) input has direct connections to participative decision-making, a foundation of the IPD Model, in which teachers and other stakeholders have opportunity for involvement.

*Input* refers to the extent to which the school leader involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies. Specific behaviors and characteristics associated with input and identified in the McREL meta-analysis are:

- Providing opportunities for staff to be involved in developing school policies;
- Providing opportunities for staff input on all important decisions; and
- Using leadership teams in decision-making. (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 51)
Sean demonstrated input when he:

- understood that staff has more ownership of problems when they help to develop solutions to problems;
- allowed the leadership team to make decisions that impact the school; and
- considered input from teachers regarding the reading program planning and implementation.

The leadership team played a definite role in making decisions that impacted the school as they helped to direct the focus for reading. A behavior leadership team also was in place at High Plains Middle School.

Sean believed that a staff should be empowered to make decisions at a certain level, but that having input from staff on many issues or topics required a great deal of time. He also said that he doesn’t want individual staff members “going rogue” so it is a delicate balance.

He liked the fact that he had led in a school where working together as a group is encouraged. He said he thinks it would be difficult not having this collaboration. He believed that frequently it was preferable for the teachers to come up with ideas for staff to have ownership. He was open to input, but said that it can be difficult at times to sit and listen to what gets said.

When he met with staff to gather ideas and input, he discussed feeling better when he used a more informal approach. “In a meeting, a lot of people don’t say what they think, because they are in a group of people. But, if you get them one on one, it seems to work better.”
Input from staff was also considered when Sean and the teachers held discussions regarding the reading program. During an interview, Sean compared implementation of the program to learning how to do the right thing by finding out what went wrong. As a science teacher, he shared with the teachers that some of the best lab experiments he taught were the ones that didn’t work, because time was spent trying to figure out why something went wrong and examining the content in greater detail. He said some teachers have commented they do not want to experiment, so the extent to which teachers are willing to try things and have input in this manner may be limited.

During one observation, when the leadership team was developing ideas for ways students would take the SSR class time more seriously, Sean asked the team members if it would be beneficial for students to be given a grade for the class. The group members offered their input to this question. When staff discussed the grouping for the students and expressed that they wanted to remain with the same students, Sean told them that he would work the schedule so the students would be with the same teachers.

At another observation, the leadership team and reading consultant were deciding upon the document the teachers would use to assess benchmarks. The consultant posed the question to Sean who responded by saying, “to do whatever you need to do”. These types of interactions represented the faculty’s input at the middle school.

Input was valued in this school. In his leadership role, the principal modeled seeking and listening to input from others. It was clear that this school practiced participative decision making and shared leadership to a great extent.
**Intellectual stimulation—McREL 11**

Researchers of the McREL study refer to *intellectual stimulation* as the extent to which the school leader ensures that faculty and staff members are aware of the most current theories and practices regarding effective schooling and makes discussions of those theories and practices a regular aspect of the school’s culture (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 52). Fullan (2003b) states that the principal has to be the lead learner and “go out of his way” to learn more, in order to become a pressure point for positive change (p. 20). Lashway (2001) explains that “deep changes require deep learning, and leaders must build teacher learning into the everyday fabric of school life” (p. 7).

Specific behaviors and characteristics associated with *intellectual stimulation* and identified in the McREL meta-analysis are the following:

- Continually exposing staff to cutting-edge research and theory on effective schooling;
- Keeping informed about current research and theory on effective schooling; and
- Fostering systematic discussion regarding current research and theory on effective schooling. (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 53)

*Intellectual stimulation* was demonstrated when Sean:

- shared the constructivist teaching method with teachers;
- led reading strategy implementation with other reading teachers and taught it to other faculty members the following year;
- supported teachers learning through the assistance of the reading consultant; and
- discussed the characteristics of middle level learners and the need to differentiate instruction with staff.
Sean said that he has tried to help teachers understand how to help students construct their own meaning. He has done this by referring to his teacher preparation program and ways in which the constructivist method has been used in science.

The first year that Sean was a principal, he and the three teachers on the leadership team were the ones to first learn and use the strategies in their classrooms. These strategies were taught to other teachers the following year. Sean’s expectations have been for all teachers to implement the research-based strategies in the classroom on a regular basis. He readily admits that using the IPD Model with the assistance of the reading consultant and leadership team members, and using specific strategies for implementation has been a vast improvement over professional development from the years prior to the IPD Model:

[In earlier years] the school would have had AEA people come in who would present for several hours, leave the staff with certain work to do, and teachers would set the work on a shelf and it would sit there, unattended to.

I think that if we were to look at the whole professional development Model… to make it be successful, it needs to be done with an AEA person…the AEA person comes in and leads us and then the teachers go and do it, and I’m the one that makes sure that they do it or not, which is a lot different than the other way…But I kind of like the system. And if the AEA could…replicate that system and keep doing it.

Sean recognized that observations in classrooms needed to be done more frequently and implementation logs reviewed more thoroughly to ensure that the reading strategies were fully implemented. He stated that distributing leadership in a way that provided teachers input, while continuing to work together with a common focus for student learning, was not a simple task for teachers to successfully adopt. It required that staff embraced a paradigm that included principal and teachers together as decision makers. Sean continually reminded
teachers about the kinds of effective school practices by saying, “This is the medium we live in.”

During interviews and observations, this researcher observed and listened to Sean’s depth of knowledge regarding middle-level learners as he tried to help his teachers consider these characteristics when they had contact with students. He spoke with teachers on a regular basis about the need to differentiate how they interacted with students based upon a myriad of factors—their family situations, how they get along with other students, their academic ability, and other considerations. The continuous reminders that Sean provided to teachers regarding their approach to students and the effect that teacher attitude and response had on student behavior were consistently observed.

It is important to note Sean’s commitment to the reading program and his knowledge of the strategies that he and other members of the leadership team practiced and modeled with the assistance of the reading consultant. Intellectual stimulation also includes staying abreast of current research about effective schooling. Sean frankly stated that he did not often take time away from school to attend many conferences. He has made it a priority to attend a school law conference annually, but outside of some AEA workshops, he felt that he could not be away from staff and students any more than he currently has been. The time factor that is involved for a school leader to attend workshops and conferences to learn about content that could be shared back with staff is significant. In the reality of a dedicated principal’s life, after school and weekend activities require a great deal of time. When one tries to balance a personal and professional life, the need to balance time away from students, time away from family, and time for his own learning become competing forces.
Involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment—McREL 12

This responsibility addresses the extent to which the principal is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment activities at the classroom level. This is considered critical to the concept of instructional leadership. As a result of their synthesis of the research on leadership, researchers at the National Institute on Educational Governance, Finance and Management (1999) noted that an administrator’s ability and willingness to provide input regarding classroom practices was one of the most highly valued characteristics reported by teachers.

The following are specific behaviors and characteristics associated with involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment as defined by the McREL meta-analysis:

- Being directly involved in helping teachers design curricular activities;
- Being directly involved in helping teachers address assessment issues; and
- Being directly involved in helping teachers address instructional issues. (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 54)

The responsibility of involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment was evident when the principal:

- was involved in leadership team meetings and helped plan and prepare for professional development;
- was an active participant in professional development sessions;
- connected his knowledge of curriculum development with content he knew;
- implemented the reading strategies with students;
- analyzed and shared data with the leadership team and teachers;
- assisted in development of the school reading program;
- assisted in the development of the leadership team;
• adjusted the structure of the school day to accommodate the necessary
  instructional time for students; and

• was involved in meetings that focused on students and their achievement.

The direct involvement that Sean has had in instructional issues was evident through
the leadership team meetings when the team planned and prepared for professional
development. This was evident at all observation sessions as he actively participated in
professional development and, depending upon what his role needed to be, he often
participated in the same manner as the teachers:

_We learned the strategies—first the read-alouds, the talk-alouds and the
think-alouds—and I was using them in my classroom. And I’m not a reading
teacher; I’m a science teacher. So to see me doing it, I think, helped quite a
bit. And I do think it is good science teaching to help the kids understand the
text that way._

When the state requested that all districts develop standards and benchmarks for
subject areas, Sean was one of the two science teachers in the district. As a teacher for both
high school and middle school levels, he explained that he wrote a majority of this
curriculum. Having played a key role in this development, he believed that he has had a solid
understanding of the process and the significance of the standards.

Sean created the groupings for the SSR classes, based upon the assessment data he
analyzed from the online system through the area education agency which has housed the
school’s data. He helped to develop the SSR program the teachers were using. At the time the
decision was made to increase the SSR class from three days to five days, Sean was involved
as he and the leadership team together planned the changes.

He spoke about being involved in the design of the initial concept of the leadership
team and planning for the focus on reading. When he first took on the middle school
principal position, he was teaching several classes at the high school and learning the strategies along with other teachers. He had always participated in all of the professional development meetings as both principal and a teacher who used the strategies. At the same time he had worn the principal hat and had reminded staff of the expectations that existed for implementation.

As he assisted with planning of the February 2007 professional development afternoon, Sean stated he did not believe that all the teachers were seeing the overall connection between use of QAR and the other reading strategies, so it would be the team’s and his responsibility to help the staff members understand QAR as the framework. He was observed as he met with the other leadership team members and let them know that he would be adjusting the master schedule to allow more time for student reading. When the professional development session began, Sean introduced the content for the afternoon session by discussing the data from ITBS that showed fewer students to be proficient in reading in grade 7 and 8 than the previous year.

In interviews, he shared how he planned the timeline for the elementary staff to meet to write intensive plans for students. Sean set a day aside and hired substitute teachers so that he and the teachers could write student plans as a group. He wanted the teachers to attend to the plans, work through the process thoughtfully, and then he and the teachers would review the plans immediately after they were developed. Sean added that he sought to be part of the development process for as much time as his schedule would allow. When significant changes were contemplated, such as considering associate time to assist a student, Sean said that he tried to arrange his schedule to be involved in these meetings.
Involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment is critical to instructional leadership. This involvement was obvious in all aspects of his leadership duties as principal.

Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment—McREL 13

*Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment* addresses the extent to which the leader is aware of best practices in these domains. The focus is on the acquisition and cultivation of knowledge, whereas the responsibility of *involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment* is action oriented (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 55). Fullan (2001a) explained that a principal’s knowledge of effective practices in curriculum, instruction, and assessment is necessary to provide guidance for teachers on the day-to-day tasks of teaching and learning. Elmore (2000) added that “leadership is the guidance and direction of instructional improvement” (p. 13).

The following specific behaviors and characteristics identified in the McREL meta-analysis and associated with this responsibility:

- Possessing extensive knowledge about effective instructional practices;
- Possessing extensive knowledge about effective curricular practices;
- Possessing extensive knowledge about effective assessment practices; and
- Providing conceptual guidance regarding effective classroom practices. (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 55)

Sean demonstrated the responsibility of *knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment* when he:

- reviewed the materials shared with the staff to know what his role should be in meetings;
- understood the connections between the professional development and the teachers’ evaluation system;
made connections to help teachers understand how the professional development content related to student learning;

reviewed curriculum maps and made connections between the content and skills and the district standards and benchmarks;

understood the elements of the IPD Model and the alignment with the CSIP and shared this information with teachers; and

understood student formative and summative assessment data and communicated the importance of both to teachers.

Because his role has been shared between two buildings, Sean stated that he was unable to attend all of the leadership meetings. He remarked that when he was not involved in planning the professional development with the leadership team, he reviewed the handouts and any materials being presented, so that he was aware of what was being communicated and understood what his role needed to be.

He also stated that he understood how the expectations for teachers fit with the goals for the students:

_I think early on, when they did the new evaluator training and...I got to sit through that just as I was getting ready [to become a principal], the year before I took this position, it was almost like the formal instruction on supervision and evaluation that I never got in my principal core program. So you know the quality of work that the kids produce, you know what the teachers do in their behaviors, and you can get a pretty good feeling for that._

Having developed standards and benchmarks as a science teacher, he said he could review curriculum maps and understood how the standards and benchmarks were distilled into the curriculum. Sean also understood the elements of the IPD Model and said that it has basically been the Model for school improvement planning. He believed that the IPD Model
has been a good model to follow because it has a research-base and it is a plan that the staff can adhere to. Rather than the teaching staff falling back on past teaching practices or having to search for something completely new or different when trying to implement, the Model can work for teachers:

When you are putting this professional development together to make sure that you are using strategies that have been tested and have shown to be effective in a blind study, rather than just the typical thing in education is, you know—you pull it out, blow the dust off it, and try it and put aside the other stuff, it seems like it’s all John Dewey, just in a different form. You know we didn’t really worry about that with the staff...these are just the things we are going to do.

Serious assessment and data review by staff is an area that Sean was pleased to see taken seriously. “You know we [previously] gave ITBS tests just to show the parents… how we went for however many decades before people said, ‘Let’s do this’ astounds me.” Sean also related that teachers take students’ poor assessment results very personally. He said it has reached the point where some teachers have difficulty understanding there are limits to the kinds of assistance they could provide to students during assessment, as the teachers wanted to ensure that students were successful on the tests. Some teachers have asked to read tests to those students who have difficulty reading, including students who do not have a reading modification in their IEP or 504 plan. Sean said that he reminded teachers that this was not an allowable practice and would not be done.

Sean was observed to have knowledge of formative assessments, and he expressed what he believed the ideal assessment communication should be for all students. He made a strong editorial for the time commitment that is required for continual analysis and communication with teachers regarding student achievement data. With the lack of a
requirement for middle and elementary schools to have a guidance counselor, data collection, analysis, and communication to parents becomes the responsibility of others who do not generally have time allotted for this task:

*It would be wonderful to sit down with every parent of every kid and put together a plan that said, “Okay, what do you see your kid doing… and forget eighth-grade, what about sixth-grade? Because you’re really starting to get ready [in sixth-grade]… “Where do you see your kid going in six or seven years? What do you want them to be? What do you want them to do? Here’s their scores, here’s where they’re at, here’s what they need to do… We do that for TAG kids; we get them to plan a project or whatever—and we do it for special ed kids. If we could do that for regular ed kids as well, I really think we’d have something.*

*I do think it would be nice year-to-year to know and to go in there as a parent and say, “Okay, I see what’s going on, I see what you are doing. What can I do at home to augment what you’re doing? What part of her skill set needs work—and go forward.” But, you know, it’s kind of an outgrowth of what we do as a district. We look at what kids are doing, where they need help, and then we change the curriculum to fit that, just like what we’re doing with our reading program… But you would really need someone to coordinate that… it would be a huge job. And you would need someone… like a guidance counselor. And the state doesn’t even require a staff guidance counselor.*

Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment is very similar to involvement in those areas. Sean utilized the services of the reading consultant to obtain greater knowledge of the research-base and application of the reading strategies. However, he learned from her through his involvement. It was his involvement in all three areas that enabled him to develop continual knowledge which served him well as he communicated instructional expectations to the staff.
Monitor/Evaluate—McREL 14

As a result of a review of nearly 8,000 studies, Hattie (1992) concluded that “the most powerful single modification that enhances achievement is feedback” and ”the simplest prescription for improving education must be dollops of feedback” (p. 9).

Feedback does not occur automatically; it is a function of design. Creating a system that provides feedback is at the core of monitoring and evaluating. This responsibility, by McREL’s definition (2005), refers to the extent to which the leader monitors the effectiveness of school practices in terms of their impact on student achievement.

Specific behaviors and characteristics associated with this responsibility and identified in the McREL meta-analysis are:

- Continually monitoring the effectiveness of the school’s curricular, instructional, and assessment practices; and
- Being continually aware of the impact of the school’s practice on student achievement. (Marzano et al., 2005, pp. 55-56)

Sean demonstrated the responsibility to monitor and evaluate when he:

- monitored student achievement data;
- monitored teacher implementation data;
- intervened and questioned the staff when implementation data showed teachers were not implementing as intended;
- determined when he needed to intervene to assist teachers, based upon evaluation of data; and
- had high expectations for teachers and students and held them accountable.

Student achievement and teacher implementation data were collected and regularly monitored. All middle school staff, including Sean, reviewed the student data. Sean
mentioned that he was the first to review the teacher implementation data. He explained to the teachers that keeping implementation records was “something you have to do, and, if you don’t, I’ll be talking to you individually”. He said that the reading consultant informed him that this was something the teachers would need to “buy into”. However, Sean’s response was that all of the middle school staff had been doing this long enough, and the teachers were well aware this was the expectation, so he had no problem “being the bad guy”.

As he explained to his staff his expectation for consistency over time, he used the example of the Grand Canyon:

And I ask the teachers, “Who made that deep hole?” Their response was, “I don’t know, water?” But, you know, you run water all over yourself all day, and you don’t get a big hole in your body. It just took forever, and that’s sort of the same thing here. You’re going to—we’re going to—do this job every day—and if we can do it consistently and properly, we don’t have to make a huge, grand statement every time we’re going to do something. We just need to be consistent.

Sean said that he monitored the implementation logs closely. He understood early on that he was not going to have the responsibilities of teaching reading or introducing new strategies to teachers as the consultant did, but he saw his role as setting the expectations and ensuring the strategies were being implemented:

To get them to learn to choose which particular strategies are appropriate for what they’re doing or for what topic or for what they want the kids to get … And I’m there to make sure they try them.

We collect implementation data to make sure that they’re doing it. And I know that implementation expectation that we have…these many per week and so forth…

As he spoke about achievement in reading, Sean said meetings with his staff have focused on issues or problems that may exist, as well as whether or not the programs are helping students. He listed the self-questioning guidelines that he follows:
Did the teacher do what they should have done? Okay well then, the next question is, did [this] have the effect that it should have had? If not, then we need to regroup like we did with SSR… there was a group of kids that weren’t doing well because they had a disability—they were not doing well for another reason. So let’s put together a program with the reading consultant, with the professionals who know what to do, and put it in place to help them—and then go back again, like I did when I looked at last year versus the year before data—to see if that program did what it was supposed to… with the whole Model and with the CSIP. You know, what are you going to do, how are you going to do it? You did it—how did it go? What are you going to do to regroup?

