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PRINCIPALS' PERSPECTIVES ON ADOLESCENT LITERACY IMPLEMENTATION
AND SUPPORT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: VIEWS
THROUGH A SOCIOCULTURAL LENS

by

Jack A. Robinson

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Education

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2008

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ABSTRACT

Principals' Perspectives on Adolescent Literacy Implementation
and Support in Secondary Schools: Views
Through a Sociocultural Lens

by

Jack A. Robinson, Doctor of Philosophy

Utah State University, 2008

Major Professor: Dr. Kay Camperell
Department: Secondary Education

In this study, interview data were analyzed to illustrate the perspectives of five secondary school principals in adolescent literacy implementation and support. These principals fell on the continuum from beginning practitioners in adolescent literacy to “seasoned veterans.” They were selected based on the recommendations of their district’s assistant superintendents and/or curriculum directors. I interviewed two high school principals, two middle school principals, and one junior high school principal.

Much emphasis has been placed over the last several decades on improving the reading skills of elementary school children, especially in the primary grades. While this goal continues to be an important one, less attention has been paid to the reading needs of adolescents than at the elementary level.

Adolescent literacy programs need to be implemented in secondary schools. The

school principal plays a key role in implementing and supporting all educational initiatives in the school. Unfortunately, there are few directions or guidelines for principals to follow for adolescent literacy implementation and support.

Analysis of the data yielded seven common strands. These strands were then viewed through a sociocultural lens, specifically indicating the influence of the student's experiences, the family, the classroom, the school, and the community on literacy learning. I found that the principal played a key role in adolescent literacy implementation and support in these five schools. I also found that each principal extensively utilized the expertise of his or her faculties—as well as that of the support staff and communities—to determine direction of adolescent literacy programs and practices.

(280 pages)

DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my wife who loved to read as much as I hated it. Fortunately for me, however, she won the reading wars. I will be indebted to her for that victory forever. She never let me give up on the dissertation, even when the light at the end of the tunnel seemed like it was the train coming the other way.

I also dedicate this work to our three children who, along with their spouses, constantly encouraged and supported me through 7 years of hard, but rewarding, labor. Finally, I offer this note of sincere appreciation to my mother-in-law, who, at age 71, earned her high school diploma and served as a true inspiration to me.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I express my sincere appreciation to Dr. Kay Camperell who consistently steered me in the direction of the latest cutting-edge research on adolescent literacy. I also wish to thank Dr. Francine Johnson for her guidance in developing and enhancing my qualitative research and showing me how to merge my raw data into a sociocultural framework.

Finally, I want to thank those five brave principals who allowed me to enter their professional lives and delve into what made them such effective literacy leaders. I have learned much from them and have incorporated many of their excellent ideas into my own work with adolescent literacy. Thank you Bob Richards, Chad Hunt, Cindy Dillon, Carol Maughan, and Gary Miller. I will never forget you.

Jack A. Robinson

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Many researchers present the argument that we live in a text-rich world that requires adolescents to be able to read and apply what they read to be a successful part of that world (Alvermann, 2001a; Collins, 1996; Frost, 2003; Showers, Joyce, Scanlon, & Schnaubelt, 1998). Adolescents in the 21st century will need to be able to read and understand what they read more than any other time in history. “They will need advanced levels of literacy to perform their jobs, run their households, act as citizens, and conduct their personal lives. They will need literacy to cope with the flood of information they will find everywhere they turn” (Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, & Rycik, 1999, p. 3).

The term *adolescent literacy* focuses on various dimensions of the reading and writing of youth (Moje, Young, Readence, & Moore, 2000). This focus on adolescents actually takes the study of literacy beyond the boundaries typically associated with traditional secondary reading and content reading to a “broad generative view” (Moje et al., p. 402) that includes film, CD-ROM, the Internet, popular music, TV, magazines, and newspapers, to name a few. This generative view is informed by elements of both formal and informal literacies. These literacies need to take into account students’ interests and needs while at the same time addressing the challenges of living in an information-based economy where the bar has been raised significantly for literacy achievement (Alvermann, 2001b).

Despite the importance of being able to read, many adolescents struggle with reading. The concepts that are found in high school texts are becoming increasingly more complex, demanding that students have the skills to read and comprehend them (Kamil, 2003).

Other serious concerns are noted by Biancarosa and Snow (2004), and they included these sobering statistics (p. 7): (a) More than 8 million students in grades 4 through 12 were struggling readers, (b) every school day more than 3,000 students dropped out of school, (c) only 70% of high school students graduated on time with a regular diploma, (d) high school students in the lowest 25% of their class were 20 times more likely to drop out of school than the highest performing students, and (e) approximately 53% of high school graduates enrolled in remedial courses in post secondary education. Almost 70% of students entering 9th grade and 60% of 12th graders can be considered as reading below grade level nationally.

The concern for struggling adolescent readers continues to grow. It is estimated that 26% of high school students nationally “cannot read material that many of us would deem essential for daily living, such as road signs, newspapers, and bus schedules” (Hock & Deshler, 2003, p. 50). Other research findings indicate that “close to 50% of all incoming ninth graders in this country’s comprehensive, public high schools cannot comprehend the texts that their teachers expect them to read” (Strickland & Alvermann, 2004, p. 3). These findings also substantiate the argument that reading difficulties eventually cause failure in various courses and ultimately to dropping out of school.

Another sobering statement should also be noted. Not only do students with poor

reading abilities have trouble in all of their subjects and all too often become disciplinary problems, in too many cases such struggling readers “go on to populate the nation’s prisons” (Coddling, 2001, p. 23).

Low-level literacy skills in adolescents have been identified as the root cause of failure in many classes, resulting in low self-esteem, discipline issues, and truancy. Even *families* of struggling adolescent readers are influenced by the student’s frustrations and feelings of low self-esteem (Daley, 1999). There are now so many struggling adolescent readers that some secondary schools report as many as 59% of their students are regarded as at risk (Showers et al., 1998). The struggling adolescent reader problem presents even more serious concerns. Reading difficulties have been linked to indifference to school, acting out of struggling readers’ frustration in the classroom, and to these students eventually dropping out of school all together (Alvermann, 2004).

Frost (2003) noted one sobering statistic showing that approximately 540,000 students drop out of school each year because they have great difficulty in reading. Other researchers who study adolescents agree that reading difficulties are a major cause of dropping out of school (Alvermann, 2003; Alvermann & Rush, 2004; Dickinson & Cheney, 2005; Spor, 2005; Taylor, 2004). What is the role of the school principal in helping to remediate this situation?

The success of any instructional program literally hangs upon the principal’s understanding and support of the components of that program (Zipperer, Worley, Sisson, & Said, 2002). Principals need to know how to support adolescent literacy implementation (Irvin, Meltzer, & Dukes, 2007; Phillips, 2005; Shanahan, 2004; Taylor

& Collins, 2003). Principal leadership provides a key element in improving student achievement.

Problem Statement

Adolescent literacy is more complex than typical conceptions of traditional secondary and content area reading. It involves acknowledging that students need to become multiliterate, engaging with the complex texts that they will encounter in the 21st century. Unfortunately, much of what is known about adolescent literacy development does not always make its way from the researcher to the classroom teacher. The principal, however, can make a major difference in the literacy achievement of secondary students by leading and supporting teachers' efforts in trying to improve the literacy achievement of their students (Shanahan, 2004).

Unfortunately, the literature that relates adolescent literacy to what the principal should know about its implementation is sparse. Nevertheless, there is a growing body of literature on adolescent literacy that indicates an increasing concern about the literacy achievement, or lack thereof, of America's youth. In Utah, some middle and high school principals are attempting to develop adolescent literacy programs in their school settings. What is the impetus of concern regarding adolescent literacy achievement (or its absence)? What kinds of information and beliefs are principals relying on to support their efforts? Do these beliefs and concerns mirror those of scholars and researchers in the field of adolescent literacy?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to determine what selected secondary school principals in northern Utah believe about leading and supporting the implementation of adolescent literacy frameworks and practices in their schools and how they perceive they are doing this. The goal was to shed light on the day-to-day processes of adolescent literacy implementation that could provide assistance to other principals in Utah and perhaps other states when implementing adolescent literacy programs in their schools.

In-depth interviews were conducted with purposefully selected secondary school principals who were at varying levels of adolescent literacy implementation in northern Utah. A cross-case analysis approach (Merriam, 1998) was used to explore the lived experiences of these principals through thick description of these experiences.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized and presented in six separate chapters. The first deals with the problems associated with adolescent readers and the potential influence of the principal in helping to solve those problems. Chapter II addresses adolescent literacy research and related research on principal leadership. Chapter III provides a view into how the procedures and methods were used to collect the data for the study. This includes how the secondary school principals were selected for the study, the details of the interview process, how the data was collected, and how it was analyzed. Chapter IV provides an insight into who these five secondary principals in the study were. It also

provides information about their schools. Chapter V is an analysis of the findings. It is presented in seven common strands and viewed through a sociocultural lens, or the influence of sociocultural theory on adolescent literacy implementation and support. Chapter VI presents conclusions and recommendations for further actions in the realm of adolescent literacy. The goal of this study was to provide insight and potential assistance for principals, teachers, school district administrations, and school boards embarking on, or sustaining, the implementation of adolescent literacy policies, programs, and practices.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This literature review was grounded in the belief that many adolescents in this country are struggling with their reading skills and need help. The literature that is reviewed in this chapter attempts to provide answers to several questions imbedded in this framework including (a) why it is important for adolescents to be able to read both now and in the future, (b) why adolescent readers need help, (c) what literacy programs are currently available for adolescents, (d) what the effect of principal leadership is on curriculum and instruction, and (e) the centerpiece of the research phase of this paper: How do five secondary school principals in northern Utah view the process of adolescent literacy implementation and support in their schools? These perspectives were viewed through a sociocultural lens to determine what, if any, role sociocultural concepts played in the adolescent literacy process. Sociocultural theory served as/or provided the theoretical framework of this study.

Sociocultural Influences on Literacy Learning

Lev Semionovich Vygotsky, a Russian scholar, is considered to be one of the earliest and most famous pioneers in the development of social learning perspectives, also known as social constructivism or sociocultural theory (Gee, 2000; Tracey & Morrow, 2006). He died in 1934 from tuberculosis at the age of 38, and his work was

banned in the Soviet Union for 20 years. His research was not widely read in the United States until the 1970s, but his work is now considered to be “extremely prominent and influential in the fields of psychology and education” (Tracey & Morrow, p. 108).

Alexander Luria, a student of Vygotsky (Vygotsky, p. ix, Editors’ Preface, 1979), stated in the late 1970s that “Vygotsky was a genius. After more than half a century in science, I am unable to name another person who even approaches his incredible analytic ability and foresight” (Vygotsky, jacket cover).

Vygotsky was convinced that human beings “from the very first days” of life acquired meaning and knowledge through a “system of social behavior.” This meaning and knowledge were not gained independently, but rather “refracted through the prism of the child’s environment” (Vygotsky, 1979, p. 30). In other words, the path “from object to child and from child to object passes through another person. This complex human structure is the product of a developmental process deeply rooted in the links between individual and social history” (Vygotsky, p. 30).

Vygotsky believed that the teaching of reading and writing must be “organized in such a way that reading and writing are necessary for something. Reading and writing must be something the child needs” (Vygotsky, 1979, p. 117). He added that such teaching is “a complex cultural activity” and should be required to be ““relevant to life”” (p. 118). He further advocated that learning to read and write should occur in a similar process that a child learns to speak.

In the same way as children learn to speak, they should be able to learn to read and write. Natural methods of teaching reading and writing involve appropriate operations on the child’s environment. Reading and writing should become necessary for her in her play. (p. 118)

This implies that the learning of reading and writing skills is, among other processes, a social activity. Vygotsky (1979) argued that the focus should be on “socially elaborated learning” and that such learning occurs “in the course of interaction between children and adults” (p. 125). He further argued that the “lack of recognition among educators of this social process, of the many ways in which an experienced learner can share his knowledge with a less advanced learner, limits the intellectual development of many students....” (pp. 125-126). Vygotsky has been noted for his philosophy of social interaction and learning because he “views learning as a profoundly social process, [and] emphasizes dialogue and the varied roles that language plays in instruction and in mediated cognitive growth” (Vygotsky, p. 131).

From this prospective, literacy cannot be separated from the social context in which it occurs (Almasi, 1996; Tracey & Morrow, 2006). Gee (1996) argued, for example, that “the traditional view of literacy as the ability to read and write rips literacy out of its sociocultural contexts and treats it as an asocial cognitive skill with little or nothing to do with human relationships” (p. 46).

The best sociocultural practices should acknowledge and reflect the experiences of youth in their homes. This would include ethnic, racial, or geographic communities. It could also include youth culture, popular culture, school culture, classroom culture, or discipline-specific culture (Moje & Hinchman, 2004, p.322). Researchers posit that meaning is socially constructed by teachers and students as they dialogue together and interact with texts and media (Bean, 2000). That meaning creates a positive attitude towards reading when teachers do the following: (a) book sharing and discussion, (b)

journal writing about books, and (c) book clubs and field trips linked to reading (Bean). Bean continues by noting that teachers can enhance reading experiences for their students by introducing study strategies and socioculturally interesting material. He also cautions that students can develop negative attitudes about reading when teachers (a) have students read dull textbooks, (b) make reading a form of “forced labor,” and (c) allow reading problems of low-level students to go unchecked (p. 637).

Ultimately, the goal of all teachers should be to promote an “ownership of literacy” (Au, 2004, p. 398). This ownership has to do with students valuing literacy, having a positive attitude towards it, and developing the habit of using literacy. Those students who do have ownership make reading a part of their daily lives outside of school.

Sociocultural theory “holds some extremely important lessons for teaching and learning” (Graves, 2004, p. 438). Students’ social and cultural backgrounds have a “huge and undeniable effect on their learning” (p. 438). Teachers must take these backgrounds into account or little learning is likely to occur. Since so much of what people learn is social and takes place in various forms of groups, it is paramount that teachers utilize dialogue and discussion practices in their classrooms. The classroom and school—including the teacher, individual students, and groups of students—are all social contexts and have “very strong influences on what is, or is not, learned in the classroom. Classrooms need to be places that recognize and respect individuals, various social groups, and the society in which we live” (Graves, p. 438).

Why It Is Important for Adolescents to be Able to Read Both

Now and in the Future

Researchers have found that for students to become lifelong learners, they must be able to read (Collins, 1996; Frost, 2003; Showers et al., 1998). This includes the reading of academic, vocational, interest, and recreational reading. They further explain that our world is a text rich one and that for adolescents to have a successful part in that world they must be able to read and understand what they read.

Today, our country places a great deal of attention, time, and money on the development of primary grade children's reading skills. While the nation's focus on reading skills of these young children is laudable and important, "...many excellent third-grade readers will falter or fail in later-grade academic tasks if the teaching of reading is neglected in the middle and secondary grades" (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004, p. 1). Unfortunately, content area reading, comprehension, and reading for employability and citizenship are being neglected at the secondary level. Biancarosa and Snow also maintain that it is critical that adolescents develop literacy skills in order to read purposefully, connect prior knowledge to new knowledge, differentiate fact from opinion, and resolve conflicting content in different texts (Biancarosa & Snow; Gordon & Gordon, 2003).

Historically, students in the 1950s and 1960s who never achieved appropriate literacy levels of comprehension and application skills could drop out of high school and still hope to achieve a moderately comfortable lifestyle. There are few such opportunities, however, for dropouts today. The jobs and social safety nets simply are no longer

available as they once were. The cycle of unemployment spirals downward without the appropriate education (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004).

The definition of a literate person has changed dramatically over the last 100 years. The U.S. Department of Education (as cited in Gordon & Gordon, 2003, p. 19) provides data to indicate that in the early 1900s, one was considered literate if he or she could write his or her own name. The literate person of the 1930s had 3 or more years of schooling. The late 1940s, however, required 5 or more years of schooling to be literate. The 1950s necessitated 6 or more years of formal schooling, and in the 1970s a ninth-grade education was considered essential to be literate. Today, at the beginning of the 21st century, the literate person should have at least a high school diploma with encouragement to obtain some form of post high school education. Gordon and Gordon, however, cautioned that even with a high school diploma, many high school graduates show an inability to read and process information beyond a literal concrete level. Such young people “have great difficulty synthesizing the main argument from a newspaper article, computing the cost of a meal in a restaurant, or determining correct change from a stated amount” (p. 19). Concrete level understanding is no longer enough in today’s society. Gordon and Gordon claimed that the application of what people read to real life situations is critical for job and personal satisfaction.

The National Adult Literacy Survey (as cited in Gordon & Gordon, 2003) indicates that 80% of all jobs considered high tech now require a 12th-grade literacy level in reading, comprehension, and math. The survey unfortunately reports that 48% of the U.S. adult population “fails to meet this criterion” (p. 19). This means that almost half of

the work force in this country is not able to or will have great difficulty in adequately performing the range of complex occupational tasks that are considered necessary for the U.S. to compete successfully in a global economy. Because of computerization and other technological applications, business and industry continue to advance their ability to increase product and service output. Future workers must be able to learn how to integrate reading, math, technical, thinking, and communication skills if they are to remain competitive in such a demanding market. “This requires a far higher level of fluency [reading ability] for the average worker in 2010 than it did for workers in 1900, 1950, or even as recently as 1970” (p. 20). Literacy definitions have changed dramatically in the last 100 years. Gordon and Gordon cautioned that unless something is done now to increase literacy skills for young adults, “many people are doomed to join the ranks of a new techno-peasant underclass” (p. 20).

There has never been a time when the literacy needs of adolescents were as critical as they are now. Literacy use for adolescents has become increasingly more complex and demanding (Vacca, 1998). Secondary school instruction places a “high premium on strategy learning as students become more sophisticated in their use of language to comprehend, compose, converse, and think critically about texts” (Vacca, p. 606). Vacca went on to say that adolescent literacy is also critical for students because it helps them shape basic strategies by which these students learn to create meaning and critical understanding of texts. This literacy process applies to the students’ reading whether they are in school or applying reading to their world outside of school.

Years earlier, John Goodlad (1984) had concerns similar to Vacca’s (1998) and

added another dimension to it. Goodlad published a landmark study entitled *A Place Called School*. The research involved over 27,000 teachers, students, parents, administrators, and other staff. There were 1,000 schools from across the country involved in the study; it took more than 4 years to complete. Goodlad's concern was that, other than the traditional students reading aloud from their textbooks, only 2% of classroom time was used for reading at the high school level. Based on his research findings, he posed this question, "If our young people are not reading in school, where are they reading, and how much?" (p. 107) As many as one-third of the nation's 12th grade students read fewer than five pages a day for both school and homework (Zipperer et al., 2002).

Vacca (1998) postulated another concern. What happens to the joy of reading many preadolescents have? Seemingly almost overnight (near the beginning of adolescence, although it is difficult to determine exactly when) these young people change from an enjoyment of reading to not reading at all. Practically the only exception to this situation is when they must read in order to get a grade or pass the class. Vacca's concern was particularly troubling to him because it involved his own daughter, and I can relate to his concern because it involved all three of our children. This has been a troubling question to me for many years. Why *do* so many children go from a love of reading in their preadolescent years to a dislike of reading and then to reading for only academic mandates when they become adolescents? The literature only hints at or insinuates that the problem stems, in large part, from a secondary curriculum that requires volumes of data to be taught and a technical reading process to meet those data demands.

I have found no empirical data, however, to confirm this hypothesis.

Literacy training that takes place in an adolescent's life is absolutely critical in preparing for life out of school. Adolescents who enter the adult world of the 21st century will have to read and write more than at any other time in history (Moore et al., 1999; Vacca, 2004). Their literacy skills will have to be advanced enough so that they can perform their jobs, run their households, and effectively conduct their personal lives. Their ability to read will not be just critical, it will be crucial to their well being.

Other researchers agree. Consider these findings from the National Endowment for the Arts report, *To Read or Not to Read* (2007):

All of the data suggest how powerfully reading transforms the lives of individuals—whatever their social circumstances. Regular reading not only boosts the likelihood of an individual's academic and economic success—facts that are not especially surprising—but it also seems to awaken a person's social and civic sense. Reading correlates with almost every measurement of positive personal and social behavior surveyed. It is reassuring, though hardly amazing, that readers attend more concerts and theater than non-readers [data reported in Table 9A, p. 87], but it is surprising that they exercise more and play more sports [Table 9A, p. 87]—no matter what their educational level. The cold statistics confirm something that most readers know but have mostly been reluctant to declare as fact—books change lives for the better. (National Endowment for the Arts [NEA], p. 6)

The NEA report (2007) also contended that as adolescents read less, they read less well. They have, therefore, lower levels of academic achievement. The authors of the report argue that the “shameful fact that nearly one-third of American teenagers drop out of school is deeply connected to declining literacy and reading comprehension” (p. 5). Findings from this report indicate that people do less well in the job market than those who read and write well. “Poor reading skills,” the authors continued, “correlate heavily with lack of employment, lower wages, and fewer opportunities for advancement” (NEA,

p. 5).

The competitive workplace that today's adolescents face requires important literacy skills, especially in reading and writing (Leu, 2004). Leu also believes that "reading comprehension, problem solving, information access, and communication are essential to success" (p. 317).

Sadly, for those adolescents who are struggling with reading and are not receiving appropriate help, there is a pessimistic picture of what will happen to them if they are unable to master essential literacy skills. These adolescents will be "undereducated, underemployed, and underprepared to participate successfully in the 21st century" (Hock & Deshler, 2003, p. 50). The need for increased literacy skills is vital for success, and some would say survival, for young adults in the 21st century (Gordon & Gordon, 2003).

Adolescent literacy must be taken seriously and is not a passing fad (Meltzer & Okashige, 2001). The authors refer to it as a "key to student success" (p. 16). They go on to say that school leaders often have insufficient support to develop and implement adolescent literacy programs, even at a time when such programs are critical to the success of more challenging academic expectations. Many principals simply do not know how to find such literacy research or how to apply it once they have found it even when there is research available (Meltzer & Okashige, p. 16).

It is critical to get third graders to read at grade level, as noted earlier. Many excellent third grade readers, however, will have reading problems and even fail in their adolescent years if the teaching of reading is neglected in the middle and high school grades (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). These researchers go on to say that students in the

1950s and 1960s who never achieved appropriate literacy levels of comprehension and application skills could drop out of high school and still hope to achieve a moderately comfortable lifestyle. Today, however, there are few such opportunities for dropouts. This puts young people at a serious disadvantage “in social settings, as civil participants, and in the working world” (Biancarosa & Snow, p. 3).

Literacy instruction for adolescents, Biancarosa and Snow (2004) argued, is more difficult than in the primary grades for two reasons. First, adolescent literacy skills are more complex and imbedded into content areas or domains. Second, adolescents are not as motivated to read or have as much interest in school as do their younger counterparts in the primary grades.

There is another critical need for adolescents to be able to read effectively. Too many students enter college and then soon drop out because of their inability to handle texts. Had these students learned in their adolescent years how to read effectively, they could have been more successful in college and avoided the pitfall of dropping out (Nokes & Dole, 2004).

Another perplexing issue of not assisting adolescents with their reading skills development comes in the form of a paradox. Teachers cease giving adolescents reading support at a time when reading, especially textbooks, becomes increasingly more sophisticated, complex, and potentially confusing for adolescents (Jetton & Alexander, 2004). These researchers provide some surprising data about a high school biology textbook that they reviewed for its readability level. The textbook was found to be *beyond* the highest level of the readability graph based on the technical vocabulary and

complex sentence structure. The highest level is beyond the 17th grade. Such texts are referred to as “complex, conceptually dense, and sometimes inconsiderately written” and are “the Achilles’ heel in the lives of so many of our older readers and a thorn in the side of so many secondary school subject-matter teachers” (Underwood & Pearson, 2004, p. 157).

The research findings indicate the need for adolescent literacy research. As noted previously, adolescents who could not successfully overcome the challenges of reading sophisticated texts or successfully accomplish difficult reading-related assignments had a safety net of jobs for decades to fall into, and so they dropped out of school. Today’s economic market and corresponding jobs, however, demand a mastery of high-level literacy skills. Today’s adolescents must learn the requisite literacy skills to be economically viable and productive in the 21st century.

Why Adolescents Need Help With the Reading Process

Many adolescents struggle with reading despite the importance of being able to read. The section that follows deals with the reasons why it is critical to implement adolescent literacy in our schools. It takes a close look at the problems that struggling adolescent readers face and the corresponding problems experienced by their schools.

Low-level literacy in adolescents has been identified as the root cause of failure in many classes, resulting in low self-esteem, discipline issues, and truancy. Even families of struggling adolescent readers are affected by the student’s frustrations and feelings of low self-esteem, widening the affected circle from school to include the home (Daley,

1999).

There are so many struggling adolescent readers that some secondary schools report as many as 59% of their students are regarded as at risk. This information is based on reading scores (Showers et al., 1998). The struggling adolescent reader problem presents even more serious concerns. Alvermann's research (2004) links reading difficulties to an indifference to school, acting out of struggling readers' frustration in the classroom, and to eventually dropping out of school all together.

One of the frustrations of adolescent literacy researchers is that despite the findings that support adolescent literacy instruction in secondary schools, there are few middle or high schools that have a comprehensive program for teaching literacy across the curriculum (Kamil, 2003). The RAND Reading Study Group (2002) reached the same conclusion. Their findings indicate that reading comprehension instruction at the secondary level is often either minimal and/or ineffective and that the preparation of teachers is inadequately addressing children's needs for reading comprehension instruction. Indeed, almost every test educators give, both classroom-based and state/nationally norm referenced tests, is comprehension based. Yet, as Kamil and the Rand Study Group point out, teachers offer very little instruction to adolescents regarding the most effective ways to develop comprehension skills.

There is a growing political perspective to adolescent literacy. Moje (2004) cited 1998 data from the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) that 32% of boys and 19% of girls in the U.S. are failing to read at basic levels. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), who is the author of the U.S. Senate Bill *Pathways for Success*, stated that

“America cannot maintain its position as the world’s strong economy if we continue to ignore the literacy needs of adolescents in middle school and secondary [high] school” (Moje, p. 3).

There are researchers who refer to the American high school as being shortchanged by government officials and other decision makers (Frost, 2003). Frost joined the concerns of Vacca (1998) and Biancarosa and Snow (2004) that the U.S. was making strides towards improving literacy skills of third graders but that little was being done to assist secondary schools with literacy improvement. Frost explained that approximately 540,000 students drop out of school each year because they have great difficulty in reading. Other adolescent researchers supported the argument that students’ reading difficulties can and do cause them to eventually drop out of school all together (Alvermann, 2003; Alvermann & Rush, 2004; Dickinson & Cheney, 2005; Spor, 2005; Taylor, 2004).

Reading difficulties are compounded by textbooks that are dull, dry, and do not connect with any relevance in students’ lives. Such texts are considered “sterile and generic” (Wigfield, 2004, p. 65). These textbooks do very little to enhance students’ intrinsic motivation to read and in fact probably stifle it. As a result, classroom textbooks typically become part of the problem rather than the solution for struggling readers.

No discussion of the literacy needs of adolescents would be complete without a discussion of domain learning and novice-to-expertise learning (Alexander, 1992, 2003; Alexander & Jetton, 2000; Jetton & Alexander, 2004) because appropriate application of these two concepts can provide help for both the teacher and the student. Although the

term *domain* has different meanings, in educational research a domain represents a specific field of study or content area. Domains can be as varied as math, family and consumer science, German, or physical education.

Adolescent literacy concerns itself primarily with the core domains of language arts, history/social studies, reading, science, and math. All of us approach a domain at some time in our educational experiences as novices to that subject matter, both in the domain knowledge and how to read and comprehend that domain's literature. In the best of circumstances, students progress from novice (or acclimated/beginning level of understanding) to competent learners (those who have reached a strategic capability to grasp a working knowledge of the domain) to proficient learners (those who possess extensive domain knowledge, strategic sophistication, and deep personal interest in the domain). Accomplishment of this third tier of learning marks us as experts (Alexander & Jetton, 2000).

The issue here is that, regrettably, only a few students experience the accomplishment of processing text as domain experts (Alexander & Jetton, 2000). The authors tell us that there are too many students at the novice level who are not given the time to reach expertise in that domain. These students are at the acclimation level and trying to process text that requires the abilities of an expert. Even highly skilled teachers are not showing students how to progress through the levels of novice to expertise because the teachers simply don't know how to teach text processing in their domain, nor can they "appreciate the time, effort, and experience it takes to reach proficiency in [their] domains" (Alexander & Jetton, p. 301). The process of taking students from

novice to expert in a domain is a challenging one, but one that can be accomplished if particular strategies or procedures are followed that are discussed later in the next section.

The literature in this section presents a stark picture of what will happen to many of today's youth if educators do not do something now to help them improve their reading skills. Without excellent and flexible reading skills, these youth find themselves at a great disadvantage. Our society is driven by knowledge and continuously accelerating demands for literacy skills. The more than 8 million struggling adolescent readers (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004) and the modern demands for literacy achievement create a new urgency to establish and achieve literacy reforms.

*Literacy-Related Processes Currently Available for
Adolescent Readers*

Although there is a dearth of research in the adolescent literacy area compared to preadolescent literacy research, there are several processes available to enhance adolescent literacy skills, which I will summarize first in this section. I will then consider some of the research currently available on the crucial reading skill of comprehension since it is one of the most, if not *the* most, critical skill in developing successful adolescent readers (Pressley, 2000, 2004). Finally, I will also review the growing presence of technology in students' lives and its impact on literacy.

The good news is that researchers and teachers are working to utilize new approaches in teaching that will promote deep comprehension. Graesser, Person, and Hu (2002) described what those processes and strategies are, primarily focusing on discourse

processing. Discourse processing deals with both written and spoken discourse. One goal of discourse processing research is to improve students' comprehension of material in textbooks through classroom discussions (Graesser et al.).

One effective approach to discourse processing is described by Almasi (as cited in Scalzo, n.d.), an instructional process that focuses on the use of peer discussion groups. Almasi explains that her research suggests that when students engage in discussions that are socially interactive and collaborative, "reading comprehension increases, particularly inferential or higher-level comprehension" (p. 1). Almasi indicates that some of the benefits of peer discussions include students learning how to (a) raise uncertainties, (b) explain and justify their positions, and (c) seek information to resolve their uncertainties. Although Almasi worked primarily with younger children, similar descriptions of the benefits of peer discussions appear in the literature on adolescent literacy (Alvermann, Dillon, & O'Brien, 1987; Sturtevant et al., 2006).

An important part of discourse processing is the concept of group dynamics or student discourse—students interacting with students and with their teachers in cooperative groups. Some researchers argue that this form of instruction is "overwhelmingly positive," stating that:

Nearly every study has had from modest to very high effects. Moreover, the cooperative approaches are effective over a range of achievement measures. The more intensely cooperative the environment, the greater the effects—and the more complex the outcomes (higher-order processing of information, problem solving), the greater the effects. (Joyce, Weil, & Calhoun, 2000, p. 122)

A brief discussion of effect size is appropriate here before reviewing this next

section on the statistical significance of cooperative approaches to teaching. An effect size is used to measure the effect that an experimental treatment has over control conditions or groups (Kamil, 2003). Kamil clarified it this way:

Small effects are represented by values in the range of 0.2, representing about an 8 percent improvement [in the intervention or treatment score]. Moderate effects are in the range of about 0.5, or a 19 percent improvement. Large effects are in the range of 0.8 or above, translating into a 29 percent improvement of an experimental group over a control group. (p. 31)

A review of “several hundred studies” involving student discourse indicated an average effect size on academic learning of about 0.61 (Johnson and Johnson as cited in Joyce et al., 2000, p. 120). “On criterion-referenced tests the average was 0.48, with some of the best implementations [of student discourse strategies] reaching an effect of about 1 standard deviation” (p. 120). The more elaborate group dynamics strategies generated results of an average effect size of “somewhat more than 1 standard deviation, with some exceeding 2 standard deviations” (p. 120). Even greater effects on higher-order thinking skills were noted, with “an average effect of about 1.25 standard deviations and effects in some studies as high as 3 standard deviations” (Joyce et al., p. 120).

There has been significant debate regarding strategic processing and its relationship to learning from text. Graves and McKeachie (as cited in Alexander & Jetton, 2000) discussed two national symposia at which participants hotly debated the evidence that strategies make a difference in student learning. The American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force on Psychology in Education (cited in Alexander & Jetton) maintains that despite the debate and controversy, “what has remained consistent is the realization that all learning, and certainly the process of

learning from text, demands a reader who is *strategically* engaged in the construction of meaning” (p. 295). Strategy discussion for the purposes of this review, therefore, will be considered as beneficial to student comprehension skill building when appropriately applied under the direction of the teacher.

