

Ward Elementary School Case Study

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Contents

List of Tables.....	iii
Introduction	1
School Context	1
Chronology.....	1
Description of the School.....	2
Description of the Neighborhood.....	2
Students	3
Staff	4
Leadership: A Principal with an Instructional Focus.....	5
Achievement.....	7
School Climate	8
Professional Community.....	9
Parent and Community Involvement.....	11
The Complexities of Instructional Improvement	12
Challenges.....	12
Changes in the Instructional Focus	13
Internal and External Supports.....	13
Internal Supports.....	14
External Supports.....	15
Classroom Instruction.....	16
Conclusion	18
Appendices.....	21
Appendix A	21
Notes about Ward’s responses to the Spring 1999 Survey of Philadelphia Teachers:	21
Appendix B.....	22
Update on Test Scores	22

List of Tables

SAT-9 Results (and Attendance Figures): Percent at Each Level	23
PSSA Results: Percent of Students in Each Quartile	24

Ward Elementary School

School Context:	(All statistics from 1998-1999 school year. See updated information at the end of the report.)
Enrollment:	574
Grades:	K-8
Student Ethnicity:	93% African American, 6% Asian, 1% White/Latino
Gender:	47% Female, 53% Male
Low Income:	91%
ESOL:	4.5%
Special Education:	7%
Suspension Rate:	13%

Performance Responsibility Index (PRI) Data:

Student Attendance: Percent of students attending 90% of days or more 1995-1999, and 85% of days or more in 2000.

	1995-1996	1999-2000
Ward Elementary School	84%	81%
Elementary school average	83%	85%

Staff Attendance: Percent of staff attending 95% of days or more.

	1995-1996	1999-2000
Ward Elementary School	50%	78%
Elementary school average	53%	65%

Promotion Rate: Percent of students promoted to the next grade level

	1995-1996	1999-2000
Ward Elementary School	90%	97%
Elementary school average	87%	93%

Stanford 9 Achievement Test (SAT-9) Scores: Percent of students at or above basic

	1995-1996	1996-1997	1997-1998	1998-1999	1999-2000
Math	5.71%	24.80%	45.90%	31.97%	27.10%
Reading	27.14%	40.00%	54.10%	56.56%	48.50%
Science	8.57%	36.00%	43.40%	50.00%	36.90%

*Note: In 1997-1998, the District changed its way of computing the Performance Responsibility Index (PRI). The 1997-1998 data were computed twice, once to compare with previous years, and again (using the new formula) to be baseline data for future years. The new 1997-1998 index was renamed the "School Performance Index." For purposes of this report, all reported data are Cycle 1 data, and the 1998-1999 data were recomputed using the original formula, so that comparisons could be made with previous years. At the end of this document you will see Cycle 2 data, computed under the new formula, and including data for the 1997-1998, 1998-1999, and 1999-2000 school years.

Introduction

This is a story about a school that made dramatic improvement in standardized test scores from 1996 to 1999. Over the three years, the percent of students scoring at or above the Basic level in science in the Stanford-9 Achievement Test (SAT-9) rose 41.43 percent; scores in reading went up 29.42 percent, and scores in mathematics went up 26.26 percent. Some hypotheses for these dramatic gains seem reasonable. Since no curriculum changes were made and resources were lacking during the first year, initial gains may have been due to a new seriousness about the test. Teachers may have been worried that, under *Children Achieving*, there would be ramifications for poor test performance. Continued gains were probably due to substantive changes in curriculum and instruction, increased resources in the school, extensive professional development, and a new principal who was highly motivated to implement all facets of *Children Achieving* as quickly as possible, because "there's no time to waste." Sustaining and improving these scores has proved to be problematic.

The new principal came to the school as an interim in the fall of 1997 and was officially appointed in March 1998. She is intelligent, articulate, and dedicated to her goals, working long hours to achieve her dream for making Ward "the kind of school that people will beat down the doors to come to." When she came to the school during the 1997-1998 school year, the teachers' biggest complaint was lack of materials; now they have more materials than they know what to do with, professional development, time to meet, a computer teacher, a librarian...and relentless demands for continued improvement. As one might expect, the principal's demands for excellence have been met with mixed reactions from staff. Those who are committed to getting better admire her

steadfastness and devotion. Others lament the fact that she is too serious, not warm and more personable, and that her standards are impossibly high. It seems clear that one critical component is missing at the school: a professional community invested in the changes that are taking place. There is little sense of ownership or pride in the reform, a high level of stress, a general level of job dissatisfaction, and a good deal of pessimism and anxiety. People are unhappy. Teachers are feeling overwhelmed and under-appreciated. Staff turnover is a serious problem, and mid-year changes in staffing have resulted in additional stresses. People are working hard and trying to make positive changes, but school is not a happy place.

The role of a loyal, committed, happy, and enthusiastic staff cannot be underestimated in our discussion of school reform. Ward School shows us that a well-meaning, hard-working, and goal-oriented principal is not sufficient to institute deep-rooted reform unless staff can be motivated around the same goals. In some respects, the story at Ward School mirrors what happened in the District as a whole, under a well-meaning, hard-working, and goal-oriented superintendent.

School Context

Chronology

This case study was written in the spring of 2000 after making yearly visits to Ward School starting during the 1997-1998 school year, shortly before the acting principal, Mrs. Johnson, was appointed as principal. The great sadness about Ward is that the professional community has not mobilized around the efforts of the principal, who has been working extremely hard over this three-year period. The three years might be summarized as follows:

During 1997-1998, the teachers were operating independently, making decisions about their own classrooms with little interaction among peers. Although everyone was trying to make sense of what to do to meet the higher expectations of the new principal, instructional practice looked quite different from classroom to classroom. Mrs. Johnson was communicating an urgency about changing, but teachers were frustrated because of lack of materials. Teachers left, some at the principal's urging. It was clear that Mrs. Johnson was aiming to form a highly professional staff, committed to excellence. New teachers came on board.

During the 1998-1999 school year, in her attempt to implement all facets of the *Children Achieving* agenda, Mrs. Johnson made sure there were lots of materials and professional development opportunities for teachers. Small Learning Communities (SLCs) were formally established for grades K-2, 3-5, and 6-8, but group dynamics were poor. There was little sense of purposeful professional community, of people bonding together to meet professional challenges. More teachers left. New teachers came on board.

During 1999-2000, in spite of attempts to reduce stress, establish interpersonal relationships among SLC members, and marshal support for instructional change, it appeared that professional community was still lacking. Morale was low. Some teachers left mid-year, and further staff turnover seemed likely.

