Impact of high-school reform initiatives using the Pygmalion effect

Kimberly K. Buryanek
Iowa State University

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Impact of high-school reform initiatives using the Pygmalion effect

by

Kimberly K. Buryanek

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:
Scott C. McLeod, Major Professor
Michael D. Book
Robyn M. Cooper
James R. Scharff
Jan M. Westerman-Beatty

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
2010
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ABSTRACT

In 2006, a 9<sup>th</sup>-period program and an A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy were implemented as high school reform initiatives in a rural high school in the Midwest. The purpose of this qualitative research study was to determine how teachers interpreted the effect of the A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy and the 9<sup>th</sup> period reform initiatives at the school where the reform initiatives were implemented. Understanding the effects of the reform initiatives from the teachers’ perspectives should help others develop and implement similar reform initiatives.

This study was guided by high school reform research and Pygmalion effect motivation theory. The process that was used within the school to implement the reform initiatives was participatory action research. Data were collected through interviews of teachers who were employed at the high school before and during the implementation of the reform initiatives. Other data collected included observations and document review.

Based on the interviews with the teachers, observations, and document review, it was determined that the A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy and 9<sup>th</sup> period reform initiatives did have an impact on student achievement and engagement. The five themes that evolved through a coding process were that the reform initiatives had an impact on student success, teacher expectations, and they changed teaching, student behavior, and improved relationships.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

If an educator could make a positive difference in a student’s life, she would probably consider herself a success. Teachers throughout the country work daily to improve the quality of education for students. One high school in Northwest Iowa has spent over five years examining and developing practices in an effort to increase student achievement. This research took a close look at how the teachers in this high school feel about the impact they have had on student achievement and student engagement.

In 2004, New Horizons High School made a commitment to expand the impact that individual teachers had on individual students. The staff made a commitment to work as one body and implement reform initiatives that would have a positive impact on almost every student in the high school.

The school began by engaging in the study of high school reform. Staff members attended a High School Summit sponsored by the Iowa Department of Education as well as a number of workshops sponsored by the local Area Education Agency. These training sessions presented key theories of high school reform and successful practices of schools that had enacted high school reform initiatives. The outcome forged the determination of the high school staff to make a lasting impact on the students. A building leadership team was assembled that included teachers who had many years of experience as well as those who were novices. Staff members on the team represented a wide range of content areas including administrators, at-risk personnel, a guidance counselor, as well as vocational, middle school, social studies, math, English, and science teachers. After examining reform
theories and data from the school, it was decided by the building leadership team that an A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy and a 9th period should be implemented.

The data that drove the decision to implement an A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy and 9th period initiatives focused on the 2005-2006 school year, wherein 253 Ds and Fs were earned by high school students during the first semester of the school year. In addition, 122 Ds and Fs were earned by middle-school students during this same time period. Upon examining the data further, it was realized that 43% of the high school students had received a D or an F or an incomplete grade during the first semester of the 2005-2006 school year. Seventy-three of these 97 students had Ds, Fs, or incompletes in more than one class. Finally, 87% of the students who had Ds, Fs, or incompletes had missing work in the class.

The leadership team spent a year studying, planning, developing, and reflecting upon these initiatives using a participatory action process. Multiple meetings were held with the leadership team to develop the plan of action. During the meetings, arguments erupted, previous decisions were reshaped, and team members left, at times thinking that what was being attempted would never materialize. Two of the key issues that the leadership team struggled with were busing and extracurricular participation. The team came together again and again to work through existing issues, finally creating a plan that everyone was willing to try. Even though there were frequent, heated arguments that involved discussions of teaching philosophy and belief systems, the team members did not take the words that were spoken personally and were able to maintain professionalism because they knew they were all working toward a common goal—to improve the quality of education for students at New Horizons High School. As the leadership team developed components of the plan, they shared their discussions and sought input from the entire middle school and high school
teaching staff during inservice days. The leadership team involved the entire middle school and high school teaching staff in this process.

The described reform initiatives now are in their fifth year of implementation. The first year of implementation was during the 2006-2007 school year. The results of the initiatives can be seen in a significant reduction of low grades for middle school and high school students. There has been an 83% decrease in grades below a C- during the first semester of the school year for high school students from the 2005-2006 school year to the 2008-2009 school year. There has been an 89% decrease in grades below a C- during the first semester of the school year for middle school students from the 2005-2006 school year to the 2008-2009 school year. The results are shown in Figure 1.1.

The students of the graduating class of 2009 were freshmen during the 2005-2006 school year when the baseline was established. They had fewer grades below a C- each year of the implementation of the A, B, C, Incomplete and 9th period initiatives. During the first semester of their freshman year, there were 70 grades below a C-. As sophomores, there were 21 grades below a C-. As juniors, there were 13 grades below a C- and during the first semester of their senior year, there were 2 grades below a C-.

During the 2006-2007 school year, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and Iowa Tests of Educational Development (ITED) revealed improved scores from the previous year, when comparing students in the 8th and 11th grades. Since the implementation of the A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy and 9th period initiatives, the ITED reading comprehension scores for 11th grade have increased each of the three years. The ITED math scores for 11th grade students increased the first year, but declined the next two years. The ITED science scores increased the first two years and declined the third year. The science scores did not decline
Figure 1.1. Results of 9th Period Reform Initiative
Figure 1.1. (Continued).
below the ITED science scores from 2005-2006. The graduating class of 2009 had the highest ACT scores in the past five years. Different students are compared each year with the 11th grade ITED scores and the ACT scores.

The graduating class of 2009 has shown gains on standardized tests. As 8th graders, they were administered the ITBS. On the reading comprehension portion of the test, 64.1% of the students were proficient. As juniors, the students were administered the ITED. On the reading comprehension portion of the test, 80.8% of the students were proficient. As 8th graders, 62.2% of the students were proficient on the math ITBS test. As juniors, 75% of the students were proficient on the math ITED test. On the science portion of the ITBS test, as 8th graders, 77.3% of the students were proficient. As juniors, 86.6% of the students were proficient on the science portion of the ITED.

Other results of the reform initiatives were revealed by the responses to anonymous surveys that were administered to students and parents. In February 2007, the middle school and high school students were given a survey. At that point in time, 77% of the students had been assigned to 9th period. Many students (47%) reported that they felt their grades were higher than the previous year’s grades. Only 20% of the students reported that their grades were lower and 30% reported that their grades had not changed. When asked if they felt they were working harder than the previous year, 75% reported that they were. When students were asked if they thought 9th period should continue at New Horizons, 52% of the students responding said they thought 9th period should be kept, 41% said that 9th period should not be kept and 7% said they didn’t care.

In October, 2006, shortly after the implementation of the reform initiatives, parents who attended parent-teacher conferences were given a survey to complete. Only sixteen
parents completed and returned the survey. Of the parents who did return the survey, nine reported that they noticed an improved effort toward completing schoolwork from their child this year; four reported that there was no change in effort, and three felt there was a slight improvement or it was too soon to tell. On the same survey, eight parents reported that they had noticed an improvement in their child’s grades; five parents had reported that they had not noticed an improvement in their child’s grades, and three parents felt there was a slight improvement or it was too soon to tell.

When examining the implementation of the reform initiatives, it is not only important to understand what was done, but also to understand how it was done. The process that was used followed a participatory action research model. Participatory Action Research, commonly referred to as PAR, is a newer form of research that is being used in a number of fields and disciplines.

There are a number of definitions for PAR. Some of the common elements of the definition are that it is socially constructed and that it brings about change. Three definitions of PAR are provided as examples of the common elements contained in the definition. The first definition for PAR is provided by Wadsworth (1998):

Research which involves all relevant parties in actively examining together current action (which they experience as problematic) in order to change and improve it. They do this by critically reflecting on the historical, political, cultural, economic, and geographic and other contexts which make sense of it. (p. 14)

The second definition is by Mueller (2006) who defined PAR as a “community based approach to research in which the voices of the participants become central to the entire research and their initiatives guide the process of change” (p. 435).

The final definition is from Kemmis and McTaggart (2006), who defined PAR as:
A social process of collaborative learning realized by groups of people who join together in changing the practices through which they interact in a shared social world in which, for better or worse, we live with the consequences of one another’s actions. (p. 563)

Another important element to PAR is that it connects academia to the real world and creates solutions for real world problems. According to Kekale and Pirtila (2006), PAR has a “double objective: it seeks to both produce academic knowledge and action directly useful to people and organizations” (p. 252). Kurt Lewin (1946, as cited in Nagda, Tropp & Paluck, 2006) saw action research as “incorporating the scientific study of social problems, the thoughtful development of solutions to those problems, and the generation of new knowledge from the practice” (p. 440).

Three key factors form the basis of PAR: research, education, and action (Gardner, 2004). It differs from traditional research by including education and action. The data collected are used to educate those affected by them and are used to encourage them to action. Paulo Freire (1970) had a similar opinion about the combination of knowledge and action within the PAR process. Freire believed that one needed to critically analyze reality without separating this step from action, instead making it part of the process. The leaders and the people involved create guidelines for action. He termed this as “cultural synthesis.” “Cultural synthesis serves the ends of organization; organization serves the ends of liberation” (p. 164).

When PAR is carried out effectively, changes in what people do, how people interact with the world and others, what people mean and what they value, and how people understand and interpret their world should change (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). These changes can be brought about through self-reflection. Atiti (2004) explained the PAR
process as “a spiral of self-reflective cycles of planning, acting on the plans, reflecting on the results and then re-planning” (p. 372).

The methods of PAR are conducted with people not on people (Savin-Baden and Wimpenny, 2007). As Freire (1985) said, “The social worker who opts for change strives to unveil reality. She or he works with, never on, people whom she or he considers subjects, not objects or incidences, of action” (p. 40). Kurt Lewin (1945, as cited in Cherry & Borshuk, 1998) felt that ordinary citizens at the neighborhood level needed to be trained to become a cadre of community experts. PAR should be “developed in collaboration with local expert knowledge and the voices of the ‘knowers’” (Savin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2007, p. 333). Participants must be involved in the research process and the process should be collaborative. Freire (1970) believed that revolutionary leaders need to work with the oppressed to construct their liberating action.

The PAR process involves some of the people within the organization that is being studied in the research, beginning with the initial design of the process to the final presentation and discussion of results and action implications (Whyte, 1991). It is important to involve all of the stakeholders from the beginning of the development of the innovation to help ensure its relevance for all that will be involved (Riley-Tillman, Chaouleas, Eckert, & Kelleher, 2005). The researcher needs to understand why it is important to include the stakeholders in the research process. Fine et al. (2004) explained that the research process needs to “take profound insights about respect for local custom and practices, not as an obstacle to research, but as a site for possible learning, shared engagement, and long-term social change” (p. 99).
After the participatory group has been assembled, volunteer leaders will split up and study various situations pertaining to the problem that have been identified by the group (Freire, 1970). Then they will come together and discuss or re-consider. They will “reintegrate the whole” (Freire, p. 93) to understand it fully. The philosophy involving various stakeholders is that “action based on these observations would be much more likely to succeed than that based on decisions from the top” (p. 93). There needs to be reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed. Cultural action requires stakeholders to investigate and generate themes, engage in critical self-reflection and self-appraisal, revise previous views of the world, and then come to an understanding of their previous knowledge. When stakeholders are involved in the process, they then will be involved with the real world in transformation (Freire, 1985).

The PAR process itself involves cycles of reflection on action, learning about action, and then developing new action that is the subject of further reflection (Wadsworth, 1998). This process, again, must include the participants. Freire (1985) explained, “The act of knowing involves a dialectical movement that goes from action to reflection and from reflection upon action to a new action” (p. 50).

O’Brien (2001) explained the steps of the PAR process by using a figure developed by Stephen Kemmis (Figure 1.2). The steps of the process include the planning phase, action phase, observation phase, and reflection phase. This cycle continues.
Figure 1.2. Simple Action Research model

Atiti (2004) explained the process as a “spiral of self-reflective cycles of planning, acting on plans, reflecting on the results, and then re-planning” (p. 372). Regular opportunities for reflection should be provided (Atiti). Reflection can be in the form of questionnaires, discussions, or journals.

The beginning of a PAR project may be difficult to pinpoint. It could begin with an informal discussion among colleagues and materialize into a formal plan. It will begin, however, with a group sharing a common concern. Wadsworth (1998) elaborated further by explaining that in the reflection and planning, the group wants to change and improve upon
the common concern. Wadsworth also believed that change happens throughout the process, not just at the end. The stages of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting may overlap and the process will probably be more fluid, open, and responsive (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005).

PAR is a creative process or “the moving to new and improved action involves a creative ‘moment’ of transformation” (Wadsworth, 1998, p. 7). The researchers take an “imaginative leap from a world of ‘as it is’ to a glimpse of a world ‘as it could be’” (p. 7). Freire (1970) made a similar statement, offering that creativity tends to develop the stages of action.

**Process of Change**

The leadership team at New Horizons High School practiced PAR as they developed the reform initiatives. They continue to use PAR as they revise the current initiatives and make additional educational improvements. They realized that change is difficult for people. The leadership team studied and implemented John Kotter’s (2005) eight-step process to use to implement a successful change.

The first step is to create a sense of urgency (Kotter, 2005). Some questions that leaders may battle with to determine the focus for change could be: Why do you need to make changes in the school? Is the drop out rate too high? Is absenteeism too high? Are math scores too low? The need for change needs to be clearly identified. Identification is done by collecting and analyzing data (Kotter). The leadership team started to develop the reform initiatives by identifying the major problem that needed to be addressed at New Horizons Middle School/High School. The major problem that created the sense of urgency
was the realization that over 40% of the high school students earned a D, F, or incomplete grade during the first semester.

The second step in the change process, according to Kotter (2005), is to assemble a guiding team or a leadership team. A leadership team was assembled at New Horizons that met frequently after school hours to discuss the data and problems, theories and ideas and possible solutions to the problems. The building level leadership team was critical in the development and implementation of the process. They were committed and engaged in the study and development of the initiatives in an effort to improve student achievement. This reform initiative was too large for one individual to undertake.

Developing the change vision and strategy is the third step of the change process (Kotter, 2005). The leadership team should get on the balcony and dream as they design the vision statement. Guiding questions for this process could be: Why do we need to develop a reform initiative? How will the initiative change the life of students? The strategy of implementing a reform initiative needs to align with the vision of what the future school should resemble. The leadership team created a shared vision. The vision was that all students would graduate from New Horizons having learned that hard work is necessary to be successful, that 60% effort is not good enough, and that education is important. The team was committed to providing support for students to ensure their success. High expectations were held for all students at New Horizons.

The fourth step of the change process is to communicate for understanding and buy-in (Kotter, 2005). The leadership team needs to take an active role to help accomplish this step. Staff, students, and the community need to understand and accept the vision and the strategy before the initiative is implemented. The School Board of Education needs to know about
the initiative and be kept informed of the progress (Dayton, 2001). As community members raise questions about the direction the school is heading, the school board needs to be armed with accurate and timely information. If the school board members possess accurate knowledge, they will be more supportive of the changes and the direction the school is heading and respond to concerns as they arise (Dayton, 2001). The fourth step that the leadership team took was to develop the A, B, C, Incomplete process. After that, the team developed the 9th period process. The leadership team framed the concept of the A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy and 9th period initiatives. When the initiatives were presented to students, parents, and the community, it was explained that the school day would be from 8:10am to 3:48pm Monday through Thursday. On Friday, the school day would be from 8:10am to 3:15pm. Students who had grades at a C or above and all assignments had been handed in were able to leave early each day. Their school day would be from 8:10am to 3:15pm. The plans were presented to the teaching staff, and the leadership team members sat with teachers at tables to complete activities and engage in discussions during inservice days. One activity early in the development process of the initiatives was utilization of a SWOT process (Kaufman, 1995). Staff members identified the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of/or to the initiatives. The leadership team then worked hard to alleviate the weaknesses and threats that were identified while capitalizing on the strengths and opportunities. Revisions were made to the implementation plan as discussions continued. Meetings were held with the staff, school board, community, and students to inform the various stakeholders of the initiatives and seek their input.

Kotter (2005) explained the fifth step of the change process, which is to empower others to act. Barriers need to be removed as others work to make the vision a reality. The
leadership team was instrumental in involving the staff in discussions and designing the reform initiatives.

During the change process, the next step is to produce short-term wins (Kotter, 2005). It will be important to create obvious, visible successes as soon as possible. This reduces the negative attacks from people opposed to the change. At New Horizons, newspaper articles, newsletters home to parents, and articles on the school website were all avenues used to share the information regarding short-term wins. It was beneficial to base the short-term wins on data results. It is hard to argue with data.

The seventh step of the change process is not to let up (Kotter, 2005). When the commitment to institute a reform initiative has been made, the leadership team needs to “be relentless with initiating change after change until the vision is a reality” (p. 131). Change is difficult for people. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) studied leadership and the effects of change. They explained that there are two types of change: First-order change and second-order change. First-order change is incremental. It is the next obvious step to take. Second-order change is a dramatic departure from the norm or what is expected. Second-order change is a radical departure from the past. Developing a reform initiative will be a second-order change. According to Marzano et al., there are four things that will happen when initiating a second-order change. There will be perceptions that:

- The culture at the school is deteriorating.
- Communication has deteriorated because of the change.
- Order and routine has deteriorated because of implementing a reform initiative. The way of doing things will change. The school will not look the same and it will appear disorderly.
The level of input from all members of the staff has deteriorated because of the reform initiative.

It will be very difficult for the school leader and the leadership team to live through the frustration and sometimes anger of the staff members due to the implementation of a second-order change. There are two things a school leader can do when dealing with those that hold these perceptions (Marzano et al., 2005). The first approach is to ride out the storm. The four perceptions to the second-order change are inevitable. Rather than try to ensure that all staff members are happy about the change, a school leader can spend the energy focusing on the steps to ensure that the change is successful. The second option for a school leader to take is to get assistance from the leadership team. They can work with staff, parents, and community members to alleviate the four perceptions that will arise with the second-order change. Specific steps the leadership team can take are:

- **Culture**: Remind colleagues of the vision for the reform initiative and why it is important. Create time for the staff to discuss the change and its implications and/or SWOTs.
- **Communication**: Probe for questions and concerns from colleagues and bring them to the leadership team for discussion and resolution. Emphasize the fact that things will get better as the reform initiative becomes better defined and institutionalized.
- **Order**: Design effective decision making procedures, problem solving tools, and conflict resolution tools. Take an active role in creating and implementing operational procedures.
- **Input**: Actively seek input from staff. Explicitly communicate the ways in which input informs decisions. (Marzano et al., 2005)
The final step of the change process is to create a new culture (Kotter, 2005). The school must hold on to the new ways of operating until they are strong enough to replace the old traditions. During the first year of implementation, the leadership team continued to meet and discuss the problems and successes of the initiatives. Revisions were frequently made in an effort to improve the process. Discussions were facilitated by the leadership team members at inservice meetings and during less formal meeting times to obtain the teachers’ feelings about the successes and problems associated with the reform initiatives. Feedback from the discussions was brought back to the leadership team meetings and modifications were implemented. The leadership team continued to meet, discuss, reflect, and revise the reform initiatives during the 2007-2008, 2008-2009, and current school years. The adjustments made to the processes were less frequent. Several members of the leadership team changed due to retirement of staff members and staff mobility. New members were added to the leadership team during this time.

*Breaking Ranks II* (2004) outlined a similar process for implementing change, but there are only four steps. The steps to implement change are:

1. Establish the action planning team
2. Use data to identify opportunities for improvement
3. Assess conditions for change and develop the action plan
4. Report the results. (p. 22)

All four of these steps were used, as discussed previously, when the reform initiatives were implemented at New Horizons.
Problem

Many believe that there is a crisis in U.S. high schools (Steinberg & Almeida, 2008; Wise, 2008). More than 1.2 million high school students drop out of U.S. high schools each year. The dropout rate from high school is at least 15% and in urban high schools this number is triple that rate or greater (Crawford & Dougherty, 2003).

High schools are being held more accountable for student achievement. Several high schools have improved the success of students, reduced drop out rates, and increased student achievement (Wise, 2008). Studies that explain the specific steps that were used to implement reform initiatives that increased student achievement and student engagement are helpful to educators who are interested in improving the quality of education for their students.

Studies have shown that students will perform at a higher level if teachers hold high expectations for student achievement (Guskey, 1982). The high school reform initiatives at New Horizons High School have attempted to raise expectations for student achievement through the A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy and the 9th period initiatives. Students are given extra support to achieve success.

The PAR process is a continual cycle involving a planning phase, action phase, observation phase, and reflection phase (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). The current research study will involve the reflection phase of the PAR process. The data elicited from this study will be used in the future planning phase of the cycle. This research study will focus on the manner in which teachers interpret the effects that the reform initiatives have on student achievement and student engagement. The teachers’ perceptions of the impact of the reform initiatives will be examined utilizing qualitative research methods.
Purpose

The purpose of this basic interpretive research study will be to determine how teachers interpret the effect the A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy and the 9th period reform initiatives have had at New Horizons High School.