In January 2007, the leadership team, consultant, and Sean met to discuss what needed to change to see an upward trend in student reading scores. In an interview, Sean said he perceived that teachers “understanding his expectations and acting upon these might be two different things”. He emphasized that his job was to “make them understand”.

In the meeting between Sean and the other leadership team members, as they discussed the disappointing 2007 ITBS results, he emphatically stated that would be spending more time monitoring implementation of the reading program. He said he would monitor more in classrooms to ensure that all teachers were teaching Seminar class consistently and do so through more unannounced classroom visits and observations to note whether all students were engaged. To help ensure that students understood their part in participation, he would also consider changing from a pass/fail grading system to a letter grade scale.

In an interview, Sean admitted that he lacked the patience for people who say they were too busy with other things. He had copies of the teachers’ commitments and following through on what they had committed to was not optional. Implementation would be much more closely monitored. He said that staff needed to all understand that the programs and strategies were to be used frequently and correctly to make a difference for students.
Just as staff members needed a “check for understanding about why we are doing this”, Sean remarked that he would like to see the teachers aspire to help students see this, as well. While he recognized that there was currently not enough time in the teachers’ schedules to develop an education plan for every student, he said he would like to see all students have consistent reviews, as he believes this would benefit student learning and growth:

*It’d be wonderful if we had enough staff to where you could put together a personal education plan for every [student]… an IEP for regular ed kids, basically. For every kid here and then sit down with them and talk to them as an advisor just like you did in college to say, “What’s your plan? What do you want to do? How do you fulfill it? Here’s your scores and here are the things we’re going to put you in to help you with your scores.” And explain to the kids why you’re doing this.*

Sean held teachers accountable for completion and submission of implementation logs. He reminded teachers regularly of this agreement that would be adhered to. He admitted that the area he needed to do more of was to monitor implementation in the classroom. He was a principal who was in constant motion, going in and out of classrooms and hallways and consistently aware of what was occurring in the school. Yet, observing all of the teachers actually using the strategies was an area he knew needed additional attention. He believed that this impacted the 2007 ITBS results. Because of the student ITBS data and the perception other leadership team members had voiced questioning whether the implementation of the strategies by teachers was being done true to form, Sean was determined to monitor more teachers’ usage of the strategies and use of Seminar time with students much more closely.
Blase and Kirby (2000) identified optimism as a critical characteristic of an effective leader, as the principal generally is the one to set the tone for the school. Kaagan and Markle (1993) described the benefit of a positive emotional tone as an environment where “new ideas and innovation abound” (p. 5).

The responsibility of the optimizer refers to the extent that the school leader inspires others and is the driving force when implementing a challenging innovation. Specific behaviors and characteristics associated with optimizer in the McREL meta analysis are:

- Inspiring teachers to accomplish things that might be beyond their grasp;
- Being the driving force behind major initiatives; and
- Portraying a positive attitude about the ability of staff to accomplish substantial things. (Marzano et al., 2005, pp. 56-57)

The principal demonstrated the responsibility of optimizer when he:

- provided encouragement to others, telling them they have the ability to succeed; and
- communicated to the staff that he believed they could make positive things happen.

Sean demonstrated being an optimizer throughout the school’s change initiatives. He stated that he has set the tone for the building and that the attitudes people have adopted had been based largely on the encouragement he offered others. He wanted his staff to believe they can try and succeed at new things. In his words: “the school isn’t a nuclear power plant…” and “whatever is happening is not the end of the world. In the long run, the best thing usually happens.”
In observations, it was apparent that Sean was respected and viewed positively by the staff members. He consistently broached topics at staff meetings with a positive and “can do” attitude. Sean said that he has consistently tried to ask himself, “What’s the proper thing to do? What would be the optimum outcome?” It has been this kind of “never give up, positive thinking” that seems to fuel Sean each day, as his high energy and determination in believing that he and the teachers would make a difference were evident.

**Order—McREL 16**

Nunnelley, Whaley, Mull, and Hott (2003) defined order as clear boundaries and rules for both students and faculty. In an analysis of successful schools in a large metropolitan area, Supovitz (2002) identified order as a necessary condition, “…groups need structures that provide them with the leadership, time, resources, and incentives to engage in instructional work” (p. 1618). Lashway (2001) explained that this means not only finding time and money, but reshaping routine policies and practices, as staffing, scheduling and other seemingly mundane issues can have a major impact on the school’s capacity to meet new standards (p.1).

McREL defined this responsibility as the extent to which the leader establishes a set of standard operating procedures and routines. The responsibility of *order* involves the following specific behaviors:

- Establishing routines for the smooth running of the school that staff understand and follow;
- Providing and reinforcing clear structures, rules, and procedures for staff; and
- Providing and reinforcing clear structures, rules and procedures for students. (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 57)

Sean demonstrated the responsibility of *order* when he:
• reviewed the policies and procedures with staff and students at the beginning of each school year and expected adherence;
• had expectations for structured professional development;
• was task oriented with his own job responsibilities;
• grouped students in the reading program according to data;
• spent significant amounts of time in the classrooms and hallways to check for behaviors; and
• expected students and staff to treat each other with respect.

Sean has been a believer in structure and emphasized this with both students and staff.

Everybody creates structure and so forth and that’s what I am trying to do here. And it is the same thing with the staff. We have a certain structure that we need to follow and everybody needs to do their part… Everyone has to do other duties as assigned.

To help establish structure and routines in the building, he explained how he used time to go through the handbook with staff each year, reviewing expectations, folders, and lesson plans. He believed that professional development also had a planned structure that helped staff adhere to expectations he had for the school.

He said he allowed himself to obsess over trying to do things perfectly; however, he admitted that he does not have the time to submit to perfectionism. He said he tried to do tasks in the best way he could in the timeframe he was given, because if he doesn’t, the next task would not get done.

In discussing making changes to the SSR program, Sean established the routine of reviewing SSR student groupings quarterly. “I figured, for middle school
kids, it is hard enough to get them to know where to go once throughout the year. If you switch it through the year, it’s going to be chaos.”

He said that rules and policies were established, and he expected adherence to these:

You read all this stuff about middle school kids and how they are different and [at the high school] they’re a little more structured… I guess [behavioral] discipline plays a great focus. Down here, I expect kids to behave and everything too, but when it comes to consequences, I don’t want to seem a softy, but I meter out justice in an appropriate manner.

He provided structure for students by ensuring that teachers understood the rules and procedures they were to follow. Sean talked about a student with a behavioral disability who was serving some academic work time in the office, but was not given assignments from the teachers. Without work to do, the student became disruptive. Sean then requested the work from the teachers, provided this to the student, and said, “Here you go, Jeremy. Here is your work. Let’s get busy; let’s have a good day, because if you don’t, your release day of Wednesday is going to become Thursday and so forth.” At the staff meeting, Sean said that he then communicated with the teachers that this lack of attention with not providing students with academic materials and support was of no help to students.

Sean was observed spending a significant amount of time in the classrooms and hallways, talking informally with students and staff. He described some of the ways he interacted with students as he communicated the behaviors he expected of them. He used analogies to help students think about their behavior and the rules they were to follow:

In the middle school, I think the girl was crawling over the desk and whacking the kid with a shoe or shooting spitballs on the bus. I just try to get them to look; you know I wasn’t smiley and happy when I did that… I wasn’t angry on the inside, but I let my displeasure be known. I said, “You know, let’s look at this, are you supposed to do that?” “No.” “Why would you do that?” “Well, he made me mad.” “Well, what have I told you from the beginning of the year? If someone does something, you ask them to stop. If they don’t, then you
tell the bus driver or you tell a teacher or you tell me”. And then we talked about the physics of crawling over a seat at 60 miles an hour and somebody slams on the brakes. You know like the sunglasses on a dashboard when you make a turn. And from there I give my consequence and away we go. So again, there is a little difference in the type of behavior and there is a little difference in the potential for harm at a higher level.

He said that when he stopped and talked with students in the hallway, he spoke to them in “their own language”. When he talked with students about behavior and conflict, he said that he frequently completed the discussion with the concept that it is a simple thing to get along with others “if you treat everyone else the way you want to be treated or treat them the way you would treat your grandmother”.

He related a story about the structure he expected:

We have one kid who has cerebral palsy and, I mean, it’s just a problem with one arm and one foot. He had surgery because of one of his feet…and he’s in a wheelchair. So I was talking to [my secretary] this morning and we saw [students] chasing somebody with him in the wheelchair. So, you know, I can go out there and scream…but what we did was set a speed limit for the wheelchair. I said, “Let’s set a speed limit. How about one mile per hour?” And he was like, “One mile per hour? We’ll never get anywhere!” So I was like, “Let’s look at this. How many seconds are there in an hour? Well, let’s do the math, that would be sixty times sixty…thirty-six hundred. How many yards are there in a mile?” “Well, I don’t know, 1,700 or something.” “Okay, so that’s less than half of 3,600. So that means you should go about a foot and a half every second to go one mile an hour.” So then I walked off and my step is almost a yard, so here I’m going every second and that’s an adequate pace. I understand you might be late for class, so maybe we could go up to a mile and a half per hour for the wheelchair. “Will we do speeding tickets here?” I’m like, “Yeah, we’ll give detention slips”…I could go out there and get angry, but that isn’t going to work. The key is to have fun with it. The kids are here to learn, and I never learned when somebody was screaming. I never learned when people were yelling at me.

He said that he reasoned and created structure in the same way with students in the classroom. He said he has been attentive to the things students do. When he saw students closing their books with five minutes left in the class, he asked them why. When students
asked why he has “all these rules”, he told them that we all have to live by rules. He explained to students that everyone expects some sort of regularity, some sort of predictability. The rules may be different in each class. However, students needed to know what the expectations were for each situation.

The responsibility of order is seen when clear rules and boundaries exist in the school. Sean was deliberate in establishing these and seeing that there was adherence. Order at High Plains Middle School was clear and meaningful for both students and teachers. At the same time, order did not mean oppression, as the principal’s personality and sense of humor helped to establish a positive environment for the staff.

**Outreach—McREL 17**

Cotton (2003) explained that the principal must have a willingness and an ability to communicate to individuals both inside and outside the school. McREL referred to the responsibility of outreach as the extent to which the leader is an advocate and a spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders. Specific behaviors and characteristics associated with this responsibility are the following:

- Ensuring that the school complies with all district and state mandates;
- Being an advocate of the school with parents;
- Being an advocate of the school with the central office; and
- Being an advocate of the school with the community at large. (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 58)

The responsibility of outreach was demonstrated when the principal:

- reached out to parents and involved them in student affairs;
- was conscientious about how and when he spoke to parents so that communication was more productive;
• communicated with parents about their student’s progress;
• involved parents and community members in committee work and school functions and solicited their input;
• communicated regularly on student achievement and middle school activities at board meetings; and
• saw interaction with stakeholders as his responsibility.

Sean stated that the school has requested and received more parental input than he remembers from the time he was in school 25 years ago. One of the points Sean underscored was that there were some parents who have not had a positive experience with school. These parents may have been somewhat bewildered or uncomfortable to be asked to be involved with the school. He perceived the “eternal search for commonality” was to help find connections between himself and parents. When situations arose with student concerns that involved parents, Sean said he tried reasoning with the parents by asking them how they would handle the specific situation were they in his place or that of the other student. He said that the parents and he usually were able to find common ground after discussion and assessment of the situation.

When Sean described his communication style, he said he has tried “to be as real of a person as he can be”.

*I think with parents it’s the same thing...when you’re talking to one person, you make that person the most important person that you’re with at that time. And if you do that, it’ll work...that’s what I try to do with parents.*

He said his secretary helped remind him of phone calls and communication he needed to make to parents. In situations where the potential existed for high emotion and Sean felt that a time interval would help to deescalate any anxiety or anger the parent may have that
could preclude a productive discussion, he stated that he made it a point to allow some time to pass.

Sean said he worked very hard to help parents understand that communication regarding questions about their student’s progress needed to first take place with the teacher. To supplement communication regarding student progress, he sent out eligibility letters every two weeks, which better enabled students the chance to improve academic performance and continue participation in sports. He had two different letters that could be sent to parents. One explained that their student was currently failing and the other focused on eligibility. Sean said he expressly stated to parents that any questions should initially be addressed to the teachers since they were the ones who have firsthand knowledge of the student’s work. He also advised parents that he would be the next person parents should contact if they felt their questions need further clarification.

When the district opened the middle school, there were a number of focus groups established to assist with planning, such as the Building and Grounds Committee and the Behavior Leadership Team. Both committees included parents, and Sean met with these groups on a regular basis. He explained that he also met with SIAC, the group that represented the district with both parents and community members and met regularly according to the guidelines of Chapter 12 of the Iowa Code to discuss student achievement. He shared how SIAC was the group to first learn about the concept of starting the SSR reading program before it was presented to the Board of Education. Sean stressed the importance of having parent and community input on issues and believed that this existed at High Plains.
Sean said he communicated student achievement and middle school activities regularly at board meetings, as he understood that keeping board members and parents informed was necessary to establish communication and maintain positive relationships. Sean saw interaction as his responsibility. He said he attended and talked to parents at athletic and fine arts events. In the fall, he conducted a student orientation at the middle school. He also led an orientation for new parents. As he explained the purpose and expectations of the school, he took time to invite questions and comments so that he could try to learn what thoughts and concerns people were having in order to address these.

*Outreach* was important to Sean, and he made significant efforts to consistently advocate for students, staff, and the school in general through his attendance and involvement in the many and varied school activities. By advocating for the school, Sean was able to increase communication opportunities and also establish stronger relationships with the stakeholders and community. Implementation of school improvement initiatives is more productive when these responsibilities are in place.

**Relationships—McREL 18**

In the context of McREL’s meta-analysis, the responsibility of *relationships* refers to the extent to which the school leader demonstrates an awareness of the personal lives of teachers and staff. To foster this responsibility, Elmore (2000) recommended that principals “rely more heavily on face-to-face relationships than on bureaucratic routines” (p. 32). Fullan (2001a) described the importance of the school leader forming bonds with and among teachers that help staff and administrators stay aligned and focused during times of uncertainty.
Specific behaviors and characteristics associated with relationships as identified in the McREL meta-analysis are:

- Being informed about the significant personal issues within the lives of staff members;
- Being aware of personal needs of teachers;
- Acknowledging significant events in the lives of staff members; and
- Maintaining personal relationships with teachers. (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 59)

Sean demonstrated the responsibility of relationships when he:

- spent time talking with the staff and getting to know them as people;
- was aware of staff members’ personal issues;
- recognized he needed to respect the uniqueness of each teacher;
- helped to create a comfortable environment where teachers felt they could try new things; and
- considered the ethical and moral actions that he needed to take to reach the optimum outcome for those involved.

Sean talked about how he spent time initially each year, walking around, spending time talking with the staff, and getting a feel for how things were going in the building. He admitted he has the “gift of gab” and that it has been easy for him to make conversation with others. He said that he preferred to spend the first couple of weeks establishing routines and not spend this span of time talking to staff about making changes. He felt that if he were to walk into people’s rooms with a lot of “this is the way it’s going to be”, that he would be sending the message that the way things have been were not acceptable. He recounted some of what he has learned about creating relationships:

*I look at when I first started this job as an administrator. I thought, “Oh great, I am going to teach the teachers to be better teachers.” No, it didn’t turn out that way. A lot of them didn’t want to hear what worked for me*
because then, if they couldn’t do it, they wondered what was wrong with them. I have had teachers in here crying, “Well [students] won’t behave in my class.” And I would say, “When I taught, I used proximity and I kept them engaged and I had a lot of transitions.” “Well I am not you—and I can’t do that.”

He said that much of what he has attended to as a principal were relationship issues.

He stated that teachers frequently shared concerns with him and he tried to offer advice. When the concern was in regard to a colleague, he encouraged the teacher or staff member to go and talk with the other person first. If that did not help the situation, then he would help to intervene by bringing the parties together to discuss work relationships and proper interactions.

Sean said he believed in creating teacher independence, encouraging them to try things and, if they have a problem, he or one of the staff would help. He perceived that each teacher needed to find his/her own style, but that it has been challenging to help staff members learn self-confidence or self-esteem. He has learned the science method of constructivist teaching and believed that, while most people should learn to experiment using this heuristic to experience new things, this kind of teaching method made some teachers uncomfortable.

Sean also described some of the realizations he has come to as teachers try to learn and grow professionally:

One of my seventh grade teachers was that way… being unsure, not having self-confidence. You know when you ask someone to give of themselves, you’re going to get whatever they have, and in some cases it’s not too pretty. So I think just like any relationship, you want to make the person feel comfortable, part of something larger than themselves, to create an environment where, if they do something stupid, you are not going to chop their head off.

A number of new teachers have come to him and asked him how to handle situations
and asked if they “were doing things right”. Sean said he has tried to be clear with teachers that he is here to support them. He explained to them that if there was a problem, he would be spending a lot of time in their classroom. Because he had not been spending a lot of time in their classroom, there was not a problem. “And you know, I might come off like a smart aleck but it’s logic. And that’s again the way that I would want to be treated and, so, that’s the way I treat other people.”

When Iowa DOE adopted the Iowa Teaching Standards, Sean explained to the staff that it was to be the decision of each teacher to decide which artifacts and demonstration of methods would be used to determine fulfillment of the standards. However, he related that not all of the staff readily accepted this new responsibility:

*And there were a lot of tears and, “What am I putting in my portfolio?” One of the other things that I want to do—one of the first things I learned as an administrator—is to maybe think before you talk.*

Sean cited the example of one teacher who did not want his assistance, but was having problems, so he believed he needed to step in:

*That’s when teachers come unglued because then you’re telling them as a person something is wrong with them. I think that comes in any profession…If I could do this principal job as a technician and not invest any part of myself in it, I don’t know how effective I would be. But then these parts of my personality wouldn’t come through.*

As he worked with staff, he said he tried to always consider what the ethical, moral and proper thing was to do. He asked himself what the optimum outcome could be and then worked backwards trying to get there. “You know, this is about people and this is all about relationships. You just need to figure out how to get people back into the phase, I guess.”