Description of the School

Ward is a large K-8 school, with two classes at most grade levels. The school occupies two buildings. One houses kindergarten and Head Start, and the other houses the rest of the grades. The main building is 50-60 years old, a solid, three-story, brick structure with a large asphalt playground

surrounded by a chain link fence. At one end of the building, the school has an old-fashioned auditorium with a stage and real seats (the wooden ones that fold down); above the auditorium is the gymnasium. At the other end of the building, on the first floor, is a building extension accessed through a long hallway; it contains a few small auxiliary classrooms and the library/media center. The library was virtually unused and the collection was extremely outdated when we first visited the school in the spring of 1998; during the 1999-2000 school year a new librarian weeded the collection, purchased new books and periodicals, and took steps toward setting up computers as research stations. The main part of the building holds the classrooms, basically one floor for each small learning community: The K-2 SLC is on the first floor, the SLC for grades 3-5 is on the second floor, and the SLC for grades 6-8 is on the top floor. The lunchroom is in the basement. The school is clean and well kept, but old.

Description of the Neighborhood

The school sits amidst a neighborhood that changes dramatically, depending on what direction you go. In one direction there are office buildings, hospitals, churches, and universities. In another direction there are residential neighborhoods: some with large, stately homes housing university professors, some with run-down row houses and residents living in poverty conditions. The neighborhood high school is nearby, and facilitates some interaction between Ward and high school students who do things like help on the playground, or assist with projects, such as a vegetable stand run by students in the lower grades. Various partnerships have been established between Ward and universities, hospitals, and libraries in the neighborhood in areas such as health services, counseling,

tutoring, cultural events, or instructional support.

Students

The student population at Ward School is largely African American (93 percent) and high-poverty (91 percent low income). Over the three years of interviews we have conducted in the school, the behavior of the students has continued to be a topic that teachers want to discuss. Noise in the halls and disrespectful behavior are particularly troublesome, and safety on the playground is also an issue. In 1998, the principal (newly appointed) expressed this opinion about behavior:

Academics will drive the behavior...Maybe kids misbehave because they are not challenged in the classroom.

Besides focusing on improving what goes on in the classroom, Mrs. Johnson has taken some direct steps to improve behavior. For example, she has enlisted high school volunteers and students with the Americorps program to help with games and sports, so that students have something to do on the playground besides getting into trouble. She has begun to focus on strategies for conflict resolution, especially for older students in the SLC at grades 6-8. Her plans to do more with conflict resolution and to involve students in peer mediation processes were somewhat curtailed during 1999-2000, due to problems related to staff turnover. Over the past three years, the school has become noticeably quieter and more orderly, especially on the upper floor, which seemed particularly noisy and chaotic when we first visited classrooms in spring 1998. As of spring 2000, teachers in the school say that the behavior has gotten better, or worse...depending on who is doing the talking. There does not seem to be a consensus about this.

Implementing the Comprehensive Student Support Process (CSSP) was one of the principal's early goals, something she incorporated into the school improvement plan for 1998-1999 not mentioned the previous year, when the former principal was still in charge. The CSSP is a facet of the *Children Achieving* initiative. It is a process designed to offer help to students at the classroom level, in hopes that they will not have to be referred for special services. A first step is to discuss the student at SLC meetings, and have teachers suggest strategies for classroom interventions. Parents are contacted and become part of the process. Community resources are contacted to offer assistance. Teachers have to document things that they have tried (new teaching techniques, materials, outside tutoring, assistance from community agencies, etc.). If basic interventions are not successful, the process goes to Tier 2, and on to Tier 3, until outside help is obtained. Criticism of the process abounds, because it is ridden with paperwork, and it takes a long time to get a student outside help, even when teachers feel that the need is obvious.

The SLCs have engaged in the CSSP to varying degrees, and have taken advantage of some community resources, such as services provided at local hospitals. Time spent on the CSSP can be prohibitive. Some teachers feel that they have obtained helpful suggestions from fellow teachers; others feel the process is a waste of time. For example; teachers in Ward's K-2 small learning community report that the amount of time spent on CSSP discussions has dominated the SLC meetings. Teachers are resentful that they spend so much time talking about the same few students, and not working on programmatic things that would benefit the group as a whole. In the other two SLCs, the process does not seem to be quite so all-consuming. They think in terms of making suggestions to each other

about what to do to help the students, and rarely take formal steps to get students to “Tier 2,” the second level of intervention in the support process. As the grade 6-8 small learning community coordinator (SLCC) explained:

When students are having problems, we provide a lot of peer tutoring, peer coaching, teacher tutoring, and recommend Saturday school sessions...We do lots of Tier 1 stuff, and the problems are usually handled there. We rarely go to Tier 2. It's not worth it. By the time you finish all the paperwork for Tier 2, the kid is in the next grade.

Staff

During the 1997-1998 school year, it appeared that staff had been there for a long time. Among 33 teachers at the school, the average teacher had spent eight years at Ward and had worked an average of 14 years as a teacher. There is good reason to think that these tenure figures are now much lower. Reviewing the professional staff list as of spring 2000, there were 32 names on the list (two names were crossed out, people who left during the year and were not replaced). Of the remaining 30 teachers, 16 were new to the school since 1997-1998, the year the new principal took over.

Since core instruction takes place in regular classrooms, we looked particularly to see what the turnover was like among regular classroom teachers. As with any elementary school staff, besides regular classroom teachers, some are special education teachers who help students with special needs; some are specialists such as reading teachers or science teachers, librarians or computer teachers; and there are teachers who teach special subjects such as art, music, or gym. Out of the 30 teachers listed on the Ward staff list in spring 2000, there were 19 regular classroom teachers

listed, and nine of them were new. Essentially, in spring 2000 it appeared that approximately 50 percent of the professional staff was new—on staff less than two years.

Staff turnover is problematic in several ways. New teachers need additional assistance and mentoring; they are highly stressed and are absent more often; some become overwhelmed or disenchanted and leave during the school year, creating additional disruption until a replacement is hired; some are asked to leave because they are not doing an adequate job. In a school with many new teachers, it is necessary for the more competent ones to take on additional roles, such as working on committees or projects. This can lead to additional stress among veteran teachers. Occasionally, leadership positions are filled by new teachers who may not have adequate experience or background to assume these roles. For example, one of the new teachers at Ward was appointed as SLC coordinator in her second year of teaching, a role generally assigned to someone far more experienced. Although she is carrying out her responsibilities in this role, it is apparent that she may be reaching her limits. In spring 2000, it was obvious that Ward was facing these kinds of challenges as a result of enormous staff turnover.