Pressley (2002) noted that he studied comprehension and related strategies since the 1974-1975 school year. Since that time, there has been “...a great deal of informative research” conducted on the subject of comprehension and its corresponding strategies instruction. What he referred to, however, as “absolutely depressing” (Pressley, p. 11) is the fact that his work and that of his colleagues has basically been ignored by the public school community. Pressley was clearly frustrated that he still saw very little comprehension *instruction* going on in classrooms despite the evidence indicating the need of such instruction. The irony was, and is, that there is a great deal of comprehension *testing* going on without the corresponding comprehension instruction.

Pressley (2002) maintained that “the evidence is now overwhelming that upper-grade elementary students can be taught to use comprehension strategies, with substantial improvements in student understanding of text following such instruction” (p. 12). Teachers and administrators simply are not using the research. Other researchers also cite evidence that direct teaching of reading strategies does help students, and particularly struggling readers (Duffy, 2002).

A definition of strategies for the purposes of this discussion describes learning strategies as “...goal-directed cognitive operations over and above the processes that are a natural consequence of carrying out a task” (Sinatra, Brown, & Reynolds, 2002, p. 63).

Sinatra and colleagues then asked, “To what extent can readers maintain conscious, effortful strategy use? While thus engaged, what other kinds of processing are hampered? Do all readers—especially lower achievers—have the cognitive resources necessary to use comprehension strategies?” (p. 63). They also point out that teaching strategies is an on-going process. Other researchers concurred that such good instruction in reading does take time, noting that “...teaching about thoughtful reading should happen in every class and throughout the school year. Most important, it requires the expertise of the best reader in the classroom” whom they describe as the teacher (Ivey & Baker, 2004, p. 37). That said they also believed that strategies do help both struggling and proficient readers improve their comprehension skills.

There are several components or criteria that must be in place for the strategies to be successful for students (Pressley, 2002). Students need to be able to make inferences about what they are reading and such inferences depend heavily on prior knowledge. Decoding skills in the primary grades should be taught so that fluency can be developed, which will help provide for greater comprehension ability in the older grades. Sight words should be developed at the younger grades so that these words can be immediately recognized, leaving more cognitive capacity for comprehension. Vocabulary meanings that are often encountered in texts will improve comprehension, and teachers need to encourage extensive reading to increase students’ exposure to vocabulary (Alvermann & Phelps, 1998; Ivey & Baker, 2004; Kamil, 2003). There is an additional component to strategy building: linking content literacy with students’ lives (Alvermann, Huddleston, & Hagood, 2004). Alvermann et al. maintain that linking literacy to students’ outside

interests is crucial to successfully connecting even the most struggling and frustrated students to positive literacy experiences.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, another in a series of important strategies designed to improve reading comprehension is discourse processing (Graesser et al., 2002). These authors express serious concerns about the lack of and/or the shallowness of knowledge comprehended by students when reading. The shallowness, they claim, is exhibited by teachers who design tests for the basic knowledge level of learning. Graesser and his colleagues also argue that teachers ask basic questions that tap only the shallow level of students' knowledge, something that the authors refer to as an "unfortunate state of affairs" (p. 33).

The good news is that researchers and teachers are working to utilize new processes in teaching that will promote deep comprehension. Graesser and colleagues (2002) described what those processes and strategies were, primarily focusing on discourse processing. Discourse processing deals with both written and spoken discourse. The interdisciplinary domains that make up the field of discourse processing include psychology, rhetoric, sociolinguistics, computational linguistics, conversation analysis, education, sociology, anthropology, and computer science. The practical mission of discourse processing research is to improve students' comprehension of material in textbooks, classrooms, tutoring, and computer-based training.

There are some mechanisms that promote deep comprehension and learning (Graesser et al., 2002). Good readers generate explanations as they read text or listen to lectures. This process is referred to as constructing explanations. Students should be

encouraged to ask deep-reasoning questions as they read. This helps them construct explanations. Graesser and colleagues believed that teachers as a rule rarely model asking deep-reasoning questions in class. Training for teachers in such questioning techniques is needed. Another mechanism to elicit deeper comprehension is challenging the learner's beliefs and knowledge. This will get students to ask questions and evoke discussions that might not otherwise have taken place.

Peer tutoring has been shown to be a superior form of enhancing learning experiences in the classroom (Graesser et al., 2002). It was found that the discourse patterns in tutoring involve collaborative problem solving, question answering, and explanation building in the context of specific examples (Graesser et al., p. 40). Reciprocal teaching and questioning the author are two approaches mentioned as effective tools for deepening students' comprehension of text.

Another mechanism grounded in student discourse and comprehension enhancement activities is Jigsaw (Brown, 1994). Simply put, the teacher assigns five or six students to a group and then selects a high interest topic (e.g., water usage and conservation) and then chooses five or six subtopics of the main topic. Each group is assigned one subtopic and is responsible for researching it, synthesizing the group's findings, and then reporting that information out to the entire class. All pieces of the puzzle (each group's findings) are needed to complete the puzzle.

The process of student discourse places the teacher in an essential role of guiding the discovery process for students toward forms of disciplined inquiry. This discovery process would not otherwise be reached without expert guidance, direction, and

motivation (Brown, 1994).

Sweet and Snow (2003) provided a detailed summary of the findings in the RAND Reading Study Group (2002) research, dealing in part with comprehension. The two authors cited eight major issues that motivated their research on reading comprehension: (a) Literacy skills are in high demand and are increasing, (b) national reading skills have fairly much remained constant over the last 30 years, (c) numerous factors come to bear on the reading comprehension process and outcomes, (d) despite at least 30 years of research on the subject, reading comprehension instruction is minimal and/or ineffective, (e) achievement gaps still exist for children in different demographic groups, (f) high stakes tests are affecting reading comprehension in ways not yet known, (g) preparation for teachers in reading comprehension areas is inadequate, and (h) the federal government is investing over \$5 billion for reading improvement over the next 5 years, and the authors note the importance of having more knowledge about reading comprehension to make good on that investment.

Although the \$5 billion investment is a significant one, Title I funding for high schools represents only 5% of the total budget for FY 2005. Kindergarten through 8th grade students received 95% of the total budget for the same year (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005).

Discussing reading comprehension from a point of view that reflects the research of the RAND Reading Study Group (2002), Sweet and Snow (2003) say the following about the importance of good reading skills: “Adult reading involves reading for purposes of pleasure, learning, and analysis, and it is a prerequisite to many forms of

employment, to informed participation in the democratic process, and to gaining access to cultural capital” (p. 42). There is also an impact of good literacy skills on the economy. The study by Carnevale and Desrochers (as cited in Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005) points out that “better literacy skills could raise [our economy] by \$463 billion and increase tax revenues by \$162 billion” (p. 3). The Alliance for Excellent Education argues that a major investment in literacy will bring back a major return to the nation’s economy.

There are 10 principles that Sweet and Snow (2003) said should guide comprehension researchers’ endeavors.

1. Instruction designed to help fluency does not have a major impact on comprehension.
2. Instruction designed to give students strategies or processes to improve reading have fostered such improvement.
3. Teachers need to be specific in their reading strategies instruction for it to be successful.
4. Researchers can aide teachers in addressing the problems of struggling readers with comprehension.
5. The role of vocabulary instruction is extremely complex as it relates to comprehension—what is known, however, is that a powerful relationship exists between the amount of reading that a student does and the corresponding increase of his/her vocabulary.
6. Teachers who deeply apply comprehension strategies to the course content

foster comprehension development.

7. The various genres of text (narrative and informational) lead to important differences in instructional opportunities—Ogle and Blachowicz (2002), in fact, argued that informational text has far-reaching and long-term implications for the students when read, understood, and applied correctly.

8. Student choice, challenging tasks, and collaborative tasks combine to increase student motivation.

9. Effective teachers use a wide variety of practices in a dynamic and thoughtful way.

10. Despite all the research supporting the effectiveness of teaching comprehension strategies, very little of it is applied in the classroom.

There is strong rationale, as explained by Sweet and Snow (2003), that educators, as well as researchers, should take these research findings grounded in the RAND report (2002) and begin applying them immediately and extensively in classrooms across the United States.

Technology and Adolescent Literacy

There is very little research at this time to confirm or deny technology's direct impact on learning specific adolescent literacy concepts (Alexander & Jetton, 2000; Leu, 2000). What is certain, however, is the fact that today's youth are literally growing up in front of computer screens. They are using hypertext and hyperlinks (switching rapidly from one Web site to another at the click of a mouse) on the Internet with relative ease.

They text message each other through cell phones and other personal electronic devices as if they have been doing it all their lives (Alexander & Jetton). Because of the daily use of technology both in and out of the classroom, it is important to address technology and its implications for literacy here.

There are definite connections between today's technology and how students can learn literacy applications from technology (Leu, 2000). That being said, in addition to the dearth of research on the subject, Leu is also concerned about the lack of staff development available to teachers in technology-literacy applications. Staff development concerns will be addressed later in this chapter.

There is not only concern but also frustration regarding the lack of research dealing with technology and its effect on literacy (Kamil, Intrator, & Kim, 2000). They found that only 2.7% of all articles written from 1990 to 1995 in the major reading and writing research journals dealt directly with literacy and technology.

Dividing those articles into six major topics of (a) writing and composition, (b) hypermedia, (c) multimedia, (d) work with special populations, (e) motivation, and (f) collaboration, Kamil and colleagues (2000) were able to reach some conclusions. At-risk students demonstrated more literacy growth with technology than without; however, there was some research that indicated the growth might have been due to the new novelty of the technology and could wane over time. This seemed to be a reoccurring theme throughout their research. For every gain found, there was seemingly contradicting research that stated otherwise.

Technology overall, however, offers real promise for enhancing literacy skills for

adolescents (Kamil et al., 2000). Kamil and colleagues referred to technology as a “tapestry under construction” (p. 783) with the bits and pieces of the overall design not yet quite coming together. The promise of researched-based positive connections between literacy and technology is there, but more research is needed to confirm that connection.

Principals need to keep informed of the latest developments in technology and their applications towards literacy in the classroom. Leu (2000) postulated that in the exploding information age, students would need to access more information and do so more quickly than ever before. They will also need to develop new forms of critical thinking and reasoning since Web site developers create sites that have a very specific agenda that distorts the reality of the data under study. He also believed that the term “becoming literate” will become a more precise term than “being literate” (p. 761) because new technologies will continue to be developed requiring new literacies in which training is needed. In a later publication, Leu (2004) added a different spin to the rapidity with which technology is advancing today and thereby affecting the definitions of literacy. He believed the rate of speed is so fast that these technologies are “turning *new literacies* into *traditional literacies* and creating even *newer literacies* on a regular basis” (Leu, 2004, p. 319). He and Alvermann (2005) called for more research in this area.

Leu postulated that in just a few years it was expected that nearly every U.S. classroom would have an Internet-connection. If this is true, he questioned not only how much is really known about technology’s impact on instruction and learning, but why more is not known (Leu, 2004). Wilder and Dressman (2006) echoed the others’ concerns

that technology's application/connection to literacy still has not been sufficiently researched. They further added, in frustration, that in the few areas where technology applications have been researched and found useful, teachers are not utilizing the research. They are failing to capitalize on technology's promises. Further, given the research of Kamil and colleagues (2000), Leu (2000, 2004), and Wilder and Dressman, some 16 years have come and gone without significant and thorough research linking technology use with literacy enhancement.

This section of the literature review has dealt with the multiple facets of comprehension instruction. I included this focus on comprehension here because (a) comprehension skills and strategies are critical to the success of adolescent readers both now and in the future, and (b) this comprehension research is available *now* for immediate implementation by teachers and administrators of adolescent students. A number of distinguished literacy researchers have weighed in on such topics as (a) teaching reading strategies, (b) the importance of prior knowledge in reading comprehension, (c) social collaboration in group studies, (d) the abundance of reading improvement research and the paucity of its implementation, (e) the shallowness of reading instruction and its assessments in a number of secondary classrooms, and (f) a host of varied reading strategies designed to assist the student *and* the teacher to make the best reading situation possible for both.

This section has also dealt with the rapidly growing use of technology in the classroom and its impact on literacy. As the literature has shown, there needs to be much more research done on the specific connection between technology and the learning of

literacy concepts and practices. Principals need to be aware of how their technology investment is being used and how, or if, it is affecting the enhancement of his/her students' literacy skills.

The Importance of Staff Development

A strong, effective staff development program must be in place for teachers in order for any instructional framework, strategy, or concept to be implemented effectively (Sykes, 1999). Sykes believed that today's highly qualified teachers must be given the knowledge and skills to enhance excellence in learning in all the nation's students. Teachers will gain this knowledge only if outstanding quality staff development activities are provided for them. Principals must know how to implement effective staff development in their schools.

A meta-analysis of 13 major studies was performed relative to the importance of staff development in school reform (Guskey, 2003). Simply stated, a meta-analysis helps to control for an error in the research that could occur in one or a few studies because the meta-analysis examines findings across many studies (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005, p. 8). A meta-analysis, in other words, "allows the researcher to combine correlations from different studies and examine the significance of the combined sample sizes" (Marzano et al., p. 132). Guskey noted that nearly every plan for educational improvement focused on staff development as a key component in educational reform. Staff development is considered a key component in educational reform. Eleven of the 13 studies indicated that enhancement of teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge

should be the top priority of staff development. A study by Hawley and Valli (1999) indicated just how important staff development was.

Hawley and Valli (1999) synthesized the research of nine studies of staff development and three national reports developed from those studies. Based on this meta-analysis of staff development, Hawley and Valli were able to identify eight characteristics of effective and successful staff development. These eight characteristics, or principles, are briefly summarized here so that principals and other leaders can utilize them in establishing effective staff development programs. Since these principles were developed from studies of the best practices of staff development, it would behoove principals and other decision makers to study them carefully and utilize them in the staff development implementation process.

The first principle relates to goals and student performance. Staff development must be centered on the educational goals of the school, the district and student performance. Hawley and Valli (1999) suggested that an in-depth analysis must be done of the specific teaching and student learning needs of the school well before any staff development program is developed.

The second principle of effective staff development refers to teacher involvement. This is a particularly critical element in that it recommends that teachers should be engaged not only in *what* they should learn, but *how* they should learn it (Hawley & Valli, 1999). Teachers can get involved in staff development through various means. These include teachers forming interest groups around a topic or project and also using the Internet to connect teachers with other teachers who share the same interest or

seeking solutions to a common problem (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). Teachers should also visit other schools together where successful programs are in place. This is typically an inexpensive staff development activity that generally provides teachers with ideas that can be implemented the next day in their classrooms (Hyland, 2004).

The third principle concerns staff development that is school based. Faculty and staff should determine, after following the planning steps mentioned above, what their priorities are. The most powerful learning opportunities in staff development planning come when solutions are sought to real, authentic problems. The school is the best equipped to determine what those problems are (Hawley & Valli, 1999). The principal is a critical partner in school-based decision making. This underscores the need for the principal to be well informed of issues in both curriculum and instruction (Bean & Harper, 2004).

The fourth principle of staff development focuses on collaborative problem solving. Hawley and Valli (1999) stressed the importance of finding solutions collaboratively. Solutions that are found individually tend to not reflect issues known by the group. Further, the basic concept of total group buy-in to a solution is much more likely to happen than when only a single person attempts to provide a solution.

The fifth principle underscores the continuous and supportive staff development. Simply put, the school and district need to be sensitive to teachers' needs and to be continuously supportive of their efforts to improve instructional skills (Hawley & Valli, 1999). The principal can best support this element by making sure that trustworthy research and research-based practices are talked about frequently and practiced in the

classroom (McEwan, 2003). Ongoing staff development goals should be designed with a 3-5 year period (Hawley & Valli). Unfortunately, when educators do not see an immediate cure to an instructional ill, they tend to set off in search of another solution that will also not be given enough time to accomplish its goal.

The sixth principle of effective staff development stresses training that is information rich. This element encourages the use of teacher knowledge and research-based information to develop high-quality staff development programs (Hawley & Valli, 1999). Teacher knowledge is critical to successful professional development activities according to Joyce and Showers (1988). Principals need to make research available to their teachers and to make the educational environment rich in information. Teachers need to share their talents and knowledge with their colleagues (McEwan, 2003).

The seventh principle involves theoretical understanding. Effective staff development involves research that is stated in understandable, applicable terms that are connected to teachers' beliefs and experiences (Hawley & Valli, 1999). The authors further state that many teachers cite a lack of understanding of research because the research is not written in a comprehensible format. Teachers also express concerns that they have limited access to research. Consequently, it is important to have a professional library at the school that is stocked with books, magazines, periodicals, reports, artifacts, etc., that reflect the current research and that are written in understandable form.

The eighth and final principle of effective staff development deals with making staff development an integral part of a comprehensive change process. Hawley and Valli (1999) stressed the importance of staff development not being short-term or sporadic.

They argued that such short-term, trendy staff development is “worse than a waste of time; it undermines the motivation for professional learning and threatens the welfare of students” (p. 137). Teachers must have adequate time to try the concept and discuss its implementation with their colleagues. Principals need to be involved in this process so that they can intelligently discuss concept implementation successes and challenges with their faculty.

These eight principles of effective staff development practices are deeply grounded in the research (Hawley & Valli, 1999). Principals and districts who implement these practices and allow the appropriate time for such implementation can expect to see enhanced teacher and student performance. This staff development research offers us critically important information, including (a) staff development needs to be the centerpiece of educational reform, (b) short-term, one-time staff development events do not work, (c) staff development must be presented over time (with sensitivity to teacher time demands) and in a cyclical pattern where concepts are revisited and new ones added, (d) teacher training needs to be grounded in the school’s teaching and learning needs as reflected in analyses of test results and their relationship to school goals, as well as input from faculty, staff, and the community, and (e) staff development programs and activities must be information rich, meaning that they must rely on and be grounded in research of effective programs...no fads, no fashions—just solid research-based activities.

The Effect of the Principal's Leadership on Curriculum and Instruction

This section deals with the effect of the principal's leadership on curriculum and instruction by looking at two major studies performed by the same group of researchers and completed 2 years apart. Both studies are meta-analyses of leadership research as it applies to curriculum and instruction and deal initially with a review of literally thousands of studies. The remaining literature in this section is congruent with the findings of the two meta-analyses and provides research that confirms the importance and effect of principal leadership on student academic performance.

A meta-analysis was performed on 30 years of research (including doctoral dissertations) examining the effects of leadership on student achievement reported since the early 1970s (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Over 5,000 studies were completed during this period and 70 met the criteria for design, controls, data analysis, and rigor as determined by: (a) quantitative student achievement data; (b) student achievement measured on standardized, norm-referenced tests or some other objective measure of achievement; (c) student achievement as the dependent variable; and (d) teacher perceptions of leadership as the independent variable. The results of their analysis indicated a "substantial relationship between leadership and student achievement" (Waters et al., p. 3). This is an especially important study because it cites quantitatively based evidence, through a meta-analysis, that connects the principal's instructional leadership to student achievement.

Marzano and colleagues (2005) teamed up again just 2 years later to do another

meta-analysis of leadership research. This time their goals were to reaffirm that the principal does have significant influence on instruction and to determine what responsibilities a principal should accomplish in order to create and maintain an effective school.

Marzano and colleagues (2005) began their meta-analysis by considering any and all available studies from 1970 to the present. The studies had to meet these criteria: (a) those involving K-12 students, (b) those involving schools in the U.S. or situations that closely mirrored the culture of U.S. schools, (c) those either directly or indirectly examining the relationship between the leadership of the building principal and student academic achievement, (d) those involving a measurement of academic achievement by a standardized achievement test or a state test or a composite index based on one or both of these, and (e) those reporting effect sizes in correlation form or that could be computed.

Marzano and colleagues (2005) initially retrieved 5,000 titles involving leadership. They then narrowed that number to 300 studies that contained descriptions that met the researchers' criteria. After a final analysis of those studies, the researchers found 69 studies that met the five criteria listed above. The total number of schools involved in these studies was 2,802. This total was made up of 1,319 elementary schools, 323 middle schools, 371 high schools, 290 K-8 schools, 499 K-12 schools. There were an estimated 14,000 teachers and 1,400,000 students involved. The studies covered an actual span of 23 years, from 1978 to 2001 (Marzano et al.).

As they did with their earlier meta-analysis (Waters et al., 2003) Marzano and colleagues (2005) again found that "the leadership behavior of the principal can have a

profound effect on student achievement” (p. 31). Their findings indicated a significant correlation between the principal’s leadership behavior and student achievement, which they determined to be “compelling and should stir school leaders to seek ways to improve their leadership skills” (p. 32). Many other researchers agree that principal leadership has a significant impact on student achievement (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Binkley, 1989; Glickman, 2002; Goodlad, 1984; Marzano et al., 2005; McEwan, 2003; Phillips, 2005; Taylor & Collins, 2003; Valentine, Clark, Hackmann, & Petzko, 2004; Sucher, Manning, & Manning, 1980; Waters et al., 2003).

The Marzano and colleagues (2005) study established 21 behaviors, or responsibilities, that principals needed to exhibit to be effective leaders. Of those 21, there were 10 behaviors that related directly to curriculum and instruction, vis-à-vis adolescent literacy. These behaviors are listed below.

The first is referred to as change agent. Marzano and his associates (2005) specifically use a scenario of a principal who makes a commitment to implement a new reading program for at least 2 years to give it adequate time to work.

The second behavior underscores the importance of communication. Communication is actually the glue that holds together all the other responsibilities of leadership. Specific behaviors related to the importance of communication include (a) developing effective means for teachers and staff to communicate with one another, (b) being accessible to teachers, students, staff, and parents, and (c) maintaining open lines of communication.

The third behavior centers on the importance of focus. Marzano and his associates

(2005) mentioned an interesting concern in this behavior. They maintain that schools can be too willing to change and do so too often. The critical aspect of focusing means that a principal must ensure that the change process is aimed at clear, concise, and concrete goals.

The fourth behavior concerns having and articulating ideals and beliefs. It is not enough that the principal should have specific beliefs and ideals. It is very important that they are communicated clearly to all parties involved in the change process.

The fifth behavior considers the importance of input. The principal must encourage and accept input from faculty and staff. De Pree (as cited in Marzano et al., 2005, p. 52) referred to this responsibility as “participative management.” Marzano and colleagues noted that without the input process the faculty, staff, parents, and students lose interest. Principals need to “listen to your people!” (p. 52).

The sixth behavior focuses on intellectual stimulation. Simply put, the principal must provide the most cutting edge, research-based information available for faculty and staff.

The seventh behavior centers on the importance of involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. This responsibility refers to the extent that the principal is involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Marzano and his colleagues (2005), based on their meta-analysis, consider this responsibility of the principal to be “critical to the concept of instructional leadership” (p. 53).

The eighth behavior deals with knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and

assessment. Involvement in these areas must be a hands-on approach by the principal. This responsibility deals with the extent to which the principal is aware of best practices in these areas.

The ninth behavior considers the importance of monitoring/evaluating. A review of almost 8,000 studies that focused on feedback from the principal to the teacher determined that feedback was the single most powerful tool in enhancing student achievement. Principals must establish times when they will be in the classroom monitoring instruction and student progress and stick to that commitment (Hattie, as cited in Marzano et al., 2005).

The tenth and final responsibility or behavior of the principal considers the importance of knowing what resources are available in the school. "Resources are to a complex organization what food is to the body" (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 59). Resources in this case refer to more than books, pencils, and papers. Marzano and his colleagues found that principals needed to provide effective, ongoing staff development based on teacher input.

The results of both Waters et al. (2003) and Marzano et al. (2005) clearly establish the impact of the principal on student achievement. Whereas the first study focused on the influence of the principal in the school, the second study provided specific responsibilities that principals need to accomplish that will both positively affect the school climate and culture and specifically enhance the instructional process for teachers and students.

Literacy should be viewed as crucial to the academic success of students

(Zipperer et al., 2002). Zipperer and colleagues felt strongly that the success of any literacy framework literally hung upon the principal's understanding and support of the components of that framework. Principals need to be responsible for being sure that staffing and scheduling are compatible with the needs of the literacy framework.

Goodlad (1984) took a different approach on the subject of school principals than one might usually find. He noted that although "good principals no doubt make a difference" (p. xvi) on the progress that their schools make, the negative effects of school and class size, restraints caused by collective bargaining agreements, split-philosophies on the school board, teacher shortages, etc. make it difficult for principals to effectively do their jobs. "Such conditions often cause good principals to leave or transfer" (p. xvi).

Goodlad (1984) went further with his concerns by saying that other issues that were "crisis prone and crisis driven" demanded so much of a principal's time that "curricular matters, however significant, are rarely of crisis proportions [and so] for over a decade they have taken second or third place to other things" (p. 137). This is not a call for a principal to give up on such critical issues as curriculum, and specifically adolescent literacy, but it is a message of warning that, no matter what crises arise in school, literacy and other curricular issues must still have top priority on the principal's agenda. Without a principal's "clear commitment and enthusiasm, a curricular and instructional reform [like adolescent literacy] has no more chance of succeeding than any other schoolwide reform" (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004, p. 21). Biancarosa and Snow stressed how important it was for the principal to be an instructional leader and to stay informed about the latest research regarding adolescent literacy, how young people learn, and how their literacy

skills and needs differ.

Commitment and enthusiasm to a program are important, but principals also need to celebrate, recognize, reinforce, and reward all faculty and staff for their accomplishments in the curricular and instructional program (Schmoker, 1996). By performing these important tasks, there is collegiality, respect, and confidence that are developed between faculty, staff, and the principal. Collegiality leads to a safe risk-taking environment for teachers to try new teaching techniques, learning activities, and curricula.

Creating a positive environment should be the principal's highest priority (Nunnelley, Whaley, Mull, & Hott, 2003). Within that environment, the principal establishes expectations and provides support so that teachers can feel comfortable about trying out new instructional concepts and strategies. "Trust and a 'safety net' are irreplaceable factors toward changes in teaching methodology," (p. 57) the authors stress. Nunnelley et al. also make it very clear that if educators are truly committed to affecting change in instruction and children's learning, then it is the principal who must inspire and lead new ways of reaching and teaching students.

Literacy leaders (in this case principals) must translate a critical vision to teachers and students. That vision should include that (a) all students can be effective, independent readers and writers; (b) through the leader's actions all students can achieve their literacy potential; (c) a schoolwide literacy plan must be collegially developed and implemented; and (c) the principal is involved in school and classroom literacy activities (Taylor, 2004).

Principals should be actively involved in every step of literacy staff development and that the principal needs to participate with the teachers in the training (Taylor, 2004). Not only do principals need to know what is being discussed and become better informed about the literacy needs covered in the workshop, but it is vital that teachers see the principals' commitment to literacy improvement put into practice (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Santa, 2006). Biancarosa and Snow continue this thought by explaining that the principal must share an informed vision of what good literacy instruction looks like. Without principal direction, they conclude, literacy implementation will likely be fraught with problems.

Many other researchers confirm the principal's importance to student achievement and specifically to adolescent literacy (Bean & Harper, 2004; Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Fisher, Frey, & Williams, 2004; Goodlad, 1984; Jetton & Dole, 2004a; Phillips, 2003, 2005; Portin, Shen, & Williams, 1998; Sanacore, 1997; Santa, 2006; Shanahan, 2004; Taylor, 2004; Taylor & Collins, 2003; Zipperer et al., 2002). Their research reveals the following important behaviors and responsibilities of a principal and provides the summary for this section: (a) having a vision of adolescent literacy implementation and sharing it with all school constituents, (b) involving teachers in the planning of staff development activities (including in-depth reviews of student assessment results and matching those with teacher-stated needs), (c) participating in staff development with teachers, (d) being well informed of the latest literacy research and sharing it with the faculty, (e) frequent classroom visitations and post-observation conferences with teachers, (f) and making every effort to provide the materials needed to

help insure successful adolescent literacy implementation.

Principals continue to be the key individuals as instructional leaders and initiators of change. Principals have a major impact on channeling teachers' directions through the evaluation process and encouraging teachers to move towards school goals, such as a focus on adolescent literacy improvement (Shanahan, 2004).

Numerous researchers (Fisher et al., 2004; Jetton & Dole, 2004a; Phillips, 2003) agreed that the following principal behaviors were critical for the success of a literacy program: (a) involving faculty and staff in program design, (b) level of the principal's commitment to the program, (c) providing staff development, (d) the principal attending all staff development activities, (e) providing encouragement and feedback to teachers, and (f) providing necessary funds for program implementation. Fisher et al. in their study of one effective principal add that the principal seemed to be "all over campus" (Fisher et al., p. 156) visiting classrooms and attending department and faculty meetings. He modeled lessons frequently for teachers and students. He constantly talked with students about their interests and goals—and how they were going to do on the state test...interviewing every student in the 9th, 10th, and 11th grades. He cultivated leadership and collaboration skills in his faculty.

Jetton and Dole (2004a) mentioned the principal in passing during their study, but they were highly complementary towards the assistant principal. The study took place in a middle school in northern Utah and focused on the sustainability of a reading program after some teachers and support staff left the school. The assistant principal continuously generated and maintained enthusiasm for the literacy program. His support was total and

complete. He assisted the teachers with program implementation. He made sure funds were available when they were needed most. He shared reading strategies with teachers during faculty meetings. He was a “gregarious, enthusiastic, and energetic man” (p. 177)—and he made teachers and staff feel like they were doing their best and inspired and motivated them.

Phillips (2003) described the principal as a strong leader who was committed to improving classroom instruction. He was totally committed to reading and knew how to involve his faculty in analyzing test data. He encouraged instructional excellence and arranged for his teachers to collegially visit each other during class time. He left no funding source, private or public, unexplored if it would benefit the literacy program (Phillips).

The principal needs to be completely aware of those successful strategies, approaches, and frameworks that are needed to improve literacy across the curriculum (Phillips, 2005). The principal needs to be viewed by teachers as a reflective, life-long learner who is knowledgeable in the area of adolescent literacy. Phillips also strongly advises the principal to be in classrooms often and highly visible throughout the school, constantly encouraging the application of literacy across the curricular domains.

In summary, the research reviewed in this section has brought out several important behaviors or characteristics that a principal should have in order to be an effective instructional leader. Research findings suggest that principals’ leadership has a direct effect on student’s academic performance. Important principal behaviors reviewed here include: (a) having a vision of adolescent literacy implementation and sharing it with

all school constituents, (b) involving teachers in the planning of staff development activities (including in-depth reviews of student assessment results and matching those with teacher-stated needs), (c) participating in staff development with teachers, (d) being well informed of the latest literacy research and sharing it with the faculty, (e) frequent classroom visitations and post-observation conferences with teachers, (f) and making every effort to provide the materials needed to help insure successful adolescent literacy implementation.

Unfortunately, there is little training or research available to confirm that principals have the knowledge and training in adolescent literacy needed to positively influence its implementation. Although there are adolescent literacy frameworks and strategies that secondary schools can implement, I found little evidence to show that such implementation exists on any large scale.

The researchers above have provided evidence about the importance of the principal in implementing an adolescent literacy initiative. Without his or her active involvement, encouragement, knowledge, and leadership, such a vital literacy initiative is likely to either be fraught with problems or fail all together. A major concern at this point, therefore, is the lack of research available to principals regarding how they should go about implementing such literacy reforms. In other words, what should principals know in order to implement such adolescent literacy reforms?

Wilhite (1984) noted that even in 1984, the vast majority of studies regarding principal involvement in literacy were elementary-based and added, "Reading is just as important in the secondary school as in the elementary school" (p. 356). Few secondary

principals are prepared to lead an implementation of adolescent literacy (Shanahan, 2004). He expresses concern that few have had any preparation in teaching reading because reading is almost never included in secondary education pre-teaching university programs. Since they have had little training in reading, they have had little, if any, teaching of reading experience at the secondary level.

Researchers admit that they become frustrated when secondary teachers ask them where there is help for struggling readers (Jetton & Dole, 2004b). “There should be an answer for these teachers, too, [but] there is not” (p. 6). When teachers ask for a list of references to deal with critical adolescent literacy issues, they feel frustrated that they cannot offer many. Jetton and Dole, however, do credit Donna Alvermann (2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2004) and her colleagues (Alvermann & Rush, 2004) for contributing much research in adolescent literacy.

Frustration also exists over why there is so little research being done about adolescent literacy issues (Hock & Deshler, 2003). Other researchers (Frost, 2003; Lee, 2004; Vacca, 1998) were likewise concerned about the few programs available for these struggling readers, especially in high school. Since so few of these programs are available, the principal has a diminished opportunity to experience the successes and challenges of adolescent literacy program and practices implementation. Likewise, the principal has very little opportunity to study a great deal of research on adolescent literacy implementation simply because there is so little research available.

Alvermann (2001b), who spent decades in the study of adolescent literacy, added that “adolescents and their specialized needs for literacy instruction at the middle and

high school level often go unnoticed by policy makers and the general public. This is indeed unfortunate” (p. 3). If that is the case, the principal continues to have limited experience in working with and learning about adolescent literacy.

If such a limited amount of research directed at what the principal needs to know to implement adolescent literacy continues, then principals, their teachers, and especially their struggling students will continue to experience the frustrations and academic, social, and economic disadvantages noted earlier. There needs to be more literacy research available for secondary principals to help remedy the issues described above.