Research Questions

The primary research questions that guided this study were:

1. How do teachers interpret the effects, if any, of the 9th period reform initiative on student achievement?
2. How do teachers interpret the effects, if any, of the 9th period reform initiative on student engagement?
3. How do teachers interpret the effects, if any, of the A, B, C, Incomplete reform initiative on student achievement?
4. How do teachers interpret the effects, if any, of the A, B, C, Incomplete reform initiative on student engagement?
5. Have teacher expectations for student achievement increased?

Theoretical Framework

The first exposure that many members of the leadership team had to the concept of high school reform was when they attended the High School Summit in Des Moines and listened to Willard Daggett and others from the International Center for Leadership in Education (ICLE). The concept that rigor, relevance, and relationships are the keys to high school reform and improved student achievement are the cornerstones of the work of the
ICLE. Great schools have established strong relationships with students, have developed a relevant curriculum, and have rigorous instruction (McNulty, 2006).

The leadership team at New Horizons were implementing the PAR process as they developed and revised the reform initiatives. They also involved other staff members in the process. The PAR process continues to be used at New Horizons, as the leadership team strives to perfect, if possible, the reform initiatives.

The theoretical framework behind the reform initiatives is the Pygmalion effect, or self-fulfilling prophecy. This motivation theory, which is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2, is based on the belief that if teachers raise expectations for student performance, then student performance will increase.

The foundation for this research will be the high school reform models studied as the high school reform was embarked upon at New Horizons. The foundation for the process used to implement the reform initiatives is participatory action research (PAR). The theoretical framework behind the reform initiatives is the Pygmalion effect or self-fulfilling prophecy.

**Significance of the Study**

This study is potentially significant in that it is timely. Nationally, much emphasis is currently being placed on improving high schools. This study will add to the research in an attempt to improve the quality of education by shedding light on the effects of two specific reform initiatives.

The process used to implement the reform initiatives are explained as well as a thorough examination is made of the teachers’ perceptions of how reform initiatives
impacted student achievement and student engagement. This information may be useful to educators who are interested in implementing the same or similar reform initiatives.

The information obtained from this study will be used by the leadership team at New Horizons to continue to improve the quality of education at the high school through the PAR process. The PAR process is a continual cycle. The information obtained will be part of the reflective phase of the cycle and used to revise the reform initiatives.

**Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine if teachers have raised expectations for student achievement and how teachers interpreted the effect that the A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy and the 9th period reform initiatives had had on student achievement and student engagement. Throughout this research, attempts were made to determine if there have been other effects of the reform initiatives, in addition to the effects on student achievement and student engagement. The underlying principles that were used to develop a basis for interpretation of the study were high school reform models, participatory action research theory and Pygmalion effect motivation theory. All of these worked together to develop the basis of the study—the development of the reform initiatives and the teachers’ interpretation of the impact on student achievement and student engagement.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the literature pertaining to the study, including relevant literature related to high school reform models and the Pygmalion effect. The literature review situates the research to reveal how high school reform models based on the Pygmalion effect have affected the reform initiatives at New Horizons High School. The
Chapter is organized into two sections: (a) an overview of high school reform models, and (b) an explanation of the Pygmalion effect.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology and methods that underpin this study. More specifically, the chapter discusses the epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods used in the study. In addition, a description of method for the data analysis is presented, as well as a discussion of goodness and trustworthiness.

Chapter 4 describes the participants of the study, the data collected from the interviews, and the data analysis. Themes emerging from the data analysis process are also presented and discussed.

Chapter 5 discusses the meaning of the results of the study and their implications for practitioners. The delimitations and limitations of the study are discussed and suggestions for the continuation of the current participatory action research are provided.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter situates the study by addressing the selected literature related to the implementation of the reform initiatives. The literature review reveals how high school reform models and motivation theory guided the reform initiatives at New Horizons High School.

This chapter is organized into two sections: (a) an overview of high school reform models, and (b) a discussion of the Pygmalion effect. Both components contributed to the development of the reform initiatives that were implemented at New Horizons High School.

Background


High school lays the foundation for what Americans become, and what Americans become shapes the high school that serves succeeding generations. Now, buffeted by powerful and unsettling winds, both the high school and the country are searching for stability and renewal. As a pivotal institution in the lives of young people, the high school can serve as a linchpin in efforts to improve the American condition, touching the lives of almost every teenager and, consequently, contributing to the betterment of the country. (p. 3)

Although this statement was written nearly 15 years ago, the words still ring true, and the sense of urgency to change not only high schools but also the condition of the country has risen to a high level. It is imperative that American high schools change in order to ensure that every student is successful because “the country is diminished to the extent that any high school fails to provide all that it might for every student” (National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), 1996, p. 5). Nevertheless, there are schools in the nation that
have successfully altered how they do business to ensure all students graduate prepared for life (Wise, 2008).

Many believe there is a crisis in U.S. high schools (Steinberg & Almeida, 2008; Wise, 2008). More than 1.2 million high school students drop out of U.S. high schools each year. The dropout rate from high school is at least 15%, and in urban high schools this number is tripled or greater (Crawford & Dougherty, 2003). The fastest growing segment of the youth population is low-income, African-American, and Hispanic, and only 65% of youth from the lower socioeconomic status earn a high school diploma as compared to 91% of youth from middle and upper socioeconomic status (Steinberg & Almeida, 2008). Less than 30% of freshmen can read at grade level. Forty-two percent of freshmen in community colleges, and 20% of freshmen in four-year institutions require remedial courses in reading, writing, or math to handle college-level work (Wise, 2008). One out of two students from middle- and upper-class families earn a college degree, but only one in ten students from the lowest socioeconomic group will earn a college degree (Steinberg & Almeida, 2008). Employers express dissatisfaction with the skills of high school graduates (Wise, 2008).

The consequences of this crisis are severe, not only for dropouts themselves, but also for society. In 2005, a high school dropout earned an average of $10,000 less annually than a high school graduate (Wise, 2008). Over the course of a lifetime, an individual without a high school diploma earned approximately $260,000 less than an individual who graduated from high school (Wise). High school dropouts also are less likely to be taxpayers. Instead, they become tax consumers, users of welfare and public health services, and commit crimes (Steinberg & Almeida, 2008; Wise). It is estimated that each high school dropout costs society about $209,000 over the course of his or her lifetime (Wise). In their groundbreaking
report, *Breaking ranks: Changing an American institution*, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (1996) reflected the same concerns by stating, “A young person who grows into adulthood unequipped to reach his or her full potential will possess neither the knowledge nor the will to contribute to making this a better society” (p. 4).

There is a need for high schools to change in order to prevent dropouts because “the country is diminished to the extent that any high school fails to provide all that it might for every student” (NASSP, 1996, p. 5). There are schools in the nation that have successfully altered how they do business to ensure all students graduate prepared for life (Wise, 2008). Models of high school reform that have evolved from the study of the successful high schools will provide valuable information to frame the current study.

As the push for improvement in schools has increased, so has the workload for school leaders and teachers (Elmore, 2004; Harris, 2007). The traditional model of one leader in a school is eroding because the demands upon the one individual are too great. Schools are restructuring leadership responsibilities and greater emphasis is being placed on teachers as leaders (Harris, 2007).

**Development of High School Reform Models**

Although it has received a lot of recent attention, high school reform is not a new concept. One of the earlier high school reform initiatives was the development of the career academy in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1969 (Stern, 2001). According to Lynch (2003), career academies “…are designed to ensure that their graduates are academically and technically proficient, have marketable job skills, and are academically prepared to enroll in postsecondary education” (p. 37). Three basic features generally define career academies: (a)
they are small learning communities; (b) they combine a college preparatory curriculum with a career theme; and (c) they form employer partnerships (Stern, 2001).

Career academies are designed to naturally create a small learning community (Lynch, 2003). Students are clustered together according to career tracks, and share many of the same classes and teachers from year to year. Small learning communities foster stronger relationships for students, which, according to McNulty (2006) and Daggett (2006), is important when improving schools and making them great schools. This component of career academies makes learning relevant for students. Student beliefs in the relevance of learning is important when improving schools and making them great (Elmore 2004; Daggett, 2006; Lezotte & McKee, 2006; McNulty, 2006).

Chen y and Tidyman (2001) explained that career academies help to create more supportive and personalized learning environments, improve attendance and retention, and increase graduation rates and access to postsecondary education. Quint (2006) found that career academies:

- Improved students’ average level of school engagement.
- Increased the likelihood of staying in school for at-risk students, improved attendance, and increased the number of credits earned toward graduation.
- Increased vocational course taking without reducing the likelihood of completing a core academic curriculum for students least likely to drop out.
- Had no effect on standardized math and reading scores.
- Did not effect high school graduation rates or rates of college enrollment.
- Increased the earnings of young men by 18% in a four-year period following their scheduled date for graduation from high school.
These positive labor market impacts were concentrated among students that were at high or medium risk of dropping out. The low risk students were probably more focused on college and other types of postsecondary education.

According to Quint, the last two findings “…provide strong evidence that investments in career-related experiences during high school can enhance the labor market prospects of otherwise at-risk youth during the postsecondary years” (p. 15).

The growth of career academies has been steady, but gradual. In the 1990s, growth in the number of academies accelerated (Stern, Dayton & Raby, 2000). Although high school reform has been a topic of discussion for many years, it has become a more popular topic of discussion since the 1990s (Lezotte & McKee, 2006) when the accountability and standards movement began. Elmore (2004) explained that “…standards-based reform is school-site accountability for common measures of student performance” (p. 53).

Two events were key in creating a sense of urgency regarding high school reform. First, the accountability and standards movement gained momentum when IBM hosted a meeting in the 1990s for all the US governors (Lezotte & McKee, 2006). At the conclusion of the meeting, virtually every governor pledged to raise curricular standards in their state (Lezotte & McKee). Second, the epiphany for the accountability and standards movements was when President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act into federal law in 2002 (Lezotte & McKee).

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act is an effort to ensure that all children are educated to their fullest potential. NCLB is based on four principles:

- accountability for student achievement of academic standards;
- increased flexibility and local control;
• a greater role for parents in their children’s education programs; and
• greater emphasis on use of scientifically based instruction. (Educational Research Service, 2003, p. 1)

The NCLB mandates that the educational performance of all students be increased. Provisions for this mandate include setting higher educational standards, annual testing to assess achievement, annual analysis of test data, and rewards and penalties for schools that don’t make appropriate gains or Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) (Educational Research Service, 2003).

Another factor that has influenced the increased attention on high school reform is the recent changes that have occurred in society. Friedman (2005) described the factors that have flattened the world, changed society, and caused new ways and methods of collaboration. A flattened world is one in which the global competitive playing field has been leveled (Friedman). Some of the factors that have caused the world to be flattened are: the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the launching of Netscape, and the increase of outsourcing of jobs (Friedman). In a flat world, people need to constantly upgrade their skills and be adaptable or they will not be able to have a good paying job in the future (Friedman). The U.S. needs to emphasize and educate more students in science and engineering, needs to instill a sense of pride and urgency in students to be the best, and there needs to be leadership in science and engineering educational fields (Friedman). Friedman explained his view of the role that education should assume.

Because it takes fifteen years to create a scientist or advanced engineer, starting from when that young man or woman first gets hooked on science and math in elementary school, we should be embarking on an all-hands-on-deck, no-holds-barred, no-budget-too-large crash program for science and engineering education immediately. (p. 275)
Daggett and his associates from the International Center for Leadership in Education (ICLE) had a similar message to Friedman’s at the 2007 Model School Conference in Washington, DC. In the keynote address, Daggett (2007) emphasized the need for students to be educated in a different school than the schools of the 1950s. Society has undergone significant changes (Daggett), and students need to be prepared to adapt and function in the ever-changing society; we need to create a culture that adapts to and supports change. Daggett (2006) also stated:

The skills individuals need for success in the 21st century are vastly different from those needed in the past. Our education system must evolve in order to prepare students for the changing world in which they will live and work. (p. 234)

Lezotte and McKee (2006) expressed a similar view as Daggett regarding how high schools need to change and why they need to change. According to Lezotte and McKee (2006), it is vital that new knowledge, new learning systems, and new educator behaviors are needed to change our schools to help students master a high-standards curriculum. They also believed the curriculum needs to be changed to make it more rigorous and relevant for the current world in which we live.

Daggett (2006) revealed four mega-trends have changed society at the family, workplace, and community levels: new and emerging technologies, globalization, changing demographics, and new generations in our classrooms. Lezotte and McKee (2006) ascertained that the push for the change in schools is driven by the change in the demographics in our societies and the global technological revolution.

Globalization is a recent change in society, which was addressed not only by Daggett (2006, 2007) but also by the NASSP. High school reform is necessary because “…a global
economy leaves few places for Americans without adequate skills because the world is filled with those who will labor for wages for which few in this country could afford to work” (NASSP, 1996, p. 3). This report from NASSP was developed to guide high school reform because the American high school is viewed “as an anvil upon which the nation forges its strength” (p. 4). To strengthen our country and prepare our young people to seize the future, high schools need to change.

There are several reasons to reform high schools, and there are many different high school reform models. Although there are many different models for high school reform, each model has its own language (Lezotte & McKee, 2006). Lezotte and McKee focused on three primary models: effective schools research, total quality management theory, and systems theory.

**Effective schools research**

Effective Schools Research began after the publication of a controversial paper known as the Coleman Report after the author James Coleman. The report claimed that public schools didn't make a significant difference in the success of students at school. Family background was cited as the main reason for student success in school. Ronald Edmonds and others worked to show that there were schools that educated low income students and were highly successful, proving that schools can make a difference (“Effective Schools Research”, n.d.).

Research has indicated that effective schools share certain characteristics (Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte & McKee, 2006). There are seven correlates of effective schools. The first characteristic of an effective school is it has a strong instructional leader (Edmonds, 1979;
Lezotte & McKee, 2006). Effective instructional leaders tend to have strong beliefs about what good schools and teaching are like and they focus their efforts to attain this vision (Hall, Rutherford, Hord, & Huling, 1984). The leader’s greatest contribution will be to articulate a vision that all stakeholders can commit to and create a community that has shared values (Lezotte & McKee, 2006).

The second characteristic of an effective school is instructional emphasis (Edmonds, 1982; Lezotte & McKee, 2006). The goals and objectives of the school must be clear. One goal should be that the pupil’s acquisition of reading and math skills is more important than any other school activity (Edmonds, 1979). When a school sets a goal, the goal should include all children (Lezotte & McKee, 2006). There needs to be equity. According to Edmonds (1979), “Effective schools share a climate in which it is incumbent on all personnel to be instructionally effective for all pupils” (p. 8).

An orderly, safe climate is another characteristic of an effective school (Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte & McKee, 2006). An orderly environment means the students are spending time focused on learning, not necessarily sitting quietly listening to the teacher talk (Eggen & Kauchak, 1996). Increased emphasis is being placed on collaboration and teamwork among students and teachers (Lezotte & McKee, 2006).

The fourth characteristic of effective schools is high expectations for all students (Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte & McKee, 2006). The instructional leader and teachers must firmly believe and model their expectations. Teachers’ practices and behaviors are significant when achieving academic success (Murphy, Weil, Hallinger, & Mitman, 1982). If a teacher delivers a lesson and determines that some students did not learn the material, but moves on to the next lesson, then the teacher did not expect the students to learn in the first
place (Lezotte & McKee, 2006). Leaders must help their schools change from teaching-centered institutions to learning-centered organizations (Lezotte & McKee). In schools where achievement scores are improving, teachers and principals hold higher expectations for students than in schools where achievement is declining (Guskey, 1982).

The fifth characteristic of effective schools is the frequent evaluation of student progress (Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte & McKee, 2006). Evaluation can take many forms. Feedback provided in the classroom is one form of evaluation. Effective feedback should be immediate, be specific, provide information, be dependent on performance, and have a positive emotional tone (Eggen & Kauchak, 1996). The school must develop an evaluation program that allows the frequent evaluation of student progress (Edmonds, 1979). It is important for the educational leader to ensure that there is alignment between the intended, taught, and assessed curriculum (Lezotte & McKee, 2006).

Another characteristic of effective schools is high levels of parental and community involvement (D’Amico, 1982; Lezotte & McKee, 2006). Parental involvement has a positive influence on students’ progress and development (Mortimore & Sammons, 1987).

Finally, staff development is important to effective schools (D’Amico, 1982). Staff development should not be limited to a few days, but should be an ongoing job-embedded examination and development of new methods (National Staff Development Council, 1995).

**Rigor, relevance, and relationships**

Another reform model, one that is prevalent in Iowa, is based on the concepts of rigor, relevance, and relationships. McNulty explained the three key elements that great schools possessed at the Iowa High School Summit (2006). Great schools have established
strong relationships with students, have developed a relevant curriculum, and have rigorous instruction (McNulty, 2006). McNulty emphasized that the most important factor of the three was the establishment of strong relationships. He believed that students will not engage in their learning, even if it is relevant and rigorous, unless trust has been established first and the students believe that learning is worth their effort. Blankstein (2004) stated, “Relationships are at the core of successful learning communities as well as student success” (p. 58). Daggett (2006) characterized strong relationships as personalized relationships between adults and students that support student’s attainment of high levels of achievement. The career academies from the 1960s, as discussed earlier, were developed around the concepts of rigor, relevance, and relationships.

In the *Rigor and relevance handbook* (2002), rigor is defined using ICLE’s Knowledge Taxonomy. Bloom’s Taxonomy is the basis for the Knowledge Taxonomy. There are six levels of the taxonomy moving across a continuum from knowledge to comprehension to application to analysis to synthesis to evaluation (ICLE, 2002). Knowledge is the lowest example of rigor and evaluation is the highest form of rigor. There needs to be rigor, in all classes, which is important when improving schools and making them great (Elmore, 2004; Daggett, 2006; Lezotte & McKee, 2006; McNulty, 2006). When defining relevance, an Application Model is used in which there are five levels to the continuum (ICLE, 2002). The model moves from knowledge in one discipline to application in another discipline to interdisciplinary application to real-world predictable situations to real-world unpredictable situations (ICLE, 2002). The highest form of relevance is real-world unpredictable situations. Figure 2.1 illustrates the quadrants and levels of the rigor and relevance framework. Schools that are effective for low-income, African-American, and
Hispanic students tend to emphasize relationships, relevance, and academic rigor (Steinberg & Almeida, 2008).

Another researcher in the field of school reform, Elmore (2004) remarked that the problem of U.S. education is that “teaching and learning in U.S. schools and classrooms is, in its most common form, emotionally flat and intellectually undemanding and unengaging” (p. 12). Elmore believed that we need to increase the frequency of engaging teaching, which will require a change in teaching. He also believed that we need to change the core of schooling so that most students will receive engaging instruction in challenging academic
content (Elmore, 2004). Educators know that exemplary teaching involves a number of factors including appropriate challenge and relevance to students’ lives, which results in more engaged students (Atkinson, 2007). Elmore (2004) expressed a dim outlook for the future of public schools in the U. S.: “If public schools can adapt to the demands of standards-based reform, they will have a better chance of survival” (p. 45). Based on the beliefs of some of the experts in high school reform, the culture or relationships within schools need to be strong, the curriculum needs to be rigorous and relevant, and the instruction needs to be engaging, and students need to be challenged.

In 1996, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, in partnership with the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, published a report that also had an effect on high school reform. *Breaking ranks: Changing an American institution* presented 80 recommendations that were developed after two years of study. Six themes evolved from the study, and the report is structured around these themes. Because 80 recommendations are almost overwhelming for school leaders to begin to implement to initiate reform, *Breaking ranks II: Strategies for leading high school reform* was published in 2004. *Breaking ranks II* (2004) proffered 31 recommendations that are clustered, or assigned, to one of three core areas: Collaboration and Personal Learning Communities; Personalization; and Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

*Breaking ranks II* (2004) focused on how to implement the recommendations that were made in *Breaking ranks* (1996). If implemented effectively, seven strategies will transform high schools and impact student achievement:

1. Establish the essential learning a student is required to master in order to graduate, and adjust the curriculum and teaching strategies to realize that goal.
2. Increase the quantity and improve the quality of interactions between students, teachers, and other school personnel by reducing the number of students for which any adult or group of adults is responsible.

3. Implement a comprehensive advisory program that ensures that each student has frequent and meaningful opportunities to plan and assess his or her academic and social progress with a faculty member.

4. Ensure that teachers use a variety of instructional strategies consistent with the ways students learn most effectively and that allow for effective teacher teaming and lesson planning.

5. Implement schedules flexible enough to accommodate teaching strategies consistent with the ways students learn most effectively and that allow for effective teacher teaming and lesson planning.

6. Institute structural leadership changes that allow for meaningful involvement in decision making by students, teachers, family members, and the community and that support effective communication with these groups.

7. Align the schoolwide comprehensive, ongoing professional development program and the individual Person Learning Plan of staff members with the content knowledge and instructional strategies required to prepare students for graduation. (p. 6)

After each strategy is discussed, recommendations for implementation are provided. The benefits, challenges, and strategies for implementation are discussed with each strategy.