But why is staff turnover so high? The high staff turnover rate is due in part to the new principal. In spring 1998, at the end of her first year at Ward, Mrs. Johnson expressed pride that she had already managed to rid the school of three “deadweight” teachers, and that two more would be leaving in June. Still others decided that this would be a good time to retire. Undoubtedly, the principal was sending a clear message to the staff that they were expected to deliver quality instruction to students, or risk the consequences. When we visited the school during that first year, it was unclear how

many people were supportive of Mrs. Johnson's agenda. We asked people to estimate how many teachers supported the changes that were taking place. Estimates ranged from "a minority" to "almost all." The principal herself estimated about two-thirds of the teachers were supportive, but it was difficult to tell who was being truly supportive and who was giving lip service to her initiatives, waiting to see how everything transpired over time. Some saw Mrs. Johnson's strong stance as good, and nothing to worry about, as long as you were "doing what you were supposed to do." Others felt she was moving too fast. For positive-thinking, hard-working teachers who were committed to change and reform, she was a welcome change. For those who were more negative and skeptical, or who did not want to change their traditional ways, she was a threat. To summarize, initially teachers were divided in their reactions to what was going on around them.

In later interviews (spring 2000) it was apparent that school morale was low. The old timers missed "the good old days," when people had more fun and there were fewer demands being made of them; the newer teachers were struggling to keep up. A high staff turnover rate, compounded by difficulty in getting substitute teachers, was contributing to the general stress level, since there were many adjustments to the schedule and disruptions to the school day. There was a high level of job dissatisfaction, and teachers were talking about leaving for the suburbs, or asking for a transfer out of the school.

Curiously, though, despite the negativity almost all the teachers expressed when interviewed in spring 2000 about the school as a whole, they all spoke positively about changes they were making in their teaching practice. Once they had voiced their general unhappiness about the school climate, they could be coaxed to talk about new curriculum and projects they were

doing with their students—and got very animated and enthusiastic about what they were doing in their classrooms. It was a puzzling situation.

The principal's ability to articulate her goals, focus and motivate staff around her priorities is a topic discussed in the paragraphs below, about leadership. Indeed, staff reaction to Mrs. Johnson and the instructional changes she was promoting is a story unto itself.

Leadership: A Principal with an Instructional Focus

As was noted above, Mrs. Johnson came to Ward early in the 1997-1998 school year as an interim principal, and was officially appointed in March 1998. This was her first appointment as a principal. Prior to Ward, a K-8 school, she had been an assistant principal at the middle school level. She had a strong instructional focus and was very committed to the idea of making Ward an exemplary school. It is hard to separate a discussion of her leadership from the discussion of instructional change, because the two are so interwoven. In short order, Mrs. Johnson became totally immersed in the endeavor to improve instruction and student achievement.

In spring 1998, she described her vision for the future like this: "People are going to beat down Ward's doors; they're going to want to come here." She proceeded to set very high standards for herself and others, and worked very long hours. This was a leadership style that was quite different from the "laissez-faire" style of her predecessor. She was knowledgeable about curriculum and instruction, and proceeded to purchase books and materials for use across all content areas. She reallocated funds so that it would be possible to establish a computer lab and revamp the old school library, and hire a computer teacher and a new librarian. She

lengthened the school day slightly, as a way to “bank time” for professional development. (On a pre-determined schedule, the students are released early, and the accumulated minutes are recaptured as professional development time for teachers.) She worked with the cluster office to provide hands-on support for teachers using new curriculum and programs, such as balanced literacy, Kendall Hunt science texts, *Everyday Math* in grades K-5, *Connected Math* in grades 6-8, and *Keylinks* and *Treasury of Literature* for test preparation. In fall 1997, when we first conducted interviews at the school, the lack of quality instructional materials was a major complaint of teachers, but no more. During 1999-2000 they were doing their best to keep up with all the innovations, and figure out how to teach using all the new curriculum materials that had been made available to them.

In planning for change, Mrs. Johnson’s approach was, and continues to be, very data driven. She gathers information from any sources available to her. Test data, however, are not her only focus. She gathers informal data by visiting classrooms, collecting and commenting on planbooks every week, and frequently collecting samples of student work on which she writes extensive comments. One teacher shared a memo from the principal to a student, which consisted of suggestions for a project, written on two 3 x 5 Post-It notes in very small handwriting.

Basically, Mrs. Johnson believes that test scores will improve if there are genuine changes in instructional practice. She researches what is available in terms of materials, professional development, programs, partnerships, and other sources of support, and provides strong guidance in the decision-making process. From the very start, Mrs. Johnson’s clear focus has been to make progress, and she is

impatient with those who do not share her sense of urgency. From the very beginning, she has told teachers, “There is no time to waste.” Her approach may have been shaped, at least in part, by the *Children Achieving* agenda, with its standards-based approach, and its attention to the processes of learning (e.g., she is especially fond of learning centers, and finding ways to incorporate technology). She is devoted to engaging students in their learning as a way toward overall school improvement, and as a way to improve problem behaviors.

The principal’s devotion to her work, which might seem admirable to many, has turned out to be an annoyance to some teachers, based on their comments during the 1999-2000 school year. The principal stays very late, and often comes to school to work on weekends. It appears that, in the process of replacing a laissez-faire principal, setting clear expectations for improvement and working long hours to achieve these goals, she has managed to add to the stress level of teachers. In spring 2000, one of the teachers voiced her perception of the principal’s long hours:

She works hard, that’s her choice. But not everyone has to do this. She needs to realize that not everyone wants to work as hard as she does... I don’t think everyone needs to stay late. Everyone has their strengths. They feel under such pressure...maybe because she stays so late herself. They feel her demands are unreasonable...Did you do this or that? Where are your learning centers?...Making us feel we are not doing what we are supposed to.

Achievement

Ward has had a history of dismal scores on District and statewide tests, but tremendous progress was made between 1996 and 1999. Here [again] are the SAT-9 scores:

In 1996, when the SAT-9 test was first administered, only six percent of Ward students were at or above the Basic level in math, only 27 percent in reading, and only nine percent in science. With the advent of reforms implemented under *Children Achieving*, expectations for improvement were clearly established. In spring 1997, the school made astonishing progress, gaining over the previous year by 19 percent in math, 13 percent in reading, and 27 percent in science. Since teachers reported that there were few instructional changes under the principal who left just after the test was given in spring 1997, it is unclear what accounts for the test gains achieved in just one year. Perhaps the teachers and students took the tests more seriously than in past years when they were not linked to the accountability system.

Whatever the reason for this initial gain in scores, the principal left, and Mrs. Johnson came on board in fall 1997. Test scores improved again in spring 1998: gaining by 21 percent in math, 14 percent in reading, and seven percent in science. These remarkable gains resulted in a monetary reward: As part of the *Children Achieving* initiative, the School District had established a systemwide accountability index (the PRI, or Performance Responsibility Index). The accountability system required that each school meet a given target in terms of test scores, and student and staff attendance. Since Ward had by this time exceeded its performance goals, they received \$70,507 from the District for doing so, to be used over two years. In 1998-1999 the money was used mostly for the purchase of computers and

books; in 1999-2000 the money was used towards the "Reading Recovery" program and purchase of library furniture.