Improving Adolescent Literacy Through Principal Leadership

If more were known about what the principal needs to know about adolescent literacy, steps could be taken based on the research to inform principals of effective adolescent literacy implementation. In this section, I will look at the need to better inform principals about adolescent literacy implementation, including a proposal for research to assist principals in this knowledge. I will take a brief look at what a principal should *not* do in the adolescent literacy implementation process. Next, I will review concerns from a number of researchers regarding the lack of training for secondary principals and literacy implementation. I will review three studies that indicate what a principal should know, along with the shortcomings of their research. I will then review my research proposal that I am suggesting to hopefully assist principals with recommendations for adolescent literacy implementation.

Some researchers believed that educators should first examine what does not

work in adolescent literacy before examining what does. Ivey and Fisher (2005) identified five ineffective strategies for developing adolescent literacies that should be avoided. These include (a) not letting students read by giving them activities to complete other than reading, (b) making students read what they don't know or care about, (c) making students read difficult books, (d) interrogating students at the basic comprehension level about what they have been reading, and (e) buying computer programs about reading and letting them do all the work. Ivey and Fisher caution principals to avoid these ineffective strategies.

“Informed principals” (Sanacore, 1997, p. 65) know how to encourage their faculties to read educational literature, share what they have learned with their colleagues, and then apply what they have learned towards the creation of effective literacy programs. The key words here are *informed principals* because they have been taught how to lead in the development of such programs. Sanacore does not, however, explain *what* informs principals or *how* it should be done. Sanacore indicated the need to have principals informed about adolescent literacy, but presents no suggestions or directions in how to get them informed.

Successful adolescent literacy programs need to be described in detail for other schools to study and implement (Hock & Deshler, 2003), and these researchers complained that there was not enough research available to assist principals in providing such successful programs. Professional development activities in adolescent literacy practices and strategies should also be adopted into school programs for principals and assistant principals. These practices and strategies should be validated and shown to

produce significant outcomes. They further call for potential secondary administrators to be trained at the university level in research-based adolescent literacy practices. Frost (2003) agreed and called for a national initiative to accomplish this type of training. Hock and Deshler and Frost agreed that there was very little direction at this time to assist principals with adolescent literacy implementation. Frost, Phillips (2003), Shanahan (2004), Taylor (2004), Taylor and Collins (2003), and Williams (2004) all strongly agreed that more training in literacy must be provided for secondary principals. Shanahan especially lamented the negligible amount of training available for secondary principals (p. 46).

This dearth of research continues to be a problem today. Having already noted earlier the importance of the school principal in implementing any school reform, there remains serious concern that principal training for something as critical as adolescent literacy has virtually gone unnoticed. Most principals simply do not know where to begin or how to start the implementation of an adolescent literacy initiative (Shanahan, 2004).

There are some recent developments in this area for assisting principals with some of what they should know in order to implement adolescent literacy. Umphrey (2006), the editor of *Principal Leadership* from the National Association of Secondary School Principals, indicates that the first time that an issue of her journal dedicated the entire issue to adolescent literacy was in 2001. Back then, she recalls, the issue was devoted to informing secondary principals what was already available in the research that principals could follow to begin the literacy implementation process. This 2006 issue, she explains, is devoted to various secondary schools across the country explaining how they have

begun to implement literacy programs. Although isolated and individual cases, such publications of individual literacy successes are a welcome step in the right direction. Of particular concern in the 2006 issue, however, is that only one article of the five published make any specific reference to research studies in adolescent literacy.

An encouraging development in adolescent literacy is a survey published every year to determine “what’s hot and what’s not” in literacy development and implementation for young people (Cassidy, Garrett, & Barrera, 2006). The survey was based on interview results of 25 leading adolescent literacy researchers from within the U.S. and outside U.S. borders. They provide input on 27 different aspects of adolescent literacy. The survey highlights such areas as comprehension, high-stakes assessment, vocabulary, motivation, and improving literacy for all adolescents. The survey is an important tool for calling national and international attention to the needs of adolescent readers.

Three sources were located that do provide insight into what a principal needs to know for such implementation, but each has some limitations that will be noted later. Only three sources (Phillips, 2005; Sturtevant et al., 2006; Taylor & Collins, 2003) could be located that specifically give principals some direction into how they should approach implementation of adolescent literacy in their schools. Of these three, only one (Sturtevant et al.) described a specific research procedure (meta-analysis of adolescent literacy research dating back to 1970) to determine the results. However, these researchers provide some direction and insight for principals.

Although Phillips (2005) did not give much detail about how she reached her

conclusions, she did list in her leadership section several researchers (Goodlad, 1984; Zipperer et al., 2002) and numerous interviews with experienced principals in adolescent literacy. From these sources she and her colleagues developed the following nine action steps for the literacy leader.

1. Determine the school's capacity for literacy improvement: This step is placed first because it is the initial step before anything else can be done. It is a process of reviewing test data and having discussions with faculty regarding the literacy needs of their students and their own literacy instruction needs.

2. Develop a literacy leadership team: This particular step is also strongly encouraged by other researchers, as well (Shanahan, 2004; Strickland & Alvermann, 2004; Sturtevant et al., 2006; Taylor & Collins, 2003). Principals need feedback from teachers regarding literacy needs as mentioned above. The literacy leadership team is one of the best ways available to receive such feedback. The team needs to be representative of all the curricular departments in the school. These teachers should be "highly motivated...highly skilled and deeply committed to improving the literacy opportunities for every student" (Phillips, 2005, p. 8).

3. Create a collaborative environment that fosters sharing and learning: The principal must provide teachers an opportunity to dialogue with each other about their successes, questions, and frustrations. The principal also needs to be in classrooms frequently to help teachers improve their literacy instruction and share with them the latest literacy research.

4. Develop a schoolwide organizational model that supports extended time for

literacy instruction: Phillips (2005) recommended an extended period of time of about 90 to 100 minutes for literacy instruction. Restructuring of the school's schedule may need to occur in order for this extra block of time to take place. Phillips also notes the importance of the principal arranging for ongoing staff development activities based on teacher needs.

5. Analyze assessment data to determine specific learning needs of students:

Standardized test results are certainly one form of assessment data that faculty and the principal need to use to determine literacy instruction needs. Other forms of assessment should also be used. These can include class grades, teacher anecdotal records, and formal and informal assessments of student progress.

6. Develop a schoolwide plan to address the professional development needs of

teachers: As mentioned earlier in the staff development section of this review, teacher-centered, research-based best practices and ongoing staff development are critical to the success of adolescent literacy implementation (Hawley & Valli, 1999). The principal's job is to know what research is available (or know how to find it) to meet teachers' training needs and then to arrange for the staff development to take place.

7. Create a realistic budget for literacy needs: Effective approaches to adolescent

literacy need to be able to support the purchase of necessary materials such as books for teachers' professional libraries, classroom sets of novels, test materials, etc. Staff development activities present budget needs as well. The principal needs to prioritize the literacy needs of the school and what costs are essential to the immediate implementation of the program, as well as what might be needed in the years to come.

8. Develop a broad understanding of literacy strategies that work in the content-area classes: The literature is very clear about the importance of the principal staying informed of the most recent research in curriculum and instruction and sharing that knowledge with his/her faculty (Glickman, 2002; Marzano et al., 2005; McEwan, 2003; Valentine et al., 2004).

9. Principals need to demonstrate their commitment to the literacy program. This is a reemphasis of the importance of the principal participating in staff development with teachers, of designing budgets to fit the needs of an adolescent literacy framework, and of actively demonstrating his or her firm commitment to literacy.

Phillips (2005) suggested appropriate steps that a principal should take towards effective adolescent literacy implementation. Although she does not explain in much detail how she reached these conclusions, they do appear to be congruous with other research findings (Schmoker, 1996; Shanahan, 2004).

Similar to Phillips (2005), Taylor and Collins (2003) based the findings for their book on their own experiences as secondary principals and a district administrator (Taylor) and a review of the literature of literacy and leadership. They did not explain the exact process for their research. Their conclusions, however, are consistent with the other two studies in this section (Phillips; Sturtevant et al., 2006). Because those findings are consistent and because they do provide helpful suggestions to principals, I include them here.

As with Phillips (2005) and Sturtevant et al. (2006), Taylor and Collins (2003) indicated that formation of a Literacy Leadership Team (referred hereafter as the Team)

is a top priority. The Team should represent all professional constituencies in the school (each department, each grade level, and the media center). The charge of this Team is to first evaluate and synthesize test data. Based on that test data and the input from their colleagues regarding instructional needs relative to the test data, the Team then begins to formulate a staff development plan to meet those needs.

The Team, which includes the principal, should then begin researching best adolescent literacy practices that are grounded in the research. The Team should become “knowledgeable about the most current proven and promising practices related to teaching adolescents and to [teaching] literacy” (Taylor & Collins, 2003, p. 74). They further advise that this knowledge should be a deep understanding of research-based practices so that it can guide the Team in designing an effective literacy classroom.

Once the test data have been analyzed and the best-practices research is well underway, it is time to begin matching needs with solutions. The Team is critical in this process. They are an integral part in selecting what the best solutions are from the research base they have been studying. Further, they play a pivotal role in helping to get the information out to teachers regarding what those solutions might look like and how to best implement them.

The Team is also charged with seeing to it that the literacy goals and objectives that the school has developed are aligned with the “learning tools” (Taylor & Collins, 2003, p. 78) that are available in classrooms. Learning tools may include, but not be limited to, such literacy items as (a) the ratio of fiction to nonfiction books, (b) diversity of reading selections (referencing readability levels, ethnic diversity, student interests,

etc.), (c) literacy teaching strategies and frameworks that are available to teachers, (d) availability to technical support and appropriate Web sites, (e) professional library inventory, and (f) classroom libraries.

Staff development is essential in developing and implementing an adolescent literacy framework (Guskey, 2003; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Taylor & Collins, 2003). Further, Taylor and Collins stress the importance of ongoing staff development that is grounded in teacher input. They recommend that the Team be a part of that process. Principals, they note, should take care to offer initial training in a concept and then offer follow-up sessions to help teachers feel more confident in the ongoing implementation process. Taylor and Collins also provide suggestions for other channels of staff development. These could include study groups, action research, collegial classroom visits, peer coaching, teacher sharing sessions, weekly strategy sessions, and monthly professional development activities in lieu of faculty meetings (p. 88).

This section has dealt with the literacy leadership recommendations put forth by Taylor and Collins (2003). The primary recommendation is a creation of a Literacy Leadership Team, made up of teachers from all aspects of the instructional program and the principal. This Team is charged with evaluating student test data, having discussions with faculty to determine adolescent literacy needs, developing solutions (with faculty input) to meet those needs, and determining the match between solutions and the learning tools currently available at the school. Finally, Taylor and Collins point out the need for specific and ongoing staff development, along with evaluation of the effectiveness of the staff development and how it is being implemented.

Taylor and Collins (2003) based their conclusions on the adolescent literacy research and their years of experience dealing with adolescent literacy implementation across the country. They did not, however, mention the specific research process they used to reach their conclusions. Further, their research seems limited to their own experiences, rather than widening their perspectives to a more global view.

The final adolescent literacy implementation process review that will be presented here comes from Sturtevant and colleagues (2006). It was grounded in the research literature. Vacca, in his Foreword for this book, indicated that it is “the first of its kind to identify for school-based practitioners, scholars, and policymakers a comprehensive set of guiding principles underlying adolescent literacy practices” (p. ix). Sturtevant et al. pointed out that although educators who work with adolescent literacy have expressed concern over their students’ literacy struggles as far back as at least the 1920s (p. 1), little has been done to help the struggling adolescent reader until recently.

The book is the result of a meta-analysis of adolescent literacy-related research dating back to 1970. The six authors (Sturtevant et al., 2006) worked for 1 year to review three types of evidence related to instruction that would inform best practices in adolescent literacy: (a) the research on adolescent literacy across several fields (literacy, special education, content area instruction, and bilingual education); (b) expert opinion from major education organizations in a variety of disciplines; and (c) observations in the classrooms of highly regarded teachers in a variety of contexts.

The authors’ main goal was to “identify principles that would assist educators in developing effective curricula to meet the needs of diverse adolescent learners”

(Sturtevant et al., 2006, p. 3). They further believed that educators and others participating in curricular planning and decision-making should be supported in their efforts to plan highly effective adolescent literacy programs that are specific to their own needs and goals.

After completing their meta-analysis, the authors assimilated their findings into eight principles that can be used as guidelines when designing adolescent literacy programs. Sturtevant and colleagues (2006) described what students in secondary schools were able to accomplish when their teachers utilized instructional practices that appropriately supported literacy and learning development.

The eight principles provide middle- and high-school teachers and principals with specific guidelines, along with documented evidence, regarding what should be happening in an adolescent literacy-based classroom. Further, each principle provides at least one vignette (from across content areas) of a description of an actual classroom teacher's application of that principle. Finally, each principle and corresponding vignette is analyzed by another researcher (not one of the six authors) in the field of adolescent literacy, thereby providing a peer review of sorts.

Each of the eight principles is described below. The principal's responsibility in all of these guidelines is that he or she needs to be familiar with them and provide leadership and assistance in their implementation (Sturtevant et al., p. 143). A more detailed description of the principal's responsibilities connected to the eight principled practices for adolescent literacy follows later.

1. Adolescents need opportunities to participate in active learning environments

that offer clear and facilitative literacy instruction. Students become shareholders in the process of information exchange rather than all information being centered in the teacher.

2. Adolescents need opportunities to participate in respectful environments characterized by high expectations, trust, and care. This principle is centered in the concept that students learn best when they find themselves in classrooms where they feel accepted, cared for, and challenged.

3. Adolescents need opportunities to engage with print and nonprint texts for a variety of purposes. Sturtevant et al. (2006) are joined by a number of researchers (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Gordon & Gordon, 2003; Vacca, 1998) who argue that our information age requires adolescents to be prepared to successfully engage with print and nonprint forms of communication.

4. Adolescents need opportunities to generate and express rich understandings of ideas and concepts. This principle of adolescent literacy focuses on the importance of reading as a social activity.

5. Adolescents need opportunities to demonstrate enthusiasm for reading and learning. This principle provides more detail in how students can become actively engaged in reading and learning.

6. Adolescents need opportunities to assess their own literacy and learning competencies and direct their future growth. This principle focuses on the importance of adolescents' ability to determine how they are performing in a literacy setting.

7. Adolescents need opportunities to connect reading with their life and their learning inside and outside of school. This principle focuses on one major premise:

Students must be able to connect their daily classroom reading and learning with what goes on outside of the classroom in order for them to gain maximum knowledge and practical application for what they have learned (Alvermann, 2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2004; Alvermann & Eakle, 2003; Alvermann et al., 2004). Students need to see how their reading connects to their interests, ideas, hobbies, likes, dislikes, and prior learning.

8. Adolescents need opportunities to develop critical perspectives toward what they read, view, and hear. The central theme of this eighth and final principle deals with providing adolescents a curriculum, and specifically literacy activities, that will cause students to “confront, question, and rework text” (Sturtevant et al., 2006, p. 126).

Finally, recognizing the importance of literacy leadership, Sturtevant and her colleagues devote the last chapter of their book to what school leaders need to do to make the eight principled practices for adolescent literacy work in the classroom. To develop these recommendations for leaders, the authors reviewed the secondary school literacy reform research literature that was published between 1990 and 2005. They then linked their findings from this review to the eight principles for adolescent literacy. Because of its rich research base and its direct application to the eight principles, I include a brief review of their findings/recommendations here.

Sturtevant and her colleagues (2006) tell us that “school leaders provide the guidance that is needed to initiate and sustain certain practices throughout schools” (Sturtevant et al., p. 143). Leadership specifically within the realm of adolescent literacy requires the principal to maintain a focus on what is important to literacy. This leader should: (a) communicate regularly with others regarding the progress of the literacy

implementation, (b) participate in professional development activities with the faculty, (c) regularly review student test data to determine what modifications might need to be made, (d) develop a professional library of adolescent literacy research, (e) discuss with teachers concerns and successes with adolescent literacy practices, (f) be seen as one who believes strongly in adolescent literacy practices through word and action, and (g) stay current with the adolescent literacy research and make that research available to teachers, students, staff, and parents.

The leader should form a Literacy Advisory Council (Phillips, 2005; Taylor & Collins, 2003) made up of various stakeholders such as teachers, students, community members, parents, department chairs, and district administrators. This council or team is responsible for providing direction and support to the literacy program and should consult surveys, test scores, and the professional literature to prioritize efforts.

Finally, Sturtevant and her colleagues (2006) stressed the importance of the leader believing in the value of adolescent literacy. This is done by espousing the concept that adolescents are not looked at stereotypically as individuals who are “stuck” between childhood and adulthood, but rather young people who are “simultaneously immature and mature, dependent and independent, young and old” (p. 150). An additional belief to which leaders should subscribe is that adolescents must see a connection between their sociocultural world and that of their academic world. Sturtevant et al. provide eight important principles for adolescent literacy that are grounded in research from the last 30 years. They further provided suggestions for principals and other leaders in implementing adolescent literacy projects in their schools. What was not covered, however, were

specific directions to principals regarding their role in seeing to it that the eight principles are implemented in the classroom. That role is implied through the data and research cited within each principle, but more specific details are needed for principals and other leaders to follow.

This leadership review section dealing specifically with adolescent literacy implementation is grounded in the findings of Phillips (2005), Taylor and Collins (2003), and Sturtevant and colleagues (2006). Although there were concerns with the research process of Phillips and Taylor and Collins, there were several strands running through the findings of all three. These include the importance of (a) forming a literacy team or council representing all instructional constituencies and selected community members, (b) reviewing student test data to determine literacy needs, (c) in conjunction with what is determined through student data results, discussing with faculty and other constituents specific needs for staff development, (d) the principal attending staff development activities with teachers, (e) assessing material and technology needs, (f) the principal being aware of recent adolescent literacy research and providing that information to teachers, and (g) the principal being in the classroom frequently to determine progress and needs for the adolescent literacy program.

Summary

This review of the literature has dealt with five basic issues centering around the need for adolescent literacy and how the principal should lead its implementation. These issues include (a) why it is important for adolescents to be able to read both now and in

the future, (b) why adolescents need help with the reading process, (c) what literacy-related processes/strategies are currently available for adolescent readers, (d) what the effect of the principal's leadership is on curriculum and instruction, and (e) what would be helpful for the principal to know to assist with the implementation of an adolescent literacy framework in the school. This final issue leads to the purpose of the research portion of this dissertation.

Research findings suggest that adolescents need to be able to read academic, vocational, recreational, and personal interest literature. They must be able to comprehend and apply what they read. Further, adolescents need to be able to read appropriately for employability/economic reasons, as well as for purposes of informed citizenship. It is critical that adolescents develop effective literacy skills in order to read purposefully, connect prior knowledge to new, differentiate fact from opinion and thereby make rational and informed decisions, and resolve apparently conflicting content in different texts and forms of text. Adolescents of today do not have the economic safety nets that their predecessors had. It is imperative for them to be able to read to compete in a challenging and ever-changing job market.

Many adolescents are struggling with their ability or inability to read. Low-level literacy skills in adolescents have been identified as the root cause of failure in many classes, resulting in low self-esteem, discipline issues, and truancy. Additionally, difficulties with reading are a leading cause of adolescents dropping out of school. Severely struggling adolescent readers are 20 times more likely to drop out of school than their peers with highest-performing reading skills. Many poor readers go on to populate

the nation's prisons. The inability to read also causes a major drain on the U.S. economy. Making this situation even worse is the sobering literature describing how little is known by secondary teachers across the domains about teaching reading skills within their domains. The literature also suggests that principals know even less than their teachers about how they should proceed in leading adolescent literacy reforms in their schools.

This review has indicated that there are literacy processes and strategies that are available to enhance adolescents' literacy skills. The literature suggests that adolescents should be taught more about comprehension skills across the domains than is currently being taught. An effective means of developing student comprehension, for example, is to place them in group discourse/discussion situations that cause student-to-student and student-to-teacher discussions. The important area of staff development has also been addressed. Finally, the effect of technology on adolescent literacy activities has been summarized.

The effect of the principal's leadership on curriculum and instruction has been noted here through quantitative and qualitative research. There is a connection between the principal's instructional leadership abilities and student achievement. Research findings suggest that there are specific behaviors that principals should exhibit in order to be effective instructional leaders.

Finally, the actual implementation and support of adolescent literacy was addressed through review of the literature relative to what the principal needs to know. It is ultimately the principal's responsibility to assure implementation of the adolescent literacy framework. Little research, however, is available on this key topic and only three

such studies could be found that have universal applications for principals. Although each has its own limitations, their findings are congruous with each other and help substantiate the necessity of the principal following certain practices during implementation. Some of those practices include (a) forming a literacy team from across curricular domains, (b) critically evaluating test data to help determine the direction of the literacy implementation process, (c) frequent classroom visitations by the principal to determine progress of the literacy plan, (d) effective and consistent staff development activities, (e) a clear vision by the principal of the literacy plan and articulated to faculty and other constituents, and (f) keeping up to date with the most current adolescent literacy research and informing the faculty of that research.

Research findings, however, inform us that much more needs to be done for struggling adolescent readers through the principals' leadership than is currently the case. Principals should be aware of research-based effective implementation processes if they are to implement and support adolescent literacy. This research proposal was designed to provide insight into the practical applications of adolescent literacy implementation by currently practicing secondary school principals. It was grounded in the most current research available. This process focused on in-depth interviews with five secondary school principals in northern Utah who were at various stages of implementing adolescent literacy programs in their schools.

My intent for this research was to (a) determine how principals perceived their process of implementing and supporting adolescent literacy practices relative to research-based principles and (b) develop a set of principled practices that were currently being

used by these principals that could be used as potential guiding practices for other secondary school principals. This research was viewed through a sociocultural lens. The specifics of this research process are located in the Research Methods chapter.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

I thought it important to make a brief comment about the methodology and procedures of my research before launching into the body of this chapter. I have grown up hearing the statement, “Anything worth doing is worth doing well” (author unknown). I believe this statement to be true. I would, however, like to add a supplement to this venerable old saying: “Anything worth doing well is probably going to take you much longer than you had ever planned.”

This chapter is divided into several sections and subsections. The methods section describes the study’s goals and the procedures used to accomplish them. I then explain why I chose a qualitative research design, including the influence of the emic inquiry and cross-case analysis approach. The research questions are addressed next and then followed by the selection process of the five principals interviewed. Since I am the research instrument, it is important that I provide some background information about myself. Following that section, I describe the actual procedures I used to conduct the study. A section on how I analyzed the data is then provided and followed by the procedures I used to help ensure trustworthiness, confirmability, dependability, transferability, and credibility. I then summarize the step-by-step procedures used to conduct the study and finish with a summary of the data analysis relative to the sociocultural lens.

Methods

The purpose of this research study was to determine what principals believed about leading and supporting the implementation of adolescent literacy frameworks and practices in their schools and how they perceived they were doing this, as well as how these perceptions were viewed through the lens of a sociocultural framework. The goal was to provide insight into the day-to-day processes of adolescent literacy implementation that could offer assistance to principals when implementing and supporting adolescent literacy programs in their schools. I chose the qualitative process because it provided the opportunity to interview the secondary principals in depth to determine what they did with adolescent literacy, why they did it, and how they went about getting it done. This qualitative research study is sustained and maintained by two additional concepts: emic inquiry and a cross-case analysis approach.

A Qualitative Study, an Emic Inquiry, and a Cross-Case

Analysis Approach

A qualitative approach to research lends itself to human-as-instrument. This means that the methods in the research are extensions of what humans typically do: look, listen, speak, read, and so forth (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is these authors' contention that the researcher will tend toward "interviewing, observing, mining available documents and records, taking account of nonverbal cues, and interpreting inadvertent unobtrusive measures" (Lincoln & Guba, p. 199). It was my goal to interview these principals to find out what they were doing with adolescent literacy, how they were doing

it, and what motivated them to do so.

An emic inquiry is a reconstruction of the respondent's (i.e., the five principals) construction (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 164). This type of inquiry provides an opportunity to see how a process or plan developed. It also allows for "thick description" (detailed descriptions and many of them) of events and activities under investigation. It allows the reader to "experience the context [or event] vicariously" (Erlandson et al., p. 164). In this case, the research data and the findings from analyzing the data will help provide insight to others about how adolescent literacy might be implemented and supported somewhere else.

The cross-case analysis approach allows the researcher to first analyze the data from each individual case, in this case the data from each of the five principals. The researcher then analyzes the data across all the cases to determine if there are connecting, or similar, "categories, themes, or typologies that conceptualize the data from all the cases; or it can result in building substantive theory offering an integrated framework covering multiple cases" (Merriam, 1998, p. 195).

Research Questions

The research questions addressed in the study were as follows.

1. What are the perspectives of the principals who are implementing reading instruction at the secondary level in five northern Utah schools?
2. What beliefs and reasons motivated them to implement adolescent literacy?
3. Do their perspectives coincide with principles of effective adolescent literacy?

programs and practices reflected in the literature (e.g., Sturtevant, et al., 2006) as well as sociocultural perspectives?

Participants

I interviewed in depth five secondary school principals in northern Utah who were at varying stages of adolescent literacy implementation. They were selected because they had been identified by their districts' administrations as principals who had or were just beginning to plan an adolescent literacy program in their schools. Thus, they were selected through purposeful sampling in consultation with Dr. Kay Camperell of the Utah State University Department of Secondary Education and school district superintendents, or their designees, of northern Utah school districts. All interviews were conducted in strict compliance with all ethical standards and other requirements of the Institutional Review Board (IRB; see Appendix A). I used pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the informants (principals). I also used pseudonyms to conceal the real names of their schools and communities. The principals included two high school principals, one junior high school principal, and two middle school principals. The principals and I did not know each other prior to the first interview.

Role of the Researcher

I served as the instrument for data collection (Erlandson et al., 1993) and, therefore, should offer some background about myself. I am a graduate of California State University, Long Beach. My undergraduate major was speech communications with

a minor in German. I should point out that speech communications is less a study of speaking techniques and more a study of the psychology of why people say what they say. This includes our own “personal filtering systems,” based on numerous cultural factors, which cause us to interpret what we hear differently than another person hearing the same thing. I did not know then that communicative psychology had such a major influence on reading until I began examining sociocultural research theory for this study.

I later received my master’s degree from California State University, Long Beach in educational administration. My education career spans 35 years, including serving 26 years in school administration. I am currently a high school principal in northern Utah. I have also served as a high school vice principal, a principal of three middle schools, and a principal of three elementary schools. I served the latter six school principalships in California and Utah. I taught 10 different subjects, including reading, at the middle school level in California.

I intensely disliked reading as an adolescent and would do anything to avoid it. I met my wife-to-be in college. She changed my life for the positive forever. She loved to read as much as I hated it. Thankfully, she won the literacy war. Our three children loved to read until they reached adolescence. Although academically successful in their secondary educational experience, they also became reluctant readers during that time, avoiding reading whenever they could. They rediscovered their love of reading sometime after graduating from high school. It was at some point after the experience with our children that I became interested in adolescent literacy. I eventually pursued a doctoral degree at Utah State University in curriculum and instruction with an emphasis in

adolescent literacy and principal leadership. Very little research exists that demonstrates the connection between adolescent literacy implementation and support and the secondary school principal. My hope is that this research will be helpful to those secondary school principals in northern Utah and perhaps elsewhere who are implementing adolescent literacy practices in their schools.

Procedures

Almost all of our family and extended family live in California and we travel there as frequently as we can throughout the year. I usually took my laptop computer and books with me to study when we visited our families. The research and writing of this study have taken place in 11 different cities in two states. This required that I take especially accurate notes regarding where I left off in my studies and where I needed to begin again—lest I should become very confused and hopelessly lost.

I began keeping a reflexive journal of research prior to beginning any of the interview process. This journal contains thoughts, practices, procedures, suggestions, recommendations, processes, frustrations, elations, and other activities, events, and notations pertinent to this study. It has survived continuous use, folding of page corners for emphasis, multiple colors of ink and highlighters, and being run over by a car. It has a permanent crease right down the middle of each page as a reminder of carelessly backing up over my research duffle bag. Every page, however, is completely legible. I am using my research journal to guide the writing of this chapter.

I piloted the interview process prior to contacting any school district for

principals' names. I performed a mock interview with a middle school principal in my own district who had been utilizing adolescent literacy practices in the school for several years. I used the same interview questions that I would be using with the five yet-to-be chosen research principals. I found it helpful to have the questions written down for myself on the same paper where I could take notes rather than writing principal responses on a blank sheet of paper. I also used a recording device. I would offer this word of caution. I strongly recommend using a digital voice recorder as opposed to a mini-cassette recorder. I began with the cassette recorder. The sound quality was far clearer with the digital recorder than with the cassette recorder. I switched shortly after the first two interviews to two digital recorders. I used one as the primary recording device and the second as a backup.

Following the pilot interview and determining what I had learned from it regarding organization and electronic and written data gathering, I began randomly contacting the school districts for principals to participate in the research. I contacted district administrators involved with adolescent literacy practices. These were either assistant superintendents of curriculum and instruction or curriculum directors. I explained that I was doing a research project for my dissertation in adolescent literacy and principal leadership. I was looking for secondary school principals who were working with adolescent literacy. Their work could be on a continuum from just beginning to "seasoned veteran." As it turned out, the principals were all along that continuum. I further explained that the interviews would provide a principal's perspective regarding the implementation and support of adolescent literacy. The principals, their

schools, their districts, and their communities would all be given pseudonyms to ensure privacy. The district administrators in every case immediately gave me the names of the principals whom I should contact.

I contacted each principal and explained my research, including the fact that their district administration had recommended them for this study. I explained the purpose of the study to each principal and that his or her participation would be voluntary and anonymous. I pointed out that there were no right or wrong answers—only perspectives on each principal’s approach to literacy. I further explained the interview process: one introductory interview about the principal and his or her school, one interview reviewing the literacy practices being implemented at the school, and follow-up interviews either by phone or e-mail as necessary.

All principals were modest about their accomplishments and wondered if they were the right ones for this study. I assured them that their district administration had strongly endorsed them, which they had, and that the principals could provide helpful and needed data for this research. All five principals consented to the study. I had each one sign consent letters required by the IRB explaining in detail the purpose of the study and that participation in the study was voluntary throughout the entire process. They could withdraw from the study at any time.

I conducted this qualitative research for the purpose of discovering how the principals who agreed to participate in the study approached adolescent literacy implementation and support. I used a cross-case analysis approach, as described earlier in this chapter, to determine what, if any, commonalities or common strands existed among

the five principals' approaches to adolescent literacy implementation and support.

I used a bracketing approach to help ensure objectivity in the process of analyzing the interview data (Ahern, 1999). This is a process whereby the researcher identifies his own personal expectations, experiences, and biases that might have an impact on interpretation of research data (see above Researcher section). The questions to which I responded in this bracketing process included the following.

1. What do you know, based on information that can be documented in research literature, about the topic you are investigating?
2. What do you know, based on your own experience or the experience of others you know well, about the topic you are investigating?
3. What beliefs do you hold about the topic you are investigating?
4. What assumptions inform the beliefs you identified in question #3?
5. What theoretical perspectives inform your current thinking?
6. What major researchers have worked within this paradigm?
7. What is the purpose of your research?

I provided in each principal's interview transcript a description of events I observed and conversations in which I participated. I gathered data, transcribed recordings of the interviews I conducted, codified and categorized the data, interpreted it from the lens of a social constructive perspective and the lens of effective literacy practices described in the literature, wrote it up, and provided the informants with all that I had written to ensure accuracy of the data being reported (member checking). I constantly focused myself on remaining neutral relative to my own beliefs about

adolescent literacy so that the research findings and corresponding analysis remained as completely objective as it could possibly be.

I conducted two in-depth interviews with each informant. Several interviews with different principals occurred on the same date but at different times. This was because several principals' schools were located over 100 miles from my home. Same-date interviews were designed to conserve both time and fuel.

The first interview was used to introduce myself and acquire demographic data about the participants and their schools. The second interview was conducted to elicit descriptions of the programs and practices being implemented and the principals' beliefs and perceptions about their reasons for implementing adolescent literacy. The interview questions are listed in Appendix B. The principals did not see these questions until the time of the actual interview. Principals were asked for artifacts that supported their statements. These artifacts included teacher literacy goal documentation sheets, school improvement plans, Web site references, classroom posters that reflected school mission and goals, targeted goal statements, course offerings, staff development surveys, and student achievement reporting forms, to name a few. The interviews began with broad questions about the programs and the principals' beliefs and perceptions about adolescent literacy and moved towards more detailed questions about implementation (see Appendix B for example questions). I kept a separate file folder for each principal's interview and artifact information. This was very helpful when I needed to go back to that principal's data for clarification and confirmation of statements and other details.