Examples of schools implementing changes consistent with *Breaking ranks* are also provided.

**Motivation Theory and the Pygmalion Effect**

In 1968, Rosenthal and Jacobson conducted a study that became a landmark study in education. At a San Francisco elementary school, there were 18 classrooms with three classrooms that consisted of each of the six grade levels. All the children in the study were administered a nonverbal test of intelligence that was disguised as a test that would predict intellectual “blooming” (Rosenthal, 2002). The test was called the Harvard Test of Inflected Acquisition. After the test was administered, 20% of the children were chosen at random from the classrooms to form the experimental group (Rosenthal, 2002). Each teacher was
given the names of the students who were in the experimental group, and told these children scored high on the test and were expected to show surprising gains in intellectual achievement during the next eight months of school (Rosenthal, 2002). Rosenthal explained, “The only difference between the experimental group children and the control group children, then, was in the mind of the teacher” (2002, p. 29). Eight months later, all the children were retested using the same intelligence test. Considering the school as a whole, the children who were expected by the teacher to show greater achievement gains did when compared to the students from the control group (Rosenthal, 2002).

Almost 500 replication studies have been conducted since the original study in 1968 (Rosenthal, 2002). Many of the studies have been conducted in a laboratory setting and false information about others was provided (Good & Nichols, 2001). Some studies have been conducted in the natural setting of the classroom. Evidence suggests that, when students are removed from a low-achieving group, they respond in better and more appropriate ways (Good, 1982). Mason, Schroeter, Combs, and Washington (1992, as cited in Good & Nichols, 2001) conducted a study with eighth graders. Students who did not qualify for a pre-algebra class, when assigned to the class, increased achievement because of higher course content and teacher expectations. Case study data revealed that, when a student is moved to a higher achieving group, student achievement increases (Good, 1982).

Replication studies of the Pygmalion effect have revealed a correlation of 0.30 between teacher expectations and student achievement (Jussim, 1993; Rosenthal, 2002; Trouilloud, Sarrazin, Marinek, & Guillet, 2002). The higher the teacher expectations were for a student, the higher was the student achievement. Simple replications of the Pygmalion study will add little new knowledge (Rosenthal, 2002). The Pygmalion effect, or self-fulfilling prophecy,
has met with much criticism, primarily focusing on the extent to which teacher expectations influence student achievement. However, the many studies have documented support for the existence of self-fulfilling prophecies and “few current researchers doubt the existence of the phenomena” (Jussim, 1993, p. 642).

**Explanation**

The Pygmalion effect, or self-fulfilling prophecy, is a motivation theory that evolved from a social constructivist perspective (Trouilloud et al., 2002). When this theory is applied to classroom settings, self-fulfilling prophecy refers to situations in which teacher expectations cause student performance to be consistent with the expectations of the teacher (Good & Brophy, 1995; Jussim & Harber, 2005; Trouilloud et al., 2002). According to Guskey (1982), “abundant evidence has indicated that teachers do form expectations for student performance and do tend to treat students differently depending on these expectations” (p. 345).

Teacher expectations are inferences (based on prior experiences or information) about the level of student performance that is likely to occur (Good & Nichols, 2001). Students’ expectations are formed by social comparisons they make and their teacher makes and their belief of their own personal ability as well as those of their teacher and parents (Good & Nichols, 2001).

In an effort to refute the critics of the Pygmalion effect, Rosenthal became one of the pioneers of meta-analysis (Jussim & Harber, 2005). Meta-analysis of the first 345 experiments on expectancy effects demonstrated the existence of self-fulfilling prophecies (Jussim & Harber).
There are three stages involved in the Pygmalion effect: (1) Teachers develop expectations for students’ future achievement, (2) Teachers treat students differently according to the expectations, and (3) Teachers’ treatment influences the students’ achievement (Trouilloud et al., 2002). The hypothesis is depicted in Figure 2.2. Teacher expectations have to change student behavior as evidence of the existence of the Pygmalion effect (Trouilloud et al.).

Low teacher expectations are not the cause of school failure (Good & Nichols, 2001). Expectations are one of many factors that may contribute to lower student performance (Good & Nichols, 2001).

There are four major factors involved in the teacher behaviors associated with the Pygmalion effect (Rosenthal, 2002). The first factor is the climate the teachers create for students. Students that are expected to achieve at high levels are treated with more warmth (Cooper et al., 1979; Rosenthal, 2002). Teachers smile and nod their heads more to high achieving students than low-achieving students (Cooper et al., 1979). Low-achieving students are more likely to be given up on by the teacher and are given less time to formulate responses to questions (Good, 1982). The low-achieving students are smiled at less often and the teacher maintains less eye contact with low achievers (Cooper et al., 1979; Good, 1982). A negative emotional climate has revealed significant negative correlations with achievement (Brophy & Good, 1984).
Figure 2.2. Pygmalion effect

The second factor is input. More material is taught to the high achieving students (Cooper et al., 1979; Rosenthal, 2002). Teachers demand less work from low-achieving students as compared to high achieving students (Cooper et al., 1979; Good, 1982).

The third factor or output factor is the tendency for teachers to give high achieving students more opportunities for responding (Rosenthal, 2002). Other studies affirming this
effect revealed that low-achieving students were given fewer response opportunities by
teachers to respond (Good, 1982; Good & Nichols, 2001). Teachers also pay more attention
to the responses of high achieving students than to those of low-achieving students (Cooper
et al., 1979).

Finally, the feedback factor refers to the quality of the feedback given to high-
achieving students as compared to low-achieving students (Rosenthal, 2002). Low-achieving
students are more likely to be criticized when they give an incorrect answer (Cooper et al.,
1979; Good, 1982). Low-achieving students are less likely to be praised when they give a
correct answer (Good, 1982). The feedback low-achieving students receive is less accurate
and less detailed as compared to high-achieving students (Good, 1982). Feedback is
provided to low-achieving students less often than feedback is provided to high-achieving
students (Cooper et al., 1979; Good, 1982).

It can be difficult for low achievers to be successful in heterogeneous classrooms
(Good & Brophy, 1995). Low-achieving students tend to be more passive in classrooms
(Good & Nichols, 2001). This is due to the student’s hesitation to answer questions in class
because the answers may be wrong and the teachers reinforce this by calling on the student
less frequently (Good & Nichols, 2001). Another factor that may lead to student passivity is
that low-achieving students need to adjust to more teachers and their varied expectations
(Good & Nichols, 2001). Low-achieving students are in the general education classroom and
may be removed to get additional help from remedial programs or special education. Each of
these teachers has different expectations. Not knowing the expectations and what to do, low
achievers learn to avoid initiations and wait for the teacher to structure their behavior (Good
& Nichols, 2001). Students who are called on less frequently, receive less praise, are
criticized more often, and are given less time to respond would probably develop a classroom strategy that prevents them from volunteering and responding, reducing risks and ambiguity (Good, 1982).

Teachers can help increase the low-achieving students’ success by providing extra instruction (Good & Brophy, 1995). Teachers can also help low achievers be more successful by monitoring low achievers’ progress more frequently (Good & Brophy, 1995). Low-achieving students are less likely to monitor their participation in classroom activities when status differentiation is less notable (Good & Nichols, 2001). Students who achieve at lower levels may do so because they have fewer opportunities to respond and are given less practice (Cooper et al., 1979). Teachers should maintain high expectations for all students. Studies have been conducted that show that teachers that hold high expectations for under achievers see an increase in achievement (Kolb & Jussim, 1993). Even if a teacher does not believe that a student is capable of higher achievement, they can act like they hold higher expectations for the student and may convince the student that they are capable of higher achievement (“Good or Bad”, 1998). In addition, if more instructional time is provided for low-achieving students without the presence of high achieving students, low-achieving students should experience more success.

**Implications**

In the current study, an attempt was made to determine if teachers perceive their expectations for students have increased. Students are likely to perform at a higher level if teachers have increased expectations for student achievement. In addition, through the implementation of the reform initiatives, students are given additional time to master course
content in an environment wherein the higher achieving students have been removed. Teachers focus attention on the lower achieving students for an additional two hours per week. Because the higher achieving students are not present in the environment, students are more likely to engage in the learning.

**Summary**

The process used to develop the reform initiatives at New Horizons High School was based on high school reform models, motivation theory, and participatory action research. These processes may have contributed to the success of the reform initiatives.

The standards and accountability movement was the crisis that the leadership team at New Horizons High School reacted to by researching high school reform and then utilizing the PAR process to develop the reform initiatives. Extensive research exists that supports the Pygmalion effect or self-fulfilling prophecy. Teacher expectations for student achievement were increased through the reform initiatives, therefore student achievement should increase.

The next chapter will describe the case study methodology utilized to examine the perceptions of the effects of the reform initiatives at New Horizons High School, a rural high school in the Midwest. A discussion of the epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods will be conducted.
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the qualitative research design used to examine how teachers perceive the reform initiatives that were implemented has affected students at a rural high school in the Midwest. To achieve this purpose, a discussion of the epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods are conducted. This chapter also presents how data analysis will be conducted. A discussion of goodness and trustworthiness follow. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Rationale for using a Qualitative Approach

This study is significant in that it will add to a body of research that currently is limited in scope. Heck and Hallinger (1999) reviewed research that focused on the principal’s role in school effectiveness. While reviewing the research, they identified “blank spots” in the research. The “blank spots” concern in-depth descriptions of how principals and other school leaders achieve improvement in schools (p. 141). Heck and Hallinger (1999) also identified “blind spots” in the research. The “blind spots” are areas that are difficult to see because the existing knowledge keeps us from examining other facets of the phenomenon (p. 141). Even though Heck and Hallinger (1999) conducted research regarding principals, there also are “blank spot” and “blind spots” in the research pertaining to high school reform initiatives.

Qualitative research was determined to be most appropriate for this study in order to fill the blank spots and blind spots. This research examined if teachers have raised expectations for student achievement and the teachers’ interpretation of the effect that successful reform initiatives had had on student achievement and student engagement. This
study closely ascertained the teachers’ interpretation of the effect, rather than examined merely what was done. Using a constructionism approach and basic interpretive theoretical framework to conduct case study research enabled this researcher to comprehend the teachers’ perceptions of the impact that high school reform initiatives have on student achievement and student engagement. They also enabled the researcher to capture the richness of the teachers’ interpretation of the effects.

**Characteristics of Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research is the study of “research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2007, p. 37). Merriam (2002) stated, “The key to understanding qualitative research lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world” (p. 3). Stake (1995) purported that qualitative research is the belief that knowledge is constructed rather than discovered.

Common characteristics of qualitative research align with these definitions of qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). One characteristic is that qualitative research occurs in a natural setting. Researchers collect data in the field where the problem under study is situated, and gather information directly from people by observing them in the setting where the problem or issue under study occurs.

A second characteristic of qualitative research is that the researcher is the key instrument for collecting data. The researcher is the one who collects data through observations, interviews, and examining documents. Data are not collected through questionnaires or instruments developed by other researchers (Creswell, 2007). Merriam
(2002) provided a similar explanation and extended it to include that the researcher is not only the primary instrument for data collection but also for data analysis.

Qualitative research revolves around the collection of multiple forms of data, such as interviews, observations, and document reviews, rather than just relying on one data source. The researcher must compile all of the data from the various sources and then elicit themes (Creswell, 2007).

Another characteristic of qualitative research is that the data analysis is inductive in nature. Data are collected and then organized into themes that form the basis of the findings. The findings are discovered using a bottom up approach (Creswell, 2007). Data are gathered to build concepts and theories rather than deductively deriving hypotheses to be tested (Merriam, 2002). In qualitative research, meanings are learned from the participants, not from the researcher (Creswell, 2007).

The research design is emergent in qualitative research. The initial plan for research is not tightly prescribed, but the design may shift or change as the researcher spends more time in the field collecting data. Interview questions may change, individuals studied may shift, but the key idea on which to focus is that the researcher wants to learn about the problem or issue from the participants (Creswell, 2007).

Another characteristic of qualitative research is that the researcher makes an interpretation of what they see, hear, and understand. It is an interpretive inquiry. The researcher’s interpretation is affected by his or her own background, context, and prior understandings (Creswell, 2007).

Finally, qualitative research is reported as a holistic account. Qualitative researchers try to develop a complex picture of the problem or issue under study. This is accomplished
by reporting from multiple perspectives, identifying the many factors involved in the situation, and sketching the larger picture that emerges (Creswell, 2007). According to Merriam (2002), qualitative studies are richly descriptive.

**Constructionism Epistemology**

Crotty (2003) described the scaffold that is used to construct qualitative research studies. The scaffold is intended to be used by researchers to give them a sense of stability and direction as they build their own research. The concept of a scaffold was helpful in designing this study. The base for the study is the epistemology. Epistemology was defined by Denzin and Lincoln (2005) as the relationship between the inquirer and the known. Crotty (2003) defined epistemology as “how we know what we know” (p. 8).

Constructionism epistemology was used for this study. According to Crotty (2003), constructionism is present when meanings are constructed by people as they engage in their environment they are interpreting. Constructionism was the appropriate epistemology to use for this study because teachers explained, or gave meaning to, how they perceived the reform initiatives at New Horizons High School affected student achievement and student engagement. Our culture has an impact on the interpretation of our view of the world.

**Interpretive Theoretical Perspective**

The next layer of the scaffold that supports the construction of the study is the theoretical perspective. Theoretical perspective is understood as the philosophical stance behind a methodology (Crotty, 2003). The theoretical perspective used in this study will be a basic interpretive approach. According to Merriam (2002), constructionism underlies a basic interpretive qualitative study.
Merriam (2002) purported that a basic interpretive theoretical perspective examines how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences. Prasad (2005) offered a similar explanation. According to Prasad, interpretive traditions involve the belief that our worlds are socially created, but they also believe that these constructions are only possible through our ability to attach meaning to objects, events, and interactions. A basic interpretive qualitative study is an effort to “understand a phenomenon, a process, the perspectives and the worldviews of the people involved, or a combination of these” (Merriam, 2002, p. 6). According to Esterberg (2002), “The focus is on how given realities are produced” (p. 16). The basic interpretive inquiry is always framed by some disciplinary-based concepts or theory (Merriam, 2002).

This study attempted to ascertain if teachers’ expectations for student achievement increased and uncover how teachers attached meaning or interpreted the effect that the reform initiatives had on student achievement and engagement.

**Case Study Methodology**

As this study was constructed, the next layer of the scaffold support was the methodology. The methodology that was used in this research initiative is case study. Case study research is not only a data collection technique but also an all-encompassing methodology. Case study methodology encompasses the design of the research process, data collection, and data analysis (Yin, 2009). Case study methodology was used for this study because it is an appropriate choice when “…a ‘how’ or ‘why’ research question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control” (Yin, 2009, p. 13).
When understanding case study methodology, the researcher needs to realize there are two elements involved in the definition: case and study. Stake (1995) defined a case as a bounded system. It is an object rather than a process. The case is an integrated system. People and programs are prospective cases. Events and processes fit the definition less well. As Stake noted, “We study a case when it itself is of very special interest. One looks for the detail of interaction with its contexts. Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (p. xi).

Case study can also be defined with a twofold definition:

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident…The case study inquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. (Yin, 2009, p. 18)

Stake (2005) purported, “A case study is both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry” (p. 444). According to Yin (2009), case studies can be used for exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory purposes.

There are three types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective (Stake, 2005). The intrinsic case study is one that is undertaken because the researcher wants to gain a better understanding of only a particular case. Intrinsic case study shows what is important about that case within its own world, which is not the same as the world of researchers and theorists. Intrinsic case studies are worried less about generalization. Thick description is important when revealing the findings of the intrinsic case study.
Instrumental case study is when a particular case is studied to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization. The case is of secondary interest. When using instrumental case study methodology, the researcher works to illustrate how the concerns of researchers and theorists are manifest in the case. Critical issues are generally known in advance (Stake, 2005).

A collective case study is used when there is less interest in one particular case, and a number of cases are studied jointly in order to investigate a phenomenon, population, or general condition (Stake, 2005).

An intrinsic case study was used for this study. The study fell within this category because focus was on only one case, or one bounded system, New Horizons High School. It also focused on the case itself rather than on generalization. According to Stake (2005), “Damage occurs when the commitment to generalize or to theorize runs so strong that the researcher’s attention is drawn away from features important for understanding the case itself” (p. 448). This case study may also be categorized as an explanatory case study because its purpose was to explain the teachers’ perceptions of the impact the reform initiatives had on students at New Horizons High School.

The case study design was a single-case embedded design. There are four types of designs for case studies: single-case (holistic) design, the single-case (embedded) design, the multiple-case (holistic) design, and the multiple-case (embedded) design (Yin, 2009). The difference between holistic and embedded designs is the number of cases studied within the case study. If there is only one case, it is a holistic study. If multiple cases are being studied within the case study, it is an embedded case study. This study employed a single-case
embedded design because one bounded system, New Horizons High School, was studied and a number of cases within the system were explored.

**Methods**

The final layer of the scaffold that was used to build the study was the research methods. Yin (2009) provided three principles of data collection to use when engaging in a case study. The first principle is the use of multiple sources of evidence, which will allow for triangulation of data. Because six methods can be used when employing a case study, the triangulation of data can easily be accomplished. The six most common sources of evidence for case study research are documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation, and physical artifacts (Yin). Yin stated, “When you really triangulated the data, the events of facts of the case study have been supported by more than a single source of evidence” (p. 116). The most common methods of data collection and the ones that yield the most evidence for the case study are interviews and direct observations (Yin). According to Merriam (2002), interviews, observations, and documents are the three most common sources of data for qualitative research. The data for this study were collected in a manner that focused on the research questions. The methods that were used for this study were: interviews, document review, and observations.

The primary method of data collection for the case study was interviews. According to Esterberg (2002), “Interviewing is at the heart of social research” (p. 83). Teachers were interviewed to determine, or get to the heart of their interpretation, of the impact that the reform initiatives had on student achievement and student engagement, as well as to determine if their expectations for student achievement increased. A better understanding of
the teachers’ perspective regarding the impact of the reform initiatives can only be accomplished by interviewing teachers, themselves. Teachers were interviewed at school during or outside of the school day, based on what was most convenient for the teacher. Interviews were expected to provide the most insight to answer the research questions of this study:

1. How do teachers interpret the effects, if any, of the 9th period reform initiative on student achievement?

2. How do teachers interpret the effects, if any, of the 9th period reform initiative on student engagement?

3. How do teachers interpret the effects, if any, of the A, B, C, Incomplete reform initiative on student achievement?

4. How do teachers interpret the effects, if any, of the A, B, C, Incomplete reform initiative on student engagement?

5. Have teacher expectations for student achievement increased?

Semi-structured, one-on-one interviews were used. The semi-structured interview allows a more open exploration of a topic. Each interviewee’s responses shaped the order and structure of the interview. There is a much freer exchange between the interviewer and interviewee in a semi-structured interview (Esterberg, 2002).

Rapport and trust are important elements to develop when doing interviews. Esterberg (2002) stated, “If the person you are interviewing doesn’t trust you or feel comfortable in your presence, then the interview is unlikely to go well” (p. 91). Efforts are made during the interview to build rapport and trust. Participants are selected for interviews who are likely to provide the greatest insight into the topic (Esterberg, 2002).
The interviews followed an interview guide approach. An interview guide helps the interviewer stay focused during the interview (Esterberg, 2002). All questions were designed to elicit answers to the research questions of the study. A broad list of questions and topics were generated and used as a guide, not a specifically worded script used during the interviews. This enabled a discussion format to move from topic to topic rather than a format that is locked into specific questions. Questions were structured in an open-ended format. According to Patton (2002), open-ended questions enable the researcher to capture the points of view of the participants without predetermining those points of view through prior selection of questionnaire categories. The interview guide used in this study appears in Appendix B. The questions for the interview guide were designed to foster thorough responses from participants. Many of the questions contained in the interview guide, as well as many of the unstructured and informal questions that emerged during the course of the interview, were “presupposition questions” (Patton, 2002, p. 369). These kinds of questions make certain assumptions about the participant’s experience and are likely to elicit a description of perceptions or perspectives. This is an effective means of focusing on the information that the researcher is gathering, and it avoids first posing “dichotomous questions” (Esterberg, 2002, p. 98) since “the presupposition format bypasses this initial step by asking for description rather than asking for an affirmation of the existence of the phenomenon in question” (Patton, 2002, p. 369).

