

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY OF THE IMPACT
OF PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOL
PERFORMANCE AWARDS ON EIGHT
MARYLAND SCHOOLS

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From 1996-2001, the Maryland State Department of Education allocated each year, \$2.75 million in monetary awards to schools that made significant improvement in student achievement on the Maryland Performance Assessment Program. School performance rewards, given to 313 schools, averaged \$30,000. The purposes of the awards were to reward successful schools, to encourage their continuous improvement, and to set an example for others to follow. Of the 313 schools, a limited number, eighteen, were successful in winning awards three or four times.

The purpose of this qualitative case study dissertation was to obtain rich information about the leadership practices of principals that received awards for improvement numerous times and to explore and describe their perceptions about the impact of these rewards on their schools. The methodology employed involved in-depth interviews of eight principals that received rewards three or four times and an examination of supportive documentation used to corroborate interview data. The

study also presents economic, demographic, and performance data on each school as well as comparative data with all schools that received awards and all schools in Maryland that participated in the state assessments and were, therefore, eligible for rewards. Descriptions of individual leadership practices before, during, and after the administration of the rewards are included, as well as an analytic cross-case analysis of patterns across the cases. Accounts of how schools used rewards money are also included. Findings point to an interrelationship between effective outcomes of the rewards program and unique leadership skills and practices employed by the principals. They suggest that the utility of a school-based performance awards program may require an environment poised for change and improvement.

A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP
AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AWARDS ON EIGHT MARYLAND SCHOOLS

by

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
2004

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Acknowledgements

My professional career and my educational pursuits have been a labor of love. At the Maryland State Department of Education, I have been given the freedom to create numerous programs and to share ideas with a truly talented group of individuals. With the support of the State Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Nancy Grasmick, I have been able to share my own talents, while at the same time, highlighting the efforts of so many dedicated and able educators. I thank Dr. Grasmick, who has been an outstanding mentor, and my colleagues at the Department. In particular, I want to recognize Dr. Ronald Peiffer for his interest in my research, and for his guidance and assistance along the way. I also want to thank Donna Gunning who was a tremendous asset in helping me assemble state data. I also thank the many committed teachers and principals who I have come to know and who inspire me daily. The principals featured in this study also deserve acknowledgement, not only for finding the time to participate in my research, but for their courage and commitment to their teachers and students.

I am indebted to the University of Maryland faculty members and my cohort of fellow students for making my years of doctoral studies so significant, challenging, and enjoyable. Professor Hanne Mawhinney, deserves a special thank you for guiding me in her area of expertise - qualitative research. As my advisor, she was always encouraging and, when necessary, a taskmaster. I thank my other committee members, Drs. George Marx, Donna Muncey, Carol Parham, and Tom Weible, whose suggestions and ideas

were very helpful. I also want to thank Dr. Meredith Honig for spending time with me in thinking about my dissertation topic. Her advice, to select a dissertation topic that I was passionate about, was sound and contributed to a research undertaking that was extremely meaningful and enjoyable.

Finally, my family has always encouraged and supported me. My mother was my friend and a source of joy and laughter until her death. My father, who passed away several years ago, was the penultimate student. Although he was forced to leave high school to support his family, he truly believed in lifelong learning, encouraging his children to achieve at their highest levels. We were, indeed, proud to celebrate with him, when at the age of 74, he received his GED. Had I not taken his advice to enter a doctoral program, I would not have arrived at this turning point in my life.

I am also indebted to my intelligent and supportive husband, Jim, who has accrued a PhD and a JD and encouraged me in my pursuits. His ability to persevere and take on a new career in law, while his contemporaries were thinking only of retirement, has been an inspiration. And to my children, David and Cecily, who are the shining light of the family, and who embody a love of learning and a caring for others, thanks for setting such great examples and for being so proud of your mom.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Over the last decade, the quality of public education has been increasingly called into question, and states and local school systems have been pressured to undertake numerous reforms to bolster education standards in order for schools to meet higher accountability demands. The current No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, a blueprint for federal involvement and the centerpiece of the U.S. Department of Education, requires statewide testing and approved plans for incremental student improvement goals in major subject areas. Schools must demonstrate that their students are meeting *annual yearly progress* toward these goals. The consequence of sub-par performance for two consecutive years forces districts to allow students to transfer to higher-performing schools and to pay their transportation costs.

School reform efforts to improve academic achievement have brought a focus on the fundamental issues of organizational structure, leadership, teaching and learning, and school funding. Many reform leaders have also adopted the notion that schools can be encouraged or even forced to fulfill higher expectation requirements and overcome the most adverse circumstances. This growing tendency on the part of policy-makers to hold educators responsible for the achievement of their students has led to the concept of rewards for success and consequences for failure (Arthur & Milton, 1991; Boe, 1990; Carlson, 1971; Clotfelter & Ladd, 1996). President Bush's agenda, beginning with his campaign, moved accountability farther into the national arena when he stated that

“education reform would measure results, praise success, and confront failure”(Bush, 2000).

Negative Incentives Policies

The federal government introduced a *get tough* stance by requiring states and districts to impose sanctions on Title 1 schools that fail to meet adequate yearly progress requirements (O’Day & Gross, 1999). In the past decade, states such as Maryland and Kentucky, and the school districts of Prince George’s County, Maryland, Chicago, Cleveland, Denver, Houston, Portland, San Antonio, and San Francisco adopted sanction or *reconstitution* policies for very low-performing schools who do not improve over a given period of time. These policies set processes in place for changing the structure of the school by removing the principal, teachers, other individuals, or the entire staff. The states and school districts also developed comprehensive intervention strategies that include a probationary period when schools can demonstrate improvement before sanctions are imposed. Although two-fifths of the nation’s states have put into place similar policies to force schools with low performance to improve or face dire consequences (Keleman, 2001), only Kentucky, Maryland, New York, Oklahoma, and Texas have actually invoked sanctions (Ziebarth, 2001). The fact that, in those states, very few schools have actually undergone reconstitution suggests that policy-makers are loath to sanction large numbers of schools and, instead, hope that the threat of sanction or being designated a failing school will motivate educators to initiate school improvement strategies.

There have been a few studies testing this premise or examining the motivational

impact of threat on leaders and other school members. They (Abelmann & Kenyon, 1996; Firestone, Mayrowetz, & Fairman, 1997; Kelemen, 2001; Kelley & Protsik, 1997; Mintrop & Buese, 2001) suggest that threat can create an environment of anxiety which more often does not lead to improvement. Kelemen's work led to the conclusion that the outcomes of sanctions and threat vary widely and depend primarily on circumstances relative to how school leaders perceive themselves in threat environments.

Positive Incentives and School Improvement

Theorists of individual, organizational, and social change have long held the view that positive incentives and motivational strategies can act as mechanisms to improve productivity and performance (Bedeian & Zammuto, 1991; Deming, 1988; Drucker, 1985; Hackman, Brousseau, & Weiss, 1976; Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959). Monetary awards have been proposed as a motivational tool to introduce success symbols and improvement-driving mechanisms into the education environment (Fuhrman, 1996; Kelley, Odden, Milanowski, & Heneman, 2000; Little, 1986; Merz & Furman, 1997), as well as to bring needed resources to support strategies for school restructuring (Arthur & Milton, 1991; Boe, 1990; Carlson, 1971; Coleman, 1971; Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Klein, 1995; Kelley, Conley, & Kimball, 1999; Kelley, et al. 2000). Hanushek (1995), while attempting to shatter theories that resources alone make a difference in school improvement, advocated the efficacy of linking monetary resources to specific positive results.

School-based performance monetary rewards have been introduced over the last few years in a large number of states and school districts as a lever to encourage the

attainment of higher educational achievement outcomes. For the most part, they have become a staple in states with sanction policies, affirming the need on the part of policymakers to offer a *carrot and stick* approach. These rewards, typically, have been given to schools who have already demonstrated improvement on state or local measures of student achievement. Rewards connote that a gift for a job well done will encourage the continuation of improvement and may motivate other schools to improve (Kelley & Protsik, 1997; Kelley, et al., 1999; Kelley, et al., 2000). However, we know very little about the actual impact of these rewards and whether or not they are used strategically at the building level to move a school forward in improvement. Although, in recent years, increased test scores have become the proxy for school improvement, we also don't know if schools receiving awards had an understanding of the reasons for their improvement, and if they had agreed upon methods or practices guiding them in their reform efforts. Therefore, the assumptions that improving schools benefit by recognition and monetary rewards and utilize the resources to further improve, have not been proved. The current inadequacies in rewards research make the topic of school-performance awards an important subject of study, and this dissertation capitalizes on the need to know more about how they work in school settings.

A rich body of literature exists linking organizational effectiveness with leadership behavior (Lawler, 1986; Lawler, Mohrman, & Ledford, 1995; Likert, 1967; Locke, 1968; Yukl, 2002). Incentives are frequently recommended as positive mechanisms to be used by leaders in environments striving to improve (Kerr & Jermier, 1978; Yukl, 2002). Critics of public education argue that schools lack incentives that are

linked to student success and, therefore, tend to operate ineffectively and without improvement gains (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Hanushek, 1994).

A few studies have also looked at positive incentives such as teacher bonuses or school recognition certificates (Hanushek, 1994; Odden, 1996). The research data from these studies which are neither in-depth nor conclusive, do not point to positive results. Other studies on school-based rewards have focused on teachers' perceptions of rewards as a motivational tool (Kelley, et al., 2000; Kemmerer, 1990; Kirkwood, 1999); the findings have generally supported an ambivalent attitude among teachers regarding merit rewards systems. This ambivalence is striking, in light of the fact that management literature is replete with suggestions that monetary incentives can stimulate leaders and workers to improve their organizations and their productivity. Of importance, is the fact that the study on teachers' perceptions of Kentucky's rewards program (Kelley, et al., 2000) and Kirkwood's dissertation (1999) on local incentives given to schools in a Maryland district, suggest that rewards appeared to evoke a far more positive response among school principals. Interviews of principals and other school members of schools winning the National Blue Ribbon Award (Marzke & Mullens, 1997) generally concur with that idea and describe Blue Ribbon recognition as positive and reinforcing to school leaders.

Maryland as a Laboratory for a Rewards Study

Maryland serves as an excellent laboratory for this investigation for several reasons. First, it is a state heavily invested in education reform, having more than a ten year history of developing high standards and high-stakes accountability assessments.

Second, it instituted positive and negative incentives in the form of rewards and sanctions in the early to mid 90's and held the course in school reform longer than any state other than Kentucky. Third, the State allocated over \$20 million in rewards from 1996-2003. Finally, the results of this study are important in the context of Maryland reform efforts which not only respond to federal requirements, but to Maryland's internal accountability mandates. Maryland's Visionary Panel, which preceded No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, developed policy guidelines calling for standards, aligned assessments, and accountability as the "three interlocking pieces" that must form the critical foundation for student achievement" (Visionary Panel for Better Schools, 2002, p. 6). The panel also affirmed that sanctions and rewards would remain an essential part of Maryland's accountability strategy. Its report suggests that Maryland must provide even more systematic and consistent recognition, encouragement, and guidance to *all* schools in Maryland, including those that are average performers. The report recommends a graduated series of rewards and interventions as an essential component to help all schools make progress.

Under this proposed policy, there will be many more schools than at present identified as making satisfactory progress and many more identified as needing improvement, including some that are relatively high performing but not improving each year. Consequently, there must be a more highly differentiated set of interventions and rewards, matched closely to the performance of each school/district and its respective capacity (Visionary Panel of Better Schools, 2002, p. 7).

Maryland's school-based performance awards program was established in 1995 to recognize and reward schools that demonstrated significant improvement on the Maryland School Performance Assessments (MSPAP) which test students in grades 3, 5,

and 8. The purpose was to create an incentive for schools to improve and to encourage further improvement.¹

School performance awards to date, have been given to over 400 schools demonstrating overall student improvement on the Maryland State Assessment Program (MSPAP) and the newly implemented student assessments (MSA's). Each year, \$2.75 million has been given to improving schools.

Maryland's program was initiated by its former Governor, William Donald Schaefer, who served from 1987-1994, and it was passed by the legislature in 1995. But recommendations for rewards and sanctions actually date back to Maryland's landmark *Governor's Commission on School Performance Report* (1989), popularly referred to as the *Sondheim Commission Report*. This report called for education accountability and a system of sanctions and rewards.²

Problem and Study Purpose

Rewards are widely used incentives in corporate America where productivity, efficiency, and product output have always been critical to the survival of the organization. With the growth of education accountability and high stakes reform efforts

¹

Evidence comes from a pilot study by D. Strouse in which interviews were conducted with Maryland State Superintendent of Schools Dr. Nancy Grasmick and former State Board of Education member Walter Sondheim who also led the Governor's appointed committee to make recommendations for school improvement in Maryland.

²

A plan was suggested, beginning with sanctions for failing schools and recommendations for rewards for schools showing achievement gains.

to improve student achievement, incentive programs have more recently been introduced into education arenas. Although numerous states and local school districts have implemented rewards policies, and recommendations for their use can be found throughout the literature, there is little substantive knowledge about their impact on schools in improvement and change environments. More information on outcomes associated with incentives is, therefore, warranted, especially in light of the fact that there appears to be a long-term national focus on accountability and high stakes testing. This study examines some of the assumptions of rewards policies in a number of school improvement settings in Maryland. It asks, *How do principals who have received rewards for school improvement perceive the impact of these awards on their schools?* It also asks the following related questions, *In what school contexts were rewards introduced? What were their impact areas? How were rewards dollars spent?* Specifically, it looks at motivational effects, impact on schools and their stakeholders, uses of rewards money, and leadership behavior and practices that are part of the rewards context. By undertaking an in-depth examination of the perceptions of principals, experienced not only in receiving and utilizing school performance awards, but in school improvement and change, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the meaning of leadership and performance awards and their application to school improvement environments.

Organization of the Study

The following seven chapters of this dissertation are organized by beginning with a review of relevant policy studies, opinion related literature, school effectiveness studies, and motivation and incentive research (Chapter 2). This review encompasses a broad

range of contexts relative to the concept of performance awards.

A framework for conceptualizing the impact of rewards on school leadership and practice in improvement environments is used as a heuristic guiding this study. Chapter 3 introduces a number of situational leadership theories which have been combined to form a multiple linkage model connecting leadership and group effectiveness (Yukl, 2002). This model is explained in detail and is one that was selected because of its focus on analyzing the multiple contexts that influence leader behavior as it relates to the work involved in creating effective organizations. Specifically, this model was helpful in developing an approach to this investigation and in framing principal responses to the impact of rewards on their schools' improvement strategies and practices.

Chapter 4 describes the design and methodological approach taken and includes the constructs developed in Chapter 3. Data collection and analysis strategies as well as limitations and issues of trustworthiness are also discussed. Chapter 5 maps out data on each school and also includes a statewide comparison of schools in terms of race, economic factors, and school performance. A brief background sketch of each principal is also included. This chapter paints a picture of the schools that is useful in a better understanding of the individual case descriptions which follow in the findings included in Chapter 6. This chapter presents data and verbatim passages from in-depth interviews of each principal to describe the school's improvement environment and change practices that were being implemented. This information sets the context for an interwoven discussion of patterns and parallel constructs on leadership and rewards impact presented in a cross-case analysis in Chapter 7.

Chapters 7 through 8 are analytical in nature. Each chapter focuses on the findings, but from different perspectives. Chapter 7 looks across the eight sites and presents a cross-case analysis of patterns using the Yukl model as an organizer for developing constructs regarding the impact of rewards on leader behavior and organizational focus. Chapter 8 includes a discussion of conclusions and implications of this study for future research in leadership and school-based performance awards as motivation in high stakes accountability and school improvement environments.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Because this study focuses on the impact of school performance awards on schools in environments of improvement and change, a review of the literature addresses a number of important concepts. First, positive incentives are discussed in relation to contemporary education applications. To set the parameters for their use in schools, they are further discussed in the context of general behavioral theories on motivation. Second, because this study investigates the impact of rewards by capturing the impressions and perceptions of principals focused on school improvement, the literature review encompasses studies relating to leadership and effective schools. Third, general management behavior and theory are also presented in light of the fact that corporate use of positive incentives has been pervasive and most likely served as a stimulus for their introduction into education. General management and leadership theory also offer relevant insights and have a history that predates comparable studies in education. Contingency theories and Gary Yukl's *Multiple Linkage Model of Leadership and Group Effectiveness* and other relevant management theories are also discussed.

Incentives as Part of Contemporary Education Policy

Reflecting a market driven philosophy, the standards movement in education has focused on accountability, primarily as measured by achievement testing. A goal has been to raise the stakes in performance and hold schools accountable to the public. Publicly issued report cards rank schools by test scores. What has followed is a public outcry regarding displays of school failure. Rewarding schools for improvement and introducing

sanctions or other consequences for failure make sense within this current scenario. As stated by one strategist in school reform,

To fully focus their energies, schools must have a clear sense of what is expected of them. Educators are likely to be more motivated when they know they'll be rewarded when they meet expectations and sanctioned when they don't (Toch, 2000, p. 5).

This thinking assumes a rational approach to school improvement and assumes that individuals will respond predictably and rationally to explicit incentives. It also assumes that incentives will convince individuals to focus on particular outcomes. However, these assumptions have not been born out in current research.

A study of state accountability systems across the United States suggested that maintaining an appropriate balance between state oversight of performance and local improvement in performance required a proper mix of rewards, sanctions, and technical assistance (OERI State Accountability Study Group, 1988). However, a number of studies (Cibulka, 1996; Elmore, Abelman, & Fuhrman, 1996) suggest that the organizations most responsible for school oversight - state departments of education and school districts - are generally inattentive to the needs of schools and attend more often to bureaucratic priorities.

A 1997 survey by the Education Commission of the States looked at standards and accountability measures in all states and made recommendations that there be a full accountability circle with standards, assessment measures, and visible consequences in the form of rewards and sanctions. Maryland was one of only a handful of states cited as having all four of those components in place by statute (Kirkwood, 1999, p. 30). A

number of individual school districts including Dallas and Charlotte-Mecklenburg had also moved forward in instituting incentive programs in their efforts to reform schools (Clotfelter & Ladd, 1996; Kelley, et al., 2000).

In a review of accountability measures, Cornett and Gaines (1997) reviewed seventeen southern states and found that seven, including Maryland, provide financial rewards for raising student achievement. All but Texas, rewarded schools and/or teachers. Texas rewarded principals. Maryland and South Carolina prohibit the money from being disbursed to individual teachers as bonuses. All the others allow the schools to decide. In discussing the effectiveness of rewards over sanctions, Cornett and Gaines (1997) propose that policies combining the two are most effective:

Some state leaders believe that the mere threat of sanctions is a more powerful motivator than payment of financial rewards. Most leaders agree, however, that a balance between rewards, assistance and sanctions is necessary to build an accountability system that is effective and widely perceived by educators and the public as fair and worthy of support (p. 20).

In 2002, President Bush introduced *No Child Left Behind* legislation which emphasized adequate yearly progress to be determined initially by assessments given each year in grades three through eight and to be followed by high school assessments that also yield adequate yearly progress. The U.S. Department of Education's *No Child Left Behind/Blue Ribbon Schools Program* links recognition with improvement on these assessments. The urgencies of accountability and strategies to improve achievement continue to grow. Incentives, both negative and positive are, in fact, increasingly viewed as important mechanisms for achieving standards-based reform.

Non-Financial and Financial Rewards

Reward programs, offered as an education improvement solution, are not new. In fact, they generally surfaced during times of widespread concern over the quality of education (Arthur & Milton, 1991). Early incentive programs were largely in the form of merit pay for teachers. Just before World War I, when Americans learned of the higher achievement of European students in some core subject assessments, merit pay was proposed as a method to improve American schools. Again in the late 1950's and early 1960's, following the Russian Sputnik space success, merit pay was proposed as the panacea for what appeared to be an ailing American public education system. In the 1980's, American education was again seen in decline, and as we struggled with the idea of being a “nation at risk” (Johnson, 1984; Murnane & Cohen, 1986; Arthur & Milton, 1991), merit pay and alternative incentives and rewards programs moved forward as a policy strategy. School-wide incentives were also introduced by then U.S. Secretary of Education, Terrel Bell, who announced the creation of a nationwide school recognition program which came to be known as the Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence Program (U.S. Department of Education, 1983 b).

Performance-related rewards have taken different forms, ranging from non-financial recognition to the allocation of monetary resources. Table 1 on the next page, depicts several examples.

Table 1

Performance Awards by Type

Non-Financial	Financial
Recognition and commendation	Competitive grants for innovation
Flexibility, extensions, waivers	Reward for achievement
Priority treatment (i.e. training, etc.)	Awards to encourage future improvement

Non-financial rewards may include recognition and commendation, granting of special provisions such as extension of time between accreditation visits, priority for training or other assets, and waiving of state regulations. Financial rewards can come in the form of competitive grants to support innovation and rewards for past achievements (Maryland State Department of Education, 2000; North Carolina Educational Policy Research Center Brief, 1991). As a reward for past achievement, they also are intended to further improvement. A third category, not depicted, intrinsic rewards, are believed to be critical to performance and include rewards that come from professional and personal satisfaction with one's job.

From 1994-1996, governors and legislators across America introduced funding for incentives and rewards. Four states, Arizona, Missouri, Tennessee, and Utah, chose to support career ladders as an incentive option. Nine states, California, Connecticut, Georgia, Louisiana, Indiana, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Washington, and West Virginia, decided that a mentor teacher program would provide incentives leading to instructional improvement. Five states, Arizona, Florida, Iowa, Oregon, and Washington, selected

incentive programs linked to school restructuring and improvement. And eight states, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, Tennessee, and Maryland developed incentive programs with monetary rewards for schools that exhibited improved performance (Clotfelter & Ladd, 1996; Goertz, Massell, & Chun, 1997).

Discussion regarding the effectiveness of incentives and rewards as strategies in school improvement, generally have not been based on extensive qualitative research or on empirical studies. Assumptions rest on the belief that rewards impact schools meeting school improvement challenges by (1) introducing success symbols and improvement-driving mechanisms (Fuhrman, 1996; Kelley, et al., 2000; Little, 1986; Merz & Fuhrman, 1997); (2) bringing needed resources for commodities and services in restructuring school environments (Arthur & Milton, 1991; Boe, E.E., 1990; Carlson, R., 1971; Coleman, J.S., 1971; Darling-Hammond, et al., 1995; Kelley, 1999); and (3) directing a focus on specific school improvement goals that are useful in systemic planning and change (Hanushek, 1995; Kelley, et al. 2000; Lawler, 1986; Leithwood, Aiken, & Jantzi, 2001).

Hanushek (1995) emphasizes the importance of tying rewards to specific improvements and believes that without clear direction and goals, schools will be unlikely to improve. Richards, Fishbein & Melville (1993, p. 32) restate the dearth of evidence about positive incentives and explain that the effects of awards are not understood because the topic has been relatively understudied. Elmore, Abelman & Fuhrman (1996) agree that policy-makers are relying heavily on little understood accountability systems that reward or penalize schools for student performance on the standards. They point out that new accountability systems are “difficult to design and

raise many technical, implementation, and political issues” (p. 73).

Even respected researchers call for studies to supplement their own findings on incentives. For example, Kelley and Protsik (1997), surveyed teachers’ perceptions of rewards and found ambivalent attitudes. Although their study did not investigate principals, it did question several, and because these leaders described positive attitudes regarding rewards, they suggested further study of that phenomenon. The study also found that in Kentucky, rewards had a positive role in focusing instructional effort toward a common goal. This survey was somewhat cursory in its attempt to find contextual answers and suggested that in-depth qualitative research would be an important next step. Goertz, Massell and Chun (1997) offer a cursory review of Maryland’s rewards as part of a larger study of education reform. At the time of this study, the rewards program was still in its beginning stage, and there was little tangible evidence of outcomes. The study did allude to some positive impacts of rewards on improvement. Odden (1996) and Kelley, et al. (2000) discuss the results of teacher surveys that show a general dislike for merit pay. They suggest that group awards might be a more acceptable incentive alternative.

The development of Maryland’s rewards program is, therefore, based less on empirical studies and more on anecdotal information from key stakeholders who had a lead in structuring the program³. The rewards program referred to as Maryland’s *School*

3

Interviews of Maryland leaders, conducted for a related pilot study, indicated that teacher union officials strongly influenced a number of the policies of the rewards program, including the stipulation that dollars not be directed to individual teachers. These decisions may have been politically rather than empirically based. Also, Maryland’s

Recognition Program, is a companion to the State's reconstitution policy, and assumes that monetary rewards can act as an incentive for those schools that have improved and for others that would want to follow in their path. It also assumes that rewards will encourage schools that receive them to continue to improve. Beyond the development of an intricate formula for determining which schools win awards, there has been little institutional focus and analysis on the impact of the rewards on school improvement. Data do exist on school performance from year to year, however, improvement results and rewards have not been analyzed. In addition, the information on how rewards money was spent is somewhat sketchy and leads to few conclusions regarding whether the money was targeted to school improvement. Also important to this dissertation, there is very little, if any, descriptive data regarding the principals' perceptions of how rewards might have impacted their schools' strategies for improvement.

Motivation and Incentive Behavior Studies

Understanding motivational behavior is important in a study of the application of a rewards system in education. Fuhrman (1986, p. 331) brings up the complex nature of motivating individuals in education reform.

Motivation for reform is just as complex a topic as the reform movement itself. Incentives are not simply matters of standards and linked accountability, nor are they simply matters of removing barriers so that entrepreneurial types can flex their muscles. Motivation is a matter of organization and management as well as policy, and it is influenced by the larger context in ways beyond the reach of any of those fields of endeavor . . . Motivation is constructed by both the motivator and the motivated. (p. 331)

program came after the Kentucky rewards program which allocated rewards money to individual teachers and was beset with problems including irate teachers.

Theoretical approaches in the field of motivation emphasize its content or the specific needs to which individuals respond in making choices. These approaches have focused primarily on the process of behavior and how it can be influenced to serve the goals of the institution. Maslow (1943, 1970) proposed a hierarchy of five distinct sets of needs that are a driving influence on individual behavior. Of the highest order, are physical and physiological needs related to human survival. These are followed by safety and security, love or social needs, ego or status needs, and finally self-actualization, self-realization and self-fulfilment needs. An important contribution of Maslow's theory is that it defines this hierarchy, bringing meaning to the fact that, first and foremost, individuals have basic "survival and security" needs. These are often affiliated with extrinsic motivators while higher level emotional needs may be connected with intrinsic motivating factors (Maslow, 1943, 1970). The notion of differences among individuals' situations, and the need to consider these differences when attempting to influence their behavior, is considered to be most critical (Windham, 1997, p.40). In applying this concept to teacher incentives, one might consider the various circumstances that would determine an individual's response. For example, a teacher in a highly disadvantaged school may respond differently to a particular incentive than would a teacher in a wealthy school. The concept of incentives as highly dependent on situation and need set an important threshold for studies that followed.

The process theories of motivation shift the emphasis from the "needs that incentives must meet, to the means by which incentives can alter behavior" (Windham, 1997, p. 41). The foundation for process theory was developed by B.J. Skinner in his

work on operant conditioning (1971), which refers to an ability to influence behavior over which the individual has conscious choice. By providing reinforcement in the form of rewards for positive behavior, or punishment for improper behavior, the subject is conditioned to behave in a desired way. An important part of Skinner's work relates to the schedule of reinforcement. Rewards given on a "piece-rate basis" receive recurrent positive reinforcement attached to a valuable behavior. Generally in education, fixed-interval models of reinforcement, such as regular evaluations and regular pay periods, are most common and believed to be less motivating (Boe, 1996). Also, if rewards are provided, regardless of the work performed, as in across-the-board pay increases, then the desired behaviors may cease (Skinner, 1971).

Kurt Lewin's (1951) classic work on motivation is also worth describing here. He conceptualized behavior as a relationship that can be depicted by the formula $B = f(P, E)$. Lewin believed that behavior B is a function of the interaction between the person P and the environment E . The person incorporates the values and capacities of the individual and the environment includes the intended and inadvertent incentives that act upon the individual. This theory sets the stage for recognizing that the behavior of an individual can change depending on environmental circumstances. Environment in this formula, includes incentives that can produce change. An important dimension in an individual's response is that person's values and capacities. Also inherent in Lewin's work, is the concept that environment can and does contribute to the capacities of individuals to act. This concept adds to the argument that rewards, used as a lever to motivate for change, may require particular environments that contribute to the capacity for change.

Theories on Workplace Motivation

Theories of workplace and workforce motivation have a long history. The famous Hawthorne studies of the 1920's, which were conducted with Western Electric workers, suggested that changes to the workplace environment could increase productivity (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939). The results of Hawthorne's landmark study contributed to a large body of psychological and industrial literature on management and workforce motivation. These literatures and subsequent theories have most often looked at motivational influences on employees rather than at their impact on managers.

Frederick Herzberg (Herzberg, et al., 1959) drew a distinction between behavioral influences or *motivators* and *hygiene* factors. Motivators included the internal job-content effects which could lead employees to be satisfied or not satisfied with their employment. They included intrinsic job satisfactions such as challenge and success in the job. The job context or hygiene factors included the more commonly understood extrinsic influences of pay, benefits, physical working conditions, and job security. The intrinsic motivation factors were shown to be critical in many occupations, especially in education (Kemmerer, 1990), however, they were not critical where positive context factors were absent. Therefore, the challenging and interesting job of working with students, could be a powerful incentive for professionals choosing teaching, but not in the absence of minimally acceptable pay and a good working environment (Kemmerer, 1990).

There are several theories that help us better understand motivation in education reform. The first is expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964; Lawler, 1986; Lawler, et al., 1995). This theory states that individuals are motivated to change their behaviors if they

understand organizational or program goals, and if they have a “line of sight” from their own behavior to achievement of the performance goals and to an outcome that is valuable to them (Kelley, 1999, p. 310). Individuals have clear preferences among choices given them. For example, managers have set expectations about what outputs are deserving of rewards and workers have set expectations regarding the outcomes of their own performance when goals are clearly stated (Lawler, 1986).

Goal-setting theory postulates that in order for goals to motivate employee behavior, they must be specific, challenging, achievable, and worthwhile. Also important is the assertion that the act of establishing goals is, in itself, a source of motivation to achieve those goals (Locke, 1968; Mento, Steel & Karren, 1987; Mohrman & Lawler, 1996; Rowan, 1996; Windham, 1997). The major criticism with goal-setting in education is that most goals and goal statements are either very vague and not operational, or not clearly linked to the resources, expenditures, or professional activities of their organizations (Windham, 1997).

Systems theory suggests that the alignment of organizational resources and policies can motivate employees (Scott, 1992). Research suggests that when human resource policies complement and align with an organization, the productivity of employees is greater than the summative effect of productivity improvements from any one policy (Ichniowski, Shaw & Prennushi, 1994; Welbourne & Mejia, 1995).

These theories on general workplace behavior and their implementation in the private sector may have had a profound influence on education reform efforts and school-based rewards policies. One explanation for this phenomenon may be the tremendous

influence exerted by the private sector on education reform. Corporate America has been vocal in its demand for education improvement as a precursor to workforce improvement. From the groundbreaking report, *A Nation At Risk*, distributed by the U.S. Department of Education in 1985, to current education restructuring efforts based on the Baldrige business model,⁴ the private sector has been both mentor and guide. Therefore, in that context, an education modification of widely used business incentives makes sense. This next section furthers the connection of corporate America and education by discussing major research studies that link general workplace motivation theories to specific education environments.

Motivation in Education Settings

There is a substantial body of corporate management literature connecting incentives to innovation. This literature emphasizes that incentive systems are an important factor affecting innovation decisions (Carlson, 1971; Kelley, 1999). In applying innovation to education, Coleman (1971) argues that if many schools are not now effective, one cause of their ineffectiveness is the lack of incentives for them to seek or invent appropriate interventions.

The importance of motivating principals and teachers to modify or improve instructional practices has become a critical variable in education improvement. Valued outcomes, clear goals, and resource alignment are frequently suggested. Mohrman and

4

Malcolm Baldrige's concepts on continuous improvement has been adopted by many corporations and has in the past few years, been adapted for education environments.

Lawler (1996), in listing design features that they believe motivate employees to high performance, go a step farther in specifying rewards as a necessary valued outcome.

Kelley (1999) studied several state school-based performance awards programs and found that the few leaders she surveyed felt that these awards were useful tools, contributing to valued outcomes, to goal setting toward academic achievement and improvement, and to resource alignment. In a more comprehensive discussion of valued outcomes, she pointed to research on intrinsic and extrinsic rewards and suggested that teachers are primarily motivated by intrinsic rewards, such as seeing and being responsible for improvements in student performance and working collaboratively with peers. Her statement may also have been based on research indicating that “teachers regard professional efficacy, not money, as the primary motivator in their work (Johnson, 1986, p. 55). Professional efficacy is defined as seeing a connection between one’s own efforts and improvement in the greater context of the job (Bandura, 1997; Lortie, 1975).

Rosenholtz (1991) found that professional collaboration among teachers in the development of curriculum and instruction also motivated them. Financial incentives are believed to be motivating when focused on meeting specific and measurable goals such as higher test scores or when offered to teachers for specific tasks or assignments (Johnson, 1986).

In attributing a benefit to school-based rather than individual incentives, Kelley (1999) theorized that financial incentives given to schools can help set clear goals. In discussing resource alignment, Kelley suggested that school-based performance awards could be helpful in bringing a much needed focus on student achievement. She called for

further study to examine how these awards could be positively aligned with achievement goals through formal and informal feedback and evaluation systems, professional and curriculum development, and the restructuring of time to enable teachers to collaborate (1999).

Eric Hanushek (1995), an opponent of increased education expenditures for reducing class size or for increasing salary structures of teachers, is an advocate of rewards if they are based on clear goals toward the improvement of student performance. He adds an appeal for experimenting with incentive approaches:

A key element of evaluation and incentives involves separating what the school and teachers control from what they do not. Specifically, incentive schemes must be based on value-added notions, where rewards are related to gains that can be attributed to individual teachers and schools, not just to the overall performance of students. The second issue is our lack of sufficient experience with incentive approaches. We cannot gain experience from things we have never tried. This fact suggests a broad program of experimentation (with evaluation). We must try different approaches and evaluate whether or not they appear to be leading us in the direction of higher student performance. (1995, pp. 63-64)

Cohen (1996) questions the efficacy of many rewards programs, which he believes need to be tied to clear measures of performance and school improvement, a feat which he feels is very difficult because performance rewards would require unprecedented clarity about measures of performance, criteria of success, and fairness.

Leadership and Organizational Effectiveness Studies

A review of studies on organizational effectiveness and leadership is called for in this study of principals' perceptions of rewards impact. Although experts in the field of leadership and organizational effectiveness generally describe both areas as interrelated, this review separates them in order to present a more cogent discussion of each. However,

this author agrees that the two are connected and proposes that both subjects may have implications in developing a context for rewards.

Goal-orientation, motivation, innovation, and collaboration are frequently passwords in discussions of leadership and school effectiveness. The term, professional learning community, is also often introduced in education literature, as descriptive of a special environment where learning among all organizational members is the critical element. In this setting, principal, teachers, and students are described as working collaboratively as learners. Studies describing these concepts, as well as contingency theories of leadership and organizational effectiveness are discussed more thoroughly in the following sections.

Education Leadership

The leadership role of the principal is generally considered critical to school performance. The principal is key in developing shared decision-making (Malen & Ogawa, 1988) and responsible for using leadership skills to develop cooperative relationships that lead to collaboratively agreed upon goals (Dunlap & Goldman, 1991). The principal must recognize teachers' educational expertise (Maeroff, 1988), and should demonstrate a "power with" rather than a "power over" orientation (Kreisberg, 1992). Richard Elmore (2000) makes a case for a facilitative leadership model rather than the traditional managerial behavior model described in earlier ethnographic studies where hectic pace, variety, fragmentation, brevity, and control typify the work of the principal (Mintzberg, 1973; Wolcott, 1973).

Elmore's (2000) recommendations for facilitative leadership, mirror those of

many others (Barth, 1988; Bedeian & Zammuto, 1991; DuFour & Eaker, 1992; Evans, 1970; Geertz, 1973) and include the following: (a) improving practice and performance; (b) developing an environment for continuous learning both by individuals and groups; (c) exemplifying the values and behavior desired by all school members; (d) developing cooperation by understanding differences in expertise; and (e) helping to make possible what is required of others, referred to, by Elmore (2000), as distributive leadership.

The report of the National Leadership Network Study Group on Restructuring Schools (in Leithwood & Jantzi, 1997) states that the role of principal must change from building manager and administrator of the status quo, to coach and facilitator. The suggestion is that the “thrill” of leading a school should come through success and not through power.

The idea of shared leadership is described throughout the literature. Although principals are seen as critical change agents, their most important challenge is one of tapping teachers’ expertise and experience to facilitate enlightened decisions and build better educational programs (Barth, 1988; Elmore, et al., 1996; Leithwood, Leonard, & Sharratt, 1998; Lezotte & Jacoby, 1992). The professional literature suggests that failures or mixed successes in actively engaging teachers in goal-setting, planning, and decision making, may result, in part, because principals lack the particular leadership skills (Goodlad, 1984) or basic knowledge essential to planning and change in shared governance operations (Carman, 1987; Elmore, et al., 1996; Little, 1986).

In a recent landmark study on leadership (Knapp, Copland, & Talbert, 2003), the authors describe student learning, professional learning, and system learning as vertical

agendas that must be addressed simultaneously by leaders. They suggest that these form interdependent contexts that impact the functioning of a school as a learning organization. Action contexts that affect student, professional, and system learning are recommended and include the following: establishing a focus on learning, building professional communities, engaging external environments, acting strategically and sharing leadership, and creating coherence. Establishing focus on learning calls for a persistent and public focus on learning and teaching. Professional learning communities that value learning are described as those that nurture work cultures that value and support their members' learning. Engaging external environments that contribute to learning means building relationships and securing resources from outside groups that can foster students' or teachers' learning. Acting strategically and sharing leadership should encompass the mobilization of effort along multiple "pathways" that lead to student, professional, or system learning. Distributing leadership across levels and among individuals in different positions is recommended. Finally, creating coherence involves connecting student, professional, and system learning with one another and with learning goals (Knapp, et al., 2003, p. 12).

Michael Fullan (Fullan, Bertani, & Quinn, 2004), suggests that collective moral purpose is critical in leadership that proposes to raise the bar and close the achievement gap, particularly for students in disadvantaged settings. He describes a moral imperative as the organizational or system quality that applies to adults as well as to students and on that means "everyone has a responsibility for changing the larger education context for the better" (p. 43). Leaders must be highly engaged with others in the district and must

establish shared ownership and commitment to improvement. Fullan emphasizes that effective leaders should build leadership capacity in others, connect schools within a district to develop new ideas, skills and practices, continue to refine strategies and goals, create productive rather than destructive conflict, develop cultures of trust and respect, develop external partners, and focus resources on real needs, as well as developing new sources of funding to support schools to move toward heightened improvement.

Larry Cuban (2004) emphasizes the importance of leaders refusing to accept low expectations. He suggests that leadership ability is embedded in particular cultural and environmental settings. These can be varied and complex, and they determine the ways that leaders exert authority in their roles and use the resources they command. Cuban maintains that outstanding education leaders must insist on a challenging curriculum, focus on instructional excellence, and rally broad support. He also believes that organizational position matters in effective school leadership and should include instructional, managerial, and political roles.

The seven core functions of effective leadership in schools described by Bradley Portin (2004), also depict the comprehensive nature of the job of the leader. They include instructional, cultural, managerial, human resources, strategic, external development, and micropolitical leadership functions. Instructional leadership entails the constellation of practices that ensure quality of instruction. Cultural leadership refers to the work involved in building symbolic resources of the school, such as its traditions, climate, and history. Managerial leadership involves the operations of the school relative to budget, schedule, facilities, safety and security, and transportation. Human resources leadership

encompasses recruiting, hiring, firing, inducting, and mentoring teachers and administrators as well as developing leadership capacity and professional development opportunities. Strategic leadership is necessary in promoting vision, mission, and goals and developing a means to reach them. External development leadership involves representing the school in the community, developing capital, tending to public relations, buffering and mediating external interests, and advocating for the school's interest. Finally, micropolitical leadership means the ability to buffer and mediate internal interests while at the same time maximizing resources.

In discussing the importance of effective leadership that is sustainable, Hargreaves and Fink (2004) point to a case study of change over three decades in eight U.S. and Canadian high schools as seen through the eyes of more than 200 teachers and administrators. They describe seven principles that contribute to enduring and positive change. First, they suggest that improvement strategies be applied to all students, not the few who are most in need. Second, they recommend that leadership should be lasting and that there must be a concerted effort to prepare successors who can continue improvement. Third, they argue for distributive leadership so that many are infused with the commitment and tasks of whole school improvement. Fourth, they posit the importance of socially just leadership, that is leaders who accept responsibility for the schools and students in their wider environment, not just in their respective schools. Fifth, they believe that sustainable leadership involves the ability to be resourceful and to supply intrinsic rewards and extrinsic incentives. These might include providing time and opportunity for networking, learning from and supporting one another, and coaching and

mentoring. Sixth, leaders must promote diversity. In this regard, diversity refers to encouraging diverse practices and less standardization of instructional methods. Finally, the authors suggest that in meeting the needs of sustainability, the leader must be an activist, forming strategic alliances with the community, promoting education through the media and other outlets, and becoming politically active at state and local levels.

Thompson (2004) introduces a notion of spiritual leadership as important in “developing a state of mind or consciousness that enables a leader to perceive deeper levels of experience, meaning, and purpose than a strictly materialistic vantage point would offer.”(p. 62) His concept, which has received limited attention in leadership literature, suggests that qualities and habits of mind such as faith, patience, intuition, humility, expectancy, inspiration and spirituality are as important as effective action in bringing about education improvement.

Effective Schools Literature

For more than twenty years, researchers have produced studies that identify the factors associated with effective and less effective schools (Barth, 1988; Brookover & Lezotte, 1977; Edmonds, 1978). These factors are generally reflective of those attributed to effective leaders. Effective schools are generally considered to exhibit environments more conducive to change and improvement. They have the intrinsic ability to continually renew themselves by self-assessing, setting and revising student-centered objectives, planning, acting in unity, and implementing reassessment processes (Brookover & Lezotte, 1977; Fullan, 2001; Rogoff, 1994). These schools are believed to have the greatest dissatisfaction with their own teaching and learning (Glickman, 1993). In

addition, school members feel that improvement energizes the organization and is possible regardless of the current state of the organization (Fullan, 2001). In these schools, poised for change, one might assume that motivation could be enhanced by external incentives.

Research on less effective schools depicts them as having the greatest satisfaction with their teaching and learning (Brookover, 1977; Brookover & Lezotte, 1977; Glickman, 1993). Because less effective schools do not share common goals, they leave teachers alone to plan what they teach, with little guidance from colleagues or program articulation from year to year (Lezotte & Jacoby, 1992). Such “self-satisfied” schools may lack organizational vitality and respond only to external forces, such as central office and state mandates or parental dissatisfaction. Often, changes in response to these externally identified crises are apt to be quickly planned or inadequately implemented (Fullan, 2001). In these types of environments, one might expect less positive effects from incentives for change.

The literature describing effective schools depicts them as promoting high student achievement and/or continuous and consistent improvement in student achievement and refers to leadership as an important common denominator (Conley, 1993; Edmonds, 1978; Elmore, 2000; Fullan, 2001; Glickman, 1993; Lezotte & Jacoby, 1992).

Organizational Learning Communities Literature

As discussed above, the literature on leadership and effective schools frequently refers to the development of learning communities as effective cultures for change. It emphasizes cooperative and collaborative structures such as planning and decision-

making in a systemically operating organization. Principals should be engaged with teachers and other organizational members in learning together and building improvement capacity.

Knapp's major contribution to the field (2003) presents a handbook of reflective tools for schools and districts. He and his colleagues emphasize developing a learning community with a focus on learning and shared values in improving the organization. They recommend enhanced staff interaction, cycles of school-wide inquiry into learning and teaching performance, identifying and addressing assumptions about norms, values, and beliefs about learning, and recruiting teachers who work from a values base consistent with those that leaders seek to develop. They also believe that opportunities must be offered to staff so that they have a role in decision-making, and they suggest that learning community type schools spend time celebrating their accomplishments.

Elmore and colleagues believe (Elmore, et al., 1996) that performance-based accountability systems should be designed to encourage schools and districts to develop the internal capabilities to improve their performance on core functions. In fact, research in this area has guided theoretical practice in calling for the creation of a special school culture and climate that lay a foundation for improvement and success. A learning organization is described as "a group of people pursuing common purposes with a collective commitment to regularly weighing the value of those purposes, modifying them when that makes sense, and continuously developing more effective and efficient ways of accomplishing these purposes" (Leithwood, et al., 2001, p. 30).

Learning-centered school environments are thought to increase collegiality, add to

collective instructional thinking, build teacher capacities, prime motivation, and counter faculty divisiveness that may accompany more individual-based and/or top-down plans (Darling-Hammond, et al., 1995; Deming, 1988; Firestone & Pennell, 1993). Learning organizations are thought to embrace overlapping responsibilities, collective accountability, and open-ended tasks, and bring meaning to imprecise goals.

School effectiveness research of the 1970's and 1980's drew our attention, not only to structural and academic factors that were aligned with higher student achievement, but to behavioral factors like relationships and values (Merz & Fuhrman, 1997). Coleman (1971) pointed to our country's growing loss of family and community connections, evidence that may have contributed to a new philosophical base that helped develop frameworks for measuring psychological, emotional, and behavioral dimensions important to education improvement. Necessary elements in this more behavioral approach were believed to include membership, influence, fulfillment of needs and emotional connection (Merz & Fuhrman, 1997).

This behavioral approach is a natural link to a paradigm that considers intrinsic and extrinsic incentives as encouragement and motivation toward achieving greater success. Peter Drucker (1996) added to this approach in his discussion of the need to change organizational structures. He commented that organizations are about more than structure and marketplace results. Rather, they are social organizations with a purpose to make the strengths of people effective and their weaknesses irrelevant (p. 5). Drucker emphasized that values and personality are inherent in an organization and leadership and teacher behaviors were, therefore, critical elements to be considered. Fullan (2004)

suggests that a collective moral purpose is necessary in making explicit the goal of raising the bar and closing the gap for all individuals. Peter Senge (1990) describes an organization where people work to create the results they desire and continually learn how to learn together. Shared vision and team learning are important parts of the system (also Deming, 1988). Rogoff (1994) describes her idea of a community of learners as one where learning occurs as people participate together in shared endeavors. She points out that all of the players may have active but asymmetrical roles in a sociocultural activity.

The studies discussed thus far, suggest that there are particular leadership traits and organizational characteristics that are conducive to school improvement. There is also a notion these organizations may be responsive to positive incentive programs. However, there is inadequate data to substantiate these ideas. There may be many schools using very different operating systems that are highly successful. This dissertation contributes to the literature by adding information regarding leader practices, their perceptions of rewards, and the environments in which they were introduced - environments which were deemed successful in sustained school improvement.

Contingency Theories of Leadership and Organizational Effectiveness

The management literature provides insights on leadership and organizational effectiveness that can be applied to education. Of particular interest are contingency theories which explain the interrelationships between work situations and role requirements for leaders. Effective leadership theory assumes that different behaviors are put in place to meet the situational needs of the workplace. In other words, these theories are used to explain why the effect of leader behavior on outcomes varies across situations.

Gary Yukl is an organizational management theorist recognized for his work in this area. His Multiple Linkage Model of Leadership and Group Effectiveness (Yukl, 2002, p. 221) is a synthesis of earlier and contemporary theories and frames the components of organizational operation, calling attention to the linkages that exist between leader and workers and specific workplace variables. Very important in these contingency theories, is the concept of the dynamic role of a leader which is predicated on the situational needs of each work unit. The relevant concepts and depiction of leadership behavior and group effectiveness can be useful in analyzing change environments such as those faced by schools in high stakes improvement environments. A discussion of contingency theories contributing to Yukl's model follow.