I used both hand written notes and electronic recordings during the interviews to

help ensure accuracy of the data. Later I transcribed the interviews into a word processing program on my computer. The transcription process took the better part of two months. It was a tedious process, but a necessary one. I matched the electronic transcription data to the hand written interview documentation, once again for accuracy. I had all five principals verify the accuracy of the data. This verification process took two to three weeks due to summer vacations and varied work schedules of the principals. One principal was opening a brand new school at the time of the interviews, and another principal's school was undergoing extensive renovation and reconstruction. This delayed the verification process somewhat, but eventually it was accomplished.

Subsequent interviews were conducted after my initial analysis and interpretations of the data. Some of these interviews were conducted over the phone and some were conducted by e-mail. Principals were shown how I analyzed their interviews to confirm that I was representing their beliefs and perceptions accurately, and they were asked to provide any clarification or additions to the data as they deemed necessary. Thus, the accuracy of these interviews was authenticated through member checks. The subsequent interviews were used to obtain clarification or elaboration as needed (Erlandson et al., 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

When all of the transcriptions were complete and all five principals had confirmed the authenticity and accuracy of the data, I began to analyze the data. I read, re-read, and re-read again the transcriptions. I was continuously looking for similarities, trends, commonalities, and strands that were interwoven across all the principals' interview data. I ran off all the principals' transcriptions initially on standard white paper. I developed a

separate file folder for each principal. Each folder contained the raw written data and the typed transcriptions of each interview. Each folder also contained the artifacts that each principal had shared with me.

The more I read the transcriptions, the more similarities began to take shape. I initially found 10 common themes or strands across all the principals' interview responses. I underlined key quotes from the principals' interview transcripts and wrote notes in the left hand margin highlighting these quotes. A sample page of the transcripts with notes is identified as Appendix C. I continued to review and analyze these 10 similarities, and I realized that some could be incorporated into others. I also referred to the adolescent literacy and sociocultural research located in the review of literature chapter to help in the search for common strands. Seven themes eventually emerged from the data. These strands became known as the seven common strands. They included the following themes: (a) long-time commitment to literacy, (b) staff development, (c) principal's involvement, (d) literacy team and faculty involvement, (e) clear communication of a literacy vision, (f) evaluation of practices and teachers, and (g) review and revision of school mission and goals.

I developed a taxonomic analytic scheme (Appendix D) to demonstrate how I reduced the data for Strand #1. This chart scheme traces how the principals' statements eventually became a strand. These comments are representative of many others that went in to the development of this strand, and the same analytical process was followed to determine the other six strands. Next to each key quote that I had highlighted with my notes, I placed a number that corresponded with the Strand in which that quote would

eventually be placed.

I then color coded each principal's interview manuscript. Both interviews from each principal were copied using the same colored paper for that principal. I then created a large chart, 44 inches tall and 56 inches wide. I divided the chart into seven columns for each of the seven common strands. I placed the title of each strand at the top of each column. I then cut out each key quote and glued it in its corresponding column. I also maintained a separate set of complete manuscripts with the same color-coding so that I could have an intact copy for further reference. I placed the chart on the wall and began writing the research findings chapter based on the data reflected in this wall chart.

Trustworthiness

If findings from an inquiry are to have an impact on knowledge, by either adding to an overall body of knowledge or by solving a specific problem, there needs to be some guaranteed measure of credibility of those findings (Erlandson et al., 1993, p.28). I completed several important processes to optimize trustworthiness. These included establishing confirmability, dependability, transferability, and credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Confirmability

Confirmability, also known as a confirmability audit, were established through the following: (a) interview questions, notes, and documents (raw data); (b) analysis of interview notes and peer debriefing notes (data reduction and analysis products); (c) review of the analysis of interview data and artifacts noted later in this section (data

reconstruction and synthesis products); and (d) analysis of a reflexive journal (process notes) and peer debriefing notes (materials relating to intentions and dispositions; Lincoln & Guba, as cited in Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 148). Further I collected artifacts such as (a) staff development survey, (b) professional development schedule for the year, (c) professional goal form outlining literacy goals, (d) school improvement plan goals relative to literacy, (e) classroom posters reflecting school goals, and (e) other items that related to the implementation of adolescent literacy at the school. As mentioned earlier, I used member checking extensively.

Dependability

My potential biases were identified by the process of bracketing. I used the same focused interview questions for all five principals. These interview questions were developed from the research questions. I had a peer review my data for consistency and accuracy. He is a district administrator in a northern Utah school district who recently received his Ph.D. in education from Utah State University. My reflexive journal provided a “running account” of the research process (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 34).

Transferability

“Implementation of an inquiry’s findings always requires an estimation of applicability [transferability]...” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 31). The transferability process was assisted by several procedures. Thick description of the principals’ interviews was included to provide important details about their beliefs, approaches, philosophies, and communities they served relevant to adolescent literacy implementation

and support. The principals were selected through purposeful sampling in consultation with Dr. Camperell and through a process approved by the IRB.

Credibility

Several processes were used to help ensure credibility. Prolonged engagement and persistent observation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) occurred through in-depth interviews with the principals. Follow-up phone calls and e-mails were utilized to confirm clarity and accuracy of the data. Triangulation took place by checking data from the interviews against the artifacts collected (mentioned earlier). I also used peer debriefing, follow-up probe and clarifying interview questions, member checking, and my reflexive journal to further establish credibility of the study.

Summary and Step-by-Step Procedures

This was a qualitative research study that utilized a cross-case analysis approach. The goal of the study was to provide insight into how five secondary school principals from northern Utah implemented and supported adolescent literacy programs and practices in their schools. These principals utilized extensively the expertise of their faculties in the process.

This chapter traces the steps I took in preparing for and implementing the study. A summary of that process is listed below. The chapter further details the data analysis procedures and the seven common strands of implementation and support that emerged from the analysis. Key elements of each strand were also explained. Credibility and reliability are cornerstones of such a study. The findings must be trustworthy. I detailed

how I went about assuring to the degree possible that trustworthiness, credibility, and reliability were maintained. The following is a summary of the steps I took in completing this research study:

1. Participated in a mock interview with a local middle school principal utilizing the interview questions I would be using with the real research principals.

2. Determined who the participants (principals) would be for the study.

3. Contacted these principals to confirm their interest in the study and had them sign the appropriate permission forms as specified by the IRB.

4. Conducted the first two interview sessions with each principal, including subsequent follow-up discussions for clarity and accuracy.

5. Analyzed the data for categories of beliefs and emergent themes. I looked for statements that (a) reflected understanding of effective adolescent literacy practices from a sociocultural perspective as described in the literature (e.g., Au, 2000; Sturtevant et al., 2006) and (b) reflected any misconceptions or naive beliefs about adolescent literacy practices.

6. Provided the principals an opportunity to review my description and interpretation of our discussions.

7. Conducted more interviews as necessary and continued member checking.

8. Continued analyzing and interpreting the data.

9. Had all five principals review for accuracy my research findings as they now applied to the Seven Common Strands. This completed a two-step member checking process: one to assure the transcript data were accurate at the beginning and one to

assure the findings were accurate at the end of the study.

10. Completed the final write-up process of all data after the findings were checked for accuracy.

Data Analysis

The data and findings were codified, categorized, and checked for redundancy and compatibility as described in the procedures section of this chapter. The data and findings were interpreted through the lens of sociocultural perspectives and the literature on adolescent literacy.

This lens helped me interpret if comments and artifacts reflected the sociocultural and sociolinguistic perspectives on adolescent literacy instruction. I determined that the principals' practices and beliefs were congruent with these perspectives as was noted by the sociocultural perspectives addressed in each of the seven common strands. I completed the final write-up procedures only after I determined the accuracy of my data through member checking, triangulation, and peer debriefing.

CHAPTER IV

MEETING THE PRINCIPALS AND THEIR SCHOOLS

Introduction

So much of what we do is influenced by who we are and vice versa. It is important, therefore, to become familiar with the principals who are involved in this study. They are indeed the focus and the centerpiece of this study. Each has indicated through his/her interviews that what each has done at his/her school has been influenced by personal background and what each believes about education in general and about adolescent literacy specifically.

It is also important for us to understand the demographics of their schools. Each school's socioeconomic and socioculture make-up determine to a large extent what and how the curriculum is taught.

Confidentiality of the individual principals is maintained through the use of pseudonyms. Pseudonyms have also been used to refer to their schools and cities.

These principals were selected by either an assistant superintendent or a curriculum director in their respective districts. The districts were randomly selected within the northern Utah area. Each district administrator was asked to select a principal who had an interest in adolescent literacy and who had been involved with implementing adolescent literacy practices in their schools. All five principals have had multiple years of experience with adolescent literacy implementation.

The Principals and Their Schools

Table 1 gives a brief summary of the principals in the study, the name of their schools, when they graduated from college, their degrees, their major subjects of study, and the time span of being a teacher and of being an administrator.

Table 2 gives a brief summary of the principals' schools and their demographics. The table indicates each school's enrollment, grade configuration, the number of faculty, socioeconomic conditions as reflected by the number of students on free and reduced lunch, and the major challenges that each school faces. Although special education teachers are considered part of the faculty and serve an important role in students' education, they were not included in the faculty column because they see a small, limited number of students.

Table 1

Principals in the Study

Principal	School	Education	Major	Career history
Bob Richards	Snowline H.S.	B.S. 1984 M.A. 1990 M.A. 1994	History Ed. Leadership Elem. Science	Teacher 1984-90 Admin. 1990-present
Chad Hunt	Glacier Ridge H.S.	B.A. 1974 M.A. 1977	History European History	Teacher 1976-90 Admin. 1990-present
Cindy Dillon	Crystal Creek J.H.S.	B.S. 1967 M.A. 1982	Vocational and Consumer Education School Administration	Teacher 1967-89 Admin. 1989-present
Carol Maughan	Eagle View M.S.	B.A. 1965 M.A. 1973 M.A. 1977	Elementary Education Secondary Education Guidance/Counseling	Teacher 1965-77 Admin. 1977-present
Gary Miller	Sun Crest M.S.	B.S. 1989 M.A. 1993	Math Education Mgmt.	Teacher 1989-93 Admin. 1993-present

Table 2

Schools in the Study

School	Enrollment	Faculty	Socioeconomics	Major challenges
Snowline H.S.	927 grades 10-12	47	250 free/reduced lunch	Declining numbers, age of building
Glacier Ridge H.S.	2,375 grades 10-12	88	665 free/reduced lunch	Extensive boundary changes, fluctuating enrollment, faculty changes
Crystal Creek J.H.S.	1,017 grades 7-9	36	345 free/reduced lunch	Boundary changes, socioeconomic shifts
Eagle View M.S.	550 grades 7-8	27	220 free/reduced lunch	Declining enrollment, boundary changes, socioeconomic shifts
Sun Crest M.S.	950 grades 6-8	28	931 free/reduced lunch	Many languages, low socioeconomics

*Bob Richards and Snowline High School**Educational Background*

Bob is the principal of Snowline High School. He received his bachelors of science degree in history with a minor in economics at Weber State University in 1984. He also earned dual teaching certification that allowed him to teach at both the elementary and secondary levels. This certification would prove to be particularly important to him early in his career, as will be explained later. He received his Masters Degree in educational leadership and an administrative endorsement from Brigham Young University in 1990. He attended Weber State in 1994 to complete another master's degree. This degree was in elementary education with an emphasis in science.

Career History

Bob began his professional career in 1984 teaching at a high school not many miles from where he is currently the principal. Both schools are in the same district. He taught world history and economics and was the school newspaper advisor. He was also an assistant swimming coach. During his first year of teaching, he was selected by the faculty to receive Teacher of the Year honors.

He taught that 1 year at the high school and then was transferred to an elementary school during the fall of 1985. There was at that time a problem of declining enrollment, as there still is in Bob's district today. Fortunately, Bob had earned a dual certification, allowing him to teach in both secondary and elementary schools and essentially letting him keep his teaching job. This was 20 years ago. Declining enrollment and its effect on Bob's high school and district will be discussed later. Bob remained at the elementary school until 1989.

He was accepted into an administrative training program in 1990 at Utah State University. His superintendent, however, during this time told Bob of another administrative leadership program at Brigham Young University and asked him if he wanted to apply. He did and was accepted. This was a dual program that offered both a Masters in educational leadership and the administrative endorsement. Bob now has two Masters Degrees. The program required three internships at different schools that together lasted 1 year. He was an intern at an elementary school, a middle school, and a high school. This required Bob to put his teaching position at the elementary school on hold for a year.

He completed the administrative program in 1990 and began interviewing for principals' positions. He was hired in 1991 as a principal of an elementary school in another district. The elementary school provided some difficult challenges for Bob. The school's test scores were among the district's lowest. It was located in a poor socioeconomic neighborhood and, since it was also located very near a military base, many students moved in and out all the time. He served there until 1993.

Bob returned to his former school district in 1993 where he remains today. He was hired as an elementary principal where he remained for 5 years. The school had a rather unique schedule with half of the school attending from 8:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. The other half attended from 9:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. This allowed their reading and other core classes to be smaller in class size at the beginning and end of the day, while their electives were larger during the middle of the day. It was a somewhat popular schedule among schools in the early '90s.

Bob received one of his most enjoyable assignments in 1998. He was appointed the assistant principal of the same high school where he had begun his teaching career 14 years earlier. "I loved it," he remembered. "You're in the thick with kids...it's the best" (Field Notes, 6/7/07). Two years later in 2000, he was asked to be the principal of a brand new sixth and seventh grade intermediate school. It was the second largest school in the district; it housed 1,100 students. He was there for 7 years when he received an assignment to be the new principal of the other high school in the district.

At the time of our interview, Bob had been at this high school for 1 year. It is a difficult school to manage because the school is over 55 years old. Sections have been

added on to the main building over the years as well. A larger school means more space, more square footage to manage, as well as taking care of aging equipment and buildings. The district, however, is planning on a school bond election early this school year for Bob's school and others in the district. There are three brand new administrators in his high school: one of them with no previous administrative experience, one with one year's administrative experience, and Bob. There is no administrative staff person with whom Bob can discuss previous concerns (faculty and staff complaints, why the master schedule was designed the way it was, why the curriculum was implemented the way it was, where problem maintenance areas are and how to manage each, etc.) regarding why things are the way they are today.

Experiences Connected to Literacy

This section is a summary of more detailed data that will be covered later in the seven common strands section. Bob explained that as an elementary school principal he always enjoyed listening to children read to him in the halls. He was always thinking of ways to motivate them to read in and out of school. One of his incentives was sitting on the roof "doing silly things" (Field Notes, 6/7/07) if his students read so many books. He added, "You know, I probably didn't have the background of literacy stuff that's taught now, but I always tried to make it a priority" (Field Notes, 6/7/07).

Demographics of Snowline High School

Enrollment, socioeconomic situation, English language learners. Snowline High School's enrollment is around 926 students in grades 10 through 12. The school has been

in a slow enrollment decline for the last several years (see next section). About 27% of the students are on free and reduced lunch and approximately 15% are English Language Learners. Snowline High School is located in extreme northern Utah. Its attendance area covers expansive farmlands and small towns. As farming costs (fuel, machinery, seeds, fertilizer, etc.) have increased, crop profits have decreased. This has caused a shift from wealthy farmers and ranchers to those who have seen a reduction in their yearly income.

Bob explained:

The population is quite diverse. At one time there was a real division. There were some very wealthy ranchers and farmers. That number has shrunk somewhat. Now there is a group of people who are not quite as well off as they once were. There's a good working class, and there is a real low end. I have about 240 [about 27%] of that 900 [students] who are free or reduced lunch. One hundred twenty students [about 13%] were on fee waivers. Our low-end economic families, a lot of them would probably be laborers. (Field Notes, 6/7/07)

A large furniture manufacturing plant, a cereal plant, agriculture, and a large retail store distribution center are in or near his attendance area. Bob pointed out that these were not the highest paying jobs. Several large manufacturing plants either moved or cut back in the area, causing a shift in employment and pay scale, but he said that the economy was looking better again (Field Notes, 6/7/2007).

Faculty. There are 47 teaching positions in the Snowline High School faculty. They cover social science/history, drama, English, math, science, technology, visual and performing arts, English Language Learners, Spanish, P.E., psychology, and family and consumer science. It should be noted that 15 of these teachers teach in multiple subjects. This includes such combinations as history/English/journalism, economics/government/P.E/basketball, dance/English, band/computers, librarian/Spanish, and so on (Source:

school Web site).

Challenges. There are two major challenges facing Bob and his school. These include declining enrollment and the age of the school building (Field Notes, 6/7/2007). Bob, his faculty, staff, and community are all struggling with declining enrollment. According to his student-to-teacher ratio, he should have cut 1.4 teachers from the faculty this year. This has been ongoing every year for several years now. “The district was nice enough to not make me do that this year because we are small enough that we can’t keep our academics going,” he pointed out (Field Notes, 6/7/07). He further explained the problem.

For example, chemistry and physics—I just haven’t been able to keep those going. There’s a great deal of pressure from the community about what we are going to do about some of the gifted kids. I told the superintendent that my legacy at this high school will be cutting teachers and programs. It’s not the kind of legacy that you want to have. (Field Notes, 6/7/07)

The effects of declining enrollment have been quite significant at his high school. Bob runs his A.P. classes at about 18 to 20 students. “You can’t staff at that,” he pointed out. Continuing, “Because wherever you have an 18 kid class, you have a 40 or 50 [kid class] someplace else. It’s a huge problem on my top, high end programs” (Field Notes, 6/7/07). Making matters more challenging are the demands from parents of A.P. (Advanced Placement) students that Snowline High School provide *more* high-end classes. Bob is already having a difficult time maintaining his current number of faculty. The pressures of adding more classes in a declining enrollment environment create some difficult situations for Bob and his faculty.

The superintendent of schools at a recent meeting was recommended to the Board

of Education that the district close a school in town. “So, the parents said that if you close an elementary then we’ll apply to become a charter school. And that really held us hostage on that declining enrollment,” Bob explained (Field Notes, 6/7/07). This means that if the district proceeded with closing the school, the parents would create a charter school and essentially take funding away from the district. Either way the district was put in a serious financial bind.

Bob believed that the declining enrollment problem stemmed from families being smaller than they have been historically. Although 3,000 new homes had been built in this rural county and school district over the past 10 years, the district was still down 800 students overall. He pointed out that those who could really afford to build their new homes probably had children who were grown or who were very near graduating from high school.

The district graduates around 800 students each spring, but there are only about 600 new kindergarteners who enter school in the fall. There has been a steady decline for about 8 to 10 years. Bob started making cuts at his intermediate school about the third year that he was there, about 2003. He has been making faculty cuts for the last 7 years, including his previous assignment at the intermediate school. This past summer he lost an A.P. chemistry and English teacher to a high school in a neighboring district. Bob rhetorically asked, “How do you replace that at my high school? Those are issues that are just tough” (Field Notes, 6/7/07).

Chad Hunt and Glacier Ridge High School

Educational Background

Chad is the principal of Glacier Ridge High School. He graduated from Weber State University in 1974 with a major in history and a minor in German. He received his master's degree in modern European history in 1977 from the University of Nebraska. He then received his administrative endorsement from Utah State University.

Career History

This was Chad's 31st year in public education. He taught at Glacier Ridge for 14 years beginning in 1976. He began his assignment as assistant principal at Glacier Ridge in 1990 and served as this high school's assistant principal for the past 17 years. The 2007-2008 school year was his first year as principal. Chad said with a grin, "They say that I'm an anomaly" (Field Notes, 6/6/07). He has spent his entire career at Glacier Ridge High School.

As a teacher, he taught history, world civilization, U.S. history, and A.P. European history. He was a concurrent enrollment adjunct professor for Utah State University, and he taught History 170 at the Glacier Ridge High School campus. He has a German minor and has taught all levels of German. He was also the high school's head soccer coach for 12 years. Chad explained that his district hired an individual to be assistant principal at Glacier Ridge High School whom Chad had coached while the young man was a student there.

Experiences Connected to Literacy

Having spent all of his 31 years at the same high school gave him a unique opportunity to know the community, students, faculty, and staff especially well. He worked for many years as an assistant principal in developing and implementing small learning communities philosophies and strategies (more on this later), and now as principal he could “continue those things that [he has] a passion for and reading is a key piece of this—kids who are struggling—is part of why we are doing this,” he explained (Field Notes, 6/6/07).

Chad has a number of staff members to support him with his work in curriculum and instruction. The school has three assistant principals, an administrative intern, a smaller learning communities director paid for by a federal grant, and six counselors (including a coordinator for accreditation). There is also an advanced placement (A.P.) coordinator.

Demographics of Glacier Ridge High School

Enrollment, socioeconomic situation, and English language learners. Glacier Ridge High School is located in a metropolitan area. A military installation is not too far away. It is a major employer in the community with many civilian employees. Many of the employees’ children attend Glacier Ridge. There is a mix of professionals (white-collar workers), service industry employees (hotels, restaurants, retail, repair companies, etc.), and employees of a large industrial park in the Glacier Ridge attendance area (Field Notes, 6/6/07).

The student population at the beginning of this school year totaled 2,375 students

in grades 10 through 12. Twenty-eight percent of those students were on free and reduced lunch. The school was under heavy construction at the time of the interviews. This is because a brand new high school was being built in another part of the district. It has had a major impact on the enrollment at Glacier Ridge High School. The district wanted to show that, although the new high school is being built and that it will affect Chad's enrollment, the district also cares about the needs of Glacier Ridge, an aging school built in the early 1960s. Several of the wings of the school are being gutted and a new media center was being built.

The boundary changes for Glacier Ridge and the new high school have caused much debate and heated arguments in the communities affected by the change. Those changes have finally been decided, but they will cause Chad some interesting staffing challenges. Before the boundary changes took effect, Glacier Ridge High School had 88 FTEs (full-time equivalent) teachers.

The new boundaries created a projected enrollment for the 2007-2008 school year of about 1,750 students, a decline of 625 students. Thirty-one percent of those students will be on free and reduced lunch, an additional 3% than there were this past year. There was significant discussion with district administration because the original boundary changes had created even larger free and reduced lunch numbers than the 31%. The less economically advantaged families were slated to attend Glacier Ridge while the more affluent were going to the new high school. The district then revised the boundary changes again to create more of a socioeconomic balance between the two high schools.

The following year, 2008-2009, will create continued enrollment change. It is

predicted that Glacier Ridge High School will drop down to about 1,375 students, but the next year, 2009-2010, they are projected to rise in numbers again to around 1,700 students. There is still much growth projected in the Glacier Ridge attendance area.

All of the boundary changes and the related decrease in enrollment create a loss of 26 teachers for the 2007-2008 school year. Further, the following year, 2008-2009, will see a further loss of teacher numbers while the year after that, 2009-2010, will create the need to hire more teachers back. All of these changes create a challenge for the instructional and curricular needs of the school, especially in the areas of smaller learning communities and literacy.

The number of English as a Second Language (ESL) students, also referred to as English Language Learners or ELL, is currently about 1.25% of the total enrollment. The declining enrollment numbers due to boundary changes created a shift in how ESL services would be delivered. The district used to provide district personnel to work with ESL students at Glacier Ridge. Chad explained that the district had recently been “quite aggressive” (Field Notes, 6/6/07) in encouraging and supporting teachers to become ESL certified, and a large number of teachers at Chad’s school had taken advantage of the district-offered program. Almost 50% of the faculty has become ESL certified and the ESL students are placed in these teachers’ classes, including those in core classes.

Faculty. The number of faculty members was somewhat in a state of flux over the next several years. The school is currently offering classes in business, performing and visual arts, P.E., special education, science, skill and technical education, health, English, family and consumer science, history/social studies, driver’s education, math, aerospace,

and foreign language.

Challenges. The major challenges facing Glacier Ridge High School are the ongoing construction in the school and the continuous changes in student enrollment and faculty changes. Chad expressed concern that all of the construction would not be completed by the start of school in two months, and he wondered where they would place all of the students if classroom construction was not complete (Field Notes, 6/6/2007).

Chad explained the other challenge, fluctuating enrollment, this way:

We lost 26 teachers this year due to the boundary changes. This process has been really interesting this year—I've been in the middle of that thing. The principal brought me in early on this so I could be involved. There are people [here] that are leaving us that we hope will come back. I think that morale is down because of all of this challenge. I don't think that they're mad at us; we just hope that at Glacier Ridge High many of them will come back to us. (Field Notes, 6/6/07).

Cindy Dillon and Crystal Creek Junior High School

Educational Background

Cindy Dillon is the principal of Crystal Creek Junior High School. She is a veteran educator of 40 years. She received her bachelor of science degree from Utah State University in 1967 with a composite major in vocational education, consumer education, and home economics. She earned her Master's degree from Brigham Young University in 1982 with a major in public school administration and supervision.

Career History

Cindy began teaching family and consumer science (FACS) in a southern California junior high school in 1967. She was there for a year and then took a year off

from teaching when her husband was in the army. She moved to Utah in 1969 where she began teaching FACS and physical education at a junior high school in central Utah. She accepted a teaching position in 1983 at a high school along the Wasatch Front in northern Utah where she again taught FACS. Cindy would remain in that district for the rest of her career. She also coached track and was the head coach of the school's drill team. Cindy quipped, "That's why I became a principal—because if you can run a drill team, you can be a principal" (Field Notes, 6/5/07). She taught for a total of 22 years.

The district in which her high school was located then asked her in 1989 to be the nutrition coordinator for the district, which included 20 schools. That was the beginning of an 18-year span in administration. She was a junior high assistant principal from 1990 to 1994 and then became a high school assistant principal from 1994 to 1996. Cindy accepted her first principal assignment in 1994 in one of her district's junior high schools. She then became principal of Crystal Creek Junior High School in 2003 where she is now completing her fourth year. She received the Utah Middle School Principal of the Year Award in 2001, and her school was awarded the Top 100 Middle Schools in the Nation by the National Association of Secondary School Principals in 2001, according to information in her vita. Cindy has also served on various district and state curriculum and student services committees and provided community training in gang prevention, parenting skills, and student success programs.

Experiences Connected to Adolescent Literacy

I was curious about how her focus on adolescent literacy came into being since Cindy's teaching background is in nutrition and FACS. When I asked her that question,

she explained that her own parents never graduated from high school. Regardless of their lack of a high school diploma or attending college, her parents were almost relentless in requiring that their children spoke correct English at home. Cindy explained that, “[Literacy] always has been my interest. Growing up, you have to realize, my parents were not college educated or graduated from high school. They pushed literacy, and they always made the kids speak correctly at home.”

She noted further, “I never wanted to be a Home Ec. [economics] labeled teacher, I just wanted to be able to help them learn. It just happened to be in that field [of home economics]” (Field Notes, 6/5/2007). Cindy still applies what she learned so many years ago—the importance of students speaking and writing properly.

Cindy wrote and received a state grant for Schools for the 21st Century. The grant dealt with implementing goals for improvement in reading, writing, and math skills. Part of this process included implementing remediation activities in her English/language arts curriculum.

Demographics of Crystal Creek Junior High School

Enrollment, socioeconomic situation, English language learners. Crystal Creek Junior High School is located in a metropolitan area, although it is only minutes away from rural land and mountains. Recent boundary changes, as noted later, brought in more poor students than they had before. This has made Crystal Creek more of an inner city school, Cindy explained. She noted that the city of Crystal Creek continues to expand into rural areas (Field Notes, 6/5/07).

Her junior high's enrollment this past year was approximately 1,017 students in seventh through ninth grades. There are approximately 11% Hispanic students, 2-3% African American, and less than 1% Asian American students at the junior high. The remainder of the student body is Caucasian. Approximately 28-34% of the students are on free and reduced lunch (Field Notes, 6/5/2007).

There was a boundary change 4 years ago at the time Cindy was assigned to the school. A new junior high was opening up, and the student population had to be shifted. She noted that when that was done, it created a larger poverty base in her attendance area than she had before. Declining enrollment has been somewhat of a problem, but the district is considering another boundary change to help compensate for the shifts in population. "We were expecting it [the new boundary change] last January," Cindy explained, "but it hasn't happened yet" (Field Notes, 6/5/2007).

In 2003, the enrollment at the school was approximately 1,075 students. This was a loss of 58 students over 4 years. She further noted that the rate or frequency of transiency was small but that her junior high, as mentioned earlier, was becoming more of an inner-city school. This created challenges in the way the curriculum was delivered, especially in literacy-related subjects like reading and writing. Meaningful and practical application of the curriculum is important for every student, but Cindy pointed out that her students need to see the importance of a curriculum application to their own lives right now. She says firmly, "Meaningful must be *right now* for these students" (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

Faculty. There are 36 full-time teachers, three counselors, and five special

education teachers, including a behavior unit at Crystal Creek Junior High School. The content areas offered at Crystal Creek include art, English, foreign language (all Spanish), P.E., family and consumer science (FACS), math, music, science, social studies, special education, and career and technical education.

Challenges. Cindy saw declining enrollment as a potential problem. She pointed out that even though declining enrollment was not serious now, the district was proposing boundary changes in her school again (Field Notes, 6/5/2007). The impact on curriculum, cultural (English language learners) students' needs, and socioeconomic conditions remained unknown. She also noted that her school was enrolling more students in the lower socioeconomic categories than before. This affected how the curriculum was taught and specifically how reading and writing needs were met (Field Notes, 6/12/2007). She emphasized again that practical application of the curriculum must be "right now" for her students (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

Carol Maughan and Eagle View Middle School

Educational Background

Carol Maughan is the principal of Eagle View Middle School. All of her education background was in parochial private schools, including her undergraduate work. She said that she had a "strong, strong, strong academic education. That was an absolute blessing, a really wonderful opportunity" (Field Notes, 6/5/07).

She received her bachelor of arts degree in elementary education from Mary Mance College in Toledo, Ohio in 1965. Carol received a master's degree in secondary

education from the University of Guam in 1973 and a second master's degree in guidance and counseling from the same university in 1977. She received her education administration certification from the University of Utah in 1987.

Career History

Carol's teaching career began at the same elementary school she attended in her childhood. Her first teaching assignment was with fourth graders and began in 1965. She taught there for 2 years when, in 1967, she had the unique opportunity to teach at the Oil Company School in Libya, North Africa. As the fourth grade teacher in an American curriculum-based program, she taught children from 84 nations. These were the children whose parents worked in the oil fields or children whose fathers were presidents of oil companies. The children "came from all over the world, and of course, that opened a whole new history for me as part of my learning in literacy," Carol explained (Field Notes, 6/5/2007). She continued, "This was a particular challenge, since there were children from so many different parts of the world, and I was 23—the youngest member of the faculty." She added, however, "I had a lot of masters to learn from, and I really did learn" (Field Notes, 6/5/2007). She taught fourth grade there until 1970.

She left the Oil Company School in 1970 and moved to Guam where she was a contract teacher for the government of Guam. She taught sixth grade. In Guam she earned her reading certification and master's degree in education with an emphasis in reading and English as a second language.

Her teaching experience in Guam involved language arts, social studies, and English as a second language. Carol explained that she taught ESL almost everyday

because there were so many languages, and the school was at the crossroads of the Pacific; hence, the students were all English language learners (Field Notes, 6/5/2007).

Carol met her future husband on Guam, married, and remained there until 1977. They then moved to the United States where they settled in northern Utah.

Carol applied to an urban school district in Utah in 1978 and immediately was hired to teach ESL to Vietnamese adults who had recently arrived in large numbers to the area. She was asked to form a counseling program for adults who were returning to school and who had never received their diplomas. She served adult refugees who were the wealthiest from Iran to the poorest of Vietnamese and other Asians. She was in this position from 1978 through 1986.

Carol was asked by her superintendent in 1986 to become an assistant principal of an inner city middle school. She was an assistant principal and principal there from 1986 through 1989. She also served during this time for 1 year as the director of the Utah Principals' Academy and then returned to her principal duties at the same school. This school was the most culturally diverse middle school in the state at that time. The school housed children from 37 nations and who spoke 27 languages. Teaching English as a second language was a daily occurrence at the school.

A new superintendent was hired in the district, and he asked Carol in 2003 to move to Eagle View Middle School as the new principal. She has been here for the past 4 years. This year marked her 42nd anniversary in education.

Experiences Connected to Literacy

Carol has enjoyed literacy since childhood. Her experiences in Libya literally “opened a whole new history” for her in literacy, as mentioned earlier (Field Notes, 6/5/2007). She has dedicated most of her career to working with students who have particular literacy needs, either because of language issues, socioeconomic conditions, or both.

Demographics of Eagle View Middle School

Enrollment, socioeconomic situation, and English language learners. Eagle View Middle School is located in a very affluent neighborhood on the east side of the city. It is nestled in a quiet neighborhood among older homes. The yards and general landscaping of the homes appear to be well cared for. The price and age of the homes have created a situation where fewer younger families can afford to purchase these homes. This has caused a decline in student enrollment in the immediate area of the school and created the need for boundary changes to include inner city school children from the central and west side of the city. Carol explained that:

We have three schools that feed to us—elementary schools that are on the east bench and they are wealthy, wealthy families. We have three schools with the new boundaries that come from the inner city and those students take the bus everyday home or to school and after school we have a later bus for those students who want to stay. (Field Notes, 6/5/07)

Carol noted that Eagle View Middle School has around 550 seventh- and eighth-grade students as of the end of the 2006-2007 school year (Field Notes, 6/5/07). A review of her school’s School Improvement Data (School Improvement Plan, February 2007) indicated that in 2003-04 there were 701 students attending her school; in 2004-05, there

were 621; and in 2005-06, there were 647 students at Eagle View. There has been fluctuating and declining enrollment for the last several years.

