TEACHER BUY-IN
ONE SCHOOL’S EXPERIENCE
TO IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

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ACTION THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN
EDUCATION

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
MONTEREY BAY

AUGUST 31, 2001
TEACHER BUY-IN
ONE SCHOOL’S EXPERIENCE
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Abstract

This case study was conducted in order to better understand teacher buy-in with respect to the reform taking place at Garden Middle School in California. The study attempted to determine if teachers were aware of the reform effort, if they knew the goal of the reform, and if they felt they were part of the reform and if so what their role was in the school’s reform efforts. A survey was given to all forty teachers. The survey contained questions regarding their attitudes and perceptions about reform efforts at the school as well as background questions. Also, interviews were conducted with a subset of ten teachers. The survey and interviews revealed that teachers were committed to improving student achievement, but perceived the reform efforts to be driven by SAT 9 preparation test. This perception reflects the pressure that school’s like Garden are under due to SAT 9. However, this perception of the reform efforts is in discord with the initial reform effort goals. This discord could potentially limit the participation of teachers and ultimately the success of the reform efforts. Additionally, the study provided a summary of the reform efforts which revealed where the school has built capacity for reform and where it needs to expand.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to acknowledge all those who helped make this work possible.

To my family whose love and encouragement helped me believe I could do anything.
To my fellow teachers for their commitment and love of teaching.
To my advisors Christine and Kani who guided and supported my endeavor.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

I have been teaching at Garden Middle School in California since the beginning of my teaching career. It is a year-round school located in the Central Coast area where the economy is agriculturally based. It has been in open since 1993, and serves a diverse population of students. It is a school that receives Title I, EIA/LEP, and Title VI funding because of its high English Language learner and low income student population.

Many times I have expressed how lucky I was to begin teaching at Garden. I work with a strong, committed and innovative group of teachers. I have been exposed to and participated in the training and implementation of teaching strategies that have helped students succeed with reading and content learning. For the last seven years Garden has been the recipient of a Middle School Demonstration Project to integrate Language Arts and Social Studies grant with a focus on literacy. Educators from throughout the State of California have visited and observed the “great things” Garden is doing.

Although Garden Middle School has been characterized as a high performing school, students’ achievement levels on state assessment such as on the California Standardized Achievement Test 9 (SAT 9) did not reflect what students were learning or being taught. External assessment measures did not align with Garden’s internal assessments such as grades and the Integrated Reading and Writing test. It has become a joke to call ourselves the high performing low performing school. We may laugh, but it also bothers us. I believe there is a need to reconcile what we know we do well with why we are performing low on external assessment. One way that we came closer to understanding was by becoming part of the Consortium of High Performing Learning Community Schools (HPLC).
Reform at Garden

About two years ago we were invited to join HPLC. The Consortium was created by the research firm Research Policy Practice after being contracted for a federal study. Part of the work they are doing is to research what resources can be provided to help schools achieve student success. Garden was asked to join specifically because it provided an opportunity to study how coaching and training in Data Based Inquiry would assist Garden in achieving student success.

Garden Middle School looked at its data and concluded that external measures of student achievement did not align with its internal assessments. Student GPA's and the scores from the school's Integrated Reading and Writing test showed improvement in student academic performance while the CTBS and later the SAT 9 did not reflect this growth. In order to eliminate this discrepancy the school initiated a reform designed to improve student academic achievement on external and internal measures.

First, homeroom time previously dedicated to study skills was given over for SAT 9 prep. The school developed a testing schedule that eliminated bells and included a breakfast. Testing occurs during a weeks' period where students test in the morning, without the interruption of bells, and so that students can attend their regular classes after testing. All students are provided with a breakfast in order to help them prepare for test taking.

Then departments began re-writing curriculum, sharing teaching strategies, and developing internal subject matter assessments. The idea was to align curriculum to newly developed state standards and see where SAT 9 content could be addressed within the curriculum. The creation of an internal assessment or benchmark would provide the school with data on whether students were learning what was being taught. Also an internal assessment would provide a broader picture of student achievement. Science and Social Studies departments also agreed to assist Language Arts and Math with SAT 9 prep. At this time the state is not testing Social studies and science, however the performance of
students on SAT 9 is a school wide concern and it was decided by the staff that Language Arts and Math teachers should not be the only teachers to carry the burden.

The school was the recipient of a Middle School Demonstration Project grant from the state to integrate Language Arts and Social Studies that focused on literacy. In order to involve Math and Science, the school applied to expand the Middle School Demonstration Project grant to include literacy development in Science and Math. The grant was obtained and funds are being used to fund curriculum development and collaboration time for teachers in these departments.

School administration recently brought in elements of the Target Teach program. This program takes textbooks and school curriculum and creates a directory which indicates where standards from the SAT 9 are covered in the school’s materials. However, teachers are then to create their own lessons to address the standard and figure out how to incorporate them with in the curriculum. Target Teach then creates what they call a “benchmark” test which tests a specific standard on the SAT 9. This program was already being used at another school in the district because of their low performance on the SAT 9. That school’s staff was given an in-service and had paid for the complete program. Garden took from the program only the benchmark tests. This program was not requested by Garden teachers and implementing only part of the program with out training has been difficult for them.

From the time that the school looked at its data the staff has been committed to improving student achievement. The staff had been working on the reform efforts for nearly five years. I wanted to see what had been accomplished by the reform how teachers perceived the reform and how they had participated in the reform during this time.

Until Garden made contact with HIPLC, I had not thought about change on a conscious level. Our principal was moved to the district office and a different one was assigned. Our high rate of staff turnover continued. New educational policy was made and every year “things” changed. With HIPLC, we were given a tool, Data Based Inquiry, to
analyze our school internally and thus created an internal change force for improving student achievement.

First we used data based inquiry to determine what were our students' achievement needs based on both the external and internal assessment data we had. Second, each department has created an internal assessment that incorporated the format and content of the SAT 9 along with our curriculum.

The external change force came with SAT 9 testing and the State Department of Education telling us we must improve. I perceived that change was not just happening to us, as a school we were trying to make change happen to improve student achievement. I would like to use Garden's experience with change as a case study of school reform.

Several studies and papers have been done on successful models of school change. Mullen et al (1994) presented a paper on a case study of district wide reform in Texas. They concluded that for effective change collaboration was vital. Useen et al (1996) also studied district wide reform at a school district in Pennsylvania. They identified factors that explained the pattern of incomplete implementation of reforms that emerged. They argued that school structures and policies isolate the school personnel undertaking reform which restricts the development of social capital necessary for effective school change.

This case study will look at an individual school's experience with reform efforts. Garden is Year Round multi-track middle school that already has in place structures that are geared toward student achievement and yet it is struggling with low student achievement as measured by standardized test. It will be possible to place Garden within the School Reform Paradigm and present what insight its experience offers for teacher participation in effective school change.

Researchers and theorists may produce recommendations for school reform, but if teachers are not on board it is unlikely reform efforts will succeed. In order to better understand teacher's perceptions about reform and their perceived role in the reform, this study examined how teachers view Garden's attempt to improve student achievement.
Clearly, the changes taken place at Garden have direct impact on teacher’s work and environment. Therefore, this study attempted to answer the following teacher specific questions:

-How do teachers at Garden perceive the alignment of curriculum with state and district standards?
-How do teachers at Garden perceive the creation of an internal assessment?
-Can teachers identify the changes that are taking place?
-What do they perceive is their role in improving student achievement?

**Terms**

Reform: Systemic school change based on improving student achievement

Tracks: grouping of students in a year round school where three tracks are always attending and one is on break

Families: a group of teachers including one teacher from each of the subject areas who share the same students and meet weekly as a group to discuss student issues

SAI 9: Standardized test given by the state to measure school’s student achievement

NCE: Normed curve equivalent

**Limitations and delimitations**

This case study had limitations and delimitations. First the research was dependent on the teachers returning surveys and agreeing to be interviewed. Surveys were placed in teacher mailboxes which are usually full of mail teachers pay varying attention to. It is conceivable the survey could have been thrown out with other junk mail. Also, teachers have much to do and little time to do it in. Many might have intended to fill out the survey, but did not have time before the date of return requested for the survey. Second, although all participants who were asked to be interviewed agreed to the interview, they were not
given the questions of the interview ahead of time. Responses then may not have been complete due to a lack of reflection time.