All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim by this researcher to ensure accuracy when used later during the analysis and data interpretation stage of the study. This process gave me the opportunity to become more familiar with the data. The interviews were conducted at New Horizons High School at the convenience of the interviewees.
Data were also collected through observations. As Patton (2002) noted, “Observational data, especially participant observation, permit the evaluation researcher to understand a program or treatment to an extent not entirely possible using only the insights of others obtained through interviews” (p. 23). Through thorough descriptions, the reader should be placed into the setting that was observed. Observations enable the researcher to understand how people behave in a particular setting (Esterberg, 2002). Observations were conducted in teachers’ classrooms during 9th period to determine if there were other effects of the reform initiatives as may be observed, such as student engagement, student relationships with teachers, and patterns of interaction. Field notes were recorded of observations. According to Esterberg, field notes are a complete description of what happened during the observation, including events, setting, and participants. Field notes can also include the researcher’s initial impression of what is happening in the setting or what the events mean to the participants (Esterberg). “You probably cannot have enough description in your field notes” (p. 75). Observational data may provide insight into other effects the reform initiatives had on students and staff in addition to affecting achievement.

Another source of data was document review. I obtained permission from the superintendent to review student achievement data and survey data. A copy of the written permission appears in Appendix C. Documents were collected throughout the implementation of the high school reform initiatives by various staff members, such as the special projects coordinator, guidance counselor and the building principal. These primary sources were also reviewed. This review provided a historical account of the process that was used, as well as some initial results of the initiatives. According to Yin (2009), “the
most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources” (p. 103).

Another principle of data collection is to create a case study database (Yin, 2009). Patton (2002) also endorsed this practice. Because case studies are a large accumulation of material, Patton recommended the organization of raw case data into a case record. In this study, all the major information that was used in the data analysis was contained in a case record. Information in a case record is edited, topics are assembled together, and raw data are organized so that the data are more manageable. All interviews for this study were tape recorded. The interviews were transcribed and stored by the researcher on the hard drive of a laptop computer connected to an external USB hub. Field notes of observations were kept in a notebook. The notes were transcribed and stored on the same laptop hard drive and USB hub. Notes were kept regarding the review of the documents involved in this study. These notes were also kept on the same laptop hard drive and USB hub. This database enabled the researcher to cut and paste information to organize around themes that emerged, and edit the themes and evidence when needed. This database enabled the review of evidence when necessary. This practice increases the goodness and trustworthiness of the case study (Yin, 2009).

The third principle of data collection is to maintain a chain of evidence (Yin, 2009). When maintaining a chain of evidence, a reader of the final report should be able to trace the steps that the researcher took from developing the initial research questions to the development of the case study finding. The researcher should think of it in terms of the process that is used to present evidence in court. The evidence that is presented in court must be the same evidence that was collected at the crime scene. For qualitative research, the data
that are collected during the data collection process must be the same data that are used to develop the findings and conclusions of the study. A personal journal of the steps taken during the study and reflections were kept. The journal was maintained in chronological order. The practice of maintaining a chain of evidence increases the goodness and trustworthiness of the case study (Yin, 2009).

**Design**

The next section of this chapter elaborates on the research design components. It includes an explanation of the research site and participant selection for this study.

**Site**

This qualitative research study occurred at a small rural high school in the Midwest. This high school was purposefully selected because the high school was involved in the study of high school reform for the past five years. In addition, the high school had initiated high school reform efforts over the last three years. The two primary high school reform initiatives that were implemented were an A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy and a 9th period. These two initiatives have caused this high school to be uncommon and a case study was deemed appropriate for this study of this high school. Upon reflection of the definition cited previously, the study investigated a contemporary phenomenon in depth in the real-life context. In addition, the boundaries between each phenomenon and context were not clearly evident.

Access to the site was gained through the superintendent of the school and the school board president. The study was explained to them and they gave permission for the study to be conducted at this site.
**Participant selection**

According to Creswell (2009), the concept behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants that will best assist the researcher in understanding the research problem or answering the research questions. In purposeful sampling, small samples are selected to enable the in-depth inquiry into and understanding of a phenomenon (Patton, 2002; Esterberg, 2002). Purposeful sampling was conducted for this study. The participants who were selected to participate in the study were participants who were employed at New Horizons High School during the implementation of the reform initiatives. These participants had the opportunity to provide rich insight into the research problem. I gained permission to study participants through the superintendent at the school and the school board president. A copy of the written permission is provided in Appendix C.

I prepared a database of all staff members who were employed at New Horizons High School during the 2005-2006 school year. The database included basic information about the staff members, such as gender, years of experience, content area taught, present location and employment status, and member on leadership team. After the prospective participants were identified, I used a purposeful sampling strategy to select 8 staff members. I used a combination of criterion sampling and maximum variation sampling.

Criterion sampling is the study of cases that meet a predetermined criterion. The purpose of criterion sampling is to select cases that are likely to be information rich (Patton, 2002).

Maximum variation sampling is a strategy for purposeful sampling that attempts to cut across a great deal of variation within the possible samples to identify the central themes (Patton, 2002). Maximum variation can be used to describe multiple perspectives about the
case (Creswell, 2007). Even in small studies, the researcher can maximize variation by identifying diverse characteristics or criteria and choosing participants that cover the range of criteria (Patton, 2002). A strength of maximum variation sampling is that, even though sample sizes are small, “any common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared dimensions of a setting or phenomenon” (p. 235). Small samples with great variation or diversity will provide two types of findings. First, high-quality, rich descriptions of each case, which are useful for documenting uniqueness are developed. Second, important shared patterns that cut across cases and derive their significance from having emerged out of heterogeneity are discovered (Patton).

The participants had to meet the criteria that they were working at New Horizons High School during the implementation of the reform initiatives, which was during the 2005-2006 school year. Once it was established that prospective participants met the criteria and were willing to participate in the study, maximum variation sampling was then used to intentionally select eight staff members who were likely to provide the fullest description of the experienced phenomenon. The Informed Consent Document appears in Appendix D. Thus, the aggregate composition of the sample included both male and female participants, of various years of teaching experience ranging from 5 to 40 years of experience, working in different content areas, and both members of the leadership team and non-members of the leadership team. The study participants are shown in the composite profile provided in Table 3.1.
Table 3.1. Participant profile summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Number*</th>
<th>Richness of data-maximum variation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 Female and 5 Male.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Age range was 30-65 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Seven of the eight had taught in other schools prior to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20+</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Varying areas of concentration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Arts</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education/Health</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Needs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Team Members</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Members and non-members of the leadership team were represented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Members</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N = 8.
Data analysis and interpretation

According to Creswell (2007), data analysis consists of preparing and organizing data, then organizing the data into themes from a process of coding, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion. More concisely, Esterberg (2002) stated that data analysis is actively creating meaning from the data. It is a process of making meaning.

Analysis for a case study consists of making a detailed description of the case and the case’s setting (Creswell, 2007). In order to develop such a description, researchers must immerse themselves in the data (Esterberg, 2002), reading the data from beginning to end several times. Analysis will be conducted in the form of direct interpretation. Direct interpretation is when the researcher looks at a single instance and draws meaning from it, without looking for multiple instances. Direct interpretation is a process of pulling the data apart and putting them back together in more meaningful ways (Creswell, 2007).

The first step of data analysis is coding (Esterberg). Codes can:

- represent information that researchers expect to find before the study,
- represent surprising information that researchers did not expect to find;
- and represents information that is conceptually interesting or unusual to researchers (and potentially participants and audiences). (Creswell, 2007, p. 153)

Coding is used to begin to reveal potential meaning for the study. Open coding will be used initially. According to Esterberg (2002), open coding is used to make sense of one’s own data. Pre-established codes from someone else will not be used. The data were analyzed line-by-line to identify themes and categories of interest. Codes were identified by highlighting the lines and passages that have commonalities.

After working with the coding process, recurring themes should begin to emerge (Esterberg, 2002). Data analysis was conducted in an attempt to elicit themes. When using a
basic interpretive theoretical perspective, data are inductively analyzed to identify common themes that cut across the data (Merriam, 2002).

After several key themes were identified, focused coding was conducted. Focused coding is when the data are reanalyzed line-by-line, but this time the focus is on the key themes that have been identified (Esterberg, 2002). “Whereas open coding fractured the data, axial coding, or focused coding, puts the data back together in new ways by making connections between a category and its subcategories (identified during open coding) to develop several main categories” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, as cited in Merriam, 2002, p. 149). By grouping topics that relate to each other, I was able to more easily determine interrelationships within the data to help identify themes for analysis. Identifying persistent themes inducted from the data yielded the findings for this study and, ultimately, provided an exhaustive description of the phenomenon.

Literature was reviewed that pertained to the research questions. The analysis and interpretation of the data also focused on the theoretical framework of this study. Relying on theoretical framework that formulated the study of the case is the most preferred strategy for case study data analysis (Yin, 2009). Yin referred to this technique as pattern matching. Data were analyzed to determine if teacher expectations for student achievement increased and the effect the reform initiatives had on student achievement. This focus assists in keeping the attention on data that are relevant to the research questions and make other data, that are not related to the research questions, easier to ignore (Yin, 2009).

In addition to coding and identifying themes and pattern matching, I also utilized several other methods to develop my qualitative analysis. Table 3.2 summarizes the methods that were used.
Table 3.2. Methods of data analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis Technique</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Study Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patterns</td>
<td>Repeated codes; similar responses, interpretations, or handling events in a similar way (Esterberg, 2002).</td>
<td>Patterns of teachers noticing students voluntarily coming to 9th period for extra assistance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparing Cases</td>
<td>Compare patterns among interviewees (Esterberg, 2002).</td>
<td>Comparing each teachers’ response to question about teacher expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build Typologies</td>
<td>System for categorizing types of things (Esterberg, 2002).</td>
<td>Many examples categorized as student behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pattern Matching</td>
<td>Match patterns to research (Yin, 2009).</td>
<td>Increased teacher expectations align with effective schools research.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interpretations were also formed. According to Creswell (2007), during the interpretation phase of the study, the researcher steps back and formulates a larger picture of what is going on in the case. The interpretations must be grounded in the data (Esterberg, 2002).

The final step of data analyses, validating the findings, is critical to the trustworthiness of a study. It was important to verify that my interpretation of the data was actually a good one. According to Esterberg (2002), “Before you finish your analysis, you will need to examine your work carefully against the data you have gathered. You want to make sure that the analysis you’ve developed is actually supported by the data” (p. 173).

**Goodness and Trustworthiness**

Qualitative research has methods or strategies that can be used to ensure a study’s validity and reliability, referred to as goodness and trustworthiness. A “good” study refers to the assurance that a study was conducted in a rigorous, systematic, and ethical manner, and
the results can be trusted (Merriam, 2002). A number of strategies were utilized in this study to ensure goodness and trustworthiness.

According to Merriam (2002), the most well known strategy used to ensure goodness and trustworthiness is triangulation. According to Esterberg (2002), triangulation is the use of two or more methods. Merriam (2002) described triangulation as “using multiple investigators, sources of data, or data collection methods to confirm emerging findings” (p. 31). Research studies that use multiple methods tend to be stronger. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), “The use of multiple methods, or triangulation, reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question. Objective reality can never be captured” (p. 5). We know about something only through its representations. Triangulation adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry. Triangulation of data collection methods and sources of data occurred within this study. Interviews, observations, and document reviews were conducted. The observation data and document reviews were used to support the interview data.

Another common strategy to ensure goodness and trustworthiness is by conducting member checks (Merriam, 2002). Member checks involve reviewing one’s findings with the participants to ensure that one’s interpretation “rings true” (p. 26). Participants who were interviewed for this study were given a copy of the transcription of the interview to check for accuracy.

A third strategy that was used to ensure goodness and trustworthiness is peer review (Merriam, 2002). A colleague who is a professor at a private four-year college agreed to review my data to provide feedback regarding the plausibility of the findings.
Researcher’s reflexivity was included in this study to help ensure goodness and trustworthiness. Researcher’s reflexivity is “critical self-reflection by the researcher regarding assumptions, worldview, biases, theoretical orientation, and relationship to the study that may affect the investigation” (Merriam, 2002, p. 31).

Another strategy that was used to ensure goodness and trustworthiness in this study was adequate engagement in data collection. Data collection continued until there was in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and the same statements were being heard over and over again, or the data were “saturated” (Merriam, 2002, p. 31).

During the research process, an audit trail was kept. An audit trail is a record of how data are collected, categories are derived, and decisions are made throughout the study, as well as the researcher’s own reflections and questions (Merriam, 2002). It is “…a running record of your interaction with the data” (p. 27). The audit trail was kept in a journal. This technique is also cited by Yin (2009) as a strategy to use to increase the goodness and trustworthiness of the study. Yin referred to it as creating a case study database. The journal also included the steps that were taken in the research process, comprising a chronological record of the study. Yin recommended that a record or a chain of evidence be maintained for case study research to increase the goodness and trustworthiness of the study.

Maximum variation, which was discussed previously, was included in the study to help ensure goodness and trustworthiness. Maximum variation is the purposeful selection of participants that represent variation or diversity (Merriam, 2002).

The final report of the study included rich, thick descriptions. To ensure goodness and trustworthiness, this technique is used to provide descriptions that other researchers will be able to determine if their situation matches the context of the study (Merriam, 2002).
Yin (2009) explained a pattern matching technique that increased the goodness and trustworthiness of a study. If the study’s findings align with research theories that have already been developed, it will make the findings of the study more trustworthy.

**Role of the Researcher**

I am interested in the study of high school reform and, in particular, the study of the effects of high school reform initiatives that have been initiated for a number of reasons. As an educator with 14 years of administrative experience at the secondary level, I have been watching, studying, and reacting to the standards and accountability movement since its inception. I have very closely followed the high school reform push, and have worked to improve the quality of education for students who are in my care. I believe high school reform is important but very difficult to achieve. When reform is achieved, I want to know how it was done. I am currently a 6-12 principal at a school that has implemented reform initiatives.

Because I have knowledge of high school reform and have implemented reform initiatives, I may have built-in perceptions about the processes and outcomes that can be used. It was important for me to remain neutral as a researcher. I worked to accomplish this in a number of ways. First, I consciously reminded myself of this expectation before engaging in interviews, data analysis, coding, and other tasks associated with this study. I also constructed questions in a way that conveys neutrality (Patton, 2002). I feel I was able to maintain neutrality because I had a deep desire to learn what the teachers perceived as the impact of the reform initiatives on student achievement and student engagement. I had my
own perceptions that were based on data. The perceptions of the people who worked with students and the initiatives daily were most likely to provide new information.

Humans are not only the researcher in qualitative research, but they are also the subject of the research, “which means that pure objectivity is impossible” (Esterberg, 2002, p. 11). Because achieving objectivity is impossible, it is important for the researcher to be reflexive. According to Esterberg, “We need to develop an understanding of how our positions shape the research topics we choose and the methods we use to study the social world” (p. 12). I kept a journal and recorded my thoughts, questions, problems, as well as the steps that were taken in the research process. This helped me remain neutral by bringing forth my preconceptions.

Some of my preconceptions initially were that the reform initiatives were effective because student grades had improved. I perceived that the reform initiatives would not be found to be ineffective after conducting this study, but I was open to that possibility.

I selected teachers to interview who would provide maximum variation. I also chose teachers who were comfortable enough with me to answer my questions honestly and not tell me what I wanted to hear. I made sure to emphasize my desire for honesty before beginning each interview.

I attempted to build relationships and rapport with the teachers at the school. This facilitated conducting interviews. I expected to have more reliable data by establishing relationships and rapport. This is an important component to consider when conducting interviews. According to Creswell (2007), when rapport has been established with participants, good data should be collected.
To help ensure impartiality during the analysis stage of the study, I utilized the professional analysis of my colleague who is a professor at a private four-year college. His analysis of the data provided feedback that was not biased.

Summary

This chapter described the qualitative research design that was used to examine how teachers perceived the reform initiatives that were implemented affected students at a rural high school in the Midwest. The scaffold that was used to build the study was described, as were the various layers of the scaffold. The layers included a discussion of the epistemology, the theoretical perspective, the methodology, and the methods that were used. The method for data analysis was also presented, as well as a discussion of goodness and trustworthiness. Finally, the role of the researcher was addressed.
CHAPTER 4. DATA ANALYSIS

This study utilized a basic interpretive theoretical framework to conduct case study research that examined if teachers had raised expectations for student achievement. The study also examined teachers’ interpretation of the effects that reform initiatives may have had on student achievement and student engagement. This chapter describes in-depth interview of the eight participants, the data collected from the interviews, and the data analysis. The interview guide can be found in Appendix B. The information gathered from the interviews served as the data for this study. Coding of the data was conducted, themes were identified, focused coding was then conducted, and pattern matching was conducted.

Participants

Eight participants were interviewed, rather than ten as originally planned. After six interviews there appeared to be a saturation of data, in which the same answers were being elicited from the interview questions. Two more interviews were conducted to ensure there was saturation of data.

The interviews were pre-arranged and conducted at the school. Three of the eight participants were female and five were male. All participants had taught at the school prior to the implementation of the reform initiatives, with experience at New Horizons ranging from five years to 40 years at the completion of the 2009-2010 school year. The median New Horizons teaching experience for the eight participants was 16.4 years. The participants were high school teachers who taught in a variety of content areas, including social studies, science, math, vocational, English and physical education. One teacher had been retired for
one year. Each interview lasted from 35 to 95 minutes. After transcription, each participant was e-mailed a transcript of the interview to assure accuracy of the data.

**Themes**

The researcher uncovered several distinct themes through the data analysis. The face-to-face interviews were tape-recorded and the researcher transcribed the data. As the researcher transcribed and read through the data, issues and topics such as *students were more aware of their own learning* and *the initiatives were not working for all students* were identified. A broad list of codes (i.e., categories) was developed. Codes then were merged, modified, and refined. As patterns emerged, themes were identified. The purpose of the research study and the primary research questions were the focus for the theme identification. Focused coding was then conducted and the transcripts were reread, line-by-line, to locate and identify the themes. A peer reviewer also read the transcripts and identified themes that aligned with the researcher’s identified themes.

Five themes emerged that revolved around the purpose of this basic interpretive research study to determine how teachers interpreted the effect the A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy and the 9th period reform initiatives had at New Horizons High School. The five themes that emerged through the data analysis from the interviews were: (a) student success; (b) raised expectations; (c) changed teaching; (d) changed student behavior; and (e) improved relationships.

**Student success**

All eight participants felt that both the 9th period and A, B, C, Incomplete initiatives had led to increased student success. This is significant because the intent of the reform
initiatives was to increase student success by reducing the number of grades below a C-. The data collected indicated that the reform initiatives were successful in achieving more grades above a C-. The teachers’ perceptions aligned with the data.

Four of the primary research questions for the study elicited positive responses. The four primary research questions will be examined individually in relation to the theme of student success.

Research Question 1: How do teachers interpret the effects, if any, of the 9th period reform initiative on student achievement?

All eight participants felt that 9th period had a positive impact on student achievement and cited grades and test scores as concrete examples that supported their interpretation.

Grades

The effect 9th period had on grades can be seen through the statements of some of the teachers. One of the teachers, Lori, stated:

*It [9th period] has definitely brought their grades up. Um, and a lot of that, I think, is due to the fact that they are getting the work done that they weren’t doing before and for a lot of them, I just don’t think that when they go home, when they leave this building nothing happens academically and for those kids, what they get done in school, is more now than what they did before.*

Howard, a math teacher, said, “I think it’s given kids an opportunity to work on some of the concepts that they haven’t mastered and come in and get some individualized instruction from the teachers. I think we’ve increased student achievement that way.” He went on to explain that, “It [9th period] has increased grades from the standpoint that students have used that 9th period time to master concepts.”
The science teacher, Stuart, also felt that grades had been raised because of the 9th period initiative:

*I think that extra time, extra contact time with the teachers, you can push them a little bit more, ‘Hey look, this is what you got and this is what you need to do’ so I think it does raise the grades because of that.*

A physical education teacher, Kevin, also saw an increase in student success:

*Before the 9th period, there was no other opportunity for them to get their grade back up again. So personally the kids that failed from my classes definitely went down, or the number of kids that failed went down. So it helped in my area.*

Several teachers referred to 9th period as a deterrent system that elicited positive results. Deb, one of the math teachers interviewed, said: “*It’s [9th period] had a big impact on mine [grades]. I don’t have, don’t have as many people hovering around the ‘this is just barely good enough’ area, because they know they can slip down below and end up at 9th period.*”

One of the vocational teachers, Don, said, “I think they realize that it is something that they have to be aware of and they try to get better grades to stay out of 9th period.” Later in the interview he commented:

*It probably has had an effect on grades to encourage those students that might end up on 9th period to improve their grades or to improve their study skills or to improve their habits so that they get grades good enough so that they don’t end up on 9th period.*

Lori, an English teacher, reflected on the original goal of the initiative and the impact the initiative had on student achievement:

*The one thing that I think is really important is that I do think that what we wanted it to do was target those kids that were at the bottom end, that were our D and F students, and I really do think that it's made a difference with them. I think that I see my list [9th period list] going down a lot. I see the kids passing more. And I think that it really did do that.*
One teacher, Ted, a social studies teacher, commented:

*It [9th period] did impact kids and it did help kids. And I know in the beginning we said if it helps a few of the kids, then it's going to be worth it. Well, the results that you tabulated obviously showed that the success rate was far beyond what we had anticipated or what we had hoped for. And the culture, the academic culture, changed for a vast majority of students.*

When asked to explain what he meant by 9th period changed the academic culture he said,

“Well, *their grades improved, their approaches improved, their attitudes improved, the work ethic improved.*”

Jean, a vocational teacher, felt the 9th period initiative had a positive impact on student achievement: “*We would have failures up the kazoo if we didn’t have this 9th period.*”

**Test scores**

All the teachers interviewed felt that 9th period had a positive impact on student achievement and some of the teachers cited test scores as an example of the success of 9th period. Howard made the comment:

*I think it [9th period] has increased ACT scores. We’ve had an increase in our ACT scores in the past two or three years. I think there is a correlation there between the concepts they are learning in school and the scores on the ACT.*

He felt the same about the ITED test scores, “*We’ve had an increase recently, especially this year in scores. I think that is an indication that 9th period is being effective and increasing test scores.*”
Stuart made similar comments about the ITED test scores: “I know our science class with our junior class this year went up. I wasn’t expecting that. I don’t know if that’s because of it or not, but if there’s a correlation you could say there’s a connection somehow.”