Her school attendance boundaries have changed due to the decreasing enrollment in and around her school community. Her school is located in a wealthy area of the city where the people who can afford to buy homes do not have the same size families as those people who lived there before. The district now busses students from the inner city to Eagle View. The School Improvement Data of the School Improvement Plan (February, 2007) showed that free and reduced lunch student numbers have hovered between 39% and 41% over the last 3 years. The same data source showed that approximately 15% of the student body was designated as limited English proficient. This number has remained somewhat constant over the last 3 years. Three elementary schools from the inner city now feed into Carol's school.

She pointed out that "the biggest challenge that I deal with every single day is the integration of all students together because we have two diverse groups: those who have and those who have not. We have had this integration for 6 years or so" (Field Notes, 6/5/2007).

Other students choose to come to Carol's school from other district middle schools under open enrollment policies. She postulated that these students come to her school because her school had the highest academic achievement scores in the district. She believed that the scores are so high because students come to school ready to learn and there are teachers there who are exceptional (Field Notes, 6/5/2007). A review of the Annual School Improvement Planning Process confirmed the strong academic program

offered at Eagle View Middle School.

She believed that her school's "unbelievable diversity" (Field Notes, 6/5/07) played a role in others wanting to attend her school. Her school's enrollment included some of the wealthiest families in the city as well as families whose parents don't speak any English—and she referred to this diversity as "wonderful" (Field Notes, 6/5/07).

The grade configuration of the school is seventh and eighth grade only. Her students then move on to attend one of two 9th- to 12th-grade high schools.

There were approximately 27 students who had very limited to no English language skills. These students received daily instruction in English language learning. Other students with more proficient English language skills were monitored in regular classrooms, but they were not specifically taught English as a second language skills.

Carol had 36 different corporate sponsorships at her former school to help students buy the things they needed for school and that the school could not afford. These included uniform shirts, planners for every student, and three ring binders, to name a few. Her current school has a student body where most of the students come to school on the first day with all of those items, and more, in hand and ready to begin the year. "The contrast," she said, "was so unbelievable" (Field Notes, 6/5/2007).

Her former school had difficulties getting parents to help in the classrooms. That was a real struggle. Her current school has parents who help on a regular basis. In her own words, she stated:

These are parents who will do anything. They put on the big jobs. They ask what are the big concerns, and I tell them that here [at this school] they are the non-English speakers. They came up with a plan, and they followed through. We have parents who show up the first Tuesday of every month for the advisory group

[tutoring and other academic activities take place then]. This is very effective. I think that our leaders of our PTSA [Parent Teachers Student Association] should be the models for our nation on how parents can be effective in schools. (Field Notes, 6/5/07)

Faculty. There are 27 teachers at Eagle View Middle School. The areas in which they teach include arts, music, foreign language (Spanish, French, and German), math, media, P.E., reading/language arts, special education, science, social studies, and technology.

Challenges. Carol pointed out that her biggest challenge was being able to integrate the “have” students with the “have not” students (Field Notes, 6/5/2007). Carol also shared an analysis of Eagle View’s demographics that revealed “in the past nine years [the school’s] minority population has grown from 16% to 30%” (School Improvement Data, February 2007). This presented challenges in what curriculum was taught and how it was taught, especially in the literacy areas of reading and writing.

Gary Miller and Sun Crest Middle School

Educational Background

Gary Miller is the principal of Sun Crest Middle School. Gary has been in education for a total of 18 years. He graduated from Western New Mexico University in 1989 with a B.S. degree in mathematics. He received his master’s degree in education management and development from New Mexico State University in 1993.

Career History

Gary began his career teaching high school math and physics in 1989 in New

Mexico. He taught for 4 years and became interested in educational administration. He has spent the last 14 years in educational administration. He began serving as a middle school assistant principal in 1993 in northern Utah. His principal took a leave of absence for 1 year in 1994, and Gary became the interim principal for that year. He then became an elementary principal in 1999 and served there for 3 years. Gary became the principal of Sun Crest Middle School in 2002. He has served in this current position for 5 years.

Gary was assistant principal under Carol Maughan, another principal selected for this research study. He said that he had heard nothing but good things about Carol. He knew that the transition from classroom to administration was a difficult one, and he needed a good role model to “teach me the ropes,” as he put it (Field Notes, 6/21/2007).

Gary indicated that he had seen the toll that administration took on people when they went straight from the classroom into the principalship, and he viewed it as tough. “It’s an impossible job at times,” he said (Field Notes, 6/21/07). He wanted to take the time to become an effective administrator and learn from one of the best. He selected Carol to be that mentor and “luckily for me,” he posited, she hired him (Field Notes, 6/21/07). He was her assistant for several years and then thought that he was at a point where he needed to do it himself. More on Gary’s background will follow in the “Belief and Commitment” strand of the data analysis section because it has a particularly strong impact on *why* literacy is taught and the *way* it is taught at Sun Crest Middle School.

Experiences Connected to Literacy

Literacy and a special childhood teacher in middle school changed Gary’s life. This teacher would not accept that Gary could not read, although Gary reported, “I didn’t

learn how to read until about seventh grade” (Field Notes, 6/21/2007). He explained that this teacher said to him, “‘Boy, you are not going to get out of this class until you can read.’ I wouldn’t be sitting here talking with you right now if it wasn’t for that lady” (Field Notes, 6/21/2007). He added this.

“That’s when really the importance of literacy in my own mind really started to solidify. And she worked her backside off with me...she gave me so much of her time and energy and effort that it still kind of touches my heart. (Field Notes, 6/21/2007)

Demographics of Sun Crest Middle School

Enrollment, socioeconomic situation, and English language learners. Sun Crest Middle School is located in a low-income area of the city. A large truck stop and major freeway are not far away, as well as large industrial parks. The school itself, however, is situated in a neighborhood of homes off a busy street.

This middle school will shortly grow from about 630 seventh and eighth graders to approximately 950 with the addition of a sixth-grade group of students. The old middle school was demolished and a new one built on the same spot. The entire student body was moved to another middle school for several years while this new one was being built.

The design phase for the new school, both architectural and grade reconfiguration design, took 4 years. A design committee made up of architects, faculty and administration, and parents worked on the project. The new school opened in August of 2007.

It became evident to Gary during the design phase that the school should be a sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade configuration. One reason for this decision was that his

years as an elementary principal taught him that sixth-grade students were far more like middle school students in their adolescent development than they were elementary students. He observed stark differences even between fifth- and sixth-grade students. He further observed that sixth graders displayed the same adolescent characteristics as older students: impulsive, very social, and very active.

He also pointed out in a seventh and eighth grade configuration, “you blink and they’re gone” (Field Notes, 6/21/07). They are suddenly at the high school that begins at the ninth grade. The sixth grade addition gave faculty and staff an extra year to nurture and foster those relationships that were so important in our profession. The age differences and the extra year were the compelling reasons for making the decision to move to a sixth- through eighth-grade school.

This new school was built to accommodate sixth through eighth grades *and* a small learning community’s concept, at Gary’s request. He felt that the school, by itself, could end up, as he put it, a “big bureaucratic institution” (Field Notes, 6/21/07). He wanted to create small learning communities based on the age of the students and their corresponding educational and emotional needs. The first floor is for the seventh graders and is divided into two pods. The sixth graders also share the first floor in another part of the building. The eighth graders utilize the top floor or second story.

The seventh- and eighth-grade sections of the building are each divided into two cohorts or groups of students. Each cohort has about 150 students and a teacher team that consists of a math teacher, a science teacher, a social studies teacher, and a language arts teacher.

The sixth graders have a different configuration. Rather than having teams that consist of four teachers, the sixth grade cohorts are smaller—dividing the students into 10 small learning communities. These teams consist of two teachers. One teacher will be responsible for math and science, and the other teacher will be responsible for history and language arts. Each teacher will teach both subjects in 3-hour blocks. Each cohort will have 60 students rather than 150 students as in the seventh and eighth grade.

Gary explained, “At the sixth grade, they’re used to having a self-contained classroom, so throwing them into a cohort of 150 students doesn’t make much sense” (Field Notes, 6/21/07). He wanted to start the sixth graders out in small numbers and then gradually get them use to larger numbers in the seventh and eighth grades. He added that adolescence was a “very chaotic time of life. Every day is an adventure. You have to be very sensitive, and you have to get people around you that are very sensitive [to these kids’ needs]” Field Notes, 6/21/07).

The sixth-grade teachers incorporated CORI (Concept Oriented Reading Instruction). This is a concept that teaches students how to incorporate reading, study, and research skills across the content areas using one topic for research. For example, students can study the effects of water use in a community through research that uses math, science, social studies, and language arts applications. Gary believed that this concept also followed the idea in adolescent literacy that all teachers needed to teach reading skills within their content area.

The economic and sociocultural makeup of his community is reflected in the 98% of his students on free and reduced lunch. Only a few students are not on free and

reduced lunch. Approximately 92% of the students are from ethnic origins other than Caucasian, and approximately 60% of those students are Hispanic, according to the Annual School Improvement Plan data from February 2007. “The best way to describe our school,” said Gary, “is that we are a microcosm of the world” (Field Notes, 6/21/07). There are 25 to 30 different languages spoken at the school. They have students from Bosnia and other countries from Eastern Europe, Polynesia, Liberia, Viet Nam, China, and other countries of Asia, to name a few. Approximately 85% of the students are English language learners.

There are several refugee centers in his attendance area. There is currently an influx of children from Somalia. Most of them came from a camp in the Sudan where they had been staying because of the war in Somalia. The children stayed at this camp before coming to the United States. The camp has no school, at least as we know it. Many of these children have been exposed to extreme violence and have seen their parents killed. Since most of the men in Somalia have either died or are still fighting in the war, refugee children arrived here with their mothers (if they’re lucky, Gary points out), aunt, cousin, or a distant relative (Field Notes, 6/21/07). There is a significant challenge to the school in providing a formal education for these children.

Faculty. There are 28 teachers at Sun Crest Middle School. They teach in the areas of reading, math, wood shop, language arts, social studies, science, special education, music, health, family and consumer science, computers, English as a second language, art, and P.E.

Challenges. The main challenges facing Sun Crest are a low socioeconomic base

and a high percentage of non- or limited English speaking children. Gary, the faculty, and staff, however, have designed various approaches to assist these children, as well as their families. This will be explained in more detail later.

Summary

Five secondary school principals were selected from the northern Utah area based on their district office administrators' recommendations. They were selected on the basis of having an interest in adolescent literacy across the curriculum content areas and experience in implementing adolescent literacy practices.

These principals include three men and two women. Two are principals of high schools, two are principals of middle schools, and one is a principal of a junior high school. All five principals were driven by either childhood literacy experiences or a strong devotion to implement literacy programs, policies, and procedures into their schools. A review of Table 1 indicates that all five principals had major emphases of studies *other* than reading or writing subjects in their undergraduate degrees.

Their education careers ranged from a minimum of 18 years to a maximum of 42 years. Their teaching careers spanned a range of 4 years to 22 years. Their administrative careers ranged from a minimum of 14 years to a maximum of 30 years.

There were similarities in the challenges that they faced. Four of the five principals reported that their major challenges deal with some degree of declining enrollment and school boundary changes. They discussed the impact of these challenges on staffing, curriculum design, and curriculum delivery. The principals' own

backgrounds and the demographics of their schools help to determine how adolescent literacy is implemented in their individual schools. This will be discussed in the research analysis section that follows.

CHAPTER V

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

Analysis of the data collected from the five principals was viewed through a sociocultural lens. Sociocultural researchers Au and Vygotsky (as cited in Tracey & Morrow, 2006) argue strongly that reading is a social activity. Au adds that even reading a book alone can be considered a social activity because the reader

is engaged with the author, the book is written in a language developed through long periods of use by other people, and the reader's concepts and schemata for responding to the book borrow from the thinking of others and result from previous social interactions. (Tracey & Morrow, p. 106)

A social learning perspective emphasizes the importance of social influences and social interaction on learning (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). "School literacy learning," Au argues, "is seen as a social process, affected not only by present but historical circumstances" (as cited in Tracey & Morrow, p. 106).

This sociocultural phenomenon of learning (or not learning) to read, Au (as cited in Tracey & Morrow) continued,

...cannot logically be separated from the particular milieu in which it takes place. When children learn to read, or fail to learn to read, they do so in a particular social, cultural, and historical environment. Their success or failure in reading cannot be understood apart from that environment. (p. 106)

I also used findings from various researchers that were particularly helpful in determining emergent themes from the principals' data. These included principled practices for effective adolescent literacy classrooms (Sturtevant et al., 2006),

sociocultural practices affecting literacy learning (Au, 2000; Bean, 2000; Bean, Bean, & Bean, 2004; Gee, 2000; Moje & Hinchman, 2004; Tomlinson, 2004; Tracey & Morrow, 2006), what to consider when implementing adolescent literacy practices (Alvermann & Rush, 2004; Biancarosa & Snow, 2004), and principals' leadership influence on school culture (Fisher et al., 2004; Marzano et al., 2005; McEwan, 2003; Taylor & Collins, 2003; Waters et al., 2003).

Seven common strands emerged after extensive review of each principal's interview data. I looked for similarities and emergent themes to determine what, if any, commonalities existed between and across these principals' adolescent literacy experiences. The questions I used to interview the principals were explained in the research methods chapter and are located in Appendix B. They were designed based on extensive review of adolescent literacy research specifically detailed in the literature review chapter and summarized in the preceding paragraph. The Seven Common Strands were not designed to match any preconceived commonalities because the Strands were not determined until after all of the interview data had been collected and analyzed.

Each Strand has a corresponding sociocultural perspective that is grounded in the research. I placed this perspective at the beginning of each Strand analysis for two reasons: (a) it allows the reader to immediately see the sociocultural relationship to the Strand, and (b) it allows the principals' perspectives and dialogue in that Strand to flow smoothly and without interruption.

A brief global summary of the seven common strands will be provided next. A summary table of the findings from each principal relative to each Strand is also provided

at the beginning of each strand's analysis. The seven common strands that emerged from my data are as follows:

1. A long-time belief in and commitment to adolescent literacy.
2. Staff development.
3. Principal involvement—observing in classrooms, participating in staff development, staying informed of literacy-related research, and the principal's role in adolescent literacy,
4. Use of literacy team and faculty involvement
5. Clear communication of the principal's literacy vision to constituents (faculty, staff, students, parents, and community).
6. Literacy and the evaluation process of program and teachers.
7. Review and revision of school mission and goals.

*Strand #1: A Long-Time Belief in and Commitment to
Adolescent Literacy*

This strand is the only one of the seven about which I had seen no prior research. Each principal, however, communicated powerfully how important his or her philosophy of literacy, especially adolescent literacy, was to him or her. Three of the five principals had especially strong feelings about the importance of literacy because it affected their lives as far back as their own early adolescent years. I purposefully included a long-time commitment to literacy as the first strand because I believe that this commitment became the driving force behind almost everything, *if not everything*, these principals did to

enhance literacy for their students.

Strand 2: Staff Development

Staff development is critical to the success of adolescent literacy practices as was noted in the review of literature chapter (Guskey, 2003; Hawley & Valli, 1999, Sykes, 1999). These principals were committed to staff development that was student-need and teacher-need driven and were committed to participating in it with their teachers. It became evident early on that it was important to include this strand.

Strand 3: Principal Involvement—Observing in Classrooms, Participating in Staff Development, Staying Informed of Literacy-Related Research, and the Principal’s Role in Adolescent Literacy

The research findings of Marzano and colleagues (2005), McEwan (2003), and Taylor and Collins (2003), as noted in the review of literature, supported the notion that principal involvement is important to the successful implementation and sustaining of adolescent literacy programs and practices. These principals were examples of how a school administrator can be involved in literacy. They spoke more to this issue than to any other of the Seven Common Strands.

Strand 4: Use of Literacy Team and Faculty Involvement

Each principal used the collegial process extensively in literacy implementation, review, and revision as suggested by Irvin and colleagues (2007). These researchers felt

strongly that principals could not improve students' literacy habits by themselves. It "must be a priority" for principals to build on the strengths and expertise of team leaders, department chairs, curriculum coordinators, and teachers for successful literacy implementation and improvement to occur (Irvin et al., p. 178). The five principals believed this process to be critical to the success of all that they were doing. This involvement came in various forms: literacy teams, department teams, ad hoc (limited time assignment) committees, and total faculty.

*Strand 5: Clear Communication of the Principal's Literacy Vision to
Constituents (Faculty, Staff, Students, Parents, and Community)*

All five principals had a clear vision of what they wanted to accomplish with their literacy endeavors and communicated that vision to their faculty. Each principal demonstrated what Taylor and Collins (2003) consider to be mandatory in communicating both the vision and the commitment to it: (a) finances and budget for literacy, (b) allocation of literacy personnel, (c) professional development, (d) appropriate instructional materials, (e) appropriate learning space, and (f) learning time (p. 11). All believed that literacy was critical to the success of their students both now and long after they have graduated from high school (i.e., becoming lifelong learners). Several felt that they needed to improve on communicating their vision to the community and have set goals to do so—including the use of their school's Web site, PTA newsletter, literacy announcements to parents, discussions with parent and school organizations, etc.

*Strand 6: Literacy and the Evaluation Process of Program
and Teachers*

All principals reported that their districts did not have an evaluation instrument specifically related to literacy. All principals, therefore, modified their district evaluation instrument so that literacy would be addressed. All teachers were required to reference how they were implementing literacy instruction in their classrooms. Principals discussed teachers' literacy goals with them at the beginning of the year. The principals then discussed the quality of implementation at the end-of-year teacher evaluation conferences.

As a result of a review of almost 8,000 studies, Hattie...concluded that “the most powerful single modification that enhances achievement is feedback” and as a result of his study of successful schools, Elmore...concluded that “superintendents and system-level staff were active in monitoring curriculum and instruction in classrooms and schools.” (as cited in Marzano et al., 2005, p. 55)

The five principals realized the importance of feedback and evaluation to the literacy achievement process and committed to ongoing feedback and evaluation.

Strand 7: Review and Revision of School Mission and Goals

All five principals made it clear that the adolescent literacy process was not over once it had been implemented. “School leaders,” according to Irvin et al. (2007, p. 137) “have to know whether implementing the literacy action plan is helping the school meet its literacy goals. Administrators and members of the literacy team should also determine if the plan needs to be changed or modified.” Review and necessary revisions were standard principal expectations across all five schools. All five principals employed

faculty collaboration in the review and revise process.

Table 3 provides a brief summary of the findings collected from each principal as the data relate to the seven common strands. It is a quick reference guide for the total data analysis that follows. A data summary table with more specific details of principals' observations relative to only that strand introduces the analysis section of each strand.

Table 3

Brief Summary of Principals' Comments Within the Seven Common Strands

Common strands	Principals				
	Richards	Hunt	Dillon	Maughan	Miller
1. Belief/commitment	Sitting on a roof	Passion for literacy	Her parents' commitment	Strong lit upbringing	Grandmother
2. Staff development	Teacher/data driven	Teacher/data driven	Teacher/data driven	Teacher/data driven	Teacher/data driven
3. Principal involvement	Ideas and experts	Vision for innovation	Meaningful <i>now</i>	Interact with everyone	"let's get crackin'"
4. Lit team/faculty	English department	No literacy team	Data and the team	Leadership team	Grade-level teams
5. Clearly stating vision	More writing then reading	Committee then faculty	Architect and custodian	Careful and thorough	"June Cleaver" paradigm shift
6. Literacy and evaluation	No options to ignore evaluation	Teacher/program evaluation	Must collect data	Teacher observation	Evaluation is powerful
7. Review/revise goals	"Razor-like" writing goals	Evaluate status quo and modify	Find and fix the gaps	Research based	Always review and revise

Analysis of Data Using the Seven Common Strands and
Corresponding Sociocultural Perspectives

*Strand 1: A Long-Time Belief in and Commitment to
Adolescent Literacy*

This strand provides an insight into why these five principals were committed to adolescent literacy achievement for their students. It allows us to see what motivated these principals to do what they did. Several important elements that emerged from this Strand were: (a) strong, long-time commitment to literacy; (b) need for faculty to develop relationships with teachers, students, and the community; (c) need for a culturally responsive curriculum; and (d) impact of family members.

Sociocultural Perspectives

Strong, long-time commitment to literacy. Researchers point out that a school's faculty and staff should commit to having "ownership of literacy as the overarching goal of the language arts curriculum" (Au, 2000, p. 839). This ownership of literacy provides students, through their teachers and staff members, with a reason to study literacy. It allows students to see the importance of literacy in their lives.

Au (2004) continued her thoughts about a commitment to literacy. She noted that some students who struggle may not place a high value on education. This is because the connection between education and job opportunities has never been supported or experienced by their own families and perhaps not indicated by their school. It is especially important, then, that the school is committed to taking the responsibility of

showing especially the struggling students what that necessary connection between education and jobs is and how to make it work best for them.

These principals' commitment to school wide literacy programs, and especially their impact on struggling readers, relates to Delpit's concept of power codes (as cited in Fecho, Davis, & Moore, 2006). She pointed out that "all students must be taught mainstream power codes because not to do so will further marginalize those who are already marginalized from access to social, economic, and political power venues" (p. 189). The challenge, however, is to have the students "understand the beauty and power inherent in a deep grasp of mainstream power codes, but [to also] find the opportunities to express the beauty and power of their home and other personal codes" (Fecho et al., p. 189). Not to validate or celebrate a student's home and other personal codes "is to create a gulf among the child, his home, and the school" (Fecho et al., p. 189).

Need for faculty to develop relationships with teachers, students, and the community. Sociocultural pedagogy should help inform and strengthen the development of relationships between teachers and students (Moje & Hinchman, 2004). The authors argue that students who formulate that kind of relationship with school adults are more likely to buy in to what the school person values as important in education—in this case literacy. Specifically, the authors note that:

Teachers who cheer for youth playing basketball, who know their students' families and neighborhoods, and who have a sense for the kinds of things particular students care about, have several advantages. Teachers who build relationships can more easily construct explanations and orchestrate experiences suited to students' existing understandings. They also can more easily read students' responses to their initiations and negotiate accordingly. (Moje & Hinchman, p. 339)

Need for a culturally responsive curriculum. Strong commitments to literacy are critical in a sociocultural setting (Au, 2000). Au reviewed research conducted from a social constructivist point of view on school literacy learning of students from diverse backgrounds. She considered more than different languages to be a part of multicultural education. Instead, she supported Gollnick and Chin's (as cited in Au) concept that ethnicity, national origin, social class, primary language, gender, religion, age, geographic region, urban-suburban-rural, and exceptionality (exceptionally gifted to exceptionally disabled) should all be considered as cultural variables. Au argues that it is important for students from all such cultural strata to see the school personnel's commitment to literacy.

The principals in this study all had schools with diverse cultures that reflected differences in race and socioeconomic conditions. All but one principal dealt with various stages of declining enrollment; he worked with a student body of over 97% free and reduced lunch students. These principals' experiences and commitment to literacy underscored the need for a culturally responsive pedagogy that takes into account many different discourse communities (Moje & Hinchman, 2004). The researchers added that culturally responsive pedagogy "should teach youth how to navigate cultural...communities" (p. 323).

The principals all had a strong commitment to serving children from all cultural backgrounds. Such a commitment seems to be the exception, rather than the rule, according to Au (2004). She explains that there is a trend towards greater diversity in the student population of the United States while the trend for teachers is headed in the

opposite direction. Most teachers, Au argues, at some time in their careers will find themselves working with students whose social and ethnic backgrounds are quite unlike their teachers. This can cause challenges to the teacher, according to Au, in being able to relate well with these students.

These five principals embodied the recommendations of Moje and Hinchman (2004) whose research indicated that a culturally responsive pedagogy “makes clear to students that knowledge is best produced when people explore the world and experiment with many different ways that different cultural groups...use to represent their understandings” (p. 343). Such instructional practices can then be considered culturally responsive pedagogy (Moje & Hinchman, 2004). Practical application is not only important; Gee (2001) has argued that it is essential.

The importance of practical application was consistent with Moje and Hinchman’s (2004) third principle of culturally responsive pedagogy: “Culturally responsive pedagogy works with youth to develop applications and to construct understandings that are *relevant* [italics added] to them” (p. 341). Authenticity and meaningfulness are critical components of the implementation of sociocultural-sensitive literacy practices (Au, 1998; Gee, 2001).

Some sociocultural researchers offer a word of caution to anyone working with students of limited English abilities. “Language is half ours and half that of others,” argues Bakhtin (as cited in Fecho et al., 2006, p. 202), “and speakers are forever striving to clarify meaning.” This thought provides a continuing challenge to consistently check for understanding of language that is spoken and language that is received. Language, as

Fecho and colleagues speculated, is first learned in the home and then in the neighborhood. It is, they argue, very much tied to identity. This identity is very personal, and the authors caution that the “possibility of having to alter one’s core belief in order to speak acceptably in mainstream settings either consciously or subconsciously can act as a deterrent toward literacy and language acquisition by learners whose language markedly differs from the mainstream” (p. 202).

This word of advice is offered to all teachers who have students whose “home languages differ markedly from the standard” (Fecho et al., 2006, p. 203).

[Such teachers] need to acknowledge those differences and to incorporate discussions about such differences into the fabric of the classroom. If students are aware of these differences that exist between the languages of their lives and the privileged mainstream dialect, they can make appropriate choices about accessing that privileged dialect and controlling the effects of such access on their sense of self and sense of membership in larger identifying cultures of race and class. (p. 203)

Impact of family members. One of the staples and main foundations of socioculturalism is the impact of the home and family (Gee, 1998) on a student’s education. It is part of what Bronfenbrenner (as cited in Tracey & Morrow, 2006) notes as one of three systems, or concentric spheres, which affects a child’s development. This microsystem, or the first and innermost sphere of the three concentric spheres, is described as the child’s “immediate environment, his home and/or classroom” (Tracey & Morrow, p. 105).

A research review from the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP, 2007) supports the importance of family in students’ pursuits of academic achievement. “High parental expectations for students’ success and achievement stand

out as a significant influence on many academic outcomes in high school, including math and reading scores, credits completed, and achievement growth” (p. 3).

The review also pointed out the importance of students perceiving that their parents have high academic expectations for their children. “When adolescents perceive that their parents have high educational goals for them, they have more interest in school, greater academic self-regulation, and higher motivation and goal pursuits” (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Doan Holbein; Marchant, Paulson, & Rothlisberg as cited in NASSP, 2007, p.3). The review also stressed that the “more families discuss school issues, the greater impact their expectations can have on adolescent academic achievement” (Jeynes as cited in NASSP, p. 3).

Familial care for their student’s progress represents the monitoring that Rodriguez (as cited in NASSP, 2007) argued was “...a parent’s—or another close adult’s—efforts to know what is going on in an adolescent’s life. Monitoring of social activities decreases school problems, substance use and delinquency, and promotes social competence and good grades” (NASSP, p. 4). The monitoring of adolescents’ academic and social lives also “...can catch emerging problems and promote positive academic outcomes” (Catsambis; Sartor & Youniss as cited in NASSP, p. 4). This underscored a study by Snow (as cited in Tracey & Morrow, 2006) that showed the positive correlation between children’s literacy development and the language patterns that their mothers used with them. Snow’s findings were later used to develop a family literacy intervention program. The results of the program implementation showed that “the language growth of children who participated in the program was significantly better than those who did not

participate” (Tracey & Morrow, p. 122).

Au (2000) recommends building a strong relationship for improving students’ literacy learning. She argues that teachers and administrators need to make “stronger links to the community” (p. 839). Parents are an integral part of the school’s literacy program.

Sociocultural researchers argue that teachers “must find ways to legitimize, validate, and celebrate the home and other personal codes students bring to the classroom. Not to do so is to create a gulf among the child, his home, and the school” (Delpit as cited in Fecho et al.; 2006, p. 189). This process for very limited English speaking students corresponds with much of the sociolinguistic research that “has maintained that students can start communicating by using very little amounts of language to negotiate meaning” (Schifini, 1996, p. 43).

Table 4 provides an introduction to and a brief summary of the data provided by the principals relative to their commitment to literacy implementation. This table acts as a signpost for the findings related specifically to Strand #1. There is a similar table for each strand.

Bob Richards

Bob has enjoyed listening to students read out in the halls for as long as he can remember. He also held reading contests with his elementary students and even would sit up on the roof of the school if students met certain reading goals.

He was always trying to find ways to motivate students to read. He had a Principal’s Reading List where the librarian had selected books. If students read a certain

Table 4

Brief Summary of Strand #1 Data: Belief and Commitment

Principals	Literacy commitment	Relationships w/ faculty/students	Responsive curriculum	Family connection
Bob Richards	Motivates students to read	Faculty book study groups	Students must write more	Is new to the school
Chad Hunt	Helping struggling readers	Major faculty collaboration	Constant review with faculty	Accreditation involvement
Cindy Dillon	Started as a child	Start with teachers, simple and fun	Must be “right now”	Mom and Dad created interest
Carol Maughan	Since the beginning	Teachers, students, and posters	Dream and set goals	Parents as teachers
Gary Miller	Seriously at-risk as a child	Newcomer A and B	All teachers teach reading	Crucial for success

number of these books, Bob would give them a prize. The last year of his intermediate school principalship, he gave students a bookmark if they met their goals. They also could pick out a book from a basket of high interest books in his office. Students also could share a book report with him, and he would give them some form of reward. Although he felt like he did not have the background in the type of literacy instruction that is taught now, he always made it a priority. He did not deplete or delete the librarian’s budget as some principals he knew had done. He remembered hearing horror stories about principals taking that particular budget and buying something else with it. “The librarian,” he said, “needs to buy books” (Field Notes, 6/7/2007).

Bob remembered a number of years ago that the principal meetings he attended began to take on a tone of the need for adolescent literacy. His intermediate literacy-related test scores were low, as were other schools in the district. He knew that he had

several teachers with strong literacy backgrounds, so he decided that he and they would set to work on improving literacy achievement school wide.

His district became interested in a program called CRISS (Creating Independence through Student-Owned Strategies) at about that time. CRISS deals with getting students to better organize, understand, and retain course information. It focuses on metacognition (thinking about thinking), the importance of background knowledge, reading for a specific purpose, students being actively involved in and with reading, group discussion, and writing about what they are learning.

Bob and his intermediate school faculty shared that interest and embarked on receiving CRISS training. Utilizing special state program funding, Bob hired a CRISS specialist, reading coaches for the sixth and seventh grades, and a sixth grade teacher particularly strong in reading skills for small group tutoring after school.

Bob read research on instructional improvement and came to the conclusion that in order to become good readers, students need to first become good writers. His goal for his students then became, both for his intermediate students and now for his high school students, getting them to do more cross-content, nonfiction writing. “What I learned,” he said, “is that we don’t prepare in a high school setting...I don’t believe we prepare students for non-fiction writing” (Field Notes, 6/7/2007). That would also include a focus on daily writing with feedback by peer evaluation/review or other forms of feedback on the writing.

Chad Hunt

Chad had a strong interest in, indeed a passion for, three things in his career:

smaller learning communities, adolescent reading, and kids who are struggling in school. During the last 7 to 8 years, his school had been looking at smaller learning communities and, under Chad's guidance, had become very involved in that concept. He enjoyed it because it, in part, brought reading into focus. He noted that the smaller learning communities approach to teaching and curriculum gave the faculty and staff the opportunity to see where the instructional program was and what school personnel could do to improve that program.

Having had the experience as an assistant principal to lead this project and having had his principal be supportive of it, the process has been, in his words, a valuable learning experience. Now, as principal, Chad felt that he could continue this process for which he had a passion. He would add more parent involvement through the school accreditation process. He believed that reading plays a key role in it and that he could help bring about a positive change for students, especially for those who struggled with school. As the principal he believed that he could have an even greater impact on learning and that he was, in his own words, "looking forward to that challenge on a different level" (Field Notes, 6/6/2007).

Cindy Dillon

Cindy's teaching background is in family and consumer science, or what many of us knew decades ago as "home economics." I asked her how she became so passionate about literacy when her area of family and consumer science was typically not associated with literacy practices or concerns.

She explained, as mentioned in the Meet the Principals chapter, that literacy had

always been an interest for her, literally for as long as she could remember. One of the reasons for this was her parents' commitment for their children to speak correct and appropriate English in the home. This was particularly significant because her parents did not graduate from high school. Cindy was quick to point out that her parents "...pushed literacy, and they *always* made the kids speak correctly at home" (Field Notes, 6/5/2007).