He recognized that everyone has days “where they’re more on top of it than others”. He mentioned that he shared with staff that “this is a job where some days it’s like trying to
take a sip out of a fire hose, there’s a huge flow of stuff, and you need to really stay on top”.

He said he understood particular situations that people experience. Sean’s first child was born in February of 2006, and he said that this was an adjustment. He took some days away from work at that time. Since then, he has taken a few additional days off from work when his daughter was ill, so he understood similar situations when staff members have personal needs that affected them and their work.

Sean described how he has learned to approach his work with people:

_I have a friend who is a priest and I know him pretty well, outside of just standing in front during Mass and telling him all the stuff that I’ve done during confession. And he’s got a job, more so than mine, where there’s eight-thousand people coming to him with a problem all the time. And I said, “How do you do this? You know, how do you handle all of these different things?” And he said, “It’s very simple. When I was in the seminary, I had this priest who was teaching a class, and he said that to do this right, all you have to do when you’re talking to one person, you make that person the most important person that you’re with at that time. And if you do that, it’ll work”. Now if time constraints come in and stuff, you’re rescheduling this and that. But that’s what I try to do._

Sean agreed that his approach has been pretty direct and that some teachers might find this difficult to understand, but thinks as he and the teachers have come to know each other better, the teachers understood “there is method to my madness”. The staff seemed to understand that this “method” has centered on ensuring students feeling cared about. He has also recognized that the staff have personal lives that need to be considered and that the business of school is “all about people and all about relationships”, so he has paid attention to this.

**Resources—McREL 19**

To be successful, leaders need to create organizations fluid enough to respond
quickly to new circumstances. This involves the alignment of several levels of resources necessary to analyze, plan, and take action in response to opportunities and threats that the future brings. (Deering, Dilts, & Russell, 2003, p. 34)

Within the McREL meta-analysis, the responsibility of resources refers to the extent to which the leader provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their duties. Specific behaviors associated with this responsibility found in the meta-analysis include:

- Ensuring that teachers have the necessary materials and equipment; and
- Ensuring that teachers have the necessary staff development opportunities to directly enhance their teaching. (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 60)

Sean demonstrated the responsibility of resources when he took these actions:

- obtained substitute teachers to allow teachers to attend essential meetings to plan instructional implementation or develop student plans;
- requested the superintendent’s assistance to support the teachers at student meetings;
- obtained and utilized the services of the reading consultant;
- provided teachers support to help them reach the Iowa Teaching Standards and enhance their teaching skills; and
- provided time for the reading teacher to work with other teachers and assist with implementation of reading strategies.

When teachers needed to have time for leadership meetings or to develop student plans, Sean obtained substitute teachers to cover their classrooms so they could have uninterrupted time to meet:

_I lobbied the superintendent really hard to get enough aides and enough time for my [teachers] to be able to do these plans properly and it seems to be_
working… I don’t think anyone has been denied. You know, it is one of those things I think we need.

When the middle school first opened, one of the teacher’s teaching assignments changed and she requested more time to prepare for these new classes. In an interview, Sean spoke about how they agreed she would be provided two weeks of additional time to prepare. He said he reshuffled things and people so that this could be done.

Sean has also arranged for the superintendent to attend certain meetings involving student situations. Sean felt that her support and attendance at these meetings facilitated positive relationships with teachers and provided an additional resource to them.

Sean said he was aware of the district’s need for new textbooks and technology. However, finances have not allowed all teachers and staff to have all that they might deem important and, therefore, purchases have had to be prioritized. He believed that, for the most part, the school has provided the equipment and supplies that the staff members have needed to do their jobs. The district has been trying to continually upgrade technology equipment; however, this has been a significant cost and these expenditures have been phased in as funding allowed. When the middle school was new a few years ago, the teachers in the building received new computers at that time.

Sean remarked that it has benefited the middle school and high school staff to have their own principal in each building. He said this has enabled each administrator to focus on that particular building’s needs.

When the area education agency arrangement with the school did not provide the reading consultant the time in the district that school personnel felt was needed, the five-school consortium formed a contractual arrangement. Sean was able to give input regarding
the services that the consultant provided in his building. The middle school has utilized the consultant’s services to assist with all reading professional development planning and facilitation.

Sean believed that the leadership team greatly benefited from the expertise of the reading consultant, when considering the dual role that the team members have had when leading colleagues:

*When you think that our leadership team is made up of teachers who are the colleagues of the people that are doing [the strategies] and, if the people that are expected to do these are not going to do them, you don’t want to put [the leadership team] in the position—especially in a building where there is a small number of teachers. You don’t want to put them in the position of being the bad guy.*

Sean also believed that small schools should consider obtaining outside technical assistance to support strong professional development and implementation of the Model:

*You’re getting someone that has a very good understanding of the background. The background knowledge and all the underlying research and all that they can pull out—the things that are going to give you the biggest bang for your buck because I don’t have the time to do that. And I can’t think of any principal that does…or superintendent. Bigger schools have curriculum directors and people who can come up with those things and people who have had that training and knowledge and all that, whereas I don’t.*

Sean perceived that the teachers in his building were given the resources needed to help students with reading. He also related during interviews that he emphasized to teachers that it was their job to fulfill the eight Iowa Teaching Standards and that these were resources they should use to understand his expectations. He said that he tried to provide the support that enabled teachers to help them achieve the teaching standards.

Prior to January 2007, when staff received the student ITBS results, reading teachers had not been going into colleagues’ classrooms to help with the delivery of reading
strategies. However, following the news of the declining student scores, Sean was willing to enlist the help of a reading teacher who would assist teachers in this manner:

*I would bring [the reading teacher] up into their classroom and help them. Or at least meet with them during their free period—or do [a strategy] for them in their classroom if they were comfortable. Or just have [teachers] go up to [the reading teacher’s] classroom and do it. Out of those three—the [one] they would be most comfortable doing.*

Providing the resources that the school was able to afford was accomplished. The services of the reading consultant, shared planning time for the grade 6 teachers and the leadership team, and professional development opportunities for theory and demonstration of the strategies were resources that the teachers had and could benefit from. Sean paid attention to what the teachers said they needed to do their jobs well and consistently worked to deliver these resources when possible.

For a school that was highly engaged in the IPD Model, the amount of time allocated for professional development seemed to be less than adequate. However, this school’s calendar was like that of many other schools. The school year had limited days and trying to balance the number of instructional days for students and still build in sufficient time for professional development to be assured that all teachers are highly skilled in research-based programs and strategies is difficult to do with the agrarian calendar.

Sean also stated that small schools often lack certain resources that larger districts have such as a curriculum director or a guidance counselor. Consequently, staff in small schools usually take on these assignments and job responsibilities, which can make it very difficult to accomplish all of the tasks that help the school operate more smoothly. In High Plains, Sean served in two principal roles in two different towns, continued to teach one science course, and was a key member of the leadership team in two buildings. The number
of associated duties with each of these areas is extensive. The school did function well; however, it was evident that in this particular school, the principal and some of the others who had to assume a myriad of duties were working very hard and putting in long hours on a regular basis.

**Situational awareness—McREL 20**

*Situational awareness* addresses the leader’s awareness of the details and undercurrents regarding the functioning of the school and their use of this information to address current and potential problems. Specific behaviors and characteristics associated with this responsibility and identified in the McREL meta-analysis are as follows:

- Accurately predicting what could go wrong from day to day;
- Being aware of informal groups and relationships among the staff; and
- Being aware of issues in the school that have not surfaced but could create discord. (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 60)

The responsibility of *situational awareness* was demonstrated when Sean:

- tried to anticipate problems before they arose and worked to be proactive, rather than reactive;
- reviewed rules and policies to understand issues that might arise;
- recognized those times when he needed to be more involved and those times when he should step back;
- attended building team meetings with teachers to plan for student programs; and
- relinquished the advisory program by recognizing the need for additional reading time for students.

Sean described his typical day:
I can honestly say that by the second that I walk in, from the second that I walk out, I’m “on”. Occasionally, I will, over lunch, read the paper on the Internet. Otherwise, I’m on, doing something. I think that, once now in almost four years, one Friday afternoon, I drove over to [the nearby town] and had lunch at a restaurant. So one day I went over there. But beyond that, it’s all here, while I’m here.

Sean said he tried to anticipate problems before they arose. He worked to be proactive, rather than reactive. He cited an incident with a parent that he knew required attention, but felt that addressing this in an appropriate timeframe helped defuse the situation:

I try real hard that whenever [a situation] comes in question, that I turn around and respond to it if it’s appropriate. Like that parent that was all angry and I let him, for a while, get the pressure out of the pressure-cooker with the lid off.

He has been acutely aware of things that could go right or wrong and admitted that when he was a new principal, he spent an inordinate amount of time trying to anticipate everything that could go wrong:

Things aren’t always going to go right. So I try to anticipate, and again, with this place opening brand-new, I spent all summer—and the part of the spring before that summer—trying to anticipate everything that was possibly going to happen here. And there’s no way that you could. So you just handle it as it goes.

Special education has been an area that administrators often recognize can be problematic for both the student and the school if regulations are not followed. Sean said he has enjoyed the “legal stuff” and liked reviewing the rules, parental and student rights, and the purpose of the staffing meeting with the team. He remarked that having involvement in the special education meetings helped him to be aware of current issues and avoid future problems.
As he discussed special education, Sean also talked about his awareness of various teachers’ skill levels. He recognized those times when he needed to be more involved and those times when he could step back:

*I have three special ed teachers…and two of them…they are go-getters, under conditional licenses…they’re both in first full-time teaching jobs out of college and they are working on their endorsements. They want to do the right thing, but I don’t think they are very confident in what they are doing yet. So in a lot of cases, I will take over a little bit more.*

*I have a special ed teacher at [the elementary] that’s been here for thirteen years, and she’s very good at what she does. She is very good at running an IEP meeting and focusing on the data. I think she does a very good job at going through the document page by page answering all the questions, telling them what she is filling out and so forth. And then she puts together very manageable goals, which is good…by going through it in a very linear fashion…she does an excellent job of doing that. In that case, I will just sit back and let her run the show. You know, make my comment at the end as it comes around.*

He also expressed some frustration with teachers who do not demonstrate an ability or willingness to assume more responsibility and related that this has been eye-opening for him after having worked in the Air Force. “*Once teachers close their classroom doors, they’re going to do what they want most times*”:

*I can see that from having people working for me in the Air Force to here, teachers are the most interesting people to observe and supervise that I’ve ever…been associated with…Occasionally they will act in ways they would never accept from the kids, but they feel perfectly justified because they think they are right. Just like some of my middle schoolers do. Everything has to be fair…If I had been in education for my entire career, I probably would have never recognized that…I think recognizing this allows me to anticipate some of these things and say ‘this is the way it is and this is what we do’.*

*I think another frustrating thing is knowing when to intervene. You know, letting people go, but trying to find that right point to say, ‘Well, what do you need?” Or…because everyone’s point of needing is different…Early on, [from some teachers] it was, “What do I do? How do I do it? I don’t want to do it wrong.” This paralysis…or if something didn’t go exactly right, everything falling apart after that.*
When one teacher wasn’t able to keep student grades current and posted for parents to view on-line, the teacher became upset that parents were phoning Sean to gather information about their student rather than calling the teacher herself. Sean said his response to her was, “Well, they look at the past system and your stuff isn’t there. So they think you don’t know your job.” He said that he has tried to be honest with staff and address situations in a straight-forward manner, so they are aware of the issues.

Sean said he has attended building team meetings with teachers when students were being discussed. He perceived that some teachers did not have an instinctive manner to know how to differentiate how they responded to student problems and that these teachers instead wanted to have a “one size fits all” kind of program. He has explained to teachers that school personnel need to think about each student and circumstance individually when considering behavior plans and consequences. He remarked that he believes there are limitations with some behavior models and has communicated to teachers that they are empowered to use good judgment and make decisions about their responses to student behaviors on their own:

You can’t really teach someone how to respond. I mean, you can give them a checklist, but you know, the checklist doesn’t fit every situation—how do you do that? And I think that’s what the teachers wanted. They wanted a menu of, “Well, what’s a major infraction and what’s a minor infraction, and what happens if this happens”.

Sean mentioned he also had a feel for the pulse of his school with both teachers and students. In spite of occasional frustration with actions that some teachers take, he said he has “not seen the teachers give up on these kids”. He understood that he needed to be aware of the frustration level that teachers sometimes experience. While Sean had specific expectations about implementation of programs and day-to-day school operations, he
recognized that teachers were very busy and that “there have been some rumblings” regarding expectations.

Sean also perceived that most of his job involved negotiation and recognizing those times when he needed to work and plan with parents about the right thing to do for their student and to negotiate with teachers about student situations. He said, “I can instinctually react, going through a situation. What feels right is usually what’s right. And I go with that… staying current with the stuff that comes across your desk.”

He brought up one incident that could have gone awry, the level at which he needed to be involved to help defuse the situation, and the explanation he gave to the teacher to avoid similar situations in the future:

I found out all the particulars from the teacher, and I sat down with the teacher and I said that, “Look, you can’t be doing this, this was the first time that it happened; that’s fine. The second time it happens, it’s not going to be fine. So, when in doubt, you really need to check.” And, you know, I talked to her and got all the information…found out informally that everything had gone off fine…if the kid would have gotten left outside in the cold because no one was home, I would’ve called right away and taken my beating. But I found out that everything was fine, so I called [the parent] and said that, “Hey, this is me, and this is what I found. I spoke to the teacher and this is what happened”—and then [the teacher] apologized, right then and there. I found that if, if you just own up… I’m not perfect. If you say that too often, then they’re going to realize that you don’t know your job. But, you know, situations like that happen because I can’t control everything.

When Sean has had questions or was not certain how to handle a situation, he talked with the superintendent. This was stated during interviews and observed during several visits to the school. He said he did this because Jane has been a school administrator longer; she has past experience in special education, and as a female Sean said he has learned a different point of view. Most of the teachers in his building are female, and he believed that gender influences perspective:
And again, being male, with the female teachers, I didn’t know how they saw the world. That’s the thing about being married; women see the world a little bit differently than most guys do. And Jane does a good job… for making the situation become a little normal.

One of the areas discussed by Sean during interviews that has been personally important to him has been the student advisory program, a program that he helped to adopt at the middle school. He wanted to have a strong advisory program to support the social and emotional needs of middle school students. He strongly advocated for a consistent and strong curriculum and wanted to see the program be successful. At the same time, when it became clear that reading scores were not improving, he talked about his awareness that the advisory program had not been what he had hoped for and that some things had to change. He said he came to the realization that the teachers were not implementing both the reading strategies program and the advisory program as originally planned. Recognizing that the focus needed to shift in a greater way to improve reading, he said he was able to “let go” of the advisory program for the present time:

I found that [the advisory program] is really hard to put together, I found stuff for social, emotional skills—and to get every teacher to teach it the same way. You know, it’s like sitting people down and having them all write the same poem. You know, it just doesn’t work. I’m disappointed that we’re not going to go forward with it like we were and like we have been trying to do. But again, I don’t think it’s been as valuable as I thought it was going to be. I think just part of it is, it’s good to get the kids from three grades together, so we’re not so stratified.

Letting go of the advisory program was one of the more difficult things that Sean had to do. He was personally vested in the advisory program; it was his original recommendation for the school as he believed it was necessary for middle school students’ social and emotional needs. However, recognizing that the middle school students needed more time and focus with reading, he demonstrated the awareness that the advisory program needed to
be cut to expand the reading program. This is an example of situational awareness that can be even more difficult when one’s own ideals and beliefs are tied to programs.

Sean was intuitive about what was taking place in the school and did a good job of keeping his finger on the pulse of things. He tried to anticipate situations before they might become problems, which also affected order in the school in a positive way.

**Visibility — McREL 21**

Visibility communicates the message that the principal is interested and engaged in the daily operations of the school. It also provides opportunity for the principal to interact with teachers and students regarding substantive issues. The responsibility of visibility addresses the extent to which the school leader has contact and interacts with teachers, students, and parents.

Specific behaviors and characteristics associated with *visibility* as found in the McREL meta-analysis are:

- Making systematic and frequent visits to classrooms;
- Having frequent contact with students; and
- Being highly visible to students, teachers, and parents. (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 61)

The responsibility of *visibility* was demonstrated when the principal:

- was visible to students and staff in hallways and classrooms throughout the day;
- attended extra curricular activities regularly;
- met with the parent group regularly;
- assisted with operations in the school not typically assigned to the principal; and
- talked with parents about their students.
Sean spent a significant part of his school day walking the hallways and going into classrooms. He said he especially spent time getting to know the new staff and visiting with everyone during the first few weeks of school.

Sean said he attended extra curricular student activities regularly and tried to be very visible to both students and parents. He met with the Parent Action Committee (PAC) group as often as was possible in his schedule. He admitted that he has “worked hard to make the parents feel welcome at the school”.

Sean talked about the student orientation that takes place each spring as fifth grade students from both elementary buildings in the two towns come together. The elementary physical education teachers organized a evening field event for the students and everyone had a chance to participate. At this same time, Sean conducts a parent orientation, shows parents the building, explains the student handbook and reveals what parents can expect for their students in terms of class size, schedules, and classes. New middle school parents then meet the PAC parents, while PAC sell concessions and has information available about the committee’s activities. Sean said that exposing the visiting parents to the PAC program at that time helped to gain support for their cause and expand the committee.

He continued to relate that parents in PAC have made certain they assisted in keeping the school kitchen clean, as the PAC group uses it throughout the year for a variety of functions. Sean also worked alongside the parents to help clean the kitchen and wanted the kitchen staff and PAC group to know he was appreciative of their contributions. He shared that last fall the PAC parents showed their gratitude by bringing mums to the cooks. Sean remarked that these kinds of gestures helped to establish good relationships and a positive school culture. These activities also combined groups of parents from all backgrounds and
various socio-economic levels and helped students from various walks of life to mix and get to know each other better.

