“WE NEED A DESIGN TEAM FOR THAT”: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY OF THE BALDRIGE PROCESS IN A SMALL TOWN HIGH SCHOOL

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by

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In the era of educational reform, many models have been used to improve student learning. One characteristic found often in successful reform models was the change in culture of the school. Although no one model worked for everyone, choosing a model whose values and ideals closely matched the school culture was important. This ethnographic case study investigated the implementation of the Baldrige in Education Initiative as one high school developed building level improvement processes. Data were collected relating process development and group collaboration to provide evidence of culture change. The research found that over the six years bounded by this study, the organization used the Baldrige framework to develop its own processes for change and used those processes as an accepted method of operation. The staff also developed a collaborative culture through the use of small school improvement teams called Design Teams. The staff used these teams to implement their change process. The collaborative decision making through the Design Teams became the accepted method of making change represented a change in culture.
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DEDICATION

To the staff of Centennial High School and their commitment to continuous learning, their desire to work together to improve, and their commitment to higher student achievement.
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CHAPTER I

This dissertation is an ethnographic case study of a high school that implemented the Baldrige in Education Initiative. This study investigated how implementing new processes influenced organizational culture. The first chapter of the dissertation presents the background of the study, identifies the problem of the study, describes its professional significance and outlines an overview of the methodology.

Introduction

“Another year, another reform.” “If we wait it out, this too shall pass.” “The administration must have been to another workshop.” These comments and a few more can often be heard echoing down the halls of school buildings. This scenario may sound familiar. Teachers sit in the cafeteria after a long day of teaching being schooled on the latest model that is certain to improve student achievement. The speaker is an outside consultant brought in as the authority on a particular model’s effectiveness. Most teachers listen politely; a few even take notes. Some teachers use the time to grade the ever present stack of papers. The activity is passive and steeped in theory. The rally cry at the end of the presentation is to go out there and try this. But no action plan or game plan is established in these short fifty minutes. At the end of the inservice, many teachers walk back to their classrooms and continue to do what they have always done, and continue to produce the same results that they have always produced. No one checks to see if the teachers are really trying to incorporate the change. Some teachers try the new idea, but lack of support and collaboration with others eventually kills the improvement idea.
Traditional professional development has a characteristic look and brings with it some long established assumptions that have remained unchanged for decades. Saying that teachers needed to be professionally developed, implies that teachers were not already competent (Hargreaves, 1995). Teachers have been told, or have come to the conclusion, that other people’s knowledge about teaching and learning is more important than their own (Leiberman, 1995). Guskey (1995) described the traditional program. First the year started with a new teacher orientation covering topics such as policies, schedules, payroll, and insurance. As a new school year began, the staff attended a district wide meeting complete with new staff introductions, a motivational speaker for entertainment, and words of wisdom from the superintendent. Teachers then headed off to a department meeting, and finally scattered to work in their classrooms.

During the year, staff development was dispensed out in one or two hour sessions on scheduled days. Teachers also attended workshops or took a course. But the pattern looked the same, a “one right answer” workshop neatly packaged, delivered by an outside expert. This was the time for the introduction of new “research based” instructional programs. Teachers attempted these innovations but when attempts to try it failed, teachers were often embarrassed to say anything and just dropped it. The end of the year was a time to reflect on accomplishments, to ponder the attempts that did not work. Teachers often struggled with hopes and aspirations not met.

This type of professional development, like many reform movements, failed to address the importance of shared learning, failed to change the culture of learning in a school. Reforms and the accompanying professional development addressed little about the moral purpose of school. Hargreaves (1995) called for balance to be struck between
the technical competence of teaching and the moral purpose of teaching. Workshops and neatly packaged programs only addressed the technical competence of teaching. Ideas from single workshops rarely lasted. Hargreaves called for professional development opportunities to create passion and desire, to stimulate development of learning in the culture and context of the school. Increased competency could then fuel teachers’ desire. In turn, this channeled enthusiasm could bring focus to the moral purpose.

In postmodern reform, organizational decisions became decentralized, the structure of decision-making had been flattened, and roles and boundaries of decision makers became blurred (Hargreaves, 1995). Schools that successfully implemented reform, built a sense of community in their schools by advocating cross-role professional development activities that stimulated shared understanding of school goals and an attitude that everyone was on the same team. Most professional development did not reflect the redesign of organizational structures. The workplace culture remained a “go it alone” place, reinforcing the long standing traditional hierarchy. Collaboration was not happening (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995).

The sense of a need for collaboration among teachers was seen as far back as 1957, when the National Society for the Study of Education published *Inservice Education for Teachers, Supervisors, and Administrators*. They proposed that inservice education should be collaborative, based on a growing knowledge of group dynamics. Yet professional development has remained stagnant for decades, and it is still widely viewed as a series of workshops, conferences and help from outside consultants. The process of restructuring schools has gone far beyond the technical tinkering and has demanded that the whole organization rethink how it defines work and learning.
(Leiberman, 1995). Current thought suggests that professional development should be used to build collaborative workplaces where teachers’ definitions of improvement needs are not ignored, where professional development activities are in the context in which the teachers work, where teachers have support mechanisms for new learning and the time to work through them (Duggin, 2004; Payne & Wolfson, 2000; Tienken & Stonaker, 2007). Leiberman (1995) recommended that learning “in-school” was connected not only to teaching practices but also to cultural change.

In the era of educational accountability, traditional inservice falls short of producing the desired results, which are often required to be measured by state achievement tests and state report cards. The process for implementing reform in schools remains the same: a mandate from above, either federal or state. These mandates are often unfunded, with little material support or collaboration with the mandators. There is a need to have instant results, and schools scramble, attempting to change techniques without changing the people. Models with merit have been used in isolation, not as part of a systematic plan. No bigger pictures are painted (Dufour, 2004; Fullan, 1999).

What if professional development looked like this? The teachers and administrators work together to decide on the common purpose of the school. They tailor an improvement process that meets the needs of their school. They design opportunities to learn both individually and as a group and make decisions based on group discussion. Time to collaborate with colleagues is valued and scheduled. Support and encouragement is present. Inservice is a time to plan, work, and develop processes that align with the goals of the school. Teachers look forward to the next inservice activity. What if a school
reform movement actually changes how things are done and that change is sustained? What if an improvement process became a foundation for cultural change in a school?

Background of the Study

The fallout of A Nation at Risk published by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) resulted in an outpouring of reform movements. A common criticism about school reform was that it did not bring about true change in the values of the organization. Schools were failing (Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Kowalski 2000; Sarason, 1996).

Today federal, state, and local governments still ask schools to perform at higher levels. A provision in the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 required schools to show progress as a measure of academic performance. The Ohio Revised Code (ORC) Section 3302.03 reflected the federal policy by requiring the Ohio Department of Education to report on the progress of each school district and each school building annually. This information was reported on a State Report card for each school district and for each building within a school district.

The State Report Card reported the percent of students who passed a series of performance indicators. The indicators included achievement test scores in the areas of reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies for grades four, six and ten. The goal was set at 75% passage. Performance indicators for attendance rate and graduation rate were also included in the report (ORC 3302.03 [A] [1]). These performance indicators were used to determine whether a school district or building
would be classified as excellent, effective, in continuous improvement, under academic watch, or in a state of emergency (ORC 3302.03 [A] [4]).

The second measure required by law was the Performance Index Score, a six tiered weighted score based on each student’s performance. The most weight was given to the scores of the highest achieving students with weights decreasing at each performance level. This created a scale from 0 to 120 with 100 set as the goal (ORC 3302.03 [A] [2]).

The third measurement of district success was Adequate Yearly Progress. This measure was calculated for only reading and mathematics for each student ethnic and economic group in the building. The goal for success is set by the previous year’s performance plus 10% (ORC 3302.03 [A] [3]).

To support schools in their quest for improvement, the state department of education also established a system of ongoing support. These services were provided through local Regional Professional Development Centers, Educational Service Centers, and Special Education Regional Resource Centers (Ohio Administrative Code 3302.04 [A]).

Schools failing to meet adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years were required to develop and implement a continuous improvement plan (OAC 3301-56-01). To assist districts with the task outlined by the Ohio Revised Code and the Ohio Administrative Code, the Ohio Department of Education selected the Baldrige in Education Initiative as a framework for action.
The Baldrige in Education Initiative developed from a management system already in place in the business sector. In 1987, Congress and President Ronald Reagan established the National Baldrige Quality Program and the Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award as a means to promote and recognize quality practices among U.S. businesses. The purpose of the program was (a) to help businesses improve quality organizational practices through the sharing of best practices, (b) to serve as a working tool for understanding and managing performance, and (c) to guide organizational planning and opportunities for learning. The National Institute on Standards and Technology (NIST) produced a seven-category scoring system, called the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence, to evaluate quality practices and performance (NIST, 2004).

The Baldrige Criteria were based on the Total Quality Management (TQM) principles associated with E. Edwards Deming and Joseph M. Juran. Deming and Juran developed quality principles based on systems theory while working with Japanese companies in the 1950’s. Both believed in the human potential to drive improvement, especially when applied to group efforts, long-term planning, and statistical thinking (Fields, 1993). Garvin (1991) found several consistent characteristics in his study of Baldrige Quality Award business winners. Winners of the award built customer-oriented quality programs, developed high levels of employee involvement, and managed improvement processes through data. The winners, it seemed, developed of their own brand of quality.

In 1998, President William Jefferson Clinton signed legislation to extend the Baldrige National Quality Award to educational institutions and health care organizations (NIST, 2004). In 1999, the National Alliance of Businesses and the American
Productivity and Quality Center invited six states to participate in the Baldrige in Education Initiative, also known as BiE IN. The purpose of BiE IN was to raise the achievement of students not by reforming but by transforming the way in which state education systems operate (Ohio Department of Education, 2006). Ohio was one of the six states chosen for participation.

The Baldrige Criteria, in both business and education, were designed to support a systems perspective with organization-wide goal alignment. The criteria were also designed to produce results at each stage. In education, those targets included student learning results, faculty and staff results, budgetary results, operational performance results, as well as social responsibility results. Although the criteria required measured results, the criteria did not prescribe how to do it. The criteria only provided a framework, leaving the organization to develop and demonstrate adaptive and flexible approaches. This general framework allowed organizations to select tools and techniques that fit the developmental stage of the organizations (NIST, 2004).

Because the Baldrige Quality Initiative began as a business model, the criteria were modified to more accurately reflect educational environments. The Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence (NIST, 2004) were developed as a framework that integrated seven Categories with eleven Core Values and Concepts. The seven Categories were: (a) leadership, (b) strategic planning, (c) student, stakeholder, and market focus, (d) measurement, analysis, and knowledge, (e) faculty and staff focus, (f) process management, (g) organizational performance results.

The leadership category required leaders to set and communicate direction consistent with stakeholder requirements. This category asked leaders to set direction,
communicate and monitor progress as well as evaluate and improve leadership systems (NIST, 2004; Shipley, 2000a).

The strategic planning category guided the organization on setting personal and organization goals. The category also emphasized the creation of specific actions that would be taken to meet the goals (NIST, 2004; Shipley, 2000a).

The student, stakeholder, and market focus examined how the organization built relationships with students, parents, and business and community members to determine customer needs and satisfaction. The needs of the district, school, and classroom could be defined through the use of satisfaction surveys, through listening and learning methods, and through the marketing of programs (NIST, 2004; Shipley, 2000a).

The main point of the information and analysis category was to effectively measure, analyze, and use data to manage key organizational processes. Measurable data provided the organization with information to set goals, to measure to success of goals, and to make decisions for future changes (NIST, 2004; Shipley, 2000a).

The faculty and staff focus category, also known as the human resources focus, was directed toward creating and maintaining a high performance workplace. The category stressed the development of collaboration and teamwork, as well as training, education and evaluation of the staff processes. The criteria in the category asked the organization to evaluate professional development to develop the full potential of the staff (NIST, 2004; Shipley, 2000a).

The process management category addressed how educational products and services were effectively delivered. Effective and efficient management of processes
linked all the other categories by examining if each category functioned as well as it could (NIST, 2004; Shipley, 2000a).

The seventh category, organizational performance results, provided real time information for evaluating and improving the effectiveness of the key processes in the organization. Parameters measured improvement over time, and assessed how well the organizations performed compared to other districts (NIST, 2004; Shipley, 2000a).

The seven categories described the essential elements of an integrated system. No category could stand alone. Although each category had a specific focus and provided general, open ended questions addressing the category, a step by step guideline for implementation was not developed. The categories provided an organization with a way to create its own blueprint of quality by examining the organization as it existed and to determine its future direction.

The Criteria were built on eleven core values, reflected by characteristics seen in high performing organizations and evident in the best schools in the nation. These core values were the foundation for integrating the Baldrige Criteria. The Core Values were (a) visionary leadership; (b) learning-centered education; (c) organizational and personal learning; (d) valuing faculty, staff, and partners; (e) agility; (f) focus on the future; (g) managing for innovation; (h) managing by fact; (i) social responsibility; (j) focus on results and creating value; and (k) systems perspective (Shipley, 2000a).

Because Baldrige in Education was designed to be a systems approach to organization-wide alignment, the criteria and core values should be seen in all levels of the organization, from the classroom, to the building, and to the administrative offices.
This ethnographic case study describes the steps taken by a small mid-western high school in one of the five Ohio pilot districts, Centennial High School, as it implemented a building level Baldrige in Education Initiative. The implementation of this model started out the same way many improvement models do, mandated from the administration. As with many such mandates, the staff accepted it politely, thinking that it too would pass. But it did not go away. Implementation of the model lasted more than six years and the culture of the school changed. School improvement grew in all sectors of the student population.

The model began as a classroom systems approach but the high school building staff quickly accepted the model at the building level. Professional development time was no longer a passive event characterized by outside consultants, but became a guided, active group decision-making process. As new learning took place, the purpose or mission of the school became clear. Systems were developed and aligned to meet the mission. Teacher leadership began to drive the system, processes were streamlined, and effective changes based on group decisions were implemented.

The Problem Statement

The general purpose of this ethnographic case study was to describe how one high school implemented the Baldrige in Education Initiative. The flexibility of the Baldrige model allows for the implementation to take place at multiple levels within a school district, such as the classroom level, the building level, the administrative level, and the district level. This study described the changes in professional development and staff behavior when the model focused at the building level.
The study concentrated on the changes in processes that took place as the model was implemented, an analysis of the shared experiences of the participants, and a description of the changes in the underlying assumptions in the building. Specific research questions guided the study:

1. What processes changed during the implementation of the school improvement model?
2. What role did team building and collaboration play in effecting change?
3. What evidence existed to show the success of the school improvement process?

The specific purpose of this ethnographic case study was to identify factors that led to culture change during a successful Baldrige in Education initiative.

Significance of the Study

Organizational development is a planned change effort, involving the total system, and designed to increase organization effectiveness and health (Beckhard, 1969). Organizational development has had a long history, beginning with the Western Electric Studies in 1927. In the famous study that later became known as the Hawthorne Studies, women were divided into two groups, a control group and an experimental group. The study questioned the optimal level of illumination required for workers to be more productive. At first, there seemed to be a positive causal relationship between illumination and productivity in the experimental group, that is, increased illumination caused increased productivity. However, when the illumination was held steady, productivity continued to increase, and when illumination was reduced, productivity remained the same. When analyzing the study further, the variables were more
psychological than physical. The actions of the workers played a role in the outcome. Changes in worker morale, group dynamics, personnel relations, and motivation seemed to be at work (Owens, 2004).

This study ushered in decades of research that French and Bell (1999) called first-generation organizational development. In the years following the Western Electric studies, researchers like Kurt Lewin, Chris Argyris, and Rensis Likert used laboratory settings, surveys, and action research to build theories on how to create effective organizations.

In the past fifty years, especially in the 1980’s and 1990’s with increasing technological innovations and mergers, organizational development moved from a predictable, work harder and smarter approach into a fast paced, less predictable future. As a result, organizations experience a greater emphasis on self-directed teams, quality circles, and employee empowerment (Zawacki & Norman, 2005). This second-generation organizational development focused on transforming the organization in more complicated ways. Organizational transformation was multidimensional, multi-leveled, qualitative, and involved radical organizational changes (French, Bell & Zawacki, 2005). These changes were focused in areas of organizational culture (Schein, 2004), the learning organization (Argyris & Schon, 1996; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Senge, 1990), teams and team-building (Zawacki & Norman, 2005), and total quality management (Deming, 1986).

The Baldrige in Education initiative incorporated areas of second-generation organizational transformation. The Criteria were framed in quality management techniques. In order to understand and apply the core values, the organizational culture
must support the values or be willing to change (Detert, Louis, & Schroeder, 2001). Furthermore, using quality management principles could transform organizations into learning organizations (Terziovski, Howell, Sohal & Morrison, 2000). This study will add to the understanding of organizational transformation by describing the interaction of Baldrige framework and organizational culture.

Because Baldrige is a prescriptive rather than a descriptive model, no “one right way” to implement the model exists. This study describes how one high school building implemented the Baldrige in Education initiative, adding to the growing body of knowledge about implementation of Baldrige in Education.

In cases where Baldrige has been successfully implemented, collaboration within the organization was a theme (Howze, 2000; Spencer & Wynn, 2004; Ziegler, 2005). Collaborative schools were characterized by teachers working as groups or subgroups toward specific goals formed by data, by relating instructional practices to goals, and by making continuous refinements towards those goals (Fullan, 1999). Fullan (1999) says “To know that collaborative cultures are more effective and even to know how they work tells you almost nothing about how to create one” (p.14). This study seeks to provide some answers on how to create collaborative cultures by describing how the staff set goals and by describing the development of teams. This study attempted to identify factors related to the model’s successful implementation and to describe the steps that led to culture change.
Overview of Methodology

This study is an ethnographic case study of one high school over a six year school improvement process. The high school was located in a rural setting, serving a community of 21,000 people, with a declining industrial base. Student enrollment at the high school was approximately 1250. The high school curriculum included college preparatory classes, vocational education, and special education classes. The building employed 79 teaching staff, 4 administrators, and 3 guidance counselors. Average teaching experience was 17 years. In 2001, the district was selected to participate in a pilot of the Baldrige in Education Initiative. Over the next six years, the school worked to improve both classroom and building-wide systems.

This study concentrated on the organizational culture of the school and the impact of the improvement model on that culture. The study attempted to identify specific factors that were critical to culture change. Three major sources of data were collected: participant interviews, participant observer notes, and documents. Two administrators were interviewed to gain insight into the early developmental stages. Two teachers involved in the process development were also interviewed.

Documents were collected and analyzed, including meeting agendas, minutes from inservice meetings, improvement team goals and strategies, and member rosters. An inductive analysis method was used to search for consistencies among the different data sources and to develop themes from the data in an attempt to answer the research question. Triangulation and member checks were used to strengthen validity and reliability of the research.
I conducted the study in the role of participant observer (Merriam, 1998) as I was employed in the district during the change process. I analyzed the data from a constructivist paradigm, believing that meaning can be found in relatively abstract areas (Hatch, 2002). Further detail on the methodology will be found in chapter three.

Limitations of the Study

This is a study of one high school, with its unique set of demographics and conditions. The community served by the high school was economically diverse but not racially diverse. The high school had a fairly experienced stable staff. The average years of experience, at the beginning of the initiative, was 17 years. Although the district was identified by the state report card as “Continuous Improvement,” the high school was meeting most of the state indicators.

Generalizing the findings of the study to a larger population is also a limitation. By design, the Baldrige model provides a multi-tiered framework for implementation based on specific criteria and core values. A step by step process is not part of the package. As a result, organizations must identify their unique improvement needs and then decide how they will address those needs. The introductory workshops for Baldrige were geared towards classrooms systems. Each building in the district worked to put classroom systems into place. This high school, unlike the other buildings, decided to move to the next level by developing building level systems. This study focuses on the building level implementation of Baldrige processes.

Culture itself is a term that can be hard to describe as well as accurately identify. The definition of culture used in this study is based on Schein (2004). Culture is
a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by the group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 17)

Because culture develops based on shared experiences, replicating the same conditions even within the same model is difficult, even with state identified similar districts. However, the literature review outlines commonalities in organizational culture that can be identified.

I conducted the study in the role of participant observer. Participant observations are subjective. I was part of the learning process and my role may have changed the outcomes of some situations. Understanding culture often requires becoming part of the culture. Participant observations allowed me the opportunity to gain access to data and to gain a unique perspective on the situation.

**Definitions of Key Terms and Phrases**

The terms listed here are defined for research clarification purposes:

1. **Baldrige in Education**: school improvement model that emphasizes organizational performance with specific values and nonspecific adaptable processes guiding an organization in the creation of a system of continuous improvement (NIST, 2004; Shipley, 2000a)

2. **Basic underlying assumptions**: beliefs that are taken for granted; commonly referred to as “how we do things here” (Schein, 2004)

3. **Collaboration**: working together towards a goal
4. Design Teams: small temporary teams created to investigate and suggest data driven solutions to a school improvement issue

5. Educational Reform: series of model implemented by schools with the goal of improving student learning

6. Ethnography: study of culture

7. Organizational culture: a learned pattern of behavior used to solve problems that works well, is considered valid, and is taught to new members as the correct way to think, feel, and act (Schein, 2004)

8. Professional development: meetings, conferences, or classes to train educators in the latest practices, techniques, and models for student improvement.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation contains five chapters, references, and appendices. Chapter I includes an introduction, background information of the study, the problem statement and research questions, significance of the study, an overview of the methodology, limitations of the study, and key terms. Chapter II discusses a review of the relevant literature, and how this case study relates to the literature. Chapter III describes the study’s methodology, including the research context, participants, data collection techniques, and analysis. Chapter IV outlines the results of the study. Chapter V presents the summary of research findings, the study conclusions, and recommendations.
CHAPTER II

School improvement requires fundamental changes in the way schools operate. Many reform movements are affected by organizational culture. This chapter discusses the history of school reform, defines organizational culture, examines organizations as learning systems, and outlines a school improvement model called Baldrige in Education.

Historical Background on School Reform

Education is the cornerstone of democracy. Thomas Jefferson linked the rights to responsibility, independence and self-sufficiency with an educated citizen. Without public schools, he believed, there could be no citizens. Education was so important to democracy that attending school became one of few requirements of the nation’s children (Barber, 1997).

Education and schooling were connected but were not synonymous. Education could be described as a process of enculturing and socializing. Education came from schools but also from churches, the workplace, and parents (McMannon, 1997). Education gave people the freedom to develop personal skills and gave society a way to create a culture of shared knowledge. The role of education should support democracy’s goal of people fulfilling their potential (Raywid, Tesconi, Jr., & Warren, 1984).

Historically, the job of schools has been to impart knowledge (McMannon, 1997). The bureaucratic structure of schools created at the turn of the last century was organized to process masses of students efficiently, while selecting a few to educate well. The goal was simple: teach rudimentary cognitive skills and basic workplace social skills to create good workers. Remnants of this structure still exists today in mandated curriculum
packages, emphasis on rote memorization, and tests that focus on lower cognitive level
skills (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p.46).