Path-goal theory.

Path-goal theory (Evans, 1970), emphasizes the situational dynamics of leadership and was developed to explain how the behavior of a leader influences the satisfaction and performance of subordinates. An important theoretical assumption underlying the path-goal model is that a leader's motivational function consists of increasing personal payoffs to subordinates for work-goal attainment. The leader must also find ways to make the paths to these payoffs more accessible by clarifying them, reducing roadblocks, and increasing opportunities for personal satisfaction along the way (Yukl, 1998, p. 266). Personal payoffs are considered important and impact "subordinate satisfaction, particularly satisfaction with the leader" (House & Dessler, 1974, p. 13).

Situational Leadership Theory.

Building on Evans' theory, Hersey and Blanchard (1977) introduced a

contingency theory that posits the notion that leadership behavior depends on the “maturity” of an individual subordinate. Maturity is made up of the following two related components: (1) the worker’s task-related skills and technical knowledge and (2) the worker’s self-confidence and self-respect. A high-maturity individual can assume more responsibility and set high goals. A low-maturity individual lacks both ability and self-confidence to accomplish high attainment work. Situational leadership theory suggests that the level of subordinate maturity determines the optimal pattern of leader behavior. In other words, as subordinate maturity rises, task and relations interventions by the leader can decrease.

Leadership substitutes theory.

This theory, developed by Kerr and Jermier (1978), identifies aspects of the working situation that reduce management leadership. The theory differentiates between two kinds of situational variables- substitutes and neutralizers. Substitutes make leader behavior unnecessary and redundant. They include any characteristics of the subordinates, tasks, or organization in general that ensure workers will be satisfied with their jobs. Therefore, if the system is operating at an optimum, the leader’s role is greatly reduced. Neutralizers, on the other hand, are any characteristics of the task or organization that prevent a leader from acting in a specified way. For example, a lack of training revenue would prevent a leader from offering needed services to the workers.

Redundancy theory.

Yukl’s adaptative model, is a hybrid of the contingency theories described above and also introduces a redundancy theory. Redundancy suggests that if situational factors

in the workplace are very favorable, and there are no constraints to the organization, some or all of the variables driving work performance, referred to as intervening variables, may already be at their maximum, thereby bringing a redundancy to the leader's job in building organizational effectiveness. On the other hand, less favorable situational factors and greater organizational constraints require more leader influence. In addition, Yukl's Multiple-Linkage Model clearly delineates the aspects believed to influence organizational output. In Chapter 3, these are described in detail with a rationale for the model's usefulness as a heuristic in guiding this study.

Literature Review Summary and Implications

The literature reviewed in this chapter supports several concepts. First, accountability and mandates for student improvement are likely to continue and also likely to incorporate incentive systems as a lever for change. School-based rewards and other recognition tagged to success outcomes, are believed to be effective, but little hard evidence exists to prove that point. In addition, beyond the rhetoric of consequences and sanctions, positive incentives would appear to be a more preferred policy among political and education leaders.

Second, studies in leadership, management and effective schools, suggest that leadership abilities and particular contexts of the organizational environment are integral to outcomes of improvement and change. Also, there is a possibility that, in settings poised for even the most challenging work, positive incentives can be particularly meaningful.

Third, behavior theories, from goal-setting to systems theory, support the notion

that individuals respond to positive incentives. A number of studies in business and education go farther, by suggesting that incentive systems be tied to innovative decisions, positing the notion that incentives have an important role in setting the ground for innovation that can lead to improvements in productivity or performance.

Research on the impact of incentives, such as school-performance rewards programs in public school settings, is still in its infancy. Few in-depth or empirical studies have been undertaken. In fact, negative perceptions are generally reported in studies of teachers' perceptions of merit pay and other rewards programs. Strangely enough, principals and other leaders, who play a critical role in their schools, and could have the most insights about the effects of positive incentives, have not been the focus of studies on recognition and rewards. This fact, and the body of evidence that supports the use of rewards and other positive incentives in encouraging school improvement, suggest the need to attend to the question that guides this study: How do principals who have received monetary rewards for school improvement perceive the impact of these awards on their schools?

Chapter 3 - Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework attempts to understand and bring meaning to how school-performance awards impact schools by examining their relationship to the behavior and practices of principals in successful school improvement environments. The framework draws on the literature reviewed and specifically on the causal relationships that are part of Gary Yukl's Multiple Linkage Model (2002).

Rewards Impact on Contextual Features of a School

A general hypothesis in allocating monetary rewards is that they will encourage the organization, resulting in its continuing to improve. In this study, I assumed that the influence of rewards could occur at three school-related context points which could be understood and reported by the school leader, in this case, by the principal. These points include staff, school structure, and organizational culture. These reflect the body of research and theory suggesting that the attributes of a *learning community* contribute to the likelihood that organization will be able to change and improve. Figure 1 depicts the possible interaction of performance awards on these organizational contexts. Staff refers to instructional and non-instructional employees of the school. Structure encompasses the organizational underpinnings of the school - how it operates and defines and divides roles and responsibilities. Culture refers to the internal and external styles adopted by school leaders, administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community. These styles also contribute to student achievement outcomes. In this model, staff, organizational structure, and culture interrelate. All three could be influenced by performance awards and could lead to school improvement.

Contextual Impact Areas of School-Based Performance Awards

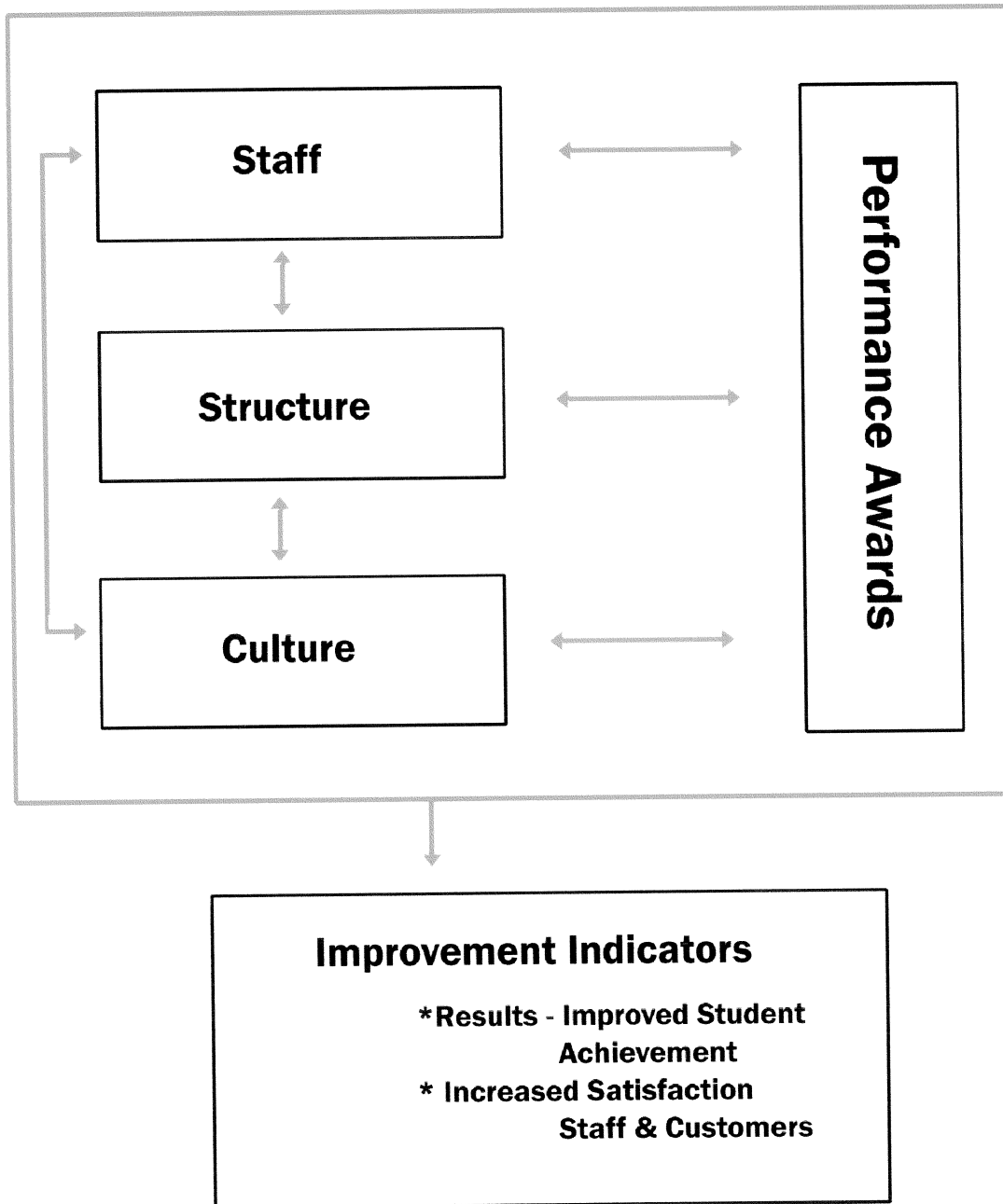


Figure 1. School context areas of staff, organizational structure, and culture may be impacted by school performance awards. Measures of improvement are included.

To illustrate staff impact, for example, rewards might impact the morale of school staff members and encourage them in higher levels of commitment and enhanced performance. Knapp and his colleagues (2003), in fact, suggest that celebrating accomplishments in student and teacher learning is critical in school reform and they believe that rewards and other incentives contribute to staff “buy in” and affirmation of the mission and vision of the organization. Although the leader position is not depicted in the graphic above, it is assumed as a critical aspect of the organization, embodying all three areas. The notion is that rewards should link to the behavior pursuits of school leaders. Researchers back up this notion (Cuban, 2004; Kelley, 1999; Kirkwood, 1999; Knapp, et al., 2003; Yukl, 2002) and discuss the important managerial role of leaders in allocating benefits to staff, individually and collectively, for a job well done. Kirkwood describes principals who believed that local awards gave them much needed opportunities to reward high performing teachers by giving them stipends to attend conferences or buy needed supplies. Kelley (1999) discusses the weaving together of extrinsic and intrinsic rewards systems to build a sense of value and appreciation among staff members. Yukl (1998, p. 279) suggests that “subordinate effort will be greater if the organization has a reward system that provides attractive rewards contingent on performance.”

The assumption is also made that rewards could impact structural elements such as the school’s improvement goals, planning processes, and strategies which could contribute to a heightened emphasis on outcomes and measures of performance (Knapp, et al., 2003). Finally, the relationship of performance awards and the cultural aspects of a school is assumed. At the culture point, rewards could have an impact on environmental

factors such as collaboration, communication, and decision making.

A Heuristic Model Guiding the Study

Yukl's Multiple Linkage Model, displayed in Figure 2 (2002, p. 221), organizes and conceptualizes the complex factors relative to leadership behavior and group effectiveness. It was selected as a heuristic guiding this study for a number of reasons. Although its layout of important leadership and work factors contributing to an organization's success, is more directed to corporate environments, these factors are actually quite similar to those described in current education leadership literatures (Fullan, et al., 2004; Knapp, et al., 2003; Portin, 2004). Yukl's framework is particularly useful in examining particular underpinnings that can determine the role requirements for leaders as they influence their group's effectiveness. It also points to specific work processes that may need to be corrected or changed in facilitating improvement outcomes, and it delineates graphically, rather than theoretically, the work of the leader in effecting change in these specific work-related areas. This model is not one that proves causation among variables.⁵ Rather, it is a model that helps organize workplace constructs, and one that shows a dynamic relationship among them, as well as between leader practices and ultimate workplace outcomes. A graphic presentation of Yukl's model is depicted below.

⁵

In granting me permission to use the model, Yukl explained that his model describes in a general way, the interacting effects of managerial behavior and the organization's situational characteristics with variables that determine the performance of a work unit. His communication to me was that he and others have used the model to develop survey questionnaires, to measure situational variables, mediators, and leader behaviors. He indicated that, unfortunately, many of the measures were not accurate enough to be useful for analyzing complex causal relationships. The model serves well, however, as a guide for interview and survey questions.

Multiple Linkage Model of Leadership & Group Effectiveness

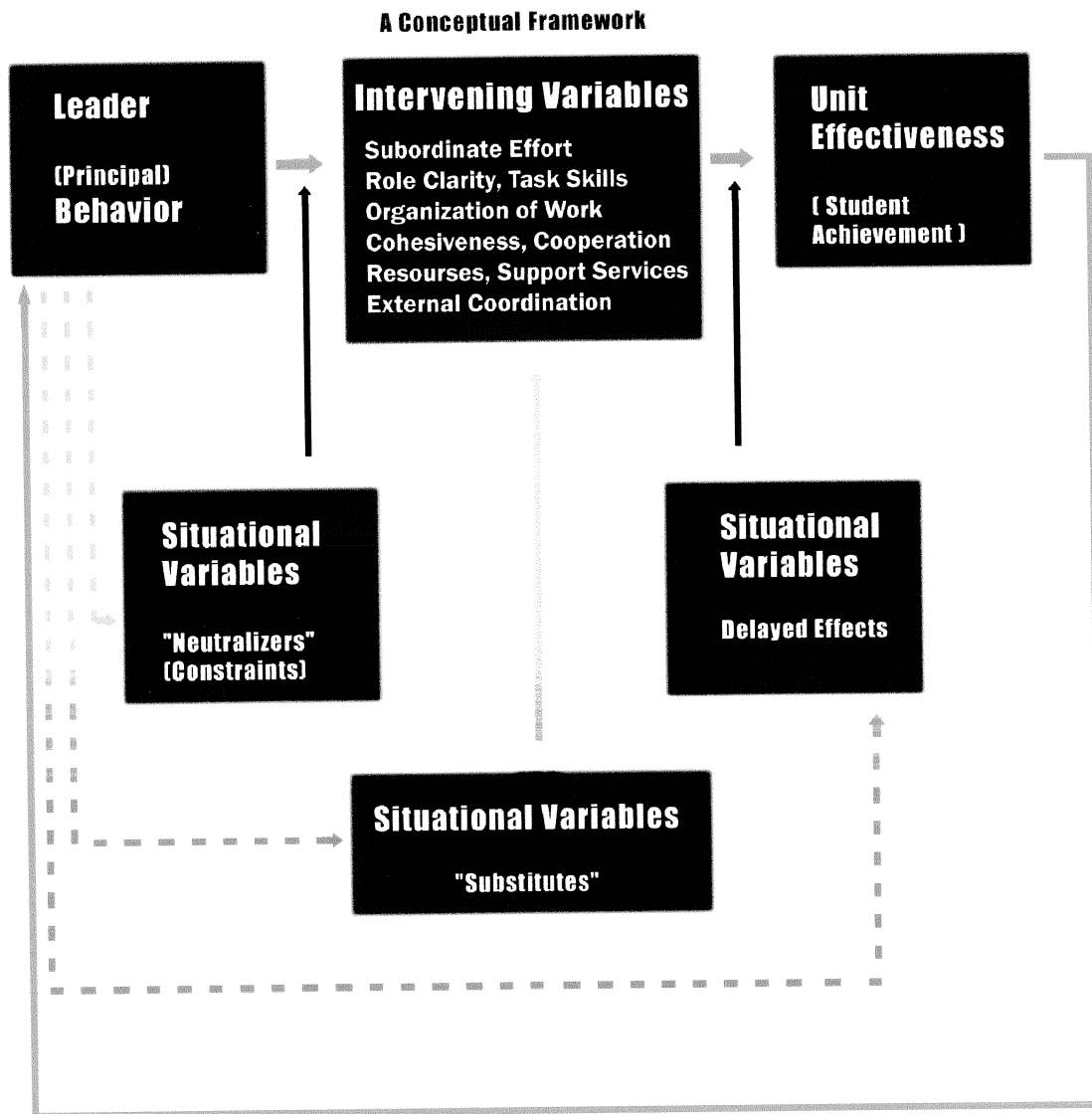


Figure 2. Yukl's Model (2002, p.221) shows the inter-related influences of intervening and situational variables on leadership behavior and organizational effectiveness.

The model enhances and clarifies the previous discussion of rewards impact areas (see Figure 1) and depicts organizational variables, described as intervening and situational (2002, pp. 220-221).

Intervening and Situational Variables

The model includes two major descriptors which are labeled intervening and situational variables. It describes the interacting effects of managerial behavior and situational variables of the work environment on intervening variables, such as worker effort and skills, that determine the performance of a work unit. The relationships among major types of variables are also depicted. Situational variables exert influence at three points. They can “constrain managerial behavior, thereby moderating its effects; they can directly influence intervening variables; and they can determine the relative importance of the important work-related intervening variables” (Yukl, 1998, p. 276).

In the model, dotted lines from leader behavior to each situational variable show indirect leader relationships. Finally, the linkage of unit effectiveness back to leader behavior is depicted, indicating the dynamic relationships involved.

In Figure 3, below, a rewards component, implied by the model but not specifically depicted, is added to show impact on all variables. This addition is useful in introducing rewards impact points, important in individualizing the model to guide this deep study of rewards impact on leader behavior and organizational response. This added feature does not transform the model, but rather displays rewards as a component that is actually an implied aspect of the model. In fact, Yukl explicitly describes incentives as impacting situational and intervening variables and leader behavior.

Multiple Linkage Model of Leadership & Group Effectiveness

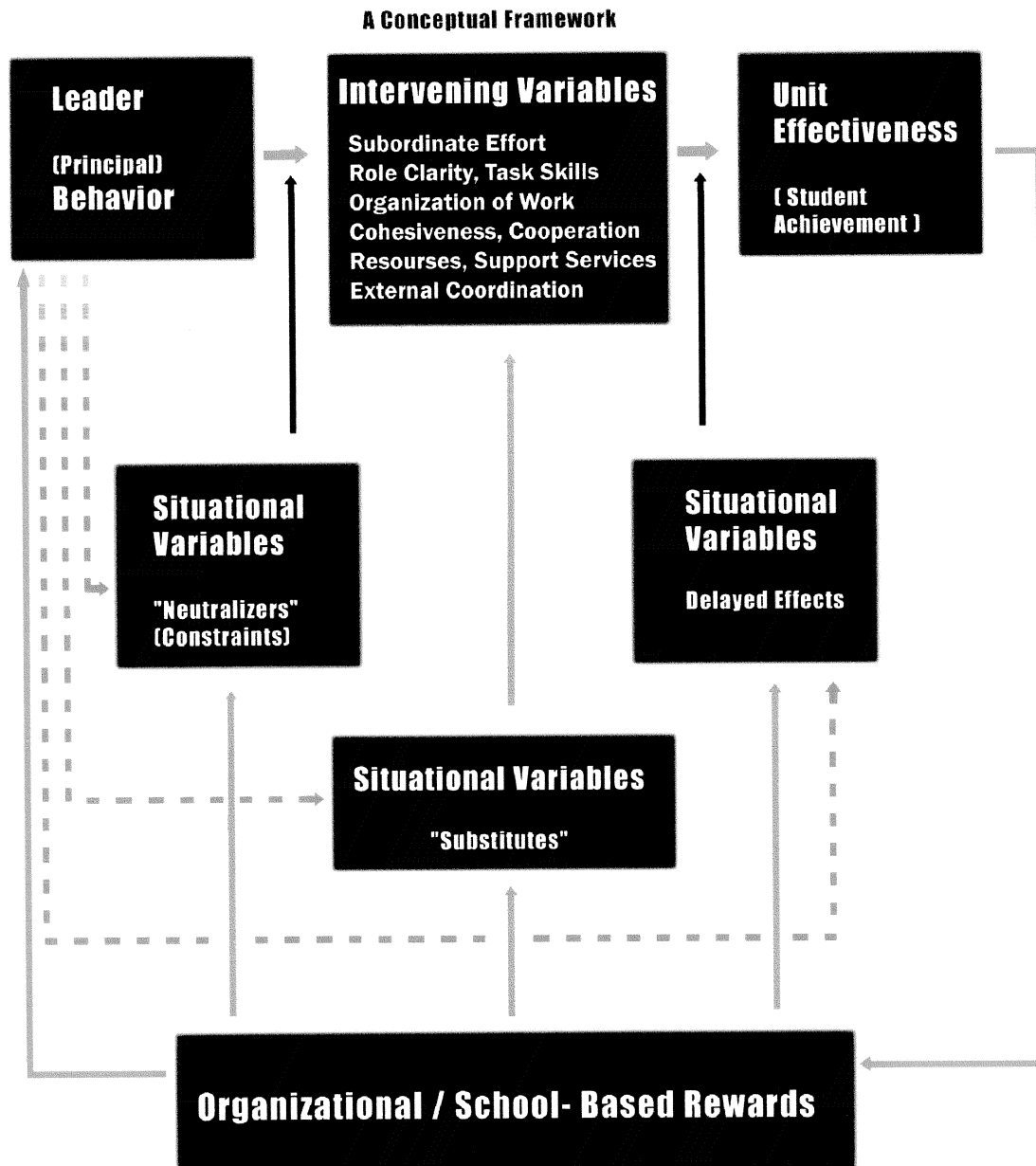


Figure 3. A modified version of Yukl's model with a rewards feature added, depicting rewards impact on intervening and situational variables.

The Impact of Rewards Systems

The rationale in using this contingency model to analyze the impact of rewards on schools is born out by contingency theorists (Yukl, 2002; House, 1971) who emphasize the use of motivation in creating effective organizational outcomes. House (p. 324), states that:

The motivational function of the leader consists of increasing personal payoffs to subordinates for work-goal attainment and making the path to these payoffs easier to travel by clarifying it, reducing roadblocks and pitfalls, and increasing the opportunities for personal satisfaction with the leader.

In a subsequent article, House and Dessler (1974, p. 13) further add to this thinking by saying, "...leader behavior will be viewed as acceptable to subordinates to the extent that the subordinates see such behavior as either an immediate source of satisfaction or as instrumental to future satisfaction."

The Multiple Linkage Model in More Detail

As previously noted, the purpose in using the model for this investigation was, not to prove causal relationships, but rather to help in structuring complex data. The model or framework was also used as a guide in developing a number of interview questions and it provided a structure for the interpretation and analysis of data.

Defining intervening variables.

Yukl defines six intervening variables which are major determinants of work output (2002, pp. 220-221). These are of particular merit in examining the relationship between principals' behavior and their practices and the context of staff performance in schools striving to improve. The first, subordinate or worker effort, refers to the extent to

which workers strive to attain a high level of performance and show a high degree of personal commitment to work objectives. The second, role clarity and task skills, relates to the extent to which workers understand their individual job responsibilities, know what to do, and have the skills to do them. The third is the organization of the work, or the extent to which effective performance strategies are used to attain unit objectives. This variable also considers the extent to which the work is organized to ensure efficient utilization of personnel, equipment, and facilities. The fourth variable is cooperation and mutual trust, the extent to which group members trust each other, share information and ideas, help each other, and identify with the work unit. Resources and support comprise the fifth variable and encompass the extent to which the group has the budgetary funds, tools, equipment, supplies, personnel, and facilities needed to do the work. The sixth, and final intervening variable, is external coordination, and refers to the extent to which activities of the work unit are synchronized with the interdependent activities in other parts of the organization and other organizations.

The intervening variables described above, interact with each other to determine the effectiveness of an organization or subunit. An important point is that a serious deficiency in one intervening variable can lower effectiveness, even though the other intervening variables are not deficient. Further, the greater the relative importance of a particular intervening variable, the more likely that group performance will be reduced by a deficiency in this variable (Yukl, 2002, p.221). Yukl explains that the relative importance of the intervening variables depend on the type of work unit and other aspects of the work environment.

Table 2

Conditions Affecting the Intervening Variables in Yukl's Multiple Linkage Model

Intervening Variable	Conditions Where High	Situations Where Most Needed
Subordinate Effort & Commitment	Interesting, challenging task Subordinates have strong work ethic.	Complex, labor-intensive work - requires initiative & persistence / mistakes are very costly
Subordinate Ability & Role Clarity	Subordinates with extensive training / experience Organization provides detailed formal rules/procedures /work highly automated.	Complex, difficult tasks; high degree of technical skills needed mistakes very costly; frequent changes due to user demands; work subject to disruptions and crises.
Cooperation & Teamwork	Stable, homogeneous, compatible membership / shared goals consistent with task objectives / strong traditions evoking pride	Task roles highly interdependent / scarce equipment or limited facilities / workers work in close proximity.
Organization of Work / Performance Strategies for It	Organization specifies optimal structure for work / workers have extensive prior training & experience.	Unit has complex & difficult mission / carries out diverse tasks / aspects of work are highly interrelated (need for coordination / high exposure task & mistakes are costly.
Resources Needed	Organization provides adequate resources/good control of sources of resources	Work requires large amounts of scarce resources/unreliable sources of resources
External Coordination	Structural mechanisms in place / handled by management or others	Coordination needed- high lateral interdependence / frequent changes in priorities

Table 2 points out the positive workplace conditions (column 2), relative to the intervening variables, that would lead to organizational effectiveness. Less leadership involvement or different forms of involvement would be recommended in these effective environments. These positive situational variables influence the level of each intervening variable independently of anything done by the leader. For example, in very favorable

situations, intervening variables may already be at their maximum, making the job of the leader much easier or even unnecessary or redundant. In unfavorable situations, the leader needs the requisite skills to act on and correct deficiencies. Table 2 also depicts workplace situations and conditions which typically lead to difficulties and negative environments. These types of organizations, including schools, would require intervention and leadership assistance to correct deficiencies.

Use of Yukl's model in the current study.

As already discussed, the model was selected as a heuristic in conceptualizing the complex relationships in leadership behavior and group effectiveness outcomes. Most important to this investigation, is the nexus of rewards and school improvement outcomes.

If-then tests, recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 271), are useful here in focusing on how the model serves as a guide in this specific case study. For example, by assuming that if a school is successful enough to win three or four performance awards, then some conditions influencing the school's work related features (intervening variables) should be moderate to high. In a restatement of this concept, if a school has demonstrated the capacity to improve student outcome areas, then it may have defined specific goals and critical improvement areas. If that is the case, rewards could contribute, not only by building internal and external motivation, but by focusing resources on targeted strategies for improvement. Examining a performance awards system through the lens of each of Yukl's intervening variables, therefore, contributes to an enhanced ability to unpack complex phenomena involved in school improvement and

to analyze the impact of rewards on the specific conditions and situations relevant to the functioning of the school in an environment of change.

Intervening and situational variables are also deemed useful in focusing an analytic lens on the impact of rewards on organizational constraints. A deeper understanding of constraints in school change scenarios should be considered critical in reform efforts. In other words, do rewards assist principals and teachers in overcoming organizational constraints? For example, if a lack of commitment to improvement is a constraint, might rewards play a part in reinforcing or boosting that commitment?

Limitations of the model.

The limitation of this model, according to Gary Yukl, is that it's usefulness in explaining cause has yet to be proven. However, in the case of this study, it is not used to explain cause, but rather, it is utilized as a tool for uncovering and guiding the inquiry as well as in analyzing the data.

Research Context Summary

Research on organizational effectiveness, facilitative leadership, and motivation, points to the use of rewards as a tool for improvement. This study analyzes the effect of school improvement performance rewards on schools by investigating the perceptions of school principals regarding the impact of these rewards on their own practices as well as on their staff members, organizational structure, and school culture. A Multiple Linkage Model which frames a number of management contingency theories, is used as a heuristic device in guiding this study. The model, used more often in business environments, organizes situational and work-related contextual features thought to be critical in

organizational effectiveness and explains dynamic relationship among these features and the work of the organization leader. Its structured layout and explanations are used as a framework in presenting patterns of principal behavior and practice presented in the cross-case analysis and discussion of implications in Chapters 6 and 7.

Table 3 presented below presents an alignment of theories from education and business literature and depicts correlating assumptions and concepts of interest in this study.

Table 3

Alignment of Research Theories and Proposal Concepts

Theories	Research	Study Concepts
Incentives lead to motivation.	Incentives may or may not motivate in schools.	School rewards can motivate school leaders.
Motivation leads to change and improvement.	Motivation must be tied to specific goals/strategies.	Rewards use, if targeted, can lead to improvement.
Leadership is important in in organizational effectiveness.	Leadership skill/will are important: Effective leaders create effective organizations.	School leaders, successful in improvement, skillfully use rewards to motivate and mediate.
Effective organizations are better at change and improvement.	Learning community organizations are better able to change.	Continuously improving schools may have organizational strengths to better utilize rewards.
Leadership and group effectiveness are linked by situational and intervening variables.	Leader /staff behavior and work features contribute to work effectiveness.	Effort, role clarity, skill, organization of work, cohesiveness, cooperation, resources, support services, and external coordination are important variables; leaders of continuously improving schools are likely to invest resources/rewards in these or related areas.

Table 3 is included as illustrative of prevalent theories associated with leadership, organizational learning communities, and incentives. They have been aligned with several assumptions, drawn from the literature, and also with salient study's concepts. There are a number of important hypothetical constructs involved. The first is that the allocation of monetary performance rewards can impact the work of leaders in a variety of ways. The second is that leaders are able to define and construct the meaning of rewards. The third is that the effects of rewards can be tied to organizational features operating in school improvement environments.

This study explores these concepts by examining the perceptions of a sample of eight principals whose schools were successful in winning awards three and four times. The underlying question is: How do these principals perceive the impact of school performance rewards on their schools? The interview protocol to obtain answers to this question is included in Appendix B.

The following chapter discusses the study's design and methodological approaches. It also adds detail and depth to an understanding of the application of the Multiple Linkage Model to this study of school performance awards.

Chapter 4 - Design and Methodology

This chapter presents an overall methodological approach and rationale, the protocol for site selection, data-gathering schedules and methods, data analysis procedures, trustworthiness features, and ethical and political considerations.

Research Rationale, Background, and Approach

This study is a qualitative case study investigation of the practices implemented and the perceptions of rewards impact by a sample of eight Maryland principals that received state school-based performance awards three and four times as a result of sustained student achievement improvement. The decision to investigate principals only, was based on the lack of previous research regarding their perceptions about rewards and the fact that numerous studies call attention to the important role they play in developing effective schools and leading change. The rationale also considered that school-based awards might best be understood in a global context by organizational leaders.

This study was exploratory and descriptive and allowed for a rich, contextualized understanding of the concepts under investigation. The selection of a sample of principals, with a number of years experience in receiving and applying rewards, was critical in bringing credibility to their impressions and perceptions and in allaying a concern regarding the retrospective nature of the investigation.

Maryland's rewards program, referred to as the School Recognition Program, was particularly well suited to such a study for a number of reasons. First, it has sustained over the course of nine years. Second, the program allocated significant monetary

resources to improving schools. In fact, an average award was approximately \$30,000. Third, the selection process involved a determination of significant improvement which rested primarily on the concept of sustained improvement for two years.

A brief background sketch of Maryland's rewards program shows that the State has allocated, each year, \$2.75 million and that the distribution of rewards began in 1996 and continued each year thereafter. The period of time investigated in this study is 1996-2001. During that period, 313 schools received a performance award, but only 25% of the schools won the awards more than one time. A much smaller percentage, 6% or 18 schools won the award three or four times. The study sample for this investigation consisted of just under half, or eight, of these schools. A detailed description of the sample is included later in this chapter.

This study, as stated earlier, was both exploratory and descriptive, in that its purpose was to uncover meaning, but at the same time to gain rich descriptive information regarding school improvement contexts and various aspects of rewards impact, including the processes involved in funding decisions as well as the actual use of rewards revenue.

A qualitative case study approach was chosen for this study. The purpose of qualitative research as described by Patton is "to inform action, enhance decision-making, and apply knowledge to solve human and societal problems" (1990, p. 12). Qualitative research is defined by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) as "multi method in focus, involving an interpretive naturalistic approach." Typical of qualitative research methodology, interviews were conducted on site in school settings. Denzin and Lincoln affirm that

qualitative researchers should “study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 2). For this study, which looked to understand the meaning of rewards to principals, qualitative research would be considered a preferred method (Maxwell, 1996, p. 134) because of its usefulness in providing a deeper understanding of the nature of rewards within improvement environments - an understanding which could effect future practice.

Site Selection

Several considerations guided the selection of the eight Maryland elementary schools for this study. First, each of these schools was deemed successful by the Maryland State Department of Education in significantly improving student achievement. The complex formula for success, used student gains at each tested grade level and in each of the data-driven assessments of the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP). Significant improvement was based on a statistically validated School Performance Index (SPI) and required that significant improvement be sustained over a two year period. Second, each of these schools won the school-based monetary awards over and over again - that is, they won three to four times over the course of a six year period of rewards administration, from 1996-2001. Third, although there were eighteen schools out of a possible 313 that could have been considered, many of them had not received awards in more recent years, and the assumption was made that the principals would have a less current memory of the impact of the rewards. Fourth, the principals of the eight selected schools were still in place as principals, either at their winning school or one close by. Fifth, the eight schools were geographically and

demographically diverse. They represented urban, suburban and rural Maryland and also reflected racial and economic diversity. Finally, the schools varied in student performance and ranged from schools in the top tier to those eligible for state probation. Table 4 displays the schools that comprised this case study.

Table 4

Maryland's Three and Four Time Rewards School Winners⁶

School System	School	Wins / Years
Belmar	Dogwood Elem	4 // 98, 99, 2000, 2001
Harrison	Cherry Elem	4 // 96, 99, 2000, 2001
Kingston	Elm Elem	3 // 99, 2000, 2001
Kingston	Maple Elem	3 // 99, 2000, 2001
Morgan	Willow Elem	3 // 99, 2000, 2001
Carlsford	Sycamore Elem	3 // 97, 99, 2000
Farmington	Spruce Elem	3 // 98, 99, 2000
Oldham	Pine Elem	3 // 98, 99, 2001

The eight schools depicted in Table 4 represent six different Maryland school systems.

6

School system and school names are pseudonyms. All interviewees were also given different identities to maintain confidentiality.

Data show the number of times each school won awards and the years they won.

As discussed above, selected schools were varied and thought to support a broad perspective on rewards, bringing richer meaning to similarities and differences in patterns of practice.

Data Collection

Data collection took place over a seven-month period, beginning in the spring and continuing through the fall of 2003. Data collection protocols and procedures were approved by the University of Maryland Institutional Review Board and by each school's local school system. Participants signed an Informed Consent Form (See Appendix C) explaining the purpose, procedures, and benefits of the study, and were told they had the freedom to withdraw from the study and the opportunity to ask questions. There were no perceived risks to participants, and anonymity and confidentiality were ensured by using school and principal pseudonyms. Data was stored and is not subject to public scrutiny.

Data collection began with a gathering of statewide information on Maryland schools with particular attention paid to those that received awards from 1996-2001. Data factors included School Performance indices, economic factors as measured by Free and Reduced-Priced Meals (FARMS), and enrollment features broken down by prominent Maryland racial categories, including breakdowns of White, Hispanic, and African American students. Data were used to compare each of the eight case schools with all schools that received awards between 1996 and 2001 as well as to compare these with all elementary and middle schools that took the State assessments and were, therefore, eligible to receive school performance awards (see displays and discussion in Chapter 5).

Interviews of Principals

A standardized introductory note was developed and given to each principal prior to the interview (see Appendix A). This note explained the rationale and circumstances of the study and the interview and explained various features including respondent anonymity and the interviewer's interest in obtaining true and unbiased information that could be useful in improving the rewards program. Special attention was given to separating the interviewer from the subject being investigated. Explanations, given to participants, clarified that this study was for dissertation research and also that there was not a relationship between the interviewer and the rewards program.

Extended, 1½ to 2 hour, confidential interviews were conducted with each of the eight principals. With participants' permission, these were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Handwritten notes were also used to check on the accuracy of the tapes. These were entered as additional supporting commentaries and analyzed along with transcribed discussions. None of the respondents declined to have conversations or portions of the conversations tape-recorded. However, conversations sometimes persisted after the taping, and scripting notes were made as soon as possible after the interview. These notes were entered into computerized script notes within several hours and were used, along with notes, to enhance and corroborate verbatim scripts. Principals were asked to call if additional ideas occurred. A number of follow-up discussion calls were made one to two weeks after the interviews to clarify issues or details that were not fully explained. Scripts or memos were sent to the principals who were asked to call if there were inconsistencies or incorrect information.

Interview questions were pre-tested on six *critical friends* which included three local and state administrators and three principals that were not part of the study. Adaptations to the interview questions were made based on their feedback and an analysis of whether the questions were clear and easily understood.

Interviews conducted with study participants were semi-structured and were framed by a protocol seeking information and description about rewards impact on behaviors and practices in school improvement. (See Appendix B). Interview questions, followed by probes, permitted individualization of the interview and the generation of particular topics while, at the same time, maintaining a consistency of response areas. Interviews began by eliciting responses on principals' perceptions of their roles in their schools' climate of improvement prior to winning awards. This information was important in exploring issues relative to their influence on improvement and the subsequent impact of rewards on them and on their school members. Questions later shifted to delve into information pertinent to the rewards allocations and were more direct in seeking answers to their influence and use. Questions and probes were also introduced to gather information relative to rewards impact on external stakeholders such as parents, community members, partners, and school systems.

Table 5. on the following page, shows the alignment of proposal concepts and interview question types and prompts. Questions reflected concepts but were structured to allow for rich discussion and variation among respondents. However, each interview searched for answers to the same questions so as to standardize information obtained from each principal.

Table 5

Proposal Concepts and Aligned Interview Question Types and Prompts

Proposal Concepts	Interview Questions
School rewards can motivate school leaders.	Feelings about winning? Motivated as a leader? Impact on leadership? Impact on motivating others?
Rewards use, if targeted, can lead to improvement	Impact on student achievement? Targeted to specific needs or programs? How determined? Which needs or programs? Used to strengthen instruction? Student services? Staff needs? Support services? Instructional equipment or other school needs? Family community involvement and partnerships?
School leaders, successful in improvement, may skillfully use rewards to motivate and mediate. Continuously improving schools may have organizational strengths to better utilize rewards.	How communicated? How money allocated? How staff and community involved? How used to mediate weaknesses and constraints on improvement? Culture and climate of school? Leadership style and responsibilities? Students, parents, community factors? Professional learning community characteristics? Defined vision, goals, strategies?
Effort, role clarity, skill, organization of work, cohesiveness, cooperation, resources, support services, and external coordination are important variables; leaders of continuously improving schools may invest resources/rewards in these areas.	Rewards revenue used to encourage? Support? Contribute to skill building? Improve roles and responsibilities? Build internal / external coordination and relationships? Purchase important instructional goods and supplies?

Other Data Sources

Documents, obtained from each school, were used to corroborate interview data and to add details that might not have been discussed. These included press releases, meeting minutes, staff meeting notes distributed by the principal, suggestions and tip sheets, schedules of planning meetings, communications to parents, reports sent to district or state offices, accountings of purchases and vendor sheets relating to rewards revenue, notices of celebrations and other events, and diagrams of organizational charts and other

school structures implemented.

At the end of each interview, principals were also asked to document, to the best of their ability, school data, which included the following: information on reward amounts and years and on other awards won by the school, district information including number of schools broken down by levels and per pupil expenditures, and school information including geographic description, enrollment, racial/ethnic composition, student mobility rates, Limited English Proficient student percentages, number of languages and their specification, percentages of students receiving special education services, numbers of students with disabilities and the specifications, the number and delineation of full and part-time staff members, the average student-classroom teacher ratio, approximate teacher turnover rate over the past three years, daily student attendance, and daily teacher attendance. This information was used to sketch a background picture of each school which was introduced at the beginning of each school's case presentation.

A data sheet related to principal background was also given at the end of each interview. Information to be supplied covered education background, number of years in education or in other fields, number of years in the current school system, number of years as principal, other administrative roles, years as principal in the awards school, other roles at the school, and number of years receiving and administering the monetary awards. This information was also used at the beginning of each case to present a fuller picture of each principal.

Interviews were also supplemented with a review of school documents related to

rewards. Surprisingly, five of the eight schools had comprehensive documentation of team planning notes and minutes of decision meetings, assessment analysis reports, communications to parents, newsletters containing announcements of rewards, reports of purchase requests, and vendor slips of materials purchased.

As mentioned earlier, school performance and other demographic data, as well as records on verified rewards allocations were collected from the Maryland State Department of Education to compare the sample of eight schools with all rewards schools and all elementary and middle schools in Maryland (see Chapter 5).

Categorizing the Schools

Categories were not used in interpreting the findings of this study. Rather they were used to obtain a picture of demographic and performance differences that may have had an impact on specific school behaviors and practices. A detailed discussion of comparisons of case schools with all rewards schools and all elementary and middle schools (rewards were not distributed to high schools) appears at the beginning of the cross case analysis presented in Chapter 6.

Rewards schools reflected different economic and performance standards. Using the economic indicator of free and reduced meals (FARMS), three categories were established. The first, disadvantaged schools (D) consisted of schools with 40% or more of their students on free and reduced meals. This standard followed the U.S. Department of Education's criterion for disadvantaged schools under the No Child Left Behind/Blue Ribbon Schools guidelines. The second, non-disadvantaged and non-affluent schools (NN) consisted of schools with 16-39% of their students on free and reduced meals. The

third, affluent schools (A) consisted of schools with 0-15% of their students on free and reduced meals.

The sample of schools in this study included two disadvantaged schools (D), three non-disadvantaged non-affluent (NN) schools, and three affluent schools (A). These categories tended to remain the same over the period of years 1996-2001.

Categories of performance achievement were based on the Maryland State Department of Education School Performance Index (SPI), which measures and compares individual school performance by a formula which combines student assessment results, attendance, and dropout rates. These are tabulated against a score of 100 which is the state's performance standard. Schools in the study sample, were designated by their variation from the state median of all schools. At the start of the rewards program, five of the eight schools fell below the state median. In 2000, the greatest gains were made by the school sample with six schools performing above the median of all schools. In 2001, two of those schools declined, one more markedly, placing it again below the state median (see discussion in Chapter 5).

Data Analysis

To facilitate analysis and the development of major constructs and themes, interview data was linked to variables in Yukl's Multiple Linkage Model. The interrelated nature of the situational and intervening variables in the model were helpful in framing a number of patterns common in all cases. It should be noted that Yukl's Model, in many ways, mirrors leadership and learning community theories of experts in the field of education (Cuban, 2004; Fullan, et al., 2004; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Portin, 2004) by

calling attention to factors believed to be critical in effecting change and improvement. The strength of Yukl's approach in guiding this study is that it presents pragmatic areas impacting the organization and directs a focus on strengths and weaknesses that call for specific attention by the leader. Many of the education approaches appeared to be more theoretical than practical in this regard.

An if-then analysis technique, recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 271), was applied, to connect findings to a general understanding of what was happening in each setting. Patterns of principal behavior and practice were then discussed in a cross-case analysis (Chapter 6). For example:

IF --	THEN --
Rewards provided leaders with motivational tools they felt were beneficial	Their views of rewards would be positive.
Rewards were applied to targeted school improvement needs	Constraints would have been identified as inhibiting
Rewards decisions were made collaboratively between leaders and staff members	School members should have positive attitudes about the impact of rewards
If rewards contributed to an enhanced image of the school by central office	The principal and perhaps other staff should have system wide roles in sharing promising practices.

Although there could be other explanations for the conclusions above, the purpose was to apply a critical lens to the rich descriptive data elicited by the somewhat lengthy interviews and to try to rule out any spurious relationships. Miles and Huberman also suggest conferring with friendly skeptics that may "dismantle" relationships that appears

to be strong. This advice was followed by sharing cross case results with the dissertation advisor and with several members assisting in this research study as critical friends.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative research is often criticized for a lack of reliability and for limited validity because findings cannot be generalized to a larger population (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 1994), but they can be generalized to theory, which is the object of this study. However, there is no question that issues of rigor and trustworthiness are important in any investigation. They are, therefore, addressed as they relate to this study.

Data sources and interpretation.

This study presented several methodological challenges. First, it relied on after-the-fact accounts of school improvement and rewards impact. Retrospective accounts are generally prone to errors of recall and rationalization of events by informants. The fact that the awards program is still current (far smaller amounts of funding are presently given to each school), and that a number of the schools had been more recently recognized, is thought to have counteracted this problem. In addition, the unique nature of the awards- large discretionary funds, highly atypical for schools- and the fact that the principals experienced them numerous times, might also counterbalance the problem of recall.

The second challenge involved the fact that principals, alone, were respondents in this study, and findings are based solely on their perceptions and descriptions. However, since the purpose of this investigation was to explore and describe a little understood phenomenon, and one believed to impact an entire school, there was a rationale for

selecting principals as school leaders who would have the most global insights.

Third, the primary source of data was interviews. Although, these involved 40-50 page verbatim scripts, they still permitted judgements about what respondents *said* occurred, and there could, inevitably, be error when people tell their own stories. However, several important points must be made. The fact that interviews were thick and rich with detail and description made it more plausible that authentic information was revealed. In addition, the questions and probes introduced rewards topics in varied and sometimes redundant formats, allowing for reliability checks on information. Finally, as mentioned earlier, in an effort to render the data more valid, efforts were made to cross-check interview findings with documents collected at each school site. Although, these documents varied from site to site, many were remarkably detailed and helpful in triangulating data and verifying principals' descriptions of processes and practices relative to their rewards environments. These documents were reviewed to add value and information to principals' commentaries.

Reactivity.

In addition to the challenges above, there were others related to reactivity to the researcher or researcher biases that can influence interpretation (Miles & Huberman, 1994). At the outset of the study and throughout every aspect of it, I examined features of my own background that influence participants or could bring subjectivity to my own interpretations. For example, although I never had a professional connection with the performance rewards program, because I administer several national education recognition programs in my position at the Maryland State Department of Education, I am

associated with the area of recognition which could influence participants to say what they think I want to hear. An awareness of my own involvement in the field of recognition and the notion of my position influence, helped me to attenuate these problems by keeping a constant focus on how I was relating to participants and how they were relating to me. At the outset of each site-based interview, I made the intentions of the study clear, emphasizing several times, verbally and in writing, that principal insights, both positive and negative, would be useful in gaining information that could structure future awards programs and that I held no personal investment in the rewards program and was very open to any and all ideas and suggestions. A congenial environment was also established prior to the interviews. Approximately 30 - 45 minutes were devoted to establishing a relationship with the informant, explaining the study, and encouraging forthright and honest responses. In discussing the problem associated with investigator relationship to the subject being studied, it is also important to point out that the idea of bias or reactivity brought up as a research weakness is, at the same time, a strength in contributing to one's ability to understand complex issues and to be able to probe and discover underlying meaning.

Generalizability.

In qualitative study, generalizability, according to Maxwell, is the “descriptive, interpretive, and theoretical validity of the conclusions” which “depend on their internal generalizability to the case as a whole” (1996, p. 97). He also presents an accepted argument that the generalizability of qualitative studies usually is based on the development of a theory that can be extended to other cases (Becker, 1991; Ragin, 1987;

Yin, 1994). In this study, participant information was very rich in meaning and detail, and it is important to note that thick descriptive data of this nature would be less likely to be captured in a quantitative study.

In preparing for theory based generalization, demographic and other information common to all the schools were collected, allowing for the efficacy of study replication in the future. A semi-structured interview approach was used, permitting the ability to individualize or tailor questions while still ensuring a standard of questioning and response. Analysis across the cases drew upon common constructs and themes, presenting parallels in leadership practice and rewards impact.

Finally, in writing the case studies, an “emic perspective” was used. The voices of participants were thought to be very important in communicating meaning to the issue of recognition and rewards. Their words, captured in verbatim scripts, were presented in often lengthy descriptive passages in the separate school cases. The emic perspective contributes more, however, than giving voice to participants. It also gives the reader a more substantive basis for judging each case’s credibility. The chapter which follows, details descriptive and comparative data on all eight schools, contributing to an important understanding of individual as well as statewide contexts relative to setting, performance, and demographics.