In the first year of the middle-school, the school did not have a custodian to help clean up after games. Because the school was new, Sean said the custodial staff wanted the school to look perfect and expressed to him that they had some difficulty with the PAC group selling food to students and letting the students walk around with the food. They had concerns about who was going to keep the gymnasium clean:

*So I was the one after the games—I think I was the highest paid custodian in the conference. So I’m the one out there, and the parents would laugh, “Oh, he’s the principal mop.” And I think that got people to realize that we’re going to do what needs to be done.*

Sean said parents have talked with him and asked for his advice regarding the kinds of things they need to be doing to help their students. His advice to parents was to sit at the table with their student every night and to make them do their homework, or put a book in front of them and make them read. He told parents that “*kids need structure and they need parents to help them establish the structure*”.

The manner in which Sean communicated with students, parents and staff, came from the advice of a friend, which is to talk with people and make each person the most important person at that time. He said he tried to be as real a person as he can be when he communicates and extends himself to others. When he is in contact with students and parents, he said he tried to understand where they are “*coming from*” and to have empathy. He admitted that being empathetic is something that he “has to really work on”, because his way of dealing with his personal situations has been to simply handle things without
complaining. He remarked, however, that approaching matters with empathy and trying to understand others’ points of view usually has helped to improve any situation.

He said that the efforts he had made to be visible and to communicate frequently and effectively with students, parents and staff have made his job more emotionally draining, rather than physically draining. He admitted that there have been times when he has been simply worn out or not feeling well, but he then he reminded himself why it is important to keep going and to not let down:

>You know, I was at home sick on the couch going, ‘Do I really have to come in at 3:30 for the IEP meeting or can I just lay here and be miserable?’ And I did get up and come in but... you know, if you can be real and just let people know that you’re going to do what it takes to help their kids, they’re going to also. Ninety percent of the parents will be [the student’s] biggest advocate.

As principal, visibility was important to Sean. Being in and out of the classrooms and hallways, talking with students and staff, as well as being highly engaged with after school and weekend student activities and seeing and visiting parents and other community members enabled him to have had more opportunities for communication and relationship building. All of these factors affected the perception that students, parents, and other stakeholders had of High Plains Middle School. This has most likely helped the sense of trust and community in the school, which enabled opportunities for school improvement programs to be better understood and accepted.

**Emerging Themes**

As the research was conducted to gather data on the principal’s behaviors and practices, additional data were revealed. Throughout the time Sean was interviewed and observed, a number of issues surfaced, which he discussed as adversely affecting students and their learning. It is the belief of this researcher that it is important to shed light on those
issues that have been raised as obstacles or difficulties, as these kinds of data would possibly impact some behaviors and practices of the principal. The IPD Model and McREL research do not encompass all of the issues with which school leaders contend. Both the IPD Model and McREL focus on the aspects of leadership that, when enacted, should positively contribute to student achievement. However, the real life of a principal includes additional factors that can interfere with the school leader’s attempts to affect positive change for students. Understanding these factors should assist in trying to find ways to rectify barriers that need to be removed if stakeholders in students’ education are to make schools better and more productive places to grow and learn.

Some challenges associated with schools and student learning are easier to remedy than others. There are also issues that are more challenging to improve or resolve. These are the ones that seem to continually cast a shadow on the day-to-day business of the school and can affect staff, students, and the learning that takes place.

The job of the principal and the work of schools are fraught with challenges. Building and system issues generally impact many within the school, including administrators, teaching staff, and students. These issues generally cannot be addressed solely by the principal, but rather are systemic issues that require collective efforts. These emerging themes are germane, as they may affect a principal, his staff, and students.

**Time Factor**

In the IPD Model, the ability of the staff to find time to collaborate, participate in peer observations, and adapt the program to the students’ needs is extremely important to the success of the program. When the content of professional development is new or complex,
researchers agree that more time needs to be allocated to training sessions. While the amount of time for demonstration and practice of a program or strategy may vary from one group to another, the expectation for the staff is that the program or strategy will be implemented consistently when it is fully learned (Joyce & Showers, 1983, 2002; NSDC, 2001; Odden, et al., 2002; Wallace, LeMahieu, & Bickel, 1990).

Sean stated that time for staff to be able to put all of the IPD Model elements in place was restricted by the school calendar, the length of the contract day, the schedule, and various other time factors. Time is required for teachers to be able to collaborate, see demonstrations in colleagues’ classrooms, pause to reflect on their practice, and modify or improve the instructional programs they deliver.

Sean said that he frequently heard teachers say that, “We’re doing all these others things; this is just another thing for us to do.” While he did not accept this as an excuse for what the leadership team determined needed to be accomplished, he did understand that the scarcity of enough time was problematic.

In a district where the principal was shared between two buildings, focus on one staff and one group of students at all times was not feasible. Time and resources were divided between two staffs and two groups of students. Sean had to make decisions each day about where his time and energy should be spent, as well as which group of students and teachers needed his time and for how long. While he would have liked to participate in the professional learning in both buildings, he had to choose which building’s professional learning session he would attend. He recognized that it was ultimately his responsibility to clearly communicate the decisions and expectations to the staff, yet he was absent for half of the meetings when these discussions occurred. With his schedule divided between two
groups, optimal times for communication between the teachers and principal could not always be utilized.

Sean described the difficulty he experienced with not having time allocated for frequent professional development, as well as shortened time periods at the end of the teaching day:

You know it’s hard for me to find, when I’ve got so few people in the middle school...people to put on that committee that aren’t already on another committee, because if you are on too many committees, your effectiveness is going to drop...You know, we’ve got a behavior leadership team...and again, it is difficult to find people to be on that as well. So I think in a small school, I don’t know how you do it...I know in Lake City they have every Thursday afternoon that they take off to do professional development...and we do—it is every six weeks or so? Or every month, it seems like. And the state has that extra day...The thing that I have a hard time wrapping my mind around is, on those professional development days you have kids in the morning and then in the afternoon you have professional development. And the teachers—it’s like their mind shift turns to “Ah, the kids are gone”. And then you’ve got to yank them back in your element and say “look”...and I was the same way when I was teaching. You know it is like you’ve got all of these things going...Here, I taught four separate subjects at the same time over six periods...It is almost like we need to start in-services with tai chi or something...You know just to get them refocused, because it’s more like “We’ve survived; let’s use this time to lick our wounds”.

Sean believed that the way in which staff did professional development, which required focus and involvement from the staff, necessitated more time than had been allotted.

“I really think that if we had another twenty professional development days that we could use, that we’d be much better at that.”

He discussed how the time factor had been a barrier for implementation of all the activities that students, teachers and the principal have tried to accomplish. It was important to be clear on the structure and expectations, yet at the same time, it diminished the time teachers had available to spend on implementing new programs or strategies. The time that
the school spent to create or review the crisis management plan, hold meetings for at-risk and students with special needs, and to conduct other meetings had been necessary but has distracted from other important activities.

Sean said that he has had very limited time during the school day to reflect on his effectiveness as a school leader. Completing teacher evaluations has become a bigger challenge due to the amount of time required to write quality observation notes and follow-up plans: “So it is all those things, you know I tell my wife that I am juggling three bowling balls in the air and if I can keep them all from hitting the floor then I think I have been successful”.

As policymakers look for continued resources to support student learning, the time element should be closely examined. The differences in the amounts of time that districts allot to professional development is very discrepant. Teachers’ professional skills throughout the state are not equally supported because of these time differences, as well as other differences in resources. Stakeholders, including policymakers, have held the expectation that schools should serve students in more and better ways. The issue of time will need to be addressed before this expectation can be fully met.

**Competing Initiatives**

While the purpose of school is to educate, a significant amount of time is spent throughout the year on management and procedural responsibilities. These duties require resources of time and personnel from the principal that compete with the actual time for the principal to focus on instructional issues.
The two teacher contract days required by legislation before students return have had limited time available to be spent on professional development. These two days set aside for staff to prepare before students arrived were used for building and district-wide meetings, as well as time for teachers to prepare their classrooms. Sean said he must spend time establishing the structure for the school at the beginning of each year, communicating rules and expectations and developing rapport with new staff, new students, and parents.

The number of emergency school situations that have occurred in schools nationwide have necessitated that schools take time and secure emergency procedures and protocols. The superintendent requested that all building principals discuss the crisis plan with staff. The middle school staff took time annually to review the plan. Sean remarked he spent one professional development afternoon formally going through the plan as he prepared for it to be shared with staff. In an effort to be equipped for an actual emergency, a presentation took place at the county park with deputies and law enforcement officials leading staff through various scenarios and courses of action that would need to be taken.

All of these initiatives and programs are important; however, they still require time—time that is removed for teaching and learning.

Additional Content Areas

Another initiative that has required time and focus at High Plains is mathematics. While reading is the primary focus for the middle school staff, the data showed that much improvement is also needed in mathematics. Therefore, the staff made the decision that a mathematics focus would follow reading. Sean said it was difficult for staff, particularly mathematics teachers, not to address this subject area in greater depth, just as the staff did
with reading. Sean shared the reaction of an eighth grade teacher who “could not believe how many students did not know their basic mathematics facts”.

Sean said that working with students who have diverse academic interests and abilities also required additional instructional time. Simultaneously, while there have been a number of students who demonstrated poor basic academic skills and required more attention. Teachers and administrators also needed to address students who required courses to prepare them for access to post-secondary institutions:

> When do we sacrifice content and processes at the high school—because “No Child Left Behind” is all about process? “Can you read? Can you write? Can you do math?”...But if you go to college, they’re going to expect that you know how to balance a chemical equation and know basic geometry and expect that you know the formula for acceleration or whatever force.

**Behavioral issues**

While the number of detentions had decreased, student behavioral issues continued to be an area that competed for and required attention from the staff and the principal. In an interview, Sean discussed how the middle school staff had not yet received training in Positive Behaviors Supports (PBS), a program adopted at the elementary. Sean said he would have liked to have done PBS training with the staff. However, with the need to focus on reading strategies, there was not enough training time available in the schedule. Sean believed that staff could still try to adopt the same beliefs and approaches with students that PBS promotes, if they “look at the kid differently.” He said that he can’t simply step in and tell teachers to “do it this way”. He remarked that even some of the elementary teachers who are using PBS have accused him of “pushing this too fast”.

Last year, the school started the behavior leadership team. This was due to a “really rough senior class” and a challenging fifth grade class in one of the elementary buildings.
The staff questioned how the school should respond. The behavior leadership team was of assistance in helping to solve and avoid problems. At the same time, Sean remarked that small schools have only so many staff members who were able to serve on committees before they were overextended:

*If you look at the contract, it doesn’t say anybody has to be on any of these special...leadership teams. If I had somebody say, “No”, I couldn’t compel them...I don’t think it falls under other duties that are assigned. So, you know, that’s the problem, too.*

Schools constantly reckon with other initiatives that compete to have their share of time. School leaders need to decide which initiatives receive attention and which ones do not. There are limited days in the school calendar. Keeping the focus on student achievement may help to sort the essential from the non-essential. Or, leaders may need to convene and establish a system of prioritization for designated allotments of time for various time demands on the school calendar. Until considerations for the school calendar are addressed by policymakers, school leaders will continue to have tough decisions regarding use of time and there will always be areas that are short-changed.

**Teacher preparation**

As a small rural school, High Plains School District tended to attract new teachers immediately coming out of college. Sean said that adapting to the life of a school has been a real learning curve for new teachers. He said that most new teachers have had the understanding that the principal will handle behavioral issues that arise in the classroom. He related a story about a teacher who wanted Sean to take care of a student who had misbehaved. When Sean explained to the teacher that she should say the same thing to the student that he, as principal, would say, the teacher became angry and ran off:
And that was the year where once a week a teacher in my office cried… I felt like Tom Hanks in ‘A League of Their Own’—“There’s no crying in baseball”…When I ran a crew in the Air Force, my guys knew what to do and they were well-trained, and my job was real easy. It got hard when people didn’t know what to do in the off-situations and discipline that way. The hard part of it, you know—teachers that aren’t confident in themselves as people—and I think that this profession attracts a fair number of those sorts of people, because they’re in charge of their room. They’re the teacher and they’re the boss…When things become hairy, they come apart or they get mean or they get sarcastic, rather than just saying, “Look, you know, I understand you’re an eighth-grader; I understand you want to screw around. But I’ve got a job to do here as well. How can we make this work—where we can all finish the day and have fun?…It’s not that ‘I’m against you or you have to do this…because you did this, then I have to take this out on you’…that’s not what I’m trying to get across.

Sean remarked that sometimes the methods that teachers have used to resolve issues and enforce rules with students were problematic. Sometimes a teacher would be “harder” on a student than Sean believed was warranted. He cited one example when a teacher sent a student into the hall to do his work. The student became frustrated and started crying. The teacher commented to Sean how surprised she was that a student in the middle school would resort to crying. As Sean related the story, he said that this kind of reaction from teachers upset him. He continued to say that he sometimes saw this same kind of discipline from elementary teachers. One of his goals was to help teachers change the way they discipline when they resort to being condescending to students in an effort to teach students to behave: “One of my pet peeves is sorting out discipline messes for teachers who have caused them rather than solved them.”

Sean believes that his teachers are now finding more ways to handle discipline issues themselves. The amount of office referrals has decreased dramatically in the last two years. He heard fewer occurrences of insubordination from students to teachers. He also helped teachers realize that negative student behaviors occurred when teachers
challenged students or put students in a place where the student felt they had to respond negatively. He said this created a situation where no one wins.

Finding certified special education teachers was also very difficult. Sean said that their school had been fortunate to find two special education teachers who, while they are still working on conditional licenses, demonstrate quality teaching skills.

Because High Plains is a small district that has a university town within a short driving distance, High Plains has tended to attract new teachers to the profession, who, once they gain more experience, often move to the university town to teach. Sean said that he sometimes makes the analogy that small schools around bigger schools are like triple-A baseball. Small schools hire the “new kids from college” that cities such as Lake City and Oak Falls have the luxury of overlooking because their applicant pool is so much deeper:

We’re like finishing school; we take them through those last two years, mentoring and induction—to where they have a really nice portfolio. They get comfortable and then they leave...My sixth-grade reading teacher, who I think is the best teacher I’ve got in the whole building, she started out here out of college midway through the year...and I got her down here in her second year...she’s working on her Master’s to be a [consultant] in reading or whatever...but, you know, when she’s done, I really wonder where she’s going to go. Is she going to go to Lake City? I keep telling her that she needs to stay here. If she thinks about staying, I will bring her bagels once a week or whatever she wants. But it’s those types of things that are frustrating in a smaller place like this.

Sean recognized that teachers frequently needed a different kind of preparation than teacher programs often provided. As teachers are inducted in their first few years of teaching, most need a certain degree of support. This then becomes another responsibility for the principal. Preparatory institutions should continue to seek ways to better prepare teachers for the reality of classroom teaching to be fair to both the beginning teacher and his or her students.
Focus on Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

One of the biggest challenges Sean perceived that he and the staff faced was to ensure consistency in following the IPD Model. He believed that teachers who taught the subject area of reading used the research-based strategies as a regular part of the curriculum. He said it has been difficult to help other content area teachers understand that these strategies were also to be a part of how they taught in their subject areas. As a science teacher himself, he understood the desire teachers have to teach their own subject area:

*I know myself, as a high school teacher when I first started, that I expected that the kids could read when they got to me… I had science degrees before I went to become a science teacher. So I’m looking at science from a different perspective than someone who gets a four-year degree and takes a few science courses and does all the methods. So, you know, I was more of a content monkey than anything.*

Sean believed the focus that secondary staff had on content, particularly at the high school level, caused teachers to neglect attention to improving students’ reading and comprehension skills. Sean perceived that a weak part of the system was that a number of middle and high school teachers did not see their primary task as teaching reading or basic academic skills. The further away students get from the elementary grades, the more departmentalized the school becomes:

*At the elementary, it is real easy to step back and look at those processes again and again without that kid getting too far behind. Out here, I struggle with this decision-making model because we are more about content than we are about process. So how do you remove the kid from life science to teach them how to read science better?*

As he spoke about teachers using reading strategies with students, he said that it was difficult to know how frequently the first set of strategies taught to teachers was actually being implemented in the classroom. Sean initially thought that teachers understood the final
goal was to use the acquired strategies over time and to determine when use of one strategy was more appropriate than another. However, he currently believes that some middle school teachers have not had a common understanding of this concept:

[Teachers] say that, “Yeah, yeah, I can do this,” and they do it for a while, but then it goes away. And, to keep it consistent...I think the reading teachers are great because they're using new strategies all the time and it's part of the curriculum. But for the other teachers, just to keep that going along...And even me, as a classroom teacher, I would've had a hard time remembering because I want to talk about protons and neutrons and electrons and chloroplasts....

While Sean discussed how he tried to attend all the professional development sessions, he acknowledged that his time needed to be divided between the elementary building and the middle school. He also recounted a time when he fully intended to be present and involved in the middle school meeting but was not able to attend because a student issue pulled him to the high school. He said this made it difficult because it forced him to miss some professional learning sessions when he wanted and needed to know whether or not strategies were being universally implemented in the building.

**Small Districts**

Sean mentioned that sharing staff between the middle and high schools made creative scheduling for additional student support difficult. The eighth grade math teacher, the eighth grade language arts teacher, and all the exploratory teachers were part of the high school staff. Therefore, when the school had professional development, a portion of the staff attended the middle school sessions:

*When it comes to our reading strategies, it is difficult to be on the same page because the high school is just...on a different level...they are doing things that are a little different, or at least they have in the past. This year they are moving towards QAR as well, put in a different context.*
Sean talked about the time teachers need to work together to plan with colleagues to discuss student performance and necessary interventions. He said the sixth grade team had teaming time and it was powerful to have a group that worked so well together. However, with the size of the school and shared staff, it was not possible for the seventh and eighth grade staff to meet regularly during the school day as a team. Teachers who were shared with the high school taught half of the core subjects in eighth grade. In addition, a number of teachers had responsibilities during the school day, such as monitoring study halls or extracurricular activities. The cost of hiring additional teachers or staff that would enable all staff to collaborate was not feasible for most small schools faced with tight budgets.