After such dramatic progress during the first two years, it was a bit disappointing to see the SAT-9 scores flatten in spring 1999: up 2.5 percent in reading and 6.5 percent in science, but down 14 percent in math—possibly because a new math program was in the process of being implemented. A bright spot, however, was the school's performance on the state's standardized achievement test, the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). The school made significant improvement from 1998 to 1999 and received another achievement award, this time from the state, in the amount of \$80,655. It was decided that this money would be used to support three years of a Read to Succeed program at the school, beginning spring 2000.

When we visited the school, it was surprising to find that there was little celebration or pride around achievement, especially since the cluster is guided by the "Principles of Learning," a model for school change promoted by the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh. Two of the eight guiding principles are: "Organize for effort" and "Recognize accomplishment." We discovered, during visits to the school in spring 2000, that few people knew about the progress on the tests or about the rewards. Even in grade 5, where most of the progress was made on the state test, instead of celebrating her success the 5th grade teacher said mournfully, "Wait 'til they see the results of the test *this* year. I have a very *different* kind of class." Indeed, test scores were quite disappointing. See results for spring 2000 at the end of this document.

The lack of celebration over test scores might also be due the fact that teachers were tired of talking about tests, and resenting the amount of class time being spent on test preparation, using various test preparation materials such as *Keylinks* and *Treasury of Literature*:

They want us to be successful on the SAT-9, so it's test prep instead of standards-based teaching. Everything seems artificial... It does seem like we spend more time assessing than teaching.

School Climate

During our visits to the school in spring 2000, it was quite apparent that although test scores were going up, school climate was a matter of major concern. There was a serious lack of job satisfaction. Some possible reasons might be:

- **Staff turnover.** Among veteran teachers, several left because they could not or would not make the necessary improvements. Some of these teachers felt the relationship with the principal was too adversarial; others appreciated her tenacity but were not willing to put in the extra effort so decided to leave. As for new staff, the principal stated in interviews that she was quite impressed with some of the new teachers, and among the new teachers many confirmed that the kind of teaching that Mrs. Johnson expected of them was what they learned about in college. Nevertheless, one frustration for Mrs. Johnson has been that many of these new teachers do not stay; they get their experience in the city and then move to jobs in the suburbs. Another problem has stemmed from teachers who come to the school as transfers from other schools. Mrs. Johnson lamented that she often has limited input about the selection of teachers

for the school, and several very poor teachers have arrived from other schools as a result of seeking a transfer, rather than being "written up" at their old school. Their principals save them the professional embarrassment of being "written up" as a poor teacher if they will leave quietly and request a transfer to a different school. As a result, their poor performance does not become part of their official teaching record and the principal avoids paperwork and possible union complications involved in removing a teacher.

- **Teacher absence.** During 1999-2000, especially, several prep teachers left during the school year and were not replaced. Substitute teachers frequently did not show up as expected, forcing SLC leaders, guidance counselors, the librarian, and sometimes the principal herself, to cover classes. There were constant interruptions to the schedule, missed prep periods, missed SLC meetings, etc. Lack of stability and nonexistent or disrupted routines in the school day became disconcerting, dismaying and discouraging. Although these disruptions might not show up in staff attendance reports, they had a major impact on school climate throughout spring 2000 when we were visiting teachers and classrooms.
- **Staff attitudes.** Some teachers at the school have been resistant to change all along; they liked things the way they were (even though students were performing poorly). Others think that the changes being made are both necessary and good. Still others think that there have been too many changes, too fast; they are struggling to keep up. Such basic differences of opinion among staff have been detrimental to school climate.

Furthermore, it has been difficult to enforce camaraderie. There has been a long history at Ward of working alone and closing the classroom door. It has been difficult to establish a vibrant and supportive community of teachers who like to work collaboratively to make things better. We look more closely at this issue in the following section about professional community. Another problem has been that teachers feel overworked and under-appreciated; incentive rewards have gone into one big pot, and teachers have not experienced the personal impact.

- **Reluctance to take on leadership roles.** Many teachers have not felt invested in the reform. They feel that the reform is something that is being done to them, rather than something in which they are taking part. Many feel that decision making at the school has been entirely too unilateral. The principal told us that she has tried to encourage teachers to take on leadership roles, to become more engaged in the decision-making process, but they have elected not to participate on committees or in leadership capacities. The principal cannot do the job alone, but often it seems that she has little alternative but to do just that. She said that she is open to suggestion about what to do, and has attended sharing sessions with other principals, but that these sessions have not been very helpful, because ultimately you always have to “go back and figure out what to do in your own school.”
- **Poor interpersonal relationships.** In one SLC, especially, poor interpersonal relationships among some members of the SLC have interfered with their productivity and positive focus. Some teachers were so

unhappy with the SLC coordinator that they drafted a letter to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and discussed their concerns with staff at the cluster office.

Professional Community

In 1997-1998, when Mrs. Johnson came to Ward, the school was in the process of setting up small learning communities. The program support teacher, who gave general instructional support to teachers, and the school community coordinator, who provided links from home to school were leaving at the end of the year, and the principal opted not to replace these positions, but to use the money for more materials and more classroom assistants to help teachers in classrooms. Her rationale was that the new SLC coordinators, who would be officially appointed in spring 1998, would perform many of the same functions as a program support teacher and the school community coordinator. Therefore, she could use the money to get materials and assistants directly into classrooms.

Although it was her stated intent that the SLC coordinators would play a strong instructional role in the school, she was impatient to get changes under way. She moved very quickly and purposefully on her own, because she felt strongly that there was “no time to waste.” In spring 1998 interviews, there was hope among staff that there was going to be a lot of participation in the decision-making process. School leaders reported that they were more involved in decision-making than ever before, but on closer examination it may be that they were just more *informed* about the decisions being made. For example, the principal who had a clear vision for what needed to be done, had a habit of speaking in the first person in terms of “I tell them what I want,” and

there were other indications that teachers' roles might not be so participatory. For example, people on the school leadership team tended to say, "We decide what we are going to do [at our leadership meetings] and *present our decisions* to the faculty."

This mode of operation was confirmed in interviews during the next (1998-1999) school year. In spring 1999 the principal said, "This year is a transition stage, really—I meet with the SLC coordinators and tell them what they have to do, and distribute materials to them, etc." She said the SLC makes it easier for her as an administrator, and when asked "How is it easier?" she said:

I can delegate things for the SLC coordinators to do so I don't have to do everything myself, such as working with teachers who need help, distributing materials, coordinating the test-giving, and ordering materials. And some discipline things too...Also, the SLC coordinator brings the teacher concerns to me, so they [the teachers] don't have to come directly to me if there is something they want to complain about.