Only one school was used for the study which may limit its applicability. It is a middle school with a year round calendar and divided into four student groups with only three attending school at one time. It is a school that has been in existence since 1993. During the last five years the staff at Garden has applied for and awarded several grants related to improving the quality of literacy instruction at the school. It was awarded several Middle School Demonstration Project grants (1996-2000).

This case study was conducted to look at teacher participation in reform efforts in a middle school. In order to gain fuller insight, Chapter Two begins with a discussion of a theoretical framework for school reform. Then teacher participation in reform efforts is placed within the context of school reform. In addition, several case studies on school reform and teacher participation are reviewed. Chapter Three describes the methodology used for this case study. The results and analysis of the survey data are presented in Chapter Four. Chapter Five provides a summary and discussion of the results as well as recommendations.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section presents the theory on school change drawn mostly from Fullan’s work. It provides a base for discussion on school change. The second section is a discussion on teacher participation in school change and it is included because this study looks at teacher participation in a particular school’s reform efforts. Finally, a section on school change case studies is included in order to see what other schools have experienced.

Theory of School Reform

The following section will discuss theory behind school reform. Discussion will focus on Fullan’s (1999) theory of change. In addition support for Fullan’s theory from other researchers and educators will be presented.

Fullan (1999) draws from both complexity and evolutionary theories and introduces the role of moral purpose to present a comprehensive and insightful theory of educational change in his book Change Forces the Sequel. His work is innovative in that it views change as having forces that can be channeled to create the energy necessary for systemic school wide reform. He discusses working at the edge of chaos, collaboration, and equity and tapping into educators’ moral purpose as necessary components in an ever evolving process of educational reform.

From complexity theory Fullan takes the idea that success in reform is achieved when an organization is operating at the edge of chaos. He explains that change is a process that is continuously happening and it is fraught with paradoxes and contradictions. With change comes conflict, anxiety and resistance, however, these very elements can lead to creative solutions and accountability in educational reform. For example, change will cause anxiety in teachers which can lead to resistance to the change taking place. Fullan believes that listening to why people are resistant can provide ways to address the problems
they have with participating in the change and facilitate the change process itself. "Creative solutions arise out of interaction under conditions of uncertainty, diversity and instability" (p.4). Being able to deal with the complexity of change is building the capacity a school has for educational reform. Clearly there is a need for a place in which interaction and the exchange of knowledge take place in order to build capacity for effective educational reform.

Another component of Fullan's capacity building for educational reform comes from evolutionary theory. The premise of the theory is that in order to survive, humans need each others' knowledge. Fullan elaborates that through collaboration schools build their capacity to incorporate new ideas and in essence are involved in knowledge creation. This knowledge creation is achieved through "...embedded interaction inside and outside organization which converts tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge on an ongoing basis" (p.16). Fullan sees schools as organizations and his study of organizational research on business practices indicates successful organizations are continuously engaged in this transformation of knowledge. Thus, schools need to also be engaged in transformation in their knowledge base creation and capacity building for educational reform.

Fullan adds to evolutionary theory by stating that this knowledge can best be shared through ongoing interaction and that these interactions or collaborat on must happen with in the context of equity because equity extinguishes issues of power and control which can inhibit the change process. Educators must see and treat each other as equals. He contends however, that there is no one answer to achieving equity. "No one has the answer to this, but it is likely that a combination of political, moral and self-interested forces will be needed" (p.9).

Finally, Fullan states, "...a strong commitment to the role of moral purpose in educational reform is crucial" (p.1). Fullan defines moral purpose on both macro and micro levels. On the macro level, moral purpose is how education contributes to the development of society and of democracy. On the micro level, moral purpose is making a
difference in the lives of all students (p. 1). Tapping into educators' moral purpose is necessary to reform efforts because it makes teachers committed to vision and goals of the reform efforts. Fullan explains that tapping into moral purpose is complex because it requires the development of mutual empathy and relationships across diverse groups (p. 2).

His concepts of collaboration is supported by other researchers (McChesney & Hertling, 2000) as is his concept of moral purpose (O'Neil, 2000). Educator and historian Larry Cuban (O'Neil, 2000) believes that change can be sustained in schools if: "...the reform reflects some deep-seated social concern for democracy, for equity or for preparing students to lead fulfilling adult lives" (p. 7). This speaks to Fullan's moral purpose and the idea that reform is successful if it is initiated from within and not imposed or copied. McChesney and Hertling (2000) argue that in order to achieve comprehensive school reform the approach or model of reform must incorporate all participants: "...faculty, staff, and parents must support it...schools should also make sure that the design has a proven record of improving student achievement" (p. 10). Collaboration and commitment from within and from outside the school is necessary. For example, parent involvement in the goal of student achievement makes reform successful.

Both Fullan (1999) and McChesney and Hertling (2000) talk about the importance of outside collaboration. Outside collaboration coming from the community, district, state or non-profit organizations is crucial in that it provides both pressure and support for the reform efforts. Moffett (2000) also agrees. "Sustaining reform at the school level requires district level leadership and a reform-support infrastructure.....Without a high level of information sharing among individuals, schools, and districts, and without a network of support for schools both within the district and throughout the broader community, change will not be sustained" (p. 36).

Fullan (2000) warns that reform models that are successful in one place may not be successful in another because the context of reform varies from school to school. "Going to scale does not mean getting the latest program in place (although this can be valuable in a
narrow temporary sense), but rather it means developing the capacity of the multilevel system to manage complex change on a continuous basis" (p.74). Reform then requires adopting and adapting models and strategies that meet the needs of the school site and continuously reflecting and analyzing how these are working to improve student achievement.

These discussions and insights provide a framework in which to discuss teacher participation in the educational reform. Teacher participation is multi-faceted. It involves dealing with teacher resistance to change. Also it involves teacher collaboration with colleges and with the outside environment. Finally, both teacher motivation and commitment to the outcomes of the reform efforts are required. Teacher participation is crucial to any educational reform effort; therefore when discussing educational reform theory or policy, their role must be considered and analyzed. “As they establish greater expectations and standards, policy-makers must know that none of this can be accomplished without supporting local forces to mobilize the will and skill of teachers” (Fullan, 1999 p. 83).

However this framework gives a broad and general view of how teachers and the reform efforts fit together. The following section deals with research that focuses on teacher participation in education reform efforts.

Teacher Participation in the Change Process

Research has focused on two ways of viewing teachers in the reform process: 1) teacher collaboration and 2) teachers’ roles in decision-making opportunities. Research has found that collaboration not only adds to teachers’ knowledge base but also enables them an opportunity to reflect on their practice. Reflection allows teachers to improve their overall teaching practices (Bruno, 2000; Raywid, 1993; Louis, Kruse & Raywid, 1996). In contrast, research on the teacher participation in decision-making processes finds that being able to make decisions does not necessarily effect reform efforts positively (Weiss, 1993).
For instance, teachers may be involved in making decisions on the number of sections they will teach. But this involvement in decision making may not be reflected in teachers deciding what teaching strategies will be used in the classroom. Other researchers add that teacher participation improves the dialogue between teachers and administrators and thus the quality of educational decision making (Smylie, Lazarus, & Brownlee-Conyers, 1996).

Weiss' (1993) study examined six high schools that had adopted participatory structures and six high schools with traditional administrative structures, and found that schools with shared decision making did not lead to a greater focus on curriculum or students nor did it lead to greater innovation and creative changes. However, Weiss concludes that shared decision making (SDM) is just one dimension of the change process, and not the answer itself. She offers that shared decision making provides a forum to express concerns and the opportunity for teachers to change conditions that interfere with their work. "On its own, SDM is simply a set of arrangements for teacher participation, a process without direction" (p.87).

Conley (1989) adds to Weiss' conclusion about the importance of SDM in school reform. "In the context of the reform movement, influence thus appears to be the central construct in efforts to initiate 'bottom-up participation' (p. 370). Giving teachers influence in the decisions that administration makes and vice versa is what Conley refers to as, "participation that is viewed not as something that is simply structured but a something that is constantly negotiated between teachers and administrators" (p.375). In other words, Conley believes that teacher participation in decision-making is an evolving process and necessary for effective educational reform. Additionally, her idea about the importance of SDM aligns with Fullan's concept of collaboration and equity with which the capacity for reform is built—that is, it is essential to have an interaction of ideas within and among teachers and administrators.