Staff in a small school generally have a number of preps for different classes. Sean said that when he taught high school science, he had four preps, taught six periods of the day, and supervised a study hall. His teaching assignment was not atypical from other teachers. He said that most teachers in his school have this kind of a schedule. Middle school is somewhat different, due to the fact that there may be one or two fewer preps. However, teachers still see a large number of students who transition in and out of their classrooms every day.

He summarized his thoughts on the challenges that come in education:

*It is hard sometimes in a small school like this to visualize and put together all of the parts...It's not like the Air Force where you've got uniform parts to do a uniform process to produce a product. It had to be identical; it had to be the same...it had to be built to a certain standard or things were going to start falling out of the sky. And here you've got so much variability in terms of ability of the teachers because it's not like lifting seventy-five pounds—either you can or you can't...and you've got variability in the kids. And, you know, it's a challenge—and some days it drives you nuts.*
Small schools have unique issues. Iowa is comprised of many school districts with student enrollment under 1,000 students, therefore, as policymakers look to the future, consideration should be given to the challenges and opportunities that exist for schools of this size. While there may be distinct instructional advantages for some students in schools with smaller student population, discussion needs to take place to determine how small schools can focus on student achievement while still ensuring that the staffs in these schools are provided the incentives that help them want to continue their careers in these settings.

As discussed in the “Teacher Preparation” section, small districts frequently attract new teachers immediately from college. This trend may prove itself to be positive over time, particularly if the district retains those teachers who exhibit attributes of quality teaching. However, building a new teacher’s skills and knowledge generally requires several years of mentoring before the teacher is able to demonstrate skills comparable to those of an experienced quality teacher. Therefore, it generally falls to the building principal to assist the inexperienced teacher and this then becomes one additional responsibility that must be addressed.

**Preparation for the Principalship**

Sean said he had not seen a strong connection between what he had learned in his education preparatory program and his actual teaching and administrative experiences:

*When I was in college, part of my final semester in the science ed program… was to write a rationale paper for what you are doing—and a lot of that was…this is what we are going to do, this is why we are going to teach, these are the things—and it did get you into that way of thinking. Now at that point I didn’t have a whole lot of understanding about standards and benchmarks and those types of things. Because again, being that I am an orderly nuts and...*
bolts kind of person, I expected our Masters courses to teach me how to take attendance and how to do grades and some luck theory…

Sean spoke about the preparation program to become a principal, stating that many of the classes he took were of little help to him. He felt the school law courses were important and relevant because he believed it would be the legal matters that would quickly get a principal into trouble:

The people who taught those other seven or eight classes in my principal prep program would disagree, but it seemed like we just sat and talked about a different way to say the sky was blue.

He expressed that beginning his job as principal was initially overwhelming:

You know, I looked back at four years ago when this place opened and I don’t even know how I survived.

When… I was still teaching in the high school and they named me for this position… and down at the high school, when I would actually walk into the teacher’s lounge initially, it would get quiet. Now it’s back to normal again, but that was kind of weird.

Just as we request educators state the importance of addressing content standards, this begs a similar question, “What is it we want principals to know and be able to do?” If stakeholders and policymakers are serious about improving education, then this question must be answered, not only with words, but in practice. This would require that the school administrator programs do a gap analysis of what is currently offered and what schools need. We cannot waste any more time not preparing school leaders for what students need today.

Summary

This interpretive case study focused on a single middle school principal in a small rural public school district. This study was conducted in order to describe and explain the leadership actions and behaviors employed by the principal throughout implementation in his
school of the IPD Model, a research-based model for improvement, and aligning the leadership responsibilities with the research of McREL. The exploratory question that guided this study was: *What behaviors and practices does this principal exhibit that are related to school improvement as defined by the IPD Model and McREL?*

Findings from this study were described as the principal followed the IPD Model and led school improvement with a building staff. These were:

1. Leadership practices relative to specific components of the Model; and
2. The 21 leadership responsibilities identified in the McREL research.

Emerging themes were:

3. Challenges and barriers to the school improvement process.

The data indicated specific leadership practices that positively impact teacher and student learning, actions and behaviors associated with implementation of the Model when aligned with the responsibilities identified in the McREL research, and the challenges that the principal faced and how these impacted his and the staff’s ability to affect teaching and student learning. This chapter provided a rich description and identified factors that contributed to the leadership practices of Sean, principal of the middle school, by describing the processes that took place in the building as the Model was implemented.

To summarize the findings regarding the principal’s behaviors and practices, Sean reported what he experienced as a school leader for a staff implementing the IPD Model. While he attended to the components of the Model, there were specific behaviors that were characteristic of his distinct personality, as well as those that resulted because of the context in which he led. As he led the staff through implementation of the Model and what could be considered second-order change, he said he became more aware of those leadership practices
that were more and less effective. His experiences have helped him realize his own professional and personal growth and those qualities that were expanded and strengthened.

What seemed essential to this study is that there were core leadership qualities that impacted a school leader’s ability to implement the IPD Model, a school improvement process intended to result in improving student learning.
CHAPTER 5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The objective of this study was to describe specific behaviors and practices that a building principal exhibited in a school that demonstrated high levels of engagement in the Iowa Professional Development Model. The primary research question that guided this study was: What behaviors and practices did this principal exhibit that were related to school improvement as defined by the IPD Model and McREL?

As demonstrated in this study, there are numerous areas that a leader should consider when leading change that impacts an entire staff and student body. Understanding that complex processes are generally multi-year and do not initially yield intended results throughout various stages of the process is key to understanding second-order change in a school.

As other principals plan for school improvement processes in their buildings that include elements such as goal setting, professional learning, practice of skills, collaboration, and collection and analysis of data, it should be clear that this cycle of improvement is destined to bring changes that are more popular with some staff than others. This study showed that leadership responsibilities that led to positive change, either for teachers as they learned ways to become stronger professionals, or for students who were to be the benefactors of increased achievement, were important to be enacted at various times throughout the process, as particular situations warranted.

The research focused on collecting pertinent data related to the behaviors and practices demonstrated by the principal during the implementation of the Model. Extensive
data were collected which included observations of professional development sessions, leadership team meetings, interviews with the principal, document analysis, observations, and field notes. This chapter discusses the research findings presented in the last chapter, including the theoretical and practical significance of the findings. This chapter concludes with the implications of these findings and recommendations for further investigation.

**Summary of Findings**

As the McREL meta-analysis has indicated, specific principal practices related to the 21 responsibilities can affect increased student academic achievement by the extent that the principal is engaged in various initiatives with teachers, other staff members, students, parents, and community members. According to the McREL factor analysis, principals need to address all 21 responsibilities in some manner when leading change. The level of emphasis placed on certain responsibilities is dependent upon the type of change being led, as well as specific issues to be addressed and the particular context. It is helpful to consider the school reform practices highlighted by McREL and the IPD Model by also looking at the relationships between the principal responsibilities and first-order and second-order change.

All 21 principal responsibilities are related to first-order change, which is another way of saying that all 21 define the standard operating procedures in a school. All 21 responsibilities are relevant and necessary to consider for effective leadership (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Because first-order change is a by-product of the daily operations of the school, all 21 responsibilities can be considered day-to-day management tools of effective school leaders. However, when
transforming the purposes, perceptions, and practices of educators, second-order change is required.

Second-order change manifests itself only in the context of an innovation, such as a specific issue that is being addressed, or problem being solved (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 72). As a leader implements an innovation, second-order change is needed for people to change their outlooks and their belief systems and alter everything from instructional roles to governance.

As the IPD Model was first implemented in schools, most educators considered it an innovation. The Model has been unlike any other implemented before in the state, as it is a systemic, prescriptive model for school improvement requiring the participation of all instructional staff.

The McREL factor analysis findings suggest principals need to emphasize seven responsibilities when leading second-order change. This listing indicates that a principal seeking to provide leadership for a second-order change initiative should have the following priorities:

1. **Change agent**—Challenging the status quo and being willing to move forward on the innovation without a guarantee of success;

2. **Flexibility**—Being both directive and nondirective relative to the innovation as the situation warrants;

3. **Ideals and beliefs**—Operating in a manner consistent with his or her ideals and beliefs relative to the innovation;
4. *Intellectual stimulation*—Being knowledgeable about the research and theory regarding the innovation and fostering such knowledge among staff through reading and discussion;

5. *Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment*—Being knowledgeable about how the innovation will affect the curricular, instructional, and assessment practices and providing conceptual guidance in these areas;

6. *Monitor and evaluate*—Continually monitoring the impact of the innovation; and

7. *Optimizer*—Being the driving force behind the new innovation and fostering the belief that it can produce exceptional results if members of the staff are willing to apply themselves (Marzano et al., 2005, pp. 70-72).

This research also indicates that principals may need to ask others to help fulfill responsibilities for *culture, communication, input*, and *order*, as these four responsibilities tend to suffer when second-order change is taking place (Marzano et al., 2005). This does not mean that the school leaders should avoid or subvert these responsibilities, but rather may have to endure the perceptions that these four responsibilities have deteriorated as a result of the innovation (p. 74).

According to the data obtained through interviews and observations with Sean, the subject of this study, culture, communication, input, and order did not seem to be negatively affected as second-order change—implementation of the IPD Model—took place. The culture was observed to be cohesive and positive. Communication was observed to be two-way between teachers and administrators. Sean provided numerous opportunities for teachers to have input. He was attentive to the order of the school and avoided interruptions to classroom instruction.
It is possible that these principal responsibilities may not have been negatively impacted as this case study was examined in the third year of IPD Model implementation rather than in the first two years. Sean reported that changes in the school, some of which resulted from the Model implementation in the initial phases, were not easy for some staff. If this case study research had been conducted during the first or second year of the IPD Model implementation, it could have possibly yielded different findings, as staff at that point in time may have viewed the IPD Model as more of an innovation, compared to their perceptions in the third year of implementation.

A summary follows of the principal’s behaviors relative to the leadership practices, as a wide range of practices were observed when components of the IPD Model were implemented. The principal was directly involved with various aspects of the Model. He held strong convictions regarding the importance of ensuring staff were engaged in all aspects of the IPD Model to facilitate school improvement.

**Areas of Strength**

In the opinion of this researcher, there were specific IPD Model components and McREL responsibilities led by the principal that were particularly strong and contributed to the teachers’ implementation of research-based practices and professional development. These are listed in Table 4. The adjacent column summarizes the principal’s behaviors and practices found through the data.
Table 4. Areas of Strength—IPD Model components and McREL Responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collection and Analysis of Student Data</strong></td>
<td>Sean was involved in collection and analysis of student achievement data and requested that teachers keep longitudinal data to determine year-to-year student progress. While improving reading was the current focus in the building, Sean was also aware of how students were achieving in other content areas through data analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal Setting</strong></td>
<td>Sean met with the leadership team to establish goals for student learning based on achievement data. He communicated these goals to teachers and students. Sean aligned the instructional expectations for teachers with the goals for student learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaboration/Implementation</strong></td>
<td>Sean established collaboration times for teachers to meet and discuss reading program goals, strategies, assessment data, and other elements of the IPD Model. Collaboration provided a means for the leadership team to meet with the consultant and discuss information regarding student achievement progress, the reading programs and strategies, and professional development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change agent</strong></td>
<td>Sean helped the staff understand why the IPD Model needed to be followed to improve student learning as he led processes and programs to ensure implementation of the Model elements. He directly addressed issues and sought ways to improve the status quo. He enacted Seminar program to provide additional reading support for students. He led the development of an advisory program to support middle school students. When teachers were not performing according to the Iowa Teaching Standards, Sean addressed this, provided assistance, and communicated his expectations. When one teacher did not demonstrate improvement in teaching practices, he took action for dismissal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>Sean made regular phone calls to parents, participated in meetings with teachers and parents, and had ongoing communication with both students and teachers. Additional communication with the leadership team occurred through collaboration opportunities. For teachers who did not have regular collaboration time in their schedules, he made it a point to go into teachers’ classrooms and discuss topics related to students and learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Culture McREL 5 | Sean believed and communicated the importance of adults in the school, modeling positive qualities that he wanted for students.  
He asked these questions of himself: What’s the proper thing to do? What would be the optimum outcome? Where do we want to go? He then worked backwards to get to his goal.  
He emphasized to staff that caring about people was at the school’s core.  
Sean established goals for staff and students and expected everyone to continuously understand and work toward this direction.  
He held himself and others accountable for maintaining a positive school culture. |
| DisciplinMcREL 6 | Sean believed that one of his key responsibilities was protecting teachers from issues and influences that would reduce instructional time for students.  
He worked to establish structure in the school day for teachers and students. |
| Flexibility McREL 7 | Sean was aware of issues that existed or could arise. He took time to consider the manner in which he should respond, using various approaches as situations warranted.  
He encouraged teachers to make decisions without reliance on him and to try new things in their classrooms.  
He demonstrated flexibility in his approach to student issues, believing that each student’s situation should be considered when determining a course of action. |
| Focus McREL 8 | Sean focused the school’s efforts on ensuring the school staff delivered quality education through attention to instruction and the positive culture of the school.  
Through his engagement with teachers and the leadership team during collaboration and professional development sessions, as well as his involvement with student and teacher data, he demonstrated his focus on increasing student achievement. |
| Ideals and Beliefs McREL 9 | He frequently reminded teachers that the purpose of the school was to provide students the best learning opportunities possible.  
He communicated his beliefs to teachers about disciplinary actions for students. He did not believe in punishment, but believed that a lesson could be learned through showing students a new or different way.  
Because of Sean’s background and upbringing, he understood many of the issues adolescents face. He frequently shared his ideals and beliefs with teachers when he stated that everyone in the school needed to consider students’ home/family/personal situations and provide for students who needed additional support. |
Sean committed his leadership practices to creating a school community, communicating his ideals and beliefs about assisting students, and working to ensure that improved instruction would increase student achievement.

Sean believed and acted upon his belief that teachers who did not meet the level of competency accorded in the Iowa Teaching Standards should be identified and offered intensive assistance. If improvement did not occur, he took steps for dismissal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Input McREL 10 &amp; Participative Decision Making IPDM 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sean encouraged teachers to share ideas and speak honestly and openly with each other and with him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers were encouraged to make recommendations and decisions regarding the reading program and its implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through collaboration and building leadership meetings, teachers had input and participative decision making opportunities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involvement with Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment McREL 12 &amp; Focus on Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment IPDM 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sean was engaged with professional development and team leadership meetings, and the collection and analysis of teacher implementation records and student achievement data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through helping to plan student reading programs, he focused on improving students’ reading skills that would result in increased student achievement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He established the expectation that all teachers were to implement the strategies on a regular and frequent basis, so that students would become well versed in the strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sean regularly attended IEP and 504 meetings and was involved in planning the students’ academic programs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Optimize McREL 15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sean was the driving force behind implementation of the IPD Model in the building and consistently communicated his belief to staff members that “we can do this”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order McREL 16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sean believed in having structure for the school day with clear boundaries and expectations for students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He spent significant amounts of time in the classrooms and hallways to check for appropriate student interactions and behaviors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While ensuring that the school day had few interruptions, he maximized the instructional time available for students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources McREL 19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership teachers were given release time to help coordinate and lead professional development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The technical assistance of a reading consultant was obtained and utilized.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sean sought to obtain collaboration time for teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers were given the instructional materials needed for teaching the reading program.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The McREL meta-analysis indicated specific principal responsibilities that can affect increased student academic achievement by the extent to which the principal is engaged in these. All 21 leadership responsibilities are unique behaviors that each represent important knowledge, skills, and practices that principals need to emphasize to positively impact student achievement. All 21 responsibilities appear to be essential for leading day-to-day or first-order changes, with seven that are positively correlated with leading second-order change. This principal demonstrated a number of the McREL principal responsibilities as he implemented school improvement through the IPD Model. All of these responsibilities were observed, some to a greater degree than others.

As the principal demonstrated these responsibilities, it became evident that many of the McREL responsibilities and elements of the IPD Model were highly connected, while some overlapped with each other. It was not always possible to separate these into discrete categories, nor was it necessary to do so to clearly portray the principal’s behaviors and actions related to school improvement. The importance of identifying these principal responsibilities is to communicate those specific ones that were clearly shown and helped to create an environment that supported increased student learning.
Areas That Could Be Strengthened

In this case study, the principal’s responsibilities were demonstrated, while some were stronger or more commonly used than others. *Monitor and evaluate* (*McREL 14*) was an area that Sean reported would be increased and altered in ways to ensure that strategies were implemented frequently and that students were engaged in learning. The principal responsibilities, *knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment* (*McREL 13*) and *intellectual stimulation* (*McREL 11*) were two other areas that were observed and reported less. These areas are addressed in greater detail in the following sections.