Chapter 5 - Data Comparisons of Schools

This chapter lays out critical data on the eight case schools and compares them with each other and against all rewards schools and all Maryland schools taking the MSPAP (all elementary and middle schools in the State). Data tables are included on enrollment totals and percentages broken down by racial categories of African American, Hispanic, and White (Caucasian) students. Data on economic disadvantage as determined by Free and Reduced-Priced Meals (FARMS) is included as well as data on student performance as reflected by each school's School Performance Index, a measure of student achievement on all State assessment subtests (MSPAP) plus attendance. Additional information on school staffing is included as well as specific monetary rewards allocated to the school. A brief sketch of each principal's professional background is also presented.

School-by-school comparisons against all rewards schools and all schools in the State that took the MSPAP during the period 1996-2001 are discussed in the second part of this chapter. Graphs are included, depicting comparative data on minority enrollment percentage, African American enrollment percentage, Hispanic Enrollment percentage, economic disadvantage enrollment percentage, and School Performance Index comparisons.

Common and Uncommon Ground

Six of the eight elementary schools served kindergarten through fifth grades. Pine and Sycamore served students kindergarten through third grade only. The selected

schools were diverse geographically, economically, and racially. They represented urban, suburban, and rural areas and disadvantaged and advantaged students. The schools are also racially heterogeneous.

All of the schools faced a similar state standard for achievement, with student achievement improvement requirements set up over a progression of years. State assessments, as offered through the Maryland State Performance Assessment Program or MSPAP, were the measure of improvement, and these tests were administered in third and fifth grades. The School Performance Index, which included all subtests plus attendance measured school improvement and performance. All eight principals indicated that in the early years of testing, the education community, including principals, teachers, central office administrators, and other staff, were somewhat skeptical that the assessment program would continue. That is, many believed it would be dropped and replaced with another accountability measure. Principals in this study maintained a strong interest in improvement on the assessments despite this pervasive belief.

School Setting and Demographics - A Snapshot of Pine Elementary School

Pine Elementary was one of five elementary schools in a district of 6,871 students. The average per pupil expenditure during the years 1996-2001 averaged \$7293.75. The school district was described as representative of a small city or town in a rural area. Student enrollment during the years of this study ranged from 494 to 549. Approximately four percent of the students received special education services. Student turnover or mobility was approximately 21% due to the seasonal nature of the work in the community

which is located in proximity to a popular summer resort.

Staff members included two full-time administrators, 30 full-time classroom teachers, one part-time teacher, seven full-time and three part-time resource teachers or specialists, 14 full-time para-professionals, and 10 full-time support staff members. The average student-classroom teacher ratio was 18 to 1 and the teacher turnover rate was 10%. Daily student attendance was 86% and daily teacher attendance was 96%.

Pine won \$106,179.25 for its three rewards allocations. The student body was primarily White with percentages at approximately 90%. It had a moderate number of disadvantaged students, with a range of 21% - 30% eligible for Free and Reduced-Priced Meals (FARMS). Its School Performance Index (SPI), which is a measure of the school's student performance on each of the State assessments (MSPAP) plus attendance percentages rose substantially from 49 in 1996 to 101.274 in 2001.

Table 6, on the following page, displays rewards amounts and years, and demographic data by year including enrollment, economically disadvantaged students, and school performance as measured by Maryland's School Performance Index.

Table 6

School Recognition Program Case Study Schools: Demographic Data

Pine Elementary

Total Number of Awards: 3

Total Amount of Awards: \$106,179.25

Demographic Data

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Enrollment						
Total	520	549	494	491	520	508
AA	43	48	43	41	42	26
WH	468	490	437	435	463	462
HS	6	7	7	8	9	13
Percentage						
AA	8.3%	8.7%	8.7%	8.4%	8.1%	5.1%
WH	90.0%	89.3%	88.5%	88.6%	89.0%	90.9%
HS	1.2%	1.3%	1.4%	1.6%	1.7%	2.6%
Economic Disadvantage						
Total						
FARM	156	162	104	120	112	111
Percentage						
FARM	30.0%	29.5%	21.1%	24.4%	21.5%	21.9%
School Performance Index						
	49	60.2361	66.7695	90.1368	93.4225	101.2744

Principal Ann Taylor's Background

Principal Ann Taylor spent 31 years in education with 30 of those years in Pine Elementary's school system. She earned a Bachelors and a Masters degree and 30 additional credits beyond the Masters. During her principalship she also worked as a national trainer in school improvement and credited her national reputation to her leadership successes at her current school. Taylor was a curriculum planner for eight years and an acting principal for one year prior to becoming a principal, a leadership position she has held for seventeen years. She was in her ninth year as principal at Pine Elementary when she was interviewed and held that leadership position for all three administrations of the State rewards to her school. Ms. Taylor also credited her leadership skills to the winning of rewards at her former school and to the naming of Pine Elementary as a National Blue Ribbon School.

School Setting and Demographics - A Snapshot of Sycamore Elementary School

Sycamore was one of four elementary schools in the district and served students pre-kindergarten through fourth grades. Its students came from a predominantly rural area. The average per pupil district expenditure during 1996-2001 was \$7,720.70. The school district was described as a small city or town in a rural area. Student enrollment during the years of this study ranged from 268 - 282. There were 31 students with disabilities including specific learning disabilities and speech or language impairment. Student turnover or mobility was approximately 3.7%.

Staff members included the following: one full-time administrator, 13 full-time

teachers, three full-time and five part-time resource teachers, four full-time para-professionals, and four full-time support members. The average student-classroom teacher ration was 20 to 1. Daily student attendance was 96%. The school had a moderate number of disadvantaged students on Free and Reduced-Priced Meals with an average of 32% during the rewards years. Its School Performance Index rose significantly from 60 in 1996 to 101.2 in 2001.

Table 7, on the following page, displays rewards amounts and years, and demographic data by year including enrollment, economically disadvantaged students, and school performance as measured by Maryland's School Performance Index. Sycamore Elementary won \$79,012.00 for its three rewards allocations. The student body was primarily White with percentages ranging from 79.5% to 88.2%. African American students comprised approximately 10% of the student body and Hispanic students averaged 6.1%.

Table 7

School Recognition Program Case Study Schools: Demographic Data

Sycamore Elementary

Total Number of Awards: 3

Total Amount of Awards: \$79,012.00

Demographic Data

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Enrollment						
Total	268	277	282	279	277	277
AA	37	33	27	22	25	23
WH	213	230	243	246	230	225
HS	18	14	12	11	20	26
Percentage						
AA	13.8%	11.9%	9.6%	7.9%	9.0%	8.3%
WH	79.5%	83.0%	86.2%	88.2%	83.0%	81.2%
HS	6.7%	5.1%	4.3%	3.9%	7.2%	9.4%
Economic Disadvantage						
Total						
FARM	98	85	85	85	83	92
Percentage						
FARM	36.6%	30.7%	30.1%	30.5%	30.0%	33.2%
School Performance Index						
	60	85.1207	98.4064	102.4129	106.4116	101.2019

Principal Miriam Ernst's Background

Miriam Ernst was in her 27th year in education when interviewed. All of the years were spent in her current school district. She earned a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts degree. Before she became a principal, Ernst was a first grade teacher and then served for three years as a *helping teacher* for all of the elementary schools in her school system. She has been a principal for eight years and was principal at Sycamore Elementary for two of the three administrations of the performance awards. She was asked to take the leadership position of another school just after winning the third award.

Ernst took pride in the fact that, during her years as a teacher, she was named her school system's Teacher of the Year. In her role as principal of Sycamore, the school was also a finalist for the State Blue Ribbon School Award. She was a participant and writer in Maryland's Baldrige in Education Program, an initiative of the Maryland State Department of Education that was adopted by a number of Maryland school systems. She has been successful in grant writing and provided leadership in winning a Goals 2000 award.

School Setting and Demographics - A Snapshot of Cherry Elementary School

Cherry Elementary was one of 32 elementary schools in a suburban district with a per pupil expenditure averaging of \$6,274.72 during the years 1996-2001. It served students in kindergarten through grade five. Approximately 98% of the students were White. The representation of other ethnic groups was minimal. Special pre-kindergarten programs for disadvantaged students aged two, three, and four were offered and funded

by the school system. Student enrollment during the years of this study ranged from 517 to 607 with an average of 556 students. There were 87 students with disabilities which included autism, multiple disabilities, other health impairments, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment and traumatic brain injury. The largest numbers of students with disability fell within the speech or language and specific learning disability categories. Student turnover or mobility was approximately 2.5%.

Staff members included the following: two full-time administrators, 21 full-time and two part-time classroom teachers, eight full-time and four part-time specialists or resource teachers, four para-professionals, and nine full-time support staff members plus 1 part-time member. The average student-classroom teacher ratio was 21 to 1 and the teacher turnover rate was 1%, an extremely low figure. Daily student attendance was above the state standard at 97% as was daily teacher attendance at 95%.

Cherry won \$157,105.92 for its four rewards allocations given in 1996, 1999, 2000, and 2001. It reflected a low number of disadvantaged students, with a range of 3.3% to 4.1% eligible for Free and Reduced-Priced Meals (FARMS). Its School Performance Index rose significantly from 85 in 1996 to 107.19 in 2001. The school was also recognized as a Maryland Blue Ribbon School, won Baltimore Magazine's *Best School Award*, and was a Maryland Character Education School of the Year.

Table 8, on the following page, displays rewards amounts and years, and demographic data by year, including enrollment, numbers and percentages of economically disadvantaged students, and school performance figures as measured by Maryland's School Performance Index.

Table 8

School Recognition Program Case Study Schools: Demographic Data

Cherry Elementary

Total Number of Awards: 4

Total Amount of Awards: \$157,105.92

Demographic Data

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Enrollment						
Total	575	607	560	547	531	517
AA	3	4	6	4	8	4
WH	566	599	546	534	515	509
HS	2	1	3	4	4	3
Percentage						
AA	0.5%	0.7%	1.1%	0.7%	1.5%	0.8%
WH	98.4%	98.7%	97.5%	97.6%	97.0%	98.5%
HS	0.3%	0.2%	0.5%	0.7%	0.8%	0.6%
Economic Disadvantage						
Total						
FARM	22	24	23	20	21	17
Percentage						
FARM	3.8%	4.0%	4.1%	3.7%	4.0%	3.3%
School Performance Index						
	85	89.2757	93.4166	101.9822	105.3119	107.1964

Principal Jack Blake's Background

At the time of the interview, Jack Blake, had just retired with 38 years in education. All of them were in Cherry Elementary's school system. He earned a Bachelors Degree in Secondary Education, a Masters Degree in Administration and Supervision, and an additional 30 credits in school management. He served for four years as assistant principal at Cherry and his last thirteen years were as the principal. He was in his leadership position during all of the recognition awards.

School Setting and Demographics - A Snapshot of Willow Elementary School

Willow Elementary was one of 125 elementary schools in a large suburban school district with an average per pupil expenditure of \$8526.52 in the years 1996-2001. The school served students in kindergarten through grade five and also offered a pre-school creative enrichment program during mornings and afternoons. That program was paid for by the parents. The Willow community was categorized as a small city or town in a more rural area of the district. School enrollment averaged 338 students over the course of the rewards years. Approximately 89% of the students were White during those years. African American enrollment averaged approximately 4.5% and Hispanic enrollment averaged 2.1%.

Table 9, on the following page, displays school data, by year, including enrollment figures, percentages of economically disadvantaged students, and school performance as measured by the Maryland School Performance Index.

Table 9

School Recognition Program Case Study Schools: Demographic Data

Willow Elementary

Total Number of Awards: 3

Total Amount of Awards: \$94,013.76

Demographic Data

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Enrollment						
Total	344	354	311	306	342	370
AA	20	20	15	9	12	14
WH	299	307	278	279	306	338
HS	10	8	3	7	7	8
Percentage						
AA	5.8%	5.6%	4.8%	2.9%	3.5%	3.8%
WH	86.9%	86.7%	89.4%	91.2%	89.5%	91.4%
HS	2.9%	2.3%	1.0%	2.3%	2.0%	2.2%
Economic Disadvantage						
Total						
FARM	18	19	4	4	5	3
Percentage						
FARM	5.2%	5.4%	1.3%	1.3%	1.5%	0.8%
School Performance Index						
	89	87.1033	100.5375	109.9932	110.9794	116.4545

Less than 2% of the students were limited English proficient and an average of 2.6% qualified for Free or Reduced-Priced Meals. Special education services were offered to 9% of the students. Approximately 12.5% of the students had disabilities which included autism, mental retardation, multiple disabilities, other health impairments, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, and traumatic brain injury. The largest number of students with disability comprised specific learning disability and speech or language impairment categories. Daily student attendance was 96.1% and daily teacher attendance was 90%. Student mobility was approximately 4.3%.

Staff members included one full-time administrator, 15 full-time and one and a half (assigned to two schools) part-time classroom teachers, six full-time and eight part-time resource teachers, six full-time and five part-time para-professionals, five full-time and three part-time support staff members. The average student-classroom teacher ratio was 25 to 1. The teacher turnover rate during the rewards years was approximately 10%.

Willow won \$94,013.78 for its three rewards allocations. Its School Performance Index rose from 89 in 1996 to 116.45 in 2001. The school also won a State Recognition Citation one year prior to its years of winning the monetary performance awards. These were received in 1999, 2000, and 2001. Other awards included state and national honors as a Blue Ribbon School and the Marriot Spirit to Serve Award.

Principal John Andrews' Background

Principal John Andrews had a late start in the field of education. He spent a few years running his father's shoe business before he realized that he was interested in

youngsters and in teaching. He also worked as a recreation supervisor for ten years before assuming duties as a teacher. With six years of teaching under his belt, he was asked to become an assistant principal. One year later he became a principal intern. One year after that assignment, he became the principal at Willow Elementary, where he remained for six years. At the time of the interview, he had just completed the first year of his principalship at another school. Andrews was at Willow for all of its award years. He has earned a Bachelor of Science degree and a Master's degree in Administration and Supervision.

School Setting and Demographics - A Snapshot of Dogwood Elementary School

Dogwood Elementary was a small school, one of 103 elementary schools in a large suburban school district. The average per pupil expenditure during 1996-2001 was \$6065.42. The school served students in kindergarten through grade five. Located in a rural area, it enrolled an average of 345 students during the years 1996-2001. Approximately 96% of these students were White. The school had no limited English proficient students and only one other language, Spanish, was represented. During the study years, an average of 6% of the students qualified for Free or Reduced-Priced Meals and 3% of the population received special education services. There were approximately 29 students with disabilities; nine with specific learning disability and 20 with speech or language impairment. Student turnover or mobility was approximately 3%.

Staff members included one full-time administrator (principal) and one part-time administrative facilitator, 12 full-time classroom teachers, one special resource teacher,

one paraprofessional, and five support staff members. The average student-classroom teacher ratio was 22 to 1. The teacher turnover rate during the rewards allocation years was zero. Daily student attendance was 96.4%. Dogwood won \$121,910.78 in monetary awards for four allocations which were given in 1997, 1998, 1999, and 2000. Its School Performance Index rose from 92 in 1996 to 111.07 in 2001 and in that year, the school was ranked in the top 10% of all schools in performance. The school also won a two-year \$23,000 School Improvement Initiative Grant, a district award for staff development. Table 10 on the following page, displays rewards amounts and demographic data by year, including numbers and percentages of student enrollment, economically disadvantaged students, and school performance as measured by Maryland's School Performance Index. Table 10, on the following page, depicts rewards amount, and demographic data by year including enrollment, economical disadvantage, and school performance.

Table 10

School Recognition Program Case Study Schools: Demographic Data

Dogwood Elementary

Total Number of Awards: 4

Total Amount of Awards: \$121,910.78

Demographic Data

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Enrollment						
Total	384	374	371	333	301	308
AA	3	5	6	8	7	9
WH	375	364	357	319	288	296
HS	6	5	7	6	4	1
Percentage						
AA	0.8%	1.3%	1.6%	2.4%	2.3%	2.9%
WH	97.7%	97.3%	96.2%	95.8%	95.7%	96.1%
HS	1.6%	1.3%	1.9%	1.8%	1.3%	0.3%
Economic Disadvantage						
Total						
FARM	23	26	27	21	14	16
Percentage						
FARM	6.0%	7.0%	7.3%	6.3%	4.7%	5.2%
School Performance Index						
	92	96.8557	101.8836	107.2186	109.2759	111.0727

Principal Denise Todd's Background

Principal Denise Todd received her undergraduate degree in Education in 1970 and her Master of Education degree in 1993. She was also certified in gifted education with a specialty in the Renzulli Model for mathematics instruction. At the time of the interview, she had spent 28 years in her current school system, starting as a teacher and later becoming an instructional specialist assigned to a number of schools in gifted and talented programs. She was a principal for ten years and prior to this role, spent one year as an assistant principal at another school in the district. She led the staff of Dogwood for six years and then assumed the principalship at another elementary school. She served as Principal of Dogwood throughout its four years of MSPAP awards.

School Setting and Demographics - A Snapshot of Elm Elementary School

Elm Elementary was one of 99 elementary schools in a large urban school system. The average per pupil expenditure in the years 1996-2001 was \$7275.33. It served students pre-kindergarten through grade five and it enrolled an average of 517 students during the years 1996-2001. Close to 100% of the students were African American. During the study years, an average of 92% of its students were eligible for Free or Reduced-Priced Meals and approximately 10.8% of the students received special education services. The student mobility rate was approximately 17.2% and daily student attendance was 94%.

Staff members included two administrators (principal and assistant principal), one part-time and 21 full-time classroom teachers, three resource teachers, seven para-

professionals, and five support staff members. The average student to classroom teacher ratio was 21 to 1. The teacher turnover rate was 2% and daily teacher attendance was 97%. Daily student attendance was 94%.

Table 11 on the following page, displays rewards amounts and demographic data by year, including numbers and percentages of student enrollment, economically disadvantaged students, and school performance as measured by Maryland's School Performance Index. A total of \$125,546.92 was allocated to Elm Elementary for significant improvement and monetary awards given in 1999, 2000, and 2001. Its School Performance Index rose from 27 in 1996 to 52.67 in 2001. The school was ranked in the bottom third of all elementary schools in the State. Sharon Smith was the principal at Elm for all of the rewards allocations.

Principal Sharon Smith's Background

Sharon Smith was in her 33rd year in education when she was interviewed. She spent all of her professional years in her current school system and had been a principal for 13 years. She was an assistant principal for three years prior to her first principalship and spent six years as a classroom teacher with expertise in gifted and talented education. She was in her sixth year as Principal of Elm. She took over her leadership position in 1996 and won her first monetary award in 1999. Smith earned a Bachelor of Science Degree and a Master of Science Degree with a concentration in reading. She also has additional graduate credits in education.

Table 11

School Recognition Program Case Study Schools: Demographic Data

Elm Elementary

Total Number of Awards: 3

Total Amount of Awards: \$125,546.92

Demographic Data

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Enrollment						
Total	577	566	535	518	485	421
AA	573	565	530	516	482	420
WH	2	0	3	1	0	0
HS	0	0	0	0	2	0
Percentage						
AA	99.3%	99.8%	99.1%	99.6%	99.4%	99.8%
WH	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%
HS	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%
Economic Disadvantage						
Total						
FARM	523	501	496	485	447	405
Percentage						
FARM	90.6%	88.5%	92.7%	93.6%	92.2%	96.2%
School Performance Index						
	27	22.3362	29.2083	35.6643	42.0026	52.6752

School Setting and Demographics - A Snapshot of Maple Elementary School

Maple Elementary was one of 99 elementary schools in a large city school system. During the years 1996-2001, the average per pupil expenditure was \$7275.33. The school, which declined in enrollment from 1996 to 2001, had an average of 406 students in pre-kindergarten through grade five. Over 99% of the students were African American. During the study years, an average of 91% of the students qualified for Free or Reduced-Priced Meals and 18% of the population received special education services. Student turnover or mobility was approximately 21%.

Staff members included two full-time administrators, 26 full-time classroom teachers, three specialists, nine para-professionals, and two support staff members. The average student-classroom teacher ratio was 20 to 1. The teacher turnover rate was 2%. Daily student attendance was 93.1% and daily teacher attendance 95.3%. Maple won the school-based performance awards three times. A total of \$101,554.89 was awarded the school in 1999, 2000, and 2001. Its School Performance Index rose substantially from 30 in 1996 to 56.46 in 2001, moving the school's ranking from the bottom third to the middle third in performance as measured against all elementary schools in Maryland. Table 12, on the following page, depicts the school's demographic data.

Table 12

School Recognition Program Case Study Schools: Demographic Data

Maple Elementary

Total Number of Awards: 3

Total Amount of Awards: \$101,554.89

Demographic Data

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Enrollment						
Total	566	463	397	372	334	310
AA	563	461	394	370	330	306
WH	2	2	3	1	2	2
HS	0	0	0	0	0	0
Percentage						
AA	99.5%	99.6%	99.2%	99.5%	98.8%	98.7%
WH	0.4%	0.4%	0.8%	0.3%	0.6%	0.6%
HS	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Economic Disadvantage						
Total						
FARM	456	424	361	353	307	296
Percentage						
FARM	80.6%	91.6%	90.9%	94.9%	91.9%	95.5%
School Performance Index						
	30	17.8896	24.2677	36.7208	46.1363	56.4604

Principal Judith Alexander's Background

Judith Alexander was in her 33rd year in education when interviewed. All of those years were spent in her current school system. She was a principal for 12 years and was at Maple Elementary for 10 of those years. She was in a her leadership position at Maple for the administration of all of the recognition awards. In the summer of 2001, she was reassigned to another highly disadvantaged elementary school in the district. She said that she asked for that assignment because she was ready to take on a new challenge.

Prior to her role as principal, Judith held administrative positions as a curriculum specialist for four years and an assistant principal for four years. She was a classroom teacher for six years and spent a number of years as a master teacher assigned to helping other teachers.

Alexander earned a Bachelor of Science Degree and a Master of Education Degree in Supervision and Administration.

School Setting and Demographics - A Snapshot of Spruce Elementary School

Spruce Elementary was one of 135 elementary schools in a large suburban school district. From 1996-2001, the district's average per pupil expenditure was \$6,753.30. The school served students in kindergarten through grade five and was categorized as a suburban school with characteristics typical of an urban area. The average enrollment during the years 1996-2001 was 531 students. Just over 96% of the students were African American. During the study years, an average of 28% of the students were eligible for Free or Reduced-Priced Meals. Eight percent received special education services.

Approximately 49 students had disabilities which included multiple disabilities, health impairments, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, and emotional disabilities. The largest number of students with disability fell within the speech or language impairment category. Student turnover or mobility was approximately 12%.

Staff members were all full-time and included two full-time administrators, 24 classroom teachers, four resource teachers or specialists, two para-professionals, and one support staff member. The average student-classroom teacher ratio was 28 to 1. The teacher turnover rate was less than 1%. Daily student attendance was 95% and daily teacher attendance was 98%.

Spruce Elementary won \$113,822.80 in monetary awards for three allocations which were given in 1998, 1999, and 2000. Its School Performance Index rose from 30 in 1996 to 66.94 in 2001 and moved it from the lowest to the middle third in ranking against all elementary schools in the State.

Table 13, on the following page, displays monetary rewards totals and demographic data by year, including numbers and percentages of student enrollment, economically disadvantaged students, and school performance as measured by Maryland's School Performance Index.

Table 13

School Recognition Program Case Study Schools: Demographic Data

Spruce Elementary

Total Number of Awards: 3

Total Amount of Awards: \$113,822.00

Demographic Data

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Enrollment						
Total	442	492	493	537	573	647
AA	417	473	471	524	559	636
WH	16	11	18	11	10	4
HS	7	4	2	0	2	4
Percentage						
AA	94.3%	96.1%	95.5%	97.6%	97.6%	98.3%
WH	3.6%	2.2%	3.7%	2.0%	1.7%	0.6%
HS	1.6%	0.8%	0.4%	0.0%	0.3%	0.6%
Economic Disadvantage						
Total						
FARM	114	125	140	174	166	184
Percentage						
FARM	25.8%	25.4%	28.4%	32.4%	29.0%	28.4%
School Performance Index						
	30	48.5155	57.6472	77.6498	83.2651	66.9408

Principal Susan Matthews' Background

Susan Matthews was in her 32rd year in education when interviewed. She had spent the previous twelve years in the school system and had been a principal for five years and a vice-principal for three years, prior to her first principalship. She was in her fifth year as Principal of Spruce Elementary. She arrived just after the school won its first monetary award. Matthews earned a Bachelor of Science Degree and a Master of Education Degree. She had 30 additional credits toward a Master of Arts Degree in Teaching.

Longitudinal Data Analysis

This section includes a data mapping and comparison of all the case study schools, with a graphic layout of student enrollment data, reward years, reward amounts, total rewards allocations, and categories of purchases resulting from monetary allocations. It presents a discussion and depiction of longitudinal data comparing each of the case study schools with median scores of all 313 rewards schools as well as with all Maryland elementary and middle schools that took the MSPAP assessments during that same time period (high schools did not participate in the MSPAP assessments). Median scores, rather than mean scores were selected as a basis for comparison because it was determined that the school data depicted extremes, and therefore, median scores were more statistically accurate and less susceptible to being skewed by outlier scores. The years depicted are those used for this study, 1996 through 2001. Demographic data discussed include the following: minority enrollment percentages which include data on

all African American and Hispanic student populations which represent significant categories for Maryland. Asian, Alaskan/Native American Indian student numbers are quite low across the State. Also depicted are data on economically disadvantaged students as determined by eligibility for Free and Reduced-Price Meals (FARMS), and School Performance Index data used as a measure of student achievement and improvement and a determinant in rewards allocations.

Table 14, on the following page, presents summative information on the average student enrollment of each case study school and its allocated rewards revenue during the years 1996-2001. It also describes major purchases made. Data show that schools ranged from enrollments of just over 250 to over 600 students, and that monetary awards, which were based on enrollment figures at each school, ranged from \$20,936 to \$54,588. Specific purchases in the schools varied, however, purchase categories were similar and generally pertained to technology, staff development, instructional materials, incentive programs, additional staffing, building improvements, and incentive programs for students, staff, and parents. The discussion which follows Table 14 involves data presented in Figures 4 through 8.

Table 14

Allocation of Rewards by Year and Categories of Purchases

School	Student Enrollment	Reward Year	Reward Amount	Total Award	Categories (Not by Year)
Dogwood Elementary	279	1998	\$25,927.00		Additional Staffing
		1999	\$24,466.00		Instructional Materials
		2000	\$39,752.00		Other
		2001	\$31,765.78	\$121,910.78	Technology
Cherry Elementary	480	1996	\$25,991.00		Incentive Programs
		1999	\$31,962.00		Instructional Materials
		2000	\$54,588.00		Other
		2001	\$44,564.92	\$157,105.92	Staff Development
					Technology
Sycamore Elementary	237	1997	\$22,067.00		Incentive Programs; Teachers, Students
		1999	\$20,936.00		Additional Staffing
		2000	\$36,009.00	\$79,012.00	Instructional Materials
					School Plant
					Staff Development
					Technology
Willow Elementary	398	1999	\$22,087.00		Incentive Programs; Teachers, Students
		2000	\$37,881.00		Instructional Materials
		2001	\$34,045.76	\$94,013.76	School Plant
					Staff Development
					Technology
Spruce Elementary	612	1998	\$30,622.00		Incentive Programs
		1999	\$29,305.00		Instructional Materials
		2000	\$53,895.00	\$113,822.00	Technology
Pine Elementary	497	1998	\$32,890.00		Incentive Programs
		1999	\$29,345.00		Additional Staffing
		2001	\$43,944.25	\$106,179.25	Instructional Materials
					Other
					School Plant
					Staff Development
					Technology
Elm Elementary	481	1999	\$30,971.00		Incentive Programs; Teachers, Students
		2000	\$52,578.00		Instructional Materials
		2001	\$41,997.92	\$125,546.92	Other
					School Plant
					Staff Development
					Technology
Maple Elementary	294	1999	\$25,498.00		Incentive Programs
		2000	\$42,456.00		Instructional Materials
		2001	\$33,600.89	\$101,554.89	Other
					School Plant
					Staff Development
					Technology

Overall Minority Student Enrollment

Figure 4 and Table 15, on the following pages, compare the percentages of all African American and Hispanic minority students enrolled in each case school, and the median percentages for all rewards schools and for all participating Maryland schools. African American and Hispanic students, for the purposes of these data displays, were extracted from other minorities that have very small enrollments throughout the State. The data show that the median for all rewards schools reflected smaller percentages of minority students as compared with participating schools in the state. Three of the case study schools had significantly more minority students than all rewards schools and all state schools. Elm, Maple, and Spruce Elementary Schools with minority enrollment percentages ranging from 96.3 % to 100% in the years 1996-2001 reflect close to total minority enrollment. The remaining five case schools consisted of minority populations below all rewards school and all State schools.

Comparison - Minority Enrollment Percentage

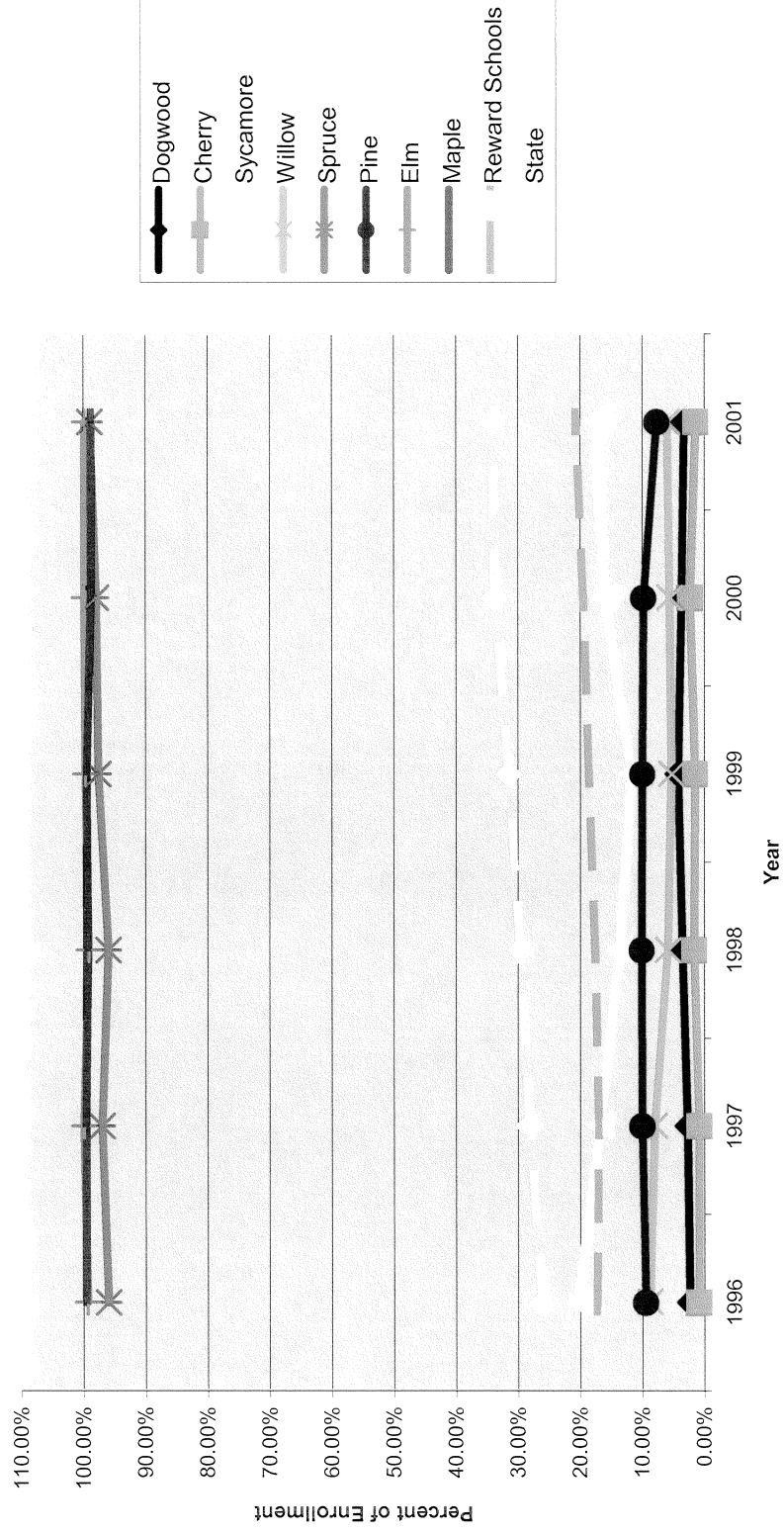


Figure 4: Comparison of minority enrollment of all case study schools against all reward schools and all Maryland schools

Table 15 below, displays specific data on enrollment percentages of both African American and Hispanic Students.

Table 15

Comparative Data on Enrollment Percentages of Minority Students Who are African American or Hispanic

Minority Enrollment %	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Dogwood	2.0%	3.1%	3.8%	4.2%	3.5%	2.8%
Cherry	0.6%	0.6%	1.0%	1.0%	1.8%	1.3%
Sycamore	20.0%	18.2%	13.3%	12.2%	17.0%	18.9%
Willow	9.8%	9.7%	6.0%	4.8%	5.0%	5.0%
Spruce	96.0%	96.8%	96.2%	98.5%	99.0%	99.6%
Pine	9.8%	10.1%	10.3%	9.9%	9.1%	8.7%
Elm	99.3%	99.4%	99.2%	99.7%	99.38%	99.76%
Maple	99.3%	99.3%	99.2%	99.3%	99.8%	99.8%
Reward Schools	18.0%	18.0%	19.1%	19.7%	20.0%	20.9%
State Schools	25.6 %	29.0%	30.0%	30.7%	31.6%	32.0%

African American Student Enrollment Data

Figure 5 and Table 16 depict enrollment percentages of African American students. In comparison with the medians of all rewards schools and all State schools, three case schools, Spruce, Maple, and Elm have far greater majority enrollment, which is in the 90% and above range. The other five case schools fall just below all rewards schools and are more significantly below all State schools.

Comparison - African American Enrollment Percentage

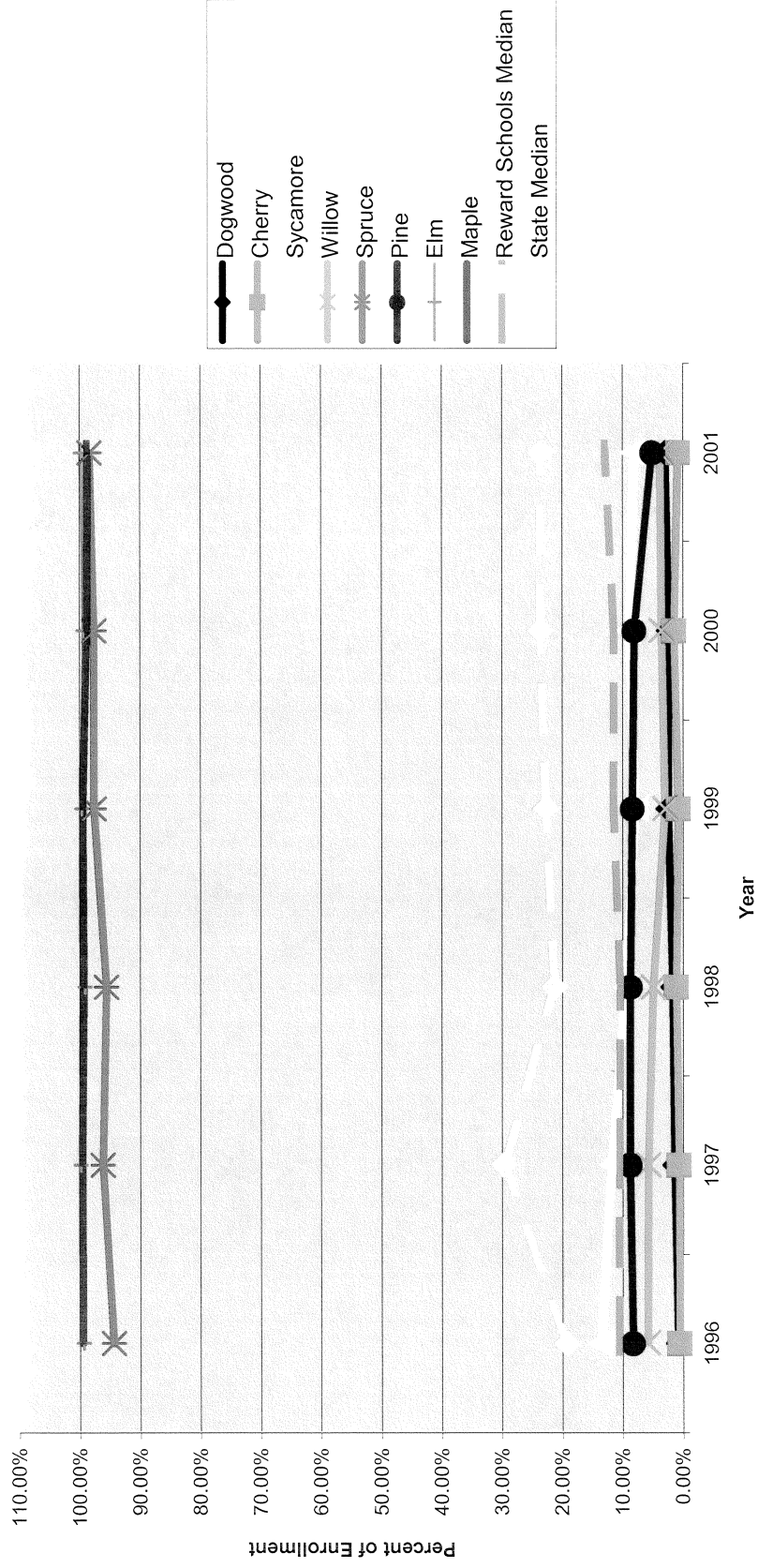


Figure 5: Comparison of African American enrollment of case study schools against all reward schools and all Maryland Schools

Table 16

Comparative Data on Enrollment Percentages of African American Students

AA Enrollment %	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Dogwood	0.78%	1.34%	1.62%	2.40%	2.33%	2.92%
Cherry	0.53%	0.66%	1.07%	0.73%	1.51%	0.77%
Sycamore	13.81%	11.91%	9.57%	7.89%	9.03%	8.03%
Willow	5.81%	96.14%	95.54%	97.58%	97.56%	98.30%
Pine	8.27%	8.74%	8.70%	8.35%	8.08%	5.12%
Elm	99.31%	99.82%	99.07%	99.61%	99.38%	99.76%
Maple	99.47%	99.57%	99.24%	99.46%	98.80%	98.71%
Reward Schools	10.52%	10.45%	10.29%	11.44%	11.40%	12.85%
State Schools	19.23%	29.79%	21.31%	22.79%	23.68%	23.77%

Hispanic Student Enrollment Data

The percentage of Hispanic enrollment is shown below in Figure 6. The median is used in enrollment numbers for all rewards schools and all State schools. More fluctuations appear to have taken place in Hispanic enrollment in each of the eight case schools than in all rewards schools and all State schools. However, percentages of students in both of these categories is below 1.5%. Sycamore Elementary has a far larger percentage of Hispanic students and in 2001 that figure was close to 9.5%. Three additional case schools have more Hispanic students and four have fewer students than all rewards and State schools. The others are relatively similar in Hispanic student population to rewards and State schools. Figure 6 below, displays graphic and specific comparative data on enrollment percentages of Hispanic students.

Comparison- Hispanic Enrollment Percentage

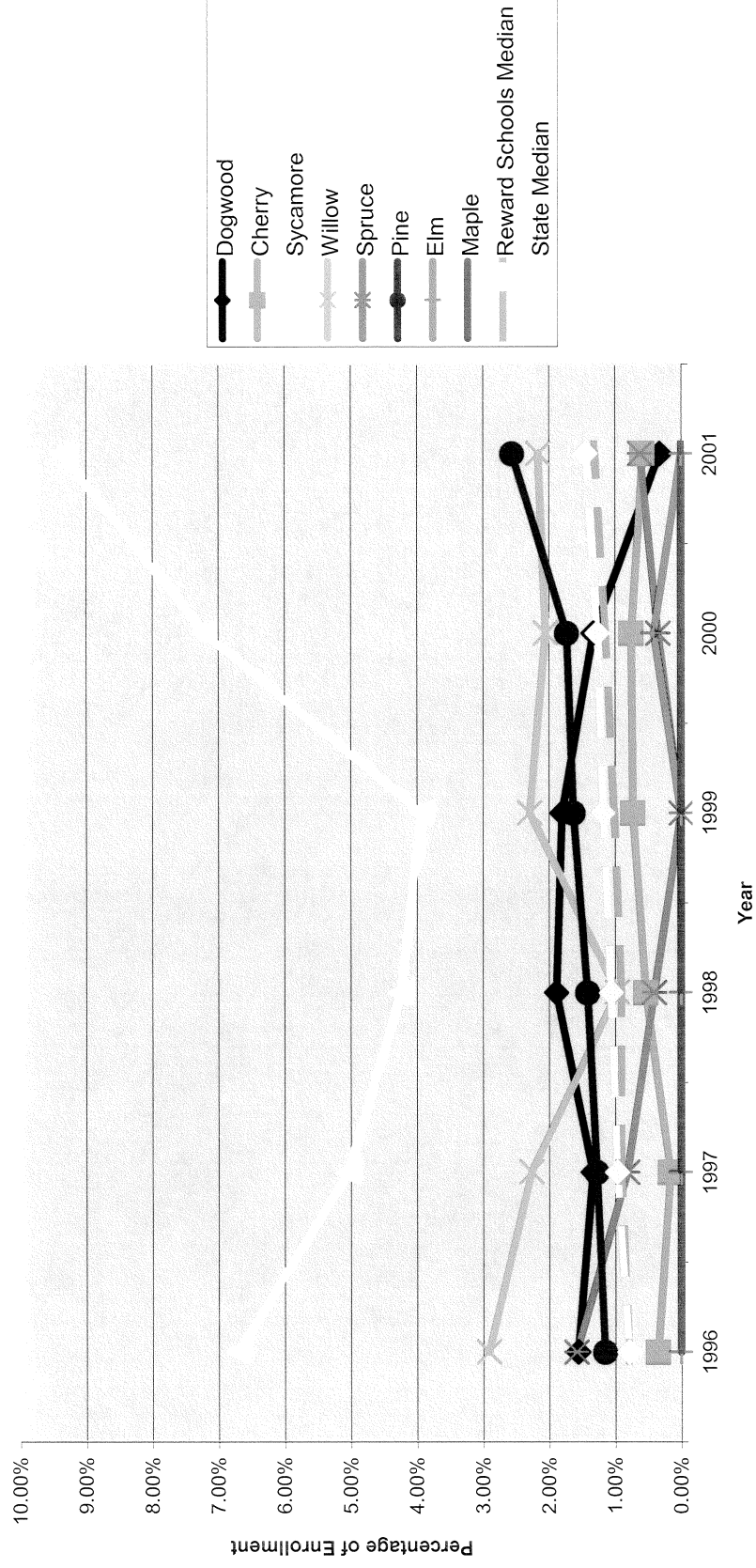


Figure 6: Comparison of Hispanic enrollment for all case study schools against all reward schools and all Maryland schools

Table 17 displays specific comparative data on enrollment percentages of Hispanic students. Sycamore is one case study school with a larger Hispanic population. The other schools are slightly below the median scores of all State schools and on par with all rewards schools.

Table 17

Comparative Data on Enrollment Percentages of Hispanic Students

Hispanic Enroll. %	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Dogwood	1.56%	1.34%	1.89%	1.80%	1.33%	0.32%
Cherry	0.35%	0.16%	0.54%	0.73%	0.75%	0.58%
Sycamore	6.72%	5.05%	4.26%	3.94%	7.22%	9.30%
Willow	2.91%	2.26%	0.96%	2.29%	2.05%	2.16%
Spruce	1.58%	0.81%	0.41%	0.00%	0.35%	0.62%
Pine	1.15%	1.28%	1.42%	1.63%	1.73%	2.56%
Elm	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.41%	0.00%
Maple	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Reward Schools	1.88%	2.52%	3.72%	1.58%	3.27%	0.88%
State Schools	3.45%	3.67%	3.87%	4.16%	4.56%	5.06%

Economically Disadvantaged Student Enrollment Data

Data on percentages of students eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Meals is shown in Figure 7. Two case schools, Elm and Maple, have on average, over 90% high poverty students. Three schools, Dogwood, Cherry, and Willow reflect affluent communities, with 1% - 7% disadvantaged students. The three remaining schools are relatively similar to all rewards schools and all State schools. FARMS rates range from 20% to 30%. All rewards schools fell below all State school percentages for FARMS.

Comparison - Economic Disadvantage Enrollment Percentage

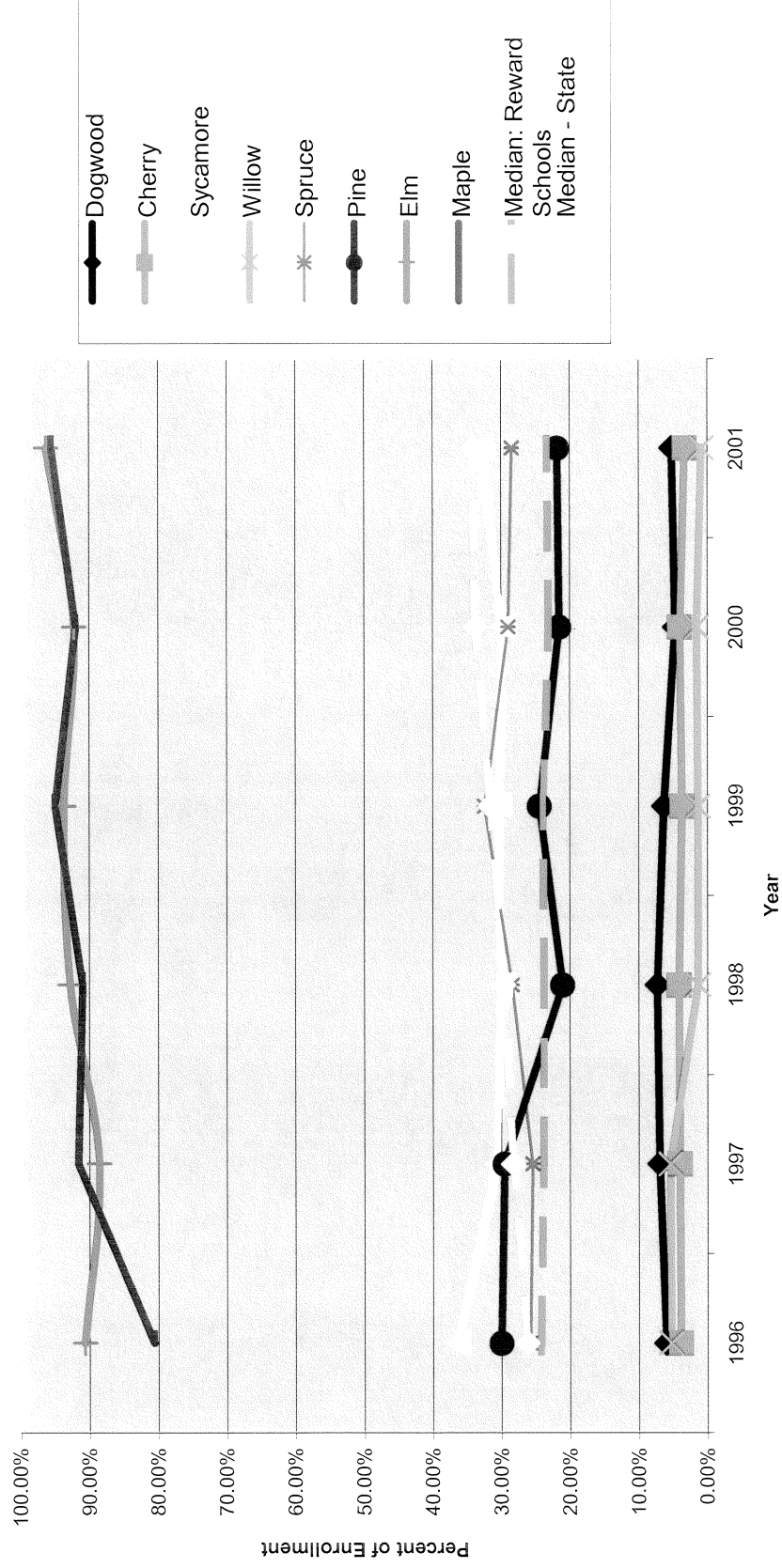


Figure 7: Comparison of economic disadvantage percentage of case study schools against all reward schools and all Maryland schools. Economic Disadvantage: students eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Meals.