In addition, Keckler and Loshman (1998) measured the dimensions of teacher empowerment in restructuring public schools and found that even though teachers had an
opportunity to participate and make important decisions at their school. Teacher decision making power alone did not ensure success for they found that many teachers were not prepared to deal with leadership responsibilities. "Teachers have not been prepared to take on these roles and administrators have not been prepared to accommodate this level of teacher involvement" (p. 5). Teachers need to be trained and guided in taking on leadership roles and school administrators need to learn to give up some control when shared decision-making exists at a school. All of this takes time. Taking on new leadership roles increases the amount of time teachers have to put in.

Louis, Kruse and Raywid (1996) further explored the importance of collaboration in the educational reform movements by discussing learning organizations. Professional communities and the reflection of practice in a comparative case study of two schools. "Thus, the positive lesson from this comparative case is that teachers can and will create schools that are learning organizations that benefit both students and themselves, but only when they have the needed resources" (p.18). Their research indicates that the necessary resources for successful reform include: time for teacher reflection on practices, time for training to increase skills, and time to create a professional community through collaboration. It also includes principals that are intellectual leaders, and principals that lead from the center where they facilitate debate, reflection and dialogue.

Other factors are tied into teacher collaboration and participation in the decision-making process. Bruno (2000) found in his survey of 1,000 classroom teachers that time is a dominant factor in reform efforts. "One implication... is that school leadership should pay more attention to the resource of time" (p.10). His results indicated that time efficiency is crucial so as to not exclude or lead to resistance from teachers who place greater value on time rather than money. He also found that reform goals need to be clear and focused or teachers will not invest their time in the reform. Finally, too many or too long after-school meetings leads to burnout, dropout and push-out of teachers.

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Raywid (1993) agrees with Bruno’s findings, but adds that schools need time for collaboration. “Successful schools are distinguishable from unsuccessful ones by the frequency and extent to which teachers discuss practice, collaboratively design materials, and inform and critique one another” (p. 9). Peel and Walker (1993) added, “Collaboration not only facilitates school improvement efforts, it also minimizes the overwhelming, austere dimensions of change” (p. 30). Reform requires that schools have the time to build a knowledge base and to dialogue about the anxiety and complexity of change, which can only occur when teachers collaborate.

Given all the research and the arguments for the importance of collaboration, effective use of time and teacher participation in decision making are key aspects of successful reform. It is necessary to look at what teachers have said about their involvement or lack of in school reform.

Case Studies

The following case studies are of schools that were successful in achieving educational reform. Commonalities exist in the approaches for educational reform taken in each of the case studies. In all three, there is evidence of collaboration, capacity building for educational reform and the inclusion of teacher voice in the reform process. In addition, support for the change process came from outside agents such as universities or non-profit organization.

The study by Mullen and others (1994) describes one school district’s experience in promoting effective school change. A team from the school district was given leadership training by El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence established at the University of Texas. The school district’s success is attributed to the collaboration undertaken by the administration and the staff. Collaboration permitted the development of consensus about the need for school change and a realistic vision of that change. “In addition to focusing on specific issues and classroom/curriculum practices that affected student success, all
faculty members shared strategies to improve student achievement” (p.2). The district built its capacity to continue the reform by developing governing structure: composed of staff members responsible for curriculum and instruction, parent participation, school climate, staff development and flexible scheduling. In addition, they developed a comprehensive plan of action with clear goals, timelines, and the opportunity to be monitored and evaluated by school personnel. The role of the teacher was also addressed through leadership training that empowered teachers. One high school principal stated, “Ensuring academic success for all Del Valle High School students is our dream.... Our teachers are committed to change and are working and sharing resources to effectively improve student performance” (p.3). This case study supports Fullan’s theory that educational change is complex and an evolving process because the school district was involved in several processes at the same time and built in the capacity to continue them and evaluate them.

In a similar study, Cohen (1993) examined the experiences of two urban junior high schools who were engaged in an educational reform effort assisted by Bank Street College of Education’s Center for Minority Achievement. The principal component that the center provided the schools was obtaining additional time to meet regularly to discuss teaching, change, and innovation. Meetings provided the context for teachers to define a goal for the reform and to become colleagues. From the study, six patterns of change emerged: school leadership that is committed to teacher empowerment, student membership in school, voluntary teacher membership, attention to professional growth, successful teams became colleagues, and even when there is real empowerment, it may not have immediate credibility (p.15).

These six patterns can be further explained as follow. When the school leadership is committed to teacher empowerment it means that teachers are involved at equal level and equal say in the reform efforts. Student membership refers to student involvement in the reform efforts. Voluntary teacher membership refers to teacher participation in reform
efforts because they believe in them and are not being imposed on them. Reform efforts may require a need for professional growth of teachers. Teachers working in collaborative teams will lead to a sense of collegiality. Empowered teachers and students may not hold the same credibility as researchers or administrators even when they are attaining success in their reform efforts. The researcher concludes that: “In the case of school reform, there is therefore a need to provide time for teachers to become part of the reform or the technology of the reform will grind itself to a halt” (p.21,22). Further, the researcher allude that when facing change, resistance is a part of the change process and energies should not be focused on these resistant teachers but on those who seek change. “As a result, different schools within the school will create their own programs and culture. The locus of change will therefore no longer be the building. Rather it is the mini-school, staffed by professional teachers, involved in an ongoing reflective process of professional development, that will define the implementation of the reform” (p.22-21). This study indicates that effective educational reform or school change occurs when time for collaboration is part of the process. However, Fullan would indicate that a reform effort that does not deal with resistance and opposition, using them to positively affect the process, will not have sustained success.

In the previous study, the researcher concluded that those against reform can hinder the reform process so success will happen through a group or mini-school committed to the process. True collaboration and dialogue can reveal what the resistance to change is and could lead to the inclusion of those resistant teachers in the change process. Just as those involved in reform at the site level need to listen to the “teacher voice” of those resistant to change, so does the educational reform research and policy need to listen to teachers. What researchers, theorists and policy makers think is important in educational reform, may not be what teachers believe to be important. Inclusion of teacher voice in educational reform research and policy making is crucial to eliciting support for educational reform efforts.
Dundridge (1993) attempted to identify the conditions that influence urban high school teachers to participate in and actively support the urban school reform. The study surveyed and interviewed teacher members of school reform projects at three urban high schools and identified six critical conditions that need to be addressed in order to not only gain the interest, but the active support and cooperation of teachers (p. 14). The author contend that proposed reform must: recognize and address the social as well as academic needs of students. It must offer new resources to meet the immediate needs of teachers and the new needs of the program. It must provide time for teachers to participate and for the reform process to take root and flourish, time for the new reforms to take root, and it needs to promote communication and collaboration among teachers. In addition it needs to involve teachers in its conceptualization and implementation of the reform. Finally, it must give teachers a sense that their contributions are recognized and that the reforms are designed to support them (p. 15). What teachers identified in this study directly aligns with theory and the research of the last decade. Educational change is multifaceted, evolving and complex, and teacher impute and participation are integral. “The challenge is to use these conditions to create a climate that opens new dialogues with teachers” (p. 15).

Review and connection to action research

Theory and research informs us that educational reform and the change process involves a dynamic and diverse aspects. Successful educational reform integrates, dealing with the complexity of change, collaboration within and outside the school site, allocation of time to the change process, listening to and incorporating teacher voice to generate commitment and participation, leadership and commitment to a moral purpose. Each of these can not stand alone, they are interconnected and must coexist in the context of effecting change so that all students are achieving academically and socially.

As a staff member of a middle school attempting educational reform I became interested in determining if our efforts had had success. As part of my reflection and
analysis, the question of how much teachers were committed to the reform efforts arose. I wanted to gain insight into teachers' perceptions of what was happening and why they were participating or not participating. Were teachers even aware of the reform process and if they were aware, could they identify the goal of the reform effort? In addition, to what degree did teachers perceive they were involved in the process and what were they doing to meet the goal of the reform effort? What did teachers think contributed to or hindered the reform effort?