**Curriculum, instruction, and assessment — Intellectual stimulation**

While Sean was highly involved in curriculum, instruction, and assessment, he said he did not attend many conferences or workshops away from the school site, as this would cause him to be away from his building and students. He was not opposed to expanding his own professional learning and attended a few one-day workshops or conferences each year. At the same time, *knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment* is a key responsibility for both first and second-order changes; therefore, additional professional development in this area could assist as Sean continues to implement the IPD Model with staff. While his *involvement* in curriculum, instruction, and assessment is at a high level, it becomes important for principals to continue to stay knowledgeable and current with information in these areas. As cited in the research (Marzano et. al, 2005) on change, being knowledgeable about how an innovation will affect curricular, instructional and assessment practices and providing conceptual guidance in these areas is one of the second-order change responsibilities. Developing deeper knowledge in these areas may prove beneficial as Sean leads the staff to
successfully implement innovations. This idea has been supported through the research of the Connecticut Principal’s Center (2004):

*The principal must be an expert on teaching and learning. The principal assumes the role of lead researcher, guiding and modeling inquiry into questions of implementation and effectiveness of instructional practices through the examination of student work and other performance data.* (p. 6)

Sean demonstrated that he understood the elements and processes associated with the IPD Model. He encouraged teachers to differentiate instruction and implement strategies that engaged learners. With the expertise and support of the reading consultant and members of the leadership team, he acquired new knowledge in the area of reading comprehension that supported his knowledge of teaching science. As school administrator, he demonstrated that he was one of the lead learners in the organization. He demonstrated what Elmore (2002a) stated was necessary—a differentiated role for leaders and a model of distributed leadership in which those with different roles and competencies could work cooperatively around the common task of instructional improvement:

Teachers and administrators learn how to connect new knowledge and skill to practice by trying to do specific things in the classroom and by asking themselves whether there is evidence that, having done these things, students are able to do things they were not able to do before. School administrators and teachers learn to change the conditions of work by trying new ideas in the context of specific curriculum content and specific instructional problems, grade-level conferences and observations around particular problems of math or literacy instruction, for example. (p. 32)

There are numerous ways a leader can acquire new knowledge and skills. This can be accomplished within the school setting through collaboration with the reading consultant and leadership team or through professional reading. Seeking information from outside resources is an additional means to expand knowledge of other innovative and effective educational methods and programs.
Adult learning needs to be anchored in the work that is taking place in the school (Elmore, 2002a). The practice of improvement is a discipline of understanding how good work and the learning of good work can be supported and propagated in schools and school systems. Sean focused his efforts to see that professional learning was connected to the work in the school.

Fullan (2003b) discussed the two-layered perspective on the role of leadership in an educational context. The first layer involves the principal creating and sustaining disciplined inquiry and action on the part of the teachers, while the second layer concerns what has been done to help create and sustain principals who are good leaders (p. 7). While Sean demonstrated effective ways to address the first layer—how he worked with teachers to cause inquiry and action—the second layer received less attention.

Sean believed his administrative preparation program did not adequately prepare him for the principal position. The Connecticut Principals’ Center for the Connecticut Association of Schools’ Position Paper (2004) called for quality pre-service programs to provide a solid foundation in: (a) models of instruction; (b) standards; (c) student assessment; (d) curriculum development processes; (e) differentiated professional program development; (f) program evaluation; (g) education law; (h) use of data to improve instruction; (i) principles of learning, including adult learning; and, (j) the facilitation, negotiation and conflict management skills required to lead and engage groups of adults and students (p. 8).

Sean may further enhance his own knowledge in some areas with more professional learning. If he would also use newly acquired information to foster knowledge among his staff, he could more fully demonstrate intellectual stimulation, another responsibility that impacts innovations with second-order change implications. By continually exposing
teachers and staff to cutting-edge ideas about how to be effective, involving them in reading articles and books about effective practices, and staying informed about current research regarding effective schooling, teachers have additional means of acquiring knowledge and skills. The desired outcome is that, as the staff collectively acquires new knowledge and skills, they can discuss and plan for additional and effective ways to improve instructional practices for students.

**Monitor and evaluate**

Based on the ITBS data results in 2006-07, Sean showed disappointment and concern that the efforts made and the programs implemented were not showing the targeted desired results. Sean recognized his need to monitor and evaluate differently. While teachers had been sending implementation logs to Sean as requested, the data collected were based on teachers self-reporting. To confirm implementation data and assess the effectiveness of the strategies, Sean planned to go into classrooms much more frequently and observe student engagement and teacher implementation of the reading strategies.

The low student achievement results were unexpected, so as the leadership team met to try and analyze what problems may have existed that contributed or caused these data, members of the leadership team and the reading consultant discussed that one issue could be implementation of the reading strategies. Because teachers were not regularly observed using the strategies in the classroom, members of the team discussed the possibility that some teachers were not fully using the strategies or may not be implementing the strategies as they were intended. As expressed by Fullan et. al (2006), “There is nothing more difficult to address than the case where people think they are doing something when in reality they are
not” and most reform efforts fail to “touch deeply” into classroom instruction in a way that gets results for all (p. 6). This seemed to address a possible issue as the leadership team, reading consultant, and Sean had the follow-up discussion regarding frequency and fidelity of the reading strategies. Without directly observing the strategies in the classroom to ascertain if these were being used at the appropriate times and with the needed frequency to help students increase reading comprehension, there was not enough evidence to substantiate that the program was being fully implemented. While Sean and members of the leadership team were sharing expertise and communicating their expectations to help their colleagues understand the reading program for the students, the expected “breakthrough” was not materializing.

When performance plateaus or appears flat despite considerable effort to improve, one must look deeper in two respects: 1) to see if all the specific ingredients for improvement are actually being worked on, and 2) to realize that the next breakthrough may take additional time for new capacities to “kick in”. (Fullan et al., 2006, p. 7)

Sean shared some concerns in the fall of 2006, when he questioned whether or not the staff should continue to focus on strategy implementation once they became accustomed to doing these. “[Teachers] say that, ‘Yeah, yeah, I can do this,’ and they do it for awhile, but then it goes away. And...to keep it consistent...the reading teachers are great because they’re using new strategies all the time, and it’s part of the curriculum. But for the other teachers, to keep that going along is very challenging.”

In order to determine if teachers were attending to the ingredients for improvement, Sean realized the need to *monitor and evaluate* differently to determine if teachers were attending to the ingredients for improvement. Sean also believed in providing support to teachers, so he made plans to have the reading teacher go into the classrooms, model the
strategies, and help coach the teachers. He explained to the teachers his expectations that serious commitments to the reading program would be made by everyone.

**Theoretical Significance**

Findings revealed during this research showed that both challenges and barriers impacted school improvement. These can affect positive changes for teaching and student learning. These issues could be similar ones for any principal engaged in innovation and improvement efforts.

In this study, several challenging areas related to implementation of the IPD Model were apparent. As the IPD Model can be considered an innovation with implications for second-order change, one could expect that challenges would exist for any principal and school staff as the Model is implemented. The lessons learned from this school can provide information regarding the challenges or barriers that may be experienced by other school leaders and staff when the Model is implemented.

**Distributed leadership**

Distributed leadership is one theory designed to support school improvement. In the IPD Model, *leadership* is one of the four operating principles (IPDM 13). Throughout this study, this operating principle was categorized using the principal responsibilities from the McREL research, as well as the components and foundational principles of the IPD Model. According to the *leadership* principle in the IPD Model, another aspect is demonstrated by how the principal distributes and shares responsibilities and tasks with others. The intent of distributed leadership is for the principal to obtain necessary assistance from teachers and
teacher leaders to implement the school improvement processes. The principal needs to seek those resources as well as additional assistance from the AEA or DOE, to ensure that the school is going in the right direction. The principal’s willingness and ability to share some of the leadership tasks can be key to successful implementation of the IPD Model.

As described in Chapter 4, the teacher leaders seemed to be comfortable when they collaborated as a team, analyzed data, led professional development sessions, shared ideas, and discussed strategies with other teachers during staff meetings and professional development. They had been meeting as a team for several years; therefore, they had acquired the skills they needed to accomplish these tasks. However, none of the teacher leaders had yet assumed the responsibility of going into other teachers’ classrooms to observe colleagues using the strategies or modeling the strategies. This would be a new role for one or more of them to assume, and it could be expected that this would require a degree of coaching from the principal, reading consultant, and colleagues for them to become comfortable and effective while performing these tasks.

One of the inherent issues with distributed leadership is that most teachers are not trained, nor do they always feel equipped to take on leadership roles in the building. Often, staff members are assigned to the role of teacher leader, and they have no previous experiences to prepare them for this (Showers, 2005). Based upon the demonstrated practices of the leadership team members at High Plains, given time and opportunities to lead colleagues, distributed leadership can be successfully accomplished.

The principal in this study scheduled his days around meeting times and collaborative opportunities with teachers to be certain students were being provided quality education. Since Sean participated in the meetings and professional development sessions, he had a
clear understanding of the information communicated to staff and was able to determine his specific role in providing whatever support was needed. By involving himself in curriculum, instruction, and assessment during sessions with the reading teachers and consultant, he also was able to gain knowledge in these areas. Having the principal participate in the training is a relatively new concept; however, this is necessary so the principal as evaluator knows as much as the teachers when it comes to SBR program implementation (Showers, 2005).

Dr. Beverly Showers, who led the development of the IPD Model, stated that the principal has often been “saddled with the entire responsibility” for school improvement (2005, p.1). She emphasized that the principal should be the one to direct the entire professional development model and, while it can and should be led by the principal and a group of lead teachers, the initiative has to be completely shared by the entire staff and the principal has to see that this happens. The role that everyone has is to be proactive and assist in a leadership role:

There have been pretty strong messages coming from the field saying to principals: It’s on your shoulders. If this doesn’t work, it’s your fault. And there’s a real consensus in the field that you cannot put all the responsibility on any one person’s shoulders, and that, in fact, it requires distributed leadership, meaning up and down the chain of command, from the school board, and the superintendent, to the teacher leaders in the classrooms to make this work well. (p.1)

Distributing leadership in the building was shown to be an essential element of the IPD Model process. Sean understood how utilizing the teacher leaders assisted him and helped staff to learn the reading content and understand data. The theory of distributed leadership supports the research of Showers, Fullan, Elmore, and others cited in this dissertation. Planning for future collaborative experiences however, would most likely need to be considered differently because these would involve an innovation where members of
the leadership team would be going into classrooms and assisting colleagues. These new experiences may require ongoing support from other members of the team and particularly Sean. This supports the need for distributed leadership, as well as ongoing collaboration between various groups in the school.

**Collaboration**

There are numerous issues associated with collaboration that is a necessary element of school improvement planning and implementation. One issue is structural. Many schools do not have a regularly and frequently scheduled collaboration time for staff to meet and discuss instruction and learning. When Sean first established collaboration time for the leadership team, they found that having only a few hours was too rushed and did not allow the members time to organize and prepare. This time was then extended to ensure that their meetings would be productive.

There were days when the leadership team met and Sean was not able to attend for the entirety of the meeting because of his schedule and shared time between two schools. He wanted to be fully prepared and informed about the content for professional development sessions, but this was not always possible.

Sean said that it was difficult to build in time for all of the staff to collaborate. He compared schools with businesses, providing evidence that these two entities are quite different given the time that people have to plan together. He believed that teachers could become more effective if they had more time for training and collaboration. When the middle school first opened, he communicated to staff that he would help find time for teachers to team and collaborate. However, with limitations in the schedule, the only teachers able to
meet regularly were the sixth grade teachers. With other teachers who had limited time for collaboration, discussing strategy implementation and student progress on a frequent basis had been very difficult.

According to the IPD Model, professional development sessions should also include sufficient time for teachers to collaborate and have opportunities for practice and feedback. At High Plains Middle School, professional development sessions occurred about every two weeks, with most sessions for professional learning lasting three hours. The total number of professional development sessions and opportunities to collaborate was less than necessary to ascertain that strategies were understood and used by all teachers.

Sean understood the challenges he faced when trying to design collaboration time. He also understood the value in these face-to-face exchanges and strove to find ways to include more of these in the school day and calendar. The challenges and time barriers that Sean experienced when establishing collaboration emphasizes the attention that needed to be given to this area to ensure teachers can be provided high quality, productive time.

It has taken a few years for teachers to learn to use collaboration time effectively. Most teachers have not been trained to work in a collaborative manner to analyze and discuss instructional practices and outcomes and the numerous other areas that relate to student learning. Kruse, Seashore Louis, and Bryk (1994) called this condition “social and human resources”, or culture. This means that staff have an openness to improvement, trust, respect, supportive leadership, and socialization opportunities. The High Plains teachers showed they had acquired these skills, but it necessitated time and practice opportunities to develop this level of trust and respect. Fullan (2006), described his concerns with collaboration:
What strikes me as more troublesome is that [collaboration] is turning out to be much more difficult than we thought to change cultures. (p.1)

Individually and collectively, professional learning, getting better and better in the setting in which you work, must be built into the culture of the school in both its internal and external interactions...What is missing in school cultures then is most schools, structurally and normatively, are not places where virtually every teacher is a learner all the time. This is the missing element in standards, qualifications, professional development and so on. The latter do not by themselves represent continuous professional learning. (p. 3)

In a major study of the implementation of new mathematics and science policies, Spillane (2004) found that teachers who substantially changed their teaching were intensely supported through interaction with their colleagues and external experts. The frequent classroom observations and practices of strategies were a core element of professional learning, as teachers increased their knowledge about instruction through conversations with others. “Teachers’ motivation to learn and change involved developing and sustaining teachers’ identities as experts and learners with one another” (pp. 60-61).

Showers’ research (2005) indicated that collaboration is an essential part of the Model’s success:

Then when we get into that whole action research cycle, inside the Model, where we’re meeting regularly as collaborative teams making implementation plans, developing lessons, looking at student data, repeating that whole cycle—to be an active participant in that, especially around the data piece. Many teachers aren’t accustomed to handling this much data, and [the principal’s] going to need to model it, help with it, be sure that it’s disseminated to staff, to parents...If you do all of those things, from a leadership position as a principal, you’re being a good educational leader... anyone who thinks they can implement anything in classrooms without teachers, by formal edict somewhere up the line, is living in a dream world...Teachers have to be so involved with every step of the way, because that’s where it’s going to happen. It will happen in the classroom and your implementation especially completely depends on teacher leaders to monitor that and say, “You know what, our students need more work with fluency. We’re not moving this”...So, it’s your teachers who are going to do that...That’s what distributive leadership is, and that’s what needs to happen all up and down the line. (p. 3)
Elmore (2004) says that the function of learning to deliver the most appropriate and intentional kind of instruction in the workplace will advance teaching and learning.

However, the structure for teachers to have time in the school day for collaborative opportunities is seldom developed:

The problem [is that] there is almost no opportunity for teachers to engage in continuous and sustained learning about their practice in the settings in which they actually work, observing and being observed by their colleagues in their own classrooms and classrooms of other teachers in other schools confronting similar problems of practice. This disconnect between the requirements of learning to teach well and the structure of teachers’ work life is fatal to any sustained process of instructional improvement. (p. 127)

Collaboration will continue to be a major challenge and obstacle for improving instructional practices. In many schools it does not currently exist. Some schools have simply not attended to the component of collaboration and, therefore, have not included this time in the school day. Some schools have tried to mandate certain amounts of collaboration time and have come up against contractual and union issues. At High Plains, the principal was determined to create the time and tried diligently to do so but was constrained by the schedule and school calendar.

Until schools are able to find additional time in the day and then design collaboration sessions that will best meet the learning needs for teachers and students, this will be a shallow area for educators. As cited and supported in the research in this section, finding the time, and then developing habits and practices to use the collaboration time well for continuous professional learning changes the culture of the school and is not as simple or free of challenges as many might have hoped.
Formative data and analysis

Another relevant theory well documented in the research is that schools demonstrating improvement continually use performance data and assessments to make instructional and programmatic decisions. At High Plains, formative assessment was collected and analyzed to determine student achievement progress, as well as to monitor the frequency of teacher implementation strategies.

Student achievement data

Student progress with reading was based on using the BRI every few weeks and the MAP and ITBS annually. The leadership team and Sean raised the following questions: Were the formative data being collected providing the appropriate data? Did the existing assessments inform the teachers and administrators frequently enough to show how students were performing on reading comprehension? If it would be determined that different assessments would be beneficial, these would need to be carefully selected to ensure that the resulting data were reliable data and could be used to better inform instruction. With limited time for teachers to meet and collaborate, the time needed to do this could create a challenge for the teachers and principal.

Most educators today recognize that more detailed and frequent information is needed than that which is acquired through annual or bi-annual statewide assessments to obtain correct information regarding student progress. At High Plains, the BRI was implemented and showed that students were making gains in reading comprehension. However, when the ITBS data results were received in January 2007, many students’ scores had declined in spite of what the BRI and classroom teachers’ assessment data had indicated.
There were several practices Sean enacted to assist teachers in understanding student achievement data. Sean started the practice of collecting student assessment data in folders so that teachers from all grade levels could track students progress each year. An online system was used to analyze and compare student performance on a regular basis. The leadership team was trying to help staff understand “the meaning behind the numbers” in order for teachers to make good instructional decisions.

In spite of the actions this principal and school members took to collect and analyze student reading data, teachers discovered through the ITBS 2007 results that student performance was not where they wanted it to be. Any one or all of these factors could have existed and contributed to this discrepancy at High Plains.

One factor could have been that the school has not found the correct assessment that would yield accurate formative data to inform how students are achieving. Another factor could lie with the administration of the formative tests, which would raise questions regarding how the tests were administered and whether they were administered with the appropriate fidelity and frequency. It will be important for the principal and leadership team to continue to ask questions and determine ways to ascertain that the assessments used are reliable and provide the correct information for students, parents, and teachers to be able to clearly know how students are performing.

**Teacher implementation data**

At High Plains, Sean and the leadership team collected data to gain knowledge about the delivery of the reading programs and strategies through the implementation logs teachers submitted on a regular basis. The leadership team tried several different forms for teachers to report implementation and believed that the most recent form and process were the
appropriate ones. In spite of these efforts, Sean and the team members realized that the implementation forms were probably not providing accurate data from teachers. Observing the strategies being used would need to occur more frequently for Sean and the leadership team to be assured that these were being used correctly and often.

Planning collection of teacher implementation data required meeting time and leadership. For data to be accurate, school staff had to have fidelity with the program. For a number of years, schools were not driven by data. Today, most schools are collecting a great deal of it. The challenges seem to lie in knowing if schools have the right data, too much, too little, or if the staff know how to correctly analyze and use the data that do exist.