Because of this strong commitment to literacy, Cindy was concerned that there were literacy development problems with her junior high students when she arrived there. She began to research ways that they could improve literacy instruction. She was particularly interested in finding ways that she and her faculty could help the struggling and reluctant reader. She added that, "I'm a data queen. That's why I researched this" (Field Notes, 6/12/2007). She really enjoyed getting into the data to determine where her school was and where it needed to be.

She believed that you must start with teachers in order to improve instruction. She was pleased that she did not have to force teachers to become involved in this process. They were willing to learn, although they did not have the background training in how to improve literacy for adolescents.

She knew that it was important that whatever direction she took in training her teachers, she did not want to make it appear overwhelming. Cindy pointed out:

Hey, you don't have to be an English major; you don't have to be a journalist; you don't have to be any of those things. I'm not of the background of the English department. That's not where I started. Make it fun. Writing is easy. Reading is easy. Then people have a buy-in. It doesn't have to be primary, but you can get writing to the basics. (Field Notes, 6/12/2007)

Cindy added, "For me, if you made it fun and I could see some success, I could

learn it. One, two, three. Make it easy, make it fun. Make it Rachel Ray—don't make it hard" (Field Notes, 6/12/2007). Cindy, having a family and consumer science background, made a connection to the popular Food Network personality Rachel Ray and teaching literacy. Cindy believed Ray's cooking philosophy should be an axiom for those teaching literacy: "My advice: Keep things simple...don't overdo it, and most importantly, RELAX" (Ray, 2003, p. 7).

She explained that her mother-in-law was an English major. She was always correcting Cindy's grammar. She emphasized again how important English and education were to her parents. Cindy referred to her mother and father, as well as her mother-in-law, as being influential in developing her appropriate use of language. Cindy added, "We know that reading and writing are going to help kids learn" (Field Notes, 6/12/2007). If we make such learning fun where both teachers and students can find success, then both groups are likely to want to learn more.

There was one more criterion for successful teaching of literacy, Cindy believed. "You have to do everything in your classroom for the 'right now.' Meaningful must be *right now* for these students" (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

Carol Maughan

Carol had a strong academic upbringing from the very beginning. She had been involved in literacy activities her entire career, and many of those were with children who had little or no English speaking capabilities. Her belief was that literacy is not only important for the more obvious reasons of reading appropriately, actively, and critically, but to expand the whole concept of literacy to a better understanding of who we are in

relation to our world.

Carol had teachers put up professionally printed classroom posters that she and her faculty created. This helped her faculty understand the importance of communicating to students why they were in school and how they could be most successful both academically and socially. Students of all cultural groups (ethnic, disciplinary, age, gender, etc.) needed to see the practical application of why they were in school. Teachers needed to be able to relate content curriculum to students' perspectives of their world. One poster referred to the fact that students should be resourceful thinkers, emphasizing that it is the responsibility and goal of our community to prepare each student for that purpose. This included being capable of using and adapting critical and creative thinking and decision making strategies, meeting opportunities, and solving problems both independently and collaboratively.

Another poster pointed to the importance of being an effective communicator. This meant that students needed to be capable of using oral, written, artistic, mathematical, and technological forms of expressions appropriately. Students should also be capable of effectively gathering, developing, and expressing ideas to all audiences.

A third poster emphasized the importance of being a continuing learner. The student should be able to actively dream, set, carry out, and evaluate personal goals. He or she should also be able to expand the limits of his/her knowledge and ability, as well as to deal positively with other people in words and actions.

Carol's adolescent literacy philosophy was driven by a strong desire to help those students who were struggling with reading. She felt there needed to be a particular focus

on helping these children. Carol believed strongly that middle school was the last best chance for these students to develop their reading skills.

She and her faculty had two reading classes for students who were struggling. These students were required to take another language arts class as well. Further, those who were struggling had an additional opportunity to work individually with instructional aides. These were parents from the community who had been trained by the teachers to provide instructional assistance based on the teacher-determined student needs. Carol had built a strong relationship with her community. Literacy *is* the overarching goal of the language arts curriculum as well as the other subject areas in the school (Field Notes, 6/5/2007 & 6/12/2007).

Carol noted that the majority, or about 70%, of the students needed probably one or two presentations of the reading or writing material to be able to understand it. Another 15-20% needed two, three, four, or five times with the presentation material to be able to grasp it. That final group of 5% to 10% in the school population needed “re-up, re-do, reconsideration, and reteaching in all kinds of ways,” as Carol said (Field Notes, 6/12/2007). The school’s goal in this coming school year was finding more effective ways to “reconsider and reteach.”

Carol still grappled with whether or not they were doing enough for the struggling readers. She stated with a somber concern:

As a principal, I know that they are leaving their school and are going to high school still struggling. And the same thing is going to happen there. Because, who will help them there? Middle school is often referred to as the last best chance. And so, it is our responsibility to help them (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

Gary Miller

Gary had a strong belief about the importance of literacy, and it went back to his early adolescent years. He came from an extremely impoverished background with parents who dealt with numerous serious health issues. He did not learn to read until he was in the seventh grade. Like many struggling adolescent readers, he faced many challenges both in and out of school, and his home life was particularly unstable (Field Notes, 6/21/2007).

Gary explained that if it were not for a seventh-grade English teacher, he would not be where he was today. She basically told him, “Boy, you are not going to get out of this class until you can read.” He continued:

And she kicked my backside and said, ‘This is what’s going to happen—right here, right now. Enough of this garbage.’ That’s when really the importance of literacy in my own mind really started to solidify and she worked her backside off with me. I remember going into classrooms with other groups of students that were struggling just like I was, and she gave me so much of her time and energy and effort that it still kind of touches my heart. (Field Notes, 6/21/2007)

Two significant adults in Gary’s life also had a major influence on his eventual success as a student: his grandmother and a high school math teacher—both of whom were good friends. His grandmother began to take care of him in about the eighth grade. He entered high school where his grandmother and her good friend, Gary’s math teacher, discussed his progress a great deal. They also made sure that Gary had enough food to eat and clothes to wear. He found that he had an aptitude for math during this time.

He was still behind in school, and his grandmother made sure that he continued to work hard, focusing on literacy and math skill building. Gary progressed to a point, thanks in no small part to several significant adults in his life, that he was able to get into

college. His math scores were good, but the verbal portions of the college entrance exams were not, due to his earlier reading problems. He had to take some remedial writing classes when he got to college. He successfully completed college and now reads at a college level. He had earned a bachelor's and a Masters Degree. He read a great deal.

Gary referred to his grandmother as “that significant adult in your life that really makes a difference to help turn some things around. My grandmother was that someone who took charge...” (Field Notes, 6/21/2007).

Gary was passionate about a student being able to read, write, and do math. He said, “This has been my experience—I’ve lived it. If they can’t do it, then they struggle. That’s why it’s so vital that we get the kids, especially my kids [at this school to accomplish these skills]” (Field Notes, 6/21/2007).

His commitment to literacy was exhibited through some unique approaches to get students to read. These were students who were struggling, not only because of a deficit reading ability, but also because they spoke little or no English. There were more than a few students at Sun Crest Middle School who had never been to school before.

Every single student in his school, whether brand new to the U.S. or an experienced college-level reader, took reading the first hour of every single day. Every teacher, regardless of their content specialty, taught reading during that first hour. Gary and his faculty chose several different programs to enhance their reading and general literacy program. The programs were designed specifically to assist the struggling reader. They included Success for All (SFA) from Johns Hopkins University, Comprehensive Early Literacy Learning (CELL) and Extended Literacy Learning (ExLL), research from

90/90/90 Schools (90% or more of the students qualify for free and reduced lunch, 90% or more of the students are members of ethnic minority groups, and 90% or more of the students meet the district or state academic standards), Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), English Language Learning Instruction Systems (ELLIS), and Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) for limited English learners.

Those students who were brand new to the country and who did not know English entered the Newcomer A program. A teacher with a reading endorsement took these students and helped them to begin the adjustment to school and the American culture. This teacher worked closely with the families and explained to them what goes on at school using the BICS program in that process. This teacher constantly worked with them to learn English. This was conversational English that children picked up by simply being immersed in the culture—being able to talk and speak conversationally.

The students who could not speak any English received initial instruction through pictures and some corresponding language. The teacher also used ELLIS software that allowed students to hear and see the English language. This was a self-contained class with about 12 to 15 students.

Once this teacher felt that the students were comfortable with English—at a first or second grade reading level—they were transitioned into the Newcomer B or second level of the school's language intervention program. This was where the academic language program began. This was also where the teachers really started to hone some of the academic language that the students were going to need once they got into other classes. They were with the Newcomer teacher for a half day and then began going to

other teachers in regular classrooms for the other half of the day. The ultimate goal was to get these students into regular academic teams in their own grade level.

Once the students adjusted to the Newcomer B program and were progressing academically, they transitioned into a third tier that allowed them to be in an English transition class for half a day and then out to math, social studies, and elective classes the other half of the day. The final tier, then, was total immersion into their regular grade level teams all day.

Gary's passion for literacy was not just for his students. He believed that people must read a great deal, which was what he did—extensively (Field Notes, 6/28/2007). He believed that we needed to teach students through our example that it was important to be a lifelong learner, and Gary was a lifelong learner. He needed to model it not only for his students, but also for his faculty and staff. Further, he noted that we would not go to a doctor who did not stay current on recent medical research. He said that he had to stay current. That was a part of his professional obligation: to stay current and model the fact that he was a lifelong learner. He concluded by saying, "Just because I'm not in college anymore doesn't mean that I can't learn stuff" (Field Notes, 6/21/2007).

He was convinced that students needed to read more and that they needed to get more focused on their school work. He believed firmly that students must take their education seriously for both now and throughout the rest of their lives. He noted the following concern regarding how students in other countries view the importance of a strong educational commitment. Those students were committed to gaining everything they could from their education. Gary believed that we should be concerned about global

economic competition in the international community.

Because I guarantee that the kids in India are; the kids in China are. And if we do not step up to the plate, we're going to find ourselves behind the boat economically, and it's going to hurt this country in major ways. I've told my staff about this. (Field Notes, 6/21/2007)

Summary of Strand 1

A long-time commitment to literacy was the only strand about which I did not read in my review of the literature. All five principals, however, demonstrated a strong long-time commitment to literacy, some as far back as childhood.

Strong long-time commitment to literacy. Sociocultural research indicates that teachers should build positive bonds with their students to allow for more effective learning to take place. These principals encouraged that kind of bonding to take place and to build upon it.

Bob Richards had always enjoyed reading to his students and strongly believes that writing plays a key role in improving reading. Chad Hunt had worked for many years to develop and implement small learning communities and has tied that concept into enhancing reading skills, with a special emphasis on struggling readers. Cindy Dillon had a passion for literacy for as long as she can remember because of her parents and is adamant that teachers make a "right now" reading connection to life for their students. Carol Maughan had worked her entire career to improve reading skills, especially for students who were of multiple nationalities. She had a passion for helping students see a literacy connection to the world. Gary Miller lived a frightening life as an at-risk youth and knew the importance of family and its direct relationship to literacy and a life of

hope. He could not read until the seventh grade and eventually became an extensive reader, constantly on the lookout for programs that would help the struggling adolescent readers in his school.

Need for faculty to develop relationships with teachers, students, and the community. Bob believed that one of the most effective ways for faculty to develop positive relationships with each other and to learn important literacy concepts was to encourage participation in faculty book study groups. Chad spent many years in developing collegial opportunities for his faculty to improve instruction for their students. Cindy had a passion for having teachers understand that teaching literacy could be both simple and fun. Carol believed that it was important for teachers to come together for, among other things, planning and creating posters that encouraged students to learn for both now and the future. Gary and his faculty developed the Newcomer A and B program for students with serious challenges in speaking the English language.

Need for a culturally responsive curriculum. We learn that “cultures” can mean nationalities, socioeconomic status, gender, geographical areas, age, and so on (Au, 2000). The principals worked with these cultures on a regular basis and encouraged their teachers to teach literacy with such cultural variables in mind.

Bob worked to help faculty understand the notion that in order for students to be able to read well, they must be able to write well. Chad’s application of a culturally responsive curriculum was to be sure that his faculty consistently reviewed their curriculum and instructional practices for meaning and application. Cindy was adamant that the faculty demonstrated the “Right Now” practical application of what they were

teaching. Carol worked to have both her faculty and students dream and set goals for learning. Gary continuously worked with his faculty to help assure that they could all teach reading regardless of their content specialty.

Impact of family members. Sociocultural theory informs us that a foundation and staple of literacy learning, indeed all learning, is the influence of the family on the student. The family is at the heart of a child's "microsystem" of learning. Several principals in this study were doing what they do today because of the critical influence of their own family.

Bob was new to his high school this past year and was still getting to know his community. Chad was able to increase his parent involvement through boundary line change discussions and planning for the upcoming school accreditation process. Cindy was appreciative of her parents' commitment to literacy and the influence it has had on her all of her life. Carol found different ways to use her parents as paraprofessional teachers and involved them in the planning process. Gary consistently showed parents how important their influence was to their children through, among other ways, his Newcomer A and B program.

Strand 2: Staff Development

Every principal involved his or her faculty in some process to collegially develop and implement staff development activities. These activities were held at different intervals throughout the year based on student need and scheduling. All five principals attended staff development with their teachers.

Sociocultural Perspective

The principals' work in familiarizing their teachers with adolescent literacy practices (primarily in reading, but also writing) supported Graves and others (as cited in Au, 2004). These researchers maintain that to serve as good models of literate behavior,

Teachers must demonstrate the kind of literacy they want students to show...[and] teachers must see themselves as readers and writers if they want students to read and write. Only then can they provide the sincere demonstrations of literate behavior that will convince students of the value of reading and writing (Au, p. 397).

The principals in this study considered staff development to be a critical attribute of successful adolescent literacy teaching. They worked to show teachers, using different approaches and methodologies, the practical applications of the three basic principles alluded to by Graves (2004).

Three key elements were found within this Strand: (a) faculty awareness of students' backgrounds and needs, (b) importance of group interaction when learning, and (c) importance of training opportunities for teachers.

Faculty awareness of students' backgrounds and needs. Sociocultural research findings have indicated that there are three basic principles of sociocultural theory about which teachers should be aware (Graves, 2004). First, teachers need to teach with the knowledge that students' social backgrounds and modes of learning and thinking are fundamental to the learning process. If the teacher does not possess that awareness, Graves says, little learning will take place. Second, much learning is social and "takes place as groups of learners work together. Dialogue—give-and-take, face-to-face discussion in which students really strive to make themselves understood and to

understand others—is a mainstay of learning” (Graves, p. 438). Third, the classroom, the students there, and the school are all “social contexts with very strong influences on what is, or is not, learned in the classroom” (Graves, p. 438).

Importance of group interaction when learning. Literacy is inseparable from the cultural and social context in which it occurs. “Sociocultural and sociolinguistic orientations are also pertinent” to the learning process (Bloome & Bailey; Brown, Collins, & Duguid; Rogoff as cited in Almasi, 1996, p. 3). Discussion is a critical component of the literacy process because discussion provides a “collaborative environment in which the goal of the event is to share viewpoints, provide a rational argument, and work together to come to new understandings about literature” (Almasi, p. 3). This same collaboration is also important in staff development activities and other teacher-based discussions (Irvin et al., 2007, p. 135). Other researchers agree that teacher (and principal) collaboration and mutual planning are critical in the teaching and learning process (McEwan, 2003, p. 33; Taylor & Collins, 2003, p. 45).

Importance of training opportunities for teachers. Principals should provide numerous opportunities and training for teachers to develop leadership skills, evaluate program effectiveness, and improve instructional practices. Principals should also have some type of school leadership team that participates in continual improvement of the school. Teacher training should be relevant to faculty needs, related to school improvement, and jointly planned with teachers (McEwan, 2003, p. 115). Table 5 provides a brief summary of the data retrieved for this strand. It also serves as a signpost of important areas discussed in this set of findings.

Table 5

Brief Summary of Strand #2 Data: Staff Development

Principals	Student background and needs	Group interaction	Training opportunities
Bob Richards	Late start, Project CRISS	Book talks	Teacher discussions, strategies
Chad Hunt	Mapping to change instruction	Teachers provide training	Nine years, \$500,000
Cindy Dillon	Student-data driven	Teacher collaboration	“Get a Coke and talk”
Carol Maughan	What students should know	Decide as a team	Feed them well, it’s all upbeat
Gary Miller	Student literacy data	School and district collaboration	Literacy coordinator, staff input

Bob Richards

Bob’s high school had staff development opportunities regularly thanks to a Late Start day each month. He adjusted the school schedule such that on the first Wednesday of every month students began their day two hours later than normal. Teachers then had two hours for staff development, which he attended with his teachers.

Bob’s focus on staff development involved primarily training in CRISS strategies. His CRISS staff development teacher was also his librarian, who was a certified teacher. She talked with teachers throughout the year explaining these strategies and where and how the teachers could use them.

Bob had also used for some time the process of teachers coming together after school and during the summer to read and discuss books related to their staff development goals. His approach was to start this reading group first with the language

arts department of the high school and then eventually have them train the rest of the faculty. As Bob put it, “We’re looking at the language arts teachers to share some stories, find some success and then go schoolwide” (Field Notes, 6/20/2007).

Chad Hunt

Chad and a group of teachers became interested in curriculum mapping before their work began with smaller learning communities. Curriculum mapping became the central focus of staff development for a number of years. Various in-school personnel organized professional training among the faculty with the goal of improving reading and writing scores. That process began about 9 years ago.

The faculty was organized so that faculty members taught other faculty members how to do curriculum mapping. There was 1 year when the faculty chose to make writing the goal for professional development. Those faculty members who presented did research over the summer and then provided the training to the rest of the faculty relative to how teachers could improve their instruction in all curricular areas. Chad and several other staff members then became interested in determining how to best restructure the school. This led them to the concept of smaller learning communities.

Prior to actual implementation of smaller learning communities, Chad applied for and received a federal government grant for \$500,000 to implement the process. Reading and writing were the focal points of the grant’s curriculum section. Almost all of that money (80%) was earmarked for staff development. The money had to go to train the teachers. The money could not go for food, but for the travel and the training at conferences and workshops. A smaller portion of the money went towards the purchase

of materials and computers.

Most teachers (meaning anyone who wanted to) were able to attend various workshops about smaller learning communities. Every workshop addressed curricular issues, including reading. Almost all of these workshops were at the national level, and Chad felt that they received better training at the national level than if they had received training locally (Field Notes, 6/19/2007). Chad's teachers' knowledge of literacy was quite minimal prior to this training. This all changed as the training evolved over the years.

Cindy Dillon

Cindy pointed out that the school was driven by goals; it was especially goal oriented. Each teacher had goals in his or her classroom. These goals were developed by a Joint Staff Study Committee in the school, and they met monthly to determine staff development needs. The make-up of that committee was determined by district negotiations. The committee surveyed teachers to determine needs and directions, as noted in a Staff Development Survey that Cindy shared with me. The top three teacher choices became the focus for staff development the following year. Another committee, the Committee for Student Success, also met with Cindy to determine directions for staff development. This committee was made up of representatives from each department.

Cindy then arranged for the staff development. She arranged as much as possible for the training to take place off campus so that teachers could focus on the training. She attended staff development activities with her teachers whenever possible. She noted that she wanted them to "go somewhere and get a Coke and talk" (Field Notes, 6/12/2007). It

was very important to her that her teachers got away for uninterrupted discussion and focus.

Carol Maughan

Carol's staff development activities were guided by the literacy plans they had developed over time and in conjunction with the school improvement plan. She explained that these plans "...just steer us where we're going. So we say, 'What is it that we want our students to be able to know and do'" (Field Notes, 6/12/2007)? Her staff development activities were paid for by Utah School Land Trust money. Staff development occurred not only for the faculty, but for the instructional aides, as well. Carol was usually there with her teachers except for the rare times they were held off campus. She required this attendance of herself.

Carol pointed out that they never had any kind of professional development unless they decided as a team what type of training needed to be offered. This involved teachers from all curricular areas. Carol stressed, "Everyone is involved with adolescent literacy at the school" (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

Carol provided time for individual teams to receive training just for them in their unique circumstances. The language arts team or the math team left school for several days to attend staff development events elsewhere. This was about the only time that Carol did not accompany the teachers in staff development because she needed to be at school to, as she said, "hold down the fort" (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

Carol believed that the professional development should never be threatening. The atmosphere where the training took place should always be a welcoming one where

learning could take place. Teachers should feel supported in their work. Carol believed that “all of those things are important. We feed them well. The atmosphere is upbeat. It really is a very positive thing” (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

Gary Miller

His staff development was arranged by a literacy coordinator who was also a part-time art teacher at the school. She and Gary worked together in the planning for staff development. She also kept Gary current on the school’s data relevant to literacy.

She also coordinated all the reading and staff development that the teachers received with respect to what they did in the reading block. Several teachers from the language arts team who were very knowledgeable concerning reading assisted with staff development.

The district helped with staff development by having a district reading specialist actually stay at Gary’s school this year. She was teaching a lab class with 25 of the most struggling readers in the school during a two-hour block of time. She worked with Gary’s teachers and also brought teachers in from other middle schools to observe this reading lab at his school.

All of his teachers had been trained in helping students extract information from expository text and content area reading. He explained that they had excellent abilities and competence at helping students extract this type of information (Field Notes, 6/28/2007).

Summary of Strand 2

All five principals believed strongly in the importance of staff development. All five attended staff development activities with their teachers.

Faculty awareness of students' backgrounds and needs. Bob Richards believed that Project CRISS training was what was needed to provide training that students needed in organizational skills and writing. He took into account their needs when he planned the Late Start staff development activities, arranging a schedule that would work for them and their teachers. Chad Hunt was convinced that curriculum mapping and planning for smaller learning communities would eventually help the struggling readers of his school as well as the rest of his student body. Cindy Dillon was adamant that staff development must be driven by student achievement data. Carol Maughan and her faculty organized staff development based on what students should know. These decisions were grounded in test data and the faculty's and Carol's observations. Gary Miller, like his colleagues in this study, also believed firmly that staff development must be designed around student and faculty needs, especially as it related to literacy.

Importance of group interaction when learning. All five principals incorporated the element of group interaction in their staff development that is equally important in the classroom. Bob Richards utilized faculty book group studies where interaction of faculty and exchanges of philosophy took place. Chad Hunt's teachers provided much of the total faculty training once they had been trained usually at a national level. Cindy Dillon knew that for her staff development activities to be effective she must involve her teachers in the planning of it. Carol Maughan also believed strongly that staff development must

involve her faculty in the planning stages. Gary Miller provided staff development training in teams, and he also called upon the district office staff to assist with training.

Importance of training opportunities for teachers. All five of the research principals held a firm belief and commitment that staff development was critical to the success of their students' literacy endeavors. Bob Richards centered his staff development activities around teacher discussions and learning various strategies, especially in the area of writing. Chad Hunt devoted over 9 years and training and wrote and implemented a \$500,000 federal grant to move his school towards smaller learning communities. Cindy Dillon believed that one of the best ways to offer staff development opportunities was to do so off campus, so she organized a number of them to take place somewhere other than school. She believed that it was important that teachers should learn in a relaxed, distraction-free environment "with a Coke." Carol Maughan had similar beliefs about the environment in which staff development took place. First and foremost, Carol believed that the surroundings in which staff development activities took place should be comfortable and non-threatening. She also believed it important to "feed them well." Gary Miller utilized the talents of his literacy coordinator to finalize and offer staff development activities. This took place after team and faculty collaboration in determining staff development needs.

The sociocultural influence here emerged reflecting the principles that Graves (2004) developed. Teachers must realize the importance of students' social backgrounds and modes of learning; that learning is social with a strong emphasis on group dynamics; and that the classroom, the students, and the school are all critical social contexts in what

is and is not learned. Teachers must also see themselves as readers and writers in order for their students to see themselves in the same way. The research principals understood this and worked to bring about staff development that reflected these concepts.

*Strand 3: Principal Involvement—Observing in Classrooms, Participating in
Staff Development, Staying Informed of Literacy-Related Research,
and the Principal’s Role in Adolescent Literacy*

This section deals with the principals’ involvement in a wide range of literacy activities. Key areas in which the principals were involved included (a) a student-centered curriculum, (b) enhancing the family’s positive influence on their children’s education, (c) building a positive school climate and culture, and (d) funding for adolescent literacy endeavors.

Sociocultural Perspective

Student-centered curriculum. The general lack of adolescents’ opportunities for choice in reading is of substantial concern to Bean and colleagues (2004). They encourage more teachers to offer “elements of student choice, individual agency, and multiple routes to meaning” in approaching adolescent literacy practices (p. 214). Other research indicates that adolescents’ growing disinterest in reading “was directly related to few opportunities to talk about books in school. Instead, a preponderance of teacher-selected and teacher-directed assignments reduced their enthusiasm for reading” (Worthy as cited in Bean et al., p. 220).

Discourse and verbal dynamics tie directly into two questions that Tracey and

Morrow (2006) related to a social learning perspective. How does the social community within the classroom affect students' literacy learning? How do teachers' interactions with students affect their literacy learning? Tracey and Morrow argue that social interaction plays a central role in the development of knowledge and learning. Numerous sociolinguistic theorists (Apel & Masterson; Snow, Burns, & Griffin; Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, & Tarver as cited in Tracey & Morrow) contended that:

Oral language is the foundation upon which children's reading and writing achievement is built. As such, oral language knowledge provides children with an intuitive understanding of the structure of language (i.e., its syntax) that helps them predict text and read fluently at a later age. From this perspective, oral language is also the foundation for vocabulary learning that later helps children comprehend the words and messages that they read. (pp. 101-102)

One principal was adamant that "Meaningful must be right now for these students." This provided a practical gateway into what Gee (2000, 2001) referred to as Discourse with a capital D. Such sociocultural Discourses are "recognizable coordinations of people, places, objects, tools, technologies, and ways of speaking, listening, writing, reading, feeling, valuing, believing, etc." (Gee, 2000, p. 204). He added that Discourses provide a certain identity to which others of that identity can relate. The Discourse to whom this principal referred to as needing meaning right now was the poverty-level student. This Discourse *demand*s that these students see meaning in the world and in texts as situated in the learners' experiences that, "if they are to be useful, must give rise to situated meanings through which learners can recognize and act on the world in specific ways" (Gee, 2001, p. 204). Situated meanings are mid-level generalizations or patterns that are not too general or too specific (Gee, 2001).

Our principals' approach to talking with students was well supported in

sociocultural research. Teachers and staff, in this case the principal, provide motivation for literacy learning by establishing positive relationships with students (Au, 2004). Au adds that establishing positive student relations and open communications helps students to form the view of their teacher or staff member as a “role model and...a model of literate behavior” (Au, p. 397). The importance of developing positive relationships is also supported by Moje and Hinchman (2004). They place positive relationship building as the first of a set of principled practices for the best culturally responsive pedagogy. This applies especially when working with adolescent literacy learners across the curriculum.

Enhancing the family’s positive influence on their children’s education. Two principals were particularly dedicated, if not undaunted, to working with their community. This approach has strong ties to sociocultural research. Research findings indicate that the literacy learning of students from diverse backgrounds is improved as educators make stronger links to the community. These links highlight how “the involvement of parents and other community members in the schools may increase the cultural and linguistic relevance of school situations for students of diverse backgrounds” (Au, 1998, p. 312).

Community involvement in the schools helps students answer the question, “What am I going to do with the rest of my life” (Tatum, 2006, p. 69)? This helps to balance what Tatum refers to as “out-of-school literacy overload” and “in-school literacy underload” (p. 69). He believes that community involvement is important because many students’ “academic performance and lives are shaped by the images of their

communities and the associated possibilities they imagine for themselves as a result of the surrounding images” (Tatum, p. 69). These images are referred to as “products of sociocultural adaptation located within the minority community as *community forces*” (Ogbu as cited in Tatum, p. 69).

Some sociocultural researchers postulate that parental support processes are “less likely to be directly influenced by principals” (NASSP, 2007, p. 4). These research principals’ involvement with the community and their belief about the importance of their involvement, however, perhaps indicated their disagreement with this NASSP finding. The NASSP report does stress the importance of family support in academic achievement, a fact that none of these principals would dispute. “The styles [of parent support] that parents use to engage youth, the quality of parent-youth relationships, and the ways parents monitor youth behavior influence adolescent achievement” (NASSP, p. 4).

The NASSP report noted that recent research “shows that parenting styles and their effects differ among ethnic and demographic groups due to cultural traditions and norms and contextual factors” (Mandara as cited in NASSP, 2007, p. 4). “For example,” the report continued, “strict limit-setting may be more adaptive for families who live in high-crime neighborhoods or for those who face racial discrimination” (NASSP, p. 4).

Schools that develop strong family connections find many positive benefits for students. Such benefits include (a) students feeling that they are accepted by both peers and adults as a valued part of the school community, (b) a positive atmosphere that values each family’s contributions, (c) improvement of the global understanding of the entire

school community, (d) and academic development for all students (Sturtevant, 2004).

Building a positive school climate and culture. One principal devoted much of his career to the pursuit of smaller learning communities implementation. Smaller learning communities, Gee (2000) noted, is an approach to learning through linguistic interaction, among other processes, that serves as a base to classroom reform. This social learning perspective emphasizes the central role of social interaction in the development of knowledge and learning (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). Sociocultural theory, in this case demonstrated through smaller learning communities, emphasizes the broader effects of communities and cultures on styles of discourse and subsequently on students' learning (Au as cited in Tracey & Morrow).

Funding for adolescent literacy endeavors. Researchers expressed concern that there was a lack of funding for students of diverse backgrounds, especially in districts and schools with large numbers of these students (Allington; Darling-Hammond; Wong, as cited in Au, 2000). "This disparity in funding is the starting point for a complex and interrelated set of conditions that results in decreased learning opportunities for students of diverse backgrounds" (Au, p. 843).

It should be noted, however, that while funding is critical for enhancing student learning, it is equally important for districts to know where to put the funds. The problem is that there is insufficient research available to help districts determine where funds can most efficiently be used to close the achievement gap between students from higher socioeconomic conditions and those who are not (Au, 2000).

Without information on the relative contribution of these components [dollar amounts to the most effective instructional use], the district cannot know how

additional funds should be spent to make a difference. For example, in the case of literacy achievement, it will be unclear whether monies are best spent on parent involvement programs, teachers' salaries, professional development workshops, books for classroom libraries, and so on. This would appear to be a fruitful area for collaboration between literacy researchers and researchers with expertise in school finance. (Au, 2000, p. 844)

Table 6 provides a brief summary of the data analysis for Strand 3. It is interesting to note that principals had more to say about this particular strand than any other. They had some strong feelings about what they believed their role should be in the ongoing adolescent literacy implementation process.

Table 6

Brief Summary of Strand #3 Data: Principal Involvement

Principals	Student centered	Family influence on student's education	Positive climate	Literacy funding
Bob Richards	Works with students, "aha" moments, improve literacy skills, more group dynamics, continue student choice of books to read, tutoring	Important, still learning families, his own family's concerns	Really enjoys working with students	His major duty, buy more books
Chad Hunt	Focus on struggling readers, trying to find a better way, focus on struggling students and graduation	Goal for more parental involvement with community council and accreditation	Much involvement with faculty, sharing vision with everyone	\$500,000 grant, seek funding all the time
Cindy Dillon	Meaningful <i>now</i> , rubrics, many literacy activities, clear expectations to students	Parents critical in READ 180, parents know expectations	Staff know students and their talents, many events, the power of good	Know your data then ask for help
Carol Maughan	Focus first on lowest students, learn from all students, learn together	Extensive work with parents, parent volunteers	Live the Golden Rule, classroom visits, seek others' ideas	Seek funding from all sources
Gary Miller	Focus first on lowest readers, research for best programs, technology for students	Parent education, "Put the darned iPods away and let's get crackin'!"	Constant classroom visits, know your students, quarterly teacher meetings	Be creative, research resources, gov't. & private industry

Bob Richards

He saw his role as coming up with the idea of what needs to be accomplished and then as he said “letting the experts run with it” (Field Notes, 6/20/2007). Further, he believed it to be imperative that he made available the financial resources to purchase necessary novels and writing materials. He believed that this needs to be done in order to make his school’s literacy endeavors successful. Bob enjoyed his involvement with students and their literacy endeavors. He worked to pass on that desire for literacy improvement to his faculty.

He emphasized the importance of faculty group book studies. The district required such book studies, but Bob was personally committed to them. There was also a stipend for smaller group meetings on a monthly basis. He pointed out that these faculty small group discussion meetings on various books really provided some wonderful “ah-ha” moments for them. “Teachers learned some things that you can do with your struggling readers,” he noted (Field Notes, 6/20/2007).