The purpose of school should not only be cognitive development but also
development of a sense of self, a relatedness to others, and autonomy. Said another way,
the purpose of school should include academic, civil, personal, and vocation aspects.
Schooling was a way to develop a sense of relationship with each other, and to develop a
sense of autonomy through the skill development (Raywid et al., 1984).

Sizer (1997) argued that in addition to cognitive development schools had three
additional functions. The civic purpose served to prepare individuals to understand the
need for the workings of a civil society and prepared citizens to collectively decide right
from wrong. Second, schools functioned for economic growth to prepare an adequate
workforce by developing language and mathematics skills needed to advance in a job.
Schools also functioned to provide enculturation. Children were introduced into groups
where they could develop personal expression and compassion and empathy for others.

Recently the role of school has expanded to include not only literacy and
knowledge, but morality, good hygiene, and relationship building. Some of these roles
were previously the responsibility of churches, communities, and parents. The variety of
school reforms reflected the changing ideas of the purpose of schools (Sizer, 1997).

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education published A Nation
at Risk. The report, written by a blue-ribbon panel, struck a chord with the nation at a
time when Japan was showing signs of economic superiority and when U.S. workers
were no longer seen as the finest in the world. In the global village, other countries were
making better products. There was a wide spread perception that something in the United States was amiss.

The well-known document proclaimed that the decline in educational standards and “rising tide of mediocrity” (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p.5) could be blamed for the economic problems. This claim was supported by several alarming findings. Although the average citizen was more educated than 25 years prior, meaning that the average citizen attained a higher level of education, the study suggested the average graduate was less skilled than 25 years ago. It seemed that the curriculum had lost its central purpose. Other nations required all students to take a core set of courses. In the U.S., there was too much student choice and students were opting out of college and vocational tracks to take the easier general track. Students spent less time in school and homework was on the decline. Textbooks were watered down and minimum competencies became maximum competencies (National Commission on Excellence on Education, 1983).

Teachers were not immune from attack. The report claimed that teacher preparation programs were too easy and lacked needed content courses. Teachers were recruited from the bottom of the college entrance candidates. Not only were salaries paid to teachers low, teachers were also left out of decision-making in school, creating a problem with recruiting high quality people.

Five recommendations came from the Commission, with the promise of lasting reform. First, strengthen graduation requirements. Called the New Basics, specific units and core classes would be required. Second, colleges would raise admission standards as well as adopt rigorous and measurable standards. The use of standardized tests would
assure that standards were met. Third, lengthen the school day or year. This would add time for teaching. In addition, the report called for a decrease in teacher “administrative” duties. The teachers needed to be in the classroom. Fourth, improve teacher preparation. Increased salaries, creation of career ladders, and access to grants and loans would provide incentives to attract better quality teachers. Teachers would be held to high standards. An extension of the length of contract to eleven months would allow time for professional development, without taking away from valuable class time. And finally, provide leadership and fiscal support. Citizens would provide fiscal support, while educators and legislators would be held accountable to meeting standards. State and local governments held primary responsibility for improvements in education, while the federal government would assure that constitutional and civil rights were upheld.

A Nation at Risk, along with reports from 275 other committees, commissions, and task forces, helped propel schools and school problems to the forefront publicly and politically. Some disagreement on public school purpose created a danger as political pressure intensified. This pressure caused oversights of the sustained, research-based deliberate changes that school improvement required (Raywid et al., 1984).

Raywid et al. (1984) characterized the recommendations from these reports as too narrow minded. Most recommendations were just a series of mandates that boiled down to heightened standards, standardized curriculum, and fewer options. The recommendations lacked an understanding of what education was all about in several important ways. First, the report made a general claim that all schools were failing. This claim was far too simplistic. Many reports failed to address the great diversity of schools
and failed to link differences in socioeconomic status, class, and race to individual student and school success.

Many reports ignored the impact of the expansion of school duties, including increased vocational training, the teaching of values and beliefs, desegregation, teaching of stress management, eliminating poor nutrition, feeding the children, and many more. Some reports used only performance on standardized tests scores, ignoring the other purposes of school (Raywid et al., 1984).

Many reports proposed remedies with little proof that they would work. Past history proved unsuccessful with reforms such as adding to the curriculum, returning to the basics, and increasing graduation requirements, yet they were being recommended again. The reports looked to schools to solve many societal woes, from reducing the crime rate, to fixing the economy, to satisfying the nation’s defense needs. The reports set expectations that were sure to be met with disappointment (Raywid et al., 1984).

The most troubling of these reports, however, was the lack of vision, lack of anchoring goals, and little attention paid to educational purpose. Reforms should “begin with context, an examination of what schools do, what they really want to do, how to judge them fairly, and how to help teachers, other professionals, and students attain and exercise greater efficacy” (Raywid et al, 1984, p. iv). Few reports or reforms identified a clear purpose of schools.

The impact of *A Nation at Risk* and reports like it seemed to signal the beginning of series of reform movements. The first wave of reform movements became known collectively as the Excellence Movement (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). The reforms that grew out of the 1980’s focused on the economic purpose of schools at the expense of the civil
and cultural purposes. Schools became training places, not learning places. Students were treated more like parts on an assembly line, with little concern for interaction and thought skills (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Schools were controlled by government bureaucracies run from a distance with no standards for running the system. Key policies were made by people outside the community. The demand for high quality work was not met with creating the conditions to produce it (Sizer, 1997). During the years following the report, schools adopted new policies for improvement that amounted to more required credits, more rigor, more homework, more tests, and more teacher training (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

When anticipated results were not seen, the legislatures turned to the teachers, calling for revisions in teacher education curricula and licensing standards. When those changes failed to bring the desired improvements, the configuration of schools as organizations became the target (Bauman, 1996).

The target on the organization became evident after several education summits within a Restructuring Movement that produced two major reforms: site based management and national educational goals and standards. The hope for site based management was that educators would embrace reform because it gave educators the opportunity to share in the decision making of their local schools. This movement also recommended time to collaborate, the development of teams, and authority over staffing, programs, and budget (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

Wehlage, Smith, and Lipman (1992) studied a reform movement called New Futures and found that after three years, only one school out of the 22 studied across four cities had significant improvement. In other studies of schools with site based
management, committees were established, and governance practices were changed, but
decision-making did not focus on the cultural core of instruction and curriculum (Easton,
1991; Taylor & Teddlie, 1992; Weiss, 1992;).

President George Bush brought governors together in a summit to discuss national
education in 1989. From this summit, along with additions by Congress, came eight
goals, known as “Goals 2000.” The document stipulated that by the year 2000:

1. All children will start school ready to learn.
2. High school graduation rate will increase to 90%.
3. Students in grades 4, 8, 12 will demonstrate competency in English, math,
   science, history, and geography.
4. U.S. students will be first in the world in math and science.
5. Every adult will be literate, have skills to compete in the global economy.
6. Schools will be a disciplined environment, free of drugs and violence.
7. Access to professional development of teaching skills, opportunity to learn new
   skills.
8. Promote partnerships to increase involvement of parents and social agencies
(United States Department of Education, 1994)

Goodlad (2002) summarized the troubles with school reform in three critical
ways. Although the purpose of schools, personal, social, vocational, and academic
growth, has remained relatively constant in the rhetoric of school reform, the “medicines”
(p. 17) for improvements were completely wrong. Reform movements ignored an
extensive body of research on teaching practices, ignored the purpose of schooling, and
ignored the policy and practice implications of knowledge gained from fields of anthropology, sociology, and linguistics.

In addition, every reform era was politically driven. Fueled by adults attempting to reinvent their past by reminiscing about the rigors of school from years long ago, they wrote hard and tough policy that was out of balance with practice. Of course, meeting the challenges fell short; leading to the claim that schools were failing. Politicians garnered mileage by keeping this claim alive, and used the claim to declare that they would be the education governor or the education president (Goodlad, 2002).

Goodlad (2002) demonstrated how the political policy of school reform was out of balance with practice by surveying groups with whom he speaks. In one example, he asked over 1000 people at the 2001 National School Board Association conference to choose from a list of four items the one they thought held the most promise from schools. Three of the four items were on the front burners of politically driven school reform. The choices were:

1. standards and test mandated by all states
2. a qualified, competent teacher in every classroom
3. non-promotion and grade repetition for all students who fail to reach grade-level
4. schools of choice for all parents (p. 18)

Only one person chose the first statement, the rest chose the second. His results were similar in other groups. Yet, the other statements were on the front line for political debate. When the National Commission of Teaching and America’s Future connected
good teaching to good schools, the media and the school reform industry yawned (Goodlad, 2002).

A serious concern overriding all reform movements was what they left behind. Goodlad (2002) made a vivid comparison of school reform initiatives to the introduction of the kudzu vine in portions of the southern United States. Planted to solve problems of soil erosion, the vines quickly consumed forests and farmland, costing upwards of $50 million dollars in lost farm and timber production. Goodlad claimed that the real trouble with school reform was that they looked like a good fix but when the reform faded away, it often left behind harmful side effects. These “eduviruses” (p. 17) grew out of the reform but became twisted and used in ways not originally designed. For example, Goodlad found nothing wrong with standards and the standards movement. He felt they helped guide and drive individual and collective discussions toward content matter, methods of inquiry and pedagogy. The problem, or the “eduvirus,” that grew from standards, became the onslaught of standardized tests. Tests, when used properly, could provide useful feedback. Even standardized tests, when used properly, could provide useful feedback. Too often the students were unfamiliar with the standards tested, teachers were ill equipped to teach the standards, and the test results were reported too late to make any changes. They became tools to determine teacher competence and used to test student competence. Standards, initially, were good; the type of testing left behind by the reform was bad.

The poor organizational design of schools may have prevented even more damage from being done as schools were subjected to one reform after another. With
limited resources and deeply entrenched traditional culture, schools resisted change. This may have in turn prevented a widening infection (Goodlad, 2002).

Typically educational reform tried to advance either teachers’ education or schools, not both; but both had to be improved simultaneously (McMannon, 1997). More recently school reform has seen emphasis on reshaping organizational patterns and curriculum to focus on learning for understanding, developing personalized environments, and collaboration (Darling-Hammond, 1997)

School Change

Around the time of the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, literature and studies on school improvement was growing. Purkey and Smith (1983) decided to analyze a variety of reform studies to search for common themes. They looked at school effectiveness research that studied building level implementation, using case studies, outlier studies, surveys, and evaluations. They included studies that looked at process (the way schools operate) as well as content (personnel, principal leadership, school assessment procedures).

They concluded that one reform movement could not be deemed better than another. The diversity of schools limited generalization, creating an inaccurate comparison of one school to another even using the same reform model. Between schools, people’s attitudes varied, as well as their method of interaction. Purkey and Smith (1983) did, however, find one factor that seemed to ring true through all the studies: the influence of school culture on academic performance.

Research suggested that student academic performance was strongly affected by a
school’s culture. Effective schools had a certain culture that was conducive to learning and had a specific way of reacting (Purkey & Smith, 1985). Changes that produced effective schools were characterized not by small incremental changes imposed by outside forces, but by system-wide improvements that involved workers in all phases of a project and had the support of top management. Changes were seen when staff assumed responsibility for school improvement, predicated on their having authority and support to respond to educational needs and program demands. Staff agreement on purpose and commitment to norms and goals produced a cohesiveness that changed culture.

Purkey and Smith (1985) further developed a framework for fostering an effective school culture. Their categories could not be seen as a blueprint, but rather as guidelines to enhance the chance of developing an effective school culture. Each category could carry different weights depending on the school because schools were diverse. Effective schools operated under site based management, with a principal leader who worked as an integrated team member. Staff turnover was low and staff development was an ongoing process, specific to the school’s instructional goals. A well planned, coordinated, in-depth curriculum was incorporated into classrooms. Classrooms were free of interruptions and disruptions. Parent involvement supported homework, attendance, and discipline policies. The district leadership supported and recognized student and teacher achievements.

These categories, in turn, set the stage for collaborative planning and collegial relationships and promoted a sense of community. Relationship development broke down barriers, allowing the staff to develop clear and mutually agreed upon goals. Effective schools also displayed order and discipline, establishing common rules that showed a commitment and seriousness of purpose.
Purkey and Smith (1985) emphasized that effective schools theory identified the school building, not the classroom, as the delivery level. Purkey and Smith (1983) used Weick’s (1979) description of “loosely-coupled” to describe school hierarchy. The work of teachers was largely independent of the principal’s immediate supervision. Mandates from the principal, or from external forces, could be overlooked. They found change was more productive when directed towards collaborative planning, shared decision making, and a commitment to clearly define roles. This culture developed at the building level which in turn influenced student learning.

The connection between good schools and specific cultures was also captured by Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) in her study of six “good” high schools. She wanted to describe schools as cultures and to uncover values that guided their structures and decision making. Six high schools were chosen based on a national reputation as being a “good” school. The samples were chosen specifically to represent public and private, inner city urban, and suburban schools. The study’s purpose was to describe specific characteristics that defined them as good. She found that each of the schools were “whole, changing, imperfect” (p. 311). Each school was conscious of their imperfections, was willing to admit them, and consciously and deliberately searched for solutions.

Leaders of the good high schools understood how to lead. They were interactive with their staff in concerns and decisions and developed symmetry between leaders and followers. Teachers in these schools were held in high regard. They were nurtured. Unlike less effective school, teachers in good high schools were not cast in a lower light. Lawrence-Lightfoot also found a fearless regard for students. Although a strong student-teacher relationship with good rapport was at work, the social organization still showed a
clear authority. It seemed that each knew their roles. These characteristics were present regardless of the type of setting. One difference between private and public schools was that private schools had more control over their definition and standards of goodness. Public schools were subjected to many more external forces when it came to power in decision-making.

The seemingly endless barrage of reform movements and legislation since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* suggested that schools had not successfully improved. Schools seemed slow to accept changes. The fundamental weakness in reform programs and in legislative strategies lay in an attempt to change selected portions of an educational system, instead of changing the system itself. Reforms attempted to change a procedure or a process, but ignored the importance of changing basic underlying assumptions imbedded in the culture (Kowalski, 2000). Newmann and Wehlage (1995) found that when given the opportunity, teachers opted to address superficial changes not directly related to student learning. Changes often relied on coercive forces, allowing teachers to revert back to the traditional ways when those pressures were lessened (Fullan & Miles, 1992).

A primary reason why many reforms failed was that they did not address the context or the substance of the problem (Sarason, 1993). Reforms tried to address a problem without taking into account its complexity. Often attempts at problem solving created additional problems that could not be resolved in a single course of action. Sarason suggested that for a reform of any type to work, there must be an understanding of the formal and informal relationships of the people in the organization. Typically, a school showed diversity in age, gender, background, race, and attitude. Although not
deliberate, these differences created reasons for reform resistance. Adults could not be overlooked in reforms targeted towards students. They initially must be seen as part of the problem, as adults bring to the table their own attitudes and beliefs. To implement change, attitudes and beliefs must first be reformed. Sarason suggested that if leaders in an organization were not first willing to change adult attitudes, then they should not bother attempting a reform.

Sirotnik (1999) preferred the term renewal to distinguish the process from traditional reform. Reform, he said was “about whatever is politically fashionable, pendulum-like in authority, and usually under funded, lacking in professional development, and short-lived” (Sirotnik, p. 608). Renewal that nurtured the spiritual and intellectual connections between people in an organization required collaboration of the staff, teacher learning, and an understanding of the processes of change. He believed teachers had a moral responsibility to create learning environments. Sirotnik also noted, however, that studies of current school improvement processes showed that mandates and accountability with little real change in people or development of personal capacity were still the norm. Sirotnik made the distinction between accountability and responsibility this way. Accountability implied blame, accountability was associated with reform. Responsibility implied a moral obligation to create an environment where information was used to evaluate, reflect, and make informed change.

Fullan (1993; 1999) believed that the reform movements are fruitless uphill battles on the wrong hill. Schools were not designed as organizations. Teachers often worked in isolation; collaboration was not something that is scheduled into the day. Fullan called for reform movements to redefine schools as organizations and to redefine
teachers’ roles by providing training in what it meant to be effective. In a society that expected its citizens to proactively deal with changes in life, most schools were not designed to function this way. Fullan believed schools had a moral purpose to develop educated people, to provide them with knowledge of all content areas and to make significant differences in students’ lives. In order to do this, schools must be purposefully engaged in renewal. Teachers, at the core, must continually reexamine, push themselves toward mastery of learning strategies, clarify purpose, and participate in collaborative learning. Schools were not set up to expect or encourage this type of renewal. Reforms addressed processes and procedures but did not change the mind set of the people in the organization.

Schools had to break their traditional structures in three dimensions, “restructuring, reculturing, and retiming” (Fullan, 1996, p. 499). Site based management was a good example of restructuring. Some roles were changed, but the reform alone showed little affect in student learning. Reculturing was aimed at changing the culture of the school to develop a more collaborative professional community. Schools successful in change showed two common cultural characteristics, (a) they valued working together and were skilled at it, and (b) they focused on the performance and learning of students by improving pedagogy. The third change, retiming, interacted with restructuring and reculturing. Retiming realigned a teacher’s preparation time and teaching time. Fullan (1996) used the analogy that a lawyer did not spend all his time in a courtroom. Preparation time was as important as the delivery of the case. The same consideration should be applied to teachers.

Reform movements often looked like a restructured process, nevertheless, the
sense of reculturing was also captured by Schlechty (1997): “Structural change that is not supported by cultural change will eventually be overwhelmed by the culture, for it is in culture that any organization finds meaning and stability” (p 136). DuFour and Eaker (1998) wrote of the difficulties of change and the power that cultures have on resistance. Culture change required a change in beliefs, habits, and expectations, creating an atmosphere of learning where the organization established shared values, engaged in reflective dialogue among teachers to examine operations and discrepancies, and acted as a support system during the change.

Gaff (1980) identified “potholes” in the road to change relating to culture in his study of task forces on general education reform. Often reform models were adopted as written. Because the model did not fit with the existing culture, the reform model failed. Change models were often given to a committee working in isolation, resulting in little ownership from the members of the organization. Some models also failed because of miscalculation of the depth of change needed. Improving one process often led to unexpected changes in other processes. The interconnections were often underestimated. Leaders underestimated the amount of time to put the change process in place, especially when changes to deeply held beliefs had to be modified. Gaff concluded that developing strategies to implement the change, that is, to change the underlying assumptions, was as important as the proposed program itself.

In a study of four elementary schools with high student achievement, DuFour (2004) noted a systematic, coordinated system of support for students. He also found evidence that the staff at each school was emphatic about the fundamental purpose of school. These schools had created a culture of learning. When children failed to learn in
traditional school structure, the teacher working alone responded. The support the child received depended on that teacher’s practices. There was no collective effort or coordinated response. Teachers were not comfortable with collaboration. Successful schools, those with increasing student achievement, had a systematic and coordinated intervention plan. They also, as a collaborative team, identified their fundamental purpose of school, established goals, created the model, and reorganized the setting. Change came when educators worked together to understand and improve their practice, when a coordinated system of support identified and developed needs.

In summary, school reform movements developed several common threads. Most reforms only targeted one area of the school; they did not address system wide change. Reform movements often became politically driven, mandated by legislators that were far removed from sound educational practice. The impact of changing culture was important in successful reform. To produce change, people’s views about the organization had to change. Restructuring movements did not guarantee organizational culture change. The key to successful school improvement required changing the behavior of the people in the organization.

**Defining Organizational Culture**

The study of organizational behavior had its roots in the work of social psychologist Lewin (1936). Lewin hypothesized that behaviors within an organization arose from the interaction of the people and the environment. When studying organizational culture, the whole situation had to be analyzed; that is, the people and the environment were inseparable components of the situation. This interaction made
analyzing what was happening in an organization more difficult. The formal structures, such as organizational charts and written procedures, sometimes did not always match the behavior observed in the organization. To understand the culture at work, an understanding of the organization’s history and traditions became critical because the members of the organization were socialized to accept them. The behavior of individuals in the organization arose not just from their personal characteristics, but also from the collective influence as a member of a group within the organization. When the history and traditions along with the behaviors were analyzed, the values of the individuals, as well as the organization, were uncovered (Owens, 2004).

Weick, an organizational theorist, described the development of an organization’s reality as created by the organization itself. “The environment that the organization worries about was put there by the organization” (1979, p. 152). Weick further stressed that shared experiences over time enabled people in the organization to make sense of the events and rituals that they shared and to act in certain ways. As these actions developed over time, and were effective in solving problems, these actions were taken for granted. This was the essence of cultural development.

Successful organizations seemed to have common cultural characteristics (Kanter, 1983). Kanter concluded that organizations that emphasize wholeness or integration were more successful than organizations that were segmented. Successful organizations valued the commitment between the people and the organization; they felt a sense of belonging. People felt they were members instead of employees. Kanter described such organizations as having a culture of pride and a climate of success. In contrast, the members of less successful organizations found difficulty relating to processes outside
their sphere of operation, they were isolated, and kept from making larger decisions in the organization.

The word culture is used in many contexts. Organizations strive to develop the “right culture,” people are described as “cultured,” some schools promote a “culture of learning.” But what, exactly, is culture?

Smircich (1983) investigated links between the concept of the organization and culture. Culture, a term borrowed from anthropology, was conceptualized in diverse ways. In the realm of organizations, Smircich saw cultural analysis from two general perspectives, either as a variable or as a metaphor. Culture, when described as a variable, became more stable and clear cut, almost as if it were part of the machinery. In classical management, culture was a variable in the organization only because it was imported from the outside by the members hired into the system. Contingency theory considered culture to be an internal variable that could be shaped and molded by managers for the management’s purposes. Management could direct interventions toward the subcultures to facilitate change. Culture existed only to be shaped as management saw fit.

The images of culture as a root metaphor were very different concepts. Cultures, in this view were social phenomenon formed by manifestations of human consciousness. In this view “culture is not something an organization has . . . culture is something an organization is” (Smircich, 1983, p. 347). This viewpoint was similar to studies in anthropology, where an anthropologist tried to determine how members saw and described their world. Like anthropology, organizational culture could be analyzed from different perspectives. Organizational culture from a cognitive perspective, patterned after cognitive anthropology, described patterns of thought and the understanding about
what constituted knowledge. This type of analysis was useful to identify networks of subjective meaning and often uncovered misconceptions about what colleagues perceived as the actual and the ideal state of the organization (Smircich, 1983).

The symbolic cultural perspective, similar to symbolic anthropology, searched for shared meaning and symbols. Symbols could then be linked to describe themes. The purpose of analysis through symbolism was to document the creation and maintenance of an organization. Analysis examined patterns of actions and processes of attention, and linking these to values and beliefs (Smircich, 1983).

Regardless of the perspective taken in cultural analysis, Smircich’s (1983) review of research at the time allowed her to conclude that culture had several important functions in an organization. Culture conveyed a sense of identity to its members and facilitated the generation of commitment to something larger than the individual. Culture also enhanced social stability and shaped behavior by creating a way for members to make sense of their environment.