**Research Question 2. How do teachers interpret the effects, if any, of the 9th period reform initiative on student engagement?**

All eight teachers interviewed had positive responses to this question and felt that 9th period did have a positive impact on student engagement and students were more successful because of the increased student engagement.

Howard said:

*Students are more engaged because they come into the 9th period and they’re more aware of their grades and what they need to do to pass and what concepts they need to learn. So I think it has increased student engagement.*

Don made a similar comment:

*I think it has improved it [student engagement], um, again, I don’t know if you can measure that unless we measure that specifically, but I think students are doing a better job of and trying to be more involved at a number of different levels whether it’s just to be engaged in the activity, knowing that they’re graded on their involvement or whether it’s, in a lot of cases, engaged in activities that makes sense to them and, um, being involved results in a higher grade. So it appears that it has had an effect for those students to stay off from 9th period and in some cases it may be that they have improved grades because they have had some extra time in 9th period to help improve their study skills or whatever.*

Lori also noted the impact on student engagement:

*I think it does keep them more engaged. You know, especially for some kids, it’s really, they don’t want to be in 9th period and they don’t want to be assigned there at least. You know, I think a lot of them will come in and use 9th period for things like retesting to try to bring their grade up, especially at the higher end of the scale, you know, a lot of B students that want to be A students. That sort of thing, will use it that way. But, I think that a lot of kids who would have been your D
students, they want to be C students now because they don’t want to sit in 9th period, you know, they don’t want to have to come in a half hour and they don’t want to be stuck there until the teacher tells them they can go, so, you know, they’ll come in and do enough to get out of 9th period, like, doing 5 or 6 more assignments, just so they don’t get assigned and then they have to come and I think that helps.

Concrete examples of the impact of increased student engagement were provided in terms of the graduation rate and dropout rate.

**Graduation rate**

All the teachers interviewed felt that 9th period had a positive impact on student engagement and some of the teachers cited the graduation rate as an example of student success because of 9th period. Stuart said:

“We had 100% graduation this year and I think 9th period had a great deal to do with that. Like I said, there were a couple seniors that I thought there was no way they were going to make it through, but in the last month, they were in 9th period every day and I think that’s the only reason they got through.”

Deb, a math teacher, had a similar comment:

“There are at least a couple of kids who’ve graduated because they passed their third math class because of 9th period. Otherwise they would not have, would not have been able to pass. . . I’ve had more people that have graduated because of 9th period, have passed my class and graduated.

Howard felt 9th period also had a positive impact on the graduation rate:

9th period has maybe provided some students an opportunity to get their grades up and graduate on time with their classmates that maybe wouldn’t have in the past. In that aspect, I think it’s helped the graduation rate. . . If they keep their grades up here, it doesn’t give them a reason or desire to leave.

Jean, a vocational teacher said, “If we didn’t have 9th period, we wouldn’t be, our kids would not be where they are today. There wouldn’t be near as many kids passing. They
would be failing.” Later in the interview, she spoke specifically about the graduation rate and said:

*I would say that kids want to graduate, they want to get their work done so they come in during 9th period or before school and get it done. I've had seniors, this last year I didn't have that many second semester, but they came in to get their work done so that they were ready to go. One would be James Petersen. He got so that he would always come in during 9th period. Even though I never assigned him, he was in doing his work because he knew that I required them to make up their work in that class, because there was no take-home.*

Lori spoke about the freshmen and how 9th period will affect their graduation in the future:

*You know, even though they [teachers] can tell them, well, if you don't pass this, you're going to have to retake it, I don't think they understand how it affects the long-term as freshmen. They can't even imagine that their senior year is ever really going to happen to them at that point, and they don't understand how that loss of credit accumulates and affects their ability to graduate. You know, I just don't think they're mature enough to make that connection themselves. And 9th period just kind of, 9th period is something that they don't want now. And so if they have to pass it to not be in 9th period, they're probably not making the connection I have to pass it so that I can graduate. But because they're passing it, that's the result in the end.*

**Dropout rate**

The teachers interviewed felt that students were more engaged in school because of 9th period and referred to the low dropout rate as evidence of their belief. Jean commented, “I haven't seen as many dropping out as we've had. Ninth period provides an opportunity for them to get their work done and for teachers to help them.”

Another vocational teacher, Don, said:

*There probably are some kids that would have dropped out if there had not been 9th period, that's, there's kids that are getting help on a daily basis that probably would have gotten lost in the shuffle or would have been forgotten because prior to starting 9th period, the options were just pure and simple*
failure and we had a lot of failures and a lot of Ds. . . It has probably greatly reduced that [dropout] because now they can’t let things slide to a point where it’s either not repairable or it’s check off, so they don’t get themselves to that point.

A similar statement was made by Lori:

They're going to stay in school because they actually have a chance to graduate now instead of, you know, getting to a point where ‘I have how many credits, I'm how many short? Well, I can never do this’ and just say saying, ‘Oh, forget it’ when they're juniors or seniors in high school and leaving, you know.

Ted also felt the drop out rate has been affected by 9th period:

Kids had an opportunity now. I mean, there was a setting. It was there. They were required to be there to get the assistance that they needed, not because it was a punishment, but because it was time needed for extra help, and kids got that help. And a large number of kids took advantage of that help and that time. So some of those without that 9th period would have faltered, would have fell and fell off the, out of the scene and would have dropped out and that would. So, again, these are figures that I don't have access to, but I'm sure that that would have lowered the dropout rate.

**Research Question 3: How do teachers interpret the effects, if any, of the A, B, C, Incomplete reform initiative on student achievement?**

All eight participants felt that the A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy had a positive impact on student achievement and cited examples of student performance that supported their interpretation.

When Stuart was asked what effect the A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy had on student achievement, he said, “It’s helped raise achievement just because they have to do more work. They’re required to do more and just can’t get by with 60% anymore, it pushes them that way.” He went on to say that, “it’s definitely helped grades. We don’t have the Ds anymore, so it’s helped that way. They have to shoot for a higher standard rather than that 60% range that a lot of them were shooting for.”
Jean had a similar comment to Stuart’s regarding the A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy:

*I think the kids work a lot harder. They know they can’t get Ds and they can’t get Fs. They’ve even said, ‘Well, there’s no more Ds so I guess I’ve got to work a little harder’. And I do believe they work a little harder. I’ve had kids this last year. One particular class there would have been a lot more Ds and Fs in there, but there’s no Ds and Fs so they have to work. And that’s the kids that came in too during 9th period and got it done. . . I didn’t fail but one or two kids this time, and I’ve had up to seven. So yes, it is. I think it really does help kids. They have to work harder.*

Ted felt that the A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy had a positive impact, also. He said, “*[A, B, C, Incomplete] Increased performances in the classroom.*” Later in the interview he said, “*I think it increased the grades of the, what were formerly C, D students. I don’t know that it impacted A, B [students] much.*”

Howard expressed his interpretation of the effect A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy had on student achievement:

*I think it has raised the expectations of students. And in turn, if you expect the students to master concepts at a 70% level, then I think in the future for them, because if you’re mastering more of the basic concepts you don’t leave holes in their education for their future years of their math. I think it has greatly increased student achievement.*

Later in the interview he reflected on the impact of A, B, C, Incomplete on grades. He commented, “*I think having that A, B, C, Incomplete and having students master more concepts increases their knowledge base and increases the number of concepts they’re learning and hence I think it increases grades.*”

Deb made comments specifically about the grades students were earning in her classroom:
Since we have moved to A, B, C, Incomplete, my grades have been a lot more consistently averaging above; you know, not so many that are in the Ds, just barely, you know, just barely scooting by. You know, because I had the same grading scale as we do now, except, of course, I went into the 60s with the Ds. Well, I would say that I have a lot more kids pushing to get into the Cs than I did before because of the, because we could eliminate, we eliminated the Ds, which in my opinion are not acceptable grades anyway. I think for the most part I have a lot more, a lot fewer kids who are below that 70 percent. I think I only ended up with five in summer school this year as opposed to 12 last year. And so that went down quite a bit. The number of kids who don't do anything and end up with IUs has gone down a lot more. I mean, I only had two this year, and I have 107 kids.

Later in the interview she commented on special education students and their achievement:

I think grades overall have improved for all the levels. My special ed students are doing better. They're not as weak in areas as they used to be. So their grades are getting, they are getting true Cs or true Bs, not necessarily just because of accommodations either. I think there's, I think they are doing a better job in the classroom.

Lori also felt that student achievement had improved due to the A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy:

I think just the fact that you do have a different standard, you know, you've made that bar go up a little bit just because, you know, with a C being the lowest grade that we give, then in some ways it makes a B seem more like middle of the range, you know. If a student is getting a C in my class, I feel like he or she isn't doing very well, you know. And so I want them to be pushing more towards that B level, up towards the A and those kinds of things. And I think to a certain extent the same kind of mentality exists within the kids. You know, whether they're really aware of it or not, I see more of my kids who maybe would have been B, C students really wanting to be Bs, you know, all Bs, and B honor roll and on that kind of thing, because they do want to draw that distinction between themselves and a C. And a C shouldn't seem like a bad grade, but it makes it seem like less of, like a little bit lower and so then they push themselves to be into that higher.

Later in the interview, Lori commented again on student performance and the effect the A, B, C Incomplete grading policy had on grades:

The kids are getting that higher grade. And I don't see really like just atrociously low test scores very often anymore, you know, kids taking a test
and getting a 40 or a 50 on it. You know, a lot of times when they're not passing the tests, they're not passing it in what would have been the D range instead of in the F range. And so I think that it's pushing it up a little bit. I mean, even by our standard now, they're still not passing, they're not passing at a higher level a little bit so.

Research Question 4: How do teachers interpret the effects, if any, of the A, B, C, Incomplete reform initiative on student engagement?

All eight teachers interviewed felt the A, B, C, Incomplete reform initiative had a positive effect on student engagement and students were being more successful.

Deb said, “I think it's [student engagement] better. You’re trying to get more kids involved so that they can achieve the higher levels.” She went on and explained:

They are trying to get, you know, some of them 10 percentage points higher and stay there. You know, some of them were ok with a 61 percent because they got a D and that still meant that they passed. Well, now they try to stay at a 71 percent. Ten percentage points is huge over the course of a semester. For somebody to stay at a 71 instead of a 61, which they used to, I mean that's a, that's a huge accomplishment for some kids. And they're doing it.

Later in the interview, she made reference to a specific instance that she had encountered: “I had one student that she had a 79-point-something and she raised her grade in the last two months up to an 87. And that's pretty good.”

Stuart has also noticed an increase in student engagement and student effort. He commented, “They have to know that they have to do more work so they’re more engaged because of it.” Later in the interview he said, “They’re required to do more, when they know they’re required to do more, they’re going to work harder on it rather than just get by. They can’t just get by anymore, they’re getting pushed a little more.”

Howard saw an impact on students because of the A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy. He commented, “It has made more students work harder to earn that graduation right.”
Jean commented on the effect A, B, C, Incomplete had on the dropout rate:

*I think it has pretty much eliminated the dropout then. We've got too many things in place for them to help them rather than. We've got A, B, and C and you've got to work for it. They see that. They see we're trying to help them. I hope that's where we're at with those kids. There's no Ds so it means they have to be at least average. They have a good, positive influence on themselves.*

Ted also discussed the effect A, B, C, Incomplete had on the dropout rate:

*I think it lowered the dropout rate for the same reason. It's a mindset. Kids were given opportunities in these two things that we did to be successful. There was assistance provided to be successful. We increased the expectations that they had to meet in order to be, quote, successful. And kids are going to go meet that. They'll fail you if you let them. I mean, it's really not more difficult than that. They'll fail if you let them, or at least so many will. And there's so many that will not fail if you don't let them. So a lot of it is on our shoulders. And what we did in the A, B, C was to take a step in saying, hey, we're not going to let you so, and that's big.*

**Teacher expectations**

*Research Question 5: Have teacher expectations for student achievement increased?*

The second theme that emerged within the study was that teacher expectations had increased. There was evidence of this theme emerging throughout the interviews, answering the fifth primary research question. All eight teachers interviewed felt that teacher expectations had increased.

The A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy was the initiative that had the greatest effect on increased expectations. As the expectations increased, the 9th period initiative was the structure that provided the support to students that were struggling in an environment that had increased the expectations for student performance.

Many of the teachers interviewed made simple statements, as Kevin did, when he said, *“I think we're expecting more out of kids now, which, you know, we need to. . . And*
we're making a move here, now we're going, we're expecting more and more and more, and I think it's wonderful.” Others extended the discussion of increased teacher expectations and the impact it had on the students and the school system.

Howard explained how the increased expectations of the school as a whole have had an impact on student achievement:

We’re expecting students to master concepts that maybe they wouldn’t have before where before a 60% or 61% was a passing grade and now it’s not anymore, you’re expected to master more concepts in order to move on and progress through the learning process, so I would think that it has raised expectations at our school. I think that was our goal with it. We wanted to raise expectations, we were, we wanted to show students that we expect more out of them and we expect them to rise, so I think it has raised expectations at our school. Of staff and students.

Stuart talked specifically about the grading policy and how that changed his expectations as a teacher:

I was one that always did the 90, 80, 70, 60 and if you got a 60 that was good enough. If you were happy with a D, that was ok with me. So, it changed my perspective that way that, just like the kids, I had to be told that that wasn’t good enough that they had to do better than that, I had to expect more from them.

Don had a similar comment about the grading policy and how that changed expectations:

The Ds and Fs were very prevalent before and, of course, we took those out of their vocabulary so with that, um, now the F is not an option. Before, that was really nice for a lot of them just to take the F and then it was over and done with and they didn’t have to worry about it any more. . . we took everything from 60-69 out of their possibilities for grades. So it has forced them to come up to a minimum grade of 70 to pass.

Later in the interview, Don explained how the initiatives changed his approach, as a teacher, to student learning:
I still expect them to put out as much as they can and to do as much as they can and so in the event that they feel they can slide by, um, I’ve got an option now that I never had before. The option that I had before was a D or an F and that, that was sufficient for many of those and they said, ‘Yeah that was fine, I’ll take a D or an F’. Student learning was not where it needed to be because they were letting it go and I had to let it go too. I just would give them the grade they had earned and, um, that was all we could do with it. They were ok with that until the last minute when they found out that they were in trouble probably, of graduating or getting enough credits to graduate.

He also commented about how the initiatives have changed the school system’s approach to student learning:

I guess it was an option to fail before, it’s not an option to fail now. Somebody’s going to intervene prior to your failure, but you could still fail. That option is still there for a very small percentage, they still choose to do that, um, but it has changed the atmosphere that we’re not going to allow you to fail easily, you’re going to have to work at failing now, so something is going to happen prior to your just giving up and you can’t be a wallflower because somebody is going to notice it and try to get you some help and again, you ignore that and neglect that, but that would be of your own choosing and it does happen occasionally, but all those things have been taken into account so it should be a fairly small percentage now of the ones that can evade that and get away with it.

Stuart had the same impression of how the school used to react to student achievement prior to the implementation of the initiatives and the change that has occurred:

They [Students] know ‘I have to get a C’, before it was like I’ll go to class, nobody cares if I do anything so if I don’t pass, I don’t pass. Now, they think we push them a lot more because they have to get a C. So, I think the number of kids getting credit has gone up. I think it’s because we’re more strict on it. You can’t fail, you have to get a C. Where before, you do whatever you do. You do it the way you want to do it.

Ted made a similar comment about the expectations that the school system had held for students prior to the implementation of the reform initiatives: “There was nothing there that provided them [the students] the incentive to go because academic culture had got to such a point that you didn’t need to do very much and you could still get through.”
Lori also commented about the practice the school had engaged in prior to the implementation of the initiatives and made an analogy of that to parenting:

*We don’t want them [the students] saying well it’s easier not to hand in my homework than it is to hand it in. It is easier [for a teacher] just to let a kid fail than to chase them around the building especially when they don’t necessarily want to do any better. You know, they don’t care, if we would leave them alone they would be happy with that and, but I don’t think that’s because that’s what’s good for them, you know. My kid would be perfectly happy if I fed him candy bars and soda every day for the rest of his life, but I don’t think it would be something that would be good.*

Deb made a comment about the student’s expectations and how she thought they were increasing:

*I think their [the students] expectations that they have of themselves are getting a little bit higher. And the number of times that I get asked for extra credit is amazing compared to what it used to be. Because my extra credit they have to actually work for extra credit. They don't just do a dot-to-dot and hand it in and say, ‘Ooh, good for you’. You know, they actually do more work. And so I get lots of people asking for extra credit, and that shows me that they're willing to work a little bit harder than this person or that person. And that's a good thing.*

There was a common discussion about raising expectations and the belief that students will meet the expectations. Deb made the comment:

*I do think the more you expect of them, they will eventually reach it. Some kids will complain about it all the way, but they'll eventually do it. You just have to keep pushing and not just say, ‘Oh, well, they're doing ok’. And I just don't like the ok stuff. I don't like them to think that they can't do any better than what they're doing now.*

Ted made a similar comment about students reaching the expectations that are held for them:

*They [The students] will meet whatever that criteria is that you set. We could have made it A, B actually, and the vast majority of those would have made it. Now, there would be a percentage of people that are going to be unable probably to get a B in a class without all kinds of assistance, you know, in*
another setting. But you could have went A, B and most of the kids that were going to meet the A, B, C could have met the A, B too. And they would have.

Later in the interview, Ted said, “They will meet whatever you ask them to. I mean, you could set it at 95 percent if you wanted to, and most kids would get there. They'd work their tail off, but they could get there.”

**Changed teaching**

The third theme that emerged through the interviews was that the 9th period and A, B, C, Incomplete initiatives had caused changes to the teaching process. All eight teachers interviewed made comments that led to the discovery of this theme. The changes that teachers discussed were that teachers keep better track of students since the implementation of the initiatives, there was an increase in teacher collaboration, there was an increase in parent communication, teachers are pushing students to achieve more, classroom instruction has changed, and teachers are now available to students which has affected the time within the contract day for preparation for classes.

The change in teaching that teachers implemented may have been the cause for the improved student success. The teachers interviewed perceived that the reform initiatives cause the improved student success. The teachers made changes to their behaviors, which had a positive impact on the students and the school.

**Keeping track of students**

Seven of the eight teachers interviewed made specific comments about their belief that since the new initiatives have been in place, teachers keep better track of students. Stuart explained it by saying:
We keep better track of them. We’re going weekly grades. We don’t go, before we had this we would go four and half, five weeks before we’d look at grades. I always kept my grades up, but I never really looked through them to say ‘You got this stuff to make up’ or, you know, it was usually mid-term and the mid-term reports went out and then realized they weren’t doing very good.

Lori had a similar comment about how the process has changed teachers’ awareness of student’s present state of learning:

I think that you're just a lot more aware of who's struggling and what to, what needs to be done. And not just necessarily kids who are failing but, you know, you look at those C minuses and you say, ok, you know, this kid is kind of on the line and we better be proactive about it and do something before he's below, you know, and kind of keep kids from getting too far down.

Howard also commented about his understanding of the student’s present state of learning:

It makes me more aware of their grade and what their grade means, what concepts they understand and don’t understand. And it provides another level of understanding for both me. For me, looking at them as students and for them looking at themselves as learners.

Kevin has seen an effect on him as a coach, and noted:

I spend more time looking at grades now. . . So now we need to keep a closer eye. There's more expected. And we've got to make sure, I've got to make sure as a coach that all my athletes are getting a 70% or better.

Don made a comment about how the initiatives have changed things for teachers:

“It’s put more responsibilities on the teacher.” He went on to explain that “the teacher’s going to have to take it upon themselves to add more, um, time and work to their schedule to get those kids to the point where they can pass rather than saying, ‘Well, they failed’ ”.

Teacher collaboration
Another effect of the reform initiatives on teaching within the school was the increase in teacher collaboration. This was cited by seven of the eight teachers as a by-product of the implementation of the initiatives.