Table 18 displays specific comparative data on enrollment percentages of economically disadvantaged students as measured by students eligible for Free and Reduced-Price Meals (FARMS).

Table 18

Comparative Data on Enrollment Percentages of Disadvantaged Students

FARMS Enroll. %	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Dogwood	5.99%	6.95%	7.28%	6.31%	4.65%	5.19%
Cherry	3.83%	3.95%	4.11%	3.66%	3.95%	3.29%
Sycamore	36.57%	30.69%	30.14%	30.47%	29.96%	33.21%
Willow	5.23%	5.37%	1.29%	1.31%	1.46%	0.81%
Spruce	25.79%	25.41%	28.40%	32.40%	28.97%	28.44%
Pine	30.00%	29.51%	21.05%	24.44%	21.54%	21.85%
Elm	90.64%	88.52%	92.71%	93.63%	92.16%	96.20%
Maple	80.57%	91.58%	90.93%	94.89%	91.92%	95.48%
Reward Schools	24.20%	23.81%	23.72%	23.90%	23.01%	23.29%
State Schools	24.80%	26.53%	26.28%	26.44%	26.01%	26.39%

The School Performance Index and Other Criteria for Rewards School Selection

An explanation of the features of the rewards selection process seems warranted before SPI data are discussed. Therefore a brief background description of the performance index and other criteria used for selecting rewards schools follows.

The SPI was defined in terms of school performance in data-based areas for which performance standards were established. At the elementary school level those included

MSPAP tests given in grades three, five, and eight in reading, writing, language usage, mathematics, social studies, and science. In addition, the index included yearly attendance rates defined as the percent of students who were present in school for at least half of the day on an average school day during the September to June school year.

The SPI was determined by a formula which looked at the average distance from satisfactory (ADS). It divided specific school scores by established state standards. For attendance, the school's score was based on the percent of students in attendance at the school level divided by the state standard of 94%. For MSPAP content areas for grades 3 and 5, each of the tested subjects yielded scores in terms of student proficiency and these were divided by the state standard of 70. The addition of all of these scores yielded an SPI score for each school.

Layered on top of the SPI score generated each year, was a requirement that schools selected for rewards would show statistically significant SPI gains for two consecutive years. That requirement remained constant through all administrations of the rewards program until 2002. However, in 1998, alternate selection criteria were offered and schools could meet one of three different criteria. The first was showing statistically significant SPI gains for 2 consecutive years; the second was making consistent SPI improvement for three consecutive years with significant improvement in the most current year; the third was attaining 100% on the SPI in the most current year, with three consecutive years of improvement.

In 1999, minority achievement was added as a factor and homogeneous and heterogeneous schools were ascribed different selection criteria. However, while some of

the rules changed, SPI remained constant as the determining factor for selection.

School Performance Index Data

A depiction of SPI change averaged over the years 1996 to 2001 for case schools compared with averaged median scores for all rewards schools and all State schools is depicted below in Table 19 and followed by a brief discussion and a graphic presentation of SPI scores in Figure 8.

Table 19

Comparison of Averaged SPI Gains in Case Study Schools, All Rewards Schools, and All State Schools from 1996 through 2001

Dogwood Elementary	+ 19.07	Cherry Elementary	+ 22.20
Sycamore Elementary	+ 41.20	Willow Elementary	+ 27.45
Spruce Elementary	+ 36.94	Pine Elementary	+ 52.27
Elm Elementary	+ 25.68	Maple Elementary	+ 26.46
All Rewards Schools	+ 5.25	State Median	+ 8.73

Table 19 compares student performance growth and shows more steady and significant increases in student performance among case study schools as compared with median scores of all rewards schools and all State schools. All rewards schools maintained higher SPI scores than all State schools in all years except 1999 which saw a decline in the rewards school indices. Performance gains in case study schools were significantly higher than median gain scores of rewards an all State schools.

Comparison - School Performance Index

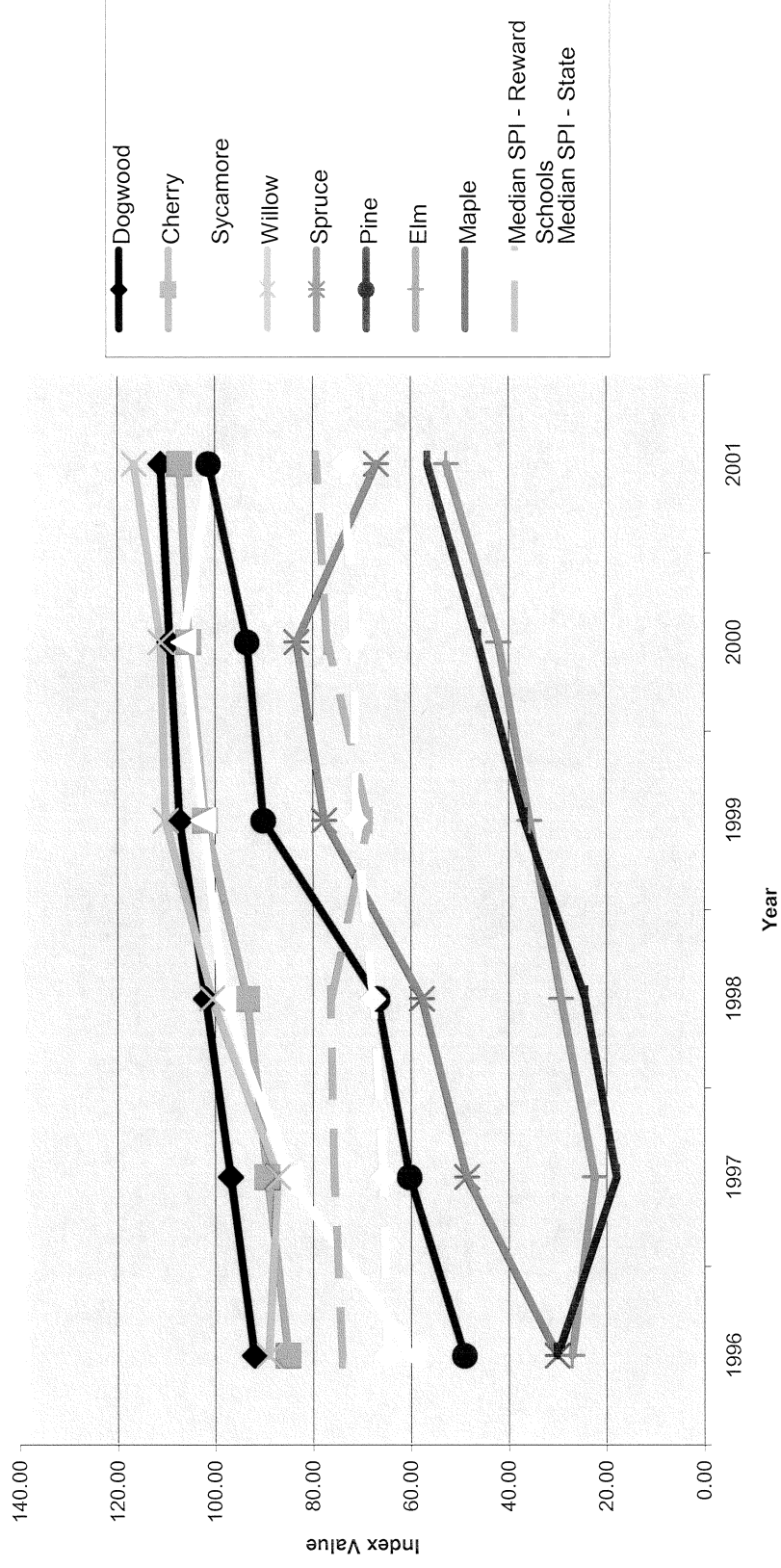


Figure 8: Comparison of School Performance Index for all case study schools against all reward schools and all Maryland Schools

Evidence of substantial increases in case study schools' SPI, over four and five consecutive years, can be noted in Figure 8. Student Performance in most of the case schools improved dramatically, as is also presented in Table 20. Median scores for all state schools increased slightly and this increase is larger than the median increase for all rewards schools which remained almost the same other than a decline in 1999. An important point of information is that five of the case schools were below the state median in 1996 and three of those schools rose above the median, two of the three significantly above by 2000. Spruce Elementary declined in 2001 but the other schools continued to improve, placing six of the eight schools above the medians for all rewards

Table 20

Comparative Data on the School Performance Index (SPI)

SPI	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Dogwood	92.00	96.86	101.88	107.22	109.28	111.07
Cherry	85.00	89.28	93.42	101.98	105.31	107.20
Sycamore	60.00	85.12	98.41	102.41	106.41	101.20
Willow	89.00	87.10	100.54	109.99	110.98	116.45
Spruce	30.00	48.52	57.65	77.65	83.27	66.94
Pine	49.00	60.24	66.77	90.14	93.42	101.27
Elm	27.00	22.34	29.21	35.66	42.00	52.68
Maple	30.00	17.89	24.27	36.72	46.14	56.46
Reward Schools	74.00	75.55	76.26	68.36	77.02	79.25
State Schools	65.00	65.68	67.71	71.29	71.66	73.73

and all state schools. By 2001, five of the eight schools were in the top 3% - 8% percent of all elementary schools as measured by SPI. Table 20 displays specific comparative data on SPI from 1996-2001.

This analysis of data serves both as background and foreground to the following two chapters which present individual case findings and a cross-case discussion of patterns of leadership practice prior to and during the administration of Maryland's performance awards.

Chapter 6 - Findings - The Individual Cases

Structure and Content

Each of the eight principals of schools that comprise this study offers unique as well as common stories of leadership and the impact of recognition and rewards on school improvement and change. This chapter focuses on critical themes and constructs related to leadership practice, school improvement strategies, and rewards as described by each principal. It serves, both as an introduction to the school environment prior to and during the implementation of successful improvement, and as evidence of leadership focus and practice. Special attention is given to each principal's leadership behavior and improvement approaches as well as to his or her perspectives regarding the impact of the MSPAP Recognition Awards. Individual case study discussions help situate and contextualize the next chapter's analysis of cross-case patterns and themes which develop important insights regarding leadership practices and the influence of rewards on the eight schools.

Reporting of school information in the eight cases is similarly structured. Each tells the story of the principal's patterns and strategies in influencing his or her school members and captures the events behind the trajectory of improvement over the years studied. Each description of the principal's leadership practices is depicted as unique, however, patterns and parallelisms are discussed in the following cross-case analysis chapter. A deliberate effort has been made to focus on areas of rewards impact in each separate case, as well as salient school culture and climate factors, as well as leadership practices of the principal. Reports include each principal's descriptions of school

accountability issues and improvement strategies employed prior to, as well as during the school's recognition and winning of awards. This description of individual cases provides a rich body of information for better understanding the broader themes and patterns discussed in the next chapter. For example, for the faculty at Pine Elementary, a middle class school in a fast growing small city, student achievement, prior to the implementation of reform strategies, was acceptable to teachers and parents and not recognized as needing improvement. Though Pine students performed above State standards, outscoring many other schools in the district, it lagged behind other schools with similar demographics. The principal found she had to stress the importance of higher expectations for her students, who were somewhat privileged and had a potential to perform at higher levels.

The story at Maple Elementary is strikingly different. The principal at this school, a very economically disadvantaged one, described a sense of apathy among faculty members who believed it would be impossible for the students to perform at higher levels. The principal used a series of pep talks and other motivational strategies in an attempt to convince teachers that Maple students could improve their achievement.

Case 1 - Ann Taylor at Pine Elementary School

The Practice of Leadership at Pine Elementary

I can be anything. I can learn anything, if I believe in myself, and work hard.

-School motto adopted prior to the first reward allocation.

All faculty and staff believe in the premise that what we expect is what we get.

There are no excuses when it comes to educating all students.

- Ann Taylor, Principal of Pine Elementary School

Taylor described herself as a “leader with authority and a strong sense of purpose and control over the functions of the school.” She was asked by the local superintendent to take over the principalship of Pine because of her leadership strengths. Taylor said she was given a charge by the Superintendent, “to raise the school from it’s mediocre position”. She noted that her students had economic advantages and the potential to be highly successful academically. She talked at length about her focus on “building a championship school” and raising student performance.

My focus was to lead an *excellent school* and my mission was to improve this school which was being outscored by many Title 1 schools that did not have the advantages that our school had. Yes, I do believe that I helped in improving enough to win the awards, but I am simply one person; it is my job to give the leadership to the team, because I obviously do not teach the 500 and some children who are part of this school. But, it is my job to set a vision and provide the leadership -- basically the vision was this school could be the best school in the County and the best school in Maryland and I told the faculty and staff that repeatedly. I also told the faculty and staff repeatedly that it is every principal’s job to make a school better than the way they found it - just the same way as when kids enter their classroom in September, by the time they leave in June, the children should be better than the day they entered. If I couldn’t do that at this school, then they don’t want me as their principal.

Ann Taylor came to Pine, with the mission to innovate and change the school. She said that initially she met a fair amount of resistance from the teaching staff who did not recognize a need to improve.

They perceived that the kids were doing fairly well and there wasn’t a real need to change. No one likes change anyway, except for a baby, and change is hard because some people perceive it as saying that somebody else did not do things right; and that’s not what it is about at all. It is simply that I saw it as my job to make this school better and that needed to be the vision — that we can be the best school and best to actually share strategies that I knew would be successful.

She was confident and relied on her own sense of good instruction to move the school

toward a goal of increased student achievement. In the first few months of her tenure as principal at Pine, she spent part of every day observing the teachers in their classrooms. She learned a tremendous amount through these observations. She describe them as her “awakening.” Taylor said that when she left her job as a teacher to become an administrator, she thought of herself as a very skilled instructor. In her role as a principal, observing her classroom teachers, she came to recognize that she was not only observing but learning instructional strategies herself. The idea of sharing practices and strategies became a powerful staff development concept for her. The previous principal had not implemented such a routine. In addition, there was no uniform set of instructional norms and expectations. Taylor took it upon herself to work with the staff in setting up norms and expectations and in sharing exemplary practices that she observed.

I know that I became a really wonderful teacher by seeing other teachers as a principal, and so it became my job to encourage the sharing of strategies. If you are doing something wonderful in a discipline then it is my job to share that with others. And there needed to be a set of norms or set of expectations that all of us are going to work on. Once that became clear, that basically started the premise of strengthening speaking and writing skills. What I mean is, that we can’t write anything we can’t say and MSPAP (the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program) was telling us that our kids have to write in complete sentences. Well, I believe we can’t write in complete sentences unless we can speak in complete sentences. So from practically the first day I became the leader in this building, I expected kids and teachers to speak in complete sentences and to support every one of their answers.

Taylor was not humble about her leadership effectiveness which she said was instructional and facilitative. She did, however, give her staff credit for the school’s positive outcomes saying that one person alone cannot improve a school. She saw her role as a leader with an eye cast on the assessments and what it would take to improve student

scores on the test. The first aspect of improvement, she felt, was an understanding of how MSPAP test questions were framed. She spent many days analyzing every sample question that was available. She also researched performance assessments and brought additional examples of questions to the faculty. She explained that she came to understand that responses with solid descriptive writing, using full sentences, could significantly lift assessment scores. Writing improvement was, therefore, an obvious initial strategy. Her teachers were brought together, during and after school, to analyze questions and high rated responses to those questions. Speaking and writing in full sentences was an important first step, and she encouraged each instructional team to incorporate full sentence responses in every lesson. Taylor described this idea as an instructional and cultural change because teachers, at first, found it hard to believe that a simple adaptation would make a difference. Teachers came up with an important concept, that in a significant number of responses, Pine Elementary students were supplying good answers, but the answers did not match the question asked.

The students not only had to support their answers in a complete way but we knew the kids may answer questions that were different from what was asked. So we knew if they did not repeat or regurgitate what the question is asking, they would get lost. For example, the question might say, describe the character trace of an individual and the child would go off in a tangent saying, 'I really thought the story was swell. I liked it because' -- and the question they would answer would have nothing to do with the question that was asked.

Working with the teachers and other staff members, Taylor asked teachers to use numerous practice exercises, imparting a sense of urgency to improvement efforts. Her description of her messages was sometimes dogmatic, but she felt that her approach encouraged and drove instructional change. In fact, only a very small number of teachers

were unable to adapt to change at the school, and by the end of Taylor's first year, those few transferred to another school.

Taylor felt that her drive for change was most difficult in the early years of her tenure at Pine. She was one who wasn't afraid to "rock the boat" and counter perceptions that "all was well" at the school. She was proud to say that she remained committed and ultimately earned the respect of her staff members.

The first year was extremely, extremely tough. A huge amount of resistance, huge, huge, and of course when teachers don't want to do something drastic, they appeal to the parents. So, my first year, actually my first and second year were extremely tough. But things certainly changed when teachers and parents saw the results. Right now, in fact, I have a number of people at this school who transferred from other schools where I was principal. In fact, the joke almost, is that I have worked with so many people in this building that were with me in other schools. So they basically, I would say, followed me here.

Taylor described what was then an innovative approach to student improvement, the examination of the performance of subgroups in the school. Analyzing disaggregated data was not a requirement at the time. In fact, few principals were focused on narrowing the achievement gap, a goal now required of schools as a result of No Child Left Behind legislation. She described her thinking in 1997.

I knew that it was not long until the year 2000 when State Goals were to be achieved. And when you are at school in 1993, you can work on improvement very slowly, but I knew that this school was in trouble. I knew that a school that I had come from did not have the advantages that this school did and it was doing better in reading. I knew that school had five subgroups, African American students that had met the excellent or satisfactory standards. African American subgroups, not Caucasian. African Americans, that was basically unheard of in any school in the State of Maryland. Five different subgroups, for example, if my memory is right. Like in fifth grade, in writing, they had met the satisfactory standards, only African American girls, not Caucasians. And I thought to myself-- these kiddos here can do it also. So I basically came in here and I said there were

going to be certain standards, and one of my norms is speaking in complete sentences and giving full supporting answers.

Taylor put herself on the line and promised her staff that the school would definitely improve as a result of new strategies and instructional expectations. She described herself as one who was driven to succeed. But that trait was not initially exemplified by the teachers. However, improvement results, followed by recognition and rewards, contributed to staff buy-in and commitment. Although significant improvement results took several years, Taylor continued to use encouragement and strong leadership to motivate the staff. Her confidence is captured below.

I promise you not only will the school be better, but each person on this faculty will be better personally and professionally. And so it came to pass. Three people retired at the end of this year. Two of them literally said to me, 'I am a superior teacher today,' in the note that they wrote me at the end of the school year.

The Impact of Recognition and Rewards

Boosting morale and buy-in - results make a difference.

Although Taylor said that she had worked diligently to set up an environment for change, with teachers fully understanding test data and the capabilities of the students at the school, recognition awards boosted morale throughout the school and brought it required revenue. She said that winning MSPAP rewards really meant something to all members of the school and that “the kids were as excited as the faculty and the staff”. Teachers and students now had a substantive reason to be proud of their efforts and the achievement of the students. She explained again, that in the past, the school family, including parents, had a false perception of high achievement. Now, that perception was based on reality.

Did the winning of the awards impact the school in terms of morale and prestige? Absolutely. The school always had high prestige, but the prestige was built on perception, versus truth. It was perceived that this school was wonderful because a former principal said that it was great. It was perceived that the school was doing well because people did not know that students were not performing as well as they could. And everyone was happy with not knowing. Parent and community involvement which was already high, led to additional resources. People tend to like to give to a school that is doing well versus a school that is being reconstituted. If we needed a \$200 donation for our graduation dance or additional money for the school, parents or community partners stepped forward. I needed only to say, 'by the way, we have been recognized by the State or we won the National Blue Ribbon. You also should know that we are the most improved school in the State of Maryland, and they would want to give. They feel proud that they are helping a good school.

Taylor described a multiplier effect that resulted from the MSPAP rewards. Her staff was far more willing to take on more and more of the work of school improvement. "Results make a difference in encouraging higher expectations," she said.

Once people realized that we were achieving wonderful results, expectations grew and they bought into the process more and more. It just started multiplying in what they were willing to do and what they were doing. I mean, all I can say is, it multiplied so quickly that we were continuing to improve at a much faster rate once we got rolling. Many schools have asked me how many instructional changes did you go forward with. Success breeds success and when somebody feels that they are doing a great job, they tend to want to do more, to do an even better job.

She talked about the importance of a positive and confident attitude in an educational environment and felt that recognition and rewards encouraged that attitude. In fact, this characteristic is what Taylor looks for in her staff members. As proof of her success in finding excellent personnel to work with and train, she explained that eight of her assistant principals had gone on to become principals, and many of her teachers had been promoted to assistant principals. She felt that her innate ability to recognize people with

attitudes conducive to improvement and change, were key to her successfully building leadership skills in others.

The potential as far as attitude, that's all I want. Because I can give people anything else they need., but I can't change attitude. So attitude either has to be changed by the boss saying, "you will do what is asked of you," or one's attitude has to be changed from within. For me, I would quit this job tomorrow, if I knew I could make a living out of consulting with the worst schools. I get a big charge out of improving a school, and very honestly, I don't mean to sound pompous, but, I know how to do this.

Taylor did not complain about a lack of funding to improve. She felt the process and people make the difference. However, she said that rewards and recognition were not only a boost to the change process, but they contributed useful revenue for the school.

Spending the rewards dollars.

Decisions about how to spend the rewards money also involved process and people. A memo was distributed to all staff members telling them the amount of money available and asking them to think about school and instructional needs. Decisions would be made based on consensus and need. The school improvement team, a decision-making arm of the school, helped render the final decisions.

We, basically put out a memo saying this is the amount of money that we won, which they already knew, and that we were going to meet as a school improvement team on such and such a date. They were asked to give their specific input, for themselves or for the good of the cause - if they thought we should plant ten pine trees, what they wanted, who it should be gotten from, the possible cost and why? They had to support the reason why. I asked everybody on the staff. They could either work in a team, in other words if the second grade teachers wanted to give us input, or they could do it individually. But the primary purpose of the money was to improve student performance.

Taylor described the process in which everyone submitted their requests and reasons. The school improvement team judged the requests and discussed positive and negative

consequences and then they voted. The process included tabulations to see if more than one teacher or other staff member requested the same item.

It was all laid on the table, and we would have a dialogue and give support or negative reasons why the money should go to a particular purpose. And then we voted. We put all the requests on the table, and we each got five sticky notes that we could put on a given number of choices. We tried to balance the things we were going to get. If I wanted an education assistant to be hired to help the children in reading, I weighted off my sticky notes for that goal. Then we literally took the amount of money we had. So we started with the most popular request and went down the list. If the top item was to purchase a program that cost \$30,000 and we only won \$48,000, then \$18,000 was left for the next priorities.

Final decisions were made over the course of one or two days. Taylor said that the decision-making process was very well received and carried out in the most collaborative fashion.

Everybody felt a part of the process and the promise was, that when teachers left the room, they weren't going to say that a particular person chose those trees outside. It was 'we decided this.' It wasn't going to be divisive in any way. I set the parameters for this. I said, 'when we leave here, we are all supporting our decisions.' And if you can't support it, you need to say it up front now. And very honestly, if you are the only one not supporting it, you need to convince your colleagues to go along with your plan. Because once it's decided, we will move forward with it.

Taylor was adamant that the rewards were extremely helpful in giving her school discretionary money to spend on school improvement needs. She said that in later years, when the rewards dollars were far fewer, she and her staff used the same process for making decisions.

Pine Elementary used their monetary awards to purchase items ranging from instructional materials to additional resource personnel to staff development programs. School assistance academies had been determined by staff to be important in boosting the

achievement of students with deficits in reading and math. Now there were dollars to support those. Each teacher was also given an allotment of approximately \$400 to spend for individual classroom purchases.

They decided; they did the purchase orders, and I signed off on them. I mean nothing was questioned because every decision that they made was appropriate. And as far as specific needs or specific programs, they were decided on by the teachers and whatever they felt was necessary. From year to year those decisions changed a bit. We were able to pay for after school academies, that is, we were able to pay teachers who help students with after- school academies. We also hired an educational assistant to support children who had reading concerns, and we were able to get equipment we needed -- computers I know were requested. I remember we ordered chairs for a music teacher. The range of requests and purchases were very broad - not, I would say, in any single domain like some of the schools that put all of their money towards computers.

Taylor emphasized that resources and other purchases needed to be justified and linked to student achievement and school improvement. However, her vision of improvement was broader than simply scoring higher on the assessments. She felt that a school environment should reflect excellence and that if teachers were proud to work in their school, they would be more committed to raising student performance. She was also an advocate of continuous staff development, and she created additional staff development days for teachers to work together and share promising practices or to learn from outside consultants who were brought to the school.

We paid for days to meet for staff development. I can remember, we paid for science development and had the Maryland Science Center and its instructional trailers come to our school to work with our staff. Those were very intensive weeks, where the children had science experiences that would contribute to their abilities to handle the science manipulatives on the assessments. The only way we could have paid for them was from the award money. We also paid for staff development and instructional units around colonial times because we knew colonial times questions and outcomes were very important. And we did not really think that our social studies program was strong at supporting or modeling that, so

we needed to bolster it. These programs definitely boosted the teachers' morale, but again, staff development needs came from them. It was not Ann's or Janet's (Assistant Principal) ideas; it was theirs.

Why we won was as important as what we won.

Taylor emphasized that winning schools need to understand why they were recognized, and she felt that more could have been done to explain to schools why they had won their awards. She also felt that, while the monetary rewards themselves were beneficial, their impact was strengthened by the fact that she promoted her school's performance and employed shared decision-making processes to come up with a purchases rationale. Gaining student information by comparing her school's test scores with other similar schools was also critical.

I think money is a positive thing. But I think it is only a positive thing if you let people know that you got it and why you got it and then you make people part of spending it. I would say that whenever we got an award, we looked at what other schools got, especially when we saw the awards in the newspaper. We would question why one school received \$30,000 and we got \$25,000. They must have made better improvement. But maybe they didn't get money last year, so this year they received more than we did. But I mean people interpret, especially when it is published in the paper, that an elementary school that got \$45,000 was doing better than we if we only got \$33,000.

Although award decisions were explained to the local superintendents, that information may not have been transparent to many principals.

I knew the State used a formula. I even had a copy of it, but it was difficult to decipher. To be honest with you, I trust people to do whatever they are supposed to do, sincerely and honestly and fairly. I assumed the rewards were based solely on the change index. If the school is really doing well and our change is not huge, this school is going to get punished. If our change was significant but others had more significant change, they got more money for that.

The State Recognition Program, in fact, was not designed to reward only the schools with

the highest amount of change, but rather, all schools that had significantly improved their school performance index over a two year period. Understanding the meaning of what constituted significant improvement, however, was difficult, and Taylor said she had not been involved in any meetings that clarified the reasons for recognition in this program. Though she didn't have a complete understanding of the State formula, Taylor knew that rewards were equated with significant improvement and she believed that her drive and management abilities contributed to her school's gains.

In managing the school, I was able to boost it psychologically, and the awards helped. I think psychological improvement in people is very important. Excellent principals are also very good managers and could be very good managers in any organization. They are good with people and improvement. And they are self-driven. It's not a matter of doing what the boss or superintendent says.

Case 2 - Miriam Ernst at Sycamore Elementary School

The results of being recognized for improvement makes you feel like Vince Lombardi - the principal makes all the difference - but I couldn't have done it without the team.
- Miriam Ernst, Principal

The Practice of Leadership at Sycamore

Miriam Ernst felt that she contributed to a culture change at Sycamore Elementary. She described an ambivalence among the staff members regarding the recognition of individual talent. Before her tenure at the school, teachers were not given opportunities to become award-winners because of the belief that the recognition of some would alienate others. Ernst felt that philosophy contributed to a culture of mediocrity. She brought with her a strong interest in changing the internal and external perception of Sycamore as an ordinary, if not below standard school.

Sycamore was a school that didn't have a Teacher of the Year, because they were "all teachers of the year....and they didn't want this divisiveness there and, at first, I really didn't fight it. But it is a big deal to be acknowledged as the best. You know, one of my partners was teasing about being passed over again for Maryland's State Principal of the Year. I didn't even know they had such a thing...and it's important that we know about these acknowledgments. After all, superintendents are required to do a portfolio every year. For me, I felt it was a big deal to be the leader of an award winning school, so I started to put structures in place to encourage the teachers. To me it is a validation of all our hard work. It was true school improvement and an outside manifestation of the things that we are proud of. The only place schools really are encouraged to compete are in sports. For the most part it's like, yeah, well we're just doing a good job. We generally are trained to be humble, but having the teachers recognized and the school recognized -- this was a big deal.

Ernst introduced the Academic Intervention Program, one designed to ensure that all students received appropriate services, interventions, and materials needed to be successful. Extended day and year programs were also offered to her students as well as a variety of reading enrichment programs. Students were encouraged with exciting awards for success. For example, the student who read the most at the end of each month won a limo ride with the principal to the local library.

Leadership for school improvement, however, did not come easily under her watch. Ernst talked about the dilemma of leadership in what she referred to as a "young, old school". Sycamore exemplified a school in which teachers had either less than five years experience or more than fifteen.

With that kind of social dynamics within the school, you can sink or swim. So it was often the old school against the new school, and that was the challenge.

Ernst described Sycamore as a school that initially lacked cohesiveness and a culture of cooperation. In an environment that stressed accountability, Ernst said, the staff was limited in tackling systemic school improvement. As the new school leader, she decided

to effect critical changes.

At Sycamore, before I came, and even after I came to the school, school improvement meant having three or four people get together twice a year. People would sit around and talk and it all fell on the principal at the end to write the plan the day before it was due, because that is way we had always done it. And I did the same thing my first two years; it was not helping. So, instead we started to conduct frequent team meetings and the awards and money encouraged that to happen. It gave us a purpose and made us willing to take the time. *We* started saying, instead of *me* saying, ‘this is what you are doing wrong,’ because I could walk into a classroom and say ‘oh my gosh. I can see this, this and this. Now we began to say ‘if you did this, how would it change that.’

Ernst felt that the Maryland School Performance Program with setting the stage for improvement and she felt that its rewards program contributed to Sycamore’s ability to make changes. It was, she said, the impetus for changing the operational culture at Sycamore, and it motivated the teachers to discuss and share. After the first round of awards, it became easier and easier for her to “pull the teachers into the conversation of school improvement.”

The award money basically opened up a world of possibility for us that we did not have, because money is always the variable that we can’t control in education. Suddenly we could control some resources and make decisions. By the second year that we got some money, we were looking at everything differently. The use of data to drive improvement- that was something we heard at the State Department and at conferences, and you know, most of us just go glassy-eyed. -- yeah, yeah, yeah, Watching it actually happen within a school is very powerful.

She credited her leadership abilities to her confidence in herself as an excellent teacher and her later experience as a “helping teacher” or coach of others. In that role, she had worked with teachers in improving student achievement on the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP). When she began to help others, she recognized an imperative - a teacher needed to be aware of instructional results and that

meant understanding how to interpret test questions and test results.

I came out of a first grade classroom in 1991, and that was the year that we were still saying MSPAP is going to go away; we don't need to worry about it, and even our school system said that. We were one of those counties that said, well, we will worry about it when we get there. When the assessments didn't go away, we were all pretty surprised. So I was the helping teacher for three years, and my job was to teach teachers about performance instruction. Now granted, to be perfectly honest, our goal was to succeed on MSPAP, but more than that, my goal as a professional was to teach teachers how to change their way of thinking - how to be more effective, to improve, to analyze data. So I brought that to this job even before Sycamore won any awards.

Ernst felt her success in school improvement was the result of her passion for teaching and individualizing instruction. She recalled, as a principal, going into her classrooms during the MSPAP test, and seeing the frustration of some of the children. Often, she couldn't help but step back into the shoes she wore as a teacher of the very young.

I would go into the classes, you know, kids would have their heads down, I would go over and rub their backs and say, 'I know you are tired but give it your best.' And sometimes, kids will not do it, I mean, I have seen kids just refuse.

She found herself in a continuous learning curve and became more interested in gathering information regarding what would motivate those children and lessen their anxiety over work that was so difficult for them. She continued to draw on her teaching instincts.

I think a lot of it was, I had just gotten my master's. I was never going to be a principal. I was just going to be a great first-grade teacher. I loved my kids. My kids loved me. I could turn out a kid who was going A, B, C to a kid who was reading Charlotte's Web at the end of the year. I loved my job and when Bob said, 'we have this new division, helping teachers, and he said why don't you try this?' I thought - uh, I'll give it a try. I became insatiable. Because I was fresh out of Peter Senge and and you know, all the new thinkers, I really wanted to embrace the process and to learn the system.

Becoming a principal took her into another realm, one that demanded more than teaching and analytic skills. Now she needed to facilitate the learning of her adult staff, and that task was challenging. She had to become a far better coach, and while she needed time to hone her skills, she felt her ultimate success was in employing strategies she learned when she worked with a program called Odyssey of the Mind. This program relied heavily on student coaching. Learning how to facilitate others to think helped her define herself as a leader.

She believed that she was able to make the transition from teacher to coach because of her “doggedly determination and willingness to learn.” These are traits that she wanted all of her staff members to have to be effective as instructors and as administrators in a change environment.

Odyssey of the Mind is one of those programs where as an adult, you would stand on the sidelines, be the guide on the side. That was a different experience for me. I was one of those teachers that just made things happen in my classroom. I love my kids. I love teaching. I love everything about kids. I love the whining as well as the --you know -- hugs -- being a first grade teacher. The hardest part about being the principal was I had to stand back and let others teach-- empower other people to do it. There is never enough training for that and it is very, very frustrating (laughs) you know ...In some sense it's like my training in Love and Logic. This teaches you how to put the ‘monkey’ back on the shoulders of others - giving the problem back to the person to whom it belongs. They sometimes think I am a superwoman – I’m going to make the whole world happy.

The challenge for Ernst as principal was to motivate her staff, not only to solve problems, but to take a role in figuring out how to change their instruction and their instructional habits so that student achievement would improve. She knew that her school would be held accountable for their relatively low scores on the MSPAP. Sycamore was, at the time, in the bottom third of the state in performance. She was also asked to take a

leadership role in the Baldrige in Education program taking hold in Maryland.

School improvement and accountability fit very well with Baldrige; specifically, Baldrige processes pointed you to an examination of data. You became concerned with what the data is telling us? So, when I went in to classrooms and observed, I would say things like, analyze the given data; do data analysis; it is as simple as what question are they still missing after my instruction? Well the data was telling us consistently - the kids were having trouble with reading to perform a task for instance. This was like a lightening rod for me; we needed to concentrate on shifting our instruction not only in third but from the beginning. We needed to shift our resources also. We didn't reach a point where we were shifting total resources, but early childhood is the place, well I'm prejudiced, but early childhood is the place that it's happening. And at Sycamore, which goes through third grade only, it really made sense to begin at the beginning - as soon as the kids begin at our school. That really made sense to me.

Adjustments in instruction and an emphasis on data-driven thinking did not come easily to Sycamore teachers. But, as they became accustomed to Ernst's leadership style, they respected her and were willing to change.

The staff was accustomed to my knowledge, which really helped. I did not have to prove myself. What happens to classroom teachers, and I am not blaming them at all, but it is just a fact of life, daily life just overwhelms. It can be as simple as -- none of my kids are doing homework, and of course Baldrige taught me, and so did Love and Logic, to ask specific questions. *What* homework are they not doing, or *how many* haven't done it? So, I ended up giving this back to a teacher and the teacher went home and she came back to work the next day and she came bursting into my office with all these numbers and she said 'there are only six kids not doing their homework,' and I said, 'hmm, what homework are they not doing?' She said, 'I did that already; they are not doing the homework that says, measure five things in the room.' Now we had something to work with.

Ernst described how she made a point of encouraging her teachers to think beyond their classroom instruction and encouraged them to build instructional capacity by examining the gestalt of their students' behavior. She talked about how she emphasized the importance of asking questions and getting more information regarding why students weren't performing acceptably.

I talked with them about interviewing a parent, to get at information. Asking them, ‘What do you want your child, your son or daughter, to be like? What do you want them to be able to do when they leave Sycamore?’ Teachers were used to making instructional decisions by themselves. I had a parent who had several daughters. And when we were sitting and looking at his kids scores, I noticed that none of the girls in this particular teacher’s class, none of the girls in science got above a B, only a few even got a B, but all of the A’s and B’s were with boys. I said to the teacher, “why do you think that is?” I mean, I did not know. And neither did he. My point is, for the kids, often the classroom teacher is the one who controls improvement. And the tough part for principals is empowering them to feel like, I need to examine what I am doing. And it’s okay to try this or that. The money, the award, the notoriety -- I guess the word is, pushed us to try some new things. And that was pretty powerful.

Ernst didn’t accuse the teacher she described of any bias or wrong doing, but she emphasized the importance of constant questioning and looking beneath the surface. What if this teacher’s examples or style were not a fit with the girls in the class? This discussion segued into the topic of staff abilities and effort. Ernst had the philosophy that an effective teacher in one classroom could contribute to a feeling of success for all of the teachers. She wanted every member of the staff to recognize the importance of the school as an integrated working unit.

You know, liking each other is not a guarantee that you are going to do a good job. Feeling as if you can do a good job is what it’s all about. I have noticed that in middle schools much more clearly than in elementary schools, because kids at the elementary school pretty much think that they can do it; they have more confidence at that time, but teachers need to think they can too. Being told you are doing a good job, like winning an award for success, contributes, but it takes a sense that it is the whole school making progress. At Sycamore, sometimes, the third grade teachers felt as if they owned the award as well as they felt like they owned the failure if they did not meet standards. The others (in grades not tested) didn’t have the confidence to know they were important too. It was a struggle sometimes, and it goes back to the earlier question, it was a struggle sometimes to remind the third-grade teachers that if the first and second-grade teachers hadn’t taught the kids to read, they could not do any of this.

Ernst summed up the difficult job she had as principal, by again relating that role to her former one as a teacher.

You know, when I was a classroom teacher, many of my average kids performed like everybody else's above average kids. If I could encourage my staff with the same passion, with the same belief that they could do anything -- that I brought to my first graders -- there would be no holding the school back. Part of the problem is, teachers are not accustomed to that.

The Impact of Recognition and Rewards

The first year of the rewards ceremony, Ernst said her school received a recognition certificate only. When she realized that other schools received monetary rewards, she made it her job to find out why and to do something about it.

The first step in improvement - understanding how it is measured.

Miriam described the importance of the State Awards Conference as motivational. The first time she attended, she thought it would be an instructional conference to inform participants about the MSPAP. But the ceremony was filled with pomp and circumstance and high excitement. It was far more a celebration than a conference. Mingling with her peers and experiencing firsthand the excitement of recognition for improvement was extremely significant to her. Her school had been asked to participate in the ceremony because it was recognized for one year of improvement, a feat which merited a State Certificate. The school would have to continue to improve another year to earn the monetary award. Ernst said that she and her accompanying team left the ceremony stimulated and determined to improve again over that next year.

Prior to the first Ceremony, we were in the dark about standards for success. We learned that it was not about just high scores and very quickly, within the first year, we knew that it had more to do with making progress than about being the

best. It was about improvement in the school performance index which looked at achievement in all areas and attendance. So, it was a composite score we had to look at. We made sure we knew what the goal was. And, you know, at that time we had just begun the Baldrige program with a systems approach. As a principal, I wanted to know what I needed to do to get over that hurdle and money was really, at the beginning, not the issue...but rather the consequence of improving.

She made it a point to better understand the criteria for selection. She compared the awards process to the Milken Awards, which identified exemplary education individuals without their knowledge of how and why they were selected. The element of surprise in the MSPAP rewards was valuable, but she felt that a school really needed to have a better understanding of what they had done to merit their recognition, and how the money allocation had been determined.

We usually got a printout that said what the other schools had done... how much money they received. I wanted to know why our school only got \$22,000 and another got \$78,00. No one explained any of that, but we figured it had to be based on the school's student population, and we calculated the money based on how many kids we had; that made us feel a little better because Sycamore is a tiny little school.

Competition as a driving force.

Recognition and rewards were, according to Ernst, a validation of everyone's hard work. She felt that school improvement awards were an outside manifestation of the things that educators are proud of, but they also involved competition which was anathema to the education culture.

The only place schools really are encouraged to compete are in sports. For the most part it's like, yeah, well we're just doing a good job. We generally are trained to be humble, but in my mind recognition for school improvement was a very big deal!

Awards dollars contributed to a competitive spirit which Ernst believed assisted

the accountability movement. It was, according to Ernst, an important feature in motivating her and her staff. Although her students were less advantaged than those in many other schools, Sycamore was striving to compete with the highest rated schools. The monetary awards were another tangible measure by which student achievement could be compared.

It wasn't necessarily sour grapes that others won more than we did -- I think it's the competitive nature of principals. You know, principals are competitive about whether their kids are better or worse than another principal's kids. We weren't sure if the amount of money given to each school was predicated on that. In fact, at first, we were convinced that we could never win money more than once. Once you get your money, you are taken out of the pool and then they give it to another person. So the second year, when we won money again, we were totally shocked. And the third year, actually the fourth year we attended the State Ceremony, I brought the School Improvement Team Chair, the PTA President, all these people and I kept thinking, there's no way we can win again. But we did.

Spending the money - a learning experience.

Ernst described an unintended and negative consequence of winning a large monetary award. She discussed the somewhat slanted perception of her third grade teachers regarding why the school won their awards and said she might have taken too authoritative a stand in making decisions about which resources should be purchased for improvement.

The third grade team took full credit for school improvement because that was the only grade in which the students were tested. If we improved, it must have been because of their instruction. No one else, therefore, should benefit from the awards money. I knew the bigger picture. I mean, my leadership had something to do with it as well, and I felt strongly about certain needs of the school. Now, I admit that the pressure of testing and the pressure of assessment fell on the third grade team. But it wasn't fair for all the glory to be sucked in there too. This is when collaboration led to divisiveness.

She described "hot meetings" in which there was contention among faculty and

administrators regarding what to purchase with the awards money. She believed the focus should be on identified needs in the school improvement plan, but the third grade team had other ideas.

One of the third grade teachers in particular, did not want the award money spent for a reading instructor, a priority of the school improvement plan. This instructor would work with the Reading Club for kids in first and second grade who were still struggling with reading, and we would give them an extra hour a day of reading practice. But that cost money, and we couldn't do it, until we had the award money.

Ernst pulled her weight on the issue of a reading instructor. Although there was money left to make other purchases, the dissension grew.

So we had enough award money to hire a para-professional under the teacher's guide to supervised services. A third grade teacher didn't like it, because it didn't suit every child's needs in this school. Well it wasn't the whole amount of the money but it (the decision) became divisive. We ended up using Baldrige strategies of affinity diagrams to figure out how everybody could get something. If there was a delta in the whole process, I would suggest that School Improvement Teams and principals be taught how to handle rewards money.

Although everyone was involved in school improvement, a number of teachers did not feel involved in decisions regarding how to spend the first monetary award. Ernst recognized her own failure in that regard and vowed to change the process if the school won a second time.

But that first year, I didn't have a process in place for these decisions. We would have benefitted from role-playing around the scenario of receiving a sum of money and having to make spending decisions. That was a situation that most school members are not prepared for.

Subsequent decisions on rewards expenditures.

Sycamore Elementary won awards for improvement two additional years. Ernst

did not remove herself from decisions, but she worked to build consensus among staff and parents.

We spent hours. We spent faculty meetings where everybody had to be present. So, nobody could say, 'well she decided by herself.' Unfortunately some teachers still seemed to feel 'this is my money, that's your money.' It took a while. Me, I kept thinking as a leader, what's best for the entire school. We also involved the parents. We brought them together to help us make decisions. They voted. If you have five dots, how would you want to spend this money, and the parents literally got up and walked around and voted. We did the exact same thing with the teachers.

Individual classroom purchases were made including instructional materials, cabinets, bookcases, a large supply of books, and individual libraries for every classroom. Each teacher was allocated \$500- \$750 for classroom needs. Money was reserved to support family fun-days, a priority of the parents.

Perhaps the most critical item purchased, according to this principal, was substitute teacher time for staff development and team development. "If I could buy anything on a permanent basis, it would be time."

Decisions were made to spend a substantial amount of money each year to improve the building. These were purchases that would stand the test of time, according to Ernst.

During the second year of rewards, we bought a new auditorium curtain which for many years, teachers and the community would recognize as a prize for effort. And they would know that school improvement was the reason we had a professional looking stage in the auditorium. These were items that the school system budget could not support, and they brought pride to the entire staff and community.

Also counted among these building purchases, was a portable sound system for the school

that contributed to a professional approach to assemblies, as well as to daily rituals such as announcements.

With \$3,500, our morning assembly went from being, you know, standard, say the pledge to literally a road show in the morning. I would sing to the kids and the kids would sing to each other, all because of a cordless mike. It brought us spirit and enjoyment and we wouldn't have been able to get it without the awards money.

Changing perceptions.

A 'can do' attitude developed after the administration of the second recognition award. Not only did teachers develop an insatiable desire to continue to improve, but the entire system perceived Sycamore in a more positive way.

Sycamore was – well, and it is, a little school in the country. Larger schools were being noticed for their achievements. We really were just that little old country school and downtown (the district), they didn't think much about us. Even the community didn't pay attention to what we were doing. The recognition brought pride to the whole community.

Ernst capitalized on the success of the school. She displayed the Governor's citation for improvement proudly. She had banners put on the walls near the front entry. She pumped up the students as well. Students voted on what they wanted purchased. Ernst said their choices were typical. They wanted more ice cream; they wanted a limo ride. They received both of these items. Students were rewarded with special limo rides in the community. Each student in the school also received a new book. These were called the award books and inside the front cover, Ernst placed a name plate that said, "Purchased by award money." At more than one assembly, she told the students about their good work.

I told them, to-the-penny, the money we had won and asked them to chant it back. And I would say ‘and this is because you have worked so hard.’ The students cheered. I think it really meant something to them.

Announcements were made to the parents and community. Ernst felt the awards either established or reinforced pride in the school. However, she didn’t see as much evidence of that with her teachers.

I think the parents, the community, and the kids were much more excited about it than the teachers, and I am not sure why.

But the staff became more analytical when it came to developing strategies for student achievement improvement. Sycamore’s reading scores were significantly lower than math or science scores. The staff recognized the need to concentrate on reading instruction. The culture did change from one of “well, that’s not my area” to “we can all help the students”, and Ernst said that change was a milestone. However, even though teachers were more willing to participate in staff development and to collaborate around school improvement issues, they still viewed MSPAP achievement problems as primarily those of the third grade team.

I think the recognition and award money made improvement easier, but I think we probably would have improved anyway. Actually, it validated our hard work and I think that was pretty important.

Ernst also felt the Recognition Program contributed to her long-held vision that every child can learn. While that concept made sense to her, not everyone at Sycamore believed it was true.

You know, the money upped the ante because suddenly my belief, and a lot of the teachers belief that every kid can learn, became the underlying vision. But there were still teachers that didn’t believe that. And it is hard sometimes to convince the staff, particularly if their vision is ‘well, I am going to teach some kids who

are here to learn, and the other ones can, you know, go do something elsewhere.’ It is an interesting concept that every single kid will learn, not just the convenient kids, not just the kids who were the brown eyed kids sitting or hanging on every one of your important words, but every kid. What the award did, it pointed to the kids who we were not attending to. It did more for school improvement then we probably realized until later. It made us look at the whole school, not just one teacher’s 30 kids.