Schein (2004) formally defined culture as:

a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by the group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 17)

In defining culture, the critical characteristic became the group. Culture developed in groups. Group members had shared history. Groups shared experiences. Their reactions to those experiences defined the group and influenced how the group dealt with tasks. The group looked for ways to create patterns and integration into systems that were
ambiguous or changing (Schein, 2004). Even leadership development in organizations was a creation of the organization. “Leaders first create cultures when they create groups and organizations. Once cultures exist they determine the criteria for leadership and thus determine who will or will not be a leader” (Schein, 2004, p. 22). This seemingly circular description of leadership grew from Schein’s observations of stages of group evolution. In the early moments of the group, the initial behavior was driven by a group member, acting as a leader. This person set direction. As the group worked through tasks, it developed a sense of intimacy, harmony, and conformity. As the group matured it came to know who it was, what its tasks were, and who could lead them to their goals. Within this group, different leaders emerged. Groups, as they developed, created their own culture, and decided who they would then follow.

Schein (2004) compared the culture of a group to that of an individual’s personality or character. Personality defined behavior. In addition, personalities were often the result of an accumulation of experiences. Likewise, an organization or group had behaviors that were driven by forces one may not be able to see. Behaviors seen in an organization were very real, although the culture or reasons behind them remained an abstraction.

Schein described processes that ultimately defined culture of a group. Groups developed a common language that improved communication. Groups also created boundaries for membership to define who was in and who was not, rules for peer relationships, rules for the distribution of power, as well as reward and punishment systems. One important piece of defining a group’s culture was the evolution of the
stories they tell, explaining and justifying critical events in the history of the organization. Myths and stories helped reaffirm what the organization was about.

Given that culture was rather hard to identify and hard to see, exactly how can culture be analyzed? Schein (2004) identified three levels of organizational culture: artifacts, values and beliefs, and basic assumptions.

*Level 1: Artifacts.* Artifacts were tangible, visible products of the organization. Artifacts were what outsiders to the organization saw, heard, and felt when they entered the building. Language, clothing, manner of address, layout of offices and rooms, observable rituals were all part of the artifacts. The climate of the group was an artifact of culture as it described the behaviors of the members. Written values, organizational charts, and charters were also artifacts. Artifacts were easy to observe, however, they were often difficult to decipher and could be easily misinterpreted by outside observers. For example, an outsider may observe the casual nature of addressing each other as an assumption that the members do not take work seriously and may be inefficient. Part of misinterpretation lies in the observer’s own background and experiences. If the observer was exposed to the group long enough, the meanings of the artifacts could become clear.

*Level 2: Espoused Beliefs and Values.* Values included strategies, goals, ethical codes, and attitudes. Values developed in a group based on their shared experiences. In early development stages, values could be those of the original leader, but as the group matured those values changed as the group had new experiences. If the group’s beliefs and values continued to work, they became socially validated, meaning they became part of the group’s internal relations. Those who chose to go against those beliefs and values risked removal from the group.
For example, a science department noticed that students’ rate of passing science courses could be improved. Working as a group, they set out to identify reasons for failures. One member of the group suggested more hands-on activities to help the students grasp the concepts. After discussion, the group members made a conscious effort to increase hands-on activities. Over time, students passing science courses increased. This teaching strategy continued to work and became a belief held by the group to ensure success. As they continued to work and had success, these beliefs gradually developed into assumptions and became part of the philosophy of the department. When the time came to hire a new science teacher, the group chose someone with the same values.

Sometimes espoused values developed in a group or organization. Espoused values were what people said they would do in a situation but it was not what they actually did. In the science department example, the members might have said they valued hands-on science, but observers did not actually see it happening.

Level 3: Basic Underlying Assumptions. Basic assumptions were beliefs that were no longer fully conscious because they were taken for granted, in a sense it was “cultural DNA (Schein, 2004, p. 21). Basic assumptions lay at the heart of culture. This became commonly heralded as “how we do things around here.” The beliefs and values worked and behaviors based on these assumptions showed little variation. These assumptions tended to be “nonconfrontable and nondebatable and hence are extremely difficult to change” (Schein, 2004, p. 31). If the group is confronted with an incongruous event, they may avoid the anxiety it caused by distorting the information to match their basic assumptions. They were the group’s cognitive defense mechanism, shared and mutually reinforced. An important job for leaders trying to implement change was then to manage
the anxiety created by changing basic assumptions and assess whether the genetic potential for new learning can even take place.

This was a place where implementing school improvement initiatives met its challenge. Some initiatives were so far removed from a group’s assumptions that they are immediately dismissed. Many reforms ignored the need to address the beliefs and values as well as the underlying assumptions. Working to change these assumptions and to deal with the anxiety levels created by the change was an important point for leaders to understand (Schein, 2004).

Wheatley (1999) supported the need for people to find order. She argued that as organizations moved away from the bureaucratic structure to a more fluid boundless organization, chaos ensued. However, people would exhibit self-organizing tendencies and groups would self-organize if given the opportunity. This self-organization would create shared experiences that defined the culture. Grounded in motivation theory, organizations would shift from external rewards to intrinsic motivations. Development of values, vision and culture, something created by the group, would be powerful forces.

In this study, culture was viewed as the accepted behaviors of members of a group as well as behaviors taught to new members. Culture developed as a proven way to provide stability and to solve problems in the group or organization. Culture was identified through artifacts like language and written processes, rituals, values, beliefs, assumptions, and actions.
Organizational Culture and Learning Organizations

Organizational Culture and Learning

The idea that an organization itself changes its behavior based on shared experiences as it learns how to deal with problems is a theme that flows through descriptions of culture. The implication of Schein’s (2004) definition was that an organization must learn. The decade of the eighties seemed to be the age of culture development in business organizations. The concept of the organization learning grew from the studies of organizational culture in the 1980’s.

Among these studies, Argyris and Schon (1978, 1996) described organizational development not as levels of culture but as levels of learning. At Level 1, described as single-loop learning, people gained knowledge but beliefs, values or underlying assumptions were not altered. The framework of the organization was not changed by the acquisition of knowledge. New knowledge may have improved the task, but the task remained the same. Learning at Level 2, described as double loop learning, was reflective, requiring the development of mental models. Double-loop learning reframed situations and reshaped patterns of thinking by questioning how to increase efficiency or enhance effectiveness. Level 3, a higher form of double-looped learning, shifted how members viewed the organization and how the organization thought about itself. These types of changes were transformational and irreversible, restructuring context and creating new environments.

Awbry (2005) compared the three levels of culture presented by Schein (2004) to the levels of learning outlined by Argyris and Schon (1996) and found similarities in the theories. In Level 1, Schein described artifacts of the organization as the procedures and
rituals. Changes in processes or doing the same job only with more knowledge equated to Level 1 learning. Changes occurred but no alteration of beliefs happened. As the organization worked through Level 2 learning changes, new mental models developed. Schein equated this to a change in beliefs and values. Both Schein (2004) and Argyris and Schon (1996) discussed true organizational change in their last level, Level 3. New environments and restructuring took place. How things were done changed. This level of learning shifted how the organization thought about itself, forming new underlying assumptions.

The idea that organizations learn was examined closely by Senge (1990). He defined a learning organization as “an organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create the future” (p. 14). Learning was at the heart of being human; it recreated us and allowed us to change our perception on the world. Senge then commented on the building of learning organizations. He believed that successful learning organizations possessed five competencies.

First, individuals in the organization developed personal mastery, a special level of proficiency. Mastery created a deeper commitment to personal vision, allowing the individual to focus their energies on clear objectives. The result of personal mastery was a deeper commitment to personal and organizational learning (Senge, 1990).

Second, organizations addressed mental models, those ingrained ideas about how members of the organization saw the world and how it influenced action. Third, members in the organization created shared vision. This was not a mission statement, but a genuine shared picture of the future created by the members of the organization. The fourth competency of a learning organization was its ability to learn as a team. Dialoguing and
thinking together allowed groups to attain a higher level of understanding not attainable by the individual (Senge, 1990).

Senge (1990) stressed the fifth competency, systems thinking, as most important. The group would see the organization as a whole and understand how those parts influenced each other. An organization could not be understood by looking only at pieces, by just viewing snapshots.

*Learning Organizations*

Since the publication of *The Fifth Discipline* (1990) several other authors have defined the learning organization. A learning organization according to Garvin (1993) was skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights. Garvin (1993) stated that the simple truth was that “continuous improvement requires commitment to learning” (p. 78). Organizations, such as Corning, Honda, and General Electric, became adept at bringing in or generating new ideas then translating them into new ways of behaving. The design was not by chance; the ideas, events, and training were designed with specific goals in mind.

Garvin (1993) further described five skills of successful learning systems. Learning organizations systematically solved problems. Based on methods found in the quality movement, problem solving used a scientific method instead of guesswork, used data to make decisions rather than assumptions, and used simple statistical tools to organize data. Training programs focused on teaching and using these techniques. Training was presented in departments or unit teams and the tools were applied to problems facing that group. This resulted in common language and common techniques
used across the organization. An example of this process was mastered by Xerox in their *Leadership Through Quality Initiative*. Their problem solving steps used for all decision making were (1) identify and select the problem, (2) analyze the problem, (3) generate potential solutions, (4) select and plan the solution, (5) implement the solution, and (6) evaluate the solution (Garvin, 1993).

Learning organizations learned to experiment. Different from problem solving, experimentation was motivated by future opportunity, not by current difficulties. Considered to be pilot programs, they generated a steady flow of ideas, gave members an opportunity to take risks without penalty for projects that may fail, and developed skills that could be incorporated into the company in the future. This gave a company a chance to create a smaller team to try out potential improvements and work out bugs before injecting the processes into the larger company.

The third skill characterized by learning organizations was that they learned from their past. Companies systematically reviewed their failures, assessed them, and recorded the failures for future planning. In scientific method, failures became part of the data. Without analysis of past failures, future changes were just haphazard guesses (Garvin, 1993).

Learning from others, the fourth skill, was a process to search for new ideas and best practices in other companies. Also known as benchmarking, this gave companies an opportunity to gain new perspectives on methods and processes, to gain information from customers, and to learn about what works in other companies. Xerox, for example, sent people into the workplace to observe users of their new products to collect information about what was working and what needed to be changed (Garvin, 1993).
Transferring knowledge quickly through the organization was the fifth important skill. Many different ways were developed to help with this task, such as tours, reports, and videotapes. Some companies relied on daily contact between supervisor and staff. An effective way to transfer knowledge, used by PPG in 1986, was to create participatory, self-managing teams with responsibilities in work scheduling, problem-solving and improvement, and peer review (Garvin, 1993).

Learning could be traced through three stages, exposure of the workforce to new ideas, a change in employee behavior, and finally performance improvement. Surveys, questionnaires, and interviews were helpful techniques to measure learning (Garvin, 1993).

Watkins and Marsick (1999) described learning organizations as those that continuously learned and transformed themselves. They compared and contrasted the development of learning organizations to the creation of a sculpture. Both required rigor and respect for the materials they were using. Sculptors used many different types of materials evoking a unique message, just as learning organizations showed unique characteristics and created unique organizations. Creators of learning organizations and sculptors chipped away their material to release the living figure beneath. While sculptures were cast in stone, created by one artist, learning organizations were created as a result of a collective effort, producing a less predictable work.

Specific details of learning organizations differed, but the common traits could be seen. Learning occurred at various levels simultaneously, involved widespread participation, and promoted system wide thinking. Individual learning and collective learning guided the organization to restructure, redesign, and develop new mental models
to address the organization’s improvements.

The Watkins and Marsick (1999) model outlined three levels of interrelated learning, individual learning, team learning, and organizational learning. Individual learning helped create a knowledge base that could build the system’s capacity to learn. Learning organizations created opportunities for learning by consciously looking at new initiatives, and providing professional development. Team learning involved the use of cross level teams and groups. The focus at this level was to create a culture in which people felt they were an active part of the organization. At the organizational level, everyone participated in creation of vision, mission, and procedural changes. People were empowered through their individual knowledge and through their teams to make changes in the organization and implement to vision.

Sugarman (2001) conducted a study of five businesses that built learning organizations under the guidance of the Society for Organizational Learning at MIT. He found, after collection of data from interviews, documents, and observations, that these organizations shared common ideas. Each case he studied showed a typical sequence of steps in their development. In the beginning, the pre-pilot stage, someone identified a needed change and took action towards solving the problem. This initiator then recruited like-minded individuals for support. The small group, a core team, began initial training and set mission and goals. The next stage was to run a pilot study to build the first concrete steps towards making a change. The pilot study involved a larger group that attempted change and analyzed outcomes. If mistakes were made, the process was analyzed and the members learned from their mistakes. Corrections were taken and the pilot continued. Throughout the pilot study, members of the team continuously and
informally assessed what was working and what was not working. The post-pilot stage examined the lessons learned, developed outgrowths and additions and expanded the change to the larger organization. At this stage, Sugarman found that the companies created new groups using the core leadership team, or trained volunteers for new projects.

Sugarman (2001) also found that each company developed leaders who could balance short term goals with long term outlooks. They valued leadership development of the core team and allowed the groups the autonomy to create new ideas.

Sugarman said learning organizations could be recognized by their ability to change how it related to the outside world and how it conducted its internal operations. Organizations needed to change their underlying assumptions by changing individual attitudes as well as management attitudes. Sugarman found that in each case, new mental models developed from training the groups how to identify the right problems and how to develop steps to solve those problems. He noted that many of the processes were based on total quality management techniques. Overall, organizations that learned were good at creating new solutions and good at sharing knowledge among members who needed it.

In summary, successful organizations were ones that learned. They had the ability to create new mental models and modify their beliefs and values. Individual learning led to greater advances in team learning and faster knowledge sharing. Learning organizations operated as a system.

Baldrige, Culture, and Learning Organizations

Educational reform models have begun to address the building of a learning organization and the need to take a more systemic view of the organization. Baldrige in
Education, a refined example of Total Quality Management, is one such model that addressed process as well as culture change.

Quality Management (QM) was a highly touted improvement program emphasizing a set of philosophies, principles, and practices used with great success in post-war Japan. The emphasis on customer satisfaction, continuous improvement, and teamwork appealed to U.S. industries in the 1980’s (Detert, Louis, & Schroeder, 2001).

Total Quality Management (TQM) encouraged organizations to focus on improving customer satisfaction by concentrating on improving costs, quality and customer satisfaction. The main tenets included organization wide training, an understanding that quality was everyone’s responsibility, an understanding of customer needs, and the continuous focus on quality (Luthans, Rubach, & Marsnik, 1995; Terziovski, Howell, Sohal, & Morrison, 2000).

In 1987, President Ronald Reagan signed into law a provision to award businesses for implementing quality principles with the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) produced a seven-category scoring system to evaluate quality practices and performance. Embedded within the categories was a list of eleven core values developed from high performing organizations. Although the award was prescriptive on philosophy and values, it was nonprescriptive in procedures and practices. The goal of the standards was to align organizations with a set of quality values, while still allowing organizations to develop their own steps to improvement. Winners of the Baldrige Quality Award were characterized by customer-oriented quality programs, with high level employee involvement, management by fact,
and strong leadership development. Judges of the award noted that each winner created its own brand of quality (Garvin, 1991).

Fields (1993), writing on the total quality movement in schools, believed education should be about continuous improvement of thought. The philosophy of total quality in schools addressed these ideals by providing a framework for guiding schools to work as an organization in continuous improvement. Fields separately compared the words “Total Quality Management” to characteristics exhibited by high-performing people: “Total (everyone committed), Quality (meeting the requirements of the customer), Management (collaboratively)” (p.13).

From the TQM principles, Fields generated a list of behaviors exhibited by people in a total quality education system. The first principle was a commitment by management. Leaders took a clear stand and supported the need for change. The second principle was the development of a customer-first focus which included both external customers, such as employers and universities, and internal customers, such as students, teachers, and parents. This provided a communication loop from customer to school that helped with curriculum and instruction modifications. The next principles included the commitment to teamwork and the belief in team potential. When developing missions, goals, and strategies, the collective work of a team was often more powerful than one person’s decision. The principles of self-management and belief in individual potential first appeared in opposition of the commitment to teamwork. But learning in Total Quality organizations was ultimately the responsibility of an individual. The individuals then could come together to form powerful groups. The last two principles included a commitment to quality and a commitment to continuous improvement. To provide the
highest quality product, improvements in communication, information sharing, along with providing an environment that induced growth was necessary.

The tenets of total quality education included a commitment to customer focus, teamwork, and continuous improvement. Educational institution picked up on these ideas in the 1990’s. Some of the business language was changed to reflect the education realm, however, the elements of Quality Management invaded education (Detert, Louis, & Schroeder, 2001).

In 1998, President William Jefferson Clinton signed legislation to extend the Baldrige National Quality Award to educational institutions and health care organizations (NIST, 2004). In 1999, the National Alliance of Businesses and the American Productivity and Quality Center invited six states to participate in the Baldrige in Education Initiative, known as BiE IN (Ohio Department of Education, 2006).

The Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence reflected the values and categories of the business award but were revised to more accurately reflect the educational environment (NIST, 2004). These changes included language, focus on students and stakeholders, and a major focus on teaching and learning. The basic Baldrige framework remained the same: the eleven core values embedded within the seven categories.

The seven Categories were: (a) leadership, (b) strategic planning, (c) student, stakeholder, and market focus, (d) measurement, analysis, and knowledge, (e) faculty and staff focus, (f) process management, and (g) organizational performance results (Shipley, 2000a).

The eleven core values represented best practices for developing and integrating
the categories into a results oriented framework. The core values were: (a) learning centered education, (b) visionary leadership, (c) organizational and personal learning, (d) valuing faculty, staff, and partners, (e) managing for innovation, (f) systems perspective, (g) management by fact, (h) focus on the future, (i) public responsibility and citizenship, (j) agility, and (k) focus on results and creating value (Shipley, 2000a).

Overall the Baldrige evaluation system emphasized organizational performance, with specific values and nonspecific adaptable processes to guide organizations in the creation of a systems perspective of continuous improvement.

Baldrige, and more generally TQM, could be a powerful means of reshaping an organization, but over time, managers discovered that TQM had some limitations (Garvin, 1995). In fact, TQM experts were reporting failure rates as high as 70%. Three areas seemed to be causing the most trouble. One, redesign of business process was detached from business strategy. For example, if the customer base had changed, redesigning processes around the former customer base would not produce the desired results. One problem with TQM was that it could have been producing improved processes in an environment that no longer existed.

A second cause for concern was that processes were being treated as unconnected islands. Often a redesign of one process affected the functions of other processes, especially if these were critical processes. Many unsuccessful TQM organizations underestimated the need to communicate across projects and watch out for the complex interactions of processes.

The third limitation concerned the managers’ roles during the change. A process-oriented organization required different management styles than the traditional command
and control hierarchy. Most management processes were woven into the culture of the organization. Schein (2004) would call these basic underlying assumptions. The organization could change all the procedures it wanted, but if the management assumptions did not change, improvement did not happen (Garvin, 1995). Leadership, an important trait found in successful Baldrige businesses, did not mean the same old top-down management (Garvin, 1993).

Much discussion of Total Quality Management and Baldrige involved processes, not culture. A study by Detert, Louis, and Schroder (2001) set out to investigate the claim between the importance of culture and successful implementation of Quality Management in schools. Their review of literature found that many organizations only implemented one aspect of the model. Even when specifically looking at organizational culture, most studies only looked at the artifact level, a level designed to observe processes, not changes in values. Studies using instruments to measure culture used instruments not specifically designed to measure Quality Management values. Detert et al. (2001) wanted to know if there was an ideal culture that helped improve Quality Management implementation and also wanted to investigate the gap between existing culture values and Quality Management values. The researchers enlisted a diverse panel of 15 Baldrige “experts,” people from business and education with experience in Baldrige concepts. The panel produced a list of values they felt were critical for successful Quality Management implementation. They were not limited to any pre-defined cultural frameworks such as the Baldrige core values. The group came up with nine values they felt must be present in some form and then correlated those values to artifacts seen in Quality Management:
1. Faculty and staff had a shared vision and shared goals.

2. Educational needs were determined by parents, community groups, students, and stakeholders.

3. Improving education required a long term commitment.

4. Schools made continuous changes to improve education.

5. Teachers were active in improving the overall school operation.

6. Collaboration was necessary for an effective school.

7. Decision making was fact-based.

8. Quality problems were caused by poor systems not poor teachers.

The researchers then made four proposals to successful implementation of Quality Management practices based on their review of studies, their own research of educational institutions, and the list from their panel. First, each of the nine values created by the group was present in some form. Second, the gaps between school values-in-use and the Quality Management values were small. There was already a “cultural fit” between the organization’s values and the Quality Management values. Third, the gap between individual teacher’s values and the dominant school value was small. And last, schools usually had established subcultures. In fact most organizations had one or two dominant subcultures. Teachers, by default, were usually the core subculture in a school. The adoption by teachers of shared values aligned with the initiative led to sustained implementation.

This cultural connection was also captured in a study by Projogo and McDermott (2005). They defined Total Quality Management as “integration of all functions and processes within an organization to achieve continuous improvement of the quality of
goods and services with the ultimate goal being customer satisfaction” (p. 1103). Their study asked the question: is Total Quality Management a set of practices, a culture, or both? They argued that Total Quality Management was not culture, it was hard stuff, and it was artifacts and methods. But their research consistently showed that when Total Quality Management was implemented, unchanged, the process failed. They concluded that while Total Quality Management was not culture, implementation of Total Quality Management required a culture of openness and a willingness to adapt to change.

Total Quality Management and Baldrige criteria, when properly implemented created learning organizations. Garvin (1993) said that continuous improvement required a commitment to learning. Organizational learning was the intended outcome of Total Quality Management (Garvin, 1993; Senge, 1990). The goal of any organization should be to become a learning organization, defined by personal mastery, new mental models, creating shared vision, team learning, and systems thinking (Senge, 1990). Ford (1991) suggested that Total Quality Management created the environment needed for organizational learning to occur. Sitkin, Sutcliffe, and Schroeder (1994) found that the companies that failed with Total Quality Management did so because they chose to only implement pieces or they diffused the principles. Total Quality Management had to be implemented as a system. Another reason for failed Total Quality Management results might have been that Total Quality Management was too limited and did not offer the future-oriented challenges those companies needed. Luthans, Rubach and Marsnik (1995) suggested that these companies move past the TQM principles to develop into a learning organization.
Terziovski, Howell, Sohol, and Morrison (2000) studied five successful Total Quality Management organizations using Baldrige criteria and Senge’s learning organization criteria. They hypothesized that the concepts of Baldrige and learning organizations (Senge, 1990) were mutually dependent. The companies were analyzed using Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award criteria and separately analyzed using Senge’s learning organization components. Their qualitative case studies of the five companies found common commitments within the Baldrige framework that compared to Senge’s components of a learning organization. These included using leadership to build shared vision. Support of the vision by leaders helped guide collective direction. There was also a connection between human resource development and team learning. As power was spread downwards in the organization, it released the potential of the workforce, allowing for individual and team learning. People felt as though they had a part in the decisions.

The third connection was of information and analysis leading to new mental models. The creation of new knowledge led to new learning and new ways to deal with change. The fourth connection was creating new mental models to help the groups make sense of the data being received and to help form creative ways to make changes. And last, in both models, organizational performance improved.