Lori explained her impression of the increased collaboration since the implementation of the reform initiatives. Her statement also aligns with the previous discussion about teachers keeping better track of student’s academic progress since the implementation of the reform initiatives:

*I think that there’s a lot more interaction with kind of those special areas like the at-risk and the special ed and that sort of thing that we really do need to be communicating and we’re making sure that we’re getting together on those kids that aren’t doing well and earlier too. You know, it doesn’t just start right before a grading period is about to happen. It is continuous and ongoing and within those first week or two of school usually I have the kids that I know are going to struggle. And, we’re doing something about it as a school.*

Kevin also referred to the increase in collaboration among staff during his interview:

*Some teachers are very, very good on making sure students are getting to where they need to be. If we have a kid that's failing three classes, say for example, I think the teachers communicate pretty good on making sure where this kid needs to be on the right days.*

Howard also referred to the students that are failing multiple classes and the collaborative effort that is needed to help the student be more successful:

*We have to work with each other with that 9th period quite a bit, you know, if you have a student that is in 2 or 3 or 4 9th periods, ah, working with each other that way. Communicating grades to the specials teachers has greatly increased with that A, B, C, Incomplete and 9th period. They’ve been a super help to those kids and having that communication with them is always good for those kids in the special education classroom, the at-risk rooms, learning center and things like that and that allows students to get that help from more than one teacher so that’s even better.*

Deb made a comment specific to the collaboration she has developed with the special education teachers and the success she has seen: “*The special ed kids, you know, with kind of*
the tag-teaming that has been done in this last year, we can really get a lot more done with kids now because we're willing to, we're willing to work together with them.”

Several teachers had more general statements about the increase in staff communication and collaboration. Jean said, “I think we talk more as a staff. . . We work better together. More is being done to help the kids.”

Ted also commented about the increased interaction among the staff since the implementation of the reform initiatives: “I think people did talk more about what was going on. I think they began to talk more about how the classrooms work.”

Deb confirmed the previous statements with her interpretation of the effects the reform initiatives had on staff collaboration:

We talk all the time about how things are working, how they're not working. And I think it's, I think it's made the conversations not only, you know, sure, we still have our friendly conversations, but we have a lot of work conversations while we're here. Conversations about what they've tried that works and what they've tried that doesn't work. . . I do think in our area, that we have a tendency to work together a lot more about classroom issues and stuff than we did, than we did before.

Parent communication

Seven of the eight teachers interviewed perceived that, since the implementation of the reform initiatives, parent communication had increased. This has had an effect on the teachers.

Kevin made a statement that was common to other teachers’ statements: “My parent interaction has definitely gone up since this has started.”
The primary form of communication cited by the teachers was e-mail. Jean made a comment about her communication with parents: “I probably do more e-mailing now. . .

There's some parents I've communicated on a daily basis.”

Deb also commented about the increase in communication with parents and her use of e-mail:

I don't think that it was, there was as much communication before we had 9th period because they [parents] don't, they aren't as shocked by things anymore. They're notified more often. If your kid is in 9th period, they get an e-mail and then they have a tendency to check the grades to figure out what they're in 9th period for. And then they'll call the teachers or e-mail them. But I betcha I did ten times as much communication in the last two years than I did all the other ones combined.

Ted made a comment about the volume of parent contacts he made, primarily through e-mail, since the implementation of the reform initiatives: “I contacted more parents in those last couple of years than I had in the previous 35 all put together I'm sure.”

**Pushing students**

Teachers noticed a change in the approach they now take with students since the implementation of the reform initiatives. They reported that they are pushing students harder and even “hounding them”.

Stuart explained what he saw as a change in the ability to push students harder:

“I think that extra time, extra contact time with the teachers, you can push them a little bit more, ‘Hey look, this is what you got and this is what you need to do’ so I think it does raise the grades because of that.”

Later in the interviewed, he elaborated further on the aspect of teachers pushing students harder and increased expectations for achievement:

Kids have something to shoot for now. They know ‘I have to get a C’, before it was like I’ll go to class, nobody cares if I do anything so if I don’t pass, I
Lori had a similar comment about the change in focus that teachers and students have on improved achievement:

*I think that in the past it’s just kind of been well, you know, if they don’t care, I don’t care, I’m not going to waste my time on somebody who won’t turn in their homework, on somebody who won’t do the things that they need to do and instead you just kind of gravitate to those kids that give you the warm fuzzies and come in and you know, want to hang out in your classroom, or whatever, after school because they just love school and instead you’re spending more time with the kids who don’t necessarily want to be doing that.*

Deb commented on the change that she’s seen within special education and their willingness to push students:

*We do have the kids that have the help from the resource room in there. And those kids are more involved because there’s somebody there pushing them and we’re trying to get them to stay at a C and we’re trying to get them, get them to be, to be at a better level. But I think that it has increased because the kid, the teachers in the resource area are willing to push those kids a lot harder to stay in the C area.*

Jean looked at the outcome for the student if they weren’t being pushed. She expressed it by saying, “Little Johnny, you know, if we didn’t make him stay, he wouldn’t finish it. He’d be dropped. He’d be underneath it all.”

**Changing instruction**

One of the changes in teaching that the reform initiatives caused was a change in classroom instruction. One of the things the reform initiatives did was increase teacher
awareness earlier in the school year of the state of student achievement which is affecting students. This is reflected in some of the following statements made by teachers.

Stuart felt that his frequent monitoring of grades transferred to an increased awareness of individual student’s learning:

I know in my classes they’re a lot more structured as far as grades, not really rubrics, but um not everything is graded on a rubric, but the kids kind of know this is what I have to have done and this is what I have to do where before I don’t know if a kid came in I’d say, ‘Ok, what do you have to do to get a C or what do you have to do to get a B?’ I don’t know if they could have answered that. They would have no idea, ‘I don’t know, do my work?’ that sorta thing, but I think they know like what, a lot more of the expectations for them now that weren’t out there before.

Lori reflected on the impact that the reform initiatives had on the building as a whole and her comments mirror Stuart’s, but on a broader level:

I think kids are more aware of their grades. I think that there’s a lot more time throughout the entire semester and the entire year spent looking at grades and checking those kinds of things and making kids aware of them than just, you know, oh, it’s a week before grades come out, which at that point and a lot of times it’s just too late to make a whole lot of difference anyway. And all of a sudden now, hey, did you know that you have a terrible grade. Instead we're looking at it throughout the whole period of time. And so they're more aware of what's going on and that helps them to, you know, keep their grades where they need to be.

Howard had a more personal comment about the effect of the reform initiatives on teaching. He felt the reform initiatives not only raised his expectations for students, but it also caused him to reflect on his own teaching:

Having the A, B, C, Incomplete and the 9th period, gave me that opportunity to reflect on student achievement and to understand it more in order to become more aware of student grades, student achievement and things like that.
Howard also commented about specific instructional strategies that have been affected by the reform initiatives: “It’s definitely changed the way my classroom looks, the way my assessment looks. I’ve changed my assessment to be more frequent.”

Other teachers have seen a change in their classroom instruction. Lori commented about the change of instruction within her classroom:

You [the teacher] really want to make sure you're so much aware of where all your students are at because you're sending your grades in weekly and that sort of thing. And you also know that, you know, if they don't get it, that they're going to need to come in 9th period and it puts a little bit more accountability and a little bit more feeling of responsibility for each of those kid's grades onto the teacher. And so I think that at least for me, I want to make sure the instruction that I'm giving is really good, that I'm really using the in-class time as best I can, making sure that, you know, I'm teaching from bell to bell and that I'm using the best methods that I can to really keep the kids engaged and keep them on task and have them involved in things so that they're not in 9th period, you know, so that they're getting what they need in class and not just kind of, well, I'm going to teach it the way that's easiest and most comfortable for me and if they don't get it, well tough. Because you do know that, you know, you've got to, you see those kids more and you kind of get an idea of how you should change your instruction to help them out and make sure that when they're in class, that they're really getting what they need there so that they won't have 9th period and so that they'll be able to meet that 70% and that sort of thing.

Later in the interview, Lori came back to this same point and expounded upon the importance of having solid classroom instruction:

[I’m] providing better instruction to all my students during the regular classroom day so that I have less of those kids in 9th period, so that they are getting more of what they need inside the regular classroom. And, you know, really making sure that I'm finding very good ways to deliver my instruction so that I don't wind up in a situation where instruction or the content is being dummied down, so that I'm making it more accessible to them without it losing its, without losing the expectations and keeping my expectations high, but changing the delivery of it.

Lori felt that the next step for the building is to improve classroom instruction:
What we need to do at this point is look within our own instruction and find ways to make classroom instruction more effective. I think that as I put more into that into place in my own classroom I see kids being more successful without 9th period. I mean, for my own classroom, I’ve almost eliminated 9th period.

Teacher availability

Another change in teaching that occurred due to 9th period was that it did set aside time during the school day that required teachers to be available to students. This effect of 9th period was discussed by several of the teachers.

Kevin explained this concept and change within the structure of the school:

I think the teachers are required to be more available. The teachers are assigned to a certain group. The students know that. The students know where to find a teacher at the end of the day because, you know, Mr. Horvath is supposed to be in this area. If they have a question on health, whether they are in 9th period or whether they’re not in 9th period, they know where to come and find me. I think it definitely helps. I think it’s great that the student knows where to find the teacher. And, you know, the teachers are held accountable a little bit and are putting themselves in a spot to be available. So definitely a good thing.

Jean made a similar comment about the structure of 9th period and the availability of teachers: “We're available after school. Some teachers were not available. They had other things they had to do to go to coaching. Now everybody is available for kids after school for help for 9th period.”

Howard also commented about the time teachers are available to students, but put a different spin on it. He viewed it as a message that teachers are sending students:

Having that 9th period just changes the whole dynamics of the school, I think, too, because we are telling students that, ‘Hey, here is some time, use it to make yourself better’. You know, we didn’t have that before, it’s not that we didn’t have that expectation of excellence, but it’s just another thing, ‘Here’s an opportunity for you, let’s use it, let’s get you, let’s teach you everything we
can in the time that we have here’ so. I think it’s raised the expectations in the school and any time you raise the expectations that’s good.

Due to the increased availability of staff to students, the teachers’ prep time after school has been reduced. All eight teachers confirmed this negative effect of the reform initiatives in the interviews. Comments were made such as, “it’s exhausting”, “it’s a struggle,” but all comments about the loss of prep time were followed up with comments such as the one Kevin made: “Who are we doing this for? We're doing this for the kids. The kids are benefiting from this, and we're professionals and we should be able to see that.”

Stuart had a similar comment. Even though he has lost prep time he felt “it’s good for kids. I think we get better achievement out of it.”

Howard explained that not only has he lost prep time, but he has seen an increase in the amount of preparation that is required because of the implementation of 9th period. He followed up this discussion with this statement: “It’s part of the job, too. Everybody has to grade papers and they do that if it’s helping kids, then it’s worth it.”

One teacher, Ted, agreed that prep time had been affected, but had a different opinion about the issue:

Prep time has increased, yes. I'm not sure, the amount that was increased by 9th period I think was very minimal. I think the real increase in prep time has come about as teachers have begun to provide more and more and do more to help students and provide that assistance to students.

Later in the interview, Ted commented about what drove the need for the development of the 9th period initiative:

If they'd [teachers] been doing it the last ten years, we never would have put in a 9th period because it'd have already been there and it would have been there by nature. We, in all fairness, I mean, we did go down the 9th period line because, I'm not being critical of teachers here, but we did include 9th period because either teachers couldn't get kids in, there wasn't time because
of extra-curriculars or other things to get kids in. In probably a number of small cases, they maybe didn't want to get them in. But generally there were other problems. And so, because whatever the problems were in the previous years, we didn't have a lot of classrooms who were running the 9th period type thing. So we had to institute what hopefully would have been there.

A comment made by Lori encompassed all of the statements cited previously regarding loss of prep time, extra time required of teachers to assist students, and the importance of the program for the success of students:

I think that for all of the lost prep time and for all of the extra time that it takes to work with the other teachers to figure out where kids are at and those kinds of things, I think that it has been very positive. And it's probably things that we should have been doing and it's forcing us to do them. And maybe we don't all necessarily want to, but we all should be. And I hope that it wouldn't go away. I think that if it did, it would just be something we should hang our heads in shame.

**Changed student behavior**

The fourth theme that emerged from the data analysis of the interviews was that the reform initiatives changed student behavior. The third component of the Pygmalion effect is that student behavior should change after the teacher’s expectations have increased and the teachers treat students differently because of the increased expectations. Student behaviors changed in a number of ways. First, students spent more time at school engaged in the learning process. Students were asking for help more frequently than before. Students were more engaged and they were putting forth more effort. Students were more aware of their own learning process. Each of these components of the change in student behavior will be discussed.
**Additional time**

During the interviews, the natural phenomenon of students spending more time at school and focused on school because of the implementation of the 9th period initiative was discussed. The extra half hour of 9th period forced some students to spend more time at school, but it also gave others an opportunity to voluntarily spend more time at school.

Stuart felt the increased student effort was the biggest difference he saw with the 9th period initiative:

*It gives them that extra time. It used to be, before the 9th period, that teachers wouldn’t see them again until the next morning, the next time they had class. You kind of keep on top of things a little bit more because you have that extra time.*

Stuart went on to clarify his comment by saying:

*They just don’t get to take off at 3:12. You get that extra half hour, or whatever, of things that would just be forgotten about. You get to spend extra time with them and say, ‘You know, you have to get this thing’ or even if it’s make up work that they have to get done. It really pushes them that way.*

Later in the interview, he referred again to the extra time that students spend after school:

*Just walk around after 3:12 and see how many kids are still here that would have never been here before. You know, that extra half hour a day that they’re getting to work on something or make up work and even for those that aren’t assigned to 9th period to get help.*

Lori had a similar observation and comment. She noticed the increase in the number of students that are still in the building after dismissal and she thought it has a positive impact on achievement:

*They are in the building and they're here and they know we're here almost just, just as a matter of I'm here and I have a half-hour to kill, what am I going to do, they come and ask for help more often just because they're still in that school mindset, you know. They, I think that it used to be when the bell rang, they were either in practices or they were gone. And now there's kind of this time in between where they're not necessarily required to be somewhere.*
For the kids who are in 9th period, they are required to be somewhere. But for a lot of them, they're kind of waiting here, they're waiting for someone to get out of 9th period or they're waiting to go home or they're waiting to go to practice. And that school mentality just stays with them longer and they're more likely to come in and ask for help just because, well, what else are they going to do, you know. And it keeps them in that mindset a little bit longer. It's almost like, I don't know. It just kind of keeps them in the idea of school a little bit longer and so they're doing more asking for help. I see kids in the commons who aren't in 9th period doing homework and things like that occasionally as well, you know, just because they do have that downtime, but it's at-school time. And that's what they do here. So they get their work done.

Many of the teachers expressed their belief that 9th period was a negative motivator.

Lori stated it this way: “I think it's a huge motivator, that they work harder so that they won't be in 9th period.”

However, the overall impression was that the extra time that students spend at school is beneficial. Howard commented:

Any time you can have a student spend more time practicing and working with math concepts, they’re going to do better, they’re going to understand it better. Practice, practice, practice, practice. You can’t go wrong with working with something. The more experience you have with it, the better you’re going to be with it.

Deb felt the extra time students spend at school is also beneficial: “If they need the extra time, that extra half-hour for 9th period is what brings them up to the Cs and the Bs. . . I think it is helpful.”

**Asking for help**

A habit of learning has also changed for the students. All eight teachers interviewed felt and gave examples of student’s increase in asking teachers for help.

Jean commented, “Kids ask a lot of questions.”

Ted felt the same way and elaborated more on his observations:

Kids who often are not successful or need assistance, many are not inclined to
come forth with questions. They don't want to appear as though they don't understand in front of their classmates, they don't want to, sometimes they feel if they come to a teacher and ask, that they're going to look ill-informed compared to others and so, therefore, there's a certain thing. . . But you've got them in that situation and then they were more free to be able to ask more free, to get help more free to help one another, and that was a benefit. If you put them together in the classroom, there's, a teacher is directing them what to do and, therefore, they may feel funny around others who are not successful to try and be putting forth effort. So, you know, it becomes a mess-around group-type thing. However, in the 9th period, they really, it was a different environment and it was one where they could work, should work, did work, and worked together.

Howard also made reference to the classroom environment that was conducive to asking questions during the 9th period: “That setting is specifically so they can ask questions on things they don’t understand and they’ll use it and they have very effectively.”

Teachers also gave examples of students that voluntarily reported to 9th period in order to receive extra assistance. This was not a common practice prior to the implementation of the 9th period initiative. Deb discussed this at several points within the interview:

*I think this year has been the biggest year for volunteers in my 9th period that I've ever had. Volunteers not only just for help but volunteers to come in and finish up tests or to do something that if they're going to be gone the next day, get notes from me, or you know, I've, this is probably the biggest year I've had for the volunteers to come in. And I have a lot of kids that ask me for help that aren't my students. You know, they. And that's what 9th period helps with because they don't have to be worried about being late for any athletics or anything.*

Jean saw similar behavior changes in students. She commented on students that are assigned to 9th period are sometimes joined by a friend:

*I have some kids that come and sit with another kid while they're, they're buds and so I'm going home with him or going home with her and so I'm just going to wait here. And so while they're waiting, they're in working on their stuff, getting their homework done, getting help.*
Stuart made a similar comment. He felt that the A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy has caused a change in students asking for help:

*If I think back to before we had the A, B, C, Incomplete, um, I hardly ever had kids come in and ask for help, but now, like I said, it’s even the kids that are shooting for the A or want that A that come in after school or whatever. I think it makes a big difference as far as getting kids in, asking for help, trying to and a lot of them just have to get that C. It seems like I get a lot more questions than I did before.*

It was hard for teachers to be sure of the number of students that voluntarily reported to 9th period for them. The teachers reported a range from three students each week to almost half of their students over the course of the year.

**Research Question 2: How do teachers interpret the effects, if any, of the 9th period reform initiative on student engagement?**

**Research Question 4: How do teachers interpret the effects, if any, of the A, B, C, Incomplete reform initiative on student engagement?**

**Student engagement**

Some teachers spoke specifically to student engagement and the change they saw. More spoke about the change they saw in student effort. Because some did speak specifically to student engagement, as opposed to student effort, student engagement is included as a separate student learner change.

Jean talked about students that came in voluntarily to learn new programs that weren’t required for the class.

Deb has seen an improvement in student engagement:

*They're becoming a little bit more willing to be brought into the whole idea of what we're doing. You know, the whole engagement thing, it has to be on my part and their part. You know, because they can refuse to be engaged in what we're doing. But some of them have a tendency as we go through and they*
realize that if I do this in class, then I'm not going to get behind, I'm not going to end up in 9th period. That's what I've noticed with the kids who are in that group who do care. They want to get their work done and not be in 9th period because they have other things to do. I think it's helped with that. . . .They probably have more at stake than they used to.

Don made similar comments about student engagement:

*I think students are doing a better job of and trying to be more involved at a number of different levels whether it’s just to be engaged in the activity, knowing that they’re graded on their involvement or whether it’s, in a lot of cases, engaged in activities that makes sense to them and, um, being involved results in a higher grade. So it appears that it has had an effect for those students to stay off from 9th period and in some cases it may be that they have improved grades because they have had some extra time in 9th period to help improve their study skills or whatever.*

**Student effort**

All eight teachers interviewed felt there was increased student effort since the 9th period and A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy initiatives had been implemented. There were a variety of examples cited as evidence for the teachers’ interpretation of the increased effort.

Students gave testimonials about the fact that they were working harder. Jean reported what she had witnessed as far as increased student effort:

*I think the kids work a lot harder. They know they can't get Ds and they can't get Fs. They've even said, ‘Well, there's no more Ds so I guess I've got to work a little harder’. And I do believe they work a little harder. I've had kids this last year. One particular class there would have been a lot more Ds and Fs in there, but there's no Ds and Fs so they have to work. And that's the kids that came in too during 9th period and got it done. . . .I didn't fail but one or two kids this time, and I've had up to seven. So yes, it is. I think it really does help kids. They have to work harder.*

Stuart had evidence of student’s increased efforts. He also saw an increase in his workload due to the increased efforts of students:

*You have a lot more kids that are coming in and doing things that they wouldn’t have done before so that takes more time like make-up work and re-
testing. I’d never really done re-testing before. There’s a lot more kids that come in and say ‘Can I redo this?’ or ‘Can I retake this test?’

Lori also saw an increase in the number of students striving for higher grades:

I think a lot of them will come in and use 9th period for things like retesting to try to bring their grade up, especially at the higher end of the scale, you know, a lot of B students that want to be A students. That sort of thing, will use it that way. But, I think that a lot of kids who would have been your D students, they want to be C students now because they don’t want to sit in 9th period, you know, they don’t want to have to come in a half hour and they don’t want to be stuck there until the teacher tells them they can go, so, you know, they’ll come in and do enough to get out of 9th period, like, doing 5 or 6 more assignments, just so they don’t get assigned and then they have to come and I think that helps.