The North Carolina Center for School Leadership Development (2001) study of what educational scholars know to be important and how leaders actually behave showed that how school personnel use assessment provides evidence there is much room for growth. Forty-eight percent of the school leaders surveyed said that classroom performance was monitored on a regular basis, offering pathways to improve student performance through improved teaching practices; 55% said that their schools monitored student achievement using both classroom and testing data to assess progress and 58% said they used the data collected from state and local testing and assessment programs to develop formative instructional strategies to improve the effectiveness of daily classroom instruction. These are dismal statistics for schools that are to be using data as a basis for decision making.

Reform strategies are getting better, so it is crucial to zero in on the key problem areas. The core problem is a failure to establish classroom routines and practices that represent personalized, ongoing, “data-driven focused instruction”…The new mission will require substantial changes in daily instructional practice on the part of all teachers and parallel changes in the infrastructure to support [this]. (Fullan et al., 2006, p. 4)
For routines and practices to be focused on data-driven instruction requires a change in instructional practices. All of these modifications could be considered innovations that are second-order change for staff.

The use of formative assessments at High Plains Middle School affirmed what the research in this dissertation has referenced: Appropriate formative assessments, when data are analyzed and used to plan instructional changes, are essential to understanding student progress. Simultaneously, finding assessments to match the content, where data are consistently collected and analyzed to drive instruction, is not a simple task. All of the elements associated with using data correctly must be in place. This requires knowledge of assessments as well as the incorporation of distributed leadership. Sean’s work with data in his school shows that formative assessments, while necessary, are an area where schools will likely need ongoing technical support if data are to be used as they are intended.

**Loose coupling**

There are a variety of leadership theories and, while this dissertation cannot address all of them, there are two others particularly relevant to this study. One is the theory of “loose coupling” (Weick, 1976). Loose coupling posits that decisions about teaching and learning have resided in individual classrooms, rather than the system as a whole (Weick, 1976; Elmore, 2000). Consequently, schools with loose coupling experience disconnected parts such as professional development that does not match teacher’s learning needs, implemented programs that are not aligned with the students’ learning needs, and classrooms that function as groups of one-room schoolhouses with little or no opportunities for collaborative learning.
As Sean led the school improvement process in his building using the IPD Model, it was clear that he and members of the building leadership team understood the “big picture” for the school. He stated that there were times when he thought not all staff members had this view. As he and the leadership team anticipated questions from staff regarding “where they were going” with the reading program, Sean recognized that the staff needed to know the relevancy and application of the teachers’ learning to that of the students’ needs. He believed it was important to know that the various school improvement elements meshed.

When the team convened to analyze data and problem solve how the staff would work differently, all recommendations to support increased implementation of the programs were focused on teachers working together, collaborating more, observing in each others’ classrooms and having more walkthroughs to see that strategies were being implemented. All of this was to ensure that the system was “tightly” coupled. As principal, Sean had made significant changes in the school based on what students needed to achieve. The onset of the poor reading ITBS scores did not deter him from planning new ways to see that the goals would be met.

Sean and the leadership team designed building-wide initiatives that were to be tightly coupled across all classrooms in the school. This supports the loose coupling theory of Elmore and Weick, as well as Cuban (1984), whose research showed that the prevalence of loose coupling has contributed to the fact that only a small number of classrooms and schools have been able to share successful instructional practices that grow to be exemplary ones. By tightly aligning instructional practices with students’ learning needs across all classrooms in the building, Sean avoided loose coupling.
Relational trust in schools

The theory of relational trust has been more pronounced through the research of Bryk and Schneider (2002). The elements underlying this theory are the distinct role of relationships that characterize the exchanges that occur in schools. These exchanges occur between (a) teachers and students; (b) teachers and other teachers; (c) teachers and parents; and (d) all groups and the principal. Each group maintains an understanding of his/her role and obligations and holds expectations about the obligations of those in the other groups.

For the school community to work well, it must achieve agreement about these obligations. Personal regard, integrity, respect, and competence in the core role responsibilities are the four considerations included in the establishment of relational trust. When these four elements are strong and present in a school, specific practices can occur which enable the group to work collectively toward a common goal. Through words and actions, members of the school show their sense of obligation for each other.

The principal’s actions play a key role as he acknowledges others, actively listens to their concerns, couples these behaviors with a compelling school vision, and then seeks ways for the staff to advance the vision. If the principal also competently manages the day-to-day affairs of the school, more trust emerges.

Sean’s ideals and beliefs played an important role in his leadership practices that in turn helped to develop the areas of regard, integrity, respect and competence. Relational trust was present among the staff as evidenced through the caring culture at High Plains Middle School. Sean was clear regarding his beliefs about care and respect for others, as well as expectations he had for quality instruction and the part that all staff had in
delivering this to students. Sean openly communicated his beliefs with staff when school improvement issues were being discussed.

As principal, Sean articulated the goals for students and staff in his building. Throughout this study, he was consistently engaged in instructional leadership activities and was always prepared and willing to support students, staff, and “do the right thing”. He fostered these same attitudes for teachers and students.

Sean’s behaviors and practices showed that he modeled the expectations he had of others. The respect, regard, personal integrity and competence in core responsibilities that had grown during Sean’s time as principal exemplified relational trust. Sean’s work demonstrated that this theory is applicable to the work that can be accomplished in schools when these elements exist and are supported.

**Practical Significance**

Implementation of the IPD Model in a school context is a new area of research, thus, there are several important lessons to be learned about the Model and McREL’s research.

This principal attempted to change the context of the school and demonstrated that this kind of school reform extends beyond technical work, where the approach and the solution are generally known. The practices and behaviors of a principal leading his staff through the IPD Model implementation was a mixture of technical and adaptive work. While the approach has been described in the Model and technical assistance resources have been provided to schools, the enactment of some Model components was challenging and difficult. The principal tried to establish a community of teachers who would realign their beliefs and
behaviors, but certain aspects were still unfamiliar and unknown for both the teachers and the principal even in their third year of implementation.

As those in the school go about the day-to-day business of teaching and learning, ultimately the focus on everything that is to be done should address the four questions that form the basis of the IPD Model:

1. What do data tell us about our student learning needs?
2. What do/will we do to meet student learning needs?
3. How do/will we know that student learning has changed?

Schools are accountable to the public today more than in any previous time. At the same time that the building leader is to be highly engaged in the continuous school improvement process, there is also more outreach to students and parents. One effective school principal can make significant and positive differences for teachers and students, but he/she cannot do this work alone or without support. When one considers the numerous demands placed on the principal as the job exists in most schools today, it is apparent that it is extremely challenging and sometimes difficult.

There are several very important lessons to be learned about the Model and about some of the principal responsibilities in McREL's research when the IPD Model was actually implemented in a particular school context. This case study uncovered some aspects that more fully expose areas that need to have attention drawn to them. There were a number of challenges associated with the various types of responsibilities expected of Sean in his role as principal that could be considered challenging or difficult. These are described in the
following section, along with suggestions for changes that could better enable the principal to serve in his role as instructional leader.

**Inhibitors and Barriers to Instructional Leadership**

1. Sean was a shared principal in two buildings in two different towns. This made it impossible to attend all professional development sessions in both schools. It was also difficult to attend all other meetings, including leadership team meetings. It is far more desirable for principals to be able to focus their leadership and improvement efforts in one building. Travel time between two towns is generally “lost” time for instructional leadership and consequently is not the most effective use of resources. The number of additional leadership responsibilities that the principal could focus on if he/she were assigned to one building or area should be considered. The issue for schools in these situations seems to be about lack of funding required to hire additional principals. This is an issue many Iowa schools face and one that only changes in policy and funding at all levels will be able to resolve.

2. The current structure of the school day included the minimum number of staff needed to teach the classes, the existing seven-period schedule, and shared teachers between middle and high schools. This structure prohibited regular collaboration for most teachers. Nevertheless, Sean continued to try to find ways for staff to collaborate and make improvements in student achievement. This was important because he understood the elements of research-based professional learning, focused on specific
areas as shown in the McREL research, and tried to give the appropriate amount of
time and effort to the work that was involved.

Solving the issue with collaboration is generally more complex in small
schools that have shared staff, so to reassign teachers to free up blocks of time also
meant hiring more staff. Again, this means changes in funding for schools. Schools
can change how time is structured for students and allow more teacher planning and
collaboration time by moving from a seven or eight-period day to a blocked schedule.
However, blocked scheduling requires that teachers learn to use time differently for
instruction and this necessitates changing all paradigms about how the school
schedule should look, the number of classes that should be offered, how all of the
state-required courses will fit into the schedule, and so forth (Canady & Rettig, 1996).
Also, changing to a blocked time schedule requires people within the school who
have the knowledge and ability to help the staff make this instructional change
successful. This requires leaders to help develop this capacity and have access to
technical assistance to make this change.

Because collaboration has not been implemented in all Iowa schools, it has
not become a large-scale contractual issue. It also has not involved a change in the
number of days in the school calendar or hours in the school day. In another state, a
school district and the teachers’ association went to court over the district’s mandate
for certain amounts of teacher collaboration time. Traditionally, teachers have viewed
planning time as “their own time” to be used as they needed or wished. Requiring
teachers to use some of is not always well accepted by staff. Therefore, conversations
need to occur about how and why collaboration takes place. As more administrators
move into the role of participants in collaboration sessions, trust and relationship building between administrators and teachers will be necessary so that these opportunities are not seen as evaluative and can become more productive for the sake of improved instruction.

3. With lack of collaboration time, there were few opportunities built into the school day for teachers to model strategies and coach their peers. Teachers needed to be provided scheduled collaboration time to learn from each other. Even with established time in the school day for observations of peers in classrooms, engaging in this type of professional learning is new for most teachers and administrators. Therefore, it necessitates school leaders who can provide teachers the collaboration theory and process to their staff. Asking teachers to go into each other’s classrooms and observe strategies and instructional practices and then to reflect and confer with others will most likely be an area that will need to be demonstrated, practiced and constantly monitored, if it is to continue. This could occur without adding collaboration time in the school day if teachers were to use planning time differently. However, it is optimal to provide enough time so that staff can be intentional and follow through with a model that provides them another opportunity to gain new knowledge and skills.

In High Plains Middle School, the culture was for teachers to meet and work together in teams. This type of professional culture does not always exist in schools, so this becomes another area for the principal and members of the leadership team to address.
4. Professional development occurred every few weeks for three hours in the afternoon when students were dismissed early. Time was limited for teachers to have training, practice the strategies, review and discuss student achievement data, and more deeply analyze any issues they may have had related to the IPD Model implementation.

Having additional structured time available for teachers to engage in their professional growth is preferred as the school day in most districts is used for teachers to be assigned as many different class sections as possible. Most teachers have a full schedule, which may cause them to feel they cannot “add one more thing” to their school day. This feeling makes it necessary for policymakers and leaders to step back and review how school hours are used. The questions that should be asked are: Are the teaching schedules meeting the learning needs of students? Are we providing all students the coursework they need to be successful? It is also incumbent for policymakers and leaders to ask: Are we providing teachers enough time during the school day and school year to meet and learn together as professionals? Do we need to add more professional learning sessions or days to the school calendar? If the answers to these questions make it apparent that changes need to occur for the sake of student achievement and continued improvement for the school, then it becomes the task of policymakers and leaders to establish the structures for this to take place.

5. The school has not had the services of a guidance counselor, which would probably relieve the principal of some student issues that arose, as well as have helped with collecting and analyzing student achievement data. The state requires that each district has a guidance counselor to serve students. There is no minimum requirement
of hours that have to be allocated per building, and the description of responsibilities for the counselor vary greatly from one district to another. Some schools have utilized counselors to assist with the collection and analysis of student achievement data. This is one of the tasks that a counselor could assume, if he/she was trained. Yet, depending upon the needs of the students in the school and the number of staff available in the district to provide support services to students, this may be one more task for a school counselor who may already be providing services to many students in multiple buildings. Each school district needs to assess services and student needs to determine what resources are required. If additional personnel are needed, then it becomes the task of leadership—board, central office, and principals—to decide how to distribute the responsibilities required to meet students’ learning needs.

6. The leadership team and the reading consultant believed that not all teachers understood their responsibility to help students increase reading comprehension skills. There were plans to add more material resources and to monitor and evaluate the teachers’ implementation of the reading strategies. Yet without additional time in the school day for collaboration, peer observation and coaching of the reading strategies, changing this existing paradigm may prove to be difficult.

If the school would seek ways to add collaboration time to the school day, either through changing the length of the contract day or the class schedule, time could be added for this purpose. However, the addition of time may not lead to a paradigm change for certain staff. Sean cited instances in which he met with staff who “were not understanding” and helped them to know his expectations. He
provided the supports for them to use the strategies and programs to improve student reading. If the teacher chose not to comply with the expectations, then Sean took action to remove the teacher from the district.

Leadership is a very large part of helping people “to understand” what needs to happen in schools. Principals and school leaders share responsibility for communicating the school’s expectations and ways that everyone can work together to meet these. It also becomes necessary for school leaders to be willing to address the problem and take action when a teacher or staff member does not comply with the expectations of the school. Leaders need to be have the time to initially provide the support that teachers need and document what has been provided. If improvement does not occur, then it is the responsibility of the principal to take action for dismissal.

School districts have laid blame for some time on teachers’ associations and the difficulty that ensues when leaders try to take steps for dismissal. This is one area that must be addressed nationwide. At the same time, it is the responsibility of school leaders to make decisions about hiring the best teachers. If any decision made is determined to be a wrong one, then it is the duty of leaders to take action and make a change.

7. The district enlisted the help of outside technical assistance by utilizing the services of a reading consultant. However, the school only received her services for a limited amount of time.
Intermediate units (AEAs) support Iowa school districts in a variety of areas, including reading, mathematics, science, and special education. However, with reduced amounts of funding for K-12 education including AEAs over the past years, the number of personnel in these areas has generally been reduced. Also, finding quality educators who have expertise in certain content areas has become increasingly difficult. Whether this is due to changes in available jobs, salary and benefits, or other reasons, most school districts find that obtaining and keeping quality educators has become a greater challenge. The same is true of intermediate agencies who hire educators to support schools. With decreased enrollment in various parts of the state, a number of these agencies have been forced to merge for financial reasons. This then creates a larger geographical area for the intermediate agency that serves all of the schools within those boundaries. Having enough qualified personnel who can travel large distances to schools has been problematic for many AEAs in the state.

Schools that have resources may be able to contract or hire additional personnel to support areas such as reading. But for many schools, having enough financial or human resources available is generally a problem. There are some solutions to this problem: (a) Allocate additional funding to attract quality people to become educators; (b) provide schools and AEAs with the funding to be able to hire and retain quality teachers and personnel; and (c) require more professional development time and allocate additional funding for schools to be able to pay for additional teacher training, thereby increasing the internal capacity of the staff to be more knowledgeable about instructional practices. None of these are simple solutions
or without controversy. However, the lack of quality resources for schools to do their jobs well will continue to be a problem if steps are not taken to address this.

8. Sean had a number of responsibilities as principal, such as supervising evening activities, handling student discipline issues, evaluating teachers and staff, collecting teacher implementation data, and helping to analyze student data, to name a few. The management and supervision responsibilities have been the expected duties for principals for a number of years. Policymakers and those who support education must stand up and clearly communicate that it is just as important to recruit and maintain quality leaders as it is quality teachers. Just as the school day and its structure and schedule need to be reviewed for teachers, so should the school day and year be reviewed for school leaders. If the primary task of school leaders is to ensure that teachers are providing the best education possible for students, then removing many of these non-instructional tasks is necessary. Quality instructional leaders who try to do it all may “burn out”. It becomes easier to lose focus of what is important in schools when school leaders are responsible for everything from discipline to instruction to supervising custodial tasks and food services to supervising ballgames and extracurricular activities. Schools need to provide a new structure and a new way of doing business, one that focuses teachers and leaders on learning and leaves the responsibilities of managing to others. It is another way to focus efforts on student learning. Without addressing this issue, little will change in the way of student achievement.
9. Sean did not believe that the courses and experiences in his principal program provided the preparation he needed to be an instructional leader. Sean referenced some of the courses he took to prepare him for the principalship, but believed that very few of these addressed the reality of his job. In spite of this, Sean was an instructional leader who learned to accomplish the tasks and responsibilities of his job. This seemed to be due to several factors: (a) Much of what Sean learned to do as a principal was due to his own “on-the-job” learning and application of these skills, as well as advice he received from his superintendent; (b) he was a principal who had a number of different responsibilities and went about accomplishing what needed to be done, even without additional resources; (c) Sean had a “can-do” work ethic and would not do less work simply because additional supports were not available; and (d) he understood that he needed to be the “lead learner” in the school if he was to lead school improvement efforts with his staff.

To be serious about preparing principals to be school leaders, it will be necessary for those in K-12 and higher education to have structured, meaningful, and ongoing conversations about the knowledge and skills required for all educators—teachers and school administrators alike—to prepare them well for their jobs. “On the job learning” for educators to acquire these skills should not be expected. While each school has unique circumstances and students’ specific learning needs may vary from one place to another, ensuring that all educators have the core set of skills and knowledge to address the needs of a wide constituency will serve everyone better.
Sean learned content such as developing standards and benchmarks, integration of reading strategies in science content, elements and application of the Iowa Professional Development Model, and other programs enacted in his school through his position at High Plains Middle School rather than his principal prep program. This raises questions: What about educators who leave preparatory programs and go to schools that do not access, know about, or use these programs? How do these educators learn research-based programs? Do they? And if the answer is “no”, then the current reality is a potential barrier to school improvement and a quality education for all students.

While content is important to know, going beyond theory to practice is essential. Teacher and school leader preparation programs should provide the content and opportunities for practice through additional practicum and mentoring programs so that the transition between the preparatory program and the first year in a new school position is not a difficult one. Schools should not be training grounds for newly hired educators when developing quality educators through the appropriate preparatory programs can be accomplished.

**Significance Summary**

Knowing that school leaders today must take schools to “great”—or at least to “greatly improved”—attending to all of the necessary elements to accomplish this and increase student learning, while considering all of the current day-to-day tasks of the principal, should cause stakeholders to pause and seriously question what needs to occur in
education to enable school leaders to attend to the most important task of all—increasing student learning and achievement.