They concluded that Total Quality Management practices could not have been successfully implemented without the sustained commitment to learn.
Successful Baldrige Type Models

Utah Valley State University initiated a Baldrige-like strategic planning process in the Spring of 2000. The university experienced fast growth in the 1990’s and a strategic plan was needed to make appropriate improvements. Spencer and Wynn (2004) compared their university’s stages in their successful process to Kotter’s (1995) eight steps to successful reform.

Kotter (1995) outlined lessons for organizational change with a cautionary list of errors to avoid during change processes. Although not specific to any one type of reform model, the eight steps could be considered when implementing Baldrige type models. Kotter warned that change processes went through predictable phases and required a considerable amount of time. Mistakes in any step had the potential to create a cascade of problems. The first and critical step was to create a sense of urgency. Finding a leader to validate the need for improvement and to encourage others to buy into the need was important for change to begin. Next a core group was created to build support outside the management. Third, the group worked to establish a vision and to communicate the vision quickly to everyone in the organization. Kotter believed that if the vision could not be communicated in five minutes or less, then people would not accept the upcoming changes. Fourth, constant communication of the vision also required the team to walk the talk. The fifth step was to remove obstacles to the new vision. This might mean structures such as procedures that will no longer work had to go. Obstacles could be people, meaning that changes in attitude were necessary. Step six was to plan for short term as well as long term wins. Plans often took a long time to realize and short term wins validated to members that the plan is working. The seventh cautionary step was to not
declare victory too soon. Real change took four to seven years. And last, and probably most important, was to anchor change in culture even if that meant changing how things were done.

Spencer and Wynn’s (2005) findings reinforced commonalities found in successful change processes. The president at Utah Valley State University initiated the process by inviting all staff, faculty, students, and community members to respond to several questions relating to concerns and issues about the university. The president of the university became the leader to validate the need for improvement and acted as the cheerleader for the cause. A core team was formed to start the initial mission development. Initially composed of school and student leaders, the core team quickly developed into a much wider, more diverse group. As the vision was developed, all stakeholder, students, staff, and support staff were surveyed. Several versions of the vision and mission were shared, with the opportunity for public feedback. The vision and mission were communicated in a variety of ways through the school website and by written document. Once the strategic plan was formed, the group created a shortened version that was easy to read; the five minute communication suggested by Kotter. The short term wins came from the ability for people to be part of the vision and mission by being able to directly email the president and core team with suggestions. Those suggestions were taken seriously and communicated to everyone.

Spencer and Wynn (2004) concluded that designing the change was as important as implementing the change. The timeline was long, over several years and because the environment constantly changed, the plan was constantly tweaked. The emphasis on collaboration with all stakeholders allowed the plan to gain momentum. They concluded
that the most important step of the implementation was the participatory nature of the design phase that allowed for extensive acceptance and understanding of the plan. This was not something mandated, it was focused improvement developed by the people.

Ziegler (2005) studied eight adult education programs that used Baldrige criteria to transform management practices. The programs chosen were the first recipients of the Tennessee quality awards. Ziegler interviewed eleven program managers and performed site visits over a six-month period. After analyzing data, several themes emerged. First, an increased awareness of managers as learners emerged. Baldrige was not the same management system as they were using. The more managers learned about Baldrige principles, the better they were at identifying their organization’s improvement needs. Managers also reported a greater involvement of stakeholders in program leadership. Where traditionally the managers saw only themselves as the leaders, they began to see the importance of input from staff as well as students. Greater teacher leadership promoted increased team decisions. Managers also discovered that displaying data and making decisions based on data really made them think about how they could improve. Finally, seeing the organization as a system resulted in less reactive decisions and more proactive decisions. Using data and the communication among groups encouraged people to explore causes of problems rather than finding immediate, unconnected solutions. Using the model provided a tool for the programs to look at change in a new perspective.

The Missouri School for the Blind, a Missouri Quality Award winner, had been using Baldrige practices since 1991. The Missouri School for the Blind operated as a 24 hour, seven day per week service to residential students. The school also offered an outreach program to the community, to school districts and to families throughout the
state. The school participated in the Baldrige award to prove that it was doing a good job with customer satisfaction and to find areas for continued improvement.

The school used three major principles to drive its continuous improvement: (1) data driven decisions, (2) a systematic process of ongoing evaluation and stakeholder feedback, and (3) school wide involvement (Howze, 2000). Outstanding qualities of the school included the development of a 5 year strategic plan, outlining major processes targets, and benchmarks to check progress. The school clarified its purpose, an emphasis on student learning, allowing the school to focus in academic achievement by providing individualized education programs, life skills, and improved case manager interaction.

The school saw the value of investing in people by rearranging its budget to reduce funds for operational expenses and increasing funds for human potential. The school also placed an emphasis on improved professional development and personal mastery, along with leadership training. The teams were formed and used to propel new ideas. Teams discussed and identified improvements and were given the power to make decisions that allowed for the school to meet its goals. Missouri School for the Blind used the Baldrige criteria and core values to create its own plan for improvement.

Summary

Education was deemed the cornerstone of society by the nation’s founding fathers. Schooling was a way to develop the skills and knowledge to make people the best they can be in society. The purpose of schooling was not only cognitive development but social, vocational, and cultural development. In 1983, on the heels of economic challenges, the National Commission of Excellence in Education published *A Nation at*
Risk and started a storm of reform movements still going today. The commission’s report claimed that schools were failing and were to blame for many societal woes. Reform after reform was attempted, most without the anticipated success. Most reforms only changed one aspect of a school or only suggested one way to improve. Reforms did not target the way people thought or acted; they failed to address the embedded culture of school. For an initiative to take place, people’s values and beliefs had to change.

Culture could be defined as the way groups of people think and act together. Their behaviors could be found in artifacts, such as procedures and physical settings, in beliefs and values, and in basic underlying assumptions, such as how things are always done. To change how things were done, an organization had to learn new ways and had to develop new values and beliefs. An organization that did this was said to learn. Single loop learning only changed procedures, while double loop learning changed beliefs, values, and assumptions. Effective organizations demonstrated double loop learning. Successful reforms were ones that addressed procedure changes as well as addressed cultural changes.

Quality management, a business technique, found its way into education with the Baldrige in Education quality initiative. The reform was created by embedding core values into categories of leadership, human resources, measurement and analysis, student and stakeholder focus, strategic planning, process management, and organizational performance results. Built as a framework, the Baldrige Criteria allowed an organization to create its own brand of quality by identifying its individual needs and creating improvement plans specific to those needs. Organizations using Baldrige successfully
learned how to identify and change processes. They identified values, created mission and action plans, and developed a collaborative culture.

The Baldrige in Education quality initiative as a reform could meet the same fate as other reforms, as another disappointment. Partial implementation, like many failed reforms, only changed process, not the culture or the beliefs of people. Some disagreement existed as to whether Baldrige was a tool to create change or was actually a change process itself. Recent research focused on the question of whether a particular culture made implementation more successful or if the initiative created a culture of learning. Regardless of the view, researchers found that the complete implementation of the initiative could bring desired improvement.
CHAPTER III

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this ethnographic case study was to examine and describe factors influencing culture change during a six year school improvement program at Centennial High School, a 9-12 high school located in the Midwest. As a qualitative case study, the research was conducted as an effort to describe the aspects of the Baldrige in Education Initiative that led to organizational culture change. The names of the school district and high school along with the names of the participants have been changed to protect their identities.

This study included an investigation of the steps taken to implement the improvement process, an analysis of shared experiences of the participants in the process, and underlying assumptions that developed as part of the change process. Specific research questions guided the study:

1. How did processes change during the implementation of the school improvement model?
2. What role did team building and collaboration play in effecting change?
3. What evidence existed to show the success of the school improvement process?

General Methodology

Qualitative studies seek to understand the meaning people have constructed and to make sense of a phenomenon (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998).
This type of research grew out of the social sciences. Rather than just collecting social facts about a situation, qualitative researchers attempt to describe the meanings that individuals give to social situations (Hatch, 2002). Qualitative data is descriptive, in the form of words and pictures instead of in the form of numbers. Pictures are drawn using an inductive strategy. The researcher is not testing a hypothesis; instead the researcher builds a theory from the bottom up, and constructs a picture shaped by the data collected. The picture is not known prior to the research, but develops as data is collected (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

The design of qualitative studies is emergent and flexible. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) suggested that qualitative research is more concerned with the process than with the product. What emerges as product in qualitative design is a rich description of the phenomenon or setting (Merriam, 1998). The purpose of conducting a qualitative study is to capture the wholeness of the setting in order to create a story that takes the reader inside the case (Hatch, 2002).

The source of data in qualitative studies is the natural setting, such as a school building, a classroom, a neighborhood. The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Creswell, 1998; Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 1998). Data are collected from answers to open ended questions, from direct observations, and from written documents. Sampling is usually small, purposeful, and nonrandom (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). The participants’ perspectives are important to help the researcher construct meaning. Unlike the quantitative researcher, qualitative researchers are not separated from the study, but qualitative researchers add their own perspectives and subjectivity to the context (Hatch, 2002).
A case study focuses on a particular situation, event, or program. Case studies are bounded systems, constrained by time and place. A variety of data collection methods are employed including interviews, observation, and documents or artifacts, which provide the reader with a holistic description of the case. Thick, rich description, a term coined from anthropology, is the product of the attention to data collection methods. Case studies provide considerable description of the context or setting to illuminate the reader’s understanding of the case (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998, Stake, 1995).

Yin advocated the use of case studies when the study has many variables of interest but few numerical data points, when the variables cannot be controlled and when it is impossible to separate the phenomenon from the context. He suggested six types of data to be collected by the qualitative researcher: (a) documentation, (b) archival records, (c) interviews, (d) direct observation, (e) participant observation, and (f) physical artifacts.

This study fits the characteristics of a case study for two reasons. First, the data were collected in one high school over six years during the implementation of the Baldrige in Education Initiative. Second, the sources of data collected were from multiple sources including documents, interviews, participant observations, and artifacts.

The present study also falls within the parameters of ethnography. Ethnographies study culture, defined as the collective behavior of patterns and beliefs of a group. People interacting together over a period of time will create culture. The primary collection method in ethnographies is the participant observer. In participant observer data collection, the evaluator may participate in all or parts of the activities (Patton, 2002). Because I was employed in the building during the improvement process, I analyzed from
a participant observer perspective (Merriam, 1998). Advantages to being a participant observer included the opportunity to gain access to otherwise inaccessible data and to be able to gain a unique perspective on the reality of the situation (Yin, 2003). Schein (2004) theorized that to truly understand a particular culture, one must become part of the culture. Critics say that this type of interaction is subjective and prone to changing participant behavior. When the participants know the researcher involved and the researcher works together with the participants to define the problem, collect data, and analyze findings, the concern for researcher bias must be addressed. The researcher may become a supporter even if no support existed before. The researcher may also be working at the task at hand and be too busy to take notes on the study, or the researcher may guide the participants in one pathway otherwise not taken (Merriam, 1998). The interviewer must be immersed in the culture (Patton, 2002). Creswell (1998) and Hatch (2002) also suggested participant interviews and artifact collection as other important sources of data.

The study fits the characteristics of ethnography. The guiding assumption of ethnography is that any group interacting for a period of time will evolve a culture. These behaviors and belief systems can best be described using ethnography techniques. In the 1980’s, organizational development studies used organization ethnography to focus on changing culture (Patton, 2002). Ethnographic research seeks to describe culture or parts of culture (Hatch, 2002). To understand the changes in processes of this school improvement initiative, one must also investigate and understand the culture that developed. Baldrige in Education created group interactions and changing cultural values within the organization.
The study also has features of symbolic interaction. Symbols and symbolic behavior can be studied through people’s interactions and communication as they generate meaning to situations. Symbols are not just charts and posters, design of the workplace, or displays. Language, jargon, legends, celebrations, rituals, and techniques can develop as a group interacts (Jones, 2002). Symbolic interaction as a qualitative analysis method is most closely associated with Blumer (1969) and emphasizes the meaning and interpretation that arise as people interact with colleagues and processes. As shared meaning is created, those meanings become reality. The best way to understand symbols is through close and direct contact. As groups interact, they create culture. They also create a common set of symbols and understandings to give meaning to their interactions that can be studied (Patton, 2002). This study has elements of symbolic interaction methods because data collection included symbolic artifacts. In addition, to study culture, group interactions must be documented.

The research paradigm was constructivist. Constructivists assume that realities are knowable and that multiple realities can be constructed by individuals who experience it. In fact, “truth is what we agree it is” (Hatch, 2002, p 15). Constructivists can not be outsiders to the study; they must be engaged with participants to construct the reality.

Research Context

The case study included data from the years 2001-2006. Centennial School District was located in a Midwestern, rural, small town district serving a community of 21,000 people. Median household income was $39,000 in a community that was showing a decline in its industrial base. The school district included 5 neighborhood elementary
schools, one 7-8 middle school, and one 9-12 high school. Average student enrollment during the length of the study at the high school was 1282, with a student population of 97% White, and 3% minority. In fiscal year 2001, the district allocated $6480 per pupil compared to $7573 for the state average. By fiscal year 2004, the allocated funding was $7362 within the districts compared to the allocated state average of $8756. Employees in the building included 79 teachers, 4 administrators, 3 guidance counselors, and 20 classified employees. Average teacher salary was $44,663 with 16 years average classroom experience. Approximately 52% held Master’s degrees. Teachers were divided between 43% males and 57% females, with 99% classified Caucasian (Ohio Department of Education). Staff turn-over rate over the four year period was less than 3% per year.

The State Report Card is a measurement instrument used by the state’s Department of Education to assess school district performance. Districts, along with their individual buildings are rated in one of four categories based on the number of performance indicators they met. From the 2001-2002 school year and the 2002-2003 school year, schools were assessed on 22 indicators. The first twenty indicators included Proficiency Test Scores in five areas: citizenship, mathematics, reading, writing, and science. Each of the five tests were given at Grade 4, Grade 6, Grade 9, and Grade 9 for 10th grade students who did not pass the 9th grade proficiency the first time. Indicators 21 and 22 were student attendance rate at all grades and district student graduation rate. To be ranked Excellent, the district must have met 21 or 22 indicators. An Effective rating ranged from 17 to 20; Continuous Improvement ranged from 11 to 16; Academic Watch
ranged between 7-10; and Academic Emergency met 6 or fewer (Ohio Department of Education).

Only district designation was reported for the 2001-2002 school year, and the Centennial School District was ranked in continuous improvement, meeting 16 of 22 indicators. The high school, however, met 11 of its 12 indicators. In 2002-2003, the district remained in the status of continuous improvement however, the high school met all 12 of their indicators and earned an Excellent rating for the building (Ohio Department of Education, 2007).

During the 2003-2004 school year, the State Department of Education made preparations to phase out the Proficiency Test at the Grade 9 to be replaced with a state graduation test given to all Grade 10 students. No testing of 9th grade students was done, and only students under the Proficiency test guidelines were tested. The high school met all of the remaining 7 indicators (the five content areas tests, the attendance rate, and the graduation rate) placing them again as Excellent. The district moved to the status of Effective, meeting 14 of 18 indicators. A third grade reading achievement test was added (Ohio Department of Education, 2007).

The 2004-2005 school year report card measured 23 indicators, seven pertaining to the high school, the 10th grade Graduation test, Attendance Rate and Graduation Rate. The high school met 6 of 7 indicators, missing the Science Graduation Test target by 0.5%, resulting in an Effective rating (Ohio Department of Education, 2007).
Procedures

Data Collection

To complete a holistic picture of the case, multiple sources of data were collected. Yin (2003) identified six categories used in case studies. The first type, documentation, includes agendas, letters, program proposals, and site evaluations. Archival records include service records, organizational charts and budgets, layout of facility, and calendars. Interviews, the third type, are an important source of information about the organizational. Interviews may include focus groups or individuals, and formal and informal questioning. Direct observations are done through field visits and can provide additional insight. Direct observations may also include photographs, maps, and layouts that can increase the reliability of other types of data.

Most commonly used in cultural or social studies the fifth types of data are participant observations. If the researcher can gain access and become involved in the organization, the participant observations can provide a unique insight into the working of the phenomenon by viewing it as an insider. The sixth type of data is the collection of physical or cultural artifacts such as tools, technology devices, artwork (Yin, 2003).

Each of these data types adds information to complete the picture being drawn by the case study. The type of case study determines which data types are the most important and which categories play a supporting role. Ethnographic case studies rely heavily on participant observations, interviews, and artifacts (Creswell 1998; Merriam, 1998).
Research Participants

Participants were chosen purposefully to gain insight and understanding to the implementation of the Baldrige model and to the perceived cultural changes during its implementation. Purposive or purposeful sampling involves choosing participants or sites based on a set of criteria established to reflect the purpose of the study (Merriam, 1998). The power of purposive or purposeful lies with the emphasis on an in-depth understanding of the study. The purposeful selection leads to an information-rich set of data (Patton, 2002).

The criteria for selection of the participants were based on the literature review of cultural development (Garvin, 1993; Schein, 2004; Sugarman, 2001), on Baldrige processes (Detert, Louis, & Schroeder, 2001), and on research methodology (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). Because Baldrige changed the common processes that had been used in the district, I chose individuals directly involved in the change processes. Four individuals were formally interviewed to gain insight into the initial implementation of the school improvement process. Each had a slightly different role. The four individuals included: (a) the district administrator who was involved in writing the grant application for the Baldrige in Education initiative; (b) the high school assistant principal who during the study became the high school principal; (c) a high school teacher who later became the district’s Quality Coordinator; and (d) a high school teacher who attended all Baldrige trainings during the first three years, was a member of the Baldrige Support Group, and was a department chair.

Each individual was interviewed once for 90 minutes. Each participant was asked a set of questions based on their area of responsibility and each were given an
opportunity to make additional comments. The interviews were audio taped. Each participant signed a consent form following the guidelines of the Human Subjects Review Board of the researcher’s university. Follow up clarification was done by phone call or email. Individual identities were protected by using a coded name.

Observations were made primarily through participant observations. As a member of the Quality Steering Committee, I was responsible for reconstructing the processes of the first round of Design Teams. Thus, I documented the meetings through these direct observations of the improvement teams. I used these notes in the manner of field notes. These field notes were derived from my direct participation in the initiative as described below.

During the six years covered by this study I found myself in the position of being an organizer. I was part of the Baldrige Support Group and later I became the Design Team Facilitator, giving me the opportunity to observe each team. My role also included scheduling meeting, making agendas, and general care of each team. I was also part of the Quality Steering Committee, one of three building leadership teams responsible for overseeing the Baldrige quality processes in the building. I have many personal notes partly because we were trying to study and modify processes, but also because I had a strong curiosity about what was going on. This participation, although it provided an insider view, also has the challenge of bias. The guiding research question for this study was influenced by my involvement in the process. However, while I was participating, I did not take notes as a researcher, but as a participant involved in the meetings; the decision to do a research case study on the process came after the notes were taken.

Benefits of participant observations include a better understanding of context, less
need to rely on prior conceptions, the opportunity to see things that routinely escape awareness, and the ability to collect information that may not be shared in a formal interview (Patton, 2002).

Archival records and documentation were collected. These included leadership rosters, Design Team reports, building leadership team agendas and meeting minutes, and surveys of staff. Document and archival records are important as they can corroborate other sources of data. Physical artifacts such as memos, team instructions, team notes and products, and meeting locations were also collected.

Data collection was guided by the original research question and the goal of the data collection was to answer the research question (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003).

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is an inductive endeavor (Creswell, 2003). Case studies represent an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded unit. As a result a large amount of data from a variety of sources is collected. The goal of analysis is to communicate understanding (Merriam, 1998).

The researcher must have a plan on how to analyze all the data. Regardless of the analysis plan, it must occur simultaneously with data collection (Merriam, 1998). The researcher should reflect on each piece of data as it is collected as well as make memos and comments about the data. In the final analysis, the researcher has two sources of information, the actual data and the insights recorded as data was collected (Patton, 2002).
Data can be analyzed in levels. The first and most basic level is description, merely explaining the event or setting. This leaves the readers open to draw their own conclusions. The next level is category construction. In this level, the researcher searches for themes and categories that reflect the purpose of the study. The third level involves developing a theory, where the analysis is taken past the data into a theory about future performance (Merriam, 1998)

Yin (2003) described additional ways of analysis. Pattern matching searches for common themes in multiple sources of data. Pattern matching also increases the internal validity of the study. The data could also be analyzed chronologically, showing that the sequence of events is important to understand the case. Data could also be analyzed as logic models. This type of analysis shows that an event produces an immediate outcome, which in turn causes another intermediate outcome. Finally an ultimate outcome occurs.

Data collection and analysis should be based on the research question and should strive to answer that question (Hatch, 2002; Yin, 2003). Although there are no specific steps in analyzing the data, common strategies can be found (Creswell, 2003; Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). Data are analyzed simultaneously with data collection (Merriam, 1998). Once the data have been collected, the researcher then begins to code the data according to important issues found in the data. The researcher then uses the coding to construct themes, categories that begin to make sense of the large amount of data from multiple sources. Once the themes are established, then the decision about how to present the themes begins.

This case study followed the following steps of data collection and analysis. Data were collected based on the guiding research questions. Documents, artifacts, interviews,
archival information, direct observation, and participant observations were collected and
notes were made simultaneously with each data source. The data were then categorized
based on the guiding research questions, and modified as themes emerged. The various
sources were analyzed for pattern matching, searching for common themes throughout
the different types of data. Interviews were transcribed to accurately capture the
participants’ answers and used for triangulation with other data sources.

As with all research, the issues of validity, reliability, and generalizability must be
addressed. Reliability addresses the ability to which the research findings can be
replicated, an inherent challenge in qualitative studies. Internal validity addresses the
question of how the findings match reality. Generalizability (external validity) is the
degree to which the research can be generalized to other populations (Merriam, 1998;
Yin, 2003).

Internal validity addresses the question of how the findings match reality
(Merriam, 1998). Given that constructivists views are realities constructed by those
experiencing it, the issue of validity must be addressed using specific strategies. Creswell
(2003) suggested the following common and easy to use methods to increase validity.
First, triangulation was used to search for common themes across the different data
sources. Second, member checks were used to determine the accuracy of the themes.
With member checks, the results are taken back to the participants and asking them if
they are plausible (Merriam, 1998). The third method, the writing of thick, rich
description, allows the reader to share in the experience. The fourth method addressing
validity was to clearly delineate the researcher bias. Last, the presentation of discrepant
information was addressed. The discussion of contrary information can add credibility especially when a study focuses on life situations (Creswell, 2003).

Reliability addresses the ability to which the research findings can be replicated, an inherent challenge in qualitative studies. Case studies, by design, are snapshots in time of an event as interpreted by humans. Even consistent repeated observations of the same event can be wrong. The use of multiple methods of data collection and triangulation of data greatly strengthens reliability. Although studies can not be exactly replicated, producing an audit trail also strengthens reliability. Audit trails show how the researcher arrived at the results (Merriam, 1998). Yin (2003) suggests that a researcher should conduct the investigation as if someone were looking over the researcher’s shoulder, producing a case study database. These methods were employed in this study to increase reliability.