According to Fullan, schools involved in successful reform would indicate that they spent time collaborating to share, gather and create knowledge as well as to evaluate and monitor the reform. Teachers would indicate that they spent time reflecting on and improving their practice. There would be a sense of collegiality among the teacher and they would express that they felt empowered to effect change.
Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter will describe the setting of the school and the participants in this study. This is a case study of a middle school’s teacher participation in school reform. The chapter will also provide the data collection process and method of data analysis.

Setting

This case study was conducted at a central coast middle school in California serving grades 7-8. The school has been open for ten years and is the only year round school in the district. The school serves approximately 1379 students with about 900 students always present. There are four year-round tracks, but only three tracks on at one time. Each track has a heterogeneous group of 25% of the students not attending school at any given time. The school can serve a total of 75% of the students at any one time.

The school runs on a six period rotating schedule that allows for collaboration time among staff on the same track during common prep time. Staff wide collaboration time is scheduled in with a Wednesday late start schedule. The school is divided into four houses, one for each track, and within each house there are two families. The families consist of one 7th and one 8th grade for tracks B, C, and D. Track A’s families each have 7th and 8th graders. Families are composed of a team of subject area teachers that share the same students.

Track A contains two tracks within one because in the past most of the language learners from ESL 1 to Transitional students were on one “side” of track A. Currently due to the large number of English language learners, every teacher has classes with students who are English language learners. Of the 1379 students, 710 are language learners.
Of the three middle schools in the district, Garden Middle is the most ethnically diverse. The groups represented include: 76% Latinos, 6% Filipinos, 3% African Americans, 2% Asian, .5% Pacific Islander, .5% American Indian and 12.7% White. Of the 59 staff members, 5 are Latino, one is African American and 53 are White.

Research Participants:

A survey was placed in all 59 staff member's mailboxes. Surveys were not personally addressed. Out of a staff of 59 only seventeen teachers completed the survey. Out of 17 respondents 8 were female and 9 were male. Five of the respondents were science teachers, 4 were language arts teachers, 3 were social studies teachers, 1 was a math teacher, 1 was a P.E. teacher, 1 was resource teacher, and 1 was a resource special education teacher. Teaching experience of survey respondents ranged from 1 and half to 32 years. There are many possible explanations for the low response rate. One explanation for this low response is that teachers are in such opposition to the reform effort that they did not wish to participate. Another explanation is the high percentage of turnover at our school. Every year there are many teachers new to the profession and new to the school. These new teachers may have felt they had not been at the school long enough and did not know enough to complete the survey. Also they may have felt that because of their inexperience, they did not have anything valuable to share about the school.

Interviews were also conducted. The teachers who were the department heads and the resource teachers were asked if they agreed to an interview dealing with their participation in the reform effort. They were asked because of their leadership position within the school and their close involvement with the reform efforts. All 17 teachers (7 department heads and 3 resource teachers) agreed to be interviewed. The department heads of the science, social studies, language arts were interviewed. The math, social studies, and language arts resource teachers were also interviewed.
**Data Collection**

Data were collected using a survey and through interviews. Questions from the survey dealt with teacher participation in the reform effort. The survey consisted of 11 questions and took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete (See appendix). Teachers were asked to identify what the reform effort was, what they were doing to improve students' achievement and what they perceived hindered or facilitated the reform effort. Teachers were asked to return the survey within a period of two weeks to the researchers' mailbox. Surveys were not labeled with teachers' names and were not coded in any way.

After interviewees agreed to be interviewed a time was scheduled for the interview. Interviews were conducted during interviewee's preparation time or after school at the school site and these times were selected by the interviewees. Prior to the interview participants signed a consent form. The interview process took place over a two week period. Interviews were 30-45 minutes in duration and consists of three central questions. Interviewer took notes to record interview responses. Interview questions dealt with how department members had specifically participated in the reform efforts as a group either through curriculum development or teacher collaboration time (see appendix).

**Data Analysis**

All the 17 surveys were tabulated. As they were tabulated patterns emerged from the responses to the survey questions. These response patterns were assigned into categories for analysis. Categories were analyzed to see how they answered or addressed the study's four main questions. As interview notes were reviewed response patterns also emerged. The patterns that emerged were also placed into categories and analyzed to see how they answered or addressed the study's four main questions.
Chapter 4: Analysis of Results

This chapter reports findings from the survey and staff interviews. Results from each question in the survey are reported (see appendix A for a copy of the survey). Survey results are followed by findings from staff interviews. This section concludes with a brief summary of the survey and interview results.

Survey Results

The survey questions dealt with four main topics: 1) opinions/motives/types of reform 2) participation in reform efforts 3) teacher evaluation of reform efforts and 4) Empowerment. The following indicates teachers' responses to each set of questions.

Opinions/Motives/Types of Reform

Teachers were asked several questions about the reform efforts including their opinion about, what they saw as the motivation, and what they identified as the reform efforts taking place.

Teachers were asked to strongly agree or strongly disagree with the following two statements:

1) Do you feel that reform is necessary at the school in order to improve student achievement?

2) Is there any reform or change happening at Garden Middle School to improve student academic achievement?

Of 17 teachers, 15 reported they agreed that reform is necessary to improve student achievement. Similarly, all teachers reported that they agreed that some type of reform or change was happening at their school. Teachers were also asked to specify what reform or
change was taking place at their school. Responses were categorized into the categories listed in table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improving SAT 9 scores</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum alignment</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Climate</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff development in literacy strategies and writing</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading/Math Skill</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety Nets</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal content area assessment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No reform taking place</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers reported a variety of reform efforts taking place at Garden Middle School. The top three most commonly reported reform efforts were improving SAT 9 scores, curriculum alignment with state standards, and improving school climate. Interestingly, one teacher reported no reform efforts were taking place at her school.

Not surprisingly, aligning curriculum with state standards was the second most reported reform effort. All departments have been involved in aligning curriculum to state standards and creating and utilizing internal content assessments. Given the high percentage of turn over, new department members may not be aware of what work has been done or is

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being done by co-department members. Along with the Middle School Demonstration Project grant, the school has been involved with a Federal grant studying school reform which helped the school to learn to look at data.

Interestingly, along with curriculum alignment, improving school climate was the second most commonly reported reform effort. No specific emphasis has been placed on school climate. Perhaps teachers have been addressing issues of school climate with their team mates and this topic was on their minds while answering the survey.

Finally teachers were asked to indicate the motives behind the reform or change efforts at their school. Of the 17 respondents, 13 stated that SAT 9 or the improvement of SAT 9 scores was the motivation for the reform effort, while seven of the respondents reported that student achievement was the motivation. Some of the staff understands that the reform is about students and helping students achieve. As one teacher indicated "(un)fortunately, I think we are too concerned about test scores. We need to be concerned about the total child. We dropped music and replaced it with reading. Music has been shown to be important to developing math skills. Besides it enriches the soul."

It appears that teachers recognize that there is a need for reform as teachers all agreed that reform is necessary in order to improve student academic achievement. As mentioned in the literature by Fullan (1999), this recognition is the starting point for teacher participation in reform efforts. He adds that reform efforts succeed when the need for the reform is clearly evident. It is difficult to obtain participation in a reform effort if there is no awareness of the reform effort. All of the responses mentioned are components of the reform effort taking place, but they indicate that there is no clear vision of the reform efforts at Garden. The teachers responding to the survey are not seeing the "Big Picture."

Preparing students for the SAT 9, aligning curriculum to standards, using a core of instructional strategies and creating assessments to show what have been done all work towards student achievement. If there was a clear vision of the reform effort then all teachers should have mentioned all three components not just one or two.
Teacher Participation in Reform/Change Efforts

Teachers were asked about their participation and the role they view themselves taking in the reform efforts at their school and why they implemented changes to their instruction. Specifically, teachers were asked if they had participated in the reform or change taking place at their school. All the teachers responded that they had participated in the reform effort. Further, teachers were asked to specify the role they have taken in the reform efforts. Even though most teachers stated that the motivation for reform itself was improvement of SAT 9 scores they perceived their roles as one of participation and collaboration. Teachers stated their roles to be: “practicing strategies learned,” “attending training and implementing them,” “implementing strategies, sharing ideas, and providing feedback” and “to increase collaboration between science teachers.” Interestingly, teachers are saying they are doing exactly what all the research findings indicate is necessary for successful reform. They are expanding their knowledge base through training in instructional strategies to become better teachers. They are also engaging in collaboration to learn with each other.