Case 3 - Jack Blake at Cherry Elementary School

We must see ourselves as scientists as we diagnose instruction.

- Jack Blake, Principal

Instruction should be flexible and inclusive
based on the best available research and the needs of the student.

- From the school’s printed Belief System.

The Practice of Leadership at Cherry Elementary

Jack Blake described himself as an easy-going principal that was generally well-liked by his staff, school system, and community. He remarked that, at times, he was taken for granted by his system because of his “nice guy” persona. A broad grin came over his face when he said that the rewards program proved that “nice guys can finish first.”

Blake relayed the initial dilemma he felt the first few years of the Maryland assessments, when he believed that high stakes testing detracted from creativity and flexibility in classroom teaching. But he also saw in the program a potential for enhanced student learning.

Our system’s testing specialist was a little ambivalent about what we were doing, because basically, we were talking mostly about improving the numbers. At first, my reaction was similar. I thought that MSPAP took the fun out of school, took the fun out of it, because now everything was geared to whether it would improve

our scores or not improve our scores. So we had to look at whether we were doing some event that would eat up a lot of classroom time and would have no correlation between the unit and the test. I mean we had to think about those things. And sometimes, you know then that you'll end up dropping it. But (as far as MSPAP), I do know that, if it did nothing else, it really, really improved student writing. As a result, the kids could write better, the kids in the second grade were writing better than the kids I had taught in fourth grade in school.

Blake said he was resigned to accepting the test as the state standard and one which needed to be understood. The state was interested only in student performance on this test, and Blake was determined to use it as a marker for his students' performance.

No matter what anybody says, MSPAP was the thing. No one cared about your CTBS scores. No one cared about your functional scores. To me, this was the state standard, and we had to take it seriously. I didn't like it; I thought it was unfair. I didn't like the way it was graded, but, this was the standard and the question was, how do we get better on it, like it or not. You have to get beyond that acceptance point, and I think we were able to do that as a school, much, much more easily, as opposed to getting hung up that this isn't right, the third grade test is too difficult for kids and all that stuff. I know all that might have been true, but that doesn't change the fact is that this was how you are graded based on the score. And now you put money into it! It's like – gee whiz, how can we improve? And then we looked at, which kids can improve? Maybe we had a better chance of improving particular kids. That was not the way I liked to think of good instruction, but that was reality. If you improve this group of kids, and if you can show the most growth, then you can move your scores up.

Although Blake had problems with the emphasis on testing, he knew that improvement as measured by the MSPAP, demanded it. He adapted his leadership role and focused on developing expertise in data and testing. He started by looking at increasing the performance of specific students.

Like it or not, you have smart kids who probably can't move up a great deal. I mean, actually, you're not going to leave those kids out, or the other students who you just can't do too much with. But you can concentrate on the kids most likely to improve. So in a sense, in the beginning, it's a triage approach. You only have so much time, so much personnel, so you want to put them where it's going to give you the most bang for your buck. And, in the beginning, we did that.

He spent time examining test data from MSPAP and from norm-referenced tests administered, and learned more about strategic student improvement.

We got more familiar with test results. We found out later from our county's test department, that kids who do well on CTBS, typically should do well on MSPAP. And we found that a lot of our kids who did well on CTBS weren't doing well on MSPAP. So those were the kids that we really targeted. We knew these kids had the potential to improve. The top kids were already doing pretty well, and the bottom kids were receiving special resource services. Our special education kids actually passed different sections of the test, but if you had one hour of time where are you going to put it?

Blake and staff used what he referred to as an intentional approach to student achievement improvement. He felt this approach was defined by the performance assessments. He guided and encouraged his teachers in strategically thinking through the tests and examining items that were directly tied to instruction. His role was that of facilitator and test expert, and theirs was to interpret the tests and develop targeted instruction.

We were intentional about what we could do to improve or make sure the kids had whatever information or skills they needed. I think that, in the course of examining the huge amount of information and skills needed for the MSPAP tests,- so many different skills- we realized the requirements differed a lot from what kids got in a regular classroom curriculum. You put these kids in a normal classroom, and they'll improve. But I think these kids needed more intentional help in specific areas in order to do well. Interpreting, reading between the lines, understanding what was asked -these were areas that we became intentional with. Our teachers became very aware of that and able to diagnose student results. One year, we got the scores back on social studies, and we'd gone down 13 points. But we took that information and evaluated it. What did we do with social studies now, that was different than what we did the year before? Then we looked at something that most people were not aware of -- the various outcome areas.

Blake talked at length about the lack of testing expertise that existed among principals and teachers. He relished the fact that he was a leader who made a point of

understanding the intricacies of the performance assessments. He went to meetings with his fellow principals and found that they not only didn't understand the tests, but they lacked an interest in data and test analysis. Blake said he had always felt a comfort level with data, and now it became a mission to understand everything he could. He developed monthly and often weekly information sheets for his staff, explaining the school's MSPAP standing in comparison with state and district norms. He broke down information by third and fifth grade assessments and included notes on MSPAP improvement strategies. He also tied in test results of other examinations such as the CTBS.

People didn't know that outcome areas were there. They looked at the one big score and forgot that there were scores other than reading and writing. There were data breakdowns as well. With reading, there were three areas, and with writing there were three areas which you could look at. And while others didn't know that, our teachers became very aware of those sub areas, those outcome areas. They also became very aware of what they were doing, or what they may not have done.

Leadership responsibilities involved developing more and more expertise in analyzing assessment data. On a regular basis, weekly or monthly, he created instructional worksheets for teachers that he titled *Digging for Answers*. These listed a series of twenty or more questions about MSPAP outcomes and suggested classroom instruction strategies that could improve student achievement on the test. Questions such as the following guided the teachers: Do you give any MSPAP consortium tasks? Do you do language drills or math drills? What could the previous grade level do to help? Are you giving your students different kinds of writing opportunities? He frequented the State website which displayed data from every school. Comparing Cherry to other schools with similar

demographics and to schools with higher performance became routine. Blake created time during the day to brief his teachers, discuss test and achievement discoveries, and craft practice exercises.

I started printing out everything I could about MSPAP. We gave it to everybody in the school and told them how to analyze it. I would just put the stuff out with a sheet to explain, 'okay, here's what you're looking at; this is what I think.' The one thing we did, which was really good. I asked questions. I gave them a sheet of 20 questions to ask. Okay, your scores went down in social studies. Big deal, who cares? Why do you think they went down? How much time did you spend? What may have happened? And they would fill the sheets out as grade teams, and then we would talk to the team below or the team above trying to figure out what they could have done wrong or what they could have done right. But I tried to make them realize, 'hey, okay, so it went down, big deal, don't worry about it. But actually the neat thing is to figure out why.' And I'd say, 'when you have a big drop, when it goes down a great deal, that's kind of neat in a way, because maybe you could figure out what the variable was. When it moves just a little bit, it's like just one kid did something different. It could have been the time of day, or someone broke his pencil.'

Blake's recollection of his actions made it more apparent that he had a positive way of relating to his teachers. His description of his actions portrayed a non-threatening, collaborative style which appeared to have encouraged his staff to want to change and improve.

So, after a while of doing that, the teachers were not fearful about questioning what they were doing, because I wasn't questioning what they were doing. We had an atmosphere of trust. Like the storage rooms being unlocked - everyone has a master key to this building and a key to my office, like no big deal. Now it bothers other people in other buildings but our teachers would say, 'Jack trusts us with the kids; why wouldn't he trust us with paper clips?' In some schools you can't get paper clips without a requisition. But you can be in a classroom everyday with kids and no one ever sees you. I think we had that trusting atmosphere and so then we were able to build up to, 'okay, folks, guess what I found on the MSDE website? I found this breakdown of these various outcome areas.' And we'd all get pretty excited about that.

He described an authentic example of action analysis taking place at his school.

Many of the schools' fifth graders had not done well on a geometry question on the test. He and the teachers examined the question and the students' incorrect responses, and they searched for explanations. They remembered the context of geometry instruction and realized that the lessons came prior to a snow week. They had, in fact, lost instructional time when schools were closed due to inclement weather. This insight came about as a result of successfully analyzing a perplexing problem.

Blake described informal and formal faculty and team meetings in which teachers were engaged in discussing new instructional strategies.

Now we did not have a zillion faculty meetings. By the way, all of our faculty meetings in the school were voluntary. Kind of an interesting thing. Because, see the other side of this, forgetting MSPAP, is that we tried to create an atmosphere in this building where people loved to come to work. Because I thought -- maybe in a stupid fashion, if the teachers are happy, then the kids are happy, kids are happy, parents do not call me, and that was important, since all the parents had my home phone number [laughs]. If I got two calls a year, that was a lot, and typically they were never about complaints; they were about borrowing chairs or something like that.

A cathartic experience led him to the idea of voluntary staff meetings.

When I first became principal at Cherry, I set up team faculty meetings in a typical way. You tell the teachers there is a meeting and they are to attend. And all of a sudden, the assistant principal said, 'Jack, the fourth grade team doesn't want to meet with you. They don't have time. They feel they're wasting planning time.' I was angry. These were the people I previously taught with. There was Jane McAllister; I went to school with her husband. She was my lab partner in high school. How could she dare say this? I decided to walk down there and tell them off. This was a matter of who's the boss. If they felt bad, it didn't matter because they'd know I'm in charge! So I walked down there, and what made me even more aggravated was, they were watching a video of Maryland. They didn't have time to meet, but they did to play a video. I was about to explode, and I walked back to my office feeling like I was in the dark. I thought about it all that day and night. But, maybe someone was looking out for me because I began to think about it, not as a power struggle, but as maybe something that made sense. We say teachers need time to plan. I do talk a lot about that. If they feel I'm taking up

their planning time, this is stupid. From that point on, I decided to create meetings they would want to attend and to make them voluntary. That was probably the best thing I did, and it dramatically changed the whole complexion of things. It was like giving in to the fact that I'm not the expert. My thing then, was to get every possible bit of data I could from MSDE, find out everything I could and give it to teachers. Then, there would be a clear reason they needed to meet with me.

After this revelation, he put his time and expertise into facilitating improvement on the MSPAP and encouraging his teachers to examine and think through the test. In every step along the way, he guided them and facilitated their thinking. He felt that his approach, based on his previous experiences and conversations with other principals, was atypical.

Blake capitalized on his non-threatening approach to teacher involvement. Rather than blame them for lower than expected test scores, he asked them to analyze what they were doing and to think of approaches that could yield better results. Blake created templates for analysis, and they would fill in the blanks. He included other staff members, the custodian and the nurse, in discussions of student achievement improvement and offered opportunities for every staff member to contribute. He remembered that the school nurse got so involved in the process, she suggested a visit to a high achieving school in another school system. Jack acted on this suggestion and visited the school with an instructional team. In fact, there were many site visits organized by this principal. From December 2000 to March 2001, fourteen visits to other schools or hosted visits to Cherry were arranged to bring home new ideas or to share Cherry methods with others.

The Impact of Recognition and Rewards

Nothing succeeds like success.
Once you start winning, everybody and everything works well.
-Jack Blake, Principal

Money does make a difference - the processes and purchases.

Blake was adamant in feeling that rewards helped him and the staff improve student achievement. He discussed the impact of recognition for success and having discretionary money to use for school and instructional purchases.

We were ecstatic the first time we won because a school like ours didn't have any grant money. The only discretionary funds that I had were \$3500 in picture money from student pictures. So that was neat because all of a sudden, now if teachers wanted to go to a conference or they needed calculators or an overhead projector, we could buy these things. When we received the first monetary award, I put out a questionnaire to the teachers asking them how they wanted to spend it. I said we could blow it all on one thing. We could go out and buy everybody a computer. At that time everybody didn't have one. But then all our money would be gone. I said, 'Let's not use it to buy stuff that the board is typically going to buy. Let's buy those things that we think we really need, that will help us to improve, help the climate here at the school.' And what was neat was that our money lasted and we could make decisions all along the way.

The State had an innovative policy involving spending decisions. There were no restrictions on when the rewards had to be spent and how they should be spent. Schools were to inform their local school systems as to what was purchased and to justify their purchases. Also, recognition awards were sent to the school system, but were to be transferred in full to the winning school.

It went right to the school, which was another new idea. It was put it in a special account and we kept track of it. We created a sheet, a wish list, which was distributed to the teachers and they worked in their teams to decide what should be purchased. It was terrific because when the team wanted to do something, we had the money to do it. But we didn't let anybody go overboard and say, "Hey, we could do this big project that costs \$30,000 which was what some schools did.

Blake included the full staff in spending decisions. Custodians and ancillary staff as well as teachers were part of the decision-making process. There was a high level of collaboration in these decisions. Individuals wrote down their requests and then compared

their needs with their grade team members. The final decisions were based on each teacher's request, although in many cases, individual needs were based on decisions about what would be most effective for team instruction. Over the rewards years, there were a wide array of purchases for school and instructional improvement. One unusual purchase was that of glass storefront walls to change the open space structure of the primary grade wing in the school.

The teachers felt the kids were distracted by an open environment, and we were not on the list for school renovation. So we contacted a downtown glass company and enclosed areas with glass walls, like you see in a storefront. We got this done in a pretty cost effective way. And we did it because most of the members of the team felt that structural change would help them improve the achievement of their students. They didn't want to feel shut out, so we came up with the idea of glass partitions. One teacher liked the open space, so we left that class as it was.

A tour of the glassed-in enclosed areas pointed to an innovative approach and teachers in the areas said they felt they were better able to keep the attention of their young students. Blake said that he knew of no other school that had added to their building the way he had.

Another unusual purchase, also requested by primary grade teachers, was an audio speaker system with cordless headset microphones that could be worn by each teacher. The system was requested by a number of teachers who felt it would be another way of holding down distractions and capturing the attention of many of the younger students. The idea was a result of a presentation to teachers by Blake's daughter, an audiologist, who shared her knowledge of the impact of environment on the learning capacities of young children. Most of the teachers in grades one to three acquired the equipment and

said it made a significant difference in their abilities to instruct all of the students, not just those who may have had attention deficits.

Rewards dollars also were used to buy reading and math materials, tutorial books, and math manipulatives. The music department received instruments; the custodial staff received a floor cleaning and a floor burnishing machine, carpet extractor, outdoor vacuum, power washer, and back pack vacuum. These purchases were uniformly agreed upon because the entire staff felt that an important aspect of student improvement was enhancing everyone's pride in the school and that included a nice looking building. In 2000, the third award year, Cherry offered its entire teaching staff opportunities to have site-based instructional development and extra planning days. In addition, several teachers used rewards dollars to attend improvement conferences. In each of the decisions, requests were tied to student achievement improvement. Blake maintained his belief that the money meant more because of collaborative decisions, a dynamic process for making requests, and a spending plan which emphasized longterm use of rewards money. There were always dollars left over for staff functions such as lunch after an all-day meeting.

Teachers and other staff were free to talk to me all of the time. People would write notes or send me requests. So they knew they could always tell me what they were thinking. The School Improvement Team would go over things, but the atmosphere that we created was such that everybody felt a part of this. Even the custodian could say, "We could really use a buffer to make these floors look really nice." I only required them to put it in writing, because otherwise I might forget about it.

Commitment to the challenge.

Blake felt that the rewards program had a profound effect on his staff's

commitment to improve and on his ability to encourage them. Affirmation of success by the State was very meaningful, and the fact that the school ranked first in the district built confidence among staff members. He also gave himself credit for encouraging his teachers to think about their instructional situations and come up with creative new ideas.

A teacher would come in with this neat idea and say, ‘Jack, I have this new thing we want to try.’ I thought my teachers were pretty smart and usually could see a tie-in to better instruction, so I didn’t do what some of my colleagues might have done... play them off and say, ‘This is really neat, but we are putting a new roof on the school right now and I’m kind of busy; why don’t you come back in three or four weeks and write it up for me.’ In three or four weeks they’d come in with this thing all written up and the principal flips through it and says, ‘You know, till I put the roof on the school, I don’t think we should do this-- maybe next year.’ After a while, when that happens to you, you forget it. You lose your commitment and interest. First of all, the rewards money gave all of these ideas a new focus, and teachers became more and more anxious to improve everything – from instruction to the building.

He facilitated teacher leadership by creating an environment which encouraged new strategies. At Cherry Elementary, his motto was, “Go ahead and do it; just keep me informed about what you’re doing.”

His voluntary staff meetings, which had a high attendance rate, became even more important and exhilarating. Everyone on the staff was proud and wanted to participate.

I remember when several principals asked me about voluntary staff meetings, like how did you do that? Would you continue them if people didn’t show up. I said, ‘I don’t care. Meetings should have a purpose and then people will want to come.’ The worse thing I can remember as an assistant principal, was the principal having a faculty meeting, and half the staff didn’t want to be there, and they let you know they didn’t want to be there. The principal had butterflies in his stomach as he tried to do this presentation to people who couldn’t care less -- who were antagonistic. So, if I’m talking about cooperative learning or we’re doing a presentation about it, and people don’t want to hear it, well, they’re probably not going to do it anyway. But those who hear it, may try it out in their classroom, and

the teacher next door may say, 'Hey show me how to do that.' I've always believed that most teachers learn better from other teachers than they do from the administration.

Announcing the awards to the school family.

Winning schools were invited by the State Department of Education to attend an awards announcement at Martin's West in Baltimore. None of the schools knew if they had won monetary awards or certificates of accomplishment, but the hundreds of participants were charged up just being in the room. The small team representing Cherry Elementary and led by Jack Blake, were told they had won close to \$26,000 for their MSPAP improvement. Blake described his method for notifying the school faculty, students, and their parents.

I called the school up right from Martin's West and they were excited. I said, 'Write this number on the board in every classroom. That's how much money we won!' And you heard a huge cheer. When we came back, we thanked the kids who took the test. They were the reason why we got the money. I said, 'You guys did well.' We put it in our newsletter for parents and the community and included detailed information—very statistical information about how we did and how we did compared to other schools.

Recognition and its influence.

Blake described the impact of his school's success as a validation of their hard work.

Winning brought us a real sense of satisfaction; it was like - hey - this showed what we were doing. Personally, it was an egotistical thing, we were really doing the right things. And because we were doing a pretty good job, maybe we could be helpful to others. It felt like having raised children who turn out to be really wonderful. And then you could say, 'I guess I can give advice to other parents.' It was neat, and my colleagues were impressed which is interesting because we didn't gloat about it. At our meetings, I didn't say a word. I didn't say, 'At Cherry, we do well because we do this and that.' But others said these things, and some invited us to their schools to assist. We brought some of our teachers who met with their teachers trying to help them out. We were so encouraged by our own success that we also visited schools in other school systems that were doing better

than we were. Team leaders, or whoever wanted to, could go. I tried to spread it out, so that it wasn't always the same people.

An important emphasis was on maintaining an environment conducive to learning, so that children would want to come to school.

Winning awards was actually an expectation at our school. I would tell the parents in the newsletter about how well we had done or quote from the newspaper that Cherry was once again a bright spot in the county and make certain that people were aware of that. But I reminded teachers that it didn't matter if we were a Blue Ribbon School, written up in Baltimore Magazine, the first smoke free school, one with a Teacher of the Year, and now the first MSPAP award winner, top school in the county. If a parent's child would come home crying, they could care less. I said that all those plaques on the wall won't mean a thing if your kid doesn't want to come to school. I reminded my parents of that, and I reminded the teachers.

Relationships with the central office.

Blake did not feel that his central office did as much as they could have in recognizing his school's improvement on the state assessments. For example, only one person, a former principal at his school, congratulated him. He was never called upon to share strategies with other principals, and although his school was mentioned as high ranking, there was no effort made to engage him or his staff in assisting others. Blake felt his school system should have done more in developing opportunities for successful schools to share promising practices.

When the superintendent gave a press conference, we were supposed to be there because we had done well again- top school in the county. We had passed in every assessment area - a trivia fact that made us quite impressive. But I'm not sure who cared, except that we were proud because we had the data to support us.

However, recognition comes in many forms, as represented by the following account of a special exemption given to Cherry by the school system.

The school system made a decision to switch social studies books. The county had selected a new series which they believed connected better with reading outcomes. We were one of the pilot schools, and our teachers felt that the new series was not as good as the previous one. We objected to the change and were the only school allowed to continue what we were doing. Every other school changed to the new series and as it turned out, their scores declined while ours improved.

In another discussion, Blake recalled that it was at the request of his Central Office that he applied for the National Blue Ribbon and the Character Education awards. Clearly, administrators considered Cherry Elementary one of their most successful schools, yet they never utilized the talents of the principal or teachers in their efforts to reform their other schools.

Case 4 - John Andrews at Willow Elementary School

I look for teachers who will say, “The reason I want to be in this school is because I have high expectations for the kids. I don’t want to discipline them. All I want to do is teach them.”
- John Andrews, Principal

The Practice of Leadership at Willow Elementary

John’s first administrative experience was as principal at Willow Elementary. He remembered being told by his supervisors, that the school was performing well and that all he had to do was maintain the status quo. He assumed his duties at the school the day after teachers got there and were working in their classrooms. Andrews said he spent that day preparing for his introduction to them and looking at the performance of Willow students by comparing them to other schools with similar demographics. He immediately turned to the MSPAP results.

High expectations matter.

I remember thinking, we are doing well compared to other schools, but not compared to schools like us. This is where we really should be. That concept did not sit very well with many of the teachers. In fact, the parents weren't happy either. They were high achievers themselves and didn't want to think their kids were not performing as well as they could.

From the very beginning, Andrews assumed a stance of improvement. After looking at all aspects of MSPAP data and becoming convinced that many of his students had the capability to achieve at higher levels, he began to implement change. He saw himself as a new principal on a mission to make a difference for students at his school.

Change in the status quo, coming so soon after he assumed the leadership role, had a profound impact on many teachers at the school. They were content with previous performance results and blamed Andrews for what they felt were unrealistic expectations.

They figured they had pretty decent scores for what they were doing. I was now asking them to do far more and they felt my expectations were a little too high. Recognition for improvement in later years went a long way in changing those perceptions. When they saw the kids start to perform at those high levels, some teachers appeared to have been enlightened.

High expectations took their toll on staff and by the end of his second year, Andrews had a teacher turnover rate of 80%, with about 50% of his teachers transferred in the first year.

It was a large number. I think they had been in a situation where they could just coast and the kids would still look pretty good, but I didn't want to be in that situation. I wanted teachers who were willing to change, willing to try new things, willing to be challenged. These kids had far more ability, and we needed to boost their achievement.

Teachers who subsequently replaced the teachers who left, shared Andrews philosophy of high expectations. Higher expectations and a home instruction process were also

introduced to the parents who were more than willing to help their children.

We would ask parents to do things at home. You know we had mandatory activities they had to do in reading and math. We made it mandatory and the parents played part in that. They had to sign off that their kids did the work. It was sent in, and we counted those assignments as grades. Parents worked at home on math facts. What was important was that we told the parents what kids should be able to do by the end of kindergarten, first grade, second grade. They were told they had to work on these things so we could spend more time on application.

Andrews pointed to the fact that parents had always been involved. What they wanted was someone to tell them what they needed to do. For those parents that needed more explicit instruction themselves, the school instituted parent training in the school.

Although, Andrews said that the gains were worth the pain of that first year, he stated that he may have done things a bit differently had he been a more seasoned leader.

I'm a bit different in my approach at this school (his new school). I'm far more layed back. I still have high expectations and high standards, but I might be less aggressive in my approach in moving this school forward. We'll get there though.

The introduction of new approaches.

Andrews said, that in his quest for instructional approaches that would work for highly capable students, he discovered the William and Mary Reading Program. This program was geared specifically to high performing students and to changing traditional reading instruction methods. He described it as a more challenging program and it fit the needs of Willow students. Instruction was, for the most part, a minimum of a year and a half above the reading level of other programs in comprehension, and there was an emphasis on writing that was a benefit for students taking the MSPAP.

The Guided Reading Program was also introduced. This program supported reading for first and second grade students and had been identified by the local school

system as mandatory for schools classified as disadvantaged. Andrews had witnessed the positive aspects of this early learning program when he served as a principal intern at his less advantaged school. He decided to introduce that program at Willow, even though it would be three years before the District would pay for the program at his higher performing school. But Andrews and his teachers believed a good foundation in reading in the primary years was critical for his students, and Guided Reading was worth the expense of training and materials.

Andrews also introduced an innovative concept of acceleration which he had experience with in his former school. Children who were capable of higher grade level work were moved up into a higher level curriculum.

There were students in the first grade that could handle second grade work and we made those changes, moving a class of those kids into second grade work. We did this little by little starting with the first grade. Some of the teachers questioned this approach. I said, 'I don't know that this will work here but let's try it. In fourth, they moved up a level to fifth, and now the school essentially has a sixth grade math class comprised of fifth grade students.

Andrews believed that accelerating students not only led them to higher academic achievement, but it encouraged the staff to work more effectively as a team rather than as individuals. In teams, teachers were able to develop many insights into the assessments and instructional outcomes.

We focused on writing and we looked at what the State expected for the kids. We used rubrics to guide the kids' writing and then we looked at protocols. We even looked at MSPAP expectations in higher grades. What would the students be required to do in the eighth grade assessments?

Andrews and his staff used a two-pronged approach. They concentrated on the students with potential for high performance and on the students that needed remedial help.

I would say that the largest group of students in the school were those that we felt could perform at high levels. Remediation was always in mind for those that needed extra help. We didn't forget the kids in the middle, but quite honestly, with high expectations, those students could float to the top.

The Impact of Recognition and Rewards

When we won the awards, there were probably many who said,
'Hey, maybe this guy knows what he's doing and our kids are doing well.'
That, in itself, was quite a reward.

-Principal John Andrews

Developing a mindset for high expectations.

John Andrews felt that an important reason his school's recognition was his belief in the abilities of his students and his encouragement of the staff to adopt a high expectations approach. Over the course of a year and a half, a school-wide culture change had occurred that drove the staff to exceed beyond past norms.

So it was a mindset of having staff look at kids with very high expectations, and we focused on reading and writing with these high expectations. We accelerated the kids and improved a great deal on the assessments. I think that was why we won the awards. In the first year, I didn't know the ins and outs of the formula used; I didn't know exactly how we won, but later I was able to figure out if we had made enough progress. I think, the last year, even though our assessment increase was slight, and I didn't think we would win, attendance played a part, so it took us up. The process wasn't super clear, but I kept my eye on important gains that we made.

John described what he called a simple fact of life. "Improvement and living up to expectations, made everyone feel smart. The students began to believe in themselves and so did the teachers." Being recognized and winning a large sum of money, he believed was "icing on the cake."

I think they lived up to the expectations that they could perform very well, and they felt really smart. So if we are talking about the impact of winning money, it

impacts everybody. Everybody thinks they're actually a lot better than they really are -- and yes, you try to live up to that.

This principal maintained a 'can do' philosophy. Developing that attitude as a part of the culture in the school did not come easily, but Andrews believed that it was bolstered by the school having a substantive method of seeing improvement. The State, he believed, had set the wheels in motion for schools to think and act more systematically in developing instruction that resulted in measured improvement.

Using rewards revenue - process and purchases.

The first year that money was allocated to Willow, Andrews was in his second year as principal of the school. He indicated that the decision-making process was not as inclusive as it could have been. He and a few staff members made the decisions, and because they felt the school needed work with its technologies, they used most of the money on computers and software.

In the second administration of the awards, Willow had become a Quality Management School (QM) and was using QM approaches. The program, dedicated to site-based management, emphasized collaborative decision-making. Willow was one of nine schools in the district participating in this program. As part of quality management, Andrews developed a QM School Council that was made up of elected members representing teachers, support staff, parents, and the community. This council complemented the School Improvement Team (SIT), which dealt with building and student issues. The Council would listen to recommendations of the SIT team, make their own recommendations, assist in school management, and bring resources into the school.

They were assigned the responsibility of deciding how to spend the rewards dollars.

Our QMC was used to make decisions on what we could use funds for and to consider budget items in the everyday workings of the school. We had parent members who brought in a reading program, Authors Workshop, and ran the whole thing for the school. They connected right into it. And they represented the professional and support staff and the parents. So everybody had a say in what we did. They made decisions on the money the second and third years.

Willow purchases in the second and third years included big ticket items such as another copier machine and a poster and chart maker, as well as \$15,000 to \$20,000 in level books to support the school's Guided Reading Program. Teacher training on these texts was purchased for all first and second grade teachers. Third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers received new math texts along with teacher training in math. Andrews also developed a partnership with another school, which, while lower performing than his own, had a principal with MSPAP and data analysis expertise. A mutually beneficial relationship had been developed and rewards money was used to pay for teacher exchanges and staff development linked to the assessments.

Increasing school spirit.

Andrews felt the positive impact of the awards grew from year to year. He attributed that growth to a groundswell of spirit which occurred in anticipation of the awards. The school was now prepared for its recognition and ready to celebrate success.

I think the impact of the awards the second and the third time became greater and greater. We became more aware even before they were announced. We talked about our improvement before the State announced the winners. It was an event we were waiting for and we wanted to celebrate. Also, we had won the Blue Ribbon Schools Award and were feeling like the best school in the State. We had a big luncheon the first time we won. I think I took the entire staff out to dinner the second year. The awards were definitely on our minds; something we hoped for. The first year, we didn't know about them until after we won. The teachers

also felt personally invested when they got materials they needed. These were seen as materials we would use for improving our scores. The parents made us feel special too. The PTA arranged a big luncheon in a nearby restaurant for the whole staff. It was during a professional day. They served many different types of food and then we had a magician come in and do a show for us—just for the staff.

Andrews described this growing spirit among teachers, support staff, parents, and students as uplifting and he credited the State with heightening the spirit of the award by its announcement at Martin's West, a Baltimore area event hall.

I really liked going to—Martin's West. Going somewhere, it doesn't have to be that nice, but somewhere that adds to the excitement of the moment. I remember receiving a monetary award for improving the achievement of our African-American and Hispanic students. Well it just kind of landed on my desk. It really didn't seem like a big thing.

Andrews was adroit at marketing the achievements of Willow. He announced the good news over the PA and made it a point to thank the students for their achievement. He communicated the school's increased rank to parents in a weekly school newsletter. He said that when he first came to Willow, they were ranked 180 or 200 in the State. After several years, the school had moved up to seventh. He let the parents and community know that and was successful in getting television coverage and a number of articles in the Washington Post. He later assigned a parent, knowledgeable about the media, to regularly inform the community about the successes of the school.

I did a communication weekly, so information about the awards went in that. And kids knew right away too. When I came back from getting the money, I made a big announcement on the PA. After we won the second time, I put up a school sign that said 'Best students, best staff, best school.', and I used to say, 'You know you guys have to continue to live up to that.' The students didn't know I put that sign up there. I think they thought we earned the sign somehow; that it was put there by other people as a result of the tests. So the parents saw the impact through student results. It was more than just getting the money.

Unintended consequences - additional resources.

Recognition meant a great deal to the parents at Willow and led to an additional benefit to the teachers and the school.

After we won the award two times, the parents started doing things for us too, which helped boost morale at the school. We had a staff lounge, like everybody else, which wasn't in great condition. In fact, it was pretty blah. We had a parent come in and faux paint it and do a hand border around the top walls. The PTA actually took a collection and got money to buy us new cabinets, counter tops, a stove. One parent donated a refrigerator and they had the entire room carpeted. They created this lounge for us. Maybe, they thought we deserved a classier room for our teachers. This all came about after the recognition awards and then the Blue Ribbon award. We didn't ask them to do it. They chose to.

Andrews admitted that the parents at Willow were far more advantaged than those at other schools, but he felt that their contributions were important in demonstrating that when parents are proud of their children's accomplishments, they want to thank the teachers and other school staff members.

Case 5 - Denise Todd at Dogwood Elementary

The students at Dogwood were referred to as the 'children of the corn.' It's a very rural community with good values. The parents chose me as their principal and I knew they really wanted me to be in this school. I was told in so many words, 'This is your job; you have a certain amount of time to do it. You are to clean the building out. And you are to make it work.'

- Denise Todd, Principal

The Practice of Leadership at Dogwood Elementary

Denise Todd took over as principal of Dogwood on the heels of another who was, she says, like an 'old comfortable shoe.' Many teachers had been at the school for 40 years, and there had been relatively no implementation of change or innovation.

Curriculum and instructional habits had remained constant, even in the midst of new and radical changes at the state and local levels.

These were the children of third and fourth generation farmers, but there was a spirit of community among the families. The population is predominantly white, fairly middle income; the farm people are land wealthy, but they really don't have much. The generations had moved back to the farm because of unemployment. When I arrived, the school was the lowest performing in an area that traditionally performed rather well.

Todd had been selected as principal by a school interview team made up of teachers and parents. In her interview, she stressed the importance of change and the need to improve the achievement of the students. Dogwood, she felt, had tremendous potential and she felt she had been given a mandate by the parents and her superintendent to bring about change and improvement. A number of parents and teachers were ready for change, but there were others who were content with the school's performance.

I had half the staff who were probably very excited. They had been on the interview team and felt that they wanted it to work and like the idea that I came in with ideas and enthusiasm. The other half didn't recognize county or state curriculum. Basically, they knew very little that was current in education. So I knew I had my work cut out for me.

She felt she had the experience to do the job. She had worked with a number of schools, including Dogwood, as a gifted and talented resource teacher and had a sense of the capabilities of the students. She relished the idea of making changes, and the early ones involved staff.

I found a passion in looking to change and improve the school; It was almost a puzzle to be solved. But a number of teachers did not. So the first year was very rocky. Six people left, retired, and said, 'I admire what you are trying to do, but I can't deliver it. It is time to leave.' At that point, the staff was invited to help me select new staff. We needed teachers that had high expectations, that were willing to try new things. They had to really care about where the school was going. The

process of new teacher selection was the beginning of our instituting true collaborative decision-making.

Todd said that she had always been an advocate of collaborative decision-making and believed in that process long before it was described in the education literature. Her involving teachers in new teacher selection, in fact, later led to an innovative reorganization of staff roles at Dogwood.

Creative organization of work roles.

In Todd's second year, her assistant principal position was taken away by the school system as a cost-saving measure. But that loss, a tremendous one at the time, according to Todd, became a significant gain for the school.

I know that people really don't want to hear this, but it was the best thing that could have happened to me as an administrator, because that's when teachers really began to contribute in the school. We had always had an AP (assistant principal), even though it was a small school. The removal of the AP really moved us a stage forward because the teachers truly became a part of decision-making. We started to examine what an assistant principal does. Why couldn't teachers do some of these jobs? I would say, 'a rose by any other name is still a rose. They can do these things-- teachers can do it!'

Todd bargained for an additional teacher in lieu of the assistant principal. The school system relented and gave her that additional position. She now had enough teachers to reorganize their work in a creative way.

We set up a completely new organization. We really reorganized the school. Now this came with year three. I knew the teachers well. We had added new staff members that were selected by the teachers, people that could move us forward. We even decided that we would call ourselves a 'self-directed school' and that scared the superintendent's staff so we changed it to-- an 'investment-centered school' because the teachers were invested in all that we did. Then I started moving people into different positions and deciding who could take on certain responsibilities at the school. We came up with various clusters, all focused on student achievement as the mission.

Teachers with particular skills were identified and given leadership roles at the school. They were leaders of clusters A and B which comprised curriculum and instruction and special support services. Additional clusters were devoted to secretarial and support staff, the physical plant, and parents. Teachers' roles expanded to cover the work previously assumed by the assistant principal. For example, secretarial duties were expanded from setting up schedules, typing, and answering phones, to assisting with budgets and ordering materials. Todd's secretary, who had the most knowledge of the community, was given the job of leading a team to develop the bus routes for the school. Todd rethought her own skills and decided that, with little effort, she could do her own typing, thereby giving her secretary time to take on different and more complex work. Most important, Todd had recast responsibilities based on capabilities, which she said were always foremost in her mind.

We had a curriculum instruction Cluster which was A. The lead was a person who became a half-time teacher and a half-time faculty curriculum advisor. She worked on tasks that were listed in the central curriculum's integrated plan. She was outstanding! She had previously been a full-time teacher, and now she assumed a different role along with part-time teaching. Then we ran two special support services. I had a teacher who had technology expertise and was very organized, very precise. She took over library media and technology. Again it was a small school, and we weren't even getting full time special area teachers.

Todd had mastered the art of delegating. But she said, her true talent was in finding people who could do the job. She talked about how she discovered a music teacher in the building that was also an exemplary math teacher.

We had a very talented music teacher who was also a phenomenal math teacher. She was assigned gifted and talented math one half the day, and she was the music teacher the other half. She was a highly motivating person who also took over lots

of other areas in the school. We probably couldn't have kept her without that creative schedule.

Parents were also given expanded roles at the school. They were actively engaged in the school-based council and had a role in decisions, including instructional decisions. Todd said, she usually tried to move to the background and allow others to be the building leaders.

Parents could be very challenging in that community. They were frightened by new, so whatever I did, I had to be sure it was front-loaded with the most experienced teachers in the building. Teachers did most of the presenting, I truly moved to the background.

Todd described the progress at Dogwood as taking a number of years with incremental changes taking place. Parallel Block Scheduling was also introduced at Dogwood. Todd described this approach in a written hand-out, as a model for restructuring the distribution of school resources which included staff, space, and time. A major feature was a substantial reduction in the student-teacher ratio during critical instructional periods such as reading and mathematics. Typically, her teachers were able to spend approximately half of their teaching day working with 15 or fewer students, while other heterogeneously grouped students were assigned to an enrichment lab for additional teacher-directed instruction. Resource teachers were not assigned to free up teachers, but rather to contribute to focused student instruction. Todd said that another strength of this scheduling approach was that it gave teams additional common training time.

Structure in leadership.

A structured approach to instruction was evident in descriptive materials obtained

from the school as well as in Todd's interview. Instructional strategies and data charts were given to all of the teachers. Todd said she was often called the 'visual queen' because she believed so strongly in the importance of visualizing everything possible. She set up weekly team meetings and a structure for how they should be conducted. She also developed an advisory committee and met often and consistently with her cluster leaders and her parents, noting that she made it a point to be open to ideas and ready to provide feedback when requested.

There was a chain of command and I, as the principal, was certainly the first one that people came to with questions and problems. But there were many other leaders. I attended one of our school-based team meetings every other week. We had a design for the type of meetings that we would have. We didn't leave it up to chance. The team leaders, cluster leaders, and principal advisors made up an important council. We probably had as many parents on it as we had staff members. In fact, everything we did as a school, the parents were given a copy of it. They and the teachers would drive the machine, because they refined everything that we did, the programs and the management. There was always lots of discussion, lots of dialogue.

Todd believed that she had employed specific techniques that were helpful in turning around her school but she said that she didn't do it alone. Not only were the teachers a viable part of school change, but she often asked for assistance from experts at the county and state levels.

The Impact of Recognition and Rewards

The MSPAP program and its awards helped sustain a momentum for change at Dogwood. The teachers had already gone quite a distance in changing the culture and instruction at the school, but being formally recognized, Todd said, was energizing.

These teachers lived to transform the school. They were true transformational leaders as teachers. They changed the organization, and when the money started

coming, we were so excited, particularly after the first reward. We knew we were on the right track and now we had money to direct toward implementing new instructional programs.

The school had adopted Everyday Math and Reading Recovery, two new performance-based instruction programs. Staff development was needed to train the teachers in these programs and various aspects of the assessments.

Staff development changes instructional practices.

Todd said that her staff wanted to know more specifics about the MSPAP, so she arranged for them to spend time with test specialists and experts. In some instances, they moved outside of their school because she felt that teachers can become “very isolated just looking at their own small world.”

. I would take the lead teachers to other high performing schools. Sometimes I wouldn't go at all. I trusted my lead teachers to go and come back with the information. I would listen along with the rest of the group and ask my questions. The teachers accepted suggestions from the lead teachers. I had two very bright people that understood the needs of the school. They were critical. They trusted me, and I trusted them to present a picture of moving forward with everybody working together. We were the geese and we were all flying together. If one dropped, we'd all fall.

Todd said that her master teachers took over some of the role of staff development and were successful because they had developed a sharing community at the school. Her teachers respected each other and had established a genuine willingness to accept the expertise of their colleagues. Rewards money contributed to stipends for teacher training and to developing performance assessment items.

We used our award money for teacher training, but also for teachers to create performance tests. If we were going to develop milestones, we wanted to have good stuff to measure. Our system was producing things that were not piloted by people who knew what they were doing. They didn't have a background-no

understanding of scoring. At Dogwood, every teacher knew how to score; we had regular scoring meetings. Three of our teachers were on the State scoring teams every year, and that was an incredible advantage because they would come back and staff develop. I am really a person who likes to do staff development, but I would step back and let the teachers share their expertise. And they really learned from one another.

Outside consultants were an active part of staff development, but they were at the school to guide the teachers, give them feedback, and reassure them that they were on the right track. Reward money paid for Dogwood teachers to write MSPAP tasks during the summer and to support professional development and teacher training in Reading Recovery. Stipends were also given to parents who became Reading Recovery tutors.

The desire for continuous improvement - a driving force in the use of rewards.

There was an ever present desire to continue the improvement at Dogwood. Todd and the staff recognized the possibility that they would not be recognized again if they didn't keep up their momentum.

We felt we had really done something. Now I wanted to make sure that we didn't lose it; we didn't want to be seen as the school that got it one time and disappeared. We wanted to sustain our improvement or it would appear that we just had a lucky year. We didn't want to get it by luck. We wanted to get it by using a process and we knew that as an effective school with effective teachers, Dogwood could stand out above the crowd.

Todd said that she and the staff also were realizing that the student population was changing. Children were moving in from a nearby county, and Dogwood was getting more children with special needs. With this new population of students, the performance levels and needs of the students had to be reevaluated.

We started looking at the data. We had assembled data binders which outlined all the data we were collecting. Our team leaders did that. We worked on the data to

put together a monthly presentation to the staff about how we were doing. At our school, we had established goals and milestones that meant something to all of us.

The Reading Recovery program and Everyday Mathematics were regarded as critical programs for the students at Dogwood. The first step in continuous improvement was to identify the children that needed reading intervention. Todd explained that a reward of over \$20,000 was like another full budget for such a small school and the money went a long way in supporting the students' reading and math improvement programs. The school chose to concentrate, at that point, on interventions that would help children succeed in critical subject areas by grade three.

Decisions were made by the School Management Team. Todd did not lead that group because she believed she might prevent the team from being autonomous. The consensus of the group was that money should be put aside to protect some of the newly adopted instructional programs. The teachers did not want to run out of money for these programs and have to face their elimination. Money also was used to purchase another school copier machine, conferences for the teachers, and the equipping of a workroom for teachers with everything they would need to develop instruction, such as electric hole punches, binders, dye cuts for letters, things that the teachers said would make their lives easier.

The decision-making process included a 'wish list' created by every teacher. The management team then met and came up with final recommendations. There was never contention about the decisions, and Todd said that all of the purchases were focused, in one way or another, on addressing instructional needs. The PTA was also generous after

the awards were presented and gave the teachers a celebration breakfast to thank them for their hard work.

During the last administration of the awards, Todd described her interest in developing a deeper method for teachers to analyze the reading process as it related to the performance assessments. She felt that she and the teachers were not able to understand the stances involved in comprehension and wanted to concentrate on closing the achievement gap at her school.

I really wanted to understand the stances; there was a lot of misunderstanding of what they were. I love Bloom's taxonomy, so I was interested in how the reader responds to or reacts to the text. It was complicated for the teachers, very confusing. They were struggling with this, so I met with Janet (a performance assessment consultant.) I wanted to take the reading process apart and look at comprehension from another view. What did the process mean and how could we break it down? She happened to be working with another system in breaking the stances apart so that you could look at some of the skills that you have to teach when children weren't succeeding. So we went to observe for the day, stayed for their staff development and said, 'We like this.' We had some ideas about how we would do it differently, but basically this is what happened with the next set of money we received. We put it into additional staff development. Then, Janet and I wrote a school improvement grant to the county, won the grant, and could pay teachers even more to take on added responsibilities.

Todd gave much credit for school improvement to MSPAP and the recognition awards.

She said that they established standards and designated funds to allow schools to implement innovative approaches and programs. She talked about the lack of incentive money at her current school.

I really miss school improvement money. Right now, I feel I have plenty of ideas. I just don't have any funds to implement them, and I feel that's strangling the school.

Case 6 - Sharon Smith at Elm Elementary School

We are a disadvantaged school and our scores were very low but nothing about them had been defined. We were near the bottom, just a step away from reconstitution. I was assigned to the school and called the teachers together. We don't want to be a school where everyone is breathing down our necks, telling us what to do. Being reconstituted was like a sentence worse than death. We have to be proactive and make some changes.
- Sharon Smith, Principal

The Practice of Leadership at Elm Elementary

Encouraging the staff.

Sharon Smith said she made it a point not to threaten her teachers, but rather to encourage them to diagnose their instruction and the needs of the students. Because she was a principal of a low performing school, she was invited to monthly district meetings where she would hear about new and innovative strategies to improve schools that were in decline. She felt that any information she received should be shared with her faculty. One of her first steps was to gather data and information from district meetings and display that on an overhead projector during staff meetings. She and the staff would examine strengths and weaknesses, in particular, what grades and subjects were pulling them down. She felt it was important not to embarrass teachers. She said, "This wasn't about pointing fingers. but rather where we were and collectively what could we do."

She said that she often put herself in the shoes of her teachers in an attempt to motivate them. In her first year at Elm, she spent a great deal of time observing every teacher in his or her classroom. This experience could have been threatening to the

teachers, but Smith cast it in terms of her being a third party who might be able to help. She said that she always explained what she was looking for and emphasized her belief that her teachers were talented and would be able to meet new expectations.

I told them I was going to come in just to watch and see what they did, and simply ask questions. They didn't have to worry about what I was looking for because I told them. Each week, I looked at something else, but initially I wanted to know how they questioned the students – what they were doing to get responses. Through these observations, which were done early on, I was certain that the missing piece for our school was in teaching reading. That was what we needed to focus on to improve.

A focus on reading.

Smith and her teachers discussed the important elements of teaching reading skills as the basis for all instruction. She scheduled faculty meetings every other week to sit down and talk together as a team. In addition to her professional background in reading, she had also spent years as a gifted and talented teacher and wanted to apply those same techniques and standards to her low-performing students. Questioning them and eliciting responses formed an important basis for active discussion, which Smith felt was lacking in the instruction she observed.

If you don't really know how to teach reading, then I think that a lot of stuff doesn't happen. So we would meet once a month and have staff development and talk -- you know just talk -- about questions asked of the students. I had worked as a gifted and talented teacher, so I really felt that it was important to let students know you expect them to think and discuss; you know, they like to talk and many times they could say things that they don't put on paper.

Smith continued her role as an instructional leader by moving from the development of active questioning to analyzing how her teachers dealt with student grouping. Once again,

she observed every teacher in her school and came to the conclusion that teachers needed to improve in that area as well.

I wanted to see if they were providing for groupings appropriately. Could they give the large group instruction and then tailor what was needed for the smaller groups. I really pulled them back together and told them what I saw, and what I felt was an area where we could grow.

Frequent and consistent visits and observations of her teachers, was an important routine established by Smith. Many principals, she said, visit classrooms primarily during periods of evaluation. However, she spent a great deal of her time every week in her teachers' classes, and she used her interpersonal skills to make those visits a learning experience for everyone. She said she was always careful not to pose a threat but rather to act as a resource for improvement.

Elm teachers become mentors.

In her weekly, sometimes daily, visits to classrooms, Smith had not only built a rapport with her teachers, but she also built a bank of knowledge about their strengths and weaknesses. She felt that a number of the teachers were outstanding in delivering instruction. There were others who had the potential to be excellent teachers and would benefit by learning from their skilled colleagues. There were also a few that needed a great deal of help. Smith decided to create a buddy system in the school, with teachers learning from one another.