Generalizability in case studies has its limitations due to the fact that a single case study defines only one situation. Erickson (1986) argued that generalizability was an inappropriate goal of interpretive research. The goal was to find and study a particular event that could then be transferred to similar situations. He compared this to what happens with events in our lives. We do not exactly replicate events, but when in a comparable position, we can take what we learned from that experience and generalize it to the new situation. One way to enhance the generalizability of this study was to provide rich, thick description. The reader can then decide how closely their situation compared. Comparing this study to other programs can also enhance generalizability (Merriam, 1998). With this case study, the sample was purposefully chosen and the study addressed a very specific issue, allowing for increased potential for generalizations.
Summary

This ethnographic case study utilized five methods of data collection: participant observation, interviews, artifact collection, documents, and archival records. Table 1 outlines the types of qualitative data collected and the frequency of use.

Table 1

Types and Frequency of Qualitative Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Data</th>
<th>Frequency of Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Archival record</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifact</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Observation</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of data occurred simultaneously with data collection. Data were categorized initially based on the guiding research questions, then modified as new themes emerged. Data analysis searched for common themes influencing culture change. Rich, descriptive text was written to help place the reader in the situation. Triangulation and members checks were done to increase validity and reliability of the study.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this ethnographical case study, as stated in Chapter I, was to identify factors that led to culture change during a successful Baldrige in Education Initiative. This chapter is organized into two sections. Section one presents a description of the main themes that emerged from the research. Themes emerged based on the specific research questions asked in Chapter I. Four themes emerged: (a) the need to identify purpose, (b) the development of common processes, (c) the changing attitudes toward collaboration, and (d) the variables of time.

Section two is organized into three stories that describe processes that developed during implementation of the Baldrige in Education Initiative and the changes in people’s beliefs toward collaboration and group decision making.

Evidence of Culture Change Based on Research

Baldrige in Education is a prescriptive rather than a descriptive model (NIST, 2004). To implement the model with success, an organization had to create its own brand of quality by defining purpose, identifying areas of improvement, and then developing its own process for improvement (Garvin, 1993). Evidence in this study supported Garvin’s claim. The first theme to develop in this study was the need to establish a purpose for change. Prior to the initiative, this organization tried to make changes based on the latest reform model to come along. This type of change was common in education systems.
The second emerging theme reinforced the argument by Argyris and Schon (1996) that culture change occurs when an organization reaches what they called the third level of learning, that how things are done actually change and that this new way of doing things becomes embedded in the organization. The present study describes the development of a process that became known symbolically in the organization as the Design Team process. This study will show its development and acceptance of the procedure by the organization by describing the operation of Design Teams.

The third theme to develop in this analysis identified changing attitudes of the group from top-down decisions to a collaborative group decision making process. Culture change, according to Schein (2004), is seen when an organization changes its basic underlying assumptions and when the people in the organization change their thinking about how they do things. This new way of thinking was learned by the group and taught to new members of the groups. Culture change also involves creating and learning new mental models (Senge, 1990). Part of this new learning was characterized by a group that values thinking and dialoguing together to make better decisions. Weick (1979) further stressed that an organization knows when culture has changed when these actions are taken for granted. Evidence in the present study showed the embedded nature of how changes were made. Evidence also showed that within three years of the initiative, the organization expected the Design Team process to be followed when other organizational changes were made. The study will describe the unrest that occurred with the decision to reassign several rooms, clearly demonstrating the embedded Design Team process and the collaborative nature of the group.
The fourth theme evident in this study was the importance of devoting enough time to allow the process and culture develop. Kotter (1995), when outlining a list of errors to avoid when implementing a change process, warned against rushing through steps. He asserted that short term wins are important, but change could take four to seven years to realize. The present case study took place over a six year period of time, demonstrating the short term wins and the long term commitment to the process. At the beginning of the initiative, the time taken to make a change was longer than planned. The mission and vision statements exceeded the expected time frame. The Design Team changes stretched past the two year goal as the process developed. But as the organization learned how to make changes using the Design Team process they created, the time needed to investigate the changes lessened. As the process became embedded into the culture and the organization learned and accepted this way of making changes, the timeframe changed. Once processes were in place the time needed to make changes declined, as will be shown with the decision to re-align rooms and the shortened time needed to complete the second round of Design Teams.

Mission, Vision, and Clarity of Purpose

History of the Change Process

This story begins with a history of the improvement initiatives of the district and then outlines the steps taken by the high school to create its mission and vision statements.

As early as 1993, there was evidence of the district’s interest in continuous improvement. The Strategic Plan, developed by the Board of Education, from a state
accreditation evaluation, identified the need for continuous improvement.\textsuperscript{1} The Board of Education, as an offshoot of their newly developed Strategic Plan, indicated that they would like to see some type of quality improvement plan however no model or funding was suggested. The district applied for a Systemic Improvement Grant through the State Board of Education. The grant wanted districts receiving the grant to “break out of the box.”\textsuperscript{2} The grant application had elements of Total Quality Management (TQM) and was written in business model language. Mr. Cowles, an administrator, recalled that when the district made their proposal, the state examiners “looked at us like we had three eyes because they just didn’t understand the grasp and gist of what we were trying to do.”\textsuperscript{3}

Not willing to give up, the administrators lobbied their local congressman and procured some money to begin an improvement process at the elementary level in grades one through three. Funds were used to hire a consultant and provide substitute teachers when staff began to be trained.

The district then began work with a local university professor using techniques heavily influenced by Total Quality Management.\textsuperscript{4} Professor Shaw was also a national Baldrige examiner. With his help, the high school applied for and received a $25,000 Venture Capital Grant through the Ohio Department of Education in July of 1995 to be


\textsuperscript{2} Interview with Mr. Hammer, Nov 20, 2008. Interview.

\textsuperscript{3} Interview with Mr. Cowles, November, 3, 2008. Interview.

\textsuperscript{4} Venture capital folder. Artifact.
used over five years to hire consultants and pay for professional development. A key component of the grant was the development of TQM processes. Initially, as part of the grant, the application team identified three areas targeted for improvement: (a) student assessment and performance, (b) improved decision making, and (c) comprehensive educational planning. Once the grant was awarded, a leadership team, the Quality Steering Council, was formed within the building. The grant required a leadership group or steering committee to be formed to oversee implementation, and the Quality Steering Council was born.

Membership in Quality Steering Council included the building principal, one assistant principal, two parent representatives, six teachers from different disciplines, one custodial staff, and one guidance counselor. The group met during school time for three hours twice a month, to plan professional development. This group used the Venture Capital targets as well as recommendations from a state accreditation (North Central) evaluation to identify more specific targets for improvement. In addition to the North Central recommendations, documents revealed a growing concern by Quality Steering Council on how to prepare students for the new graduation test mandated by the state. The group targeted three specific areas: problem-based learning, mentoring, and group dynamics. The Quality Steering Council team assumed the role as coordinators of the plan to develop and deliver in-services related to these three areas.

At the same time the high school was working to identify areas for improvement, the state education department began issuing District Report Cards that required districts

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5 Principal memo to staff, February 15, 1994. Archival record.

to write a Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP). The first mention of a building CIP came in November 1999.\footnote{Minutes from QSC meeting, November 8, 1999. Document.} Over the next several months, the areas identified as part of the Venture Capital grant and the accreditation evaluation were reworked into three CIP general areas of school improvement: problem-based learning became student achievement, mentoring became part of small school environment, and group dynamics was incorporated into a larger category of efficient and effective operations. In addition to the three areas of improvement, Quality Steering Council was charged with creating a mission statement for the CIP.

*And Then, Baldrige.* Just as the Venture Capital grant was winding down, the district was presented with another grant opportunity, quite by chance. Two district administrators, Mr. Hammer and Mr. Cowles, and the university consultant attended the National Quality Education Conference in Atlantic City. As they walked into the convention center, they saw representatives from the Ohio Department of Education. As part of the continuous improvement plans required by the state, the department of education was looking for volunteers to be part of a pilot program to implement the Baldrige in Education Initiative (BiE IN). Professor Shaw, Mr. Hammer, and Mr. Cowles knew that this process mirrored the TQM processes that their district was using as part of the Venture Capital grant, so they rushed back to Ohio and applied for the grant. The district became one of the first six districts to be awarded a grant to implement the Baldrige in Education Initiative. Mr. Cowles added, “So you talk about the serendipity, so what came out of that is when we were ready to engage in a full scale school
improvement process you had a core of teachers who had some basic understanding of
basic quality processes and data collection.”

*Introducing Baldrige to the District.* The Baldrige in Education Initiative was
introduced to the Quality Steering Council on March 27, 2000. Discussion about the use
of Baldrige practices appeared in the April 10, 2000 the Quality Steering Council
meeting. The principal, Mr. Lee, suggested that “we begin to think about how the
Baldrige process will work in our building.” He also asked for input on whether the
Quality Steering Council was willing to become the Baldrige training team. By May 22,
2000, the group had agreed and BiE IN began.

The CHS staff, already primed with TQM training, received Baldrige training
from Bradley and Associates beginning in the fall of 2000. The first stages of training
included understanding of the six steps of improvement: (a) validate the need; (b) clarify
organizational purpose, goals, and measures; (c) adopt an organization-wide approach to
continual improvement; (d) translate the approach into actions; (e) analyze results and
make improvements; and (f) repeat the process (Shipley, 2000a). The leadership
category of the Baldrige Criteria required leadership to set and communicate direction.

Much of the initial training centered on classroom systems, but emphasis was also
placed on using the same techniques at the building level and at the district level. Because
mission statements translate requirements into a statement of what the organization is
going to do, for whom, and how it will be done (Shipley, 2000b), one of the first steps to

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8 Interview with Mr. Cowles, November, 3, 2008. Interview.

Baldrige implementation was to create a mission and vision for the district’s buildings. Since this was already a directive of the CIP, the Quality Steering Council was charged with this initial task at the high school.

**Creating the Mission and Vision Statements**

In the fall of 2000, the Quality Steering Council prepared a plan to solicit information from various stakeholders and to gather input about what should be in the mission statement. A flyer was produced stating “Centennial High School is developing its Mission Statement and would like your ideas about what this Mission Statement should be and/or include.”

Information was collected from students, staff, parents attending the high school open house, community members visiting the city school district’s county fair booth, and members of the Chamber of Commerce. Quality Steering Council sorted and categorized responses. Responses from students, staff, and parents/community were kept separate to help insure that at least one major concern from each group was represented.

*Information from staff:* Information about what the staff would like to see in a mission statement was collected during an in-service in late September, 2000. The responses were sorted to search for common categories. The staff categories were:

“a) academic achievement, b) accountability, responsibility, c) teaching and learning environment, d) attendance, graduation rate.”

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Information from the community. Information from the community came from three sources. Community members had an opportunity to complete a card at a local fair booth sponsored by the city school district. These responses, along with responses collected from parents attending the high school open house, the second source, produced the following categories: “a) educate to find jobs and be responsible citizens in the community, b) adjust subject content to meet the needs of the Individual Child, c) teachers put students before salary raises, d) teach kids.”

The third solicitation was from cards sent to over 1000 names on a mailing list received from the local Chamber of Commerce. Four responses were returned.

Additional combined responses. The remaining smaller categories collected from staff and community included “a) safe learning environment, b) equal opportunity, c) well rounded student and full potential, d) career guidance and goal setting, e) individualized education and preparation, f) academic issues, g) life-long learning, h) citizenship, i) college and employment preparation.”

Information from students. The homeroom period on November 10, 2000 served as the avenue to collect responses from students. A student spokesperson in a video production introduced the concept of creating mission statements. After showing the video, students responded by completing cards. Because of the potential of 1200 individual responses, a plan was formulated for sorting and analyzing. The student council was trained to work as a table group of five to six students. Their task was to sort

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the response cards by reaching a consensus on broad categories. Members of the Quality Steering Council assisted the table groups in the task.

After reviewing the categories, the Quality Steering Council decided that they could produce separate Vision and Mission statements. A subgroup comprised of four members used the category data to produce a draft Vision and draft Mission statement, which they presented to the Quality Steering Council at the January 23 meeting. The Vision statement was “Achieving Higher Success.” Some discussion revolved around the word “Higher” and the Vision was adjusted to “Achieving Highest Success.” The first draft of the mission stated: “The mission statement of the CHS community is to provide educational opportunities for learners in a safe and supportive environment.” The draft was amended to state “The Centennial High School Community is creating a high performing workforce in a safe, supportive, and challenging environment.”

The adjusted drafts of both the Vision and the Mission statements were presented to the staff during an in-service on February 1, 2001. Staff was given the opportunity to provide feedback and air concerns to the Quality Steering Council. One concern revolved around the “high performing workforce” phrase. Suggestions included a changing “workforce” to “community of learners” or to “workforce of students and staff.” Staff was asked for a preference of phrase through email communication. The final draft read

“The mission of Centennial High School is to create a high performing community of responsible learners and citizens in a safe, supportive, and challenging environment.” \(^{18}\)

A second concern involved the use of the word “highest” in the Vision statement. The suggestion was made to use the word “Higher.” After discussion with staff and within Quality Steering Council, consensus was reached to modify the Vision statement to read “Achieving Higher Success.” This change was emailed to the staff for feedback. No further comments or concerns were received from the staff about the modifications. \(^{19}\)

Students were solicited for feedback during a homeroom period. No results could be found.

The revised Mission statement stating “The mission of Centennial High School is to create a high performing community of responsible learners and citizens in a safe, supportive, and challenging environment,” and the revised Vision statement stating “Achieving Higher Success” were presented to the staff at an in-service meeting on April 4, 2001, allowing the opportunity to establish consensus. Also shared at that meeting was the review of the process that Quality Steering Council used to get to that point. Students were reintroduced to the Mission and Vision through a video presentation in homeroom. \(^{20}\) No changes were noted and the revised statements stood.


In Summary

This story shows the initial culture changing steps of identifying purpose by clarifying the school mission. While this story outlines the steps taken to create a mission, this story demonstrates how, even in its infancy, the Baldrige framework began to change procedure and introduce a more collaborative culture in the building. Mr. Cowles added that the introduction was a very calculated plan of deployment. Building leadership teams were trained. Teachers were trained by department, by grade level, then grade levels above and below within the first two years. This was the first time teachers had the opportunity to work on a school improvement initiative as a team. Mr. Cowles added that the real changes in the district were “greater collaboration, real change in principals as leaders, students better engaged, and better teacher acceptance of their roles as change agents.”

The themes found later in the study were just beginning to emerge here. This story shows the initial steps that brought about a cultural change, that is, the change in a procedure. In order for culture to change, a procedure change must become embedded in the group. At this point, the collaborative nature of the change was still just procedural, not a way of doing things, thus not a clear example of the culture change that would be seen later. But the establishment of purpose laid the groundwork.

This story also begins to show an attitude shift in the organization. The back and forth sharing of ideas between a small change process group doing the detail work and the large stakeholder group was beginnings to establish a way of doing things. This theme of collaborative teams will appear throughout the study.

21 Interview with Mr. Cowles, November 3, 2008. Interview.
The time frame for this process was, however, rather quick compared to later changes seen with Design Teams. This was likely due to the newness of the process and the structure of the organization at the time. The staff had really not experienced collaborative decision-making and may not have been comfortable or knowledgeable about questioning the process at that point. They themselves were just learning this new model. In later years, as the staff became more comfortable with the process, the timeframes shifted.

Culture change cannot occur unless the group forms new mental models and creates new ways of doing things. The mission/vision process showed the importance of collecting opinions from all stakeholders and sharing the results at each step of the process. This openness indicated a new way of thinking, an indication of what would become a new mental model for the organization.

Design Teams for School Improvement Issues

Introduction

This is the story of how the high school developed a process to identify and change issues that they believed were important to school improvement. The story focuses mainly on process change, but also outlines the changing values of the staff, the importance of whole group decisions, and the challenges of time.

Creating Design Teams

Training in Baldrige processes was in its infancy. In the fall of 2000, the entire high school staff attended a six hour training session to introduce quality techniques.
During the 2000-2001 school year, the first year of the initiative, the staff began using these quality tools to improve their classroom. Baldrige training with staff concentrated on classroom improvement methods such as creating mission statements, setting goals, and identifying areas for improvement. The staff, through Baldrige training sessions, was engaged in identifying areas that would improve student achievement, not only in their classroom but in some building processes that did not seem to be working. Since the Baldrige techniques could be used at different levels within the organization, the building’s three leadership teams began to adopt these ideas as they focused on building improvements. The Quality Steering Council’s first task was to develop a school vision and mission.

Like most schools, this school had some of those nagging issues that everyone wished could be changed but no one knew exactly how to go about it. The culture prior to the Baldrige Initiative included those elder, vocal staff members who set the tone for the building. Complaints were aired at department chair meetings. The principal listened, everyone left, and the next month the routine was repeated, not because the complaints were not important but because no process existed to make changes.22

In January, 2001, some building issues were being more formally discussed with leadership teams.23 For example, the department chairs and the Quality Steering Council were working to develop a first semester exam schedule. Because the Quality Steering Council was charged with planning the agenda for early release inservice time, the

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22 Interview with Mr. Hammer, November 20, 2008. Interview.

committee thought this was a valuable topic to discuss with the staff at the next early release in February, 2001. The department chair team shared their vision of a semester exam schedule at the February 1, 2001 early release. Some table discussion time was provided for staff to share their thoughts with their departments, then, additional information was gathered through the use of a survey.

The results of the survey showed twenty seven people preferred exams by period with only ten opting for the two hour exam choice. The results were split on the choices of limiting the number of exams per day to two instead of three. With limited responses, no clear decision could be reached. The group agreed that the current system was no longer favored but they were unclear as to the direction of change. The assistant principal suggested that the survey be modified and given to the staff again.24

Also during the January meetings, the Quality Steering Council identified the need to set aside time to work on “past and present initiatives.”25 What may have been happening was that the Baldrige Initiative was training the staff in how to identify needs and how to create a process for change. Those nagging issues that everyone complained about but no one could figure out how to fix were rising to the surface. In the Quality Steering Council minutes between January and March of 2001, lists of issues and improvements, and suggestions began appearing. Items included changing parent-teacher conference time, changing from a six week grading period to a nine week grading period, improving open house attendance, and training students in the Baldrige Initiative.


Sources of these issues could not be identified. While the issues were presented by two department chairs who served on the Quality Steering Council, the issues also seemed to be informal complaints and observations made by the staff and administration over the years. The six-to-nine week change, for example, had been bandied about for years. While the list of concerns seemed to be developing, a plan of attack was still not evident. The minutes from the February 13, 2001 Quality Steering Council meeting referred to the work time surrounding the discussion of this list as “Initiatives and the Anonymous Plan.” There did not seem to be a plan for resolving any of these issues.

Mr. Hammer, a high school teacher in the morning and District Quality Coordinator in the afternoon, was becoming increasingly concerned that these nagging issues could undermine the classroom application of the initiative. He felt that a fair enough number of teachers were having trouble accepting what they might do in the classroom with kids because they felt there was a bunch of stuff at the building level that could not be resolved. He believed that these had to be addressed. He brought this up with the Quality Steering Council and started to talk with them about the need to deal with these building level issues, because Mr. Hammer felt strongly that if these issues were not dealt with, then many of these teachers would not attempt any of the Baldrige tools in their classrooms. From this discussion came the idea of forming Design Teams, temporary groups formed specifically to identify, research, and create solutions to building issues.

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27 Interview with Mr. Hammer, November 20, 2008. Interview.
Things were all about to change in March of 2001 when the district was awarded an additional day for professional development from the state - referred to in the district as Waiver Day.\textsuperscript{28} The day would be dedicated to the creation of Design Teams. Since the staff in a building this size had never made decisions in such a way before, a detailed plan had to be formulated. Mr. Hammer used ideas and tools gleaned from Professor Shaw’s training folder, material from Bradley and Associates, the expertise of Jessica Williams, a Bradley trainer, and from Mr. English, a fellow teacher. He created the process and used tools such as nominal grouping technique, force field analysis, and matrix analysis (McClanahan & Wicks, 1993; Anderson, 1990). While Mr. Hammer’s process, compiled from a variety of sources, had not been used, he knew that “we couldn’t do it the way we’ve always done it before, it never worked, so we needed to have some good tools in order to make some decisions.”\textsuperscript{29}

In May 2001, on Waiver Day, the high school staff would hear a speaker from a local successful business involved with quality initiatives. The staff would use Mr. Hammer’s plan to create change at the building level by creating Design Teams.

Based on Baldrige principles (Shipley, 2000a), validating the need to change was an important first step. To start, the staff would brainstorm a list of items to improve within one year, a list that became known as the One Year List. They would also brainstorm a list of items to improve within five years, a Five Year List. Although the

\textsuperscript{28} Minutes from QSC meeting, March 13, 2001. Document.

\textsuperscript{29} Interview with Mr. Hammer, November 20, 2008. Interview.
Five Year List could not be ignored, Design Teams would focus on short term wins and work on selected issues from the one year improvement list.

The organization identified its own needs and created it own plan of improvement, reinforcing Garvin’s (1993) claim that this was how culture was changed. The planned process of identifying issues was the first developing theme in this study. Schein (2004) would say that culture change begins with a change in procedure. The Quality Coordinator believed that training the staff on how to make decisions and giving them the tools to change “really ended up being . . . a change in culture.”

Recruiting the pilot group

Running effective Design Teams would require facilitators to oversee the groups. Their job would entail the nuts and bolts of running a team, such as implementing the tools and developing the group dynamics. The Quality Steering Council, the leadership group responsible for professional development, would have been the likely group to be trained as facilitators, but they were busy working on the mission and vision statements, a process still new to them. Although the Quality Steering Council was facilitating the creation of the mission statement, they were not being trained on how to facilitate groups. Although the Quality Steering Council could assist with Design Team facilitation, Mr. Hammer wanted an additional group interested in Baldrige techniques.

There was another group meeting during this time period that was perfect to help facilitate the development of the Design Teams, a group called the Baldrige Support

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30 Interview with Mr. Hammer, November 20, 2008. Interview.
Group. This group was formed after the initial Baldrige training in the late fall of 2000 as a way for teachers to support each other as they incorporated the new Baldrige ideas into their classrooms. The group of approximately ten teachers had been meeting after school regularly for about three months when Mr. Hammer came calling in March 2001. These teachers were enthusiastic about the Baldrige ideals and also represented some of the developing teacher leaders in the building. The Baldrige Support Group was a natural pilot group to help develop the Design Team process, to fine tune procedures, and to be trained as Design Team facilitators. When asked to help, the group reluctantly agreed. As one support group member recalled, “I remember being upset because we had gone there to get support and all of a sudden we ended up being facilitators because we were the ones who showed the most interest.”

But Mr. Hammer convinced the group that their assistance was critical to the plan. The process he created had never been done with a large group and practice was needed with this small group.