Bob saw a difference between his literacy experiences at the intermediate school and at the high school. He explained that, based on his observations and interactions with teachers, intermediate teachers utilized various literacy-based instructional techniques such as word walls, students pairing up to discuss topics, creating reading and writing booklets, and note taking and graphic organizers. Teachers learned those strategies at the high school, as well, but so far he had seen fewer of their applications as in the intermediate grades. There was more of a focus on direct instruction and lecture than at the intermediate school.

Bob added, however, that he was pleased to observe the high school language arts teachers working with literature circles. Students selected from several different novels to read and then discussed in groups. Bob's goal, therefore, was to continue to provide a variety of printed material that students can read. They recently purchased \$500 worth of novel sets, which he believed would help provide motivation and engagement on a variety of topics for students.

Bob was still concerned, however, that they were not doing enough for the struggling reader at the high school. They were using data from the Utah Basic Skills Test (UBSCT), classes that students failed, and teacher observations to determine which students should attend remediation classes and tutoring. The tutoring occurred before and after school or in a computer lab with self-paced and self-correcting software. There were, however, large class sizes in the regular classes and 160 students per teacher during the day. He was concerned that they were not finding a student with reading problems until the student was really struggling and having serious difficulties with school.

Bob believed that while it was very important to attend school-staff development with his teachers, which he did, he was not able to attend all the teacher group discussions during the summer. He provided an interesting observation in saying, "You know how brutal the year is. If I don't take a vacation with my family, I'll be looking for a new family" (Field Notes, 6/20/2007).

Chad Hunt

Chad had been closely involved with his school's restructuring process for the past 15 years. Because his student population had challenges in the areas of reading and

writing which he related to the socioeconomic standard of his attendance area, Chad explained that “more than any other thing that really got us going [about restructuring and literacy] was a junior high in our district that had the READ 180 program” (Field Notes, 6/19/2007). His district, which was also concerned about Glacier Ridge’s reading scores, suggested that he and the faculty look into this reading program. READ 180 had been a part of the school’s reading curriculum ever since. Chad’s concern, however, was that there were not enough computers available in labs to accommodate all the struggling students who needed the program. Approximately 20 students at any time used the program, with some graduating out of the program early. If there was still time in the semester, new students could be brought into the class.

Chad indicated that the regular instruction classrooms were having more of a challenge in helping the struggling or reluctant reader. There was more focus on reading instruction across the curriculum a few years ago at Glacier Ridge than there was now, but he believed that the accreditation process would rekindle the need to address reading concerns in classes throughout the school. He explained that key elements of the school’s goals were improving reading, writing, and math scores, which were reflected in the school’s accreditation report and the course catalog. The upcoming accreditation process would also provide opportunities for parental input. Chad hoped that this would provide a venue for additional parental input regarding literacy needs. Decreased parental involvement had been a concern of Chad’s. He pointed out the following, however:

I think with the recent opening of a new high school, that has brought in, because of that boundary change issue, that parents are more involved now than they have ever been and are more willing to come and participate in the school. So, I think we’ve had more of that now than we’ve had in years—more from parents. And

with the changes and accreditation where we've also had to have parent involvement and where we've aggressively solicited more involvement from the parents last year, we've built up a greater pool to draw from—because of those two issues this last year. So, we're better at that, and I think that our community council will be better organized next year, too. (Field Notes, 6/19/2007)

Part of the ongoing school construction included the building of three additional computer labs. Before construction began, there was only one writing lab that was converted from a classroom. This lab was used for writing activities for the entire school. The lab contained 36 computers.

Chad saw his role as providing the vision for literacy improvement. Even before becoming the school's principal, Chad was allowed to provide the vision for innovation. He and a grant coordinator attended workshops, and then went back to the faculty and shared their vision about smaller learning communities and the corresponding changes in instruction and master scheduling. The smaller learning communities' concept allowed for more student-to-student and student-to-teacher interactions than typical classroom practices.

Chad believed strongly in training the teachers and letting them see the benefits of this change process. He helped form teacher committees that were responsible for various restructuring responsibilities. He constantly reminded them of what the vision was and what the school was about. He always attended faculty meetings where this work was taking place, including the many restructuring committee meetings that were going on, including summer workshops.

Chad expressed his vision this way:

My vision is to provide the niche, the support, for students at whatever level they come to us and move them forward...we need places to help remediate. And

that's kind of my vision to provide ways and means to help them—the lower end students to improve their test scores to improve their abilities to read and write...to help our struggling students achieve and graduate. (Field Notes, 6/19/2007)

He expressed appreciation to his former principal who allowed Chad the flexibility to find the solutions and to find a better way that would work at Glacier Ridge High School. Chad felt that it was very important that he afforded others the same opportunity.

Cindy Dillon

There were numerous activities in which Cindy was involved as noted in an edition of a school newsletter that she shared with me. They were across the content areas and had literacy applications for that subject area in which the activity took place. Ten percent of the student body, for example, read a combined one million pages this past year. Another activity was a Shakespearian Festival where the students could do various projects including: writing poetry, rewriting an original story, creating displays showing how the town looked back then, and generally reading about the time of Shakespeare's day. During a display event, parents were invited to see the many projects that students had created. Other reading activities included Geography Olympiad, We the People American Government Competition, and students attending Crystal Creek City Council meetings where students were allowed to address matters of civic concern to the city council.

Cindy required teachers to post word walls in their classrooms to assist students with vocabulary development. She also believed strongly that rubrics for writing be

posted in each classroom to provide clarity and help so that students knew what was expected of them. She was adamant that teachers talk to students to get to know what the students' outside interests were. She pointed out that students loved to talk. "They're in junior high! They'll tell you where they're coming from" (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

Cindy's directive that teachers talk to their students served a two purposes. First, teachers gained an insight into their students' interests, talents, likes, and dislikes. Second, teachers were providing linguistic experiences that developed a foundation upon which students could build reading enhancement opportunities. She continued, "About 33% of my students are at the poverty level and, for these students, survival is their number one priority. Meaningful must be right now for these students. Teachers must care about their students and have high expectations" (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

Cindy had direct involvement with the implementation of READ 180, a program the school purchased to assist struggling readers. Her school also worked with the SOAR (Skills Opportunities At Reading) program, which was also designed to help struggling readers.

Cindy saw her role as one of leadership in adolescent literacy. "That is our number one goal. Our number one goal is for literacy, with a special focus on our struggling population...everything we do focuses on that," she stressed (Field Notes, 6/12/2007). Teachers must teach reading in their content areas and they needed to learn how to teach reading strategies to be effective. Getting students to improve their writing skills was also a high-priority item for Cindy and her faculty. She required writing goals to be included in teacher evaluations. If you were going to implement reading, she

maintained, then you're going to have to write. The reading and the writing process went hand in hand. She explained that the overall writing goal was that teachers "break down the writing process so that it is more easy to understand" (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

She added that the principal was the architect and the custodian of the vision. The principal must work with the faculty to make the vision happen, and the vision must be kept simple. The principal must get buy-in. "Get as many onboard as possible," she said, "and you have to know the dynamics of the group. Basically we are about our students. We have a powerful impact for good" (Field Notes, 6/12/2007). She added quite directly during this interview that if teachers didn't embrace this concept of improving literacy for their students, then they really didn't want (and wouldn't have) a teaching position at this school.

Carol Maughan

Carol was so involved in every facet of adolescent literacy in her school that I suppose I could have simply included the entire interview in this section. I have, however, chosen several specific instances that indicated her involvement in the process and how she saw her role in the development and implementation of adolescent literacy.

She saw her primary role as setting the tone for the school. She asked herself, "What is it that I want to see and have happen in my school as I walk in every single day?" She pretty much lived her day by the following guidelines: (a) Interact with everyone, (b) always be welcoming and treat everyone with respect, (c) treat others how you would like to be treated, (d) visit classrooms every day, (e) greet every staff member every day, (f) learn together (in her words, "How important it is to say, 'I am learning

with you and we're learning together.”), (g) know what kind of teaching and learning is happening in every classroom, (h) generally speaking, keep your office door open, and (i) create an atmosphere where suggestions about improvement can flow *both ways* between principal and staff (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

She was instrumental in receiving private funding for literacy development. The school used the money for several things: professional development, to pay for a reading specialist, and to pay for teachers to attend various staff development activities. When the grant money ran out this year, Carol convinced her school community council that Utah School Land Trust funds should be used to fund the reading specialist and staff development. She continued to receive an annual \$5,000 gift from a philanthropist's family for various school improvements—long after he had passed away. This year Carol used the money to fund special staff development activities, including paying teachers to attend and receiving a 14-book library related to the staff development for every attending teacher.

Carol enjoyed talking individually with students. When she was on lunch duty, she liked to do an “informal test” with her students. She went to a table in the cafeteria and asked students what their favorite class was that morning. She said that she really got such a picture of what students' thought about school and what their interests were, including which teachers they really liked. Those teachers who cared about the students and who challenged them were the teachers whom students consistently considered to be the best teachers (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

Carol worked very closely with the parents in her community. Together, they

organized an extensive tutoring program where parent volunteers were trained by faculty members to reinforce specific literacy components that particular students needed. This was an especially important activity designed to help, among others, the struggling students.

Parents helped in other areas, too, under Carol's guidance. If she wanted to do a play at her former middle school, she would have to find ways to raise the funds needed to do this, primarily through the many business partnerships she had established there. She indicated that at her current school she needed only to say that they wanted to do a play, and in a short time, some \$20,000 had been raised. She added that the parents took care of costumes and scenery and that the play or musical was "like a Broadway production." She further added that this was yet another important form of adolescent literacy (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

Gary Miller

The faculty took a serious look about 7 years ago at where students were in terms of reading. This was prior to Gary being assigned here. They found that many of their students were reading at a first- and second-grade level. In his words, "How on God's green earth can you extract information from an eighth grade history text [with a first or second grade reading level]? Can't do it" (Field Notes, 6/28/2007). He and his faculty immediately set to work to improve the situation shortly after his assignment began at Sun Crest.

Gary constantly told parents in a meeting about their child who was not performing well that they needed to put the "darned iPods, put the video games away and

let's get crackin'" (Field Notes, 6/28/2007). He made it very clear to the parents about the importance of their child's future and how important it was for that child to study.

Gary worked with his teachers regarding technology so that technology became an integral part of the curriculum. There was one computer for every two students in many classrooms. Students learned desktop publishing and how to do Power Point presentations. The sixth and seventh grade teachers utilized a technology and curriculum-based program called eMints. It was a program that was based in Missouri and was very much of a constructivist nature and approach utilizing and integrating technology with the curriculum, especially in language arts (Field Notes, 6/28/2007). There was an after school remediation program for struggling students that utilized a computerized reading program. Gary enjoyed working with technology, but he also felt this way about it: "Technology is a wonderful servant but a terrible task master" (Field Notes, 6/28/2007).

Gary described his main role as follows: "Get out of the way and let the magic happen!" He believed that he needed to also steer the ship and keep it away from obstacles (Field Notes, 6/28/2007). He also believed that it was important to team teachers up with the right people—those who would be a compliment to each other. He believed that each and every one of us had and brought to the table certain unique strengths and gifts. He wanted people to work together so that they could bring out the best in each other and strengthen those areas that needed strengthening. He made every effort to see that his teacher teams complimented each other in strong and powerful ways. That was one way to assure that the ship was sailing in the right direction for his students.

He was also very involved in finding the funding for his literacy programs. He

secured Title I, Title III (refugee money), and Highly Impacted federal funds. He tended to shy away from grants that paid for staff, because the money was “soft,” and then ended with no other means to pay the people who had created an effective program. Therefore, the program died. He wrote some grants for his voluntary after school program, and they paid for equipment and supplies.

Gary’s involvement in adolescent literacy implementation and application also included a great deal of attention to being in the classroom. He also met quarterly with teachers to see how they were doing. He and the teachers discussed individual students during this quarterly meeting and how each student was progressing (Field Notes, 6/28/2007).

Summary of Strand 3

Student-centered curriculum. Bob Richards wanted to see more group dynamics and less lecturing in the teaching at Snowline High School and was working to make that change happen. Chad Hunt knew that his struggling readers were a main focus for improvement not only in literacy and math skills, but in these students’ graduation rates, as well. Cindy Dillon was involved with many literacy activities for her students and worked to help teachers show their students the practical application of literacy skills. Carol Maughan focused on her struggling students and on listening to what they had to say; she considered learning from them to be an important endeavor. Gary Miller also placed a major emphasis on helping the struggling reader and strongly believed in researching as many programs as possible to find the right ones to assist those students.

Enhancing the family’s positive influence on their children’s education. Bob

Richards knew the importance of the family in strengthening their children's educational progress, but he was still new to his high school and still getting to know the community and its families. Chad Hunt set a goal of more parental involvement through the school community council and the accreditation process. Cindy Dillon found parent involvement to be critical in her school's implementation of the READ 180 program. Testing of all incoming seventh graders' reading skills was a clear message to the community that reading was important at Crystal Creek Junior High. Carol Maughan believed that parents were critical to their children's literacy success not only at home but working in the school, as well. Gary Miller demonstrated his belief in the importance of parental influence through the numerous parent conferences he had and the parent information nights that his school offered.

Building a positive school climate and culture. Bob Richards simply enjoyed working with students. He believed that student interaction was important in helping determine the direction of the school's literacy program. Chad Hunt noted numerous times throughout our interviews how important it was to seek faculty input and collaboration. He believed the faculty's involvement aided in building a positive school climate. Cindy Dillon believed strongly that she and her teachers had the opportunity to provide a positive atmosphere for their students, and talking to students was one way to enhance that atmosphere. Carol Maughan's philosophy was that she and her faculty/staff needed to live the Golden Rule every day. Being kind and respectful to one another was a touchstone by which all people at her school should live their day. Gary Miller was convinced of the importance of knowing all of his students and how they were doing at

school. Part of that process involved quarterly meetings with each one of his teachers.

Funding for adolescent literacy endeavors. All five principals underscored the importance of finding funds for their literacy programs. Each stressed the necessity of investigating various opportunities for program funding including private, government, and private industry financial support.

Sociocultural influences are especially strong in this Strand. Sociolinguistics, dialogue, and group dynamics play an important role in the execution of these principals' role and involvement in adolescent literacy. Each principal knew the importance of the influence of the family in a student's education. They understood what they needed to do to enhance the family's positive influence: parent/student/teacher conferences, parent information nights, various forms of parent involvement at the school, parent newsletters, and so on. Each principal was actively engaged in building a positive climate and culture in his or her school.

Strand 4: Use of Literacy Team and Faculty Involvement

This section will illustrate how the principals utilized their faculty in planning for adolescent literacy development and implementation. All but one principal utilized a literacy team format in one form or another. The only principal who did not have a literacy team extensively used various faculty committees to achieve literacy goals. Key elements in this Strand include (a) observing and learning from others, (b) data-based decision making, and (c) student choice and relevancy.

Sociocultural Perspective

Observing and learning from others. Several of the principals used an approach in faculty involvement that mirrored to some degree Bandura's social learning theory (as cited in Tracey & Morrow, 2006). A major premise of Bandura's theory is that of "vicarious learning" (Tracey & Morrow, p. 111), which is the concept that people learn from observing others. These principals assigned certain key faculty or an entire department to receive training in a literacy area. The teachers then came back and modeled the practices or principles so that others could learn by observing and then by doing.

Bandura argued that people learn more from observing others' actions than they do from the consequences of experiencing their own personal practices (as cited in Tracey & Morrow, 2006). Social Learning Theory postulates that "it is fortunate that humans are capable of observational learning; without it we would all have to experience everything ourselves in order to learn" (Tracey & Morrow, p. 111). We can then, Tracey and Morrow continue, "learn by observing others—their successes, failures, efforts, and styles" (p. 111).

Bandura called this observational stage the attentional phase, or the first stage of the social learning process (Tracey & Morrow, 2006, p. 111). This is the phase during which the observers (the faculty) watch the model. The faculty observes the practices of those who received the training and then begin the retention phase, or second stage, of Bandura's observational learning theory. This phase has the observer thinking about and processing what he or she has observed. The faculty eventually completes the third stage

(reproduction phase) where they begin to repeat the behavior that they had observed. Faculty can eventually enter the fourth stage (reinforcement phase) where they begin experiencing the reinforcement from peers and others for practicing the modeled behaviors (Tracey & Morrow).

Data-based decision making. Data collection and evaluation of the data was something that each principal did. This process was strongly supported by Au (2000). One of the principals collected the data, analyzed it, and then approached her district for additional funding to provide a second reading teacher. She made her case, along with the accompanying data, and the district supported her request. It should be noted that her district did not follow the national trend about which Elmore complains (as cited in Au). Elmore argues that most districts look only at past expenditures and not at *current* cost-benefit analyses that will provide for best cost-to-student-performance improvement ratios.

Student choice and relevancy—a culturally responsive pedagogy. Several principals noted how they focused their faculties on the practical applications of literacy learning. This approach to connecting meaning to students' lives is a fundamental principle of a culturally responsive pedagogy. It is critical that such pedagogy “works with youth to develop applications and to construct understandings that are *relevant to them* [italics added]” (Moje & Hinchman, 2004, p. 341).

Those principals' approach to adolescent literacy with the entire faculty reflected another principled practice of culturally responsive pedagogy (Moje & Hinchman, 2004). This practice dictates that “youth participate in multiple and varied discipline-specific,

cross-discourse experiences that include reading, writing, speaking, listening and performing service of increasingly sophisticated knowledge construction” (Moje & Hinchman, p. 343). Another advantage for students that is fashioned by this principle is that it makes clear to them that knowledge is best produced “when people explore the world and experiment with many different ways that different cultural groups (ethnic, disciplinary, age, gender) use to represent their understandings” (p. 343).

Several principals spoke highly about the library and librarian relative to their specific importance to adolescent literacy. The reasons for the success of the library have roots in sociocultural research. A critical attribute of adolescents is their ability to make choices. This includes such choices as what to read, what to talk about, how the discussion is structured, who gets to participate, giving students choices of working conditions or ways of expressing what they are learning, and so on (Bean, 2000; Bean et al., 2004; Tomlinson, 2004). Solely teacher-directed and teacher-selected books with no options for students to choose “reduced [students’] enthusiasm for reading” (Bean et al., p. 220). Teachers need to give adolescents choices in how they pursue assigned reading (Bean et al.).

Two studies were conducted that compared what students liked with what adults honored (Nilsen, Peterson, & Searfoss; Lehman as cited in Galda, Ash, & Cullinan, 2000). These researchers found a negative correlation between books that received critical praise by adults and books that were popular with students, implying that “a book no matter how high its literary quality, must be engaging to children to be read” (Galda et al., p. 368).

Finding students' interests is not always easy. "Preference and interest are highly individual phenomena that change from reader to reader and book to book, but at the same time are embedded in sociocultural norms and expectations" (Galda et al., 2000, p. 367). Adolescent literacy researchers Summers and Lukasevich (as cited in Galda et al.), while recognizing the importance of such sociocultural norms and expectations, found other factors at play in selecting books based on student interests. They studied the reading preferences of 1,000 fifth, sixth, and seventh graders in three different communities and found significant age, gender, and community interactions. They concluded the following:

Reading preference is highly variable and that children can be expected to exhibit different preferences by community, fluctuate by grade, and exhibit the most stable differences in terms of specific likes and dislikes for males and females... The best approach for the teacher is to treat 'norms' lightly and analyze preferences for a particular class, within a specific school and community. (Galda et al., p. 367)

The sociocultural factors of school and community are important. Additionally, the literature likes and dislikes of students, both as individuals and as a class, must be taken into consideration.

Table 7 provides a brief summary of the data analyzed for Strand #4. It is a signpost for the points to watch for in this Strand.

Bob Richards

Bob explained that when he heard what the elementary schools were doing with literacy, he began to wonder how that could connect with what he was doing at the intermediate level when he was principal there (Field Notes, 6/20/2007). He proceeded to

Table 7

Brief Summary of Strand #4 Data: Use of Literacy Team and Faculty Involvement

Principals	Observing/learning from others	Data-based decisions	Student choice and relevancy
Bob Richards	Begin with language arts team, share successes with rest of the faculty, move cautiously	CRISS influence, decisions are data driven	Program decisions based on student interests and data
Chad Hunt	Numerous faculty committees, modeling what they learned	Federal grant requires decisions to be data driven	Keys to success are relevancy and rigor
Cindy Dillon	Teachers model lifelong learning	Entire school is data driven, second reading teacher funded on data	The librarians crucial role is assessing student interest
Carol Maughan	Language arts team plans strategies, shares with total faculty	Student needs come first, develop training to meet those needs	Reading abilities assessed, student interests and teacher observations play major roles
Gary Miller	Teachers plan in teams, assist each other, receive training in reading strategies	Constant review of student achievement data	Critical role of librarian for both students and teachers—needs for both

use state Career Ladder (now called Quality Teaching funding) and Utah School Land Trust money to fund four positions mentioned earlier in this chapter: a CRISS specialist, a sixth grade and a seventh grade reading specialist each, and a sixth grade teacher who was strong in reading skills. These teachers became his literacy team. His literacy team at the high school had become primarily his language arts department, along with his librarian.

Bob wanted to start at the high school with a very specific focus on the language arts department and the literacy needs of his students. That was the goal for this year of 2007-2008. Once they had developed some ideas specifically to help with the success of their students, they would share these ideas with the total faculty. The idea was that the

faculty could then modify these ideas, strategies, and practices to fit the curricular areas that they were teaching.

He wanted to move cautiously in implementing new approaches school wide since he was new to the high school. He believed that it was important to start with a core group of teachers who understood and supported the goals of adolescent literacy and then carefully move out with school wide recommendations. Two teachers on the language arts team were particularly respected among the faculty, and Bob hoped that their encouragement and leadership would help others in the school join in the literacy program. Bob's goal was to have his literacy team members act as models for the rest of his faculty from whom the faculty could learn and similarly model to their students.

Chad Hunt

Chad noted that they did not utilize a literacy team. The school, however, had been dedicated to utilizing faculty for many years now in the restructuring process, smaller learning communities development, and reading and writing planning (Field Notes, 6/19/2007). The restructuring committee that was made up of a number of faculty members from around the school played a key role in the work of the restructuring and smaller learning communities planning. They had just received the 3-year \$500,000 smaller learning communities federal grant and it was now time to plan for the restructuring of the school into smaller learning communities.

Chad indicated that they selected the "movers and shakers" of the faculty to serve on the restructuring committee. These were people who already showed a desire and knowledge about curriculum mapping and who wanted to do things differently. They

were teachers who wanted to be on the cutting edge, who were always looking for better ways and means to teach. There were some who were also “nay sayers.” These were the teachers that the planners thought would struggle with this process (Field Notes, 6/19/2007). Some of those teachers who were negative were also involved in the initial planning process.

The grant provided for the committee to go on site visits. One teacher who was particularly negative about the change process was asked to attend a site visit out of state where several schools had been particularly successful with different models of smaller learning communities. That teacher who had particularly struggled with the idea of restructuring came back from the visit and became Glacier Ridge’s most outspoken advocate for change. This teacher realized the positive potential for students at her school when she saw smaller learning communities in place and how they were organized and what it did for students. Chad knew that his faculty would probably follow the example set by his “movers and shakers” (Field Notes, 6/19/2007), but he also knew that faculty would be wondering about the influence of the “nay sayers” as well. Chad had continued to provide training for the entire faculty. He noted that teachers had seen more and more what smaller learning communities could do. They had given their support because of the benefits that smaller learning communities brought to students (Field Notes, 6/19/2007).

Chad saw the connection between smaller learning communities and literacy this way. He believed that, more than anything else, it was important to look and see what teachers were doing in the classroom and how they could improve learning opportunities for their students through literacy in combination with other instructional practices.

One of the key elements in smaller learning communities was rigor. That element, along with relevancy and relationships, make up the “three key cornerstones to small learning communities” (Field Notes, 6/19/2007). The school mission statement, noted in various school publications, emphasized that students prepare for productive lives through rigor, relevance, and relationships. He believed that it was crucial that students saw the connection between these elements and that these smaller communities created an important relationship, or connection, with adults. The rigor and the relevancy forced his teachers to look at what they were doing in the classroom and how they could improve reading and writing scores—where it was *everybody’s job*, regardless of the subject area that one teaches.

“That’s the key,” Chad explained. “It’s across the curriculum. Everybody’s trying to help students read and write better” (Field Notes, 6/19/2007). A school-wide Desired Result of Student Learning (DRSL—which was a major component of the high school accreditation process) referred to students achieving academic excellence through the “effective use of reading, writing, and math skills using a wide variety of learning approaches across the curriculum, including the use of technology as a tool for learning and communication” (Goal Statement, Glacier Ridge High School Accreditation Action Plan #1).

Chad explained that the strongest component in Glacier Ridge High School’s restructuring process had been the faculty (Field Notes, 6/19/2007). Chad observed this involvement since the whole process began, and it fueled all of the work that had been accomplished.

He indicated that adolescent literacy, which was a development that came out of the smaller learning communities' process, was directly related to what the teachers could buy into. It came from them and not "from above," as he put it (Field Notes, 6/19/2007). Chad concluded by noting that to obtain the smaller learning communities federal grant there had to be proof that at least 80% of the faculty would support the restructuring process. He noted that the survey of the faculty confirmed that 85% were ready to move forward with that process (Faculty Notes, 6/19/2007).

Cindy Dillon

Cindy's literacy team was made up of a reading teacher, a parent, teachers from the core departments, and one elective teacher. They periodically met to discuss literacy needs of the students and teachers and ways that those needs could be met. She actually had two reading teachers. They were funded by a combination of FTEs (full time equivalent teachers) and another district budget. She was able to secure the second reading teacher based on test and related performance data she collected. The data confirmed a strong need for additional reading help.

The School Community Council, made up of one more parent than teachers and support staff, was continuously kept informed of the progress of the school's literacy program. This progress was based on test data and teacher and principal observation.

The school librarian played an important role in the literacy process. She assessed students' interests and found books to read to them that were related to their interests. The librarian also found out what departments needed regarding their content area reading books.

Cindy added that she worked with teachers to keep them aware that they were not teaching an individual curriculum, separate from the rest of the school. She stressed that “we have to educate the whole child, not just our content area” (Field Notes, 6/12/2007). Teachers needed to think as a whole school rather than just an individual. They needed to be in the present and stay current with what was going on around them. They also needed to be lifelong learners so that they could be good examples for their students.

Carol Maughan

The “main crux,” as Carol described it, of teaching literacy falls to the language arts teachers (Field Notes, 6/12/2007). Every language arts teacher had accepted that responsibility. They had also hired a reading specialist to help with literacy needs across the curriculum areas. Carol’s approach was similar to the one used by Bob Richards. She utilized the strengths and knowledge of her language arts teachers to develop ideas and procedures to share with the total faculty.

The literacy plan, including the delivery of instruction, was planned out by Carol, the reading specialist, and a committee of teachers called the leadership team. The team represented all the disciplines at the school. This group of faculty and Carol then developed various strategies to help students improve their literacy skills across the content areas. Their goal was twofold. The first was determining what the students really needed; the second was determining what it was that the entire faculty could do to help accommodate those needs. The reading strategies were such that they could be used by the woodshop teacher, the P.E. teacher, the language arts teacher, and so on (Field Notes, 6/12/2007). The committee looked at some literature and some articles together. They

determined through these discussions that they had enough information that would be helpful to the faculty.

They agreed as a faculty to use these strategies across the board and use the same vocabulary so that students would be familiar with these strategies no matter what class they were in. For example, the word “rafting” referred to a strategy that was designed to use writing-to-learn activities to enhance understanding of informational text, and the strategy was used school wide.

Teachers submitted a School Improvement Plan Survey in the spring that reflected how they felt they did in teaching various literacy strategies, along with ideas and suggestions for next year. Carol shared several of these completed teacher forms with me.

Carol said throughout this process that she was “just astounded” (Field Notes, 6/12/2007) by the thoughtful consideration of the teachers for the teaching and learning process. Reading strategies were agreed upon and then used across the entire school curriculum. An Application of Strategy and Reflection form was also filled out by the teachers to assess how the strategy instruction went. Examples of student work were also included. Carol shared various copies of these completed forms with me.

Teacher observations of their students were also a key in reading enhancement activities. Teachers grouped students in reading abilities and re-group again when the students struggle with a particular concept or strategy. There was a constant monitoring and adjusting of instruction based on student progress and individual literacy needs.

Gary Miller

Gary stressed the importance of teachers planning together in teams. They attended staff development primarily in teams. He saw this as an integral and important part of the small learning communities' concept. He noted that when it was determined that students were arriving at the middle school with a second grade reading ability, the faculty rallied and began planning and searching for effective reading programs and concepts. Gary referred to his faculty's efforts as a "testament to the staff and the commitment of the staff" to help these particularly struggling students (Field Notes, 6/21/2007).

One such program used to help these students was Success for All. It had a highly structured, highly scripted format that told teachers exactly what to do. Gary and his faculty chose this program since the teachers were content area specialists with no reading pedagogy background. Reading was out of their area of expertise in the beginning. Gary and the faculty fine-tuned the Success for All program a bit to include more fluency and more comprehension strategies.

The school librarian also became involved. The library had books categorized by reading level. Teachers and the librarian worked together so that students at a seventh grade reading level selected books at a 7.5 reading level. The idea was to stretch students' reading abilities with scaffolding and support from the teachers and librarian. They had worked very hard to obtain books in the library that were both challenging and of high interest, as well as providing a reading choice to these adolescents. This had created a library with one of the largest, if not *the* largest, circulations of any secondary school in

the district. “This is because kids are very much encouraged to read books that they are interested in at their level or at their challenge level,” he says (Field Notes, 6/28/2007).

Gary’s librarian was the key to the library’s success, and he explained why:

Our library is literally the center of the school. Our librarian is extremely welcoming and extremely inviting. And that’s the key. We have so many kids that want to be in the library at one time, it’s unreal. And they check out books. He [the librarian] conducts research classes—just the overall mood and climate is overall—he’s just a friendly and open guy and kids just love being in there. It’s a very warm and inviting place. More so than anything else, that’s the key. (Field Notes, 6/28/2007)

Summary of Strand 4

Observing and learning from others. Bob Richards utilized mainly his language arts department for staff development in literacy practices. He made it clear that these teachers would cautiously move out to the rest of the school with strategies that the language arts department had developed. Chad Hunt’s faculty was divided into various committees for curriculum mapping and planning smaller learning communities. These committee members modeled to the rest of the faculty what they had learned in their training. Cindy Dillon noted that her teachers modeled lifelong learning skills to her students in reading and writing. Carol Maughan took a similar route as that of Bob Richards. Her language arts teachers received training and then brought it to the rest of the faculty. Gary Miller had his teachers trained in teams. They assisted each other as they began to implement what they had learned in training.

Data-based decision making. Bob Richards centered his literacy training on Project CRISS, based on achievement data he had reviewed at his school. Chad Hunt reviewed achievement data throughout his school reform process and used data to satisfy

requirements for the federal grant. Cindy Dillon was able to convince her district of the need for a second reading teacher based on the reading score data she had collected and analyzed for her school. Carol Maughan was clear that student needs came first; they determined the direction for faculty and staff involvement. Gary Miller and his literacy specialist continued on a regular basis to review and analyze students' literacy achievements.

Student choice and relevancy—a culturally responsive pedagogy. Bob Richards centered his decisions, together with his faculty's, on student interests and needs. Chad Hunt noted that a driving force behind their faculty involvement was showing students the critical importance of relevancy and rigor in their education. Cindy Dillon indicated the critical role her librarian played in getting books of high interests for students both for the library and for teachers' classrooms. Carol Maughan emphasized the importance of getting teacher observations of students' performance when determining what was to be taught and how. Gary Miller also pointed with enthusiasm to how important his librarian was in offering a student-centered, culturally responsive reading experience for all of his students.

The sociocultural influences within this Strand centered on student relevancy and teachers' observations of each other. Meaningfulness to students must be in place in order for the most effective learning to occur. A corollary to that is that adolescents need to have the opportunity to choose, in some degree, what they read, what they write, and what they discuss. The opportunity to choose is a critical attribute and a critical need for adolescents.

Teachers, on the other hand, can learn much by observing their peers. The observation process becomes active involvement in teaching, and Bandura tells us that it is a critical part of sociocultural theory and a most effective way to learn (Tracey & Morrow, 2006).

*Strand 5: Clear Communication of the Principal's Literacy Vision to Constituents
(Faculty, Staff, Students, Parents, and Community)*

There were some divergent opinions from the principals on their literacy vision. One felt that the only way to get students to read was to write and that teaching of literacy should focus on writing and not reading. Another principal felt that reading and writing needed to be taught, or balanced, together. Other principals talked more about reading than writing in their literacy practices. Although their literacy vision may have been different from one another, my data showed very clearly that they all agreed that they needed to clearly communicate what they believed and what they expected others to do. Also common to each principal's vision was implementing a curriculum that tied students' home life to their academic learning. Two key elements emerged from this Strand's data: (a) communication with the community/families, students, and faculty and (b) learning activities that were tied to culture.