Leadership is the key to school transformation. Implementation of the IPD Model can be done effectively when the principal plays a key role. Research supports that intended learning increases when the IPD Model is carried out as intended. However, those inside and outside of schools recognize that there are caveats that accompany school transformation and ones that should be difficult for stakeholders and policymakers to ignore.

It is the responsibility of schools and states to integrate pressure and support so that everyone places a focus on students and results. Capacity needs to be built so staff can be collectively instrumental in ensuring knowledge and resources are mobilized to close the student achievement gap that exists. It will be largely up to school leaders to see that this task is carried out. It is important that leaders and policymakers help determine removal of barriers that currently stand in the way of progress for schools and students.

**Limitations**

This case study focused on one principal in one Iowa school district as he led teachers in his building through the processes involved with the implementation of the IPD Model. A study involving one principal is a limitation, as is the context of the IPD Model. However, this study revealed connections to the current leadership research on school improvement and program implementation. The information yielded through this study could be used to inform practices in other schools as leaders plan for ways to increase student achievement with more success.
Just as applications can be generalized to other situations, this type of school improvement initiative could be one that significantly impacts other school staff as they plan ways to improve student achievement and could be applied to other school improvement scenarios.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This single case study was a snapshot of one principal during the 2006-2007 school year with observations and interviews that took place during a six-month period. There are numerous other questions that this case study raises. Further research might consider a comparison study between principals from schools of various sizes or varied student populations. Studying a school leader who has implemented the Model with a closer examination of how barriers have been shaped or removed to facilitate increased student achievement could answer some of the issues raised in this case study. Distributed leadership and effective use of collaboration in a school that is successful in raising student achievement is another area that warrants further exploration.

Just as there are a myriad of principal tasks—ranging from instructional responsibilities to managerial tasks, from establishing a safe school to evaluating teachers—there are a myriad of remaining unanswered questions. If stakeholders and policymakers want and expect principals to be instructional leaders, what tasks can be removed to make the job more doable? As shown in the Practical Significance section, this principal was shared between two schools and also had teaching responsibilities, as well as supervision of evening activities. What can schools can “let go of” to maintain good leaders? How can systems attract and keep quality educators who are fully prepared to teach and lead? This principal
said that he learned most of his skills in leading his school “on the job”. He led school improvement programs without having had focus on these in his preparation program. In this researcher’s search for a school that was implementing the IPD Model well, it was somewhat of a challenge to find one. Since all Iowa schools were to be following this research-based model for school improvement beginning in the fall of 2004, why was it difficult to find a school that met this description in 2006? How can students be ensured of receiving the best instructional practices in all schools? If Iowa’s students are to be productive citizens, ready to compete in a global society, it is everyone’s responsibility to ensure that students have ample opportunity to find their place in the future.

All of these questions relate to one thing—increased achievement for students.

There is limitless research available in the quest to see that youth are served in order to be productive, contributing members in our society:

We need a system that will support the day-to-day transformation of instruction for all students—a system that is both practical and powerful. Such a system must include all levels—the classroom, the school, the district, and the state. To transform instruction on a wide scale is to transform the entire system. (Fullan et al., 2006, p. xvi)

**Conclusion**

In *Leadership on the Line*, Heifetz and Linsky (2002) state that leaders these days must be able to be on the dance floor and the balcony simultaneously, analogous to how the principal must be working alongside staff, at the same time overseeing the work in the context of the “big picture”. Hesselbein (2002) stated that the principal has to be the lead learner if he/she is to become a pressure point for positive change.
Sean was on the dance floor and balcony through most of the school day. He was the pressure point for change in his building. Leading school improvement is entirely about establishing a culture of professional learning. Sean was willing and eager to change the status quo, and he was not afraid of change. He wanted to remove the barriers that got in the way of improving the school and student learning. This type of leadership is described by Fullan:

The principals we need are Level 5 leaders—more like chief operation officers than managers. The teachers we need are immersed in disciplined, informed professional inquiry and action that results in raising the bar and closing the gap by engaging all students in learning. There is no greater moral imperative than revamping the principal’s role as part and parcel of changing the context within which teachers and students learn. (2003b, p. 11)

As this principal was studied to learn more about how he impacted a system through a study of his attitudes, beliefs, behaviors and practices, it became clear that these aligned with Heifetz’ (1994) research that addresses the need for leaders to convene others to focus their work and realign their beliefs, their behaviors, and their relationships to respond to the school’s challenges. Ongoing professional learning that results in student achievement is a never-ending enterprise with continual needs both for teachers and for students. It requires leadership at the very highest level. The question becomes—will our systems be able to develop and sustain the kind of Level 5 leaders we need in our schools today?

As this research study showed, aspects of the school improvement process remain challenging. For schools to consistently improve instruction requires strong and effective leadership that begins with the principal and is distributed throughout the staff. How schools respond to the urgent call for the need to increase student learning now and in the future will remain to be seen. It becomes the responsibility of all personnel and agencies to determine
that, separately and together, these efforts will be supported. Nothing that prevents schools and students from doing anything less than continuously heading in the “northeasterly direction” (Elmore, 2000) on the improvement trajectory should be accepted by teachers or leaders.

What is needed in schools to increase student learning and ensure student success is an area for which the answers are known. What is not known is whether stakeholders, policymakers, leaders, and everyone with a stake in education today will do whatever it takes to see that these resources are delivered.
APPENDIX A. INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT FOR STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Title of Study: Leading change: A principal's role in leading school improvement through the District Career Development Plan


This is a research study. Please take your time in deciding if you would like to participate. Please feel free to ask questions at any time.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to discover and understand the behaviors and practices of a school principal in Iowa who demonstrates engagement in the District Career Development Plan. The overall aim in the study is to explore specific behaviors of this leader, as defined by the actions taken in a statewide school improvement model designed to positively impact teacher efficacy and student learning and achievement. Understanding the behaviors and practices of an educational leader in Iowa as a staff implements a systemic and research based model for improvement should provide relevant and significant information for stakeholders both inside and outside of the school.

You are being invited to participate in this study because of the staff’s implementation of the District Career Development Plan, a required component of the Iowa Teacher Quality Legislation for schools.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in this study, your participation will last for 3 months and will involve 3-5 interviews, surveys, observations and evaluations of the program. Each visit is expected to be between four and eight hours. During visits, there will be observations of you, as principal, having staff meetings, attending professional development meetings, observing classrooms and teachers. You will be asked to respond to questions about the District Career Development Plan, school improvement processes, and your experiences.

Audio recordings will be used during interviews and will be erased after the research is completed. While responding to survey questions, you may skip any question that you do not wish to answer or that makes you feel uncomfortable.
RISKS

While participating in this study you may experience some inconvenience or possible loss of anonymity. However, every attempt will be made to reduce or eliminate identifying individual participants. The researcher will indicate participants of the study by the use of pseudonyms. No other foreseeable risks are predicted at this time from participating in the study.

BENEFITS

If you decide to participate in this study there will be no direct benefit to you. It is hoped that the information gained in this study will benefit society and the area of education by providing additional information on leadership practices that impact teacher efficacy and school improvement.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION

You will have no costs from participating in this study. You will not be compensated for participating in this study.

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or leave the study at any time. If you decide to not participate in the study or leave the study early, it will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by applicable laws and regulations and will not be made publicly available. However, federal government regulatory agencies, e.g. the Iowa Department of Education, the Grant Wood Area Educational Agency, and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves human subject research studies) may inspect and/or copy your records for quality assurance and data analysis. These records may contain private information.

To ensure confidentiality to the extent permitted by law, the following measures will be taken: each subject will select a pseudonym and will be referred to this fictitious name throughout the study. Participants will have access to interview scripts and will be able to provide feedback to the researcher if so desired. All records and documents will be kept confidential in a locked filing cabinet. The records and documents from this study will be retained for one year following the completion of the research. If the results are published, your identity will remain confidential.
QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study.

• For further information about the study contact Pam Armstrong-Vogel at 515-238-4108, pdvogel@mchsi.com. If you have questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact Ginny Austin Eason, IRB Administrator, (515) 294-4566, austingr@iastate.edu, or Diane Ament, Director, Office of Research Assurances (515) 294-3115, dament@iastate.edu. Address: 1138 Pearson, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011.

**************************************************************************

SUBJECT SIGNATURE

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given the time to read the document and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You will receive a copy of the signed and dated written informed consent prior to your participation in the study.

Subject’s Name (printed) ______________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

(Subject’s Signature) (Date)

[ ]
INVESTIGATOR STATEMENT

I certify that the participant has been given adequate time to read and learn about the study and all of their questions have been answered. It is my opinion that the participant understands the purpose, risks, benefits and the procedures that will be followed in this study and has voluntarily agreed to participate.

__________________________________________________________________________  ___________________________________________________________________
(Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent)  (Date)
APPENDIX B. HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL

DATE:    March 9, 2006
TO:    Pamela Armstrong-Vogel
FROM:    Dianne Anderson, IRB Co-Chair
RE:    IRB ID # 06-060
STUDY REVIEW DATE:    March 8, 2006

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed the project, “Leading Change: A Principal’s role in leading school improvement through the District Career Development Plan” requirements of the human subject protections regulations as described in 45 CFR 46.101(b)(1). The applicable exemption category is provided below for your information. Please note that you must submit all research involving human participants for review by the IRB. Only the IRB may make the determination of exemption, even if you conduct a study in the future that is exactly like this study.

The IRB determination of exemption means that this project does not need to meet the requirements from the Department of Health and Human Service (DHHS) regulations for the protection of human subjects, unless required by the IRB. We do, however, urge you to protect the rights of your participants in the same ways that you would if your project was required to follow the regulations. This includes providing relevant information about the research to the participants.

Because your project is exempt, you do not need to submit an application for continuing review. However, you must carry out the research as proposed in the IRB application, including obtaining and documenting (signed) informed consent if you have stated in your application that you will do so or required by the IRB.

Any modification of this research must be submitted to the IRB on a Continuation and/or Modification form, prior to making any changes, to determine if the project still meets the Federal criteria for exemption. If it is determined that exemption is no longer warranted, then an IRB proposal will need to be submitted and approved before proceeding with data collection.

cc:    ELPS
       Barbara Licklider
       File

ORC 04-21-04
APPENDIX C. SCHOOL IDENTIFICATION PROTOCOL

Fall 2005

These questions were asked of AEA and DOE Professional Development and School Improvement personnel who work directly with schools involved in the Iowa Professional Development Model:

1) In your work with the schools, which schools stand out as those that are truly exhibiting implementation of the DCDP?
2) Explain what you know about the school district’s implementation of DCDP.
3) Is the school considered “case study” by the Iowa Department of Education?
4) To your knowledge, is the entire administrative team involved in the DCDP implementation?
5) Do you know of other personnel at your agency who could speak about this school or any other districts that should be considered?
APPENDIX D. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interviewee ___________________________  
Interview Date _________________________

Interview #1-Background and General Information

1. Tell me generally about this school.
2. Have you been a principal at other schools?
3. If so, how does being a principal in this school compare?
4. What are the issues/goals your school has been working on through the District Career Development Plan (DCDP)?
5. What particular responsibilities have you assumed in relationship to these goals?
6. Are there particular school activities you think would be important for me to attend to have a fuller understanding of the school’s work in this area (these areas)
7. Who in your school has assumed a particular leadership role in helping implement the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP) and DCDP?
8. What data did your school use to determine this focus area?
9. What processes were used to determine the focus area(s)?
10. How would you describe what you do as a principal? (Probe for thick descriptions of leadership tasks)
11. Have there been any changes in your focus on this issue or goal? If so, what led to these changes?
12. Are there any particular areas, individuals and grade levels you are targeting?
13. Are there individuals and/or organizations inside or outside of the school that are helping you with this task? If so, who are they?
14. How are they assisting? What is it they do?
15. Where and when does the work on this issue occur?
16. Are there particular things about the way this school is organized that help in this work? If so, what are these?
17. Are there particular things about the way this school is organized that inhibit progress in this work? If so, what are these?
18. Are there other factors you haven’t mentioned yet that influence the way you go about this work?
19. How effective have you been in those areas? Explain.
20. This is a project on principal leadership and how the District Career Development Plan is carried out. If there are lesson(s) or message(s) that we should take back from this study, what would that be?
21. What documents would you recommend be looked at in order to understand the DCDP and your involvement in it?
22. Tell me about the Building Leadership Team.
23. What are their responsibilities?
24. What is your role with this team?
25. How would you characterize the current culture of this school as a result of implementing the DCDP? Is this changed from times prior to the DCDP?
Subsequent Interview Sessions

1. Explain how your building analyzes student performance data (student reading, math, science, or other content area scores).
2. What is your role in analysis of the data?
3. How does your school building use data to determine what professional development activities will be?
4. What is your involvement in the process?
5. What is the area of focus for professional development this year? For next year?
6. What was your role in determining the area of focus?
7. Please explain how teachers work together to understand the student learning expectations as they relate to professional development in the building.
8. What is your role in collaboration?
9. Describe the process that was used in deciding the focus for professional development.
10. What was your involvement in the selection of the PD?
11. Does your school have a building PD plan? If so, describe the process that was used to develop this.
12. How is professional development designed?
13. Who has input into these decisions?
14. How are you involved in designing the building PD?
15. Are sufficient resources allocated to support in-depth training? Please explain more about this.
16. How has your building included teachers responsible for instruction in PD?
17. Does the current PD differ from previous PD? If so, how?
18. How is training for staff distributed throughout the year?
19. What was your role in these decisions or in the implementation?
20. How have collaborative teams been organized?
21. Does the building have ongoing support from AEA personnel? From other external personnel? What does this assistance consist of?
22. How would you characterize your working relationship with these personnel?
23. What is your role as a principal in these various aspects of professional development and follow-up training?
24. Explain any collaborative processes in your building. What is your role in these?
25. How are the teams formed?
26. How was the structure for use of collaboration time determined?
27. How are the teams held accountable?
28. What has your role been in determining collaboration processes?
29. Do you believe the staff has a clear vision of what students are to experience as a result of the DCDP? Why or why not?
30. How is implementation monitored?
31. As principal, how are you assured that implementation is in keeping with fidelity of the strategy?
32. How will you address the situation when implementation is lagging?
33. How are student achievement data shared? With whom?
35. Have any changes in the strategy or program resulted from analysis of student achievement data? If so, what are these?
36. What is your role in review and analysis of student data?
37. Do teachers provide students with information regarding their performance? How and how often?
38. Do teachers provide students with information regarding their performance measured by the district’s standards and benchmarks—beyond student report cards? If so, please explain more about how this is done.
39. How do teachers provide parents with information regarding student performance?
40. What is your role in communicating student progress? With students? With parents?
41. How are teacher implementation data collected?
42. How are these data shared?
43. Is this current method of providing feedback appropriate? Why or why not?
44. Explain how you observe instruction in classrooms.
45. How do you describe quality teaching?
46. What is your role in facilitating quality teaching in the classrooms?
47. Have any changes in the program occurred due to classroom observations? From implementation data? If so, how are teachers informed about any procedural changes?
48. What process is in place to determine if and how teachers may require assistance in their teaching?
49. What is your role in this?
51. Are school resources (time, personnel, money) shifted according to perceived or actual teacher learning needs? If so, how?
52. Are school resources (time, personnel, money) shifted according to student learning needs? If so, how?
53. Has student achievement been impacted by the strategy or program? If yes, how?
54. What data is this judgment based upon?
55. Please describe the school’s plan for evaluating the strategy or program. What data will be collected (any pre/post tests, etc.) to determine if the planned change is having the intended effect?
56. What is your role in evaluation of programs?
57. How will student data be combined with teacher (implementation) data to determine if changes in student achievement varied due to implementation?
58. How will the evaluation data be used to plan the next cycle of school improvement (the DCDP)?
APPENDIX E. CORRESPONDENCE

Subject: Visit to _________
Date: Monday, April 3, 2006 9:49 AM
From: parmstrong <parmstrong@woodward-granger.k12.ia.us>
To: ______________________

Hi,______,

First of all, I understand congratulations are in order! ______ shared with me that you had a new baby. That is wonderful-- and I am sure you are very busy now, trying to balance school and home.

I wanted to update you on where I am right now with the dissertation study. The first thing that I need to get done is to have the Capstone (Prelims) approved and then I present the dissertation study proposal to the committee at a second meeting. I had hoped to have both committee meetings done by mid-April, at the latest, so that I could at least get a couple of visits to ______ in before May 15. However, I have not been able to find a time yet when all five committee members can meet for the Capstone, so it looks like I may not get my dissertation proposal meeting in before the first of May.

If this is the case, I am still hoping to have the opportunity to come to ______ a few times in May and/or June to do a couple of observations and/or interviews. Does your staff have any professional development days scheduled for May? If not, maybe you and I could still do some interviews in May or June. Once I know when the proposal meeting is planned so I can begin the study, I will phone you and see what we can set up.

Also, I have a new position beginning July 1. I will be the Coordinator of Leadership Development at Heartland AEA 11 and will be working with the McREL folks with the Balanced Leadership Principal Academy for the first year. The Academy will be in place for three years, at the same time, after year 1, my hope is that we will be offering some additional PD for superintendents, Boards of Education and teacher leadership teams, centering around the research on instructional leadership.

Please call me or email if you want to talk further about the timelines for the study. What this will mean is that I will need to visit several more times (days) in the fall at_______, since I do want to visit you and the school when students and teachers are present, as well.

I hope your spring is going well. Enjoy that new baby. Please let me know if the changed plans are conducive to you and your schedule.

Pam

Pam Armstrong-Vogel
Director of Curriculum/Instruction & Special Programs
Woodward-Granger Community School District
306 West Third Street
Woodward, Iowa 50276
515-438-4333
REFERENCES


Iowa Administrative Code 281—83.6(284). Teacher Quality Program (2007).