Now there were about five teachers that I would say needed some structural support. They were just all over the place and not doing what I thought was good for children. So I decided to pair them with teachers that I had seen and felt really did something well. And I would say, 'Could you go with me and watch so and so.' It didn't make them feel that I was targeting them as not being able to do their job because I would say, in a casual way, 'I saw this lesson and it really worked. I

want you to see how she made it work.’ Then I would say to the teachers that I thought could help others, ‘You know I really liked what I saw in your room. Would you mind if I bring somebody in to observe?’ And that kind of made them feel like, ‘wow, she really thinks I am doing something special.’ So it really didn’t divide the staff. In fact, it helped them come together a little bit more.

Smith instigated new instructional practices using these collaborative approaches. She was also a strong advocate of professional development from outside as well as inside the building personnel.

Developing better instruction and teacher leadership.

She encouraged her staff to participate in State programs that were geared to building a deeper understanding of the State assessments and performance-based instruction. Her efforts to create a cooperative learning community involved inspiring teachers that opposed change as well as those ready for it.

The State Department was having an MSPAP Conference in Ocean City, so I sent two teachers from the third grade and two teachers from the fifth and the master teacher. They stayed overnight and came back very excited. One of the third grade teachers had always been our trouble maker. If you thought it was day, she’d say it’s night. She was just something! She was an older seasoned teacher, very good, but just one who questioned me -- ‘let me see how much she knows.’ So I decided to send her as part of the team. And I said, ‘You really have lots of good ideas and the teachers could benefit from your leadership. I want you to go and take the leadership at this conference.’

The selection of a talented though negative teacher to take on a key role in the school, was an example of Smith’s own leadership abilities. Her interpersonal skills and handling of this teacher, ultimately led to creating a strong advocate to help her drive school improvement and change.

I really disarmed her. She was much older than I was, and she was thinking, ‘I am going to give her a run for her money.’ But when she was there (at the conference), she and the whole team had a wonderful experience, and they came

back, and they were the ones that set the tone for change at the school. That teacher and the master teacher said to the staff, ‘This is what we must do, and if you cannot get onboard, you should not stay here.’

Smith said that with her strong interest in staff development, she would hear of a good workshop in the Maryland, Virginia, or Pennsylvania area and send at least one teacher per grade level with an assignment to bring back information to the school. Meetings and conferences, she felt, had helped her enhance her own abilities, and she wanted to offer these opportunities to her teachers.

It always helped me take a fresher look at ways to do something. I believe teachers should do that, and I don’t think that, the way we operate, enough time is devoted to that. So I made it a point to involve teachers in outside learning experiences as much as possible.

There were a few teachers however that Smith said, ‘didn’t cut it instructionally.’ She worked with these teachers individually and paired them with talented teachers, but in the end, she had to encourage those few teachers to leave the school. Encouraging them to retire or not-renewing several that were on provisional teaching certificates, was not something to be taken lightly. She described the very difficult and painful process of terminating teachers who were ineffective. She said she had to remain vigilant, provide extensive documentation, and spend an inordinate amount of time to remove these individuals. But, she persisted saying that her first and most important rule was to have “effective and hard-working teachers who believed in themselves and in the students and could deliver solid instruction.”

Reorganizing teaching assignments.

Several reassignments of staff helped change the instruction at Elm. Smith

concentrated on the third and fifth grade teams because they were the assessment grades. She felt that an imperative was to create a more effective third grade team, and to accomplish this result, she changed the grade level assignments of several teachers. Her most outstanding teachers in particular subject areas took over the teaching of those subjects with all third grade classes.

We had some excellent reading teachers in the fifth grade, and I asked one of them to move down to third grade. As a result, the third grade team became the best in the whole school. My job was to move people to where their strength was and I decided that we should have the best person who taught reading, teach reading to all three third grade classes. I did the same thing with another teacher who was really good with math. She taught math to all three classes, and the third person in the team taught social studies and science.

The progress of the students was so impressive that Smith replicated this approach in fourth and fifth grades. Improvement on MSPAP followed in the fifth grade as well.

Demonstrations of teaching methods.

Smith saw herself as a facilitative and hands-on principal. She believed she had strong abilities as a manager but also as a teacher. She was frequently engaged in demonstrating techniques in the classroom

I really love teaching, so I would go into a classroom and help. Sometimes I would take over the class and teach a reading lesson myself. The teachers didn't object; they saw me as a resource for them, particularly in the field of reading.

The Impact of Recognition and Rewards

The first recognition for Elm was a Certificate of Improvement from the State. The Certificate carried no awards money, but it did confirm the school's significant improvement over the past year.

The first year we got a certificate, we were ecstatic. It put everyone on the bandwagon and was really a boost. We were so proud, we announced it on the intercom so all our kids could hear about it. I put it in the parent bulletin and talked about it with the parents at PTA meetings --- what they had done to help to contribute to it. It really became our school banner. You know, we could do this and be proud of the school.

Rewards money helps bring a new reading program to the faculty.

Smith remembered introducing an innovative reading improvement program following that first recognition. She and her faculty had become not only more interested in seeking ways to improve instruction, but they had become more confident in their abilities to succeed. As a strong advocate of moving outside the school for new ideas, Smith learned of an excellent reading program at the University of Pennsylvania that was geared to urban teachers that needed additional coursework to support their reading instruction. Reading had become the initial focus of instruction at Elm, and Smith noted that many of her teachers did not have a strong background in teaching reading.

At her own expense, she took a trip to the University of Pennsylvania and was very impressed with their program. Filled with enthusiasm, she met with her central office administrators and persuaded them to let her pilot this program. The system gave her a grant of approximately \$20,000 which covered the bulk of expenses in offering the course at Elm. To make up for the amount not covered by the grant, Smith offered the course to her teachers and asked each one to pay \$100 out of pocket. She felt this was a small monetary commitment for a valuable course which offered the teachers three reading credits from the University of Pennsylvania and contributed to their instructional credentials. Smith explained to her teachers that the work would be demanding. She said,

“It was no cakewalk, but the teachers were willing to do the work.” The course was scheduled after school hours and there were to be 20 spaces for participants. Smith said that, in a strong show of support, most of the teachers signed up. In fact, the course limit was extended so that 24 of her teachers could participate. When the school received its awards money, a portion was used to defray the teachers’ cost of taking the course.

This anecdote reflects an important use of rewards dollars, but more important, it describes the creative talents employed by this principal and the dedication of an inner city staff committed to school improvement. Elm teachers were willing to invest personally in money and their own time to gain skills to improve their instruction and the performance of their students.

Scaling up with a partner school.

Smith described the reading course as a tremendous success. In fact, a principal at a neighboring school, with a similar student population and scores a bit higher than Elm’s, heard of Smith’s successes and grew interested in offering the reading course as well. Smith talked with officials at her central office, and they agreed to let this second school introduce the program. As a result, Smith and the other principal formed a partnership, one which paired them in building reading skills, and a year later extended to include mathematics instruction.

We spent two years developing the reading techniques we learned, and in the second year, we were improving. That’s when I encouraged the Board to try the program out at another school. The principal of that school and I were friends. She was very interested in participating and had Title 1 money to run the program. Central Office agreed, and we introduced the program at this second school which was fairly similar to ours. And their scores really jumped also.

Smith and her partner were so excited about improvements in reading that they decided to take another step and they introduced math training for their teachers.

We went back to Philadelphia to learn about math instruction. I found an excellent math instructional support person at Johnson Elementary (the partner school) and took this math person with me to University of Pennsylvania, and we learned math together. Again, I was able to get the board's permission to introduce the math program. That next year, I co-taught with the math instructor at her school, and she and I taught math skills together at my school. It was great for our teachers. It really gave us some new approaches and was exciting. I could hear our teachers in the lounge talking about reading and math techniques. It changed the tone from negative things about the kids to good instructional practices.

Other uses of financial awards.

Supporting student improvement was the determining factor in spending rewards revenue, according to Smith. She said that her teachers and other staff, and even parents, were involved in these decisions. A critical eye was cast on where third and fifth grade students stood in performance scores as compared with the previous year. The question consistently asked was, "What would propel the students to continue to improve?" Reading was always one of the answers, and it remained a focus for several years. Smith offered to pay for reading conferences and training, and the faculty and school improvement team agreed that these were programs that should be supported by the awards grant.

We were looking at where the third grade students were the previous year, and where they were that year. We would also look at CTBS (Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills) scores for the 2nd and 4th grade students and we used them as our indicators. Our youngsters were moving along well in reading and in math. They were making real progress, and the expectation was that they were going to continue to move up. Then we had a specialist come in to share data because we needed additional insights even though we were always looking at the average scores in our system and comparing our scores to those.

In subsequent years, Elm used their rewards for computers and a new portable PA system, but the majority of funding was applied to staff development.

I remember we took a bus trip to U of Penn when they had a spring symposium on children's literacy. All the teachers and other staff members came on the bus and came back with a great deal of information and ideas. It was really something. They talked about that for weeks.

Smith affirmed the importance of receiving recognition for their improvement.

Even the first year's certificate without a monetary award meant a great deal. But the financial awards allowed the school to invest in human capital- their teachers. The professional development opportunities gave them many ideas and a chance to collaborate and learn together. Each teacher who participated in a program came back to teach others in the school. Smith felt that recognition, in various forms, helped her motivate the teachers to make culture changes at the school.

It was critical when we won – for the teachers, the students, and the parents. The staff came to believe they could do almost anything they wanted - with hard work. We all really came together. It was just marvelous when we found out we won. I came back to school and interrupted instruction. I never did that, and the teachers were a little worried about what I had to say. I told everyone, 'I have a very important announcement.' First I read the certificate and then I said, 'And we won more.' They were just ecstatic. They kind of saw the fruits of their labors and knew that the State saw it too. I didn't put a banner out telling the community how proud we were, but I should have. I can say for certain, that without that money we could never have given the teachers so many chances to gain new and better instructional methods.

Resources support parent involvement.

Smith and the staff also dedicated some of the awards money to bolster parent involvement. Elm, ultimately became a community meeting place for better understanding the MSPAP. The first year, only a small number of parents participated in

evening sessions devoted to sharing assessment information with family members. That number grew significantly over the course of their years of improvement.

We did more things with parents as a result of the award because we had money, and we could offer things. Before the test would come, we would hold three day workshops for the parents so that they could better understand what their kids would have to do. We invited all the parents, and we had food there and showed them strategies - what they should do with the kids. We gave them samples of the questions for them to try. Many of our parents couldn't do the tasks themselves, but they got a better understanding of what we were working on. We emphasized that we needed them to cooperate with us so their children would learn. These were night meetings and the parents were tired, but they still came.

Smith said she was not disillusioned when her early attempts to involve a substantial number of parents failed. The nine or ten parents that participated in school meetings the first year more than doubled the following year and continued to increase, and for a disadvantaged school, that result was extremely encouraging.

Case 7 - Judith Alexander at Maple Elementary School

The school resides in a high crime, high poverty area with incidents occurring during the day right in front of the children. Many times, I had to pull our children off the playground because of the neighborhood disruptions. There were times, even during MSPAP testing, that I had to hold the children until 4 o' clock because of a hold-up in one of the apartment buildings connected to the school.

So it was a very difficult, very stressful situation. But in spite of that, I maintained my belief that children of all economic levels, can achieve.

- Judith Alexander, Principal

The Practice of Leadership at Maple Elementary

A strong belief in the premise that all children can achieve was the underlying philosophy that drove Judith Alexander. She said that when the MSPAP test was first

introduced, it seemed to be so difficult that she and faculty members had little faith that their students would be able to succeed. They were not afraid of student results, but rather in awe of those children who were able perform at high levels.

I am not sure whether it was everyone in our school system, but we felt like this test does not look like a test our kids would be able to handle. The first year that we used the MSPAP, we were just in such a state of awe of what kids were required to do on the test. But, I truly believe that poverty has nothing to do with achievement. I believe that children of all economic levels can achieve; they may not do it as quickly, and they may not do it as thoroughly in the beginning, because they don't come with the experiences that a lot of other students do that are not in high poverty or high crime. We have to provide them with those experiences in the best way that we know how.

As an example of this thinking, Alexander described an interaction she had with a student who returned to school after the summer vacation.

There is language that the children don't have that comes along with the experiences of going places. For example, a kid came to me at the beginning of the school year and said, 'I'm so excited. We went on a big vacation; we had a good time and we got in the car and we drove on the highway for ever and ever.' I said, 'Where did you go? Let me see, did you go to New York?' This student continued and said, 'We had to pack a lunch, and it took a long time.'

Alexander came to find out that this 'big vacation' was actually a trip to a shopping center in a neighboring county. To this student, this excursion was equivalent to a memorable trip to another state.

Additional commitment for deprived children.

Judith realized that the situation for her students called for strong teacher knowledge of improvement strategies, a broadening of student experiences at school, and a strong commitment to improve.

In one sense, that child's story was funny and in another, it was hurtful. It is hurtful that so many kids never get out of the neighborhood. They don't know

what going away is really about. And so I thought to myself, we have the responsibility here to do some more teaching and provide more experiences.

Initial resistance.

When Alexander took over the principalship at Maple, the school was in ‘alert status,’ which was only one step above ‘Reconstitution Eligible,’ a designation for schools with very low test scores. Reconstitution schools faced the possibility of being ‘taken over’ by the school district or the State. The principal and the staff knew that, unless students’ scores improved, their school could be subject to significant reorganization.

We were determined not to go into Recon, and we really wanted to get our act together. If other people can increase learning, why couldn’t we? But at the time there was so much teacher resistance. I didn’t have any teachers at that time that said, ‘I believe we can do it.’ Instead, they were saying, ‘This is the test that our kids will never be able to do. It is not written for urban children. This is a test written for suburban children.’ Quite frankly, there were items on the test that our children would not have experienced. We realized that we had to provide the experiences for the children vicariously if not actually?

Citing an example, Alexander described an assessment question that asked the students to order particular items from a menu. This task was alien to students who had never been to a sit-down restaurant. Instruction would require the introduction of role-play and other strategies. The teachers agreed to work on new instructional practices, but they still didn’t believe they would see positive results. Although they were not asking for transfers, many of the teachers were quite negative about changes that would be required.

They just didn’t want to do it and some of them had to be asked to leave. In most cases, I think they just felt, ‘I can bide my time and not have to deal with this. Let the upper grades be involved because the test doesn’t hit until third grade.’ My feeling was, if you want something to happen in third grade, you have to start in kindergarten.

Alexander said that, initially, even the school system was reluctant to take the reform program seriously. She said there had been so many initiatives adopted, that two years later had been abandoned. The system may have believed that Maryland's School Performance Program would be another new idea that would disappear if people waited it out. But when, two years went by, and the State persisted, the district began to take a role in assisting its schools.

The school system encouraged many of its principals to attend Maryland State Department of Education sponsored assessment meetings. Alexander went to one of these. Presenters represented schools that had been successful on MSPAP, and they shared instructional techniques they felt would improve student achievement.

I went to this meeting because I was interested and because I knew that my children were as smart as any other kids. They were poor but they were smart. I don't recall many principals from the system going, but at the time, the Title I coordinator told all of her schools about the conference. So I gathered up a little group of teachers that I felt could help bring the message back. We would need to convince the staff. We went there and we listened to what people were doing.

Focusing on assessments and student needs.

Believing that Maple could succeed on the MSPAP was critical and according to Alexander, she and her school team experienced a growth in confidence as a result of the conference they attended.

We came back and said, 'MSPAP, it's not so hard. Our kids can do this.' It was like a light bulb turned on. We are going to do this! That was the message. I couldn't have brought that back by myself. I wanted some teachers to go because I knew they could tell other teachers, 'We saw it; we heard it; others are doing it; we can do this.'

Armed with a new faith, Alexander and the staff began to analyze the test. They

decided to focus on writing, because they determined that the assessments demanded an ability to explain and discuss. This first step was very significant in giving Maple an impetus to make important instructional changes.

We started focusing on writing and developed a real format for it. That first year, we concentrated on writing to explain and writing to inform. We made writing a part of every teacher's job. We decided that we would do a school-wide activity and that from first to fifth (grades), everybody for the next three weeks would be writing to inform.

Teachers used their staff meetings to develop plans. Every teacher and specialist, whatever his or her content specialty, worked in teams with Alexander as the facilitator. She used her past experience as a 'master teacher' to guide her teachers, but she also brought in experts from the district to assist.

I had Title I coordinators come over and encourage the staff to ask for help. I said to them (the teachers), 'Ask them to watch what we're doing and tell us what we need to do to develop strategies as to how we're going to go about a school-wide focus on writing.'

The analysis of instructional methods and the development of new strategies were important steps in gaining successful results, according to this principal. Teachers were later offered professional development on how to focus on writing specifically in social studies, science, and mathematics. New strategies involved students writing out everything they did. Within a year, their writing abilities noticeably improved.

The teachers learned to constantly ask students a set of questions - why they decided to do something, what operation they used, why they used that operation, what did this information tell you. They included that in their writing, and they wrote all the time

Writing, she said, was a challenge for the students, but they were willing to accept their teachers' suggestions, and to do what was asked of them.

Taking an assertive and a facilitative stance.

Alexander was a principal willing to put herself on the line for her students. She said she was probably far more aggressive than others in seeking district support for her school.

I probably asked for more assistance (than other principals) whenever I could. You know, we tend to accept. When we have gone three or four levels, and we are told no, we tend to accept that because we figure if we do anything more, we would be called troublemakers. At this point in my life, I think once you turn 50, you have permission to step out of the box, or do whatever you have to do. What are they going to do, fire me for asking? I basically, for the lack of a better word, have become a monster in terms of advocating for kids.

Redesigning work and refining teacher planning and instruction.

Changes needed to be made in instructional design as well as in practices.

Alexander realized that her teachers did not understand how to develop a good lesson plan, and they needed assistance in setting up an effective classroom environment. She took a lead in working with the teachers and facilitating discussions. She also continued to solicit district assistance whenever she could.

They did lesson plans that were not very good. I said, 'Let's talk about what a good lesson plan format looks like.' So, as a staff, we developed a good lesson plan design. We did the same with improvements in classroom environment, so that teachers could be more effective working with smaller groups of students. I didn't do it; they did. They wrote down what should be included in a complete lesson plan. Then we condensed it to basic things which ended up resembling the system's suggested lesson format. We listed all the things that make a conducive classroom. We were able to come up with 66 items. Then we went back and asked where we had been redundant. We began to lump things into categories and I encouraged them to refine these categories to two or three things instead of ten or twelve things. They came up with the answers. What I did was translate that onto a working document. And it became our classroom environment checklist. It was just reflective of their thinking, and it became a model that everyone felt good about.

Alexander said her staff sessions were nothing less than focused professional development geared to student improvement on the MSPAP. She and her master teachers spent time reviewing every teacher's lesson plans and giving them insights and suggestions. Initially, some of the teachers did feel threatened. Alexander put their fears to rest by relaying a consistent message of faith in their teaching and learning abilities. Her persistence, she said, was critically important during this period of school change.

A master teacher approach.

Alexander introduced an innovative work configuration which she said she had thought of even before the Maryland School Performance Program was introduced. She strongly believed that benefits would accrue from identifying teachers' strengths and giving them opportunities to use those across the grade team. She, like Sharon Smith, facilitated a reorganization in which skilled teachers taught specific subjects to every student in a particular grade level. Alexander felt that strategy proved additionally beneficial during MSPAP testing, because the students had a working relationship with every teacher, including those who proctored the exam.

When children know the teacher assigned to them during testing, their comfort level increases and that can contribute to higher concentration and a willingness to do their very best on the test. Kids can turn off during a test, and then you don't know if the results are measuring that they're tired or that they don't know the material.

The Impact of Recognition and Rewards

Alexander said that recognition by the State was extremely important in validating Maple's improvement strategies. The staff had implemented significant new approaches and strategies, sometimes reluctantly. The principal had remained steadfast, encouraging

and sometimes demanding that the faculty stay the course. Recognition of improvement was a critical and affirming message to the school.

The first year we just got a certificate - no money. But that was validation that we had grown. You had to be successful for two years before getting the money. Anyway, the first time we went to the big meeting where the announcements were made, we brought back the certificate for one year improvement. I told them (the school staff) about the money that other schools were getting and I told them about the hoopla and how they got to spend this money - \$25,000, \$30,000. It was a lot of money. There were so many things we couldn't do, because we didn't have the money. I said, 'another year like we had this year, we could be one of those schools.'

Although the teachers were very pleased and proud that Maple had been recognized, they were afraid that their students were limited in their ability to continue improving.

Alexander's leadership approach involved consistent encouragement. The recognition and certificate of improvement, she said, paved the way for her.

Some of them (the teachers) said, 'We might not be able to improve again, because we are urban and our kids are poor.' I said, 'That has nothing do with it. We are being compared with ourselves. You know, we are being compared and evaluated upon what progress our own school makes. We're competing with ourselves. Forget everybody else. Let's do what we can do to beat this year. We could be out there with money.' And guess what, it happened.

Every child can achieve - a new ideology.

Alexander said that she had to battle negative teacher attitudes every step of the way. She said she finally put out a school-wide mandate of sorts and asked the teachers not to make excuses for why they were going to fail. Failure would no longer be an option.

I said, 'Every single child in this school can learn. Suppose I felt that way about you (the teachers). I think every single teacher in here can teach. I don't think there is anybody in here that can't teach. And also, I bet some of you can teach much better than you are teaching. You can do it and so can they. And if you think

you can't do as well as some of the master teachers, I can show you that you can. Just like you can show the kids that they can perform at a higher level.'

She waged a battle that she felt was typical in disadvantaged schools and said that a lack of confidence was pervasive and very difficult to change. However, she was persistent and passionate regarding improvement and, the following year, the school again improved and was recognized with a monetary award.

Maple Elementary - 'The Little Engine That Could.'

Alexander's story of improvement is reflective of the children's classic *The Little Engine That Could*. Similar to the struggle of the small and fragile engine that appeared unlikely to be able to pull a heavy train up a steep mountain, Maple's story was one of persistence and measured success. Alexander talked about the importance of believing that the most challenging results can be possible. In emphasizing this ideology, she borrowed lines from the story above saying, "We went from thinking- maybe we can, to we think we can, to we know we can. And we did!"

Winning the MSPAP awards the second year carried a monetary prize and was extremely significant to the entire school family. Alexander vividly and emotionally described the day she was told of her school's achievement.

Well, first of all, I was sitting at the table not knowing that I was getting anything. I said to myself, 'Well we got the certificate last year, and I have been invited, but I don't know if I'm getting anything.' I was sitting there and saw these others schools. You know, county schools- you know, county schools are always better, and people perceive city schools are at the bottom. Then, they called my school's name. I screamed! After that, I jumped up and the newspaper photographer took my picture with my mouth gaping open, and I didn't care. I screamed. I yelled. I was so excited I couldn't contain myself. All the way back to the school, my heart was racing. I didn't know how I was going to break the news to everyone. I walked into the school and I was very silent. I said to the secretary, 'We need to

get everybody in the library right now!’ I asked her to call in the aides to cover classes so all the teachers could be together. Some people were on the playground and in gym and I wanted to talk to everybody. I made an announcement on the PA, ‘Every teacher and every staff member is to report to the library exactly at 1:25. I need everybody.’ I said this very solemnly and everyone thought they were in trouble, because I had never done that. I said, ‘I am here to share with you the results of the MSPAP awards. There were many schools at that program that received money. I want you to understand that money doesn’t always mean everything and you worked hard this year. You got a certificate last year. I want you to know that you are being recognized for the progress that you made and not all of the time will you get rewarded monetarily for what you do.’ And then I waited for a little while, and I said, ‘But this time - you did! We got \$25,000,’ and with that, everybody stood up and screamed; everybody was so excited that they were in tears. We were laughing, jumping up and down. It was probably the most exciting time of our careers.

Engaging parents, community, and district.

Celebrating success took the form of formal parties, announcements to parents, and marketing to the community. The State’s formal acknowledgment of improvement gave the teachers far more confidence, according to Alexander who said, “They began to own the improvement, and they were proud of the students and themselves. Everyone was pumped up.”

The community took notice of Maple’s success. The local community association which was comprised of business members, began to invite the principal and Maple teachers to events and later offered volunteers to assist as tutors and mentors.

The district also weighed in, showing their faith in the school, by selecting it for a Child First grant which allowed Maple to offer an after-school program. “Only a few schools were identified and the parents were ecstatic,” said Alexander, who also explained that Child First contributed to additional attention because it was funded by the Mayor through business partnerships. Becoming a Child First school was, she felt, a

direct result of Maple's MSPAP success and recognition.

By the end of the second year, teachers, parents, and community members were convinced that Maple was a school worth investing in.

We constantly drew in the community and involved them in everything we did. They wanted to be involved. Now they had a winning school in the neighborhood. They became more supportive, helped us with our clean-up activities. They assisted us in block watching for safety. And then I started asking our partners to match us. I said the state has given us x amount of money. Is there anyway you can match it with?

A number of organizations stepped forward to help and several designated funds for the school. Alexander also forged a new relationship with a nearby synagogue.

Executives visited the school and offered books and resources in the form of speakers and retired teachers who agreed to provide one-to-one tutoring.

None of my children were Jewish, but here was this synagogue sitting in the middle of the community. It made sense to have a partnership with them. Before, the kids were throwing rocks and doing all kind of things, and then the synagogue came in, and we started the partnership. The synagogue brought books, gave them tutoring, and then invited the students to after-school programs. The kids started going over to the synagogue and they said, 'We want to go, we want to be a part of this church.' And then, it was unbelievable, they started to say to the older kids in the neighborhood, 'Don't you throw rocks at our church; you can't do that because this is our church.' My kids didn't even know any other ethnicity or any other religion. So we had the Rabbi come down and talk about the Jewish religion. At that time, anybody that wasn't black was an enemy. Really, they were considered bad people. It was reverse racism. But what resulted was a lesson in respect for those who were not people of color.

Alexander came to recognize the important contributions that the religious sector could provide. She invited a nearby church to get involved, and as a result, obtained additional tutoring services. Another partnership was forged with a college in the area. Alexander called the college administrators and asked if they could send student interns

to her school. The request resulted in a semester program in which college students assisted Maple art teachers in student design. The final project consisted of a full wall mural described by the principal as “an inspiring work that is appreciated by the students and the entire community.”

Most of those kids (from the college) were young yuppie kids. They hadn't had a lot experiences with urban kids. It was good for them and good for my kids. They all worked together like a great team. The mural they produced was really terrific. And my students grew to love them. They called them the 'Big Kids' and thought of them as big brothers and sisters.

Alexander attributed these new relationships to an entrepreneurial spirit which she felt grew from her school's success. She wanted to bring in more resources, and now that her school had built a positive image, it was easy for her to ask for help. She said that she found, to her amazement, that everyone she asked really wanted to be involved.

Rewards dollars bring computers and other assets.

Alexander used the School Improvement Team and input from every teacher to make decisions regarding how to spend the rewards money. The first year, most of the award money went to purchasing computers, software, related peripherals, and training for the teachers. The consensus of the staff members was that they were below par in their technology abilities and applications so they purchased more than 30 computers, adopted specific curriculum software, and worked with the software company to conduct teacher training. The computer programs that were purchased supported reading and math, and the principal believed they were helpful in providing students added opportunities to work on basic skills while teachers worked on higher level ones. In addition, purchases included overhead projectors, tape recorders for every classroom, calculators, compasses,

and supplementary materials for math, reading, and writing. The awards also allowed Maple to develop a teachers' resource center where staff members could go for information, handouts, and special materials.

Case 8 - Susan Matthews at Spruce Elementary School

I inherited a wonderful staff. Even though they are individuals, the vision of the school was theirs, and it remained pretty much in tact when I took over as principal. It wasn't so much, a new principal is coming in, as a chance to talk about the vision, the goals, our community, and our children. And I continued to move that forward.

- Susan Matthews, Principal

The Practice of Leadership at Spruce Elementary

Susan Matthews became the Principal after Spruce won its first MSPAP Recognition Award. She credited former leadership with setting the course for this improvement. Her task, she said, was to strengthen the vision that everything done at the school must revolve around the needs of children. Her office reflected that philosophy. It was filled with objects of interest particularly to children of color. Miniature replicas of historic black figures and other collectibles representing African American themes covered one-third of her desk. She said that, unlike many principals' offices, hers was one that children often enjoyed visiting.

Going to the Principal's Office can be a terrible thing in many schools. Not in my office. That's the problem. Here, the children can't wait to see the Principal! But, there is a message to this. Because when children come in my office because they have disturbed and they are angry, they have visual distraction and it gives them a chance to just sit for a while before we talk. Often, these same children drop by with no problems, just to see, touch, and feel things they like. And these are figures that represent pride in our culture and our society.

The school community was one that was economically diverse and ranged from

very wealthy families to those in subsidized housing units. Matthews said that for the most part, the school reflected middle America. “We have a nice mix, and that’s what makes the flavor of my school so interesting.”

She described herself as a principal who believed in structure and procedures. She asked her staff to write down their requests and ideas before she acted on them. She believed in the importance of formal and consistent meetings focused on discussing instruction.

I am one that needs to have requests submitted in writing. ‘Don’t give me things verbally, walking down the hall.’ I honor requests back in writing. We do have dialogue, but if it is something serious enough, it should be written down. That’s one of the things that the staff had to get used to, along with making sure that we hold meetings with our instructional chairperson. These are meetings held every morning before school starts.

Matthews said that discussions around instruction and student achievement were particularly important in an environment of dramatic increases in student population. Spruce had grown significantly, and there were issues involved in serving a large number of students in a school built for a much smaller population.

Logistically, our school population had grown over the years, and we were bursting at the seams. I mean, we had grown from 290 to well over 620 children from the time the school started until now. The building hasn’t changed very much. We had a renovation, but it didn’t give us more classroom space.

Getting started.

The school’s renovation took up a great deal of Matthews first year as principal. It included a new gym and restructuring from open space to closed classrooms. Matthews was not well versed in building construction, but she had to oversee the project and at the same time provide instructional leadership.

I was thrown in the middle of construction five years ago. You can't imagine what it was like! At the same time I had to work on the instructional program. It was dealing with structural and instructional changes. Recreating our handbook was a tremendous job. Our teachers were given a handbook at the beginning of the school year to put in their binders. I felt this document had to be a working document. Something that would guide the teachers and not add to a lot of unnecessary work. They were already overwhelmed with what they had to do.

The handbook was a symbol, she said, of a continuing focus on school improvement. She remained constant in that focus.

Staff development and the sharing of promising practices.

Staff development and involvement of the teachers in deciding what is best for children were critical, according to Matthews. She found herself part of many meetings set up by the State Department of Education and her school district, to help principals develop an understanding of the assessments and instructional requirements. The information she obtained was shared with her staff.

I may be the captain of the ship, but we all had to be able to enjoy what we were doing together. I was lucky because our teachers were willing to pull together. I was learning myself, as a part of a group of principals and other leaders involved in gaining information on best practices. My system really supported that, and I brought it back to the teachers.

Matthews described a serendipitous situation which helped her set the tone for MSPAP improvement.

Here was my advantage. I started in a school (prior to her principalship) in this system that was one of the few schools doing well on MSPAP. It was making proficiency for several years. But they did not get money because their incremental gains from the beginning score to where they were each year were not significant enough to get money. There was an individual at this school, the school's testing coordinator, who studied everything that came from the State. She used the MSPAP website; she understood how to interpret learning outcomes and content standards and would explain what we needed to focus on. She didn't have any more information from the State than anybody else. Her advice was, 'If they

are going to talk about dessert, and I see the word dessert coming up a lot, you can be sure that desserts are going to show up on the assessments.’ It was a practical way of studying what was coming from the State, and I learned quite a bit from her. Unfortunately, not every school had a person like that.

When Matthews became the Principal of Spruce, she utilized the expertise of her former colleague who met time and again with team members. These were learning sessions and they resulted in useful questions and discussions that Matthews felt contributed to improved instruction.

Creating time to meet, collaborate, and plan.

Within the first year that Matthews became the Principal, she instituted block scheduling which created longer instructional units and also gave her teachers a 90 minute block of time for team planning. She felt the advantages were significant for her teachers as well as for the students and said she was guided by her own recollections of what she felt would have been beneficial to her when she was a teacher.

I felt it was real important for team members to collaborate with each other. I remember wanting time for that when I taught. I persuaded them to work with me to create the most effective block schedule for our school. We utilized our resource and specialist teachers to teach focused areas that were relevant to higher student achievement. Children were not in a wasteful time block, but in a specialized learning program. Ninety minute blocks of time were created and that meant that 90 minutes per week would be reserved for team meetings. Each team would now have an opportunity to meet together to plan and to discuss new initiatives and strategies. I wanted them involved and to have the time to sit down and discuss those kinds of things. And I, or my vice-principal or reading specialist, would meet with each team throughout the week.

Instituting block scheduling involved, according to Matthews, the ability to use specialists creatively and to connect them to the important learning goals of the students.

When the teachers were planning, the specialists were in the classroom teaching various skills. For example, the library science specialist would teach how to

use the library to enhance writing assignments, where to locate books, how to gather information - those kind of things that were part of the reading block. Also my technology person, a para-professional, would also go into the classroom during this time and train children on how to use the computers, surf the web, and direct them to programs that were tied to material they were learning. My science resource person would be a part of that and might also take over one of the first grade classrooms and teach the various skills in developing a science project. While teachers were planning for that 90 minutes, a specialist could be in first grade in the morning and in fifth grade in the afternoon. So resource people had an important role to play.

Matthews emphasized that she employed a structured approach. Planning meetings involved discussion reports and team decisions regarding topics for the upcoming meeting. She maintained annual binders for each team and included each of the meeting reports within a separate section. Teachers were also encouraged to examine the progress and decisions of other teams. The information was readily available and well organized and the binder system has been continued as an important resource for the principal and staff members.

Planning meetings were to be organized. I wanted to see a reading, writing, and math focus, and I wanted teachers to show that they understood the content standards. I wanted the teachers to be able to use the documents the State was giving us. Many times we were not sure of how to use them. So we spent that time working on that. I was demanding in asking each team to write down what they were doing on a reporting form. I told them, 'This is the form. I need it coming back to me. If I don't get it, I will be looking for the team leader.'

Structure was also emphasized in communications to parents. Matthews instituted weekly newsletters that included instructional information. Parents were told what their children learned that week and were given the objectives for the following week. The newsletters were composed by the grade team, so there was team consistency.

Every team must speak the same language, and each team's page looks the same. Remember, the objective is the same, the teams are the same, and although teacher methods may be different, the product is the same.

Matthews prided herself in being aware of everything that was being taught in the school.

She said that she had her thumb on the pulse of every teacher and every classroom.

That's what makes our school kind of creative and special. We actually know who's teaching what, and when they're teaching it, and that doesn't usually happen in elementary schools. My vice principal and I are very hands-on, and we have to know where everyone is and what they are doing. Our scheduling format helps us because it has given us so much uninterrupted time for reading, math and an ability to plug in music and physical education. But we have to know who's doing what. You won't find most elementary schools able to know at a glance what everybody is doing at a specific time.

The Impact of Recognition and Rewards

The MSPAP awards brought our teams closer together. It stopped the fuss about what we didn't have. Now we had revenue that we needed. Now we could really focus on the children's instruction.

- Susan Matthews, Principal

Matthews' position at Spruce Elementary began with the first allocation of MSPAP improvement awards. She said that this mark of success contributed to an already positive climate at the school as she assumed leadership. The following year, when the school won again, she felt personal responsibility for the continued improvement. Although the school system did not refer to Spruce Elementary as an exemplar in improvement, they did recognize it as one that was making progress.

I was excited. The recognition was very confirming. I think it helped keep us on the right track. We weren't singled out to share our methods because they (system administrators) had other schools that met satisfaction in more areas. Those schools took a lead in that. But those were often not the schools winning the awards. It was still pretty obvious that we had been noticed. At county meetings, they would introduce us and say, 'You are already doing a great job.' You know -

that kind of thing - and it meant a lot when it was said. But nothing formal ever took place in terms of our leading sessions on school improvement.

The school system was encouraging in other ways as well. The award-winning schools were honored at a local board meeting and presented with a commemorative check. The system also publicized the good news in its newsletter and included the names and photographs of award winners.

Using rewards money.

Spruce Elementary was still an open space school the year it won the first MSPAP awards. Matthews felt the environment was not conducive for learning, however, another year was needed before the closed classrooms renovation would be completed. According to the principal, recognition of the school contributed to a positive attitude and buy-in among many of the teachers who had been complaining about the open classroom environment. Award revenue was also important because it contributed to the acquisition of needed instructional materials.

The teachers had already moved forward in changing instruction and when I got here they were still on that ramp. But when we got the award, it was, 'Now we can buy books that we need. Now we can buy computers that we need. Now we can buy overhead projectors that are needed and sets of library books for each class.' It was like Christmas is here! And we went crazy, buying the things that our children had gone without.

The school's site-based management team and instructional leadership team were given the task of making recommendations about how to spend the rewards money. They asked the grade level teams to submit wish lists of needs. Teachers came together in discussions, and their requests were categorized and prioritized. Materials needed to be useful across grade levels. Every item requested was to be tied to established instructional

goals and strategies. Matthews said that this linkage was a requirement of the local school system.

Purchases included literature books, computers, audio visual equipment and software, instructional materials in math, science, and reading, science materials for hands-on experiments, globes, maps, other reference materials, staff development and training, professional resources for teachers, awards and special programs for the students.

Before these awards, we didn't have discretionary money to purchase things. We had no hardware to do anything. It was difficult to support our teachers with the professional development they wanted and needed. Each year, we could look at our needs and buy other things that would help us improve. I know we intrinsically felt the importance of our work, but the extra money gave us a real boost.

Pressure to continue improving.

The only drawback noted by Matthews, was the tremendous pressure to continue the school's track record of improvement. Each year that it was recognized, there was a higher level of expectations, and the pressure was on for even greater achievement gains.

I can say that at lower achievement levels, the smallest increment can be so exciting. But once you reach a level of winning awards, then the expectations can sometimes be overbearing. And the MSPAP didn't give individual scores of every child, so we had to rely only on a school picture. I don't think that gives enough information to make the leaps in achievement that were expected, but our progress showed us that disadvantaged kids, if given a fair chance, can do it.

This chapter presented the individual stories of principals and their school reform practices. It also illustrated and described the impact and meaning of recognition and rewards. The cases are unique, but they also exemplify common themes and constructs.

These are discussed in the next chapter and framed by the leadership and organizational variables in Gary Yukl's Multiple Linkage Model.

Chapter 7 - Cross Case Analysis

The eight cases presented, illustrated leadership strategies for school improvement that were specific to the context of each individual school. Although, each case offered insights into the impact of recognition and rewards within a larger school improvement environment, the identification and exploration of emerging themes and patterns are critical to this study. These are ever more important in light of the fact that, although the eight schools shared the common characteristic of having won performance awards for continuous improvement numerous times, they varied significantly in geographic setting, demographics, and student performance levels. Therefore, the striking similarities among the principals' leadership habits and improvement practices is ever more important. So is the fact that all of the principals shared a positive perception of the impact of recognition and rewards on their schools.

Several important points must be made at the outset of this chapter. First, principals described a school improvement milieu in which MSPAP rewards were embedded. They gave vivid descriptions of change strategies that they implemented, and they described rewards as either an integral part of these strategies or as a confirmation that the strategies were working. Therefore, the assumption is made that an interrelationship exists between improvement practices of these principals and recognition and rewards.

Second, all of the principals indicated that while the monetary awards contributed to their overall school improvement efforts, the aspect of recognition, was, in itself,

important. Although specific information is given regarding the merit and uses of monetary awards, revenue and recognition together should be regarded as complementary. In other words, in most instances, it was impossible to exclude the effects of recognition from the principals' discussions of the impact of receiving monetary awards.

Third, an in-depth, several hour interview protocol was used, which allowed for rich descriptions of school improvement strategies and awards impact. Open-ended, less structured questions gave principals a chance to, not only fully describe their efforts and those of their teachers to improve their schools, but to bring insights into the emotional and tangible outcomes of the school-based performance awards.

Finally, Gary Yukl's model for leadership behavior and organizational effectiveness was used as a heuristic framework in guiding this study. Although it has been more commonly used as a corporate model, it was thought to be relevant to school environments, and it proved to be so. In fact, the model mirrors many of the current categories of action or practice believed to be vital to effective leadership and common in schools described as professional learning communities (Cuban, 2004; Fullan, et al., 2004; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Knapp, 2003; Portin, 2004; Thompson, 2004). The discussion in this chapter focuses on patterns of leadership practice employed by the principals. To a large extent, these were congruent with the recognized education theorists mentioned above, and with the Yukl's model, and they are categorized by The Multiple Linkage organizational variables which include the following: staff effort, role clarity and task skills, organization of the work, cohesiveness and cooperation, resources

and support services, and external coordination.

Although, comprehensive descriptions of leadership behavior and practices make up the individual case descriptions in Chapter 6, they are somewhat idiosyncratic. The discussion in this chapter adds value by highlighting important patterns and similarities among interviewed principals.

Leadership Behavior - A Passion for Change and the Will to Improve

All eight principals interviewed described a determination and passion to implement change in their schools. They exhibited confidence and a “can do” attitude. They were also constant in their purpose and attention to student achievement improvement. Susan Matthews was the only principal who came to her school after it had achieved its first track record of success on the MSPAP. She did not feel a compulsion to change the instructional programs because she described her staff as already producing successful student achievement results. However, she was thrust in another type of change environment, one of a significant school renovation. She described how she, as the school leader, had to be totally dedicated to this structural change event. The other principals described change as their mission to raise expectations and improve the performance of their students. Their vision and practices portrayed a passion for the job. For the most part, these were not line managers waiting to be told what to do. They described themselves as leaders unafraid to make decisions that they felt would lead to a school culture and climate amenable to instructional improvement.

Ann Taylor, Miriam Ernst, and John Andrews were newly assigned to their schools and said they immediately moved forward in implementing change. Taylor was

specifically asked to raise the test scores of Pine Elementary School students who were underperforming. She was given the charge by her superintendent to “move the school from a mediocre position” to one of high performance. She relished the challenge and believed in her own talents as a turnaround principal.

I’d done it before. I could see the potential of students like those at this school and could put in place what was needed to improve these kids. My focus was to lead an excellent school and my mission was to improve this school which was being outscored by many Title I schools that didn’t have the advantages that we had.... If I could, sometime, I would love to go around the country and bring my ideas to other principals. I love the challenge and I know what it takes to change and improve.

John Andrews was told by his supervisors that his school was doing well, and they advised him not to “rock the boat” at Willow Elementary. John, however, looked at the performance of his students in comparison with other schools with similar demographics, and determined early on, that his students had a great deal of room for improvement. He instituted, what he called a “culture of high expectations.” This new culture was at first rejected by teachers and parents alike. His passion to raise the achievement levels of his students resulted in significant changes in instruction and a number of malcontent staff members. By the end of his second year, Willow experienced a very high teacher turnover of 80%. Those that replaced former faculty members, however, were, themselves, advocates of change and adapted to Andrews demands to be vigilant and modify instruction to meet the higher capabilities that he knew the students possessed. Several principals described similar teacher exit patterns though none experienced as high a turnover. However, Ann Taylor and Denise Todd talked at length about their vigilance in working with teachers who were having difficulty functioning in their increased

performance environments. They, too, said that a number of teachers left their schools of their own volition or were encouraged to leave. Andrews said that his staff and his own system administrators were both surprised and encouraged by student increases on the MSPAP, but he remained steadfast throughout and he felt driven to prove his school could do better.

Denise Todd of Dogwood Elementary and Jack Blake of Cherry Elementary were principals that also said they relished the idea of improving their schools. Change was, for them, an exciting challenge, and recognition of success stimulated them. Blake had initial reservations about the testing program, but unlike many of his colleagues and supervisors, he recognized the permanence of the State's accountability system and its assessments and was determined to change instruction in order to increase student performance. He was not an advocate of prescriptive teaching, but he believed that instruction had to be geared to the performance standards and test domains. He became a passionate gatherer of assessment information and used that information to develop a shared vision for his school. The meaning of this shared vision was clarified over and over again by his almost daily information-sharing and his positive attitude that reinforced success. He said that he came into school each day with "a sense of purpose" and his staff came to trust his knowledge and instincts regarding mechanisms for improvement on the MSPAP.

I guess I lived every moment trying to figure out what the data told us about our kids. Even my wife thought I was a little obsessive and I don't usually strike people that way. I'm known to be relaxed – you know– I'm looked at as this nice guy that's easy to work with. Not that I wasn't still a nice guy, but I spent a lot of time getting information and learning myself about the MSPAP and what we, as a school, needed to concentrate on. I didn't tell the teachers what to do. Who am I to tell the teachers? I don't know how to teach every grade and subject in the school.

But I do know how to give out information and keeping the morale high was very important. When we started to improve and won the awards, it became easier to keep up the momentum. Everyone was getting as exciting as I was.

Denise Todd said that she recognized a need to change the habits of her teachers as soon as she took over the leadership position at Dogwood Elementary. With the tremendous amount of education change in the State and in her school system, her staff was still maintaining the status quo and curriculum and instruction had remained constant. She was also a new principal in a highly charged accountability environment and she was determined to improve the school's performance record. The fact that Todd had been selected by the teachers and parents of Dogwood to institute change and improvement was the mandate she needed and she saw her role as challenging but exciting. She said she was willing to commit herself to many extra hours, examining what was lacking in the current operating system at her school.

Todd, like a number of the principals interviewed, said that changing the negative mindset of her teachers was her biggest challenge. Half of her teachers were obstinate regarding school improvement and didn't see any reason to implement new methods. The other half were more than willing to work toward improvement. Recognition and rewards, she felt, helped her stay the course by boosting the confidence of her staff and encouraging them to try new instructional approaches.

I have always believed that the teachers are the driving force in any good school. Well half of them were not happy with me at first. I knew full well that our students could achieve at higher levels - I never gave up on that idea - but some of the teachers - well they had gotten used to certain habits and ways of teaching. They really didn't want to hear that they were not doing a good job. I had to use many personal skills with them. The awards helped when they kicked in. We were already accomplishing a great deal, but winning, being one of the best schools in

the State confirmed that we were on the right track. All of our hard work was being recognized. It was very important to the teachers, the parents, and the students.

Sharon Smith and Judith Alexander also described the tremendous efforts they made to encourage their teachers. They were principals of far more economically disadvantaged schools and had to deal with the day to day realities of improving the achievement of very low performing students. Their teachers were more than discouraged; for many, the situation was a hopeless one. Both of these principals described the forces involved in overcoming a stigma of failure. Failure, in their school system, involved political as well as instructional consequences - the possibility of school reorganization or state takeover in management. The low performance at Elm, like many other schools in the district, was a constant threat in the daily lives of school staff members.

Smith said that she needed to maintain, at all times, an upbeat attitude to encourage her teachers. She was, as she described, “unwavering” in her appeal to teachers to analyze and discuss mechanisms for change and improvement.

If I could see this as a period of growth – that challenges are positive – they could. I usually think back to my days as a classroom teacher and I put myself in their shoes. I encouraged them and regarded them as talented teachers who would most definitely improve their students’ achievement. And I encouraged them by being there as they taught their children. I was in their classrooms frequently and my interest in diagnosing the MSPAP and instruction was an important message. Everyone had to believe our kids could achieve at a higher level than they were when we started.

Judith Alexander’s situation at Maple Elementary was even more extreme in that the school had been identified as one step away from the failure mark for state

intervention. This principal described her personal passion for improving Maple and proving that “poor kids can achieve at high levels.”

I love the job of working with kids who often don't have a chance in life. They're written off and that cannot persist. Honestly, I could take a job tomorrow, near my house, in a school with privileged students. I wouldn't have to drive 40 minutes to get to work and I wouldn't have to spend the extra hours, sometimes late into the night, that are required in a school with kids that are fighting crime and drug busts on a daily basis. But, I love this work. I know that I'm needed here and I can help the teachers make a difference. That's what it's about.