As we have observed in so many other schools across the city, in spite of this principal's stated intent to have the SLC coordinators (SLCCs) become instructional leaders, they ended up dealing with administrative details and headaches, and as messengers who delivered information from the principal. During 1998-1999 many teachers described the school's decision-making process like this:

The principal decides what has to be done, and the SLCCs deliver the message to the teachers, who then figure out how to comply.

During the 1998-1999 school year, Mrs. Johnson did make arrangements for the SLC to meet one period a week during the

school day, and to release the SLCCs for at least one period a day to deal with their extra work. But there were few indications that the SLC structure was strengthening professional community or gathering momentum around major instructional improvements. One SLC was unhappy with the directive nature of their SLC meetings and the fact that too much time was being spent on the comprehensive student support process. Another was planning lots of theme activities, but the instructional connection and impact seemed weak. The third SLC was reputed to be doing good things for both behavior and instruction, but it seemed that this was largely due to the efforts of one or two strong individuals.

By the end of the 1998-1999 school year, the principal seemed happy with new staff who she perceived as more attuned to reform, and more inclined to deliver standards-based instruction. But in interviews with teachers, many were expressing negative feelings, and several indicated that they were trying to transfer out of the school. Indeed, several teachers did leave; others opted to stay, in spite of their unhappiness. The talk about leaving persisted in spring 2000. In some interviews, teachers revealed their intention to leave at the end of the year, but they had not yet told the principal.

Without doubt, during the 1999-2000 school year, the school was plagued by teacher turnover and long-term teacher absence. Although the principal was still standing behind her decision to drive out "deadweight" teachers, and was still striving to find good release teachers so that teachers could meet together as SLCs and for other instructional reasons, she was finding it difficult to hire and hold onto new classroom teachers and good reliable teachers for special subjects, such as computer class, gym, art, and music. With some consternation, she expressed her frustration at not having the right to hire her own staff, and at getting a number

transferred teachers who she later found out were not functioning at their previous schools. She also expressed great disappointment that so many good new teachers would get their training in Philadelphia schools like Ward, and then move to the suburbs. What she did not mention, a striking omission, was that many teachers at Ward were leaving because they were simply unhappy, and had no strong allegiance to the school, to her, or to a professional community.

By spring 2000, there were some indications that teachers were beginning to establish positive informal relationships within their small learning communities, perhaps a good sign for long-range change. As of spring 2000, in the SLC for grades 6-8, only two of the six classroom teachers had been there in previous years; the SLCC, herself a relatively new teacher, was working to get the group to meet informally after school, go out for dinner, etc. The teachers in the SLC for grades 3-5 were trying to meet over lunch, with the proviso that they not discuss work; in a school that is feeling such stress over work-related issues, this might be a good rule. And in the SLC for grades K-2, the SLCC had been out on long-term leave and the teachers had banded together to divide up the SLC work; their greater participation in the SLC work, and the realization on the part of the SLCC that life went on without her, were both good outcomes. Disturbing, though, was the fact that the principal was so convinced that things were settling down in terms of staff stability. In conversations with the teachers, it seemed likely that there would once again be considerable staff turnover in fall 2000; and some of the turnover would occur among some of the principal's prized teachers. This might be quite disconcerting for the principal if these teachers actually leave.

Parent and Community Involvement

The school gets involved with many activities in the larger community, such as partnerships with the local high school, neighboring universities, hospitals, clinics, museums, and libraries, etc. Outside partners express frustration at communicating with the school. The telephone and Fax machine are frequently busy, messages to teachers do not seem to get through, and visiting the office is not a pleasant experience. Visitors sign in when they enter the building, and are told by the office to "sit in the hall," where they wait until someone decides to see them. It is not a welcoming environment. This may be even more intimidating for parents who are reluctant to make a visit to school under the best of circumstances, and are frequently there for some kind of specific unpleasant reason.

Although the school established an elected Local School Council (LSC) in spring 1998, it did not seem that parents were very involved at the school. Those who were involved tended to be parents who worked at the school as classroom assistants or aides. Several teachers made comments about how hard it was to work with parents who do not know how to help their children. In spring 1998, the home-school coordinator, a position that no longer exists at the school, commented that many of the parents were not much older than the students, that it was hard to get parents to come to school, and that when the students got into trouble the parents acted surprised and angry. The school has been attempting to organize events for parents, like plays and assemblies. The SLC for grades 3-5, whose focus is on arts and humanities, frequently puts on performances and musical events. But in spite of the new SLC organization and the reported closer ties to student families

through the SLCs, it did not seem that many parents have decided to participate enthusiastically in the life of the school.

The Complexities of Instructional Improvement

Challenges

In reviewing what occurred at Ward over a three-year period, it becomes clear that organizational change is extremely complex. The principal has had a very clear focus on improving instruction, but things are not progressing as planned. We are seeing that it is hard to make changes and sustain them over time when the component parts of the organization are not working smoothly and in tandem. But it is not always easy to identify where things are going awry, or to figure out what to do to make things right. For example, here are some challenges that need to be addressed:

- **How do you get people to have a more positive attitude?** In conversations with teachers, it was all too clear that they preferred to dwell on the negatives rather than focus on the positive improvements that have occurred, such as more instructional materials, the attendant professional development, and the drastically improved test scores.
- **How can teachers become a community of learners who will engage in open professional dialog with each other?** When Mrs. Johnson came to Ward in fall 1997, she immediately took steps toward raising expectations and implementing standards-based instruction in all the

grades. She attempted to focus her staff not only on what gets taught, but how to teach it. In her observations of teachers, she looked for instructional strategies that would engage students and address different learning styles – hands-on activities, cooperative learning, using technology, and establishing learning centers in classrooms. She collected plan books every week, and closely monitored lesson plans using a checklist, looking for standards and requiring samples of student work. She talked about important instructional issues with her teachers, but she has been unable to get them to engage in this same kind of professional dialog with each other. For example, on one of the school's professional development days, she had teachers at the same grade level each share samples of their students' writing. One teacher characterized the experience as:

...a waste of time. She [the other teacher] looked at my work and I looked at hers. I didn't learn anything from looking at her students' work. It was really terrible. Of course, I didn't tell her that.

For some reason, Ward's professional community has not yet learned how to communicate with each other openly and honestly in a professionally supportive way.