Teachers were given a list of responses to choose from to indicate why they implemented changes to their instructional practices. They were asked to circle two reasons. Reasons and frequency of response for each reason are listed in table 4.2 below.
Table 2 Frequency of Teacher Reported Reasons for Implementing Changes in to Their Instructional Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) I wanted to improve the quality of my teaching</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Student needs</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Administration told me</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) I had support from resource teachers and/or colleagues</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) My department decided it</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of teachers reported that they implemented instructional changes because of student needs and to improve the quality of their teaching. The reasons stated are supported by the research. Any change or reform should come from within the school. Reform needs to be based on the needs of the students and what best will meet their needs. Teachers need to see the connection between the reform and student achievement to be committed to the reform and to participate in it. It seems that most teachers are participating in reform based on the needs of their students. Teachers’ desire to improve their teaching is another indication of effective reform. Teachers are building a knowledge base that should be shared as a school. There is evidence of the potential of teachers’ moral commitment to reform efforts.

Successful reform needs teacher participation and Garden has the participation at least among those who returned the survey. There exists a potential for commitment and the development of moral purpose in the staff at the school. With moral purpose, the
reform effort is not something that is imposed or needs proponents, but it becomes something owned from within the teachers and the school.

**Teacher evaluation of reform efforts**

Teachers were asked to reflect on the change efforts taking place at their school with respect to student academic achievement. Teachers were asked to strongly agree or strongly disagree with the following statement: "The change efforts have had an impact on student academic achievement." Twelve of the 17 teachers strongly agreed or agreed that the reform effort was having an impact on student academic achievement while two said they strongly disagreed or disagreed.

Teachers were also asked to identify specifically what is working to improve student achievement. Teachers gave a wide range of responses. For example, teachers mentioned that Garden had dedicated teachers willing to put in time and that teachers at Garden are willing to share ideas and communicate with colleagues. Teachers stated that at Garden there was a wide range of resources and varying teaching techniques available, not only in training, but also support for teachers. The grouping of teachers into families (language arts, social studies, math, science and PE; teachers share the same students) helped student achievement. Families are helpful because the team of teachers created through the family is able to develop a common language and procedures and has the time to discuss students' needs during family meetings.

Teachers were also asked to indicate what if anything is preventing improvement in student academic achievement. The teachers identified some of the same obstacles to reform as do theorists like Fullan (1999). Obstacles were grouped into 7 categories which are listed below along with the frequency of responses for each category (see table 4.3).
Lack of resources, which included time, was indicated by teachers as contributing to the prevention of student academic achievement. Teachers also said that what prevented student academic achievement was, “older teacher attitudes and their unwillingness to change”, and “some teachers’ resistance to change.” Fullan talks about how change causes anxiety and resistance, but that if change is perceived as force that can be harnessed and as continual it alleviates some of the anxiety and resistance. Also resistance comes from those who have concerns or criticisms of the reform effort or who see it as fragmented or not connecting to student needs. Teachers also said, “teacher apathy and lack of follow through” prevented student academic achievement.
Teachers’ Empowerment

Most teachers (12) reported they strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that they felt empowered to effect positive change at their school while a few (4) indicated they disagreed with the statement. The fact that the majority felt empowered to effect change indicated that structures and motivations necessary for change are already present at Garden, at least for the 17 who returned the survey.

Interview Responses

The science department head, the language arts department head and resource teacher and the math and social studies resource teachers were interviewed. These staff members were asked to give their thoughts and opinions on their respective department’s efforts in the reform. Specifically, they were asked to answer the following three questions:

1. What are department members doing as a department to improve student achievement?
2. What is the motivation behind the department members’ work as a department?
3. How did department members respond to efforts of the department?

What are department members doing as a department to improve student achievement?

Responses indicate that all departments are working on the same things to improve student achievement. The components they are focused on are: alignment of and creation of curriculum to state standards, creating content assessments aligned with the curriculum, participation in training and implementation of instructional strategies “to see on the same page”, using student data to drive instruction, and preparing students for the SAT 9. The
teachers interviewed are considered to hold leadership positions and this enables them to have a broader and clearer view of what the reform effort is. To them what is being done at Garden is not just SAT 9 prep or alignment of curriculum, but a combination of several components to improve student achievement.

What is the motivation behind the department members’ work as a department?

According to the teachers the motivation behind the work of the department members had several components. Teachers responded that having the accountability and the funds from the Middle School Demonstration Project grant was crucial. The grant coordinated and paid for training and provided support in implementation. The grant required the school to host visitations by other schools and this was a great source of accountability because teachers had to prepare lessons that reflected literacy or writing training and their classroom walls had have student evidence of the use of the instructional strategies teachers had been trained in. The grant also paid for after school training, retreats and for teachers to develop curriculum. Another component was the influence of both HPLC and SAT 9 to look at data and have it drive instruction. The school was trained in data based inquiry where we learned to look at SAT 9 scores, grades and other assessments and identify the needs and the strengths of our students. New state standards and new curriculum developed to be aligned with standards had to be presented to teachers. Teachers needed to know and wanted to know what they were expected to teach and how best to teach it. Having resource teachers to lead, coordinate, model and cheer efforts aided the departments in their work.
How did department members respond to efforts of the department?

The response varied from department to department. The math department invested a lot of time in after school training and retreats, but felt it was not showing much success. The science department spent time after school sharing hands on lessons. Social studies was not motivated to invest much time outside the school day because they felt they were implementing strategies and had agreed to support language arts. The science department spent time after school sharing hands on lessons. Language Arts felt overwhelmed with trying to incorporate grammar and mechanics skills into a literacy based curriculum in a meaningful way.

The math resource teacher said, "staff was needy of all staff development and wanted opportunity to meet and learn." The department has held two math day long retreats and they meet for two hours after school every month. All time is paid and it is paid by the grant. During department meetings members agreed to spend less time on business and focus on analyzing their work and planning lessons as a team. "Attendance is good to after school training and retreats even when teachers are on vacation they attend." The resource teacher also noted, "nobody thinks", "I know it all" and "we are a team", "all are on the same boat." The department knows they are doing the "right things", but they are not getting the increase in student scores on their internal benchmark assessment nor on the SAT 9. The challenge the department faces according to the resource teacher is, "how to keep motivated to continue in the face of no positive results."

Like the language arts department the social studies staff had been trained by and were participating in the efforts of the Language Arts and Social Studies Demonstrations Grant. According to the social studies resource teacher, teachers have focused on state standards, academic skills, teaching students to access expository text and teaching students to write well using the writing model used by language arts and evidence if this
can be seen in student work on classroom walls. The department head has noticed apathy setting in on the department. Two years ago, after having analyzed data using data based inquiry, the department decided to create an internal social studies test using SAT 9 multiple choice format to see if students were learning what was being taught and to familiarize them with the multiple choice format of the SAT 9. The test was written but never piloted because academic skills and standards had not been sufficiently addressed in the test. Last year, the department realized that curriculum created through the Middle School Demonstration Project grant needed to be rewritten to integrate academic skills and state standards. As a whole, the department showed little interest in having a meeting, after school or getting release time to write the curriculum guides. The department head tried to write them with one other member during release time and meeting after school. According to the department head, “it was too much to attempt to do on top of prepping for our classes and not having the newly adopted textbook resources available to use in the guides.” The curriculum guides were not written and the department decided it would try to write them next year during department meetings. The department head is concerned that meeting time will not be enough time to get the guides written.