Once this group had been recruited, Mr. Hammer shared his idea for forming the Design Teams with them. Mr. Hammer used the Baldrige Support Group to practice identifying a purpose for making change and creating a list of potential improvements. The Baldrige Support Group identified a purpose for change: Improve CHS. They then developed two open-ended questions for the staff to answer: (a) what things would you like to see changed at CHS by June 2002, and (b) what things would you like to see changed at CHS by June 2006? These became known as the One Year and Five Year Plans. The Baldrige Support Group then simulated a brainstorming session to answer the

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31 Interview with Ms. Montgomery, November 19, 2008. Interview.
two questions. This simulated the procedure that would be used with the staff to generate a more comprehensive list. Based on their own experience, the Support Group thought that the brainstorming should be done in groups so individuals could feed off of other’s ideas.\footnote{32}

During the month of April, formal and informal groups of staff were asked to brainstorm lists of issues that they believed needed to change in those time frames. Lists were generated from Quality Steering Council, Department Chairpersons, Baldrige Support Group, English Department, Math Department, Special Education Department, Science Department, Homeroom Committee, Library, Foreign Language Department, and the Art Department. A member of the Baldrige Support Group compiled the items from each group, combining repeated issues. Because the list was overwhelming, with 77 issues, the issues were placed in categories, but each issue was listed as a separate item (See Appendix). The list was reviewed by the Baldrige Support Group prior to Waiver Day to assure that the items were properly categorized.\footnote{33}

On April 30, 2001, the Support Group met to review the Waiver Day agenda and action steps and to participate in a practice run of setting up the Design Teams.\footnote{34} On the practice run, the support group created a list of nine issues, much like what was already being generated with the staff brainstorming lists. The next step was to choose which issues would be addressed as Design Teams. It was critical that the staff use the same

\footnote{32} Personal notes from Baldrige Support Group, March 2001. Participant observation.  
\footnote{33} The 1-year issue list. Archival Record.  
\footnote{34} Baldrige Support Group meeting notes, April 30, 2001 p 3-6. Participant observation.
criteria to choose which items would be addressed. The group needed to vote for the good of the group/goal/issue and not for their personal favorites. There needed to be an agreed-upon reason that an issue would improve CHS. The Baldrige Support Group created a list of criteria to match the goal of improving CHS. They felt that an issue for Design Teams should be “doable, affects people not building, affects all students, consistent with CIP, quick results, interdepartmental communication, more efficient and productive, consistent with best practices.” After a lengthy discussion of topics, the support group was able to summarize their thoughts into four criteria: “beneficial to all, align with goals, saves (wise and productive) teaching time, and makes a “real” change.” The final criteria did not exactly match the original list because the group took the liberty to reword and clarify the meaning behind some criteria.

What happened next may have been the most critical step in the successful buy-in of the Design Teams. Mr. Hammer had already formulated an agenda in his head about what tasks needed to be accomplished during Waiver Day. With only an early release and then Waiver Day, time was a major factor. If the teams were not chosen and started, it would set the process back another year. He suggested to the Support Group that they simply use the Support Group’s voting criteria with the staff. He viewed this as a time issue. With so much to accomplish on Waiver Day, already having the criteria would allow more time for Design Teams to work. However, the Support Group felt strongly

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37 Interview with Mr. Hammer, November 20, 2008. Interview.
that the development of the voting criteria was so critical to staff buy-in that the time should be spent to generate a staff list and that the May early release could be used to establish the voting criteria. The Support Group did not feel it represented the entire staff, and their discussion of the criteria had been so valuable to understanding what they were about that the time and attention given to the voting criteria was critical. Much of the Baldrige training encouraged group decision making and this group recognized that the entire staff had to be involved in this step. “We pretty much put our foot down” recalled a Support Group member.\textsuperscript{38} The classroom level training appeared to be resulting changes in the underlying assumptions of the organization.

After a 20 minute lively discussion between Mr. Hammer and the Support Group about staff buy-in, time frames, and importance of staff collaboration, a compromise was drawn to give the necessary time to the voting criteria. A plan had to be formulated to efficiently collect and determine voting criteria. This was a critical step in developing a collaborative process that would ultimately become culture changing. The teachers in the group became the key decision makers in the implementation of process. Although Mr. Hammer created the process, he had to accept modifications to the process. His role became trainer of facilitators instead of decision maker.

This scenario demonstrates the changing ideas from an administrator making decisions to a group taking responsibility for a decision. This was a new way of thinking in the organization and in many educational settings. It also shows the importance of taking the time to value the process. It would have been easy, because of the limitations of time, to just use the Support Group’s criteria, but to get the staff on board required

\textsuperscript{38} Interview with Ms. Montgomery, November 19, 2008. Interview.
stakeholder input. As the evidence will show, the staff results were much different from the smaller Support Group.

**Determining the Voting Criteria with the Staff**

The Baldrige Support Group’s recommendations were presented to the Quality Steering Council during their May 8, 2001 meeting. Tom, a Quality Steering Council member, and Mr. Hammer explained that the May 15 early release would be dedicated to creating a list of voting criteria.\(^39\) To accomplish this task, a detailed plan had to be made of how to efficiently determine voting criteria with a staff of 85. The decision was made to use smaller table teams instead of trying to create a list from one large group. The staff was divided into teams using a mixed pattern by birthday months with at least one Quality Steering Council member at each table. Quality Steering Council members acted as recorders. The staff generated a list of voting criteria in their small groups and then narrowed their list down to three criteria. Each group’s list was combined with all the other groups to create a larger summary voting criteria list. The staff collectively looked at the resulting summary criteria and discussed the criteria at their table. The criteria were clarified to ensure everyone was of the same understanding of meaning.

The criteria list was generated as a group, however, the vote to determine the most relevant criteria was done by each individual. Each staff member chose from the summary list what they felt were the four most important criteria. Within their four choices, each staff member ranked their chosen criteria according to importance, giving

a “4” to the most important, and a “1” to their least important. Each staff member’s votes were tallied at the table and used to generate the criteria list. The criteria with the top four scores became the voting criteria. The staff referred to this procedure as a nominal voting technique (Anderson, 1990; McClanahan & Wicks, 1993). As predicted by the Baldrige Support Group, the staff voting criteria differed from the support group. The categories were: involves the most students, teachers, and staff; do-able; measureable; and improves school climate.  

It is interesting to note that there was a deliberate effort to avoid pet project voting. Seating the group outside their immediate contact/work group and using voting criteria were two methods to try to halt this. Verbal reminders were also used. While this did not guarantee that people would resist voting for their pet projects, these methods served as tools to focus people on the issue of building wide improvement. Deliberate attention was also paid to clarifying the criteria and issue items.

Another concern was making sure the principal did not interfere. Imagine being a principal with a staff of 85, about to make decisions in a way that they have never done before. It was a big risk. The District Quality Coordinator and a veteran staff member spent much time behind closed doors with Mr. Lee assuring him that this would work.

The voting criteria procedure involved the entire group. Although not designed as a group building activity, it established group consensus. Each member had a voice and some compromise had to be made for the good of the group. This is an illustration of the

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40 Baldrige Support Group meeting notes. Participant observation.

41 Interview with Mr. Hammer, November 20, 2008. Interview.
changing mind set away from administrative decisions to decisions made by the group, which indicates culture shift in how things were done.

Deciding the Issues and Establishing Teams

Waiver Day, May 21, 2001. Waiver Day was a professional development day granted by the state. The meeting was held off-site at a local church.

With the voting criteria established at the May 15 inservice, the staff set out to decide which of the seventy-seven issues on the One Year List would be targeted for improvement teams. This involved complete participation of the staff. To begin, the entire One Year List was reviewed. The staff was given an opportunity to ask for any issue to be clarified. During this time, the facilitator reminded the staff that no judgments were to be made about an issue, only a clarification of what the issue meant. The next step was to choose issues. The procedure used to choose from the issue list was similar to the procedure used to determine voting criteria. Because the list was so large, with seventy-seven issues, the staff first narrowed down the choices. Using the voting criteria as a guide, the staff used the nominal voting technique (Anderson, 1990; McClanahan & Wicks, 1993) to rank their top 15 issues. The staff used the issue list to cast their votes. Quality Steering Council collected each person’s ranked list and tallied the scores. Once the top 15 issues were identified, this smaller list was presented to the staff. From these top fifteen items, another nominal vote was cast to determine the top six issues that would become the Design Teams. From the original list of seventy-seven, these six issues became the targets of building improvement:

1. Creating a semester exam schedule
2. Improving the interim reports

3. Changing from 6 to 9 week grading periods

4. Enforcing rules

5. Improving attendance procedures

6. Improving parent teacher conferences

Using a card, each staff member was then given the opportunity to choose the team on which they wanted to work. As a precaution, the staff was asked to list their top three choices. The Baldrige Support Group facilitators helped sort the staff into teams. With the exception of three staff members, everyone was placed on their first choice team. The teams were interdepartmental teams. The time from clarifying and voting on the issues to team placement took approximately three hours.

*Design team process start-up.* Members of the Baldrige Support Group were paired with a Quality Steering Council member and assigned to a group to help facilitate the first action steps of Design Teams. Each Design Team met in separate rooms at the meeting facility for approximately two hours. The teams were supplied with poster-paper, markers, and a laptop computer. The facilitator’s role was to guide the team through predetermined steps. The first task was to clarify the team’s mission. Discussion occurred around what exactly was meant by the issue, and why it was an issue. The team then discussed what a possible change might look like. A force field analysis (McClanahan & Wicks, 1993) was used to determine the feasibility of the change. When using the force field analysis, the team first created a list of drivers, those things that were do-able and could make the plan happen. They next created a list of barriers, those things that would

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42 Notes from inservice on May 21, 2001. Participant observation.
seem to prevent the change from working. Barriers represented the snags along the way that would have to be addressed.

The last step that day outlined the team’s next steps. At the end of the two hours, most teams had completed the steps through the force field analysis. At the end of the two hours, the entire group reconvened and each team was given a few minutes to report out to the rest of the staff on their progress. Hard copies of each team’s reports were prepared and distributed to all staff within two weeks.43

Quality Steering Council reviewed the evaluations of Waiver Day in their May 22, 2001 meeting.44 Most staff felt the force field analysis was helpful, everyone was engaged, and the facilitators did a good job. Staff frustrations indicated that there wasn’t enough time. Quality Steering Council further discussed the time issue, suggesting that some time be dedicated to Design Teams during the final exam schedule in June 2001, during the opening day of school in August, and during the September 2001 inservice day. As a result, all inservice dates for the 2001-2002 school year were devoted to Design Teams. Time allotted for Design Teams ranged from 35 minutes to 60 minutes for each of the five early release inservice days, and approximately 3 hours for the day-long September inservice.

During this year, the high school organization established a consistent procedure. The Design Team procedure worked so well that it would become a standard way of making building wide changes that affected the entire staff. This example shows the

43 “What we have done at CHS with Design teams” documents. Document.

44 Minutes from QSC meeting. Document.
beginning of a procedure that would become embedded in the culture and represents the first steps toward culture change.

Establishing Design Teams involved the collaborative input of the entire staff. The staff was open to letting Mr. Hammer guide them through the process but not let him make decisions. As a veteran staff, they also saw this as an opportunity to make changes that had been talked about for many years. Since the issues were generated by staff, they felt they had a stake in the changes.

This once again speaks to the theme of time. An engaged staff wanted more time to work. The district leadership, by devoting the time to work, demonstrated their commitment to change. Devoting the entire inservice schedule to Design Teams was a major paradigm shift. In the past, these inservice times were given to department meetings or to an outside speaker/consultant for a flavor of the month inservice.

The goal was to put the Design Teams to bed at the close of the 2001-2002 school year and this seemed like a reasonable goal. The data also indicated early that some changes in thinking were occurring which indicated some values were beginning to change. In the Quality Steering Council minutes from October 23, 2001, a ten minute open discussion was noted about how building decisions were made. If Design Teams recommended a change, would the administration permit the change? No clear conclusion was drawn. This seems to indicate that while the administration made some decisions, there was a question as to how Design Team changes would be handled.45

For the next school year, 2001-2002, each Design Team continued to work on their improvement plans. Teams surveyed, collected data, and made proposals for change. Because each team had different missions, their plans had slightly different looks. As the year went along, not all teams were at the same stage, either. The attendance committee, as early as October 2001, had strayed from their real mission and the facilitator expressed concern about getting them back on track.⁴⁶

The grading term policy team was a battle ground with two polarized camps: keep the 6-weeks grading period or change to a 9-weeks grading period. They had been able to quickly gather research from other districts. Because they were so polarized, they felt they could do nothing more than to call for a vote. Their goal was to have a voting matrix ready for the staff by December 5, 2001. The group’s tight time schedule was also being driven by school board policy if a change was to be made for the following school year. The voting eventually occurred at the January 31, 2002 early release. The voting results changed the grading period from a six weeks grading period to a nine weeks grading period. A resolution had finally occurred for an issue that had been bantered around for years.⁴⁷

The only other Design Team ready for closure was the group working to revise the interim reporting procedure. This group recommended that the current system of hand writing interims for students in danger of failure was cumbersome and did not include all students. They recommended that all students should receive a computerized progress


report in all of their classes. They presented their plan at the March 20, 2002 inservice, along with a request to train the staff on the how to enter reports using the computer grading program. The other teams were still in the planning stages. Only updates were ready for the March inservice from these committees: conferences, exam schedule, attendance, and enforcing the rules teams.48

Even with these differences, some consistencies grew out of the meetings. A certain amount of trust was needed for the staff to accept another team’s plan. The trust was built with consistencies of procedure. As a team’s plans for change began to materialize, one very important step along the way was to share the developing plan and ask the staff for input. At each inservice meeting, the teams reported on their findings and their draft plans. Staff members were given the opportunity to give suggestions, ask questions, or raise concerns. All issues were addressed as the team proceeded. The “report-out” process became a standard agenda item at inservice meetings. The staff expected this procedure would be followed. This was an example of a culture change as a process becomes embedded. The basic assumption of how things were done was changing into the way things actually were done. As Ms. Montgomery explained:

Even in Design Teams, we kept bringing stuff back and bringing stuff back. We think we’ve thought of everything and somebody would bring something up. Yes, we thought of that and here’s what we decided or no we hadn’t thought of that, we’ll research it. By the time people voted they felt like they had heard every single thing. I’m just speaking about mine. But because I knew what was

happening in my group that I really trusted it, that that was what was happening in the other groups and I accepted what their decision was.\textsuperscript{49}

The theme of amount of time needed for a collaborative decision to be made was rising to the surface here again. One administrator can mandate change quickly. But when the whole group is involved, acting in the best interest of all involved, it takes a lot more time than expected. The group was trying to make sound decisions, based on as much data as they could collect and analyze. Ms. Montgomery added that the Design Team process added credibility . . . staff members began to trust each other and then they could put a group of 10-12 staff members together and trust that they would do research, that they would make sure that they would get your feedback through out the process, so when they finally come to a plan or idea, that it isn’t just I read it in a book somewhere kind of thing. I felt that over the last several year, there was a lot more trust in the building and I think that came through: working together, working in team, have successes, feeling like I was listened to, even if it wasn’t my choice.\textsuperscript{50}

The goal of being finished at the end of the school year was reasonable in the beginning, however, the reality of making changes was setting in. Some group’s changes were quick and other groups could not come to clear conclusions. Quickly the groups found themselves in different places in the process. To add to the time factor, when a

\textsuperscript{49} Interview with Ms. Montgomery, November 19, 2008. Interview.

\textsuperscript{50} Interview with Mr. Hammer, November 20, 2008. Interview.
group was ready to present proposed changes, they needed to use inservice time for presentation and voting, taking time away from the other Design Teams.

_Trying to end._ The staff and teams started the process thinking they would be finished in one year, this is what really happened. The ending date goals were stretched out into the 2002-2003 school year. The grading term was changed from six to nine weeks and plans were made to monitor signs of problems with students during the extended time, and to monitor attendance issues. The Interim team’s plan was presented and approved at the March 20, 2002 inservice. Staff training dates for the computer entry process were scheduled for the fall inservice day as no time was available at any inservice for the remainder of the 2001-2002 school year. The Conference team gave their report at the May 2002 early release, but some modifications still remained. Because the conference schedule involved contractual changes, additional time was needed to complete the plan.

The Exam Schedule team reported in March that they would need forty minutes for presentation on their proposal and for a matrix analysis voting. The report was postponed until Waiver Day in May 2002. At that meeting, the staff voted overwhelmingly to accept the new semester exam schedule. The Exam Schedule team’s job in the following school year then became to communicate to staff, parents, and students the expectations of the schedule.

The Attendance Team and the Enforcing Rules Team continued with their frustrations. The issue for both teams was too vague, and both teams met with some resistance by administration. These teams continued to meet into the 2002-2003 school year, but neither committee’s work resulted in any changes.
The dilemma that was created at the end of the first year was that the teams were all at different stages. Some team’s plans were approved, some team’s plans were still in the works, and some teams were without clear plans. The teams that had resolved their issues worked to clean up the plans and finalize the process. This led to some frustration for the teams that essentially had little remaining tasks yet still met scheduled inservice times.

Adding to the Design Team resolution factor was the drastic cut in meeting time for Design Teams in the 2002-2003 school year. The inservice schedule for the 2001-2002 school year included five early release in-services meetings, one fall full day inservice (Fair Day) and one full day spring in-service (Waiver Day). While all in-service days during 2001-2002 were devoted to Design Teams, the emphasis during 2002-2003 shifted to the development of department initiatives. Design Teams were now given two hours each on the full day in-service and scheduled for only two of the five inservice days. Most teams were at the monitoring stage of their changes at this point. The decrease in time added to the difficulty at which the teams were brought to closure.

Adding to the changes in the 2002-2003 school year, a new principal, Mr. Collins, was hired for the 2002-2003 school year. In October, 2002, he shared his plan with the Quality Steering Council to help direct Design Team focus.51 He devised an elaborate flowchart of goals, strategies, measures, and action plans. The elaborate flow chart of goals, strategies, measures, and action plans could only be located for the Interim Design Team as he met with their team’s facilitator first. While Mr. Collins met with each

facilitator to discuss the goals and outcomes of each Design Team, the flow charts could not be found for the other teams. This shows how the process and the group thinking were embedded in culture. The principal had a different way of organizing the Design Teams, but the teams were already doing their own thing; process established.

The plan to bring closure to Design Teams was finally found in the March 11, 2003 Quality Steering Council minutes. The entry commented on the need for teams to gather and summarize their data and to come up with a plan on who would continue to monitor their progress. Each Design Team presented its findings at the May 2003 one hour inservice and identified who would remain vigilant as the “chief worrier” over their plan. Because the changes with some teams still required some monitoring, a person or a few people were designated to keep track of the progress and to answer any questions that later arose. These people were called the “chief worriers” and they acted as the go-to person for later questions.

Four of the six teams were successful in making positive changes. Two teams, the Improving Attendance Procedures team and the Enforcing the Rules team, were unable to make changes. Although the Enforcing the Rules team created a discipline grid for handling discipline matters more consistently, they were unable to gain buy in from a key administrator. The Enforcing the Rules team felt that most of their concerns were too large, abstract, or beyond their control.

In the final steps that day, the staff voted on whether they would like to have Design Teams again. The results were 71% in favor of running Design Teams again.

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They were also asked to comment on “what worked well for us” and “what could be improved next time.”

Some comments on “what worked well for us” included:

1. Recognized all points of view
2. Consensus building
3. Shared leadership responsibilities
4. We had the opportunity to work with staff members from outside our departments
5. Nothing we accomplished made anyone mad
6. Used data

Some comments on “what could be improved next time” included:

1. Create attainable goals (focused), narrow, specific, realizable
2. We need authority to make change
3. Stop when we’re done
4. Where do we go with recommendations that we felt weren’t part of our goal?
5. Our issues were too large. A design team needs to have a clear focus.

One final act occurred at the December 2003 inservice, well beyond the expected one-year timeline for Design Teams. The staff enjoyed a celebration of their hard work. Mr. Collins provided the staff with a cake, adorned with six candles, one for each team.

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The remaining inservice dates for the 2003-2004 were reserved for department issues such as writing across the curriculum and curriculum alignment.

The extended timeline for the teams and the commitment by the administration to take the time allowed the process to develop. If the Design Teams were over at the end of one year, as was the intention, the shift in thinking and development of the process may never have occurred. Making cultural shifts in thinking takes time and the organization was given time to complete what they started.

Overall, the response to Design Teams was positive. While each team worked on separate issues, a process developed that would be tested in the second round. In general, the process was:

1. Set a timeline
2. Compile a list of issues
3. Determine the voting criteria
4. Identify the top issues through nominal voting
5. Divide the staff into self-selected groups
6. Clarify the goal or mission of the team
7. Identify the drivers and barriers
8. Survey necessary stakeholders, collect data
9. Draft a proposal
10. Share with stakeholders (staff)
11. Gather input from staff
12. Re-work the proposal
13. Share (report-out) with staff until all issues about proposal are satisfied (within reason)

14. Vote to change

15. Implement the plan/change or decide that no change can be made

16. Assign chief worriers and dissolve the team

**Round 2 Design Teams.**

Evidence of culture change exists when processes become embedded (Schein, 2004). Because response to the Design Team process was positive and because the building’s staff felt that issues remained, the organization of Design Teams – Round Two began. Two members of the Quality Steering Council gathered and organized the materials from Round 1 in preparation to begin Round 2. Because the District Quality Coordinator had retired, a Quality Steering Council member volunteered to act as the Design Team Coordinator. Her job was to organize the Design Teams. Recognition that the building was changing was reflected in an address given to the staff at the beginning of Round 2 voting at the May 11, 2004 inservice: “Three years and a Level 3 Baldrige Award of Excellence later, our school climate has changed.”

The process used to begin Round 2 was the same as that followed the first time. Between March 9, 2004 and April 13, 2004, a new brainstorm list of fifty-eight issues was generated through department meetings. At an inservice on May 11, 2004, the Design Team Coordinator reviewed the Round 1 procedures, reinforced the positive

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changes that were made in Round 1 and acknowledged frustrations. “It’s time for Round 2. I know that for some of you that’s pretty exciting stuff and for others this causes some frustration.”  

Because the staff understood the process from the first round, to expedite the development of voting criteria the staff was asked to bring three ideas with them to the inservice meeting on May 11, 2004. The voting criteria were established during the May 11 inservice using the same procedure from Round 1: small group list generation, compiling results of the small groups, then a nominal voting technique. Although the staff revisited the voting criteria from Round 1, the Round 2 voting criteria were different, suggesting a change in values. The new voting criteria were: (a) do-able; (b) improves student achievement, academic performance and learning; (c) improves morale; and (d) impacts or improves the most students, teachers, and staff. After criteria were established, the Issue List was presented to the staff for review prior to the three hour May 30, 2004 Waiver Day inservice.

The list was again presented at the May 30, 2004 Waiver Day. An hour was scheduled on the agenda to review and clarify the list, then to nominally vote for the top fifteen issues. From this shorter list, seven new issues rose to the top and became the new Design Teams:

1. Creating a resource of best practices for reluctant learners
2. Incorporating the FISH philosophy (Lundin, Paul, & Christensen, 2000)

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3. Restructuring the school day

4. Establishing an academic integrity policy

5. Identifying “at-risk” students

6. Modifying the grade scale

7. Building and grounds improvements\(^{59}\)

Fifteen minutes were scheduled for team sign-up. An additional hour was scheduled for preliminary team work, that is, to clarify purpose, establish team roles, identify drivers and barriers, and develop the action plans for the next steps. A fifteen minute report out time was scheduled for the end of the time.