Alexander also described a school environment in which teachers believed there was nothing more that they could do to improve their students. Her job, she said, was to convince them otherwise. She said that she always had faith in the children and knew they were smart, in spite of the fact that they were poor. Small but steady achievement improvements moved the school forward and when it was recognized that next year with a certificate of improvement, that award motivated her staff by confirming their instruction.

Leadership Practices and Awards Related to the Organizational Effectiveness Model Staff Effort

Yukl (p.278) describes an effective working environment as one in which subordinate effort and commitment are critical. Situations which require particularly high effort and commitment are those with complex, labor-intensive work that require high worker initiative and persistence. Mistakes in this type of environment are often costly and worker tasks have high exposure to internal and external communities.

The principals interviewed, in one way or another, confirmed that they and their teachers were working in these types of environments which required high effort and

commitment. Instructional tasks were described as complex and demanding. Lower performing schools felt the sting of low performance a bit more than the schools with middle to high student achievement scores, but all of the principals indicated that they and their staff members felt the pressure of being on the “front page” when it came to accountability on the MSPAP.

Yukl also describes a number of conditions that lead to high effort and commitment. These include interesting, challenging, intrinsically motivating tasks, staff members with a strong work ethic, and a crisis environment where failure is perceived as costly for staff members. Interviews of the eight principals indicated that they played an important role in creating high effort environments. They used almost daily encouragement, formal planning, data analysis, staff development and other strategies to effect change. They also believed that Maryland’s accountability and reform movement, while creating pressure, also created an environment conducive to increased effort and productivity. Many of the principals agreed with Taylor who said, “It was painful, but it was the best thing that ever happened to encourage better teaching and learning.”

Yukl implies that the introduction of innovative mechanisms into the workplace is important. These act as worker stimulants. He and others explore the importance of adhocracy in high performance workplaces (Deming, 1988; Waterman, 1990; Drucker, 1996; Dunlap & Golden, 1991.) Adhocracy, described as a management system in which leaders and workers work smoothly and effectively together, stresses the important role of workers in a well- functioning organization. The development of individuals and teams charged with creating as well as implementing is suggested. All of the principals

described environments in which teachers and other staff members were charged with creating and implementing change in curriculum and instruction.

Emotion can play a significant role in change and worker effort. Deal & Peterson, (1994), posit the notion that implementation involves changing other people's behavior and is, in itself, a highly emotional activity. They add that processes that appeal to our emotions are those that invite input and take suggestions seriously and that leaders must be available to act as coaches and to develop a rewards system to motivate staff. In fact, motivation is discussed as a critical linchpin. Interviews of the eight principals in this study show patterns of leadership and involvement that contributed significantly to teacher effort. Principals were engaged in and passionate about their responsibilities and appealed to the emotions and professional intellects of their staff members. Recognition and rewards appeared to play a prominent role in confirming instruction and motivating staff in their improvement processes.

Establishing a strong performance culture.

All of the principals talked about establishing a performance culture that stressed high expectations and the importance of a widely shared vision of high student achievement. Although the situations that each faced were different, they all discussed their strategies for a shared vision that focused attention on student achievement results as measured by the MSPAP. Establishing a performance culture implied additional effort on the part of the principal and teachers.

The principals of Pine, Sycamore, Willow, Dogwood, and Maple were direct in their discussions of somewhat painful beginnings in encouraging school improvement

and change. Their focus on improvement added work to the teaching load of staff members who were now being asked to gather and interpret data, diagnose student needs, and develop new instructional strategies and lessons. Many teachers interpreted this new message to mean they were not doing a good job and that caused them angst. In other cases, they either couldn't or didn't want to face change. Even with the provision of encouragement and assistance, a number of teachers in these schools either transferred to another school or were asked to leave. John Andrews experienced a dramatic turnover of 80% of his staff after two years as principal. Taylor, Todd, and Alexander talked about the tremendous challenges they had in dealing with a number of teachers that weren't doing a good job or as Andrews said, "just couldn't cut it." Denise Todd and Sandra Ashe talked about the insurmountable obstacles faced by principals when they want to remove ill-equipped teachers. Todd explained that she would do everything in the world to help an ineffective teacher but sometimes, he or she, simply wouldn't put forth the effort needed, or, for other reasons, couldn't do an adequate job.

Recognizing that you don't have the talents to teach effectively is something that is so difficult to face. And for some, who won't face it, we have to make decisions for them. The most challenging part of my role as principal, has been dealing with the process of removing teachers that can't do the job. There are some teachers that simply need to leave if children are to learn. The system makes it so difficult. I can't begin to tell you.... I've had to be persistent but sometimes, it just has to be done. And it really hurts; it takes its toll.

In setting a strong performance culture, most principals described their own resolve in fighting teachers' resistance to change by encouraging them with positive feedback and a vision of success. Unhappy staff members who left, were replaced with teachers open to the challenge of improving their schools. Judith Alexander was the most explicit in

summing up her approach to consistently pumping up her teachers. In response to the constant repose that the students at her school would never be able to achieve at high levels, she countered with her own faith and passion that told her disadvantaged children could do as well as any others.

I believe that children in any type of economic level can be achievers; they may not do it as quickly andas thoroughly in the beginning because they don't come with the experiences that a lot of other students do that are not in high poverty or high crime. We have to provide them with those experiences in the best way that we know how....We can do it and so can they!

Once the schools were in an improvement cycle, recognition and rewards contributed to motivating teachers and other staff members to stay the course. All eight principals stated that recognition and monetary awards contributed to improved teacher morale which they felt boosted effort toward continuous improvement. Sharon Smith and Judith Alexander were vociferous in their descriptions of the effect of the awards on teacher morale. For their disadvantaged schools, the awards meant, perhaps even more, because they cast a new and positive light on their schools and gave their teachers an impetus for the additional effort it would take to continue to improve. Sharon Smith, principal of Elm Elementary, said that the first year's certificate of improvement, which carried no monetary award, was received with tremendous excitement.

We were ecstatic; it put everyone on the bandwagon.... we had been working hard and, you know, there's a tendency to question whether it's all worth it. Well, that recognition put us on the map. We came back ready to roll up our sleeves and do much much more.

Building consensus for improvement, revising instruction, and risk-taking.

Principals felt that the building of consensus for change proved to be a critical

factor in their school improvement. In some cases, that consensus came only after teachers saw the fruits of their labor in terms of improved student test scores. Here again, the performance recognition grants played a part. Taylor said that her staff was willing to take on more responsibility for the performance of the students after they improved and were recognized.

I started the ball rolling by coming up with ideas about what it would take to move the kids forward. Now they really believed that our changes were good for kids. They were making recommendations, analyzing results, thinking of new writing and reading tasks. Teachers stayed after school and came in early to meet and discuss instruction. It was really exciting. They weren't complaining; they were using formal time to think about what our kids needed. They were working harder but really, they were working smarter. Everything we thought about and did involved quality teaching and learning.

Constantly thinking about instruction, verifying approaches, obtaining a comfort level in revising instruction, and taking risks were described by many of the principals as critical to improvement. Again, recognition and rewards were thought to have played a part. Jack Blake felt that the school recognition program supported his team's willingness to work harder and more effectively. He described an "intentional approach" taken by the teachers, with him as a guide. The intention in instruction was to improve student achievement as measured by the MSPAP. Non tested areas, Blake said, benefitted as well by a well-thought through approach that encouraged modification of instruction, questioning results, and risk-taking in terms of new strategies.

Even after we saw initial improvement, we spent hours thinking and discussing what it takes to improve student learning. Teachers, they know what good instruction means. They trusted my information about the data, and I trusted them to come up with the solutions. We were intentional about what we could do to improve or make sure the kids had whatever information or skills they needed.. Once they saw the results, that we were moving up, winning awards, and we were

already a good school, they wanted to spend more time pouring over the data and applying that to their instruction. Our effort was really concentrated on building skills and abilities. No one was afraid to offer new ideas and to fight for what they believed would add to learning for the kids.

At Willow Elementary, the mantra of high expectations drove teacher effort. In the first two years, teachers had not adopted a vision that their students, who were already performing above the norm, could substantially improve. A change in their philosophical approach to instruction and expectations was an important first step. John Andrews was vigilant and confident. The first cycle of improvement, he said, was extremely encouraging and recognition awards were “icing on the cake.” In the years that followed, the teachers came to believe that the students could handle far more difficult work. For Willow, that meant a shift in classroom instruction and the recognition that teachers should not be content with the status quo.

I was asking them to do far more, and they felt my expectations were a little too high. Recognition went a long way in changing those perceptions. But it took a lot of effort on the part of the staff when we introduced new programs. And starting new programs was just the beginning. We knew we had to refine our approaches and build on our strengths. It was tough in the beginning, but it proved to be worth it. And the teachers were proud of themselves, and they became more confident in their own abilities.

Teachers at Willow were willing to transform their reading instruction and take on the challenge of learning themselves. The William and Mary Reading Program and Guided Reading which were introduced, called upon teachers to spend additional time and energy preparing for instruction. Writing across the curriculum also became a mainstay in every classroom and the understanding and use of rubrics took a great deal of work. What happened at this school was nothing short of a “culture change,” according to

Andrews and the process became a “positive adventure,” particularly when the school improved and the teachers were recognized for their hard work.

Celebrating success.

Research on effective organizations, including schools, often points to the importance of celebrating success (Clotfelter & Ladd, 1996; Demming, 1988; Drucker, 1985; Elmore, et al., 1996; Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Kelley, 1999). In this study, all eight principals affirmed the importance of celebrations which they felt contributed to an overall positive environment, and one which involved not only the teachers but the students and parents. When they were recognized by the State, they capitalized on their awards. They created public announcements, assemblies, parties, lunches, and dinners outside of the school. Celebrations were for leaders, a chance to thank the entire school family and to bring an air of excitement to everyone involved in their improvement. In a sense, these also took on a symbolic nature, reminding staff, students, and parents of the important work accomplished at each school. They also set the tone for continuous improvement which would take commitment and dedication on the part of teachers, students, and parents alike. Denise Todd explained the celebrations as a driver for future success.

We did everything we could to bring attention to our success. We celebrated hard because we needed to stop and applaud ourselves, even if for a short while. Everyone had pulled together to get us where we were, and we wanted to thank them and to get them ready for more improvement. Knowing that we had been recognized at a state level added to the excitement at the school and to a renewed dedication to evaluating all that we were doing to move us even further.

Role Clarity and Task Skills

Workplace conditions that reflect high role clarity and task skills are, according to Yukl, those in which workers have extensive prior training and experience and are provided detailed formal rules and procedures. In many of these situations, the work is also highly automated. With these conditions as a guide, we can analyze the barriers faced by most principals interviewed. They generally had a mixed staff of veteran and new teachers, some with far greater capabilities and previous training than others. The teachers' work was neither automated nor routine, even though accountability goals were uniform for all. School environments were in a dramatic change mode and traditional rules and procedures regarding instruction were shifting. In fact, many conditions that management experts believe lead to optimum role clarity and worker abilities were far from stable. However, these principals described the introduction of new external and internal organization rules, procedures, and strategies that would take time but would ultimately play an important part in moving the schools forward in improvement.

Yukl (2002) also describes workplace situations where worker ability and role clarity are most important. These include units with complex and difficult tasks and with work that requires a high degree of technical skill, environments in which mistakes are costly. These workplaces may reflect frequent changes in priorities due to demands of users, and workplaces subject to unpredictable disruptions and/or crises. Many of these situations are dominant themes in the principal interviews undertaken for this study. Teachers were faced with new priorities and complex tasks involving data interpretation, instruction of new programs, changes in leadership and organization. Their work was

highly visible and progress was a mandate. The following discussion details several patterns of practice that contributed to a clarification of teachers' roles and abilities.

Data driven instruction - new rules of engagement.

Each of the eight interviewed principals discussed their emphasis on data-driven instruction. For most of the teachers, interpreting and using data was a new technique and they needed assistance in order to apply the technique to instructional practice. Data interpretation was, for seven of the principals, an initial tool that helped them convey to staff the need for student achievement improvement. Taylor and Andrews explained that their staff members had a preconceived perception that the students were doing well and there was little reason to change. These principals took a strong stand in using MSPAP data results to change that perception and introduce the idea of raising student performance.

Taylor compared the test results of Pine students with other schools and recognized that her youngsters were being outperformed by students in her district's lower performing Title 1 schools. She used the State assessment web site and other resources to put together information that depicted a student body that was far from high achievement goals. Although she coupled that data with reinforcements rather than threats, teachers and parents alike were shocked by her revelation.

I told them things they didn't want to hear, but as an instructional leader, I had to tell them the truth. The data was important. It was persuasive. You couldn't really argue with data results. Here was a school with good teachers and excellent students that had far more than others in disadvantaged schools, and the school looked mediocre... I wasn't a data or test expert, but I became one. So did the teachers, eventually. I put a strong emphasis on interpreting the test questions. I

used every sample question I could find and that led me to knowing that we needed to improve our writing.

Taylor and Andrews imparted a sense of urgency to improvement efforts and data analysis helped them along the way. Andrews also used data to create a platform for school improvement.

I remember thinking, we are doing well compared to other schools, but not compared to schools like us. This is where we really should be. That concept did not sit very well with many of the teachers. In fact, the parents weren't happy either.

Andrews eventually turned his staff into data detectives. They spent in-school planning time and time outside of the regular school day examining at result and applying that information to their instruction. Classroom assessment instruments also helped them set a course for improvement.

We lost our fear of what the tests were telling us and weren't afraid to try new instructional programs that would get us where we wanted to go.... In our school, parents were important. There was a lot they could do to back us up. It took a lot of new thinking and training, and for certain MSPAP was telling us what we needed to do. But we also used our instincts and knowledge. I know I felt sure of the steps we were taking. And the improvement and recognition confirmed what I already knew.

Jack Blake became a data guru. He displayed his many charts and reports that interpreted test results, compared schools with similar demographics to Cherry, and suggested strategies for improvement. He encouraged his teachers to do the same. They set up many voluntary staff meetings to share insights. MSPAP data became understandable and transparent, and Blake encouraged teachers to use the information to evaluate practices and refine them as needed. He said he truly enjoyed his regular routine of examining results.

That's what I was there for. To help the teachers think about skills needed for MSPAP. After all, I'm not the best teacher among them. I don't know how to teach every grade level. They're the experts, but I could point them in the right direction, make them come up with answers about instruction. I liked doing that. I'm a pretty organized guy and I could offer them a lot of information to use. That's what I did. I had the time to search the web and study the MSPAP site. I came up with, sometimes, weekly reports, set the data up in a matrix and they used that information in making instructional decisions. There were many meetings and team discussions.

Denise Todd, described her interest in improvement as a "puzzle to be solved."

She also relied on MSPAP data to guide her and the teachers. She said that she was often referred to as the "visual queen" because she believed in visualizing everything. She developed many data charts with matching instructional strategies. She also said that, while she didn't have a quantitative background, she believed in structure and felt that MSPAP data contributed to a more structured approach to instruction. She relayed that message over and over again to her teachers. In her mind, the test was not an obstacle, but rather an adventure in finding ways to improve teaching and learning. She was open to those who could assist her in gaining a better understanding of the assessments and the knowledge and skills that it measured, and she called upon local experts to help guide her and the teachers. Several consultants worked with her staff in creating instructional programs that could contribute to improvement for the students. Real buy-in, she said, came when the state data confirmed that their school was improving. Recognition and awards also meant there would be resources for training and materials development.

The rewards were extremely important. They justified our hard work and gave us the resources we needed to train teachers in ways that we felt would move us farther in improvement. We used our award money for teacher training, but also for teachers to create performance tests, because if we were going to develop

milestones, we wanted to have good stuff to measure... At Dogwood, every teacher knew how to score... and that was an incredible advantage.

All eight principals agreed that understanding data was a critical asset in their schools' improvement, and that it helped them and their teachers focus on instructional objectives. They made it clear that their achievements were due to critical changes in instruction, not to test preparation. Susan Matthews said that by concentrating on results, her teachers were willing to consider new instructional strategies and focus on best practices.

You know, sometimes teachers like to do it their way. We were now open to going in new directions. It was important for us to prove to the community that we were successful with their children. We were still autonomous, but we were driven by results and understanding how to get them was part of the process.

Professional development.

Staff development was critical in the drive to improve student achievement. Ann Taylor, Miriam Ernst, Sharon Smith, Denise Todd, and Judith Alexander emphasized strategies employed in developing their teachers. They focused on each and every teacher's strengths and weaknesses and used frequent, often weekly visits to their teachers' classes, not to evaluate them, but rather to coach and assist them. All of the principals said they called upon their own instructional expertise in guiding their teachers to improve. They instituted formal staff development programs which not only brought in outside experts, but also called upon their own master teachers to share promising practices. Their descriptions of collaborative learning, under the direction of their exemplary teachers, were vivid examples of principals who capitalized on teacher strengths, creating teacher leaders who could contribute to staff development.

Taylor said that she encouraged the sharing of strategies among teachers and set

up regular and frequent meetings as a setting for professional development. She, herself, worked with her teachers to develop an understanding of how to incorporate writing in every lesson and across the curriculum. Ernst, who had been a resource teacher assisting other teachers, used her coaching abilities with individual teachers and in staff development meetings which were set up on a frequent basis.

At Sycamore, before I came, and even after I came to the school, school improvement meant having three or four people get together twice a year. People would sit around and talk, and it all fell on the principal at the end to write the plan the day before it was due, because that is way we'd always done it. Instead, we started to conduct frequent team meetings and the awards and money encouraged that to happen. It gave us a purpose and made us willing to take the time. *We* started saying instead of *me* saying 'this is what you are doing wrong,' because I could walk into a classroom and say 'oh my gosh. I can see this, this, and this. Now we began to say, 'if you did this, how would it change that.'

Teachers talking together and teaching their fellow teachers was the model set in place by all of these principals. They maintained an important role as guides and mentors. Jack Blake, not only encouraged frequent meetings of his teachers, but he created instructional worksheets which linked instruction to assessment outcomes. Each of these worksheets included twenty questions about instruction that teachers were able to discuss in their team meetings. His twenty question concept, he said, led to a non-threatening approach to teachers' questioning their own instruction and discussing new ideas and programs.

John Andrews introduced new instructional programs that called for scaling up in staff development. There were formal and informal professional development sessions in which consultants worked with regular and master teachers. He instituted teacher exchanges as a viable staff development technique. Teachers at Willow visited other

schools, bringing back information and strategies which they shared with their colleagues. His school also used rewards revenue to equip the school with computers and to develop staff capabilities in technology use.

Denise Todd, applied her experiences as a former gifted and talented resource teacher, to identify teachers with particular skills. She created leadership positions for them as “cluster” managers and team leaders. Her true talent she said, was in “finding people who could do the job”. And the job involved school improvement. Todd entrusted her lead teachers to go to conferences and forums and bring back to the school what they learned. These lead teachers assisted less experienced teachers. Outside specialists were also brought in to work with staff and to provide teachers with additional skills they needed. Specialized programs in reading and math were adopted and training was offered to Dogwood teachers. Todd said that a great deal of professional development resulted from her teachers who were on the state assessment Scoring Teams. They would come back to her school and lead staff development of other teachers. Rewards money, Todd said, was an important contributor, in that a large portion of it supported professional development.

Sharon Smith and Judith Alexander also described their initial steps in frequent visits to observe teachers and offer them constructive feedback. These visits led to formal meetings to discuss strengths and weaknesses as they related to individual student needs. Staff needs in reading and writing instruction were an early discovery, and both principals set out on a course to develop the staff in these areas.

Smith and Alexander described how they used their bank of knowledge about the

strengths of particular teachers to establish teacher leaders who would play a prominent role in developing other staff members. These principals, and others, paid for their expert teachers to attend state and national conferences and training institutes, and charged them with the responsibility of sharing new strategies and techniques with their colleagues. They created blocks of time for teachers to discuss and learn together.

Outside consultants were also brought into the schools to assist. Alexander described her message to teachers to engage the talents of others as a way of improving their own instructional abilities. Now that her school was on an improvement track, she said, her teachers were willing to seek help from others.

I had Title I coordinators come over, and I encouraged the staff to ask for help. I said to them, 'Ask them to watch what we're doing, to tell us what we need to do, to develop strategies as to how we're going to go about (implementing) a school-wide focus on writing.'

Susan Matthews said that she was given many opportunities as a principal to attend local and state meetings which explained the assessments and instructional requirements. She realized that she needed to learn as much as her teachers. She increased the number of formal staff meetings at her school in order to share information that she was receiving, and she also restructured instructional time by instituting block scheduling which gave teachers a larger period of time to meet in teams in order to plan and discuss instructional practices. These meetings were structured by rules and procedures that called for focused discussion and summary reports of outcomes.

This was staff development at its best. Planning meetings were to be organized. I wanted to see a reading, writing, and math focus and I wanted teachers to show

that they understood the content standards. I wanted the teachers to be able to use the documents the State is giving us. We spent time working on that. Some of our best ideas on improving our teaching came out of those meetings. Teachers really learned to listen to one another and learn from one another.

Matthews, Alexander, and Andrews felt that performance awards gave their schools the assets needed to purchase instructional and technology equipment, which in many cases called for related staff development. They described their use of train-the-trainer models in which a small number of teacher experts were given skills which they shared with the other teachers.

Organization of the Work

Yukl's description of workplaces in which the organization of work is extremely critical, exemplifies schools facing accountability demands. In the model, these organizations are comprised of workers who must be highly skilled. The work unit is charged with a complex and difficult mission and must carry out a number of diverse tasks at the same time. Also, aspects of the work are highly interrelated and carry high exposure tasks for which mistakes are very costly. These conditions were all discussed in various ways by the principals in this study, who described their emphasis on new and innovative organizational approaches which they felt optimized instruction at their schools.

Increasing and restructuring meetings.

Ann Taylor and Miriam Ernst recognized that maintaining the instructional status quo would not result in higher achievement for their students. They initially began reorganizing what was being taught and the delivery of instruction by enhancing the role

of grade teams in making decisions. They encouraged more frequent and structured meetings for grade level teachers to discuss student outcomes and results. Susan Matthews also described changes she made in the frequency and quality of her teachers' meetings which were to be "results oriented". In each of the schools, teachers in one grade were also expected to share instructional strategies and information about student needs with grade teams above and below them. Ernst enlisted her faculty in problem-solving, something that she said had formerly fallen solely on the shoulders of the principal.

Our meetings increased significantly. Teachers began to share their ideas and their insights about what their colleagues were doing. *We* started saying instead of *me* saying 'this is what you are doing wrong.'...we began to say 'if you did this, how would it change that.'

Principals as instructional leaders.

Both Ernst and Taylor, described their own teaching abilities as excellent, and they relied on their own skills to assist other teachers, particularly in the areas of reading and writing. Andrews, Todd, Smith, and Alexander also affirmed their instructional leadership roles and felt that the use of data was critical in helping them guide their teachers in a focus on student strengths and weaknesses. They discussed the direct role they played in working with their teachers to build the skills that they felt were necessary for the school to improve. Andrews introduced reading and math programs that he was familiar with and worked with staff in boosting their understanding of the programs. He later introduced outside consultants to refine instruction. Todd, an expert in Renzulli math instruction, introduced those methods and worked with her teachers in gaining

necessary skills. She described how she used her expertise in teaching gifted children to assist teachers. Smith and Alexander visited, often on a daily basis, their teachers' classrooms and brought their knowledge of teaching and their subject areas to less able teachers. They, themselves, introduced reading and writing strategies before they brought in outside experts to work with the teachers.

A number of the principals also described instruction beyond the classroom. Miriam Ernst talked at length about how she mentored her teachers who were not relating well to parents.

I talked with them about interviewing a parent to get at information. I advised them to ask, 'What do you want your child, your son or daughter, to be like? What do you want them to be able to do when they leave Sycamore?'

Jack Blake's description of his role as principal was nothing short of a super organizer. He took it upon himself to be the lead in gathering information that the teachers would need to reorganize instruction for school improvement. He generated data reports, guiding questions, worksheets, rubrics for classroom use, comparisons of similar schools across the State, charts showing progress, and summaries of grade-level team meetings. These were given to every teacher as templates for their increasingly frequent meetings. His idea of reorganizing for improved instruction, meant giving teachers as much information as possible, encouraging them to meet and share their ideas, and letting them implement change in their classrooms.

Enlisting the support of master teachers as team and school leaders.

All eight of the principals talked about their talents in identifying outstanding teachers to assist them in school improvement. Denise Todd, Sharon Smith, and Judith

Alexander, explicitly stated that master teachers were critical in turning around student performance. All of the principals felt that recognition grants contributed resources to develop their master teachers.

Denise Todd used an innovative approach to reorganize the functions of teachers and other staff members after she lost her assistant principal position. When her district eliminated that position, she aggressively fought for an additional teacher for the school and reorganized staff duties. She orchestrated what she referred to as “deliberate management of the instructional program” by assigning a faculty curriculum advisor and faculty resource advisor, along with five team leaders, to implement the curriculum and performance-based instruction. She commented that the loss of an administrator later turned out to be a serendipitous event in school improvement for Dogwood Elementary. She felt that by the third year of performance gains, her restructured system had contributed to far more effective school-wide administration and instruction.

We set up a completely new organization. We really reorganized the school....I knew the teachers well. We had added new staff members that... could move us forward. Then I started moving people into different positions and deciding who could take on certain responsibilities at the school.

Todd recognized that master teachers had the capabilities to lead, train, and support other teachers. She created a range of options for teacher leadership by identifying interests and abilities of staff members and matching them with the leadership needs of the school. She also provided focused staff development to help teachers implement techniques learned from experts. Her expertise, she said, was in identifying talent in particular teachers. Her innovative reorganization merits discussion.

Todd's organizational clusters included one centered on curriculum and instruction. Her master teacher became the faculty curriculum advisor with lead responsibilities for the essential curriculum, MSPAP, staff development, integrated planning, grants, the testing program, the coordination of grade team meetings with the principal, and school improvement goals. She worked directly with three grade team leaders that were identified by Todd and each grade team members to serve as coordinators for primary grades K-2, intermediate grades 3-5, and the testing program which also focused on the CTBS test, reading, resource development, data collection, and volunteer programs. Another cluster encompassed special support services. The master teacher or faculty resource advisor oversaw technology, special education, gifted and talented programs, enrichment programs, special area teachers, guidance counselors, cultural arts programs, safe school grants, health services, and purchasing. A third cluster comprised the secretarial and support staff. Her administrative secretary took over as leader and was in charge of tracking the school budget and purchases. A clerical assistant who had lived in the community for over 30 years, became the transportation manager. The fourth cluster involved the physical plant and was led by the chief custodian. Finally, the fifth cluster was comprised of parents, with the PTA President and Site-Based Management Team representatives as leaders. This all-inclusive organization brought a new reality to school leadership, according to Todd.

Todd and Matthews were advocates of parallel block scheduling to create longer blocks of instructional and planning time. Their descriptions included the introduction of enrichment and remedial labs and systems for utilizing master and resource teachers to

take over classes, so teachers could meet frequently during the school day.

Most of the principals indicated that though they were at the top of the chain of command, many important school decisions were actually made by talented staff members who were asked to gain consensus from colleagues when decisions were to be rendered. Todd believed that her management style changed the insular thinking of teachers and contributed significantly to collaboration among her talented staff members. Although she felt that she had the instructional background to assist with feedback and leadership, she attributed much of the engineering of her school's performance improvement to the work of her staff members.

Sharon Smith developed a teacher buddy system, capitalizing on the strengths of her master teachers. Her frequent visits to classes had given her insights on teachers with outstanding skills and others that needed assistance. She described how she set the tone for the pairing of strong and weaker teachers.

I decided to pair them (weak teachers) with persons that I had seen and I felt really did something well. And I would say, 'Could you go with me and watch so and so,' and it didn't make them feel that I was targeting them as not being able to do their job, because I would say in a casual way, 'I saw this lesson and it really worked. I want you to see how she made it work.' And then I would say to the teachers that I thought could help others, 'You know I really liked what I saw in your room. Would you mind if I bring somebody in?' So it really didn't divide the staff. It helped them come together a little bit more.

Smith appeared, herself, to be a master of interpersonal relations. She said she was always conscious of feelings when she engaged her master teachers in working with teachers needing assistance. She said the buddy approach was effective for everyone involved. It provided assistance to those who needed it and gave master teachers an opportunity to

share content knowledge and tricks of the trade, thereby refining their own skills.

Meetings with buddies were conveniently scheduled, and according to Smith, also assisted in building a team atmosphere.

Most of the principals were advocates of outside training. Smith brought in experts to work with her teachers and would send her master teachers and other grade team teachers to numerous conferences and meetings. They were always charged with the task of “bringing back new information and techniques to the school.” Smith also set up formal time for master teachers to train others at the school. Her interpersonal skills were an asset in turning on, even the most negative teachers. She recounted her experience with a “trouble maker” teacher who opposed everything at the school. This teacher was very talented but also often took issue with Smith’s ideas and decisions. Smith, not only identified her as a participant in a State sponsored meeting about the MSPAP test, but she asked her to be the lead teacher at the conference. This move turned out to be extremely positive for the school because this teacher became a strong proponent of improvement and led others in that direction.

Sharon Smith and Judith Alexander both described a reorganized approach to teaching which involved the use of their master teachers. They restructured teaching assignments engaging the strongest teachers with the largest number of students. Smith recognized the need to strengthen the third grade team because it was weak and was also a critical measure of performance on the MSPAP. Her fifth grade team consisted of many skilled teachers, and she reassigned several of them to teach, not one third grade class, but all of the third grade students. Smith attributed student achievement gains in reading,

social studies, science, and mathematics to this strategy.

We had some excellent reading teachers in the fifth grade, and I asked one of them to move down to third grade. As a result, actually, the third grade team became the best in the whole school. My job was to move people to where their strength is and I decided that we should have the best person who taught reading, teach reading to all three third grade classes. I did the same thing with another teacher who was really good with math. She taught math to all three classes and the third person in the team taught the social studies and science. The results were so terrific that I instituted this in the fourth and then the fifth grades as well.

Judith Alexander also identified master teachers to assist her in leading instruction with entire grade teams at her school. Her formula was a bit different than Smith's in that she identified an area of strength in every team teacher and reorganized instruction so teachers taught their specialties to all students in the team. She said that teachers liked being able to "focus on less rather than more" and to have a familiarity with each and every student in the grade.

This turned out to be especially beneficial with the MSPAP because, not only did all the children have the benefit of better instruction, but in addition when it came to MSPAP testing, every student had a working relationship with every teacher in the team. I think that gave us an edge because a teacher was not a proctor but really one of the student's teachers. I think the kids took the test more personally than they otherwise would.

Cohesiveness and Cooperation

Yukl's description of workplaces with a high level of cohesiveness and cooperation are generally ones with a stable, homogeneous, and compatible membership in which members have shared goals consistent with task objectives. The work unit also usually has strong traditions that evoke pride of membership. His model points to situations where high cohesiveness and cooperation are particularly important. These include workplaces with task roles that are highly interdependent; where subordinates

share scarce equipment or limited facilities; and where subordinates work together in close proximity for long time. These characteristics exemplify school situations and were reflected in conversations with the principals in this study.

All of the principals concurred that they placed a high value on staff cooperation and collaboration and that the Recognition Awards were a positive influence, particularly in enhancing a shared vision around school improvement and accountability. They did not hide the fact that there were teachers who did not want to accept new responsibilities or a vision that the school needed to improve. Quite a few of these teachers ultimately left, particularly when they felt that dramatically changing norms were persisting at their school. However, the majority of teachers did adapt to change, and principals described significant improvement in attitudes among these teachers when they witnessed higher achievement results.

Yukl's model also depicts workplaces within a change environment as those most likely to be struggling to achieve a cohesive and cooperative staff environment, particularly if faced with new leadership. Such was the case at most of the schools in this study. All but one of the principals, Jack Blake, had assumed new or relatively new leadership positions at their schools. Maryland's assessment program, expected by many to be short-lived, was continuing. The State Department of Education and its local school systems were holding schools accountable for student achievement and that also involved public scrutiny. Goals, objectives, and instructional norms were shifting and maintaining the status quo was no longer acceptable. However, in this difficult period of change, principals talked about their willingness to accept challenges, and they described a growth

in cooperation and teamwork which they felt contributed to their schools' performance.

As Jack Blake put it, "We had to become more like a well-oiled machine." The following themes emerged as important in building cooperation and cohesion in the eight case schools.

Shared decision-making and rewards decisions.

The allocation of performance awards called for decision-making at the school building level and principals felt that collaborative methods were created or enhanced as a result. The Maryland State Department of Education recommended that the School Improvement Teams or other site-based management groups have a hand in purchasing decisions. In most of the cases, elaborate mechanisms were set in place for decision-making around the important and exciting job of deciding what purchases should be made. Individual teachers, grade level teams, school improvement team members, support staff, and ancillary staff members were drawn into an authentic and purposeful situation that the principals believed enhanced internal school collaboration.

Decisions were largely made by school members, and although principals had final authority in what was purchased, they generally supported the faculty. Miriam Ernst was the only principal who brought up the unintended consequence of infighting among faculty members when it came to rewards decisions. She was honest in her appraisal of her own mistakes the first awards year. She said she took a dominant a role in making decisions and used a significant part of the awards for school improvements that she believed were important. Her process, she felt, was not as collaborative as it could have been, and it caused dissension among the faculty. The next year, when the school

improved again, she adjusted procedures, giving the major decision-making role to grade level teams and the School Improvement Team.

Principals described rewards decisions as uniquely motivating. Teachers had not previously had an opportunity to give input on the spending of substantial amounts of money for instructional and other school purposes. School budgets, the principals said, were typically tied to maintenance of instruction, staff, and building, and there was little, if any, discretionary money left over. The opportunity to come together in a positive way to discuss needs and resources was not only unifying, but it gave teachers a chance to relate to other teachers not part of their own grade team. Decision processes included researching vendors, prices of goods, and the efficacy of particular instructional materials or other resources requested. Taylor, Blake, and Todd discussed brainstorming methods, justification discussions, and voting procedures that were implemented. All of the principals indicated that, in gaining a deeper understanding of the work of their fellow teachers, faculty members grew to better understand the various functions of the school as a whole. Ernst, Blake, Todd, Smith, Alexander and Matthews indicated that they believed that this new responsibility paved the way for additional cooperative ventures among school members. Others added that even their custodial and other ancillary staff members were drawn into the school community by being given responsibilities in resource decisions. Taylor described her role in setting up and assuring that purchasing outcomes would be collaborative and acceptable to everyone.

Everybody felt a part of the process and the promise was, that when teachers and other staff members left the room, they weren't going to say that a particular person chose those trees outside. It was 'we decided this.' It wasn't going to be

divisive in any way. And very honestly, if you are the only one not supporting it (a decision), you need to convince your colleagues to go along with your plan. Because once it's decided, we will move forward with it.

Heightened instructional decision-making.

Principals in this study felt that the performance award system enhanced staff members willingness to tackle more responsibilities in changing instruction to increase student performance. Most of the principals described the change environment as one which was initially very difficult for their teachers. Though they were guided by their principals in many ways, including the selection of new programs and expectation, the teachers were identified as the ones that had to make critical classroom decisions. Not only were they to work independently, but they were encouraged to plan, discuss, and evaluate their strategies in team and full staff meetings which increased during the rewards years. Ernst described her role which blended authoritative and facilitative approaches.

Now granted, to be perfectly honest, our goal was to succeed on MSPAP, but more than that, my goal as a professional was to teach teachers how to change their way of thinking and teaching -- how to be more effective, to improve, to analyze data.... They needed a bit of coaching, but they also needed to make decisions about what was needed in their classrooms and with their students. I pushed them in that direction. And the data could give them the information they needed to make necessary shifts and changes in what they were teaching and how they were teaching. They really became more autonomous, though they didn't get it at first. In this reform era, teachers had to be the masters of their ship. I didn't take that away from them. Actually, I think some (of the teachers) made more instructional decisions in a few years than they had in their entire careers.

Analyzing test data was a plus in instructional decision-making according to six of the principals. Blake felt that knowledge of outcome areas on the MSPAP gave teachers substantive decision rules in restructuring their instruction.

People didn't know that they (outcome areas) were there. Our teachers became very aware of those sub areas, those outcome areas. They also became very aware of what they were doing or what they may not have done. They met in the morning, in grade teams, to discuss their ideas and make decisions about changes that would benefit the kids. Then team leaders sat down and talked about new ideas and new directions. I gave them credit for being smart enough to decide what was working and what wasn't. And here we emphasize, just do those things. 'Go ahead and do it but let me know what you're doing.' So, in the meetings, the teachers were charged up with new ideas about how to improve the scores - really to improve the skills, but the test gave us the direction.

Blake said there were eight coordinators overseeing that many teams in his school. These teams were empowered with instructional decisions. Although he facilitated some of the discussions through his weekly handouts of information, the teachers set up the rules for meetings and the decisions that were made. Team coordinators or leaders met with Blake once a week to share information. Those coordinators comprised a school-wide leadership team.

John Andrews was one of seven principals who talked about the introduction of new instructional programs which opened the door to teacher decision-making and buy-in. These new programs, supported by rewards money, became a focus for teacher leadership and decisions regarding implementation methods, staff development, team teaching approaches, and the spiraling of instruction from one grade to another. Andrews, for example, described the decision-making processes involved in a new program, Guided Reading.

The teachers agreed that reading was a priority for improvement. The system had recommended Guided Reading for disadvantaged schools. We wouldn't get the money for it for three years. We were far down on the list. The teachers agreed that Guided Reading was worth the expense of training and materials. I'd seen it work in my other school, but it was the teachers' decision. They really liked the results that could be achieved. It was interesting because it's a program that

supports first and second grade students, yet the teachers in all the grade levels agreed that it was worth the investment. The rewards money made the program feasible because this was a long-term commitment, and it would cost us when they decided on the program. But they knew a strong beginning in reading was a priority that would pay off in achievements in reading down the line - in every classroom. They had to plan and make a lot of decisions about staff development and learning a new reading process, but they took on the challenge.

Denise Todd also employed shared decision-making in her reorganization efforts at Dogwood. Her teachers had already surpassed typical schools in making critical decisions because a number of them participated in the selection of their own principal. Now she involved them in the restructuring of instructional and organizational management. Teachers worked with Todd to reframe their own duties and those of other staff members. Together they created oversight managers of important functions in the school. Decision meetings were developed which asked for substantive input into the new management concept. Todd said that the teachers were ready to “step up to the plate” and were more than willing to accept new responsibilities.

Teachers assumed a great deal of decision-making authority in working with me to develop a new instructional design and management structure. They spent hours brainstorming and coming up with solutions to problems that were brought up. They were really moving the school in a new direction. I suggested those who I thought had special leadership abilities and instructional talents but they agreed or came up with different people. Block scheduling also gave us an advantage. It gave us far more time to plan and discuss. They (the teachers) were driven, as I was, by what would work best for the students. The parents also had an increased role in making decisions. We had a strong and involved group of parents and we formalized their role and made them a part of the function of the school. They interacted quite a bit with the teachers. Their ideas and decisions were part of our instructional priorities.

New designs in teaching and in teaching assignments also created pathways for decision-making at Elm and Maple Elementary Schools. Sharon Smith and Judith

Alexander recognized that their ablest teachers could have an impact on other teachers in the school. These teachers were given more authority in facilitating instruction at their schools. For example, Alexander and her lead teachers brought the entire staff together to discuss ways to strengthen the school's writing program. There was a focus and a system developed for input and decisions that needed to be made.

Meetings were to result in decision results. We started focusing on writing. We developed a real format for writing. That first year, we decided to concentrate on writing to explain and writing to inform. We made writing a part of every teacher's job.

Teachers took on the role of leading decisions involving the development of concept maps, staff development needs, and the school writing format that would be used by all the teachers. They created three or four week writing activities and decided how to implement writing in different content areas.

Spruce Elementary's principal, Susan Matthews also affirmed the increased decision-making of her teachers which began as part of the school's renovation process. Teacher input provided a construction map of structural changes that they felt would improve teaching and learning. Matthews relayed to her staff the importance of their ideas and feedback. She said she had always been a strong proponent of shared leadership and she wanted her staff, not only to be informed, but to be engaged in all decisions regarding the school.

It is their school. They have to feel they are in charge of what we do at the school. And their ideas are very important. I'm blessed with an expert group of teachers. I may be the captain of the ship, but we all had to be able to enjoy what we were doing together.

Matthews and her teachers also created a block schedule which contributed to more

frequent and longer periods of time for teachers to meet, discuss, and make decisions. Staff meetings were organized by teaching teams and they concentrated on instruction or related issues. Matthews demanded written reports with results of each meeting. She still has in her office numerous notebooks, organized by year, which include documents and reports of the meetings of her teams, as well as their meeting decisions. The notebooks document instruction to be carried out from week to week, disaggregated data on students, instructional questions, concepts for improving in various subject areas, and names of those charged with retrieving information by the next meeting. Companion books held information on purchases and materials requested but not ordered. Teachers were invited to read not only their own team notebook but those of the other grades. In fact, Matthews felt it was critical for her teachers to understand as much as possible about instruction taking place in teams other than their own if they were to assume a role in making school decision.

School to school and other partnerships.

Interschool collaboration was established by a number of the principals. Most of them attributed rewards money to a greater ability for them to hire substitutes and visit schools within and sometimes outside their school systems. Taylor, Blake, Todd, Smith, and Alexander described visits to schools that had achieved higher performance results as well as partnerships that were developed with lower achieving schools to share promising practices. These cooperative interactions were a result of a school focus on gaining information to increase student performance. Lead teachers and sometimes entire grade teams visited schools or hosted site visits at their schools. Ann Taylor, Miriam Ernst, and

Sharon Smith said they were invited to a number of schools to talk with and guide other principals and teachers. They stated that these relationships were immensely helpful in widening their own and their teachers' perspectives. Personal visits were followed up with calls to buddy principals and teachers. Smith's comments summed up the experiences of a number of the principals.

Too often, teachers have a narrow perspective. When they interact consistently with their own colleagues, it's special, and when they get to collaborate with teachers in other schools, it's really exciting for them. And it pays off for us as well.

Denise Todd also felt it was important to learn from members of other schools. She believed that schools were too often isolated and locked into their own small world. She formed relationships with a number of principals and sent her teachers to other high performing schools to learn from them and to share the knowledge they had.

Smith formed a higher education relationship with the University of Pennsylvania and under its guidance, she developed a special reading program at her school. Success with this program developed into a long-term partnership with a higher performing neighboring school. The pairing of these two schools introduced an innovative team teaching approach that had the principals and teachers instructing students cooperatively at the two schools.

Cooperation between schools is really unusual. We were working together and it was a thrill to do that. And we improved together too. It was great for our teachers. It really put a different spin on the staff.

Judith Alexander described her school's unique community partnerships which contributed to enhanced cooperation among adults and students. They began, she said, as

a result of the school's recognition. Community members began calling the school and offering to assist. An unusual relationship between the school and a nearby synagogue resulted in tutoring and books for the children. Also important, it contributed to the development of positive attitudes among the students toward the Jewish community. Another partnership with a neighboring art institute helped to develop an expanded art program for the school along with cooperative arrangements which brought in college interns and professors who mentored Maple teachers.

Resources and Support Services

Yukl describes effective workplaces as those in which the organization provides adequate resources. Less effective organizations are those where the work requires large amounts of scarce resources and the sources of supply are unreliable. One could argue whether or not schools do indeed receive adequate resources to do the job. In Maryland, there is a general consensus that more money is needed to educate students, particularly those who are disadvantaged.

Many of the principals interviewed did not complain about a lack of resources for improvement, but they talked about more creative uses of their given school budget to focus on strategies for change. Most of them expressed the importance of a "can do" philosophy that went above and beyond the issue of funding. Taylor's statement exemplifies that philosophy.

It's not about money as much as the way we go about our jobs in education. With the right processes and people, we can certainly improve our schools. That's not to say that additional dollars aren't needed and helpful, but the problems go beyond simply supplying money.

However, with that thought in mind, all of them said that additional funding was a significant contribution, and they talked about the importance of infusing their schools with additional dollars they could focus in specific areas. Denise Todd described her dilemma at her new school which had not been given performance awards.

I really miss school improvement money. The rewards money was for our small school like another full budget. Right now, I feel I have plenty of ideas. I just don't have any funds to do them, and I feel that's strangling the school.

Principals also discussed non-monetary resources such as the experiences and knowledge that their students bring to the learning environment as well as parent and community support. Principals of schools in economically deprived areas felt they were operating under less than optimum conditions. Even with additional Title 1 federal funding, their resource needs for deprived children were very high, and parent involvement was not a given. Principals of schools in average to more advantaged schools described what they felt was an incorrect assumption - that they didn't need federal and other additional dollars. In fact, they said that their costs in ratcheting up student performance was high.

Rewards dollars boost discretionary spending.

All eight of the principals said that discretionary funds at their schools were minimal, and recognition awards were helpful and well conceived in that they gave them additional revenue as well as flexibility in making purchasing decisions throughout the school year. They stated that rewards funding allowed them to buy important services and materials that they otherwise would not have been able to obtain for their schools.

They also believed that rewards funding helped them better meet targeted goals and contributed to improved teaching and learning.

Recognition and rewards boost morale and add other sources of revenue.

All eight of the principals also said that their own morale and that of the teachers increased substantially as a result of receiving awards and being able to make school-wide decisions about how to allocate these resources. Although the principals credited their teachers with school improvement, they felt that their reputation as positive school leaders and their ability to sustain improvement were enhanced when they received the State's recognition and rewards.

For several of the principals, identification by the State also brought additional resources and revenue from the district. Sharon Smith received a special \$20,000 grant to implement her new reading program. Judith Alexander's school was selected for a Child First Grant which gave it funds to offer after-school programs. Miriam Ernst was identified as a principal to participate in the Baldrige in Education initiative adopted by her school system and the State. She attributed the State's recognition to her involvement in the program and said that many of her restructuring ideas resulted from information she obtained as a Baldrige participant.

All eight principals also felt that parent involvement was enhanced and in several cases, additional school resources flowed from that involvement. Andrews' school benefitted when his parents redesigned and outfitted a faculty lounge, an activity which would have typically cost the school thousands of dollars.

It was all because they wanted to show the teachers their appreciation. You can't

imagine how much it meant to these parents when we were recognized. They were high achievers and they wanted their children to be as well. What they did was a real surprise to us.

Ann Taylor, John Andrews, Denise Todd, and Judith Alexander also believed that community involvement was significantly enhanced and that the sum total of services contributed was significant. Taylor said that community members more readily stepped forward to donate money for school activities, and that business partners were “proud to contribute to a winning school.” Judith Alexander described an outpouring of support from community members after she won the Recognition Awards. Hundreds of instructional hours as well as art related resources were an important contribution to this small urban school. Alexander said, “I never thought to even ask them. Now they were calling me. You can’t even put a price tag on what we received from the community.”

Additional resources improve staff capabilities.

All of the principals described the awards as assets that enhanced staff capabilities. Professional development programs and outside education consultants were purchased by all of the schools, and according to the principals, contributed to instructional improvements. Six of the eight principals also enhanced instruction by hiring tutors or introducing remedial instruction before or after school. Miriam Ernst said that when she hired a reading resource assistant, that position reduced the class load for her teachers and gave them more time to plan and focus on changes to their instruction.

Every principal used a portion of the rewards funding to equip their schools with additional computer equipment and to develop technology skills in their teachers. Many of these purchases preceded their districts’ expansion of computers in the schools.

Principals said their teachers had a strong preference for these purchases and felt that technology was critical to delivering instruction and giving them and their students access to a wider field of instructional materials.

External Coordination

Yukl's describes effective organizations as those that have meaningful relationships with organizational subunits as well as those with outsiders. In applying this description to schools, they should exhibit coordination among teachers of different grades and/or subject areas as well as with other schools, state or local school systems, community groups, consultants, parents, and other relevant organizations. Yukl's framework model depicts work situations which demand a high level of external coordination as those in which one work unit has high lateral interdependence with other units in the same organization. In other words, the effectiveness of one class or grade depends on the effectiveness of others. Relationships external to the organization are believed to contribute to internal functions. Although these relationships can often be achieved by people in special linkage positions, Yukl's model places the organizational leader in the vortex of external environments.