Science had been without a set curriculum for so long that when Eisenhower funds were acquired for this activity, the department met for two hours after school every two to three weeks. During meetings, a scope and sequence for science curriculum for grades 7-8 was established and teachers shared hands on lessons that were compiled in science binders distributed to all teachers. The department head commented that teachers focused on hands on lessons because they believed they were fun and fun lessons would help make the curriculum accessible to students. The science teacher also received literacy and writing strategies training, however there is no evidence that she can see of implementation of literacy strategies in science teachers’ instruction. “Science teachers have lost focus and energy for the reform effort due to the burnout caused by trying to accomplish all that is required with insufficient time.”
The language arts resource teacher says she sees student work on classroom walls as evidence that the language arts teachers are using common strategies and have created a common language to teach writing in most classrooms. The language arts department members had been participating in the Middle School Demonstration Project grant since its inception and are used to incorporating literacy strategies into their instruction. The language arts department head felt, "Members were very receptive to alignment of our literacy-based curriculum to standards and integrating it with the grammar skill tested on the SAT 9 and with writing skills." They understood that this integration would enable students to see the connection between literacy, grammar and writing. According to the department head, teachers had commitment to the integration process because it helped students achieve academically. But the challenge of integration without the necessary textbooks and materials and with not enough time to integrate, led to teachers becoming overwhelmed. She fears that teachers will become frustrated and even resistant next year when they will be required to give a benchmark test every six weeks. Benchmark tests will test between 50-80 benchmarks or grammar skills, each of which appears on the SAT 9. Preparing students for the benchmark will require an increase in teacher preparation time.

Summary

Both the teacher survey and interviews revealed much about what's being done at Garden in terms of reform. Teachers' perceived role in the reform taking place at Garden as well as what is supporting and hindering the reform. The majority of teachers who responded to the survey agreed that reform was necessary to improve student academic achievement and that some kind of reform was occurring at Garden. They perceived that the reform at Garden involved improving SAT 9 scores and alignment of curriculum. Not only was SAT 9 identified as the reform, but improving SAT 9 scores was also viewed as
the motivation behind the reform effort. Teachers identified several reform efforts taking place at Garden from SAT 9 to curriculum alignment to school climate. Almost all respondents indicated they had participated in the reform effort they had identified. Teachers described their role in the reform efforts as collaborating with other teachers. When asked if they believed the reform was having an impact on students, most of the teachers agreed that it was. Of the teachers who reported reform efforts had an impact on student achievement, the majority indicated that they changed their instruction because they wanted to be better teachers and to address the needs of their students. They also reported that improvement in student academic achievement was due to dedicated teachers’ training, teacher support and having teachers teamed in family groups. They identified the barriers to the reform as being teacher resistance to change, teacher apathy, and lack of time.

The interviews with department heads and resource teachers indicated that reform at Garden was in their view a combination of several components of which SAT 9 was a part but not the whole. Interviewees all agreed that the work being done in departments to improve student academic achievement would not have been possible without the Middle School Demonstration Project grant. The Grant provided funded resources, collaboration time to write curriculum, and provided support to implement strategies, content and accountability for teachers participating in the Grant. According to the interviewees, they saw teachers for the most part as willing to participate in the department reform efforts, but some departments had more participation than others.
Chapter 5: Summary, Discussion and Recommendations

In order to place the results of the survey within the context of teacher participation in reform efforts, this chapter begins with a brief summary of the reform efforts at Garden. This is followed by a discussion of the survey results as they addressed each of the study's questions. The chapter continues with a section on Garden's capacity building for reform already in place and where it needs to expand. The conclusion is followed by several recommendations for the expansion of the school's capacity building for reform and teacher participation in the reform efforts.

The following section brings together results from the survey, interview responses and the study's four guiding questions. Survey results relevant to each guiding question is presented followed by a connection to pertinent research on school change. Only 17 out of a staff of 40 responded to the survey. The small response rate (50%) prevents generalizing results from the study to Garden in general.

The four guiding questions are:

1. Do teachers even recognize that the changes are taking place?
2. What do they feel their role is in improving student achievement?
3. How do teachers at Garden perceive the alignment of curriculum with state standards?
4. How do teachers at Garden perceive the creation of an internal assessment?

I. Do teachers recognize changes are taking place at their school?

All participants of the survey recognized there was some form of reform taking place at Garden. All surveyed teachers reported they did believe reform was taking place at their school. It is encouraging that given the high teacher turnover rate (25-30% annual turnover rate) all participants could identify that some type of reform is taking place. In
addition, when asked what were the motivating factors behind the reform efforts, the most common factors reported by teachers were: improving SAT 9 scores and increasing student achievement. According to Fullan (1999), staff awareness of the reform efforts is indicative that there has been an initial level of collaboration and school wide discussion of the reform efforts.

While a general awareness of the reform effort taking place is important in having teacher participation, research indicates several additional components must be in place for success in reform efforts. Fullan (1999) refers to imbedded and on going collaboration and reflection on the reform efforts and its direction. In addition, Bruno (2000) found that when a clear and focused goal was lacking in reform efforts teachers invested less and less time in the reform. Results of my study indicate that teachers do not have a clear focus or direction of the reform and the reform effort has not become part of the school structure. Garden is not trying to improve student achievement with only the SAT 9 or curriculum alignment or improving school climate or by creating internal content assessments. The reform is more complex - it is all four components. Teachers did not view the reform as including all these components - they listed one or two only. In contrast, resource teachers and department heads gave a more comprehensive view of reform. These staff mentioned the creation of and alignment of curriculum to state standards, creating internal content assessments and participation in training on and implementation of instructional strategies as part of the work being done to improve student academic achievement.

Not only did teachers, department heads and resource teachers give mixed responses to the reform efforts taking place at Garden, but many teachers disagreed with one component of the reform - SAT 9 improvement. SAT 9 preparation has become a major focus at Garden. A great deal of energy and discussion has been directed on the SAT 9 as compared to other reform efforts as evidenced by teachers reporting SAT 9 as the motivation behind the reforms, school materials allocated to improving SAT 9 scores, and meetings dedicated to analysis of SAT 9 scores. If this sample of teachers is reflective of
the school as a whole then the dominant reform effort centers around increasing SAT 9 scores.

Interviews with department heads reveal the high level of impact standardized testing is having in our schools. Garden Middle School is investing large amounts of time preparing and practicing for the SAT 9. For example, Wednesday planning time has been spent on SAT 9 discussion. It is then not surprising that teachers should perceive SAT 9 as the school’s priority and driving reform effort. However, some teachers do not agree it should be the main emphasis. As one respondent indicated on the survey the school is placing “more emphasis on one method of obtaining higher SAT 9, and here is not one indication of teacher creativity or teacher individuality.” Another survey respondent indicated that the emphasis on test prep and drill and kill was not “reform.”

According to Fullan (1999), if teachers do not believe in or see the connection between reform efforts and helping students they will resist the reform efforts. SAT 9 prep is a component of the reform effort at Garden. However teachers see that SAT 9 prep has become the focus of the reform and they disagree with this. Given this insight to the current reform efforts, the school has to re-evaluate the goal of the reform. If the goal is indeed only to increase SAT 9 scores then the dissension from the staff will most likely limit the success of meeting the reform goal. If the goal of the reform is a broader one, then the school failed in effectively communicating what the broader goal is and in giving equal energy and time to all the components of the reform. Having a reform goal that is clear and that teachers agree with at Garden will garner stronger commitment to the reform which will facilitate its success.
11. What do teachers feel their role is in improving student achievement?

The survey asked teachers to describe their roles in the reform taking place at Garden. They defined their roles in the reform as participating in training on instructional strategies, collaborating with colleagues and resource teachers. Both on the survey and during interviews, participants reported spending time working with other teachers integrating literacy strategies into their lessons and sharing those lessons. The fact that all teachers were given the opportunity to receive training in these instructional strategies during the last seven years shows that the school is working toward building a common knowledge base or as one teacher stated during an interview, "(b)eing on the same page."

Evidence that teachers are trying to "be on the same page" can be seen in student work on classroom walls and student portfolios. Fullan (1999) argues that the creation of a knowledge base and collaboration within the school is needed for effective reform.

Changing instructional practice in order to improve student achievement is part of the teacher's role in the reform efforts. When teachers were asked to indicate why they had changed their instructional practice, teachers reported they did so to meet the needs of their students. This reveals that some of the teachers at Garden have a sense of moral purpose. When teachers are asked or ask themselves why they are incorporating something new or changing something, the motivating factor should be to make a difference in the achievement and lives of their students. This moral purpose is described by Fullan (1999) as a powerful force that drives change.