- **Why don't teachers have the same zeal as the principal, the same sense of urgency about getting the job done?** All teachers at Ward School know that they are expected to teach to higher standards. During her first year, 1997-1998, the principal made her expectations known in no uncertain terms. Teachers who did not embrace the vision for improvement were encouraged to leave. When

people suggested that she was trying to do too much at once, she was impatient with them, insisting: "There's no time to waste." Curiously, this echoes the superintendent's sense of urgency surrounding the entire *Children Achieving* initiative. Her urgency and determination have been met with mixed reactions from teachers who, in general, do not seem as motivated as she is to get the job done. How much of this might be due to the largely unilateral decision-making on the part of the principal, or the solemn and high-stress environment?

Changes in the Instructional Focus

The 1997-1998 School Improvement Plan, which was written under the previous principal, was focused on an interdisciplinary, language arts approach that would somehow miraculously spill over into "reading, mathematics, science, social studies and minor subject areas." The 1998-1999 plan was written in a way that seems more in keeping with the thinking of the new principal and reflects the focused, subject-by-subject instructional approach being advocated at the school. There are very specific goals and strategies outlined for each subject area. The plan addresses the improvement of literacy, math, and science as separate goals, with explicit links to standards and technology. Also, the new plan promotes the improved implementation of the CSSP (the Comprehensive Student Support Process) through the involvement of parents and community. The school improvement strategy is clearly more aligned with the *Children Achieving* approach to school change.

Informally, the principal seems to be especially supportive of mathematics and computer technology, but she is always quick to come back to a discussion of improving literacy, because that is a District and cluster priority, and therefore a high priority in the School Improvement Plan. It also seems that the three subjects tested in the SAT-9—reading, math, and science—are the subjects that get major attention. Social studies is the poor sister, perhaps because it is not yet tested. Music, gym, and art are viewed as subjects that are functional in the schedule, because the specialists are supposed to provide time for meetings and planning. By contrast, the principal seems to see computer and library time as being more linked to high priority goals—to writing, doing research, completing projects, and finding alternative strategies for engaging students in their learning.

Internal and External Supports

During our first visits to Ward during the 1997-1998 school year, some teachers were pleased that the new principal was focusing on having everyone do a quality job of teaching; some went along with the program in a superficial way; others decided it was time to leave the school. But the biggest complaint among teachers was about lack of sufficient materials. This deficiency was soon rectified. During 1998-1999, there were new materials in almost every subject area—at least the tested subjects: mathematics, science, and reading. And serious attempts were being made to link new curriculum materials to high quality professional development experiences.

Internal Supports

In mathematics: The school adopted *Everyday Mathematics* ("Chicago Math") for use in grades K-5, one of several high-quality, reform-based mathematics programs approved by the National Science Foundation (NSF). *Everyday Mathematics* was being promoted and supported by Philadelphia's Urban System Initiative (USI), an NSF-funded, District initiative focused on improving science and mathematics education across the district. Teachers at Ward were encouraged to attend USI's Saturday professional development sessions related to this new program. The principal also arranged for additional professional development directly from the company. For grades 6-8, the cluster promoted the adoption of *Connected Math*, another NSF-approved and USI-supported "effective program," and the cluster facilitator worked with the teachers at these grade levels. Clusters usually have one or more people on staff whose job is devoted to working with teachers to improve instruction in reading, mathematics, and science.

In reading/language arts: "Balanced literacy" was being promoted across grade levels. By the beginning of the 1997-1998 school year, emergent literacy programs had already taken hold in the kindergarten. The kindergarten teacher at Ward, who was already successfully using MONDO (one such program) in her classroom, began working with teachers at other grades within her own K-2 SLC and, during 1998-1999, she started helping the third grade teachers (in the Grade 3-5 SLC). This is because, in 1999-2000, second-graders who had been involved in a balanced literacy approach for several years, would be reaching third grade for the first time. (She also began working with the older grades, for example in sixth grade, during

spring 1999, to help them develop balanced literacy approaches in the upper grades.). The language arts cluster facilitator was also called upon to set up professional development and offer in-class support. Also, as part of the cluster's participation with the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh), the cluster advocated for teaching practices such as "accountable talk," a set of classroom procedures for helping students to organize and share their ideas about books they have been reading together as a class. The cluster arranged for all principals to visit Hancock School in the chain cluster, to see "accountable talk" in action. Other programs and procedures, such as "Running Records" and the "100 Book Challenge," were used to encourage children to read and keep track of their progress. Many tradebooks were purchased, including \$10,000 worth from Western Union, as part of a grant to the K-2 SLC. The principal has continued to purchase an enormous number of books for use in classrooms, to support shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading. In 1999-2000, the school also instituted a Reading Recovery program, a program devoted to giving intense support to children who are having problems learning to read.

In science: Late in the 1998-1999 school year, the principal ordered science kits, workbooks and software for grades 3-6 to go along with science texts purchased before she came to the school. She said they were texts published by Kendall Hunt, and described them as "very hands on." She consulted with the USI to discuss what kinds of textbooks and/or science materials to order for K-2. In grades 7-8, they started using another science program designated by USI as an "effective program," and she arranged for professional development sessions from the vendor. Curiously, she described initiatives from external partners,

such as the Penn Merck, USI, Dr. Tobin at the University of Pennsylvania, and Penn Links as “hit or miss”; she wanted a more “coordinated” program. It sounded like she valued the help from external partners, but did not yet consider them as a strong foundation for school-wide planning. Rather, she seemed to regard them as supplementary to the regular program of studies. As a result, these outside partners seem to be more involved in planning activities with individual teachers and the SLCs rather than the whole school.

Technology: During spring 1998, first steps were taken to set up a computer lab. One of the SLCCs (Small Learning Community Coordinators) was designated “technology leader” and was helping the teachers learn about available software. During the 1998-1999 school year, there was a full computer lab in operation (about 25 computers) and the principal hired a computer teacher for teaching basic computer literacy and helping students with computer projects. In addition, she made sure that every class was equipped with a classroom computer, with available software for teaching in the content areas (science, math, and reading). Funding for the computer lab came largely through the capital budget, but for other computers and software she used money from the Title I budget and the regular school budget.

Library: Besides providing materials, getting SLCs organized, promoting the CSSP, and bringing technology into the school, during the spring of 1998, the principal also talked about revamping the library and hiring a school librarian. The school library was in poor condition. There was an area designated as an “IMC” (Instructional Media Center) but it was actually just an old library that no one was using. There was no librarian, and the materials were very old—some dating back to the 1920’s and 30’s. The principal had a vision for improving the IMC, but was

unable to act until the 1999-2000 school year when she hired a new librarian. By spring 2000, the new librarian had weeded the collection, re-shelved the books on new bookshelves, ordered new books and magazines, arranged for the computerization of the collection, installed a cluster of computers, and was taking steps toward working with teachers on class projects and helping individual students. Her intention is to implement a full Library Power program, which involves making strong links between library activities and classroom learning.