Several interesting developments occurred during this meeting and this round that addressed the developing culture as it related to Design teams.

“Cross the ramp off the list.” The first development concerned one issue that appeared on the brainstorm list. The vocational department identified the need for a ramp to be installed over a set of steps that would provide easier access to three rooms in their wing of the building. After the list was presented on May 11, a teacher affected by this issue began lobbying people to vote on this item. Within several days, the administration and the Quality Steering Council heard of the lobbying. The principal discussed with the teacher that there were other ways to take care of this particular issue and to remember the voting criteria. The Design Team Coordinator also discussed with the person her concern about campaigning for an issue and that if the issue was important to the staff and met the criteria, the issue would rise to the surface on its own. An underlying

\(^{59}\) Design teams notes. Document.
assumption about voting for issues was that personal emotion was not a reason for voting, hence the creation of voting criteria.

During clarification of the issues on Waiver Day, May 30, 2004, the concerned teacher stood up and passionately lobbied for the need for the ramp to the staff. The Coordinator quickly reminded the group that they should be mindful of the voting criteria and if this issue fit the criteria, they should vote appropriately, but they should be mindful of voting for personal reasons. The principal, Mr. Collins, then stepped forward and said, “We have other ways to address this item, I think we should cross this item off the list.” The staff immediately took offense to eliminating anything from the list. The staff, stunned by such a suggestion, became agitated. Low rumbles and murmurs could be heard among louder comments. The Design Team Coordinator, caught a bit off guard by the principal’s action, was speechless for a few moments. She was not prepared for this snafu. The scene had the potential to reach chaos. Established and understood in Round 1 was the idea that the list could have personal issues and the voting criteria would eliminate such issues from becoming Design Teams. Crossing off an item at this point would violate the integrity of the process. The List represented a voice.

Upon gaining her composure, the Design Team Coordinator brought the crowd to order and explained to the principal, in front of the staff, that removing an item was not an option. Going back to the item, she asked if there were any other clarifications about the ramp issue. Other teachers then began to speak up about the ramp issue and about other building issues in the same category. The ramp, it seemed, was a symbol of some

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60 Field notes – Design Team facilitator comments. Participant observation.
other underlying building concerns. After some lively but orderly discussion from staff members about similar issues on the list, someone suggested that the similar items of concern be joined into one larger category and listed as building and grounds related issues. The staff agreed to the change and the cluster was voted in as a Design Team.

This example shows the integrity of the process. The issue could not be crossed off, as the principal suggested, and that the issue would either rise or fall based on the voting criteria. The example also shows the value of group discussion and the flexibility of the group to make modifications, as long as the entire group agreed. Although the ramp was too narrow of an issue, when the other building issues were added, the category then became valuable as a Design Team. The cultural change of group-led decisions instead of administrator driven change was shown by the refusal to allow the principal to remove an item.

Another piece of evidence that the Design Team process was becoming an embedded part of culture as an accepted process was the speed at which the teams began work. At the May 30, 2004, Waiver Day inservice, time was built into the schedule for the groups to begin work. The Design Teams got right to work. Quality Steering Council members and Baldrige Support Group members were not used this time; leadership was established within the team. Each team elected a facilitator from within the group, clarified the mission/goal of the team, created a list of drivers and barriers, and developed their first action plans. An hour and 15 minutes was scheduled for team work, with time
included at the end of the inservice for each team to provide a short report out of their progress.\textsuperscript{61}

\textit{Lessons of time.} With a better understanding of the time required to collect, analyze, and create plans, the timeline for Round 2 completion was stretched to two years, allowing the first year for study, and the second year for deployment.\textsuperscript{62} The inservice schedule used for both years was similar to the 2002-2003 schedule. Two three-hour blocks of time were set for the fall and the spring inservice full days. Two early release inservice meetings provided an hour and fifteen minutes each. The teams decided at the end of the 2005 school year, the halfway point, to meet during the last teacher work day for an hour and a half to plan for the following year. During 2005-2006, the teams met for the same amount of time, but the distribution of was a bit different. The two three-hour inservice meetings were both in the fall, as well as one of the hour and a half early release periods. The other early release was in May, 2006. In both years the departments received the other allotted times.

For the two school years of Round 2, the Design Teams met, following the same process developed in Round 1. Minutes from the Quality Steering Council meeting on September 13, 2005, half way through the timeline, showed that “much work was done in May, 2005 on Waiver Day” and that the teams were progressing nicely with their plans.\textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{61} Personal notes/communication of Coordinator. Participant observation.

\textsuperscript{62} QSC update, February 8, 2005. Document.

\textsuperscript{63} Minutes from the QSC meeting on September 13, 2005. Document.
The Identifying “At-risk” Students team was streamlining a new IAT process. The Best Practices for Reluctant Learners team was developing a manual of interventions and resources for helping students. The FISH committee continued to work on social events and implementation of the FISH philosophy with both students and staff. The Academic Integrity team had developed a new policy and was soliciting input from parents, staff, and students. The Building and Grounds team had completed a list of recommendations and looked forward to meeting with the district’s new Business Manager. The Grade Scale team had developed a plan that needed staff input. Their plan would eventually require the vote of the staff. The Restructuring the School Day team had discovered that “block scheduling did not seem to fit us at this time” and continued to investigate ways to give students more scheduling options.64

Lessons from the past: end when you’re done. As the Quality Steering Council reviewed the results of the November 2005 inservice, two concerns were discussed.65 One concern was brought up about how to end design teams, a lesson learned from Round 1. Another concern that was becoming apparent was that the teams created changes that required different types of staff acceptance. Some teams had created a product for optional use and not requiring a staff vote, others had developed policy or procedural change that needed consensus from the staff, and others had developed changes that would require overwhelming support by the staff. In Round 1, two teams required a vote by the staff by matrix analysis, resulting in overwhelming approval. Other

64 Minutes from QSC meeting, September 13, 2005. Document.

changes had been presented and reworked to the entire staff satisfaction without the cumbersome matrix voting. Quality Steering Council felt that some consistent procedure was needed to address different types of changes that may occur in the second round.

The following decision was made regarding the finished product of the teams. If a team’s end result was a resource that was recommended for use, but optional, then the team only needed time to present their information and make recommendations to the staff. No voting for acceptance was necessary. This was the case for the Reluctant Learners team, who produced a resource package of websites, activities, and suggestions about what to do with students who was not working up to their potential. No voting was needed and the team presented every staff member with a copy.

If a team produced a change in procedure that was expected to be followed by the staff or if the team was recommending a policy change, then the change would require a vote. Discussion centered on the complexity of the issue and how voting would best reflect the true feelings of the staff. Two methods would be chosen, a hand vote for consensus and a matrix analysis for more complex issues.

When voting, a change would be made if 80% of the staff voted in favor of change. If the vote was less than 80%, then the change would go to a matrix analysis vote. Difficult items with multiple issues would also be deferred to a matrix analysis. In either case, this would require the team to identify salient points and to identify areas that needed further clarification. The matrix vote limit was also set at 80%.  

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The Identifying the “At Risk” Student team revised the Intervention Assistance team policy. Their information and changes had been shared with the entire staff throughout the Design Team process. No clarification or issues remained on the voting day. They took a hand vote, with 100% of the staff voting for the change.67

This 80% decision was quickly put to the test with the Design Team working on the Grade Scale/Quality Points issue. The situation further demonstrated the developing process of staff involvement in decision making. A decision on whether to leave the grade scale quality points as it was or to change the quality points awarded at each letter grade was the matter at hand. The team itself was split between the benefits and drawbacks of either method. A meeting was held to share with staff the group’s list of plusses and minuses of each choice and to allow for discussion and questions.68 The design team used information gathered at this meeting along with their own collected data to develop a list of categories to use in the matrix. The categories represented the identified reasons that a staff member would use to change the scale or to leave the scale the same. The team referred to them as critical issues and they were: (a) fairly and accurately reflects the performance of most students, (b) parental concerns, (c) scholarship opportunities, (d) course/teacher selection (point mongers), (e) and user friendly. The group felt that not all critical issues carried the same weight in matrix analysis and these weights had to be determined. The team decided that the entire staff

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67 Notes from an inservice March 30, 2006 inservice. Participant observation.

had to decide the weighting system, similar to what happened with voting criteria. The team created a handout to explain the system:

You will find five critical issues that summarize the major topics that we kept coming back to during our design team meetings as well as in full faculty discussions. The matrix analysis requires us to vote between “change” or “no change” based on a set of critical issues. The issues carry weight. We must determine the weight of the critical issues.\(^{69}\)

The criteria issue weights were established using an electronic survey. The March 30, 2006 inservice was dedicated to the matrix voting of the issue. The staff was grouped into small table teams with a Quality Steering Council facilitator to help clarify procedure and tally votes. The results of the voting were: 54% to keep the current system (no change) and 46% for the proposed change.\(^{70}\) These results were deemed too close to change. Many members of the staff felt it was “great to have this [opportunity] even if the result was to not have the change.” Other comments included “the Design Team deserves praise for faithfully following through with the process.”\(^{71}\) The staff learned that change was not always the end result of a Design Team. The role of the team was to collect as much data as possible to allow the staff to make an informed data-driven decision. The voting brought closure to this team. They had met their goal.


\(^{70}\) Minutes from QSC meeting, April 4, 2006. Document.

\(^{71}\) Minutes from QSC meeting, April 4, 2006. Document.
The embedded collaborative process was demonstrated here again. The Grade Scale/Quality Points team worked together with the staff to uncover hidden concerns to changing how grade points were calculated. In the end, a new system was not necessarily better than what was already in place. Each side had several issues of which appeared to carry different levels of importance. As with the six- to nine- weeks change team, this team also found itself polarized. Unlike in Round 1, the team did not decide the weights for the critical issues, they let the staff determine those.

A clear procedure was being repeated for the Design Teams in Round 2. The need to establish clear purpose for voting as well as to have the entire group vote was consistent with the procedures established in Round 1. This is beyond Schein’s level 2 culture change of basic underlying assumptions – what we say we do is not always what we do to Schein’s level 3 culture change – the values of the organization had changed (Schein, 2004). This was just the way things were done, demonstrating an example of a cultural shift. In the past, an administrator or a committee would have just made the decision.

The other teams were finishing up their plans as well. The Reluctant Learners team was putting the finishing touches on their resource packet with plans to distribute at the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year. The FISH team continued to plan outings. The Academic Integrity team was piloting their new plan. The Restructuring the School Day team planned to implement a Zero period the following year. They continued to look at possible day schedule changes but were finding that none rose to the top. The Building

and Grounds team had a plan for room renumbering. The goal was to put the Design Teams to bed on the Fair Day Inservice, 2006.

The lessons learned from Round 1 were evident in the second round. Beginning with the voting criteria, the staff recognized that an issue had to be specific enough to be do-able. The staff voted on issues that were specific allowing the teams to set goals and drivers/barriers quickly. Because the teams were familiar with a process of team work, they were able to move forward quickly. The staff also learned to stop when they met the goal of the team, even if that meant that no change happened.

Overall, the process from Round 1 was followed in Round 2. Clarity of procedures was evident, but there was a definite process taking shape. Important decisions that affected staff and students were being made with input from the entire staff and other stakeholders.

Summary

This story demonstrates the development of a process that became the way the organization made changes, representing a cultural shift. The importance of whole group decision making on issues that impact the whole group was also evident in the change procedures. The seemingly personal agenda that presented itself in Round 2 speaks to the integrity of the process. No issue could be crossed off, but no issues should be campaigned for brazenly, hence the importance of establishing purpose, via voting criteria, to vote for changes. The cycle of research then report out process allowed every member’s voice to be heard and every concern to be addressed, prior to any change. The
procedure represents a shift in values of the organization from administrator-led to group
decision making based on data.

Changes did not happen over night, and they took longer than planned, as
predicted by Kotter (1995). The district and the building invested in the time to allow this
type of decision making to take place. The timeline for Round 2 became tighter because
the process was established. The system of decision making had changed. This process
was soon tested with another issue.

The Room Change

Introduction

At the beginning of the Baldrige in Education implementation, the staff operated
under a traditional hierarchy, mainly departmentalized with administrators making most
of the school-wide changes. As part of the building level improvement plan, the high
school formed Design Teams to identify and resolve issues that would improve the
environment for the staff and students. These teams involved all staff members serving
on a team of their choosing, giving them the opportunity to become the decision makers
in building change processes. Using the Design Team philosophy, the staff worked
through the development of a process to systematically resolve issues of change.

The staff was no longer departmentalized, as teams were interdisciplinary. The
hierarchy that once existed in the building had changed. The administration had
relinquished control of many decisions and assisted the teams without interfering with the
decision making process. Staff members worked collaboratively as teams developed and
got to know each other well. Leaders developed among the staff. Teachers took their role
of participants of change very seriously. They owned a workable, successful process of change.

The Situation

During the second round of Design Teams, the staff found themselves wrestling with an issue that would validate culture change. In January, 2005, the principal began an effort to correct a room allocation problem. Mr. May, who previously held the position of assistant principal, had now assumed the role of principal. During his tenure as assistant principal he became frustrated with two recurring problems as he built the master schedule. He had to make decisions about scheduling that “were not for the right reasons.”73 Two departments, Special Education and Science, suffered from limited space and courses were sacrificed because of the lack of room availability. When Mr. May became the principal, he decided to rectify the situation by giving the Special Education teachers their own rooms and by giving the Science Department an additional room.

The decision to look for room reassignments addresses the theme of defining purpose. The principal had identified a need that was supported by the Science department and the Special Education department.

With course offerings growing and distribution of students changing, classroom space was at a premium. Because no spare rooms in the building existed, these changes were certain to impact other departments. Mr. May first approached the Special Education Department. Their rooms were located next to the Art Department rooms and when the Art Department chair heard of the possible changes, she went directly to the

73 Interview with Mr. May, July 28, 2008. Interview.
principal with her thoughts. She saw it as an opportunity to relocate her rooms into a more efficient plan. After doing some brainstorming of wishes, Mr. May went to the mechanical drawing and design teacher to ask him to create a drawing of what the room layout would look like. According to Mr. May he came up with “a terrific plan for how to divvy up that space”74 Mr. May believed he had just taken care of the Special Education problem and in the process made the Art Department happy.

During this time the Math Department chair saw the preliminary plans and took the opportunity to resolve a long-standing issue in her department. “I wrote down, every single year on the end of the year report, that a need or a concern for us was that the math department was split into two different hallways. But then nothing ever happened. I just wrote it down every year, with no hope of anything ever changing unless we got a new building.” She worked with several teachers who would be impacted by her proposed changes to devise a plan to move the math department. Ms. Montgomery said “people were pretty flexible” with the out of the box thinking and a plan for moving their department was added to the draft.75

This is an excellent example of how the collaborative culture had developed over the few years of the Baldrige initiative. The principal worked in collaboration with staff members to come up with a plan. His main goal was to give the special education teachers rooms. By a collaborative effort of the people in those departments that were impacted, the plan was workable and better than what may have been if just the principal mandated a change.

74 Interview with Mr. May, July 28, 2008. Interview.

75 Interview with Ms. Montgomery, November 19, 2008. Interview.
The next step was to find a science room. This would prove to be a little more challenging as there was no clear solution to adding a science room. One criterion for the new room was the need for running water. The new science room needed water, leaving two options: plumb a room or find a room already equipped. The principal decided to begin a preliminary research by checking out rooms, taking notes, and asking questions, a behavior that was out of the ordinary for him. Because most of the staff was unaware of his pending changes, his actions appeared to the staff to be snooping around, and staff members became suspicious.

Mr. May spent about two weeks looking over potential plans. As these weeks wore on, the Design Team Coordinator, also a member of the science department, found herself fielding questions and concerns from several people who could be impacted by the room changes. On several occasions she was accosted in her lab and asked to explain what she knew. To them, the appearance that the principal was making decisions without the input of the staff violated the way things were done. “He’s not following the process” could be heard echoing down the halls.

The Design Team Coordinator approached Mr. May, who was unaware of the unrest he was causing, and filled him in about the situation she was experiencing. He explained that he had some plans in the works and had shared those plans with the concerned teachers by telling them, “This is what I found so far, keep looking and if you have a better plan I am willing to listen.”

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76 Interview with Mr. May, July 28, 2008. Interview.
Part of the dynamic of the situation was that several teachers impacted by the change were reluctant to have a conversation with the principal. Unlike other decisions being made in the building at the time, this decision had not been assigned to a committee. As other departments learned of the impending change, they began to talk among each other. If rooms were being moved, they had some ideas for their own department and they wanted input. They also felt strongly that a team should be making this decision. That after all, was “how we do things around here!”

The Resolution

The end of this unrest came when two department chairs and the Design Team Coordinator met with the principal to discuss their concerns. A teacher involved in the meeting said she “felt empowered that we could talk to Mr. May and say just so you know this isn’t working, here’s what we think could make it better.”77

The main point of the meeting was to express a concern that these changes impacting many staff were not being made by a team. The meeting lasted approximately an hour and during that time the principal explained how he was trying to correct a room distribution problem and that he was merely trying to put a plan together. He planned to share the plan with department chairs. He also added that the people directly involved had seen the plan. The teachers acknowledged his actions but felt that a move such as this should be made by committee where other ideas and other room changes could be discussed. For example, the math department chair saw this as an opportunity to move all

77 Interview with Ms. Montgomery, November 19, 2008. Interview.
of her rooms together. These ideas were not found in the present plans. At the end of the meeting, the group reached an agreement that the department chair committee would be the best group to evaluate and revise the room changes Mr. May had already started. The principal expressed that he had every intention of turning over his research to a committee but he couldn’t decide which of the committees working at the time was best equipped to do it. He thought since he had “caused all the trouble in the first place” that he should at least do the legwork and devise the first plan.\textsuperscript{78}

At the end of this meeting this small group agreed that the best committee to handle the details of the room changes would be the department chair team. Since each department had a representative, this would assure that information was disseminated out to all staff members through their departments. Ms. Montgomery did not think this type of meeting would have been possible without the collaborative culture that had developed during those earlier years.\textsuperscript{79}

In March of 2005, the department chairs met. The plan “was done in a regular department meeting, a specially called department meeting, and then the subsequent regular department chair meeting and at that point we were done. Three meetings.”\textsuperscript{80} The speed at which the plan was finalized may have been the result of Mr. May’s work on many drafts prior to the involvement of department chairs. Each time someone suggested

\textsuperscript{78} Interview with Mr. May, July 28, 2008. Interview.

\textsuperscript{79} Interview with Ms. Montgomery, November 19, 2008. Interview.

\textsuperscript{80} Interview with Mr. May, July 28, 2008. Interview.
a room change, he tweaked his plan. Many bugs had been worked out by the time the department chairs got busy on the final version.

Part of the concern by staff was that the principal seemed to be working against an already established procedure. Once a group was assigned to handle the decision-making, which put things back into alignment with the established culture, the issue was handled quickly, efficiently, and with acceptance. Ms. Montgomery said “people knew to trust the process.”81 The process had been followed, teachers had a say in the change, a team worked in collaboration with the staff to produce the best plan, and order was restored.

In Conclusion

This research shows that given an appropriate amount of time, an organization could create processes and systems that change culture. The Baldrige in Education model guided the organization by helping them shape their own brand of quality. The processes developed throughout the six years bounded in this case study, but evidence of culture change could be seen as early as two years in. To create the highest level of change, the organization continued to develop a process of making changes that would become “the way things were done.”

With the guidance of the Quality Coordinator, the organization used a pilot process that established their school’s purpose by defining their mission and vision. As the classroom teachers were trained, they became open to the opportunities to make some building level improvements. The creation and running of Design Teams was

81 Interview with Ms. Montgomery, November 19, 2008. Interview.
responsible for the collaborative group culture that developed in the building. By using
voting criteria to decide important change issues, the staff further embedded the values of
group decision making and clarity of purpose when making changes.

The embedded culture change was best seen in the decision to move rooms. Because changes like these were now done with teams, when an administrator was
perceived as making his own decision, the group insisted that the established way be
followed. The group, well trained in collaborative group decision making, valued their
role as change agents. They expected the room decision to be made with the trusted
process they had created. They did indeed “need a Design Team for that.”
CHAPTER V

Summary and Discussion

Introduction

To accommodate the reader, Chapter V restates the research questions and reviews the methodology used in this study. A summary of the research and conclusions drawn from the research are also discussed in this chapter. Limitations of the study and recommendations for further research are also discussed.

Statement of the Research Question

As stated in Chapter I, this study is an ethnographic case study of one high school’s implementation of the Baldrige in Education school improvement model. This case study concentrates on the story of how one high school implemented the model. This study also describes the development of key processes that changed how the organization made improvements. Three research questions were pursued: (1) What processes changed during the implementation of the school improvement model? (2) What role did team building and collaboration play in effecting change? (3) What evidence existed to show the success of the school improvement process? Using information collected over a six year period, this case study triangulated data collected from documents, archival records, participant observer notes, and interviews, searching for common threads that led to culture change.
Review of the Methodology

This case study focuses on one high school over a six year period. Because the study falls within the parameters of ethnography, the main sources of data were participant observer notes, archival records, and documents. I also interviewed four individuals: a teacher who later became an administrator, two administrators, and a teacher directly involved in the process. Interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes and were used to triangulate data and fill in missing information needed to develop the story of change. The data were analyzed to search for common themes and to validate the accuracy of the different forms of collected data.

Summary of Results

Development of Processes

The Baldrige in Education initiative provided a framework for the organization to identify its needs and to develop its own steps to improvement. The building leaders used an outside consulting firm to train the staff in Baldrige concepts. The training focused mainly on the classroom level implementation (Shipley, 2000b). The Quality Steering Council, one of the high school’s building leadership team in place from an earlier improvement process, initiated the first building level implementation of the Baldrige initiative, by using a procedure to create the building’s vision and mission statements. The simplified collaborative process would become the foundation for the more detailed Design Team process.

As the staff worked through the vision and mission writing and continued to be trained in classroom improvement techniques, Mr. Hammer, a building leadership team
member, became concerned that several building level issues were resurfacing. He was concerned that unless these issues were addressed, the issues might derail teacher buy-in to the Baldrige process. Mr. Hammer enlisted the help of a university business professor who had consulted on the previous Total Quality Management project. Using Professor Shaw’s group decision-making processes (Anderson, 1990) and the Baldrige workbooks (Shipley, 2000), Mr. Hammer created a method to form small school improvement teams to address these building level issues. These Design Teams, as they were called, were developed to be short term teams to address, research, and create a solution to an identified desired change.

The staff generated a list of 77 issues they felt, if changed, could improve the school. Prior to deciding which of the issues would become Design Teams, the staff collaboratively agreed on a set of voting criteria. These criteria were used to guide the voting process in an attempt to eliminate voting for pet projects. Six issues rose to the top and each issue became the topic for a Design Team. Teachers self-selected on which team they would work.