Ted saw an increase in student effort and spoke specifically about how the A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy affected student effort:

Some kids had to do more to achieve, under the new guidelines of A, B, C, the greatest change, again, would be in those students who were formerly C, D. You saw a great deal of difference in the way they approach, but they, also, and 99 percent of those who knew it liked it. And it goes back to the point, kids like to be pushed, they like to be disciplined. They can't do it themselves and they won't do it themselves. And why do we think they would, because they're kids. But they like to be disciplined. And when they were pushed by a system to do more, they were more successful. And they like the idea of being more successful.

Kevin also saw an increase in student effort:

They've got to get a C now, and they've got to put the time and the effort in to achieve that C. They cannot, you know, you've always got those kids that just want to pass, they just want to slide by, they just want to, you know, pass the class, get through. Well, now they're not going to slide by with a D. They're going to work to get the C grade.

Lori also stated that she saw fewer students choosing not to complete assigned work since the implementation of the reform initiatives:
I see a lot less kids doing that kind of ‘I’m just going to opt out of this. I’m just not going to do this assignment. I don’t like it, I don’t want to do it. I don’t want to put in the effort’. Um. I’ve had kids, you know, it might not always be wonderful high quality work, but they’re at least completing the assignment or I don’t have kids that just choose, ‘I’m not going to write my research paper. I’ll take the D or I’ll take the low grade’ because they have to finish it and they know they’ll be run into 9th period and will be made to do that. So I think that they put more effort into it because they know that they’re going to have to.

**Learning process**

During the interviews, seven of the eight teachers discussed how the reform initiatives had impacted the student’s understanding of the learning process. Teacher comments ranged from simple statements to elaborate explanations.

Lori made a simple statement: “Kids are more aware of their grades.” Similar statements about student awareness of grades because of the approach teachers take was discussed in a previous section.

Don explained how the increased student awareness is due to the process that is used and the checking of grades weekly:

*They’re either falling behind and not, they’re aware of it, but it’s not significant in their mind unless they see it weekly now, which they’re seeing. Before, they may have let that go. It’s made the difference on those kids that were content with an F. A lot of times, what would happen, is they’d get to their junior year, not realize that they were getting further and further behind on credits, to find out in their junior year that they’re way behind and they’re going to have to something and so they’ll possibly drop out but, more than likely go to the alternative school probably.*

Howard had a detailed explanation of how he thought students had become more aware of their own learning process through the reform initiatives:

*It makes students aware of their grades more. Having that incomplete really kind of keeps something on the students that they need to do this or what do I need to do? So, I think it has made them more engaged. It has made them*
more aware of their learning, more aware of the learning process, the struggling students, before we had this, I don’t know if a student really would have understood what an incomplete meant. You know, an incomplete means I have not completed the mastery of the concepts and that’s what we’re looking for, you know. The student never really understood what an A or a B or a C means. I’d like to think that with this A, B, C, Incomplete, that incomplete is showing them more than what the D or the F showed them. Having a D or an F as a grade and having that name, that Incomplete, I have not completed this, this is what I need to complete in order to pass the course, so I’d like to think that they have more understanding of the learning process through that.

Deb had a similar interpretation of the Incomplete component of the grading policy:

I hear from them [students], ‘We don’t have Fs in this school’. I said, ‘You’re right, we don’t. You either completed it acceptably or you didn’t complete is acceptably. And that’s the way it is’. You know, I said, ‘Then you can redo it’. Well, I think if somebody wants to fail, they want to fail. Well, yeah, but that doesn’t mean that that's going to be the end of it. You're going to have to take it again. And that's what an incomplete is as opposed to an F. An F means, you know, you failed and that's fine. We're going to give you an F and we're going to keep it. Well, an incomplete just means that you need to go back and do it again. And I think that's what, you need to do it until they get it right. And I think that they're trying, they're finally getting that through their heads, that there are some places where we're not going to let them just do whatever and hand it in.

Later in the interview, Deb talked about how the conversations she is having with students about their learning is changing:

It seems like the interactions that I have are more me talking to them and saying, ‘Well, what do you think we should do about’, you know, it's more of a two-way conversation than a one-way. ‘Do you want to do this during 9th period? We can work on it this time’. Or ‘Do you really think that this is, that you were ready for this test?’ and, you know, that kind of stuff. And the kids are more open. They're not quite, ‘Well, I don't know’. You know, I think it is. It's turning more into a conversation type of situation than it is just a teacher-student one, you know, that they're willing to tell you, you know, some of the reasons why they didn't do so well and help you come up with ideas of what they can do to make it better because they have more time to work with a teacher during 9th period than probably they've ever had, you know.
The Pygmalion effect was achieved at New Horizons High School. Teachers raised their expectations for student achievement, teachers treated students differently because of their expectations, and student behaviors changed.

**Improved relationships**

A final theme that emerged from the interviews was that relationships between students and teachers had improved through the 9th period initiative. Six of the eight teachers interviewed commented on the strengthening of relationships with students.

I was most surprised to uncover this theme during the interviews and data analysis. New Horizons High School had been working on improving relationships at the school. The method that had been implemented to foster improved relationships was an advisor-advisee program. This program was not being seen as successful. The 9th period initiative was allowing teachers to spend time with struggling learners and give them additional attention. This was the objective of the advisor-advisee program, but was being achieved through the 9th period initiative.

Because 9th period is held for 30 minutes each day with only the students that are assigned by the teacher to attend due to low grades or missing work, the number of students attending 9th period is usually significantly lower than students that attend class during regular school day. Many of the students that are assigned to 9th period are students that struggle academically. As Kevin explained:

*I know there's [sic] days where I've had one kid for 9th period. Well, if I'm one-on-one with a kid, I'm going to get to know that kid a lot better, you know, than when I have a PE class with, you know, 20 or whatever. . . . how we interact with the kids, if we have a struggling student, and we're going to get to know probably that kid better. We're going to interact with them more. We're going to see them more. You know, that's kind of the thing there, that*
yeah, our interaction with kids has definitely, if they're going home at 3:15, you're not going to interact with them anymore. So definitely gone up.

Deb commented about 9th period: “I like what it does with your ability to work with kids individually.”

Jean also commented on the interaction she is able to have with students in a smaller 9th period setting:

The kids that come in during 9th period we work more on a one-to-one. And that's more time for them, make them feel special, and help them get their work done. Yes, it does. We communicate with those kids a lot more. I don't know if I would say that it works with all the kids, to communicate. But it certainly would with the kids that come in 9th period.

Howard made a similar comment about the one-to-one setting within 9th period and the effect it had on students:

It [9th period] provides that opportunity for kids to have that one-on-one attention from the teachers, so they feel more comfortable asking for help. The teacher provides that classroom setting for them and that setting is specifically so they can ask questions on things they don't understand and they'll use it, and they have very effectively.

Howard commented later in the interview about the interaction with students and felt that because of the initiatives “we have time to work with them, gives us more of an interaction with students.”

Don also commented on the 9th period setting for students:

[The] student does not get the individual attention in a regular class and they do get individual attention in 9th period. It really helps those students that are placed in a helping situation where there’s, in a lot of cases, one-on-one or maybe one, two or three students in that setting, so they get a lot of help there.

Jean emphasized that within 9th period: “They [the students] see we're trying to help them.” Later in the interview, she commented on an individual student:
The kid was more focused. He wasn’t overwhelmed. He had somebody helping him in 9th period and trying to focus. So he wasn’t by himself. Everyone that had more than one class or two classes had someone guiding them.

Deb noted that some students like coming to 9th period: “There’s some kids who just don’t mind being in 9th period because then they get the extra time with the teachers.”

Jean had a similar comment about students: “There are some of these other ones that like to come to 9th period. They need a home to go to after school and so they come in and work then.”

Ted also commented about the teacher’s interaction with students during 9th period.

His comments were similar to the other teachers:

This is the one place where through the 9th period, a setting was provided for kids that needed assistance. They were given a place where they could feel comfortable seeking help. Help was there. While not all kids sought it, but it was there. And for that group of struggling students who maybe never were going to truly be in a situation where they could interact with their teachers for a variety of reasons that probably are all those things that we heard about: I don’t want to be stupid, I don’t want to sound stupid, I don’t want to look stupid in front of my, I don’t, you know, I feel, well, yeah. So we were able to, we started interacting with kids here in an environment and in a setting that was available to them. And I think kids were really comfortable in those situations. At least that was my impression. And I think that was the impression others had as well. I mean, whether every room was run right or whether every room was run the same is a different story. But the environment in which these lower-achieving students were put to get help I think truly was a great improvement in the way that teachers, students interacted. I don’t know that it changed an awful lot with the others, except when you had maybe the top students who now thought that they were in a grade situation so they would come into 9th period on their own to get help. But other than that, I don’t know that it changed the upper interaction so much. But it really did change the bottom.
Observations

Observations were conducted within the 9th period classrooms by AEA staff trained in the Instructional Practices Inventory, as well as by the researcher. The observations did not reveal a contradiction to the themes identified through the interviews.

The AEA staff identified that the majority of the classrooms had students working and the teacher was also engaged in the classroom. The researcher observed similar situations.

Most of the 9th period classes contained smaller numbers of students, as compared to the classes within the regular school day. Classes observed had from three students receiving assistance to ten students receiving assistance. This smaller number within this setting could be conducive to the building of relationships. In addition, more attention is given to a smaller group of students and the opportunity for individual attention is greater in the 9th period setting than it is in the regular classroom setting.

Summary

This chapter described in-depth interviews with the eight participants, the data collected from the interviews, and the data analysis. Five themes were identified through the data analysis and presented: (a) student success; (b) raised expectations; (c) changed teaching; (d) changed learning; and (e) improved relationships.

Pattern matching and a discussion of the findings will be presented in Chapter 5. The implications for the results of this study and a direction for the continuation of the current participatory action research will also be discussed.
CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this basic interpretive research study was to determine how teachers interpret the effect the A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy and the 9th period reform initiatives had at New Horizons High School. The previous chapter presented an analysis of in-depth interviews with eight high school teachers that were selected in an effort to create maximum variation. Central themes that emerged from the participants’ responses were presented. Findings were validated using multiple strategies, including triangulation of data, continued member-checking of participants, and utilizing a peer reviewer to identify and validate the themes that emerged from the interviews.

This chapter contains a brief summary of the findings pertaining to the research questions and central themes. Findings from the review of literature that was contained in Chapter 2 will be juxtaposed with the findings of the current research. The focus of this chapter is a discussion of the meaning of the results and their implications for high schools engaging in reform initiatives. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the delimitations and limitations of the study and a suggestion for the continuation of the current participatory action research.

Research Questions

*Research Question 1: How do teachers interpret the effects, if any, of the 9th period reform initiative on student achievement?*

Each of the eight teachers interviewed perceived that student achievement had increased because of the implementation of the 9th period initiative. Concrete examples of improved grades and increased test scores were provided as evidence of their interpretations. For example, Lori stated:
It (9th period) has definitely brought their grades up. Um, and a lot of that, I think, is due to the fact that they are getting the work done that they weren’t doing before and for a lot of them, I just don’t think that when they go home, when they leave this building nothing happens academically and for those kids, what they get done in school, is more now than what they did before.

Test scores at the school have improved over the last five years, echoing the accuracy of participants’ perceptions. Similarly, the ACT scores for the graduating class of 2009 were the highest scores of the previous five years. The ITED test scores for the school also showed an increase. Teachers perceived that the increased test scores can be correlated to 9th period. As Howard said:

I think it [9th period] has increased ACT scores. We’ve had an increase in our ACT scores in the past two or three years. I think there is a correlation there between the concepts they are learning in school and the scores on the ACT.

Research Question 2: How do teachers interpret the effects, if any, of the 9th period reform initiative on student engagement?

Each of the eight teachers perceived that student engagement had increased since the implementation of the 9th period initiative. The teachers cited the 100% graduation rate for the Class of 2010 and the low dropout rate as evidence of increased student engagement. For example, Stuart made the comment:

We had 100% graduation this year and I think 9th period had a great deal to do with that. Like I said, there were a couple seniors that I thought there was no way they were going to make it through, but in the last month, they were in 9th period every day and I think that’s the only reason they got through.

Howard made a similar statement:

9th period has maybe provided some students an opportunity to get their grades up and graduate on time with their classmates that maybe wouldn’t have in the past. In that aspect, I think it’s helped the graduation rate. . . If they keep their grades up here, it doesn’t give them a reason or desire to leave.

Don discussed the impact 9th period has had on the dropout rate:
There probably are some kids that would have dropped out if there had not been 9th period, that’s, there’s kids that are getting help on a daily basis that probably would have gotten lost in the shuffle or would have been forgotten because prior to starting 9th period, the options were just pure and simple failure and we had a lot of failures and a lot of Ds. . . It has probably greatly reduced that [dropout] because now they can’t let things slide to a point where it’s either not repairable or it’s check off, so they don’t get themselves to that point.

The certified dropout rate for the 2008-2009 school year, according to the Iowa Department of Education, was one student. This was the most current certified report (Retrieved July 31, 2010, from https://www.edinfo.state.ia.us/Dropout0809/Home.aspx).

Research Question 3: How do teachers interpret the effects, if any, of the A, B, C, Incomplete reform initiative on student achievement?

Each of the eight participants perceived that the A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy had a positive impact on student achievement and cited examples of student performance that supported their interpretation.

Deb discussed the grades students were earning in her classroom:

*Since we have moved to A, B, C, Incomplete, my grades have been a lot more consistently averaging above; you know, not so many that are in the Ds, just barely, you know, just barely scooting by. You know, because I had the same grading scale as we do now, except, of course, I went into the 60s with the Ds. Well, I would say that I have a lot more kids pushing to get into the Cs than I did before because of the, because we could eliminate, we eliminated the Ds, which in my opinion are not acceptable grades anyway. I think for the most part I have a lot more, a lot fewer kids who are below that 70 percent. I think I only ended up with five in summer school this year as opposed to 12 last year. And so that went down quite a bit. The number of kids who don't do anything and end up with IUs has gone down a lot more. I mean, I only had two this year, and I have 107 kids.*

Lori also felt that student achievement had improved due to the A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy:

*The kids are getting that higher grade. And I don't see really like just atrociously low test scores very often anymore, you know, kids taking a test*
and getting a 40 or a 50 on it. You know, a lot of times when they're not passing the tests, they're not passing it in what would have been the D range instead of in the F range. And so I think that it's pushing it up a little bit. I mean, even by our standard now, they're still not passing, they're not passing at a higher level a little bit so.

Research Question 4: How do teachers interpret the effects, if any, of the A, B, C, Incomplete reform initiative on student engagement?

Each of the eight teachers interviewed perceived the A, B, C, Incomplete reform initiative had a positive effect on student engagement and students were being more successful. Stuart noticed an increase in student engagement and student effort: “They have to know that they have to do more work so they’re more engaged because of it.” Later in the interview he said, “They’re required to do more, when they know they’re required to do more, they’re going to work harder on it rather than just get by. They can’t just get by anymore, they’re getting pushed a little more.”

Deb said, “I think it's [student engagement] better. You're trying to get more kids involved so that they can achieve the higher levels.” She went on and explained:

They are trying to get, you know, some of them 10 percentage points higher and stay there. You know, some of them were ok with a 61 percent because they got a D and that still meant that they passed. Well, now they try to stay at a 71 percent. Ten percentage points is huge over the course of a semester. For somebody to stay at a 71 instead of a 61, which they used to, I mean that's a, that's a huge accomplishment for some kids. And they're doing it.

Research Question 5: Have teacher expectations for student achievement increased?

Each of the eight teachers interviewed perceived that teacher expectations had increased, especially through the implementation of the A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy. Howard, as one example, expressed his conviction that expectations for students had increased:
We’re expecting students to master concepts that maybe they wouldn’t have before where before a 60% or 61% was a passing grade and now it’s not anymore, you’re expected to master more concepts in order to move on and progress through the learning process, so I would think that it has raised expectations at our school. I think that was our goal with it. We wanted to raise expectations, we were, we wanted to show students that we expect more out of them and we expect them to rise, so I think it has raised expectations at our school. Of staff and students.

Stuart made a comment about a personal adjustment that he made:

I was one that always did the 90, 80, 70, 60 and if you got a 60 that was good enough. If you were happy with a D, that was ok with me. So, it changed my perspective that way that, just like the kids, I had to be told that that wasn’t good enough that they had to do better than that, I had to expect more from them.

Pattern Matching Themes

Pattern matching is the most preferred strategy for case study data analysis (Yin, 2009). It relies on the theoretical frameworks that undergirded this case study. The five themes identified through the data analysis process were matched to research studies that informed the theoretical frameworks of this study:

1. Students were more successful in school since the implementation of the 9th period and A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy initiatives;
2. Since the implementation of the 9th period and A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy initiatives, there were changes in teaching practices;
3. There also were changes in student behavior;
4. Teachers had increased expectations for students; and
5. Student-teacher relationships had improved since the implementation of the initiatives.
Student success

The first four research questions elicited direct responses that elicited the theme of student success. Each of the eight teachers interviewed perceived that students had higher achievement because of the 9th period initiative and the A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy. They also felt that student engagement had increased because of the 9th period initiative and the A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy. The students’ increased success was not determined to be caused by intrinsic motivation, which would have been the ideal.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the Pygmalion effect, or self-fulfilling prophecy, is a motivation theory that refers to situations in which teacher expectations cause student performance to be consistent with the expectations of the teacher (Good & Brophy, 1995; Jussim & Harber, 2005; Trouilloud et al., 2002). Teacher expectations is discussed next.

Teacher expectations

The second theme that emerged from the interviews and data analysis was that teacher expectations had increased. There was evidence of this theme emerging throughout the interviews. Each of the eight teachers interviewed perceived that teacher expectations had increased. This aligned to the fifth research question of the study.

The Pygmalion effect has three components. The first component is that teacher expectations need to increase. The second component is that teachers need to treat students differently because of the increased expectations. The third component is that student behaviors need to change. The first component of the Pygmalion effect was achieved at New Horizons High School; teacher expectations were increased. This was most evident through the A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy initiative.
Effective schools research has identified the holding of high expectations for all students as a correlate of effective schools (Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte & McKee, 2006). In schools where achievement scores are improving, teachers and principals hold higher expectations for students than in schools where achievement is declining (Guskey, 1982).

At New Horizons High School, teachers perceive that expectations for student achievement are higher. Achievement scores, as indicated on the ITED and ACT tests, revealed increases in student achievement. Student performance may be consistent with teacher expectations.

**Changed teaching**

The third theme that emerged through the interviews was that the 9th period and A, B, C, Incomplete initiatives had caused changes to the teaching process. Each of the eight teachers interviewed made comments that led to the discovery of this theme. The changes they discussed were: teachers keep better track of students since the implementation of the initiatives; there is an increase in teacher collaboration and parent communication; teachers are pushing students to achieve more; classroom instruction has changed; and teachers are now available to students.

One consistent negative component since the implementation of the reform initiatives was uncovered within this theme. The teachers are now more available to students which has directly affected the time within the contract day for teacher preparation for classes.

Two correlates of effective schools align with this implication. The frequent evaluation of student progress (Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte & McKee, 2006) and high levels of parental and community involvement (D’Amico, 1982; Lezotte & McKee, 2006) are both
correlates of effective schools. Both of these correlates were discussed by teachers as areas that had improved since the implementation of the two initiatives. Grades are updated weekly and students and parents are notified more frequently. Teachers communicate with parents more frequently, especially through e-mail.

There are four major factors involved in the teacher behaviors associated with the Pygmalion effect (Rosenthal, 2002). Three of the four factors are relevant to the phenomenon occurring within 9th period. The first factor is the climate teachers create for students. Students who are expected to achieve at high levels are treated with more warmth (Cooper et al., 1979; Rosenthal, 2002). Teachers smile and nod their heads more to high-achieving students than low-achieving students (Cooper et al., 1979). Low-achieving students are given less time to formulate responses to questions (Good, 1982). The low-achieving students are smiled at less often and the teacher maintains less eye contact with low-achievers (Cooper et al., 1979; Good, 1982).

The second factor is input. More material is taught to the high-achieving students (Cooper et al., 1979; Rosenthal, 2002). Teachers demand less work from low-achieving students as compared to high-achieving students (Cooper et al., 1979; Good, 1982).

The third factor or output factor is the tendency for teachers to give high-achieving students more opportunities for responding (Rosenthal, 2002). Other studies affirming this effect revealed that low-achieving students were given fewer response opportunities by teachers to respond (Good, 1982; Good & Nichols, 2001). Teachers also pay more attention to the responses of high-achieving students than to those of low-achieving students (Cooper et al., 1979).
It can be difficult for low-achievers to be successful in heterogeneous classrooms (Good & Brophy, 1995). Low-achieving students tend to be more passive in classrooms (Good & Nichols, 2001). This is due to a student’s hesitation to answer questions in class because the answers may be wrong, and the teachers reinforce this by calling on the student less frequently (Good & Nichols, 2001).