If it seems like a lot of things have been happening at once at Ward School, this is very true. Right from the beginning, the principal said she needed to focus “on everything” because “everything needs to be done.” Again, this is strikingly similar to the superintendent’s approach to *Children Achieving*. She has proceeded to do lots of things at the same time, especially ordering materials and arranging for different ways to support the teachers. For example, besides materials, there was additional support in terms of professional development and in-class assistance. The school started to “bank time” (as a way to get more professional development time), and additional teachers were hired for subjects like art and music, so that time could be set aside for SLC meetings and for the SLCCs to do their work. She also arranged for professional development support from the cluster, vendors, and outside partners. And although she did not rehire a program support teacher or a school community coordinator when they retired, she used these funds to hire additional classroom assistants for in-class support.

External Supports

The principal is diligent about tracking down potential sources of support for the instructional program. Besides using the

ongoing support from the cluster, the school has partnered with clinics and hospitals for health and counseling services, has used university resources such as Penn Merck and Penn Links, has used high school students on the playground and for certain curriculum-related projects, has used the expertise and professional development opportunities available through the USI, has taken advantage of professional development offered through vendors, has received grants from companies like Western Union and McDonald's, has taken advantage of cultural opportunities available in the city, has obtained music lessons through Settlement House, and has a school artist-in-residence. There is a long list of such activities. Some are more connected to curriculum and instruction than others.

Financially, beyond the school's normal operating budget, there are Title I funds which are used for full-time and part-time teacher salaries, summer and extracurricular programs, staff development, classroom assistants, noontime aides, and the parent scholar program (a program for training parents and then putting them to work in classrooms). During 1998-1999, the school received \$70,000 as part of the District's capital expenditures budget: monies were used to buy computers. As a reward for exceeding its performance target, the school received an additional \$70,000 from the District: During 1998-1999, the first half of this money was spent on computers and books; and during 1999-2000 the remaining funds were spent on the newly established Reading Recovery program and new library furniture. In December 1999, the school received an additional \$80,000 from the state as a reward for outstanding progress on the statewide tests. These funds are being used to support the balanced literacy program in the form of professional development and books.

Classroom Instruction

The principal has done her part in providing resources for the teachers. And the fact that they have not mobilized around her priorities is certainly not due to lack of communication. Her expectations are very clear. She has communicated her seriousness of purpose in several very concrete ways: She collects and reviews planbooks on a weekly basis, she writes many notes and suggestions to teachers about what they are doing in their classes, she collects and comments on student work, she attends SLC meetings, she stops by and visits classrooms, and she gives extensive feedback when she does formal classroom observations. To communicate about the importance of improving test scores, she has provided test preparation materials for both literacy and math, and has used professional development time to encourage teachers to assess one another's student work. Unfortunately, though, these monitoring functions are from the principal down. She has been unable to garner strong staff support for the reform. There is a spirit of compliance, but not enthusiastic energy for the reform. Teachers are not united in the effort. Although the principal is knowledgeable and well-meaning, she has not been able to establish a culture of peer accountability where teachers watch out for each other and help each other to do a better job.

The bottom line, of course, is what goes on in classrooms. Undoubtedly, over the past three years, we have seen remarkable changes at Ward. Much has been accomplished, but there is more work to do.

- During class visits in spring 1998 there were several instances of commotion and noise in the halls, which were distractions to the observed lessons. Although some teachers were still concerned about lack of school

discipline in spring 2000, the school was noticeably calmer and classrooms seemed more focused on instruction.

- In spring 1998, teachers complained about lack of materials. In spring 2000, there were many new books being used for reading/language arts. In grades K, 4, 5, and 7 we saw examples of teachers using new materials to support the balanced literacy program—for shared, guided, and independent reading. The kindergarten program was nothing short of exemplary. Classes we saw at other grade levels did not look very different from traditional lessons orchestrated around basal readers. Students read out loud and answered questions. Most questions were low level, but some required higher-order thinking.
- By spring 2000, teachers in grades K-5 were all using *Everyday Math* and most have been to professional development both in school and on USI Saturdays. We did not see any *Everyday Math* lessons per se, but one second grade class did an interesting problem-solving activity which involved picturing and recording number sentences to show how many ways two flavors of cupcakes could be arranged in a tin holding 12 cupcakes; another teacher was observed using pattern blocks for finding fractional parts of a whole.
- By spring 2000, the *Connected Math* program was being used in grades 6-8, but there were some apparent difficulties. Both a seventh and an eighth grade teacher reported that they were having trouble finishing the modules in the time allotted. In one lesson, we observed a teacher using the new materials, but teaching in a traditional lecture-style format where students would “solve the problem and put it on the board.” It appeared that the materials were different, but the delivery of instruction was the same as what we saw in previous years.
- By spring 2000, there were many new computers in the school. There was a new computer lab. Classes had a regularly scheduled computer period in which students learned to use the computer. Computer instruction was somewhat uneven. The quality of the collaboration between the computer teacher and the classroom teacher seemed to lead to different outcomes for students. Where the teacher worked closely with the computer teacher, students clearly benefited from the collaboration. The principal reported that the computer teacher has had some problems controlling students in the lab, and as a result some of computers have been vandalized. Classroom computers are in evidence, but we did not see them being used by students.
- The new librarian has laid the groundwork for implementing Library Power, but students are just beginning to use her services as librarian. Things look promising for next year.
- All teachers reported that they feel the quality of student writing has improved. This might be a direct result of the principal collecting and commenting about student writing, on a regular basis.
- The fifth grade teacher reported that the science fair projects were of a higher caliber than in previous years. She said she thought this might be because the principal had given individual feedback to all the students about how to improve their projects.

- The principal provided time for teachers to examine student work and improve their assessment practices. A first grade teacher revealed that she was uncomfortable criticizing another teacher's work. Apparently sufficient trust has not been established for teachers to engage in this kind of self-evaluation and peer coaching.
- Most teachers explained that they use test-preparation materials; some feel that using these materials takes time away from instruction.
- A seventh grade teacher has LRDC's Principles of Learning posted in her room: organize for effort, clear expectations, recognition of accomplishment, fair and credible evaluations; academic rigor in a thinking curriculum; accountable talk; socializing intelligence; learning as apprenticeship. She said she frequently uses them in conversations with her class, but some teachers in the school say they have never heard of the Principles of Learning (supposedly a cluster focus).
- In all three SLCs, there was talk about having students complete projects in response to the District's requirement for projects at each grade level during each marking period. It seems that steps are being taken to help students learn how to work on I-searches (independent research projects, often involving internet searches) and other kinds of projects which require increased sophistication as students move up the grades.