Schools as organizations requiring lateral interdependence.

Discussions with the eight principals pointed to their practices in strengthening the interactions within and between grade level teams in order to stimulate higher performance. They moved from a traditional grade-by-grade approach to a whole school planning effort and created or expanded the frequency of intra-grade meetings. Blake, Todd, Smith, Alexander, and Matthews also talked at length about the sharing of data and

other information between teams and of devising structures in which grade team leaders would meet and be involved in far more planning before, during, or after school. Several principals reorganized teaching assignments to allow resource teachers to take over instruction while teachers met to implement change. Others switched to block scheduling to give staff members more time to interact and plan together. Susan Matthews encouraged teachers to read the meeting notebooks of other grade teams to gain an understanding of instruction throughout the school. The principals shared in an appreciation of coordination and collaboration which allowed teachers throughout the school to better understand the instructional programs that their students had recently completed or those they would face in the coming years. Miriam Ernst, was a principal that, in fact, talked about the negative impact of her teachers' initial resistance to the idea of grade to grade cooperation. Many of her teachers outside the third grade level were loathe to accept responsibility for improving student achievement if they taught grades which were not tested by the MSPAP. She described her many concerted efforts to change that notion.

Local and state inadequacies in external coordination.

Although the principals mentioned that district personnel were either assigned to the school for coordination or were available if called, none of them described local mechanisms that were in place to share effective practices of the rewards schools. Taylor, Ernst, Todd, and Smith said, in fact, they were never called upon by their system administrators to share their ideas. Their work with other schools was entirely entrepreneurial. Jack Blake felt that issues of principal jealousy may have played a part in

local school systems' failure to feature the improvement strategies of their own successful schools. He also thought that his system administrators and other principals never gave full credit to his school's improvement because it was a high achieving school, and they felt he had a student body with advantages that others didn't have. In contrast, Judith Alexander said that her system tended to focus only on its highest performing schools as models for the others.

Schools with the highest test scores got most of the attention. Why talk about the high flyers only? The improvement we were making was pretty incredible, especially when you consider our students were coming with so many disadvantages and working to catch up with kids who have so much. I think we were really a model of hope for lots of schools in our area.

John Andrews was ambivalent about taking a lead in his district to share his school's improvement strategies.

That's not me anyway, not my style. What's important to me is to do the best job I can in my school. I don't need to set myself up as an expert in my school system.

All of the principals, however, felt that showcasing rewards schools would have been a good idea and might have influenced the performance of others. Taylor said that a written report sharing information about improving schools would have been helpful in giving her new ideas for continuous improvement. She said that learning from others had always been a driving force for her as a leader.

The State Department of Education also did not capitalize on the success stories of improving schools and did not seek information from rewards schools regarding practices or reasons for improvement. It was, therefore, not focused on sharing promising practices with others across the State. The Department did ask that schools report rewards

purchases to their local school systems and in later rewards years, it requested that information be sent to the State, but many schools interpreted this request as voluntary and did not submit the information. No summary report about purchases was written or disseminated. An important point, however, is that the State Department of Education did an admirable job in developing a useful website replete with assessment data that was used by these principals in creating useful information that allowed them to analyze their student scores and compare them with other schools.

Coordination - learning together and keeping stakeholders informed.

All of the principals indicated that they networked with peers and outsiders to develop cooperative relations. Most of them talked about formal and informal relations with principals and other leaders that had been recognized for improvement. They also described discussions of promising practices with fellow principals during regional or system-wide principal meetings. As previously discussed, many of the principals formed new and mutually beneficial relationships with leaders of other schools in their district or in neighboring ones. External cooperation was far more important and consistent, they said, as they continued to improve.

Previous sections detailed the use of outside subject area and assessment consultants. Every principal contributed to staff development by utilizing the talents of experts outside of the school. Several also described extensive partnerships with community members and higher education.

The principals also were more vigilant in coordinating with parents. They issued frequent reports about subjects being taught and used the success of the school to further

involve parents in instruction. John Andrews required parents to work more consistently with their children on school subjects. Denise Todd involved parents as tutors and paid those who were tutoring on a permanent basis. Judith Alexander set up family nights for parents to be instructed on aspects of the MSPAP and the school's instructional program. All of the principals indicated that they increased external communication and instructional information to parents.

Coordination with students.

Many of the principals discussed new approaches in involving their students in school improvement initiatives. "So often, students are the last ones to see the big picture," said Miriam Ernst. In many of these rewards schools, students were given an explanation for their course of study and the expectations for them as students. They were thanked for their improved performance and told they were the reason the school was recognized and rewarded. Six of the eight schools mentioned purchasing books for each of the students. Miriam Ernst went so far as to put labels in the books explaining to the children that they were purchased as a result of their hard work. The students were looked upon as true partners in their schools' improvement. There were discussions with them about the importance of doing their very best on the long and difficult tests. Ernst described how she patted the backs of her eight year old students and encouraged them to work as hard as they could for themselves and for their teachers.

Cross Case Analysis Summary

There were a number of interesting ideas presented by these principals who, for the most part, reflected leadership in action. Throughout the discussion there was clear

evidence of principals who were confident in their abilities to improve their schools. They themselves had a hand in implementing new strategies and programs, and they enlisted the support of internal and external school members. Most of them saw their roles as leaders and not line managers. They communicated with staff and external stakeholders and were not afraid to point out negative features of their instructional programs or their organizations as a working entity. Conclusions to be drawn from these cases are many. However, overgeneralizing the results to other schools would be unwise. The following chapter takes this recommendation into account. It discusses major implications and relates the findings of this study to the broader context of current research.

Chapter 8 - Discussion, Conclusions, and Implications

During the middle decades of the twentieth century, school administration policy was directed to ‘efficiency’ rather than a central concern with teaching and learning. Management, rather than learning was the byword of this era. Today, accountability mandates have encouraged educators to focus on raising student performance and closing achievement gaps among student groups. In fact, policies that hold schools accountable for the achievement of their students are the norm. The pendulum has reversed and substantive educational issues and pedagogy are seen as central to effective school leadership.

The current federal *No Child Left Behind* legislation mandates annual yearly improvement for students in every school in America and stresses measures of student performance. Currently over a quarter of the nation’s 93,000 schools have been placed on a watch list because of poor test performance. Under the law, districts that have schools in a second year of sub-par performance are forced to offer their students transfers to higher-performing schools and must pay all transportation costs.

The stress and additional costs for local school districts are significant, and education policymakers across the country have either introduced or are considering incentive programs as remedies to stem the tide of failure and encourage improvement. The basic assumption of incentive policies is that they motivate school leaders and other professionals to change practices to improve student performance. Yet what we don’t

know about the impact of various incentives is far greater than what we do know about them.

Motivation for reform is a complex concept. Susan Furrman (1996, p. 331) describes it as “a matter of organization and management as well as policy” and believes it is constructed by both the motivator and the motivated. Much of the research on the effects of incentives has been focused on teachers (Kelley (1999; Leithwood, et al., 1998; Little, 1986; Mohrman & Lawler, 1996) who have somewhat ambivalent attitudes regarding incentives. These studies present the notion that principals and other leaders may have more positive impressions regarding the motivational effects of rewards, and they suggest further study of that phenomenon.

The research undertaken for this study delves into this relatively unknown area and looks specifically at the impact of school- based performance rewards. It provides data from eight Maryland principals who, numerous times, experienced recognition and rewards as a result of their schools’ improvement. It also examines the impact of these awards on the principals’ leadership behavior and practices. The data, though gleaned from a limited sample of principals, support the conclusion that rewards, when coupled with focused and systemic school improvement practices, can serve as an effective motivational tool for improvement. This chapter discusses and interprets major findings and draws a number of important conclusions. It also, describe some the study’s methodological limitations and proposes recommendations for policy and practice.

Major Findings

Focusing Incentives on Specific Needs

Eric Hanushek (1995) generally opposes increased education spending to reduce class size or to increase salaries of teachers. He does, however, advocate incentives for student performance. He calls for incentive schemes based on value-added results and suggests that rewards should be related to gains that can be attributed directly to specific changes implemented by schools and teachers. In other words, he does not advocate incentives simply for overall improvement, but rather specifically applied incentives (pp. 63-64). Cohen (1996) agrees with this basic premise and questions the efficacy and acceptance of rewards programs unless they are tied to clear measures of performance and school improvement. He points to the difficulties in clarifying measures of performance, criteria of success, and fairness.

This study supports the basic ideas of Hanushek and Cohen and suggests that performance awards can be efficacious in overall school improvement scenarios when the incentives are tied to effective organizational structures and transparent measures of overall improvement. In fact, the findings further the notion that targeted student achievement improvement is a function of the individual school and can be enhanced by defined state accountability standards.

In the cases studied, Maryland's school performance program and recognition awards were a ratchet for school-wide improvement. The State's program clearly focused on student improvement as measured by statewide tests and it allocated rewards to schools based on two years of significant overall student improvement. Although specific

changes to improve instruction were not a part of the State formula, these occurred at the building level.

Principals attributed specific strategies directly to student improvement and believed that reward dollars were applied to these targeted areas or to overall school improvement features. For example, principals felt that a concentration on data interpretation led them in the direction of student improvement and in most of the case schools, rewards revenue was directed to the goal of understanding and learning to apply data in prescriptive instruction. Outside consultants were brought into the school and student weaknesses, identified through test and other data analysis, were ameliorated through staff development and new instructional programs. In addition, every school identified reading and writing improvement as important areas for student achievement improvement. Incentive money was used at each site, in specifically targeted approaches to strengthening those areas. Although one might argue, philosophically, that the mark of school improvement should be greater than measures of improvement on the statewide assessment, the fact that students improved in a measurable way, based on verifiable evidence, strengthens the course of action of schools and the impact of rewards revenue.

Principals as Central Actors in Improvement and the Impact of Incentive Rewards

At the outset of this dissertation, two general assumptions about rewards and high-stakes accountability were introduced. The first assumption was that incentive awards can motivate; the second was that leadership matters. This study tends to confirm these two assumptions. Principals who were interviewed, appeared to play a critical part in their schools' responses to high stakes accountability and school improvement. They

set up in their schools a culture for change. They were positive, if not passionate about improving their schools and presented encouraging messages to staff members over and over again. This finding also supports a number of studies that emphasize the important leadership role of establishing school communities of shared leadership and a positive vision for change and transmitting as well as persisting in developing positive cultural aspects of organizations (Deal & Peterson, 1990 and 1994; Fullan, et al., 2004; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Ogawa & Bossert, 1995; Portin, 2004). These studies and others argue that much of what constitutes leadership can be noted, not as much in the accomplishment of activities, as in the ability of leaders to infuse activities with meaning shared by organizational participants (Knapp, et al., 2003; Selznick, 1957). Again, this study corroborates this theory and points to recognition and rewards as mechanisms useful to leaders in bringing meaning to the work of school members.

Principals believed that recognition and rewards were instrumental in enhancing their own resolve and focus and also helped convince staff members that the school's vision, programs, and activities were coherent and leading them in the proper direction. These findings are also congruent with the notions of researchers O'Day & Gross (1999) who believe that incentives are particularly effective if they motivate leaders, the critical linchpins in school improvement. These individuals, they believe, mold responses to high stakes accountability by shaping other educators' responses through their interpretation of what policies mean in the context of their schools. Also, they use their formal position and authority to introduce and facilitate change.

The principals in this study described their leadership roles as critical in

interpreting and creating an improvement mission, and they believed they were instrumental in encouraging, facilitating, and developing change in their schools. Their descriptions of specific actions and behaviors position them, not as line managers, but rather as visionaries and facilitators of change.

Principals also described rewards as a motivational tool in helping them facilitate growth in their teachers' capacity to work toward higher student achievement. Rewards, they said, encouraged them to introduce innovative practices and strategies. The sections below use the intervening variables in Gary Yukl's *Multiple Linkage Model for Organizational Effectiveness* as a basic framework for discussing the leadership practices of these principals and their perceptions of the impact of rewards relative to school improvement. Yukl's conceptual model links effective leadership behavior to important intervening variables of worker effort, role clarity and task skills, work organization, cohesiveness and cooperation, resources and support services, and external coordination (Also see Chapter 3). The model, used as a heuristic guiding this study, was found to be pertinent. The intervening variables applied in all of the school cases, and interview data supported a connection of rewards to each of the critical variable areas. Table 21, on the following page, can be used as a reference in this discussion. It shows school changes made to improve or enhance each of the work-related intervening variables integral to the Multiple Linkage Model.

Table 21

Changes in Organizational Behavior of Case Schools

Intervening Variables	School Changes Taking Place at Case Study Schools				
Staff effort	Focus on MSPAP	Additional meetings for planning and analysis	Acquiring new teachers	Professional development	Team decision-making
Role clarity task skills	Data analysis	Professional development	Focus on reading, test data, writing	Analysis of teacher needs	School instruction plans
Organ. of the work	Redesigned faculty meetings	Principal demonstrations	Creating master teachers	Change in staff roles	Block schedules
Cohesiveness & cooperation	Shared decision-making	Internal collaboration	External collaboration/partnerships	Students as stakeholders	Parents as stakeholders
Resources & support services	New programs materials & staff	Training & mentoring	Technology	Building improvements	Motivational awards & celebrations
External coordination	Inter-school relations	Participation in State meetings	Principal to principal partnerships	School & local school system relations	Communication to parents & community

In improving staff effort, all of the schools focused on requirements of the assessments, concentrated on planning and analysis, brought in new teachers who shared the vision of the school and were more interested in change and improvement, offered far more professional development activities, and used a team and whole-school approach in sharing decision-making.

In the area of role clarity and task skills, schools again employed data analysis to define these, instituted professional development to contribute to instructional skill-building, focused on major areas of need such as reading, writing, and test data interpretation, made a concerted effort to analyze individual needs of teachers, created targeted instructional plans, and used feedback to guide staff in continuous improvement.

Relative to work organization, the schools restructured instructional delivery time through block scheduling and other methods and encouraged before and after-school work schedules. They redesigned faculty meetings and added additional meeting and planning time. Finally, they created master teachers who, with the principals, demonstrated excellent teaching methods and shared promising practices.

In building cohesive and cooperative school cultures, they heightened or introduced shared decision-making and internal collaboration between teams and among them, and developed external partnerships. In addition, most of the schools included students and parents as critical stakeholders, sharing with them their successes as well as their needs for further improvement.

The flow of resources and support services were directly attributed to rewards. Schools were better able to introduce new programs and obtain needed materials, offer teacher training in these and other instructional efforts, add technology equipment, software, and training, improve the school building, and sustain the momentum through motivational awards and celebrations.

Finally, external coordination was enhanced through inter and intra school relationships. Principals and teachers were sharing ideas and instructional programs

among themselves and helping others by creating relationships with other school staff members, acting as “socially just leaders” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004, p. 11). They also participated with outside experts, attending state meetings which emphasized testing and improvement. Principals, by their own will and interest, partnered with other school principals, forging bonds and relationships that connected them not only to other district schools, but, in a more complete way, to their local school systems. Also important, they used the power of communication to share information with parents and community, drawing them farther into the workings of their schools. A more detailed discussion of each of these areas is offered in the sections below.

Building staff effort and skills and defining teachers' roles.

Leadership behavior in Yukl's organizational management model and in much of the literature on school change, suggests a focus on staff effort, role clarity, and skills. Members of effective organizations in change environments are thought to have the willingness to work at continually renewing themselves (Edmonds, 1978; Brookover & Lezotte, 1977). They have the organizational vitality and spirit needed to self-assess, set and revise student-centered objectives, plan, act in unity, and reassess (Cuban, 2004; Fullan, et al., 2004; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Portin, 2004; Thompson, 2004). Glickman's (1993) observations are that these professionals are often the ones who have the greatest dissatisfaction with their own teaching and learning and are interested in refining their skills and methods. On the other hand, research on less effective schools shows that they have the greatest satisfaction with their teaching and learning (Brookover, 1977; Brookover & Lezotte, 1977; Glickman, 1993). The defining and enhancing of roles

in organizations undergoing change is also posited by Gary Yukl (2002) as an important intervening variable. These concepts are consistent with findings in this study which pointed to leaders focused on improvement and willing to make substantive changes in their schools to reach high goals.

Effective principals are credited with facilitating these staff behaviors and with establishing a climate which favors improvement as a way of energizing the organization (Fullan, 2001; Knapp, et al., 2003; Portin, 2004). Education experts (Cuban, 2004; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Kreisberg, 1992; Maeroff, 1988;) discuss the importance of principals recognizing teachers' educational expertise and using interpersonal skills rather than their own position power to encourage staff. Richard Elmore (2000) proposes facilitative leadership, coaching, guiding, and assisting, as a preferred model over strict management and control, particularly when faced with a change or improvement environment. Facilitative leadership is also recommended by other education experts (Barth, 1988; Bedeian & Zammuto, 1991; DuFour, 1992; Evans, 1970; Geertz, 1973; Knapp, et al., 2003) as a means of (a) improving practice and performance; (b) developing an environment for continuous learning; (c) exemplifying the values and behavior desired of all school members; (d) developing cooperation; and (e) helping others achieve new requirements.

The notions and practices of principals comprising this study were congruent with these concepts. These leaders set a pace for change and worked to discourage a status quo mentality in their schools. Particularly meaningful was the emphasis each gave to the introduction of diagnostic and prescriptive approaches which encouraged teachers to

analyze student assessment data and use analytic tools to guide instructional practice.

This attention was useful in developing a focus on student performance. Rewards were believed to be an asset in contributing resources so that principals could bring test experts to their schools and offer other professional development programs.

The literature describes an important leadership role as one of monitoring student progress (Heck, Larsen, & Marcoulides, 1990) and assessing the quality of teachers' instruction (Sheppard, 1996). Heck and Marcoulides (1990) depict principals' visits to classrooms and teacher observations as acts of leadership. Every principal in this study described increased effort in these areas. They stated that they became far more familiar with the performance and progress of their students, often spending hours analyzing test results of individual students. They also discussed their increased and consistent visits to classrooms as a way of gaining a deep understanding of their teachers' instructional capabilities. These visits were coupled with extensive conversations with visited teachers. Several of the principals said they spent a large part of every day in the classroom, an activity which they said later guided them in determining which teachers could take on leadership roles or be effective as master teachers.

The principals admitted that they placed more instructional demands on their teachers and took an active role in defining instructional needs. They felt that rewards were instrumental in mitigating teachers' feelings of threat or inadequacy. They described the contributions of rewards as furthering an environment which encouraged acceptance, if not enthusiasm, for instructional improvement. This positive feeling, they said, led to a greater willingness on the part of most of the teachers to spend additional time analyzing

and planning and adapting or changing instruction. In other words, principals believed that rewards created an overall sense of accomplishment among staff members and instilled in them a desire to exert more effort to achieve successful outcomes for their students. In fact, several felt that the recognition of even slight improvement, mitigated the negative effects of stressful high-stakes accountability environments, allowing them to encourage a stronger performance culture and discourage resistance to change.

Although interview data support the positive impact of rewards on teachers in these eight schools, several of the principals, specifically those taking over new leadership roles at their schools, described their early years as tumultuous, with a significant turnover of staff. However, Ann Taylor, John Andrews, and Denise Todd, who were particularly impacted by teacher turnover, described their teacher attrition, not as an impediment, but rather a benefit, in that incoming teachers were far more willing to adapt to instructional improvement methods being implemented.

Organizational changes, planning, and collaboration.

The work of researchers (Cuban, 2004; Dunlap & Goldman, 1991; Fullan, et al., 2004; Knapp, et al., 2003; Malen & Ogawa, 1988; Portin, 2004) point to the principal's leadership role in developing shared decision-making and in creating cooperative relationships that lead to collective goals and vision. Noted in the literature on organizational learning communities, is the concept that a team approach positively impacts teaching and learning. Studies recommend that a school must become a systemic learning organization, with its members collectively pursuing common purposes, regularly weighing the value of those purposes, and modifying them in order to continue

to improve (Leithwood, 2001). Peter Senge (1990) and others (Cuban, 2004; Fullan, et al., 2004; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Knapp, et al., 2003; describe the important role of a leader in developing an organization where people work to create the results they desire, and where people continually learn how to learn together. Rogoff 1994) points to the role of a good leader in creating a community of learners where learning occurs as people participate together in shared endeavors.

Leithwood and Jantzi (1997), in studying administrators' behavior, find effective staffing to be an important strategy in supporting transformational leadership functions. Deal and Peterson (1994) emphasize collaborative planning as a leadership function. This idea is also emphasized in most current education research (Fullan, et al., 2004; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Knapp, et al., 2003; Portin, 2004; Waters, et al., 2004). Also important is the notion that performance-based accountability systems are effective when they are designed to encourage the development of internal capacities for improvement, with principals engaged in facilitating teachers and other organizational members as they focus on core functions (Elmore, et al., 1996; Knapp, et al., 2003).

Descriptions of practices implemented by the eight principals in this study were congruent with these concepts. In addition, performance awards, in an environment pre-set for constructive change, appeared to enhance collaboration and continuous improvement. In all eight cases, principals described the introduction of new paradigms to improve staffing and build and support teams and team planning.

They stressed planning time as integral to improvement. Several moved to a block schedule approach which gave their teachers additional time to meet together and plan

instruction. They created or enhanced the importance of grade team interaction by setting up formal time during the day and also encouraged meetings before and after school.

These principals were also involved themselves in school-wide planning. They shared state and local information on assessments and student performance, created focused information reports, and participated in team meetings. They sometimes took on the role of staff developer or demonstrated support by offering significant professional development opportunities to their teachers.

All of the principals described shared leadership approaches including the creation of master teacher positions, mentor teacher assignments, and grade team leaders who met regularly with the principals. In several cases, principals reconfigured traditional teacher roles. Denise Todd, redesigned the role of her teachers, giving them assistant principal and other leadership authority. Judith Alexander, identified outstanding teachers, reconfigured grade assignments and had her strongest teachers instruct entire grades of students.

Most of the principals also described their parents as insiders in school improvement. They were individually and collectively, as members of the school management teams, given meaningful decision-making roles and included in activities related to performance improvement. Recognition and rewards were believed to have been important in furthering a cohesive and cooperative environment at each school. First, they stimulated team decisions around an exciting and positive outcome, where to invest rewards dollars. The decision processes described were formal, collaborative, and generally involved the entire school staff. For the most part, these decisions motivated

and united faculty and other staff members and strengthened the credibility of the principal. Second, the rewards program brought needed resources to the teachers, (See Table 14) giving them opportunities for professional development as well as necessary materials and equipment to improve the climate of the school and the instructional programs. Third, they encouraged clear goal-setting, buy-in, and collaboration outside of the school. These assets are discussed in more detail below.

Resources and support services for improvement.

Motivators are discussed in the literature as relating to internal job-content effects which may lead employees to be satisfied or not satisfied with their employment (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959). Skinner's work (1971) contributed to the theory that positive reinforcement can condition behavior in a desired way. Kurt Lewin (1951) another early motivational theorist, believed that behavior is a function of the interaction between the person and the environment, and that intended or inadvertent incentives can act upon that individual. Rewards that meet an individual's needs and desires are thought to be effective in encouraging positive behavior.

Systems theory suggests that the alignment of organizational resources and policies can motivate employees (Scott, 1992). Relative to educational leadership, Firestone (1996) identifies obtaining resources, particularly time and professional development opportunities, as critical to leadership for change. The importance of bringing needed resources for commodities and services in restructuring school environments is also noted in a number of other studies (Arthur & Milton, 1991; Boe, E.E., 1990; Carlson, 1971; Darling-Hammond, et al., 1995; Fullan, et al. 2004; Kelley,

1999; Knapp, et al., 2003). Mohrman and Lawler (1996) specify rewards as a necessary design feature to motivate employees to high performance. Gary Yukl (2002) also includes resources and support services as an area of significant importance to leaders in improving their organizations.

This study confirms many of these theories drawn from the literature. Principals believed that the infusion of additional money resulting from rewards was critical to their schools' continuous improvement. Additional revenue gave them purchasing power to move forward in the direction of the goals established by them and their teachers. In many of the schools, new instructional programs had been identified and money was needed for materials and training. All of the principals dedicated a substantial amount of rewards money to professional development and support services. Teaching assistants and consultants were hired to assist staff members in focused areas of need such as reading, writing, and understanding state assessment criteria and data results. Computers, instructional software, and school building equipment were also purchased for teachers and students. Technology equipment was important in offering individualized instruction and data management for teachers. Decisions regarding rewards spending were the outcomes of team and individual teacher requests and were considered to be motivational as well as instructionally viable.

A particularly interesting outcome of the recognition and rewards program was its influence in generating additional resources and support for the schools. Six of the eight principals described additional district funding, donations to their schools, and partnership development as consequences of their state awards. They attributed outside

perceptions of their successful strategies as reasons for these additional investments.

Enhanced external relations and coordination.

Yukl, (2002) includes external coordination as an important variable in an effective organization, stressing as critical the synchronization of internal activities with externally relevant groups or individuals. In a corporate environment, external bodies might consist of suppliers, clients, or joint venture partners. Goldring and Rallis (1993) emphasize the roles of leaders in managing relationships with stakeholders outside of their own organizations, and communicating and promoting their organization's legitimacy. These are variables and functions not generally captured in traditional education leadership literature, but they are relevant to this case study.

Seven of the eight principals described an emphasis on external involvement and relationships. Many extended their reach to local media communicating the progress they were making. At Willow Elementary, a parent with journalism expertise was enlisted as a promotional writer and tasked with sharing information to local markets. All of the principals cited examples of marketing good news to their parents, partners, and the surrounding community.

Principals discussed enhanced communication with parents, informing them weekly, about instructional units and student learning outcomes. In several cases, classroom instruction was coordinated with requests for parental reinforcement at home. At Dogwood Elementary, a number of parents were even given formal and paid tutoring assignments. Information on the statewide assessments was shared with parents who were offered sessions to acquaint them with the tests and test results. Parents were advised to

encourage their children throughout the year, but they were specifically drawn into particular situations such as helping set a positive attitude about the assessments their children would be taking. Seven of the principals described themselves, in one way or another, as marketers of success when it came to informing parents after their schools' received the recognition awards.

External coordination was also described in terms of relations with state and local school systems. Principals availed themselves of information offered by the State Department of Education and their local systems. They consistently used the state assessment web site to gather information about their schools and to compare their results with other schools. They or their appointed teacher leaders attended conferences and meetings offered by the State and their districts, and information obtained was shared with staff members in structured meetings. State and local experts and other outside consultants were also invited to their schools to assist teachers in new approaches and in understanding how to apply assessment information to instruction.

Non-traditional partnerships with other schools, principals, and community organizations were also developed at these schools. Master teachers and sometimes entire school teams visited schools or hosted meetings of other schools in attempts to share information and to learn of effective practices. Principals described formal and informal relationships with other principals in order to exchange instructional ideas and promising practices. Partnerships with community organizations, agencies, and corporations which may have already existed at some of the schools, were enhanced. The partnership experience of Maple Elementary, a disadvantaged school without external relations prior

to the awards, was particularly noteworthy. After the school was recognized for its improvement, several organizations approached the principal and offered to assist. The principal not only developed solid relationships with these organizations, but developed many others that brought monetary as well as human capital to the school.

Conclusions

Principals believed that the school performance program and recognition awards impacted their improvement activities by encouraging them and their teachers to analyze student needs and focus on specific instructional areas and by reinforcing their strategies and interventions. The participants in this research study, in many ways, personify school leaders who were also skillful learners. Their accounts of personal and professional investment in change, and their descriptions of the impact of positive incentives can contribute to a greater understanding of improving schools and sustaining reform efforts.

This study supports the concept that performance awards can motivate and play a critical role in school improvement by introducing success symbols, enhancing improvement-driving mechanisms, directing a focus on specific school improvement goals, and contributing to needed school resources. In all of the cases, principals felt that recognition of their success was key to their improvement.

Interview data also presented a clearer picture of the important leadership roles of principals who were successful in school improvement environments. They exhibited persistence and a personal enthusiasm for change and embodied many of the characteristics and traits portrayed in the literature describing effective leaders. They used facilitative, instructional, and collaborative techniques and created positive messages in

supporting a culture of high expectations. They encouraged their teachers to work together and to work harder and smarter. By offering to share the responsibility of improvement with their teachers, they were better able to encourage them to apply new strategies to improve their practice.

An interesting outcome of this research was the finding that these principals focused on many of the same organizational areas that management experts find important, suggesting the possibility that experts outside the field of education may have a role to play in school improvement.

Interpretation and Implications for Policy and Future Research

A Personal Statement

This section presents an interpretive discussion and a number of suggestions for future consideration. Specific limitations are also discussed. One which was discussed previously in the methodology chapter deserves additional attention here. The fact that my role in overseeing a number of other state awards programs gives me a proximity to this subject could be considered a drawback. In addressing this issue, I emphasize again that I had no relationship to this particular rewards program and made that fact very clear before, during, and after each interview. In all honesty, I was only interested in gaining deeper meaning regarding the contexts of school improvement and the impact of the rewards program and I was open to both negative and positive outcomes. In fact, a number of program weaknesses have been discussed and others are presented in the implications section. Also of importance, is the fact that the notion of researcher bias resulting from experience or closeness to a subject can be countered by the benefits of

that same experience in gathering rich and more comprehensive data. There were numerous times during the eight interviews when my background gave me the expertise to probe deeper and uncover details that could have been lost to a novice in the field.

The following discussion summarizes major findings and considers or suggests further study in a number of critical areas. These include the impact of recognition and rewards within specific school cultures, the importance of effective leadership, the notion of differentiated incentives, the issue of sanctions as alternative incentives, and additional directions for future research and policy.

Recognition and Rewards Within Specific School Cultures

This qualitative study contributes to previous research on incentives and suggests that rewards can play a positive role in the course of school improvement. However, in the cases described, there is the possibility that improvement results would have occurred without a rewards program. These schools were somewhat atypical in that they were among a small group of rewards schools that had demonstrated continuous improvement and won awards three and four times. A much larger sample of schools won awards but did not continue to improve significantly enough to win them more than once or twice. In addition, although all of the eight principals believed that recognition and monetary rewards had a positive influence on their abilities to reform their schools and sustain improvement, many of their recommendations and strategies may have been introduced without the awards. Four of the eight principals were new to their schools and anxious to try out new strategies and interventions. Also, there is no firm evidence that awards, in and of themselves, led to school improvement. In fact, this study points to the conclusion

that effective leadership and organizational changes were also influential, and it suggests that rewards may be most beneficial when given to effective leaders in schools poised for change. This finding is, in itself, of merit to policymakers. Going one step farther, rewards in these positive environments could interact with leadership and other organizational variables, producing an increase in results beyond what one might expect. This concept is analogous to economic development phenomena, whereby critical economic factors combine, yielding far greater economic growth.

Effective Leadership

Knapp (2003) describes effective leadership as creating powerful, equitable learning opportunities for students and adults, and motivating them to take advantage of these opportunities (p. 12). In many ways, principals in this study embodied the skills thought to be critical in leading schools toward improvement. The cases in this study exemplify, perhaps, a unique group of leaders who were driven by school reform and able to instill that commitment in their school members. They had critical personal and professional skills that enabled them to guide instructional leadership and they either intuitively or consciously worked to create professional learning communities in their schools - communities of shared thinking and leadership. For them, recognition and rewards were a means to achieving focused goals and garnering support both internally and externally. Skilled leaders did appear to matter, and most important, their practices in setting up mechanisms for change and improvement, appeared to have been situational while at the same time conforming in many ways to common school needs. As a result, the patterns of practice had a direct bearing on the impact of the school performance

awards, and the awards were a reinforcement to the strategies for improvement. If rewards in these particular cases, were reinforcers to established improvement environments, the implication of this conclusion, at the very least, calls attention to the need for a significant district and perhaps state role in supporting principals and encouraging them to develop capacities to effectively lead their schools. Many of the principals in this study were experienced teachers and principals who, on their own, were able to assess school needs and create a school environment conducive to student and adult learning, and they may have acquired support throughout their years of experience. The large number of less experienced educators now assuming leadership roles would imply a new and formal focus on local and state institutional support that might include the guidance of others who have demonstrated success. For example, principal-to-principal mentoring relationships could be an effective and affordable intervention. Without formal support structures in place to ensure leadership success, rewards and other incentive systems may have little impact.

Differentiated Incentives

These points and several others are worthy of future research and may have a bearing on policy decisions. For example, the results of this study indicate that recognition itself can act as a motivator in school improvement, and they suggest that education leadership and reform policy and research should consider the effects of differentiated recognition systems. That is, they could look further into systems that award recognition alone, such as the Blue Ribbon Schools Program, those that allocate monetary resources, and those that combine the two.

Principals also credited improvement to outside assistance from their school systems and the State. The donation of assets in the form of consultants and technical assistants might also serve as a valid reward for schools in change. In line with that suggestion, is the notion that schools, themselves, might be trained in entrepreneurial techniques which would serve to bring their schools additional revenue or manpower. With the national economic slowdown, many states are pulling back on allocations of monetary awards, but if the infusion of dollars is essential to reform, schools could use partnerships and other resource gaining tactics to garner additional funding.

Finally, interview data suggest that successful principals and staff members could be better utilized in assisting others. In fact, most of the principals expressed an interest in acting as mentors and guides, and many took it upon themselves to create these collaborative relationships. Perhaps a greater local and state commitment might be considered in identifying successful principals and bringing them more fully into reform efforts.

Sanctions as Alternate Incentives

Consideration of negative performance-based incentives also merits discussion. School probation and sanction policies are another understudied area, yet they have been adopted by a number of states and school districts. These policies are based on behavioral theories that threat can be an effective motivating force. Organizational threat is described as an externally imposed event that requires an organization to respond to its environment. It generally involves the potential of organizational extinction or

reconfiguration, and it impacts not only the organization but the individuals within them (Withey, 1962).

Policies introducing sanctions and rewards have been implemented in Maryland. Schools with very low test scores that are failing to improve, can be *reconstituted*; that is, staff members and/or the principal can be replaced, or the State or another entity can assume the role of managing the school. There is little empirical data showing the effectiveness of sanctions and threat on the improvement of schools. A study on reconstitution in Maryland (Mintrop, & Buese, 2001), found that principals in schools facing state probation were more authoritative in their management practices following the threat of ‘reconstitution’ or sanctions. Sanctioned schools tended to shy away from encouraging teacher leadership and instead placed the burden of improvement more definitively on the shoulders of principals. A follow-up study (Mintrop, Curtis, King, & Plut-Pregelj, & Quintero, 2001), found that probation often led to the individual sanction of principals who were moved, either at the start of probation or by the end of two years after the school’s designation. In a more recent study of the effects of reconstitution in Maryland (Malen, Croninger, Muncey, & Redmond-Jones, (2002), researchers found that implementation patterns ran counter to the major premises of the reconstitution policy and that, in fact, it did little to improve staff quality, school organization, or school performance. Finnigan and Gross (2001), in their research on educators’ interpretations of probation in Chicago elementary schools, found that principals and other leaders had very different perceptions of threat, and that their responses to it were guided by their individual understanding and their own specific situation in the school and the district.

Research undertaken by Matthew Keleman (2002) concurred with these findings and presented qualitative data suggesting that leaders' concepts of their roles may be important indicators in their reactions to threat. His study also pointed to the importance of reinforcement in sanction environments. In several of the cases he presented, perceived success was neither recognized nor supported at the district level, and this behavior led to frustration and discouragement on the part of the principals.

The dearth of evidence on how and why schools respond in particular ways to threat and other negative incentives suggests that additional research is needed. Although, this rewards study did not compare rewards and sanctions, its positive findings relative to the impact of rewards suggest that they may be a more effective policy choice in encouraging and sustaining school improvement. However, policies of sanctions and rewards are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they may work together. There are a few excellent examples of that being the case. For example, an elementary school, recently removed from its local reconstitution list, made progress, receiving accolades and praise along the way, and ultimately achieved the title of National Title One Distinguished School and Maryland Blue Ribbon School. In that case, the school was provided institutional supports it needed, credited with improvement milestones, and afforded professional development and technical assistance opportunities.

Funding Issues

This study points to a few critical issues regarding school funding. First, it emphasizes the importance of the allocation of discretionary money to schools, particularly in an environment of change and focused improvement. The strength of the

State plan, which gave not only additional dollars but autonomy in spending it, was positively discussed by all the principals. This policy was considered unique and extremely beneficial and implies serious thought, not only to considerations of how much funding is necessary to ensure school reform, but how and by whom spending decisions are made. In other words, if principals and staff members are credited with the ability to improve their schools and their students' achievement, perhaps they should be in greater control of the dollars that drive the system. A second and connected implication reaches to the core of improvement concerns. In the cases presented, even a relatively small investment, proved to have a big payoff. Rewards allocations of \$25,000 to \$35,000 were focused on assessed needs in a way that may have accentuated and accelerated their use.

Additional Directions for Future Research and Policy

Larger sampling studies.

Research based on a greater number of principals and schools could be helpful in further defining the results of this study. For example, a quantitative survey of the principals of all Maryland rewards schools, now numbering over 400, could yield additional information about the significance and usefulness of Maryland's rewards.

Additional research might also examine teacher perceptions of school recognition and performance awards. Although previous investigations have generally found that teachers are not incentives advocates, these studies are far from confirmatory. In addition, the implications of this study point to the possibility that in effective organizational environments, performance awards may have as positive an impact on teachers as on principals.

Cost benefit analyses.

Cost benefit analysis is also suggested and could be undertaken to overlay the costs of rewards programs against other school improvement treatments. The possibility that rewards systems are significantly more cost effective than other improvement strategies may carry weight with education policymakers. As an adjunct to that recommendation, the issue of central office spending authority is also important. Currently, schools are given prescribed spending mandates with very little discretionary money. School systems most often maintain authority over large expenditures for the building, personnel, and federal and state grants. The overwhelmingly positive response of principals to the allocation of rewards money as discretionary funds suggests that issue is one worthy of investigation and possible restructuring.

Comparative research.

This dissertation begins to develop a framework for understanding some of the common characteristics of principals that were successful in responding to the pressure of high stakes accountability policies. Their perceptions and uses of rewards are important as are their dispositions and practices, not only in designing rewards programs, but in discussing leader selection and development. However, more inclusive data would be very beneficial. This case study could be followed up with a larger sample that is more representative of all schools. Research could examine rewards, leadership, and other improvement strategies of highly successful, somewhat successful, and less successful schools to obtain a picture of similarities and differences.

Leader selection and development.

This study gathered data on the impact of rewards and recognition on school improvement, but it also highlighted the critical role of the principal in an improvement and change environment. The principals comprising this study had habits of mind and practice which appeared to contribute to their effectiveness during a time of heightened change. Their leadership methods are very reflective of current education leadership theorists (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Portin, 2004; Waters, et al., 2004) who suggest that school improvement leaders must foster shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation, establish standardized operating procedures and routines, provide teachers with needed materials and professional development opportunities, be directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, have a deep knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, focus on clear goals, be visible and have many interactions with teachers and students, recognize and reward individual and group accomplishments, communicate regularly with teachers, reach out as an advocate for the school, involve teachers in shared decision-making, recognize and celebrate school accomplishments, demonstrate empathy with teachers and staff on a personal level, and be willing and prepared to actively challenge the status quo. Their behaviors and practices of the case study principals were very much in line with these suggestions. The issue of how to find or create leaders with these qualities is one that merits consideration, particularly at a time in which there are, not only strong federal and state accountability mandates in place, but also a large turnover of principals across the country.

Martin Haberman (1999) suggests that there are what he refers to as ‘star principals’. These individuals possess particular abilities that connect what they do and how they think about what they do. He posits the idea that these ‘star’ performers should not be created, but rather selected based on their value-laden beliefs. This notion is particularly important in the context of this study and the larger issues involving selecting and motivating new principals. For example, the principals in this study were able to encourage their teachers to problem diagnose as a means to an end. This strategy involved new thinking and direction and was, in itself, a conceptual leap for most of the teachers. Professional development experts might be advised by this pattern of practice to think in terms of how to model and encourage this behavior.

In addition, principals and staff members with a drive to succeed and a resolve to sustain improvement, might be particularly influenced and motivated by recognition and rewards. With this thought in mind, policy-makers and school system administrators may need to look more closely at their principal selection processes in order to find individuals that have the assets necessary for the job. They may find that their assumption that principals come to the job with traits and ideologies favoring school improvement may not be the case. In fact, intentional training may need to be introduced to build positive attitudes and capabilities. Also, contrary to the conclusions of Frederick Hess and Andrew Kelley (2004), who espouse the selection of new principals from fields other than education, this study points to the strengths of principals with a knowledge of instruction. Additional research on this issue could be important, particularly in light of the fact that more states are bringing individuals from other fields into the profession.

Appendix A

Introductory Note to Interviewed Principals

Maryland is one of a number of states that introduced school-performance awards as an incentive for school improvement. While they are given as a reward for demonstrated past success, policy-makers also believe they are incentives for further improvement. Over the years, Maryland has invested millions of dollars in this awards which have been given to schools like yours, those that showed significant improvement on the MSPAP. To date, very little feedback has been gathered relative to these awards and their impact on schools. In fact, there is little information nationally on the perceptions of principals regarding awards such as these. This dissertation is designed to bring a greater understanding of these incentives to researchers and policymakers.

In addition, although Maryland's School Recognition Awards Program changed recently, MSDE has a keen interest in gaining a better understanding of the program and its impact, if any, on schools. The Department is also interested in perspectives on the new program. Principals' perceptions are particularly important because they have critical insights and have, perhaps, the most comprehensive picture of their schools' organizational needs and assets.

The hope is that this dissertation case study will fill in many gaps and lead the way for additional research in this area.. Specifically it can yield information regarding how you, a principal that won the awards three or four times, perceive the impact of these awards on your school. There are no right or wrong answers. I do not have any personal or professional commitment to this program. Whatever your perceptions, positive-negative- or somewhere in-between, I am interested in capturing them. Most important, the information gathered from these interviews can go a long way in helping improve the program in the years to come.

Your name and school name will be kept strictly anonymous. Your responses will be part of a larger data set of interviews of eight principals from across the state of Maryland - all three and four time award winners- who were selected because of their experience winning the awards and applying awards revenue. You will be given for review, the transcript of data generated during the taped interview. Any inaccuracies or misinterpretations will be removed or changed based on your feedback.

Your superintendent has no reservations regarding your participation in this study and the University of Maryland has positively reviewed the study proposal and has no reservations regarding the subject of this study.

Appendix B

Semi-Structured Interview Questions and Prompts

Pre-Interview Protocol

Principals were asked to read and sign the Informed Consent Form and to read the Introductory Note to Interviewed Principals. Discussion about the two took place in all interviews. Principals also gave the interviewer school data information on other school awards, district data on number of schools and geographic description of the school community, staffing, special education services, student to teacher ratios, teacher turnover rates, daily student attendance, and daily teacher attendance. Information was cross checked with available State data. Semi-structured questions follow. Prompts are enclosed in brackets.

Personal Background Questions

Before asking you anything about this school, I would like to know about your professional background. Could you tell me something about that?

How long have you been a principal / at the rewards school?

How long have you worked in this school system?

Could you describe how you came to your position as principal of _____?

[Why do you think you were offered the job?]

How well did you feel prepared for the job of being the principal?

Professional Role and Responsibilities

Could you describe your responsibilities?

What's the most important part of your job? Why?

How do you feel about accountability measures of the State?

[MSPP, MSPAP, new tests, requirements.]

School Description Before or at the Time of the Awards

How would you describe your school?

[Strengths? Weaknesses? Culture? Climate? Staff? Students? Parents? Community?]

What was the morale of the teachers? Were they committed to change?

Were they experienced? Good teaching methods?

What did you feel the school needed to improve?

The Context of School Improvement Prior to the Awards

How did you handle your role as leader a time of school improvement? [Impact of
MSPAP]

What did you do as principal to improve your school? Can you recall specific activities?
[Why did you do these? Where did you get the ideas? Did anyone assist you?]

Understanding the Rewards Policy - Meaning to the Principal and other

School Members

Do you believe you had a clear understanding of why your school won performance
awards?

What was your understanding?

What did it mean to you as a principal when you won the awards?

What did it mean to the teachers? The parents? Community members? Students?

What was the overall impact on your school?

Can you attribute the winning of rewards to specific things you did as principal?

What did the teachers do? Parents, local school district, state, others?

Communication

How did you communicate your success to staff? Parents? Community?

Why was that important?

Impact

Did the winning of the awards impact teachers at the school? Other staff? Students? [In what ways?]

Did the winning of the awards impact stakeholders outside the school? Parents, partners, community friends, other principals, local district administrators? [In what ways?]

Did the winning of the awards in any way enhance your capabilities as the principal of the school? [Explain.]

Were you able to overcome any obstacles as a result? [Why did these exist? Are they typical?]

Did the winning of rewards contribute to improved student achievement? Explain.

Unintended Consequences

Were there positive unintended consequences of winning the awards? [Unusual results, effects on others.]

Were there any negative unintended consequences of winning? [Jealousy, loss of other revenue]

Did winning the awards lead to other recognition or other resources?

Monetary Decisions and Purchases

How did your school decide what to spend the rewards money on? [Process in place for

deciding, who decided, how, new experience, positive experience, negative experience]

What was purchased with rewards money? Focused on improvement needs?

[Improvements of the building, staff, parents, students?]

Who benefitted?

Size of the Award

Was the fact that the monetary awards were large particularly important?

Would smaller amounts be as positive?

Would recognition alone be important?

Would you have improved without the awards?

Did the awards make up for lack of needed funding to implement important programs?

Summary Questions

Were there other benefits not mentioned?

Were there negative outcomes not mentioned?

If you were to name three most important outcomes of the rewards program, what would they be?

Do you have suggestions that would improve the awards program?

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

Project Title

A Qualitative Case Study of the Impact of School Performance Awards on Eight Maryland Schools

Statement of Age of Subject

I state that I am over 18 years of age, in good physical health, and wish to participate in a program of research being conducted by Darla Strouse for her doctoral dissertation in the Department of Education Policy and Leadership at the University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland 20742.

Purpose

The purpose of the research is to understand how principals of schools that won Maryland's monetary school performance rewards three to four times, perceive the impact of these awards on their schools.

Procedures

This research will involve one to two interviews over the course of the year 2003. Interviews will be conducted regarding my perceptions of rewards impact on school improvement processes to increase student achievement. Interviews will last approximately one hour. One on-site interview will be conducted. Interview data and write-ups will be shared, giving me an opportunity to agree with or make any changes to the data. In addition, the investigator will be able to examine the School Improvement Team's minutes and/or other records to obtain additional or corroborating evidence.

Confidentiality

All information collected in the study is confidential and my name will not be identified at any time. School and respondent codes and pseudonyms will be used. For reporting and presentation, I will be asked to give my permission. In many cases, the data I provide will be aggregated with data others provide, for reporting and presentation. Data will be stored away from the public eye. Only a few people will have access to findings.

Risks

There are no known risks of personal or professional harm associated with participating in this study.

Benefits, Freedom to Withdraw and Ability to Ask Questions

This study is designed to help the investigator and others learn more about school-based performance awards and how they may impact school improvement. As a study participant, I can contribute to a clearer understanding of this impact which could lead to improved program design. I am free to ask questions or to withdraw from participation at any time and without penalty. If I have any questions, I can contact Darla Strouse, principal investigator for this study, or her dissertation advisor, Dr. Hanne Mawhinney at the University of Maryland.

Contact Information of Investigators

Dr. Hanne Mawhinney - Office- 301-405-4546

Darla Strouse, 9338 Afternoon Lane, Columbia, MD, Office-410-767-0369, Home-410-7303764,

E-mail- dstrouse@msde.state.md.us

Your (Printed) Name

Your signature and Date

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