As the teams began to collect data and formulate solutions to their issues, they regularly reported their progress to the rest of the staff. The entire staff was given the opportunity to provide feedback, ask questions, and give suggestions. The reporting out procedure became a standard and expected way of sharing information.

As the staff learned to work in this framework, they developed trust in each other and learned that they actually could discuss and create their own plan to make improvements. The Design Team process was so successful in the first round that the staff decided to identify and create seven teams for a second round of improvements. The
process became embedded in the culture of the group. Proof that a cultural norm was established came when the principal decided to reallocate several rooms. He seemed to be working on a building level change in isolation. The staff grew anxious, meetings were called and the department chairs quickly took over the planning of the room reallocation. The chairs used the Design Team process to make changes. Because the Design Team process was now being followed, the group was accepting of the changes.

*The Role of Team Collaboration*

By its nature, the Baldrige in Education Initiative requires collaboration of a group, whether it’s a classroom of students and the teacher or a building of students and adults. The initial training included groups of teachers sharing and developing classroom plans. The Baldrige Support Group grew out of the need to share successes and get advice from other similar teachers.

The mission and vision process, headed by the Quality Steering Committee, showed the beginnings of a collaborative process that would become the building level norm. The preparation of the mission and vision statements was a simple procedure that allowed the staff, in a non-threatening way, to become involved and to learn how to work towards a common goal. The process included asking staff for input to a question, collecting information and creating a preliminary plan. The plan was shared with the staff and feedback and questions were collected. The plan was reworked until all involved were satisfied.

Design Teams, by definition, were meant to work through collaboration. The teams were self-selected and interdepartmental. As Design Teams were formed, two
important collaborative processes developed. The first process was to identify the purpose for voting for an issue. The Baldrige Support Group acted as a pilot group to test the procedure of establishing voting criteria. When the Quality Coordinator wanted to use the support group’s criteria with the entire staff the Baldrige Support Group maintained their position that they alone should not determine criteria; that the entire staff must decide common reasons for forming a Design Team. The entire staff, as well, must vote to decide the topics for the teams.

To ensure a successful start, the Quality Steering Council and the Baldrige Support Group received training in group dynamics. One member from each group was assigned to a team to guide the team through a common set of steps that would help the team develop solutions. As members of the Design Teams worked together, they established trust and grew more cohesive as a team. In the second round of Design Teams, facilitators were chosen from within the newly formed Design Team. The group was able to begin work quickly because they knew the process of the actions and they understood the dynamics of working in a team.

Another consistency that developed from the mission and vision process was the reporting out procedure. The process of Design Teams reporting out to staff at each step of the research became a way to ensure that all staff was comfortable with any potential changes. The culture that was developing was one of inclusion of all members of the staff. Small teams of seven to twelve people did the research and drafted a change plan that impacted the entire staff. Then, to ensure a collaborative process, the Design Teams shared their drafts and collected feedback at regular intervals until the plan was satisfactory to the staff.
For this school improvement initiative to be successfully implemented, a change in culture had to be seen. Changing cultures are characterized by not only the way things are done, but also by the fact that the process by which things are done becomes assumed (Argyris & Schon, 1996; Schein, 2004). In the early stages of the Baldrige in Education implementation, during the writing of the mission and vision statements, the collaborative processes were developed. The processes were refined during the two and a half years that the first round of Design Teams was operating. Having experienced successful changes in the first round, the staff made the decision to use the same process to identify and change other issues.

Evidence of the changing culture appeared during the second round of Design Team operations. The high school principal decided to reallocate several rooms to accommodate enrollment changes in the Science Department and the Special Education Department. The principal, independently, began collecting information, looking at rooms, and asking questions of the staff. As the staff learned of the potential changes, they became vocal in their concerns about how the decision seemed to be progressing. The staff felt that their voices were not being heard. They trusted the Design Team process and it was not being followed. The staff’s perception of the principal’s plan was that he was making a building level decision outside the parameters of the culturally accepted Design Team process. The action was unacceptable.

After several meetings, the principal turned his findings over to the department chairperson leadership team. Plans were then shared with the staff and feedback was considered. Compromises were made and a well-developed plan was put into place. They in turn followed the Design Team process to resolve the room allocation issue. This
seemingly incongruous event was evidence that the culture of the building had changed to one of collaborative decision making, a characteristic of Total Quality Management and Baldrige type organizations.

Discussion of Results

Researcher’s Insights

Implementing the model. The reason the Baldrige in Education model worked for this high school was because it was a good cultural fit. For several years prior to its implementation, the staff had been exposed to and educated about Total Quality Management practices. The high school attempted to make student achievement changes during the Venture Capital grant, but seemed to struggle with identifying exactly which changes should be made. The staff was open to change; they just did not have a tangible plan on how to do it. The Baldrige in Education model provided the staff with the framework to clarify their purpose for making changing and gave them a basis on how to start.

The timing of the implementation occurred when the State Department of Education began issuing report cards for district progress and requiring districts to create continuous improvement plans. The need to improve became evident and the leadership was able to show the staff how this model could be easily integrated into the current value system. When the implementation began, all staff attended two training sessions emphasizing the classroom level techniques. The Quality Steering Council concentrated on the same techniques at the building level. This researcher concluded that creating the mission and vision statement creation at the building level was a nonthreatening way to
introduce the collaborative process. The Quality Steering Council was able to model the process at the building level that could be used in the classroom. Teachers were encouraged but not forced to create mission and vision statements for their classrooms. The collaborative process that would develop in Design Teams had begun.

Over the six years identified in this study, the staff continued to attend training on Baldrige practices. The model did not have a step by step guide to making changes but focused the staff on why they would consider making an improvement, why they should be making data driven decisions, and why the collaborative process was so important. These values became evident as the staff developed their own method of improvement.

*Development of the Collaborative Process.* The Baldrige in Education model does not provide a formula for change, but instead provides a framework by which the organization develops its own steps to improvement. Design Teams were responsible for changing the culture from an administrator-led system to a staff collaborative decision-making system. To begin the change process, the leadership recognized that some type of structure had to be in place to teach the staff how to work effectively in a group. The process of creating the mission statement at the building level was one of the first collaborative efforts of the building. The activity gave the staff a taste of working together to change just a small piece of the school in a nonthreatening way and served as a model of how they could create change in their classroom. Identifying the mission and vision of the school also generated conversations about issues within the building that could be improved.
Prior to the initiative, collaborative decisions about what improvements to make did not happen. Issues were discussed among staff or among administration, but changes were never made or were made without adequate data. Changes may have been mandated because one administrator thought the change was a good idea, even though it may not have been an issue with the staff. Similarly, the administration often did not make changes that teachers thought should be made. The concept of Design Teams involving the entire building grew from the need to make informed changes.

Nothing on this scale had ever been done in the building. The first procedures, designed by Professor Shaw and Mr. Hammer, addressed the need to solve the problem as well as to train the group in the decision making process. To ensure a successful start, the Quality Coordinator utilized the Baldrige Support Group, a small group of interested teachers, as a pilot group to test the procedures about to be used by the staff. Because this small group consisted of teachers, not administrators, they added credibility to the process. Design Teams were successful in changing culture because the staff at this building made their own decisions about which issues to investigate. The entire staff decided which issues would generate Design Teams using a voting system. The voting system was also decided by the staff, allowing the staff input at each step of the process.

The collaborative process grew in strength as the teams were successful in making changes. The consistent procedures that were created required the staff to work together and as a result the staff developed trust in the process. The continuous reporting out of progress ensured a voice for everyone. As the process worked, more staff members bought into the system and as the culture of the building changed, the collaborative
process became the norm. The phrase “We need a Design Team for that” became a symbol for making building level change issues.

*Time.* Also critical to the success of the implementation was the amount of time devoted to the initiative. Changing values and basic underlying assumptions of how things are done takes time, some research says from 5-7 years (Gaff, 1980; Kotter, 1995). Starting with the Board of Education and continuing on to the building administrators in charge of inservice scheduling, the time scheduled for training and collaboration was something not seen before in the district. The first round of Design Teams lasted well past the intended timeline. The leadership could have just ended the teams at the end of the two years whether the teams had completed their goals or not. The changes in values and basic underlying assumptions about improvement were in progress but were not fully realized at the end of the original timeline. The second round of Design Teams and the ultimate embedding of the process may never have taken place if the original timeline had been followed. This indicates that a second round, or a prolonged timeline may be necessary in order for culture change to be institutionalized.

**Relationship of Current Study to Prior Research**

Over the years, school reform movements have come and gone. Many reforms that seemed to have promise, withered away. After the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), the first wave of school reform appeared. In the 1980’s, many school reforms were controlled by government bureaucracies with no standards for running the system (Sizer, 1997). Improvements amounted to adding more credits, more homework, and more tests, but failed to address
the interactions among the people in the system (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Even with later movements, such as site based management (DuFour & Eaker, 1998) little improvement was recorded. Wehlage, Smith and Lipman, (1992) studied 22 schools involved in a site based management reform called New Futures and found significant improvement in only three schools.

Research on why the reforms fail point to several reasons. Most failed reforms attempted only to make superficial changes, only changing a procedure or a selected piece of a system, not the system itself (Kowalski, 2000; Newman & Wehlage, 1995). In addition, these changes were often seen as mandates that were easily overlooked when the pressures from principal supervision were eased. Teachers could then just revert back to their old ways (Fullan & Miles, 1992; Purkey & Smith, 1985). Many unsuccessful reforms lacked vision, lacked goals, and failed to identify the moral purpose of schools (Hargreaves, 1995, Raywid, Tesconi & Warren, 1984). Many reforms also failed to account for the individual attitudes of the people involved in the change. Little emphasis was placed on training and time for teachers to collaborate (Fullan, 1999; Sarason, 1993; Sirotnik, 1999). Goodlad (2002) summarized that school reform movements ignored the purpose of school, the practice of teaching, and the growing knowledge of sociology. Fullan (1999) argued that the reason reforms failed was that schools were not treated as organizations. Collaboration was not valued.

The Baldrige in Education model fundamentally differs from many of these unsuccessful reform movements. First, the framework emphasizes identification of values for successful implementation. Values require people to look at their system differently, not just at the procedures but also at the way processes are done. Second, the eleven core
values and the nine criteria of the Baldrige model work together as a system; one is not isolated from another. When the staff of Centennial High School began their training, the systems approach was strongly emphasized. Third, the first implementation steps begin with the development of vision and mission statements at all levels of the organization, forcing the organization to address its purpose. The mission/vision process provided a simple way to teach staff and students about the how to identify purpose. Teachers could participate but they themselves were not being asked to make major changes their classroom setting. This allowed the staff to become comfortable with the process and ease into the changes.

The importance of identifying the purpose for change was outlined in two places in the Design Team process. First, the voting criteria defined the purpose for selecting a change issue. Second, as each Design Team began work, their first task was to clearly identify their purpose and goals for making a change. Two teams in the first round of Design Teams were unsuccessful in making any changing. The Enforcing the Rules team and the Improving Attendance team concluded that their topics were too abstract and they could not clearly define their purpose. Their reasons seemed to mirror a similar reason why some reforms were unsuccessful: the lack of a clearly defined purpose. These two teams were not considered failures, however. They were used as learning examples for the next Design Team rounds.

The structure of professional development is another reason cited for failed reform (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Guskey, 1995). Teacher inservice usually consists of two-hour workshops, where the teachers sit passively. Teachers sit, listen, leave, and never try any of the ideas. Little follow-up is planned and if teachers try
a new idea, there is little support or sharing. The workplace is a lonely place, without many opportunities for collaboration (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Gusky, 1995; Hargreaves, 1995).

In contrast, Centennial High School’s building level implementation of the Baldrige Initiative was an active process. The training sessions involved a considerable amount of time sharing experiences and discussing how to implement the quality techniques. During the mission and vision development the staff was engaged in discussions about their school’s mission.

The report-out process that developed at the inservice meetings gave staff the freedom to ask questions and give comments, providing continuous feedback about an issue. The Baldrige Support Group was created by teachers for teachers, and in the support group, they shared successes and failures as they began to implement some of the new quality techniques. A person visiting a Design Team meeting would witness a team that was active, animated, and most likely unaware of the visitor. The Baldrige framework at the building level required the staff to collaborate to design systems to improve.

This case study tells the story of a successful school improvement initiative. The high school shares characteristics found in other successful organizations. One important characteristic of the Baldrige initiative is that the organization must create its own system of change (Garvin 1993; NIST, 2004). Purkey and Smith (1983, 1985) discovered that one reform movement was not necessarily better than another. Through their extensive studies, they discovered that one model worked well in one school because the model and the organizational were a good cultural fit. The change was within their belief system.
The same model, on the other hand, was unsuccessful in another school because the dynamics of the people were different. What mattered was that there was a culture conducive to learning and the organization had a specific way of reacting. Successful schools’ cultural characteristics included site-based management, shared decision making, time to collaborate, having a fundamental purpose, establishing goals, and reorganizing the setting (Dufour, 2004; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Fullan, 1996; Purkey & Smith, 1985). As important as it seems to set purpose and goals, Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) noted that good high schools were also willing to admit their imperfections and consciously find ways change them.

Centennial High School developed these characteristics as they implemented the Baldrige in Education Initiative. Over the six years of this bounded study, the organization continuously clarified their purpose through the operation of Design Teams. They increasingly made building level decisions based on data collected by Design Teams and shared with the entire staff. The decision making was shared, not made from a top down administrative hierarchy. Design Teams became the system for making changes. Embedded within this system were ways of identifying imperfections and consistent processes of making changes.

The organization represented in this study developed a successful system of change that resulted in a cultural shift. Schein (2004) defined culture as a learned pattern of behavior used to solve problems that works well, is considered valid, and is taught to new members as the correct way to think, feel, and act. As an organization develops new culture, it moves through stages, first changing procedures, next changing how it thinks about change but not always following through with action, and last, acting on the new
beliefs (Argyris & Schon 1996; Schein, 2004). If the culture change is truly embedded, then any incongruous event causes alarm and anxiety and often a refusal to work through the event in another way. The development and use of Design Teams at Centennial High School clearly showed the stages of culture shift. The group created a procedure, learned to value and trust the procedure, and used the procedure to solve new problems because it worked. When the aforementioned room reallocation issue appeared, the staff expected the Design Team process to be followed, as it had become the accepted way of making change.

The success of the implementation in this case study is reflected in comparison to other studies identifying successful Baldrige or Total Quality Management culture. Fields (1993) provided a framework to begin the quality process that included establishing values, mission and goals. He also advocated using groups to make decisions based on data. Detert, Louis and Schroeder (2001) interviewed a panel of 15 business and education people they considered to be experts in implementation. Their panel concluded that most attempts to implement Baldrige processes failed because the organization only tried to change a procedure and failed to recognize the importance looking at the entire system and the importance of changing culture. Their study also concluded that implementation was most successful when the existing culture already possessed some of the values of the Baldrige model. Garvin (1990) claimed that a continuous commitment to learning was necessary to fully implement change. In a study of five successful TQM organizations, Terkiovski, Howell, Sohol, and Morrison (2000) found a commitment to learning, use of data, creation of a shared vision, and team decision making were required for successful implementation. Finally, the long commitment of time was cited as
important to the success of Utah Valley State University’s Baldrige-like strategic plan (Spencer & Wynn, 2004) and in the Baldrige processes of the Missouri School for the Blind (Howze, 2000).

Centennial High School shared certain characteristics of successful Baldrige implementations. These were (a) having a shared vision; (b) identifying needs; (c) using data to make group decision; (d) encouraging active collaborative involvement of teachers; and (e) changing the system, not only changing its parts. The district also gave Centennial High School the necessary time to change the system. The high school learned how to solve problems by developing a pattern of procedures and behaviors that were valid, accepted by the organization, and taught to new members.

Recommendations for Further Study

Additional research could include a look at the current decision making process at Centennial High School. This study concluded that Design Teams became an embedded piece of the culture. Additional study might show whether and how the Design Team process is still used to make decisions.

Another area for study would include researching other high schools that use the Baldrige in Education model. The consulting firm that trained the staff at Centennial High School currently trains other high schools. Additional study could compare Centennial High School’s methods to other high school’s implementation looking for similar themes.
Implications for Practice

This study adds to current research on Total Quality Management/Baldrige cultures. The study uncovered themes to consider when implementing the Baldrige in Education model. This ethnographic case study tells the story of how one high school modified its culture to create a systemic process of change using the Baldrige in Education school improvement initiative. Fullan stated (1999) “To know that collaborative cultures are more effective and even to know how they work tells you almost nothing about how to create one” (p. 14). The present study describes how Centennial High School’s collaborative culture developed. This is a single case study bounded by time telling the story of how a collaborative culture developed as the staff made building level improvements. Each organization, however, has its own culture and structure, limiting the degree to which this study could be replicated. However, certain procedures and values seen in this case compared with other successful Baldrige type implementations, suggesting that addressing basic procedures and creating shared values can aid in successful implementation in other educational organizations.

The successful implementation of the Baldrige in Education model in this setting relied on several key factors. First, the model was a good cultural fit. The values of the organization were similar to the values presented in the model. The high school had been educated about the concept of Total Quality Management prior to the introduction of the Baldrige Initiative. Prior to discovering the Baldrige model, the staff struggled to create systemic changes to student improvement because they lacked a framework to guide them. The values and criteria presented in the Baldrige model provided directional clarity.
Second, when the Baldrige initiative began everyone in the organization was trained in the basic principles. The training concentrated on classroom applications but also included applications for building leadership teams. The building leadership team and Design Team facilitators received leadership training in group development. Teachers then became the leaders for building change processes by using the same procedures and values practiced in their classrooms.

Third, the organization began the school improvement journey by creating a shared mission and purpose for the building. The building leadership team used the classroom level methods taught to the staff to guide the staff through the stages of identifying the building’s mission. This step was a simple way to create some collaborative efforts and model the process. The importance of establishing purpose was found embedded throughout the study. A common theme found in successful Total Quality Management/Baldrige organizations was the development of shared vision at the start of the process. Centennial High School was no exception.

Fourth, the organization created active collaborative teams. From the development of the building mission statement to the running of Design Teams, a deliberate effort was made to include all staff in the decision making process. The staff decided which issues to address. They also decided the process by which the issues would be resolved. As the staff learned new techniques, they changed their ways of thinking, and made their own decisions. The collaborative process became the accepted way of making change.

And last, the leaders scheduled the necessary time to allow the collaborative culture to develop. The organization was not only changing the way it made
improvements, it was also changing the attitudes of the staff on how it identified issues and corrected its weaknesses. As an actively involved staff began to reap successes, they were willing to spend the time to work through the process. Developing of process became more valuable than meeting the timeline.

Summary

Successful implementation of school improvement models, like Baldrige in Education, require a modification of existing culture, leading to a change in how people think and solve problems. Changing a procedure is the first step to implementing school improvement, but procedural changes do not always provide lasting change. The Baldrige model’s successful deployment relies on developing a collaborative culture where teachers have an active role in deciding what and how changes are made.

The organization in this study created a shared vision as its first step to developing the cohesiveness needed for development of a collaborative culture. Shared decision-making led to a change in how decisions were made. Culture change, and the successful implementation of the model was seen when the organization developed its own processes for change and used those processes as the accepted method of operation.
References


Ohio Revised Code. Section 3302.03.


APPENDIX A

ISSUE LIST: ONE YEAR PLAN
1 Year Plan - Goals to Improve Centennial High School

Compiled from brainstorming activities of: QSC, Support Group, Department Chairpersons, English, Math, Special Education, Science, Guidance, Staff Survey, Homeroom Committee, Library, Foreign Language, Art

Communication (parents, staff, student)
_____ 1. parent open house
_____ 2. parent/teacher conferences - spring and fall
_____ 3. data folders
_____ 4. communication with parents
_____ 5. parent/student/teacher cooperation and accountability
_____ 6. communication between staff/school, probation officers
_____ 7. staff informed about latest drug info to handle incidents
_____ 8. establish lines of communication between administration and teacher
_____ 9. establish lines of communication between departments
_____ 10. establish lines of communication to align curriculum
_____ 11. improve parent involvement
_____ 12. improve morning announcements
_____ 13. one interim, like grade card
_____ 14. improve time efficiency for interim mailings
_____ 15. student led conferences

Training (staff, students, parents)
_____ 16. more time on contract day
_____ 17. awareness training freshman (all)
_____ 18. teachers working together
_____ 19. ongoing training
_____ 20. staff bonding
_____ 21. have professional talking about missions
_____ 22. collaboration time
_____ 23. better use of inservice

Facility
_____ 24. improve computer labs/ library use
_____ 25. upgrade restrooms (wheelchairs)
_____ 26. wheelchair ramp by rm 144
27. improve staff parking lot on south side (straighten drive, move
driver ed cones)
28. longer lunch
29. parking problems
30. air conditioning

Attendance and Drop Out Rate
31. consistent enforcement of attendance
32. initiate tougher attendance policies in conjunction with new state
    regulations
33. improve the drop out rate
34. staff follow up on chronic attendance
35. examine number of students missing for field trips, etc

Assessment
36. 6 wks vs 9 wks
37. weekly eligibility for athletes (as it relates to 6, 9 weeks)
38. better way to schedule proficiency exams
39. quieter place for special education students to take proficiency test
40. eliminate spring proficiency test schedule
41. create fairness in scheduling teacher-proctoring of proficiency
42. increase release time for IEP writing, conferences
43. improve student motivation
44. mid-year exam schedule
45. uniform way to schedule - reduce changes
46. uniform way to schedule - value prerequisites

Homeroom
47. homeroom feedback/improvement - PDSA
48. career folders in homeroom
49. teachers inserviced and educated on homeroom
50. provide time to inform teachers on monthly homerooms
51. develop meaningful homeroom programs for students and staff
    (not covered by specific academic areas)
52. provide platform for teacher input about homeroom
53. provide "icebreakers" to break down barriers
54. fix the room situation for homerooms
55. senior homeroom teachers give students diplomas
Grades
_____ 56. standardized grading scale
_____ 57. plus/minus on GPA (begin grandfathering)
_____ 58. improve test scores and grades

School Rules
_____ 59. interruptions
_____ 60. chronic discipline
_____ 61. dress code (enforce, modify)
_____ 62. clarify guidelines for referring troubled kids
_____ 63. enforcing rules
_____ 64. school safety (lockers, book bags, etc)
_____ 65. no food outside the cafeteria
_____ 66. control use of hall passes
_____ 67. strong administrative presence in the building
_____ 68. administrative support
_____ 69. later student start

Department Issues
_____ 70. math and science collaboration
_____ 71. update guidance department web page/ continuous monitoring
_____ 72. update job description for high school counselors
_____ 73. eliminate collection of money for printing and copying in library
_____ 74. develop a teacher video library from teachers' video collections
_____ 75. develop a procedure for recognizing excellence in teaching beyond teacher of the year - a format to reward excellence on a regular basis
_____ 76. improve facilities in the library - air conditioning, replace worn carpeting, ceiling
_____ 77. smaller class size