Though there appears to be a strong willingness to participate in training to improve instructional strategies in the classroom, there is no consistent, comprehensive school wide method of accountability. The Middle School Demonstration Project grant visitsations do provide a certain level of accountability for teachers participating in the grant. Teachers are asked to present lessons that reflect literacy and writing strategies and to have student evidence reflecting instructional strategies on classroom walls during visitsations. However, not all teachers can be visited and those who are not participating are left out of
the visitation schedule. Administration has begun to visit classrooms and become more aware of what they should be looking for as student evidence and instruction, but though their intentions are good they do not spend enough time in classrooms to create administrative accountability. Finally, for older and newer teachers, literacy strategies such as reciprocal teaching, utilization of graphic organizers, specially designed academic instruction in English (SDAIE), the writing process and SAT 9 prep materials are disconnected. These are perceived as separate and isolated from each other. Teachers say things like, “I am doing a SDAIE lesson” or “look I used that organizer” when they should always be creating lessons that incorporate one or two or however many are appropriate for the material to be covered. Also the SAT 9 or something like it will be around for a while and we need to help our students do well. It is necessary that we also consider SAT 9 when we are planning our lessons. But it is not the only measure of student academic achievement. Along with grades we have the internal subject area assessments and the integrated reading and writing test as well as portfolios that can be used to measure student academic achievement.

To conclude teachers who participated in the survey perceive they have a role in the reform efforts. Their role is to collaborate and improve their instructional practice. The motivation behind their willingness to work with other teachers and implement instructional strategies is student achievement. Though participating teachers express this, there is little systemic accountability for teachers to implement the instructional strategies being promoted at Garden. In addition, not all teachers clearly see the connection between the instructional strategies promoted at the school and student achievement. The lack of systemic accountability and understanding how students benefit from instructional strategies is detrimental to the reform efforts. The impact of the benefit of the instructional strategies for students and the teacher collaboration to improve practice is not fully realized.
III. How do teachers at Garden perceive the alignment of curriculum with state standards?

The staff at Garden is aware of the work being done to align curriculum to state standards. On the survey teachers indicated that curriculum alignment was one of the reforms taking place at Garden. Teachers identifying it as a reform effort is reflective of the amount of time and work departments have put into discussion and creation of the state standards and our curriculum. Interviews revealed that all departments are working to create curriculum guides that are aligned with state standards. There is an understanding from the department heads and the resource teachers that it is necessary to make sure we are teaching what the state has put down, but it does not mean that we are only teaching to the standards.

However, because resource teachers and department heads see the curriculum guides as guides does not mean that everyone else does or that new people will. The curriculum guides serve multiple purposes, one of which is making it possible for the school to have uniformity of its curriculum. It also creates a way to assist new teachers. With the guides they have good idea what they must teach and a few suggestions as to how. What needs to be understood is that the curriculum guides are a basis to work from. Teachers should expand and deepen the curriculum where they deem it necessary. Given that the curriculum guides incorporate state standards it would be interesting to see what teachers think about state standards. However, the study did not ask teachers about their opinions regarding state standards.
IV. How do teachers at Garden perceive the creation of an internal assessment?

Only one teacher indicated on the survey that having internal assessments was part of the reform efforts at Garden. Nonetheless there is a history to why internal assessments were needed. Five years ago, using data based inquiry the staff observed that there was a discrepancy between external assessments like the California Test of Basic Skills and the Gates Mc-Ginty, with grades and our integrated reading and writing test developed through the Middle School Demonstration Project grant. Externally we were low performing while internally the data showed growth in student achievement. In order to better understand how our students were achieving it was decided that each department would create its own assessment to measure if students were learning what we were covering. Some departments like math are ahead of the rest. They have developed their own benchmarks tests, administered them and are analyzing the results. Similarly the science department developed a unit test, which they have also administered, but not analyzed school wide. The social studies department is waiting to first develop new curriculum guides and for the district to write its standards for social studies. Language Arts has been administering and analyzing Target Teach benchmark tests in preparation for next year when they get the full program and training.

Given the fact that time has been given by teachers to the creation and administration of the assessments shows that they think these assessments are important. The staff reached a consensus that we needed internal assessments to attain a better understanding of our students' achievement. Using data from multiple sources to direct changes or reform is a forward thinking approach that has been hampered by SAT 9 pressure.
Capacity Building for Reform

There are several components to building capacity for reform. These components include: consistent dialogue about reform as part of the school’s structure and schedule, revisiting and reflecting on reform efforts and modifying as necessary, and placing all the successful “best practices and strategies” that teachers already do with in the “big picture” of student achievement. Along with these components the issues of sufficient time and resources must also be addressed in order to successfully build capacity for reform. The following demonstrates how important time and resources are to the reform efforts at Garden.

Teachers feel that there is not enough time to incorporate and implement instructional strategies and cover curriculum and meet all the administrative tasks asked of them. Lots of time is required in order to create assessments, create and align curriculum, and analyze and reflect on instruction and students’ performance. A demand of time to meet after school, on the weekend and during vacation is being placed on teachers. Many do put in the time, but begin to feel burnout and guilty about taking time away from their families. Interviews reveal that teachers feel insufficient time is given to see student academic achievement. Results are expected immediately. Teachers need time to get proficient at implementing new training. They also need time to reflect on their instruction and reteach what students have not learned. Fullan refers to these issues of time as knowledge base building and collaboration. Both must be taking place within an ongoing basis and within the school structure.

The Math, Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies departments’ experience with internal assessments is an example of a lack of time provided for teachers to implement change. The math department was implementing new internally developed curriculum guides and administering benchmark tests. Much time has been invested by the department members to develop and utilize curriculum guides and benchmark tests, yet the initial test results were low. The department felt a pressure for their students to perform
well both from the administration and from the district. Teachers felt they were not being given enough time to become familiar with the new curriculum to teach it well and have students’ test scores improve. The district expected immediate results and it seemed to the teachers that if these were not achieved it reflected negatively on them. The math department at Garden lobbied to be allowed to create new curriculum and assessments instead of having to adopt the external program Target Teach. This program comes in and locates where standards covered on the SAT 9 are located in the school materials and texts and provides benchmark test every six weeks or so. This kind of program, while it may help with SAT 9 scores, takes away time from rest of the curriculum not covered on SAT 9. It also requires additional time dedicated to creating lessons to cover the standards on the SAT 9. The department had already done much of what Target Teach does, but its focus was to cover the curriculum while addressing the math standards on the SAT 9. If teachers feel they are not being given enough time to show success with the work they are doing they may give up. Giving up may simply mean teaching to the test.

Language Arts department members also felt they did not have sufficient time. The department head indicated that teachers were asked to follow the Target Teach program before they were trained in the program and without being shown how to effectively create lessons that connected the test standards to the literacy-based curriculum in place. Learning how to create these integrated lessons requires time. Having to put in this extra time and feeling resentful about having to follow the program with its six-week test led to some teachers teaching the test standards in isolation. This is one step away from teaching to the test. The department head was able to integrate the benchmarks from Target Teach with her curriculum, but she indicated that it was difficult and required more time than she previously dedicated to lesson planning. She was asked to show her department how she had created her lesson integrating the benchmarks. However, she was still figuring out how and having to show others placed pressure on her and required more of her time. Target
Teach and the SAT 9 are not going away, but teachers need to be given time and shown how to integrate benchmarks with their curriculum.

Like Math department the Science department members had dedicated many hours after school to creating curriculum binders. After a while they began to feel they did not have enough time to meet continuously after school and also meet their other professional and personal commitments. The department head described it as “burn out.” Similarly the Social Studies department members had difficulty setting up meeting times during the school day (covered by substitutes) or after school because of the time requirement. Being covered by a substitute meant additional time to write up lesson plans and then time spent re-teaching because the substitute was unable to cover lesson effectively. Thus, few members met to create curriculum or collaborate. If this kind of teacher work and collaboration is valued, then time has to be set aside during the school year for planning, creating and sharing when students are not in school.

The work teachers have done with curriculum guides and internal assessments reflects their commitment to student achievement. Teaching is time intensive. Teachers need time to improve their practice and time is necessary to see results. One way that several teachers have been compensated for curriculum development and collaboration was through the grant. The grant paid teachers for meeting time, attending meetings and developing lessons that would be shared with other teachers. As demonstrated by the Middle School Demonstration Project grant, teaching is time intensive and requires a specific amount of time. The Middle School Demonstration Project grant demonstrated how teachers need time to implement new strategies and improve their practice, and that time is necessary to show results.