Due to the 9th period initiative, students who are struggling, have grades below a C-, or have missing work spend up to two extra hours each week with teachers. High-achieving students usually are not assigned to 9th period. Teachers, as was discussed previously, hold higher expectations and are demanding higher performance of the lower-achieving students with the A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy. The higher-achieving students are not as likely to be in the classroom for up to two hours each week; therefore, teachers can focus their effort and instruction on the low-achieving students. This also gives the low-achieving students more opportunity to respond and get assistance. Teachers have changed how they treat low-achieving students, which is the second component of the Pygmalion effect. Thus, low-achieving students are experiencing more success at New Horizons High School. This change in relationships will be discussed in a following section.

**Changed student behavior**

The fourth theme that emerged from the data analysis of the interviews was that the reform initiatives changed student behavior. Students spent more time at school engaged in the learning process and were asking for help more frequently than before. In addition, students were more engaged and putting forth more effort. They had also become more aware of their own learning process.
The three stages involved in the Pygmalion effect are: (1) teachers develop expectations for students’ future achievement; (2) teachers treat students differently according to the expectations; and (3) teachers’ treatment influences the students’ achievement (Trouilloud et al., 2002). Teacher expectations have to change student behavior as evidence of the existence of the Pygmalion effect (Trouilloud et al., 2002).

Teachers perceived that expectations had increased due to the implementation of the reform initiatives. Teachers treated low-achieving students differently through the 9th period initiative. The teachers also cited evidence of changes in student behavior. For example, at the end of the interview, Don reflected on the effect of the initiatives and spoke specifically to the change in student behavior:

*I was hopeful that it [the initiatives] would change behaviors more so than it would change grades, so I guess that I’m more concerned with what we’re learning and the ability to continue to learn rather than a number. And I guess as I’ve thought about it now and talked about it for the last half hour or so, I guess I’ve realized that it did change behaviors and it probably changed the behaviors of all the kids that it’s possible to change behaviors of except for this certain group which we do not have an answer for yet . . . I guess, I guess we have changed behavior on a lot of them. Some of them didn’t really need to change behavior because they were already at that level that that did not affect them anyway, but the other ones, um, I guess we did do that and I hadn’t really thought about that until I thought about it long enough and talked about it long enough that maybe that did change.*

**Improved relationships**

A final theme that emerged from the interviews was one that was somewhat surprising. Relationships between students and teachers had improved through the 9th period initiative. Six of the eight teachers interviewed commented on the strengthening of relationships with students.
This aligns with another reform model that is based on the concepts of rigor, relevance, and relationships. McNulty (2006) from the ICLE explained the three key elements that great schools possessed at the Iowa High School Summit. Great schools have established strong relationships with students, have developed a relevant curriculum, and have rigorous instruction (McNulty). McNulty emphasized that the most important factor of the three was the establishment of strong relationships. He believed that students will not engage in their learning, even if it is relevant and rigorous, unless trust has been established first and the students believe that learning is worth their effort. According to Blankstein (2004), “Relationships are at the core of successful learning communities as well as student success” (p. 58).

Ted commented on the change in the relationships between teachers and students due to the 9th period initiative:

This is the one place where through the 9th period, a setting was provided for kids that needed assistance. They were given a place where they could feel comfortable seeking help. Help was there. While not all kids sought it, but it was there. And for that group of struggling students who maybe never were going to truly be in a situation where they could interact with their teachers for a variety of reasons that probably are all those things that we heard about: I don't want to be stupid, I don't want to sound stupid, I don't want to look stupid in front of my, I don't, you know, I feel, well, yeah. So we were able to, we started interacting with kids here in an environment and in a setting that was available to them. And I think kids were really comfortable in those situations.

**Implications and Recommendations for Practitioners**

This study has important implications for New Horizons High School, which will be discussed in the section, Recommendations for Continuation of the Research, which follows. This study also has implications for teachers, administrators, school leaders, teacher and
administrator preparation programs, and policy makers. High schools that seek to be institutions that increase student success, increase teacher expectations, change teaching, change student behaviors, and improve teacher-student relationships should look closely at implementing A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy and 9th period reform initiatives.

The Pygmalion effect has been manipulated through the reform initiatives. Teachers hold higher expectations for student achievement because of the A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy. Teachers are treating low-achieving students differently than before the reform initiatives because the higher-achieving student has been removed from the classroom for up to two hours each week and the low-achieving student is spending more time with the teacher. Therefore, student achievement is increasing and student behavior is changing.

The reform initiatives are also aligned with high school reform research. Three of the seven correlates of effective schools research were addressed through the reform initiatives, as well as the relationship component of the reform model from the ICLE.

**Teachers**

Teachers should be aware that holding high expectations for all students will result in an increase in student achievement. Teachers should consciously increase the expectations they hold for students. They should also be aware of the natural treatment they give to students, such as responding more positively to high-achieving students and giving them more wait time. Teachers should change their response to low-achieving students. If high expectations are held for all students, all students should be receiving relatively the same treatment from teachers.

**Administrators and school leaders**
Administrators and school leaders can also benefit from the results of this study. The school that was explored in this case study altered the school day and the grading policy. The school day was lengthened for students who struggled academically. The grading policy raised expectations. The results were increased student achievement. Administrators and school leaders wishing to increase student achievement need to raise expectations for all students and, as the expectations increase, a structure needs to be in place to support the struggling students. The 9th period structure gave support to struggling students as the expectations were increased for all students.

Administrators and school leaders should look at inservice and training opportunities for teachers that focus on teacher expectations and teacher behaviors. If teachers can raise expectations and treat all students as if they hold high expectations for them, students will increase their achievement and strive to reach the expectations set for them. Training could be focused on feedback that teachers provide to students.

Administrators and school leaders should develop initiatives that are research-based. The initiatives that were implemented at New Horizons High School aligned with three of the seven correlates of effective schools research as well as the relationship component of the reform model from the ICLE.

**Teacher and administrator preparation programs**

Teacher and administrator preparation programs should include a focus on the importance of teachers holding high expectations for all students. Teacher and administrator preparation programs should also focus on the fact that teachers’ behaviors affect student achievement and there are strategies for teachers to implement that will alleviate the
influence their behavior has on student achievement. When student teachers are observed, the supervising college professor should look for behaviors that affect students positively and negatively, and bring those behaviors to the student teachers’ attention to improve their teaching practices. Administrators should also be trained to look for behaviors that affect students positively and negatively, and bring those behaviors to the teachers’ attention during observations in an effort to improve teaching practices.

Administrator preparation programs should have a focus that centers on research-based theories, such as the effective schools research. Administrators will be involved in causing change and knowledge of effective theories and research will help them cause sound change.

**Policy makers**

Because the reform initiatives aligned with three of the seven correlates of effective schools research as well as the relationship component of the reform model from the ICLE, the initiatives were grounded in reform research. Policy makers should strive to support initiatives and require that initiatives, when being developed, align with research.

**Delimitations**

This study was conducted with several delimitations. It was conducted at a single, small rural high school in the Midwest. There were a small number of participants (eight). In addition, the participants were selected for maximum variation—they were teaching at this high school during the 2005-2006 school year when the reform initiatives were being developed. This enabled them to reflect upon the changes that they perceive have occurred since the implementation of the reform initiatives.
Limitations

There are several limitations associated with this study. Purposeful sampling and a small number of participants were used; therefore, generalizations cannot be made to other populations. Nevertheless, the results can be used to learn and provide opportunities for further research.

Another limitation inherent to qualitative research is that the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis. The personal biases and beliefs of the researcher may affect the interpretation of data. Efforts to ensure goodness and trustworthiness of the study, such as member checking, triangulation of data, peer review, and maximum variation of participants, were implemented.

Another limitation is the use of a single case, a small rural high school in the Midwest, which was the focus of the study. The findings would be stronger if they were findings from multiple cases.

The data were collected through interviews, artifact reviews, and observations. Some limitations associated with the interview method are the participants may have been biased in their interpretation of the effects of the reform initiatives. The participants may have provided answers in an effort to please the researcher. The researcher may not have accurately interpreted the answers provided by the participants. Thus, controls for bias were implemented throughout the research process.

Recommendations for Continuation of the Research

The participatory action research model is a continual process that loops through planning, action, observation, and reflection phases. This study is a summary of the
reflection phase of the process. The summary should be presented to New Horizons High School leadership team for them to use in the planning phase as they cycle through the loop of the PAR process again. The leadership team might consider implementing the following strategies that align with motivation theory and reform models into the reform initiatives to further increase student achievement.

The Pygmalion effect, or self-fulfilling prophecy, was the framework for the reform initiatives. The first strategy the leadership team should implement is to look at research that has expanded upon the Pygmalion effect and build the next level of the reform initiative upon that theory. The current reform initiatives have raised teacher expectations and are pushing students to achieve higher levels, but it does not appear to be intrinsic motivation. Strategies should be incorporated into the school that cause or motivate students to choose to put in more time at school and choose to study harder fulfilling their own intrinsic desire to learn. Newmann, King, and Carmichael (2007) studied and developed the Authentic Intellectual Work (AIW) theory that may be the natural next step for the leadership team to study. Authentic intellectual work is more interesting and meaningful to students, and more likely to motivate and sustain students to learn (Newmann et al.). The AIW also increases rigor and relevance in the classroom. Rigor and relevance are the two components of the ICLE reform model that weren’t depicted through this study.

The reform initiatives aligned with three of the seven correlates of effective schools. One of the correlates that the initiatives aligned with was the frequent evaluation of student progress. Feedback to students was also discussed within the research surrounding the Pygmalion effect. The teachers are providing weekly updated grade reports to students and parents. The leadership team might consider examining other forms of feedback that could
be incorporated into the routines within the school to maximize the impact of effective feedback. Grant Wiggins and Robert Marzano are two researchers who may provide studies and training regarding effective feedback for students.

The other two correlates of effective schools research that this study aligned with are high expectations for all students (Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte & McKee, 2006) and high levels of parental and community involvement (D’Amico, 1982; Lezotte & McKee, 2006). The teachers reported an increase in communication with parents. The interviews did not reveal a high level of parental and community involvement. The initiatives may have moved teachers in this direction. The leadership team might consider implementing strategies that build upon and increase parental and community involvement as a natural next step.

The four correlates of effective schools research that were undetected through the interviews of teachers for this study were: a strong instructional leader (Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte & McKee, 2006), instructional emphasis (Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte & McKee, 2006), an orderly, safe climate (Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte & McKee, 2006), and staff development (D’Amico, 1982). These correlates should be reviewed by the leadership team as they engage in the planning phase of the PAR process. One or more of the correlates could be the focus of the future action phase.

Rigor, relevance, and relationships are the foundation of the reform model from the ICLE. The relationship component was improved, according to the teachers interviewed, through the reform initiatives. The two remaining components, rigor and relevance, should be reviewed by the leadership team. Rigor and relevance should be increased within the classrooms. The structure, through the 9th period, is in place to support students as the rigor and relevance is increased. Lori commented that the next change that she thought that
needed to occur within the school is a change within the individual classrooms: “What we need to do at this point is look within our own instruction and find ways to make classroom instruction more effective.”

Another recommendation, not necessarily for the leadership team at New Horizons High School, but as a more general recommendation is that similar qualitative research could be conducted in other locations, at other types of high schools, that are implementing A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy and 9th period reform initiatives. It would also be helpful to conduct this research with teachers from comparative schools to determine if they differ in their perception of the impact of the A, B, C, Incomplete and 9th period reform initiatives.

**Conclusion**

Based on the interviews with the teachers, it was determined that the A, B, C, Incomplete grading policy and 9th period reform initiatives did have an impact on student achievement and student engagement. The reform initiatives had an impact on student success, teacher expectations, it changed teaching, it changed student behavior, and it improved relationships. The leadership team at the school should continue using the PAR process to expand upon and develop other initiatives that will continue to impact student achievement and student engagement. The use of the results of this study can serve as part of the reflection phase and can be used as they loop back to the planning phase. Educators can use the PAR process to strategically cause change that has a positive impact on student achievement. Not only will the changes improve conditions for the individual students, but it will also improve the condition of our society because “the country is diminished to the
extent that any high school fails to provide all that it might for every student” (NASSP, 1996, p. 5).
APPENDIX A. DEFINITIONS

Several terms were defined for use in the study:

*Area Education Agency:* In Iowa, the AEAs are regional agencies that assist the Department of Education in providing services and support to local school districts.

*Authentic Intellectual Work:* Instruction that focuses on original application of knowledge and skills by the student. It also focuses on the study of the details of the task in order to create a product or presentation that has value beyond school.

*Instructional Practices Inventory:* Instructional Practices Inventory (IPI) is a process that provides valid, reliable data for profiling the level of student engagement in the learning environment.

*IS:* A grade of an IS means continued effort in 9th period will likely raise the grade to a C or higher. A few content concepts need to be mastered.

*IU:* A grade of an IU means continued effort in 9th period is necessary, but it is likely the class will need to be repeated because very little content is being mastered.


*Student achievement:* For the purposes of this study, student grades will be the primary indicator of student achievement, unless otherwise noted.
APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What is your position at the school?
   How long have you been teaching here?
   Were you a teacher here before the ABCI and 9th period initiatives were implemented?
   Were you a teacher here after the ABCI and 9th period initiatives were implemented?

2. What effect has 9th period had on student achievement?
   What makes you feel that way? How do you know this?
   What effect has 9th period had on grades?
   What makes you feel that way? How do you know this?
   What effect has 9th period had on ACT scores?
   What effect has 9th period had on ITED scores?

3. What effect has 9th period had on student engagement?
   What makes you feel that way? How do you know this?
   What effect has 9th period had on increased effort?
   What makes you feel that way? How do you know this?
   What effect has 9th period had on attendance? Please explain.
   What effect has 9th period had on graduation rate?
   What makes you feel that way? How do you know this?
   What effect has 9th period had on dropout rate?
   What makes you feel that way? How do you know this?

4. What effect has A, B, C, Incomplete had on student achievement?
   What makes you feel that way? How do you know this?
   What effect has A, B, C, Incomplete had on grades?
   What makes you feel that way? How do you know this?
   What effect has A, B, C, Incomplete had on ACT scores?
   What effect has A, B, C, Incomplete had on ITED scores?

5. What effect has A, B, C, Incomplete had on student engagement?
   What makes you feel that way? How do you know this?
   What effect has A, B, C, Incomplete had on increased effort?
   What makes you feel that way? How do you know this?
   What effect has A, B, C, Incomplete had on asking for help? Please explain.
   What effect has A, B, C, Incomplete had on attendance? Please explain.
   What effect has A, B, C, Incomplete had on graduation rate?
   What makes you feel that way? How do you know this?
   What effect has A, B, C, Incomplete had on dropout rate?
   What makes you feel that way? How do you know this?

6. How do you think the reform initiatives that we’ve implemented have changed what we do?
   How has it affected prep time, if at all?
   How has it helped us to focus on struggling students, if at all?

7. How do you think the reform initiatives that we’ve implemented changed your expectations for student achievement?
How has it changed the expectations of the building as a whole? Has that had an effect on students? Please explain.

8. How do you think the reform initiatives that we’ve implemented have changed how we interact?
   How has it changed how we interact with each other?
   How has it changed how we interact with students?
   How has it changed how we interact with parents?

9. What was your role in the implementation of the 9th period initiative?

10. What was your role in the implementation of the A, B, C, Incomplete initiative?

11. If I, as the principal of the school, left, what do you think would happen to the reform initiatives?
January 11, 2010

To Whom It May Concern:

As superintendent and school board president of West Sioux Community School, we give permission for Kim Buryanek to complete her dissertation at West Sioux, interviewing teachers regarding high school reform initiatives that have been implemented. We also give her permission to access and use any data from the school that would be beneficial for her study.

Sincerely,

Paul Olson  
Superintendent

Susan Sharpe  
Board President
APPENDIX D. INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Title of Study: The Impact of High School Reform Initiatives: A Case Study

Investigators: Kim Buryanek, BS, M.Ed.

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 determine teacher beliefs regarding how the high school reform initiatives at New Horizons have impacted student achievement and student engagement. You are being invited to participate in this study because you were a high school teacher at New Horizons during the 2005-2006 school year.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES
If you agree to participate in this study, your participation will last for one visit, which will take approximately 45 minutes to one hour. During the study you may expect the following study procedures to be followed: You will be interviewed one time. The interview will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes and consist of a number of open-ended questions. Follow-up questions will be asked to clarify a point or follow a related tangent. Observations in classrooms during 9th period may be conducted. The observations will last no more than 30 minutes. During the observations, student engagement will be noted. At no point will your name or teachers’ names or students’ names, titles, or other directly identifying information be used in this research project. You will be assigned a pseudonym in all written records. I will tape record our interviews. Your name will not be included on the tape recordings and said recordings will be erased at the completion of the research project. You will be asked to review transcripts of the interviews, as well as any other instances where you are portrayed. The final written report and presentation will be shared with my Plan of Study Committee at Iowa State University. If the results are published, your identity will remain confidential. At any point during the interview process you may skip any question that you do not wish to answer or that makes you uncomfortable. You may also end the interview at any point, no questions asked.

RISKS
There are no foreseeable risks at this time from participating in this study.

BENEFITS
If you decide to participate in this study there may be no direct benefit to you. It is hoped that the information gained in this study will benefit society by providing valuable information about teachers’ perceptions of the impact high school reform initiatives at New Horizons have had on student achievement and student engagement. It also is hoped that the information gained from this study will benefit New Horizons by providing valuable information that can be used to improve upon the reform initiatives that have been implemented.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION
You will not have any 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 auditing departments of Iowa State University, 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. At no point will your name, title, or other directly identifying information be used in this research project. You will be assigned a pseudonym in all written records. Your name will not be included on the tape recordings and said recordings will be erased at the completion of the research project. I will be the sole person who will have access to study records. They will be kept on a personal flash drive that will be kept in a locked box in my home office at all times. Written files will be destroyed as soon as legally possible. 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 Kim Buryanek at (712) 551-4722 or Dr. Scott McLeod at (707) 722-7853.
- If you have any questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact the IRB Administrator, (515) 294-4566, IRB@iastate.edu, or Director, (515) 294-3115, Office of Research Assurances, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011.

***************************************************************************
PARTICIPANT 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 written informed consent prior to your participation in the study.

Participant’s Name (printed) 

(Participant’s Signature) (Date)

(Signature of Parent/Guardian or Legally Authorized Representative) (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 E. HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Date: 5/10/2010
To: Kim Buryanek
1315 10th St
Hawarden, IA 51023

From: Office for Responsible Research

Title: Impact of High-School Reform Initiatives Using the Pygmalion Effect
IRB Num: 10-152

Approval Date: 5/10/2010
Continuing Review Date: 5/5/2011
Submission Type: New
Review Type: Expedited
CC: Dr. Scott McLeod
N231 Lagomarcino

The project referenced above has received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Iowa State University. Please refer to the IRB ID number shown above in all correspondence regarding this study.

Your study has been approved according to the dates shown above. To ensure compliance with federal regulations (45 CFR 46 & 21 CFR 56), please be sure to:

- Use only the approved study materials in your research, including the recruitment materials and informed consent documents that have the IRB approval stamp.
- Obtain IRB approval prior to implementing any changes to the study by submitting the "Continuing Review and/or Modification" form.
- Immediately inform the IRB of (1) all serious and/or unexpected adverse experiences involving risks to subjects or others; and (2) any other unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.
- Stop all research activity if IRB approval lapses. Unless continuation is necessary to prevent harm to research participants. Research activity can resume once IRB approval is reestablished.
- Complete a new continuing review form at least three to four weeks prior to the date for continuing review as noted above to provide sufficient time for the IRB to review and approve continuation of the study. We will send a courtesy reminder as this date approaches.

Research investigators are expected to comply with the principles of the Belmont Report, and state and federal regulations regarding the involvement of humans in research. These documents are located on the Office for Responsible Research website http://www.compliance.iastate.edu/serviceforms/ or available by calling (515) 294-4566.

Upon completion of the project, please submit a Project Closure Form to the Office for Responsible Research, 1136 Pearson Hall, to officially close the project.
REFERENCES


“Good or Bad, what teachers expect from students they generally get!” (1998). Retrieved from ERIC database (ED426985)


ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the participants in this study. My words cannot appropriately convey the respect that I have for you. Listening to your thoughts regarding the work that you do for students conveyed to me a sense of professional commitment that you feel. I am grateful that you shared your thoughts with me.

I would also like to thank my parents, John and Janice Vander Feen. They were my first teachers, the ones that instilled in me a desire to continue to investigate and learn that has carried me to this point in my life.

Finally, I thank Gary Buryanek and Antonia Buryanek. Gary gave me encouragement when needed and made it possible for me to pursue this degree by taking great care of our home and family. Antonia taught me to include time with family and to find balance in my life between work and family. My degree belongs to them as well. I would not be writing this acknowledgement without their love and support.