Conclusion

Clearly things have improved at Ward School over the past three years. As of spring 2000, new policies are in place that set higher expectations for students, and the policies are being enforced. People are doing what they think they are supposed to be doing. In general, it seems like materials and supports are in place, and people are all taking first steps toward the wide variety of long-range goals that have been thrust upon them. Undoubtedly there is a need to improve the quality of what is going on, but this will be difficult to do unless the teachers sincerely adopt the school's goals as their own and marshal some enthusiasm for the reform. They are complying with new policies, but not totally embracing them, nor are they supporting each other in the joint effort that is needed to move the reform forward.

If we think of what has happened at Ward in terms of financial capital, human capital, and social capital, the principal has provided financial capital in the form of materials, and human capital in the form of new support teachers and professional development activities. However, the importance of investing in social capital has not been sufficiently recognized or addressed. Focusing on personal relationships, social interactions, and the building of a strong professional community are important next steps for making continued progress at Ward Elementary School.

Appendices

Appendix A

Notes about Ward's responses to the Spring 1999 Survey of Philadelphia Teachers:

In spring 1999, the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) conducted a survey of Philadelphia teachers to learn about their perceptions of the implementation of system-wide education reforms called *Children Achieving* in the city's public schools. In May 2000, the CPRE evaluation team produced scaled scores for each school relating to groups of items on the survey. The scores of schools with the same grade level configuration were then compared with one another. Thus, Ward was compared to other K-8 schools in the District. In all but one category, the reform scales looked more positive at Ward than in the other schools. Teachers reported fewer obstacles to hinder student learning, better safety, better school climate, better leadership, better attitudes toward small learning communities, better reactions to the professional development, better reactions to the curriculum and assessment components in the reform, and greater adoption of reformed practice in their school. On only one scale—collaboration among teaching staff—did the school score lower than other K-8 schools.

Closer review of the Ward data revealed that only 11 teachers (42.3 percent of 26) responded to the survey. The percentage would probably have been closer to 35 percent, if full-time substitutes acting as classroom teachers were included in the survey. Among these 11 teachers who responded, only five identified themselves as general elementary teachers, i.e., as regular classroom teachers. The other six

consisted of one reading-language arts teacher, one special education teacher, one "other" teacher, and two "non-specified." The teachers were asked to designate grade levels at which they were teaching. In all, these 11 teachers checked off a total of 32 grades. Because so many grades (a total of 32) were indicated by so few teachers (11), it is highly likely that many of the teachers who took part in the survey were not typical classroom teachers, but specialist teachers or small learning community coordinators who saw students in several different grades. It is therefore hard to judge if the quantitative results could be considered an accurate reflection of the overall opinions of regular classroom teachers at the school. A review of some specific survey items did prove interesting, however.

Decision-making: Out of 11 teachers, nine said that *half or fewer* teachers at the school were active in decision-making groups, but eight of the 11 agreed that teachers were involved in making the important decisions at the school.

Instructional practice: Ten of the 11 teachers reported that the cluster's professional development has led to changes in their teaching practice, ten of 11 said that teachers in the school have high expectations for student learning, nine said that they have changed their teaching strategies to help the school achieve its performance targets, and eight said that they have participated in professional development workshops from the cluster's TLN staff.

The principal: Nine of the 11 said that the teachers support the principal in enforcing school rules; nine of 11 said that they feel respected by the principal, eight of the 11 said that the principal communicates a clear direction for the school; seven agreed that the principal has confidence in teacher expertise, seven said that the physical

condition of the school building has improved over the past two years, six said that the principal is committed to shared decision-making, and six said it is okay to discuss feelings, worries, and frustrations with the principal.

When considering the different aspects of *Children Achieving*, the teachers responded to the various reform components as follows:

Out of 11 respondents...

- Ten said that small learning communities (SLCs) have had a positive effect.
- Nine said the curriculum frameworks had a positive effect.
- Eight said that the Teaching and Learning Network (a new system of professional development run from the cluster offices), the content standards, and School-to-Career initiatives had positive effects.
- Seven said that clusters and the graduation and promotion requirements were positives.
- Six said that the Stanford-9 Achievement Test (SAT-9) and Local School Councils had a positive impact.
- Five said the Family Resource Network (FRN) was a positive (but four did not comment).
- Five said that the Comprehensive Student Support Process (CSSP) was a positive; six said that it had a negative or no impact.
- Four said that service learning was a good idea, but five did not respond at all.

- Three said that the Performance Responsibility Index (PRI) had a positive effect; six said that it had a negative or no effect. (The PRI is an annual system-wide accountability measure which includes things like each school's test scores, and information about student and staff attendance.)

Comparison of 1999 survey results to 1997 results was not attempted, since there were only three respondents to the 1997 survey.

Appendix B

Update on Test Scores

At the writing of this case study in spring 2000, data were not yet available about the 1999-2000 school year. Data for spring 2000 are reported here, along with 1998 and 1999 data compiled using the new cycle 2 formula adopted by the district in 1998. (If you compare this data to the 1998 and 1999 data reported in the body of this case study, you will notice that the numbers do not match. This is because the data in this report were compiled using the original cycle 1 formula.) Starting in 1998, the District decided to include more grade levels when it computes composite test scores, and has changed its cut-off points for reporting levels of attendance.

The following tables contain data from the spring of the 1997-1998 school year (the year when Mrs. Johnson became principal), to 1998-1999 (when test scores were still improving), to 1999-2000 (the year when this case study was written, but before the test scores had been reported).

SAT-9 Results (and Attendance Figures): Percent at Each Level

	Spring 1998	Spring 1999	Spring 2000
Reading			
Basic and Above	44.9	45.6	48.5
Below Basic	42.6	49.1	47.7
Not tested	12.5	5.2	3.9
Math			
Basic and Above	33.9	29.8	27.1
Below Basic	46.0	59.7	66.1
Not tested	20.0	10.5	6.9
Science			
Basic and Above	37.4	43.2	36.9
Below Basic	43.8	47.2	57.5
Not tested	18.9	9.7	5.6
Staff Attendance			
93% or higher	74.0	84.0	87.7
Student Attendance			
85% or higher	82.9	85.8	81.2

PSSA Results: Percent of Students in Each Quartile

	1997-1998	1998-1999	1999-2000
Grade 5 Reading			
top	0	6	3
high-middle	1	16	12
low-middle	1	51	24
bottom	96	28	60
Grade 5 Math			
top	0	0	0
high-middle	4	31	11
low-middle	23	61	32
bottom	74	8	55
Grade 8 Reading			
top	2	3	3
high-middle	10	14	7
low-middle	27	29	23
bottom	61	54	67
Grade 8 Math			
top	2	3	2
high-middle	5	15	2
low-middle	33	39	19
bottom	61	44	77