The presence of the Middle School Demonstration Project grant is an indicator of the potential for success with student achievement at Garden. The interviews with department heads and resource teachers made evident that having the Middle School Demonstration Project grant at Garden benefited the reform effort. It provided funding for
training, a literacy focus and accountability. With the Grant, teachers have been paid to attend training and to create curriculum. Teachers' time and commitment put into improving their practice is validated and compensated. One resource teacher stated, "sometimes teachers do not even claim the money for the hours they put in, but just the idea that the money is there motivates them to continue putting in the time." The Grant also provided a focus, in this case, a literacy focus. The literacy work done through the Grant was strong in reading, but teachers realized the writing piece was missing and adapted their work to incorporate writing. Fullan (1999) talks about the importance of reflection and evaluation of the successes of a reform effort to insure its continued success. Incorporating writing is evidence of this reflection, valuation and adaptation. Finally, the grant paid for resource teachers who coordinated, supported and motivated the literacy focus. In addition, the hosting of visitations to the school provided accountability for the teachers. They had to provide evidence of the literacy and writing strategies in their instruction and in student work. It is what Fullan (1999) refers to as outside pressure and support.

Unfortunately this is the last year Garden will have the grant.

Conclusion

This case study on the perceptions and participation of teachers in Garden's reform effort reveals that several components of successful reform already exist at the school. However there are crucial components that are missing. The study reveals that Garden Middle School has the potential for achieving successful educational reform. Teachers at Garden reported that they perceive their role in the reform as one of collaboration. They have a moral purpose through keeping their students' needs at forefront of their practice. The school has initiated reforms based on school data resulting in curricular alignment and the creation of internal assessments. There is evidence in students' work that teachers are beginning to build a common knowledge base. Finally the school was the recipient of
Middle School Demonstration Project grant which lead to the development of the Garden Literacy Center. Successful educational reform requires teacher participation.

This case study has shown the reform efforts at Garden also have limitations. To obtain a strong commitment from teachers, the reform effort must have a clear goal connected to student academic achievement. Teachers who participated in the reform see the school focusing mostly on the SAT 9 prep part of the reform. Several teachers disagree with placing so much emphasis on the test. Especially when teachers agreed that there are other measures of student academic achievement besides the state's standardized test that the school needed to develop and utilize during the initial discussion on reform at Garden. Another important item to consider when discussing reform is making reform goals relevant to the population of students served and this would mean including a multicultural perspective. While teachers were not asked about the issue of multiculturalism in the study, from anecdotal evidence little discussion takes place around this issue at Garden. Also time should be scheduled into the structure of the school for teacher reflection of practice and collaboration with colleagues. Teachers should be recognized for the time put into the reform and they need to be paid for time put in outside the contractual day. Both the reform and the teachers need an outside agent to evaluate and support the reform work taking place. The Middle School Demonstration Project grant will no longer provide resources, moneys nor accountability.

Recommendations

1) Reform should establish a clear goal and vision, based on the needs of students and the school site. Teachers working with HPLC presented what they perceived was a clear goal for the reform. They stated, "student achievement as measured by the growth of 5 NCEs on the SAT 9." However, stating it this way limited how we could measure student achievement. Relying on one measurement can be misleading. Measures of student achievement should be reflective of the reform efforts taking place. Failure to emphasize
the other measures of student achievement gave SAT 9 emphasis over the other components of the reform effort and did not provide a broad picture of student achievement.

2) There are several components to building capacity for reform. These components include: consistent dialogue about reform as part of the school’s schedule, revisiting and reflecting on reform efforts and modifying as necessary, and placing all the successful “best practices and strategies” that teachers already do within the “big picture” of student achievement.

Discussion of reform efforts should integrated into the school’s schedule systematically. Reform efforts and issues should be part of every staff meeting, department and Wednesday morning collaboration times. Staff development should move from needs of the reform efforts. The reform efforts should not be an item on the agenda that appears every once in a while, but something that the school has internalized.

With consistent dialogue about the reform it is possible to reflect, modify and celebrate the progress of the reform efforts. Reflection should answer the questions of what are we doing, why are we doing them and how is it helping students to learn. A climate of open dialogue would also allow teachers to voice their concerns or objections and for the school to address them. The discussion should not silence the objectors or those experiencing difficulties, but to understand why they object and help those that need it. In the course of the dialogue it may be decided that the reform efforts need to be changed or redefined. Also the successes of the reform efforts need to be acknowledged and celebrated publicly. Committed teachers work hard and they need to know their efforts are recognized and appreciated in order to keep motivated. The existence of such a dialogue about the reform efforts allows for the building of capacity for change.

Another way to build capacity is to connect theory, research and practice to student achievement. Not all teachers are aware of the research or theory behind the instructional strategies in place at Garden. My experience has been that only a small group of teachers
has read and analyzed the research behind strategies like Reciprocal Teaching (RT) and internalized how they help students achieve. This kind of analysis should occur schoolwide throughout the year. Teachers also have to sit down and see how instructional strategies, Reciprocal Teaching, writing process, SDAIE and SAT 9 test prep connect to each other and to student achievement. For example students access text utilizing a pre-reading organizer that includes both RT and SDAIE. Pre-reading the lesson in the textbook by looking at the visuals, reading section headings creates a schema in the students' minds for the information they will be reading. Schema building is part of SDAIE. With the organizer students predict what the lesson will be about and turn section headings into questions which they should be able to answer after reading. Predicting, questioning are components of Reciprocal teaching. Optimally when teachers realize how these practices help students and how they connect to each other they will plan their lessons in a way that systematically incorporates these practices.

When a school builds their capacity for change it is able to weather internal and external pressures and changes that may effect the reform efforts.

3) Time is necessary for teacher collaboration and reflection both with in the school day and after. Time put in beyond contractual duties by teachers needs to continue to be recognized and compensated. One way that time could be found is through receiving another grant. The grant could provide money to compensate teachers. On the school could set aside moneys from the general fund specifically to pay for collaboration time outside contractual day. Also the staff meeting and Wednesday morning meeting times could be used to discuss the reform efforts and as collaboration time. These meeting times have been taken over by mostly, by SAT 9 preparation. Finding and utilizing time for the reform also builds capacity for change. With capacity building new teachers would be informed about reform efforts and more likely to be part of it. Also the school would be better able to withstand the external pressures imposed by standardized testing.
4) What work is done for the reform needs to be documented in order to create a living record of what has been successful for student achievement and why. A living record will help focus the reform and will enable the school to inform new staff members. This living record can take many forms. One of them is an actual document that chronicles what has been done and why. It would be a living document because it would be read, added to and changed. This document could be given out with the teacher handbook or even at the interview with new teachers that will be hired. Then during the first staff meeting it could be studied and discussed. Another form could be a kind of mind map or organizer that visually represent the reform components and how they tie together combined with a brief timeline. It can take any form. What is important is to create a “memory” of the reform so that what was done the year before is not forgotten. So much time and energy is spent in reinventing the wheel when it should be spent on the reform itself.
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Appendix A: Study Instruments

Teacher Survey

1. Courses I Teach are ________

2. Male/Female? ________

3. I have Taught for ________ years

4. I have taught at Garden Middle School for ______

5. Do you feel that reform is necessary at Garden in order to improve student academic achievement?

6. Is there any reform or change happening at Garden to improve student academic achievement?

7. What is the reform or change that is taking place at Garden if any?

8. I have participated in the reform or change taking place at Garden

   Yes / Not at all

9. What are the motivations behind the change at Garden?

10. What do you see as your role in the change efforts?

11. The change efforts have had an impact on student academic achievement. (circle one)

    Strongly agree / agree / disagree / strongly disagree / N/A

12. What is working best to improve student academic achievement at Garden?

13. What is preventing it?

14. I have implemented instructional changes because.. (circle (2) responses only)

    * Of students needs
    * An administrator told me to
    * I had support from resource teachers and or colleagues
    * My department decided it
    * I wanted to improve the quality of my teaching

15. Do you feel empowered to effect positive change at Garden? (circle one)

    Strongly agree / agree / disagree / strongly disagree / N/A
Department Head and Resource Teachers Interview Questions

1. What have the members of the (department name)__________ department do to increase students' academic achievement?

2. What was the motivation or the reasons behind these efforts?

3. How did your department respond as a group to your efforts?