Sociocultural Perspective

Communication with the community/families, students, and faculty. The community plays a critical role within the sociocultural realm. Community impact on literacy is important because many students' "academic performance and lives are shaped

by the images of their communities and the associated possibilities they imagine for themselves as a result of the surrounding images” (Tatum, 2006, p. 69).

Communicating the literacy vision to families and the community is also important. The NASSP (2007) report on promoting family involvement also underscores the importance of family and community in adolescents’ education. The report notes that:

Parents and educators frequently end up like ships that pass in the night: overworked and time-deprived families and professionals can find it difficult to stop and exchange signals. This is true especially during the middle level and high school years, due in part to adolescents’ increasing desire for independence and to changes in school structure and organization. Although the nature of family involvement processes changes from those of early childhood and elementary school, families remain a crucial influence in the lives and learning of older youth. (p. 1)

The report goes on to substantiate these claims with the following research findings: (a) “Family involvement in secondary education is associated with higher rates of college enrollment” (Zarrett & Eccles as cited in NASSP, 2007, p. 1) and (b) “The academic encouragement parents provide to their adolescents is even more powerful than the support provided by friends” (Sands & Plunkett as cited in NASSP, p. 1).

Learning activities that are tied to culture and meaning. Communicating a literacy vision to students is important and so is seeking student feedback about literacy needs in the school. Student input coincides with sociocultural research. There is a need to include “adolescents’ voices and views” in the process of schooling and especially in literacy (Alvermann, Hinchman, Moore, Phelps, & Waff as cited in Bean et al., 2004, p. 223). We are warned that until or unless we tap into the “multiple literacies in adolescents’ lives, we will continue to see adolescents develop a disinterested cognitive view of in-school literacy functions and a more enthusiastic sociocultural view of out-of-

school discourse functions” (Bean et al., p. 223).

These principals in the study could be considered “hunters and gatherers” of insights about individuals and the school as a whole (Tomlinson, 2004, p. 241). They worked with their faculty to share how “gender, culture, varied learning exceptionalities, and varied experiences have shaped and continue to shape...[their] students as learners” (Tomlinson, p. 241).

Each principal in one form or another incorporated the recommendations of Tomlinson (2004) that indicate teachers should know “the specific scope of reading and writing skills and understandings important for proficiency as a literate adolescent and adult.” This knowledge provides “the compass for assessment, instruction, coaching, and feedback for students” (p. 241).

All five principals had students whose native languages were not English. They continued to incorporate concepts and teaching skills that would help these students more quickly adjust to the English language. These approaches to literacy instruction were supported by Garcia and Godina (2004) who urged educators to involve parents especially of English Language Learners. They also suggested that educators find out who their students were in terms of their language, sociocultural backgrounds, and educational experiences.

Learning activities with practical applications to both the students and their communities were key goals of several of the principals. Such learning approaches have major applications to the sociocultural realm of literacy learning. The best culturally responsive practices, Moje and Hinchman (2004) argued, attend to “the knowledges and

discourses (defined by Gee, as cited in Moje & Hinchman, as emphasizing not only language itself but also the ways of knowing, doing, being, reading, writing, and talking that people in different communities enact, p. 322) of the youth's homes; ethnic, racial, or geographic communities; and youth culture, popular culture, school culture, classroom culture, or discipline-specific culture" (Moje & Hinchman, p. 322). Students experience the practical application of literacy learning through their positive impact of service to their community. These activities provide simultaneous benefits to the classroom, school, and outside community. One principal particularly emphasized such services to the community through various literacy activities.

These are experiences not typically a part of a student's education. The principal's approach to international discussions within the school, however, supported a culturally responsive pedagogy component that "invites youth to develop and express new understandings of the world, understandings that merge mainstream content concepts with everyday knowledge in alternative, creative forms" (Moje & Hinchman, 2004, p. 344).

Another principal admonished us that it was time to shift the paradigm of what was typically referred to as parental involvement. His admonition was underscored by Smith (as cited in Holstein & Gubrium, 1994). Smith is concerned about the "taken-for-granted distinction between 'intact' families and those that are not intact" (p. 269). He argues that the view of the "standard North American family" leads some researchers to "overrule' women's diverse and legitimate familial experiences" (Holstein & Gubrium, p. 269).

The principals presented some views in this Strand that may not be considered typical. Sociocultural research findings, however, afford us the opportunity to lend some authority to what these principals are saying. Table 8 reports a brief summary of the findings in this Strand. It highlights the major points to watch for in this Strand.

Bob Richards

Bob believed that his role was to “come up with the idea and let the experts run with it” (Field Notes, 6/20/2007). He also believed, based on what he had been reading this past year, that literacy was more writing than reading. His direction and philosophy for the high school was having his faculty focus more on nonfiction, technical writing

Table 8

Brief Summary of Strand #5 Data: Clear Communication of Principal’s Lit. Vision

Principals	Communication with community/ families, students, and faculty	Learning activities that are tied to culture and meaning
Bob Richards	Use of school website to promote literacy vision, will improve his communication of vision to the community, create the vision then “let the experts run with it”	Improve nonfiction/technical writing, literacy should be more writing than reading
Chad Hunt	Create the vision and let others share it, more parental involvement needed in vision sharing, multiple committees are key to sharing the vision	Students became key factors in restructuring process
Cindy Dillon	Communicate school-wide vision regularly, increased communication a goal, keep the vision simple	READ 180 allows reading assessment of every incoming seventh grader, teachers need to know that teaching is a total school effort and not only for a content area
Carol Maughan	Thorough and careful communication, public address system, and literacy announcements	Strong community service component; literacy applications to local, national, and international communities
Gary Miller	The “June Cleaver paradigm” shift, a vision in nautical terms, city and business partnerships	Parent education/information nights, enrichment programs for students after school

than on reading—as a school-wide goal. He communicated this to his faculty, but especially to his language arts team.

The School Community Council was supportive of his efforts. They approved the use of School Land Trust funds to accomplish his goals (Field Notes, 6/20/2007). The school's parent and student association had also been made aware of what literacy efforts were underway at the high school. It was not an official PTA organization; rather a student/teacher/parent organization.

Bob also had literacy information on the school's Web site for parents to see. He believed that the school did need to improve on getting information out to parents about the literacy program. Bob's goal of improved community information about literacy was an important one. The community support was good at his high school. Bob had not seen the need to address agencies or businesses about the literacy program yet at his high school. He was still getting to know these agencies and businesses (Field Notes, 6/20/2007).

Chad Hunt

Chad stated emphatically, "My role is the vision" (Field Notes, 6/19/2007). He shared that vision first with his restructuring committee and then "we would be in faculty meetings and share our vision" (Field Notes, 6/19/2007).

Chad was concerned, however, that there should be more parental involvement than there had been with regards to adolescent literacy and the accompanying school vision. The PTA was involved in various stages of restructuring, but there was not a great deal of parental participation. The boundary change issues, mentioned earlier, began to

change the problem of waning parent participation and did get many parents involved with the school. That, coupled with the need to involve parents in the ongoing accreditation process, helped bring more parents into the school. The School Community Council, required by Utah state law, had also increased parent participation. Chad and his staff continued to work on communicating the vision of adolescent literacy through smaller learning communities.

Students became a key factor in the restructuring process as the federal government required their input as a part of the smaller learning communities grant. Outside evaluators were brought in to help survey students to see the impact of smaller learning communities on the student body (Field Notes, 6/19/2007). The faculty and staff, as mentioned earlier, were involved since the very beginning. Advisory committees and subcommittees, made up primarily of teachers, were an integral part of the restructuring process.

Cindy Dillon

Cindy believed that she was “the architect and the custodian of the vision. You’re working with them [teachers] to make the vision happen” (Field Notes, 6/12/2007). She communicated her vision of school-wide literacy practices regularly to her faculty through meetings and individual conferences with teachers.

The READ 180 program for seventh graders was an example of community involvement. The school notified parents of current sixth graders so that the parents knew what the program was and how their students were involved with READ 180. It was also a strong message to parents and their children that reading was important at Crystal Creek

Junior High School *before* they entered this school and that the goal was to have children read at grade level (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

The students who were sixth graders registered for seventh grade in the spring. Cindy's staff pretested all of the incoming seventh graders' reading abilities at this time. If the students were not at grade level in reading, they were automatically placed in the READ 180 program.

If parents did not want their son or daughter in this program, parents had to sign a release form stating that they did not want their student in READ 180. That form was placed in the student's permanent file in case reading problems continued and the parents blamed the school for not properly teaching the student how to read (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

Cindy also made the program available for parents to see at school, and she explained that she had not experienced any problems with parents not wanting their children to participate. Students graduated from the program when they became proficient in reading based on the Scholastic Reading Inventory (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

Cindy made increased community involvement one of her goals for next year. She wrote a school newsletter four times a year, a copy of which she shared with me, and it highlighted numerous accomplishments of both students and faculty. Students' literacy accomplishments, such as reading one million pages this past year, were part of those highlights.

Cindy clearly communicated her vision of literacy to her teachers by explaining that this was a school-wide effort. Teachers could no longer afford to view their teaching

as an individual or isolated experience. “Teachers,” she said, “need to think as a whole school rather than just an individual. Teachers need to be in the present and stay current with what is going on around them” (Field Notes, 6/12/2007). They must educate the whole child.

“The vision must be kept simple. We all have to work together,” Cindy said (Field Notes, 6/12/2007). She was also very clear that if teachers cannot accept this vision, then it was time to find a teaching position in another school.

Carol Maughan

Carol was careful and thorough in communicating her vision to her constituents. This process reached across all areas of her school, both inside and out. She said very directly, “I see my first role as principal as setting the tone for the school. What is it that I want to have happen as I walk in here every single day? But I never can do that by myself” (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

Her parents played a particularly critical role in understanding and implementing her literacy vision. Carol, her faculty, and staff have noted the tremendous support given the literacy program through the school’s parent volunteers and instructional aides, as well their impact on the teaching and learning process. This included working in the ESL program, the literacy tutoring program in multiple subjects, and the regrouping process for students of various needs. A PTSA (Parent Teacher Student Association) mother took on the responsibility of arranging for literacy aides and volunteer tutors. Parents were also active in helping to establish computer keyboarding classes and providing helpful recommendations regarding mastery levels for those classes.

Carol made comments over the school's public address system about a particular strategy that was to be used that day and why it was important for students to learn it. This occurred during her daily announcements to students and staff. She reminded teachers to write a particular note on the board about this strategy that would make it easier for students to grasp the concept. Teachers then periodically shared in meetings what their students had created as a result of this strategy, pointing out the students' successes and what still remained to accomplish students' learning goals (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

Carol noted several practical applications of what students were learning through literacy. They related to assisting people in need. The school collected eyeglasses for people in Mexico. The students studied (read and wrote about) why people need eyeglasses. An optometrist came to the school and spoke to the students on this subject. Students took surveys of how many people they knew who wore glasses and took that data to extrapolate how many in their community wear glasses. They visited an eyeglass store and found out how eyeglass prescriptions were determined, using the donated glasses.

Once a month the school made 18 loaves of sandwiches for the city's homeless shelter that was also assisted by the Salvation Army. The needy ate the sandwiches for dinner. The ingredients were delivered to the school by the local Kiwanis Club of which Carol was a member. The club then picked up the student-made sandwiches and delivered them to the shelter for dinner that night. The students study about the need for a shelter, how many people were receiving help, how many families that included, how to

follow recipes, the importance of hygiene in the preparation of food, the importance of service and the Kiwanis and Salvation Army connection to service, and so on.

Carol believed that literacy must have a practical application for students. They saw these applications through these and other activities. She further believed that this must be done for students to see that learning took place in multiple levels, both in and out of the classroom and that we never learn in isolation. We have to learn connected to other things. Carol noted, “It’s that kind of enriching background that these teachers provide for our students” (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

Carol worked with two school-based councils. The School Improvement Council was made up of various faculty and staff members and was negotiated by district agreement with the teachers’ association. This council oversaw all that went on at the school. The other council was the School Community Council and was made up of teachers, staff, and parents. Both councils were closely involved with adolescent literacy activities.

Parents were also involved in teaching a class to students about character building. The lessons were taught once a month for 45 minutes and were taught from the same lesson plan so that students across the school were taught the same information. It was called the Community of Caring. This was a program that was designed by Carol’s parents. It had national recognition as an outstanding community partnership and, Carol believed, was another important part of literacy development (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

There were also groups of international travelers through our State Department who visited the school. Carol arranged for students to greet the international visitors as

they toured the school. Discussions between them and the students led to dialog from the students about the visitors' language, dress, customs, and other questions. Carol argued, "This is literacy at its best" (Field Notes, 6/12/2007). It was dialog, and it was understanding. The teachers loved the program as did the students. Carol was convinced that "we only understand ourselves better when we understand others" (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

Gary Miller

Gary described his vision of and role in adolescent literacy in nautical terms: His role was to see that the ship was being steered in the right direction. "The ship goes nowhere if there's no wind in the sails. These people [faculty and staff] are the wind in the sails, and that's my second role is to make sure that I take care of those guys because if I don't, the ship goes nowhere—no matter what direction I steer it in" (Field Notes, 6/28/2007).

Gary wished to see more parents involved than there currently were. He pointed out, however, that many of his parents were involved with mere survival. The idea that there could be active involvement by many parents in his type of community was distressing to him. Gary noted that his parents were working three jobs just to be able to put food on the table.

Our parents are involved with mere survival. We [the educational community] have got to overcome—I'm going to be very blunt with what I'm about to say—we have got to get over this fifties mentality of parent involvement now days, especially in a community like mine. They can't come and volunteer the way June Cleaver used to back in the fifties. (Field Notes, 6/28/2007)

He believed that we have to get over the common paradigm of parental involvement. He

added further that if his parents made sure that their children came to school. If they came to school prepared with clothes on their back and with food in their stomachs, then he believed that his parents were involved.

This highlighted Gary's concern that the typical acceptable definition of parental involvement does not include a parent getting his or her child ready for school, making sure the child was fed and clothed and prepared to come to school—especially when that may be the only involvement that the parent *can* have with the school (Field Notes, 6/28/2007).

Gary and his staff continued, however, to make every effort to communicate with parents regarding many important activities. These included: drug awareness meetings, health night focusing on good nutrition and related items, parenting skills and communication information, reading and math nights, sending out monthly newsletters, calling to remind parents of parent teacher conference nights, notifying parents about after school and Saturday academic programs, providing ESL classes and support for ESL families, and so on (2007 Annual School Improvement Plan, p. 28).

Gary developed rather extensive business partnerships. Every summer the employees from G. E. Capitol came in and sat and read to the students in summer school. They continued this practice during the school year, as well. They also provided additional resources. The city's mayor's office helped with the school's after school program. They help financially and with staff, mainly providing enrichment programs for the students after school.

Summary of Strand 5

This section has provided an opportunity to see some divergent views from the principals relative to a literacy vision, its application, and its communication to constituents. Each principal provided different ways of communicating with the community, students, and faculties. They also provided learning activities that were tied to culture and meaning.

Communication with community/families, students, and faculty. Bob Richards utilized his school's Web site to communicate with his constituents about what was going on at his school relative to literacy. He created the vision but felt that it was important to let the experts, or his faculty and staff, expand and improve on it for the benefit of the students. Bob knew that he needed to improve on his communication with the community, and he believed that this would happen as he began to know them better. Chad Hunt also believed that it was his responsibility to create the literacy vision for his school, but he believed that it was important for his faculty and staff to share that vision with others. The committees that he created for the improvement of his school were helpful in spreading that vision. He believed that more parental involvement was needed and that process would be aided by the School Community Council and the accreditation process. Cindy Dillon posited that it was important to keep the vision simple so that it could be understood and shared more readily. She was also committed to expanding communication opportunities to her constituents. Carol Maughan utilized her public address system during a regular time of the day to talk to students about literacy strategies, and their teachers would implement them. She was convinced that her

communication needed to be thorough and careful. Gary Miller reminded us that the 1950s “June Cleaver Paradigm” was no longer valid for communities with parents who struggled to be able to have enough food and clothing for their children. He believed that schools needed to be more culturally responsive in understanding what “involvement” meant for these parents.

Learning activities that are tied to culture and meaning. The five principals and their faculties provided various learning opportunities that were both culturally sensitive to the needs of their students and meaning-centered. Bob Richards noted that his belief in literacy stemmed from the need to be able to write correctly. Students, in his view, needed to be able to communicate clearly in writing before they could improve their reading. They needed to improve especially in non-fiction, technical writing in his opinion. Chad Hunt’s philosophy was to make the curriculum especially meaningful for his struggling students. He considered them to be a target group for literacy endeavors and school restructuring and improvement. Smaller learning communities and literacy practices that were appropriate for these students were two ways he and his faculty felt they could help these students. Cindy Dillon’s message to her faculty was that teachers needed to see the whole child and the whole school. Content areas were important, but teachers needed to see the bigger picture of the total child. Carol Maughan placed special focus on communicating her school’s literacy goals to the entire school and community. Her vision was to show students the out-of-school connection to literacy through community-based service projects and dialog with international visitors. Gary Miller knew that his school needed to provide educational opportunities beyond the regular

school day given the unique culture of his community. He enlisted the help of his own faculty, his district, and the city's mayor's office to provide for this after school program.

Sociocultural research findings indicated the need for effective communication home about school events and parental influence on student achievement. Another important aspect of sociocultural influence was the positive impact of the community on students' education and the necessary partnership of community and school.

Sociocultural researchers also stressed the need for schools to be sensitive to the sociocultural and socioeconomic needs of its community, and the significant importance of making literacy instruction meaningful to all cultures represented in the school (Bean, 2004; NASSP, 2007; Tatum, 2006). Several examples of sociocultural awareness of the individual school communities and related meaning-sensitive curriculum were noted in this review.

Strand 6: Literacy and the Evaluation Process of Program and Teachers

Sociocultural Perspective

An analysis of the data in Strand 6 and a review of the literature grounded in sociocultural theory unveiled two key elements. They included (a) assessment of students and programs and (b) importance of teacher evaluation.

Assessment of Students and Program

An interesting caution is provided by Au (1998) in which she explained that students from different cultures may need to be assessed in a format different from mainstream school practices. For instance, researchers Au and Mason (as cited in Au)

found that Native Hawaiian students were performing poorly in reading lessons and assessments when teachers conducted their lessons “following the rules for conventional classroom recitation” (Au, p. 302). Students began performing much better when their reading lessons were conducted in a “culturally responsive manner” (p. 302). This meant that students were allowed to follow rules for participation much like those in “talk story,” a common speech event in the Hawaiian community. This process involves students collaborating with each other in producing responses to teachers’ questions.

Alternative forms of assessments are recommended, including portfolios and statewide tests that focus on the process of meaning construction (Pearson & Valencia as cited in Au, 1998). It is further recommended that open-ended “envisionment” questions be used (“e.g., What have you learned that is happening so far?”) as opposed to decontextualized probing questions (“e.g., What order was used in the piece you just read?”; Au, p. 314).

There is no question that assessment needs to take place whatever the assessment tool or process is. The teacher and the class need to adopt a “growth orientation.”

Together they understand that:

There is a continuum of knowledge, understanding, and skill along which each learner is growing. The teacher, with ongoing student input, will assess to determine learner needs, and will work to ensure that students have the support necessary to grow along that continuum. (Tomlinson, 2004, p. 242)

Importance of Teacher Evaluation

All five principals used similar processes to evaluate teachers and the literacy practices at their schools. Noted at the beginning of this chapter, a number of researchers

speak to the importance of teacher evaluation and its potential in improving the instructional process. It was concluded that feedback to teachers was one of the most powerful tools in enhancing achievement (Hattie as cited in Marzano et al., 2005). It was further noted that in successful schools, there was consistent monitoring of both curriculum and instruction in the classrooms (Elmore as cited in Marzano et al., 2005). Districts may use different evaluation instruments and methodologies, usually based on a negotiated contractual agreement. What is clear, however, is that “effective instructional leaders are in almost universal agreement that observation and feedback are near the top of the list when it comes to ways for improving instruction” (Guzzetti & Martin as cited in McEwan, 2003, p. 87)

The five principals realized the importance of feedback and evaluation to the literacy achievement process and committed to ongoing feedback and evaluation. All five principals had evaluation procedures relative to adolescent literacy practices although the districts did not require evaluation of specific literacy practices or procedures. Table 9 provides a brief summary of the findings in this Strand.

Bob Richards

Bob believed that there was not an option to ignore UBSCT and criterion reference test scores (Field Notes, 6/20/2007). These test results were key to determining where and how to proceed in their next steps of adolescent literacy development. Bob monitored student and teacher progress by visiting classes. He expected to see daily and or weekly writing topics and that students were writing. He further placed a strong emphasis on teacher input and attitudes about what was going on in literacy.

Table 9

Brief Summary of Strand #6 Data: Literacy and Program and Teacher Evaluation

Principals	Student and program assessment	Teacher evaluation
Bob Richards	No option to ignore testing data, key to determining next steps in literacy development, regular writing topics	Modified district format to evaluate literacy progress, focus on the positive, future use of business model
Chad Hunt	Test score analysis key in literacy practices, assessment, state accreditation and teacher involvement, "Looking hard at what we do."	Reaching/writing goals are across the school, goal setting and goal evaluation, includes literacy goals
Cindy Dillon	Teacher-designed tests, teacher observations of students, criterion-referenced tests, READ 180 tests, strong emphasis on data analysis	Goal setting forms, literacy goals required, goal evaluations, frequent classroom visits
Carol Maughan	Most important is teacher observation of student, criterion-references tests used, Iowa Test of Basic Skills	Collaborative meetings with teachers in fall and spring, goals tied to literacy, personal note mailed to every teacher
Gary Miller	Weekly meetings with literacy coordinator regarding individual and school-wide progress, Scholastic Reading Inventory test, student data analysis critical to school	Frequent classroom observations, quarterly progress meetings with teachers, students discussed by name

There was no specific statement on the district's teacher evaluation form regarding teaching literacy. It was Bob's intent, therefore, to focus on the positive and recognize areas of commendation as teachers implemented literacy activities. He believed that teachers needed to hear from him about how they were progressing and that he needed to assist them in areas of follow-up as needed (Field Notes, 6/20/2007).

He further planned on implementing a business model where the supervisor (Bob) meets with his key leadership people (department chairs) at least four times a year to get a progress update regarding, in this case, adolescent literacy implementation. Bob wanted to pursue this process and perhaps receive training in it.

Chad Hunt

Reading and writing were school goals—”across the board,” as Chad indicates (Field Notes, 6/19/2007; School Accreditation Report, p. 213). Teacher evaluations included setting goals at the beginning of every year and completing them by the end of the year. Teachers showed the administration during their final evaluation what they had done throughout the year to accomplish their goals.

Chad emphasized that test score analysis played a key role in determining how well the school’s literacy program was doing. Teachers were involved in program evaluation through school-level performance assessments and their own observations. Another critical component of program evaluation was the state accreditation process. His school recently went through this accreditation process and received the highest rating possible. They were the only high school in their district to receive this rating. “And I think,” Chad posited, “what that reflects is that we did a good job in looking at what we need to do to be better at our school” (Field Notes, 6/19/2007).

They had been doing this self-assessment process for the past 8 to 9 years, “really looking hard at what we do and how we can make it better,” as he puts it (Field Notes, 6/19/2007). Chad then concluded, “Literacy is a key element” in the self-assessment and accreditation process.

Cindy Dillon

Cindy placed great emphasis on data collection. She followed the progress of her students and her teachers carefully through such data. Teachers were required to fill out a Professional Goals and Activities form that Cindy shared with me during one of our

interviews. Goals must reflect the literacy needs of their students. They were encouraged to use school-wide, grade-level, team, or department goals in this process. They documented their goals, goal progress, classroom activities related to those goals, and the progress of those activities to meet the goals. They then discussed the results with Cindy. They were encouraged to use a Data Source Student Achievement Reporting Form that Cindy also shared with me to include those data that confirm the progress made by students.

Teacher-designed tests (both pre and post), READ 180, and criterion-referenced tests (CRTs) were used to determine student and school progress. Cindy believed that it was important to be in classrooms frequently to observe the instructional process. She indicated that she always left a note to let the teacher know how he or she was doing in the lesson. Cindy added, “I work with teachers to get them to believe that they are doing their best” (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

Carol Maughan

Carol and her staff analyzed data from the Utah CRTs as well as from the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. They also reviewed writing analysis tests. She added, “But I think most important is the assessments that our teachers do on a continuing basis. And they know if students are learning or not” (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

Carol held collaborative meetings in the fall and spring regarding their own official district evaluations. She provided during our interview an example of the Spring Reflection that teachers used to summarize, as well as a copy of the Fall Collaborative meeting indicating what literacy goals teachers wished to accomplish for that year. The

teacher and Carol talked about how the teacher had or had not met his/her goals. The goals were tied into literacy. She also wrote a note to every teacher about three times a year telling them specifically what she's observed in their classrooms or in a program of which they have been in charge. This was a handwritten note that she sent to their home, and she kept a copy of the note in the teachers' files. This process was viewed favorably by the teachers, and they appreciated the personal touch (Field Note, 6/12/2007).

Gary Miller

Gary and his staff used data extensively to monitor student progress. A couple of times a week the literacy coordinator reported to him how students were doing based on test data like the Scholastic Reading Inventory. She also gave him extensive information about class progress and school-wide progress, especially as it related to the state's CRTs. He made regular classroom visits to assure that the literacy program and related models were being followed. Gary noted that the school was "making AYP [Adequate Yearly Progress from the federal No Child Left Behind Act] and [has] been for the past several years" (Field Notes, 6/28/2007).

Every single teacher taught reading, and Gary met with the teachers on a quarterly basis to go over the reading growth in their classes. He did not necessarily tie that information into the summative evaluation at the end of the year, but added, "When I have those quarterly meetings with those teachers, it is a very powerful thing" (Field Notes, 6/28/2007). He asked questions about the progress of each student by name. Gary pointed out the importance of discussing reading and other curricular progress with teachers, and he added, "I've been doing this game long enough to know that teachers

pay attention to what the principal looks at” (Field Notes, 6/28/2007).

Summary of Strand 6

All five principals knew that evaluation of their teachers’ literacy practices needed to take place, even though none of their districts mandated a specific evaluation of literacy practices. They further accepted and supported the ongoing assessment/review of student performance data. The following key element summary will provide specific examples of how the five principals implemented the practices within each element.

Assessment of students and program. Bob Richards was adamant that we have no option to ignore test score data. These data provided the components to guiding how the school was doing with literacy and what changes needed to be made. Bob was also implementing writing topics for the school on a regular basis to help improve students’ writing skills. Chad Hunt required his faculty to look seriously at what the school did and what was needed to improve. This process was done by various committees involving smaller learning communities and literacy practices. The upcoming school accreditation process was also providing opportunities for deep introspection with regards to program offerings and development for students. Cindy Dillon continued to place a major emphasis on student performance data analysis. She and her faculty used criterion referenced tests, teacher-made tests, and teacher observation to determine next steps in program development and improvement. Carol Maughan considered teacher observations of student progress the most important criterion to determine how the students and school were doing. She also utilized criterion referenced tests and nationally normed tests to determine how students were doing. Gary Miller considered data analysis critical to the

progress of his school. He met weekly with his literacy coordinator to determine how the individual students and the school in general were performing.

Sociocultural research findings inform us that we need to use caution when evaluating all students with the same instrument. Students of different nationality background may not understand the information being sought in a test and therefore invalidate the results. Some sociocultural researchers are encouraging the use of authentic assessments such as portfolios. Other recommendations include using tests that allow students to envision an answer on open-ended questions, rather than responding to basic multiple choice questions. Researchers also believe that teacher observational practices should be used and considered as important data to measure student progress.

Importance of teacher evaluation. All five principals created literacy goal requirements for their faculties since none of the districts provided them. All the principals modified their evaluation instrument to require literacy goals and evaluations. Bob Richards focused on the positive during evaluations and provided encouragement for his teachers. He planned on implementing a business model evaluation process whereby Bob would meet regularly with his teacher leadership to help determine student, teacher, and school goals. Chad Hunt required that literacy goals be developed school wide. Teachers met with him to set literacy goals at the beginning of the year and then again at the end of the year to determine how successfully the goals were met. Cindy Dillon believed that it was important to be in the classrooms regularly. She was able to determine how well teachers were meeting their literacy goals, which had been developed earlier in the year collaboratively with Cindy. Carol Maughan also tied literacy goals to

her district's goals. She and the teachers met early in the year to set the goals and then in the spring to determine goal attainment. She sent positive personal notes in the mail to teachers' homes after each formal classroom observation. Gary Miller met quarterly with his teachers and discussed each student by name and how each student was progressing. Gary also believed that it was important to be in the classroom frequently.

Strand 7: Review and Revision of School Mission and Goals

All five principals took seriously their commitment to consistently review their school goals. This process was typically done collaboratively with their faculty and based on test and teacher/principal observational data. The practice of reviewing goals then informed the process of change—whether a change of direction is needed or not.

The principals' process of program review and revision closely mirrored some of the most recent recommendations from researchers (Irvin et al., 2007). They recommended utilizing what they referred to as an "Inquiry Cycle for Program Monitoring" (Irvin et al., p. 139). This cycle, graphically portrayed as a circle made up of arrows pointing clockwise, advocates a starting point at the top of the circle. This is the first step and begins with determining what needs to be known. The process then moves to (a) selecting appropriate data sources, (b) describing evidence of success, (c) collecting and analyzing data, and (d) deciding what actions to take. That final arrow in the circle then points to where the cycle began, i.e., determining what needs to be known. All the principals in this study followed some form of this cycle as they monitored, evaluated, and adjusted their literacy programs and practices. Key elements that emerged from my

data analysis of this Strand were (a) group modeling of importance of literacy concepts and (b) cyclical review of school mission, goals, and literacy program

Sociocultural Perspective

Group modeling of importance of literacy concepts. One principal used faculty group study processes extensively. The teachers took what they had learned from a particular book and then shared that information with the rest of the faculty. This group study process has roots in sociocultural and sociolinguistic research (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). It uses discussion in a social setting to help determine ways in which teaching can be improved. Teachers learned from each other during the discussion phase of these book study groups. Such a process emphasizes the importance of teachers bringing knowledge and artifacts from their own lives, or culture, into these discussions.

Research findings point out that “teachers must show students, on a daily basis, how reading can be rewarding” (D’Amato as cited in Au, 2004, p. 397). Researchers indicate that it is paramount for teachers to first establish positive relationships with their students in order to begin to show students how powerful reading can be in their lives (Moje & Hinchman, 2004). Teachers must also serve as good models of “literate behavior” (Moje & Hinchman, p. 397), and they “must see themselves as readers” if they want their students to read (Moje & Hinchman, p. 397). It is only then that teachers can provide the genuine demonstration of literate behavior that will persuade their students to read and make it apart of their daily lives, both inside and outside of school (Moje & Hinchman).

An important consequence of students reading daily is “ownership of literacy”

(Au, 2004, p. 398). “Ownership,” Au argues, “has to do with valuing literacy, having a positive attitude toward literacy, and having the habit of using literacy. Students who have ownership make reading a part of their everyday lives outside of school” (p. 398). Au concludes by noting that although all students can benefit from being part of a classroom of readers, “this experience may be especially important to students of diverse backgrounds, by giving them a reason for staying in school” (p. 398). This concept of giving students a reason to stay in school is a driving force of why these principals do what they do.

Several principals believed that in order for faculty to be able to make sound judgments about literacy practices, teachers must be actively engaged themselves in reading and writing. This philosophy is supported by Au (2004) who argues that teachers “must demonstrate the kind of literacy they want students to show...teachers must see themselves as readers and writers if they want students to read and write” (Au, p. 397).

The faculty discussions about the enhancement of the instructional process and decisions made about corresponding literacy needs are related to culturally responsive pedagogy. This process encourages people to explore the world and experiment with many different ways that different cultural groups (ethnic, disciplinary, age, gender, etc.) can use to represent their understandings (Moje & Hinchman, 2004).

Continuous review of school mission, goals, and programs. The study principals extensively utilized staff development to enhance their literacy programs. They also used this staff development model (group discourse) to evaluate where these programs were and where they needed to be in terms of student achievement. This approach is similar to

a sociocultural researcher (Tatum, 2006) who provided staff development that was designed to do more than provide “basic skills aimed at minimum requirements on a standardized instrument.” Tatum believes that staff development should help teachers engage their students with authentic text and authentic discussions relative to their lives, provide meaningful literacy activities that take into account students’ adolescent and cultural identities, and help teachers realize that skill development, increasing test scores, and nurturing students’ identities are fundamentally compatible (Tatum, p. 71). This process has implications for program evaluation because teachers have been actively involved in meaningful literacy activities, student discussions, and developing positive student relationships. This allows teachers the opportunity to make conclusions about programs based on student- and teacher-driven data.

Research findings and practice related to teaching to the individual adolescents’ literacy needs suggest the importance of at least three key elements for effective instructional practice: “reflection on learners as individuals, attention to quality curriculum, and flexibility in instruction” (Tomlinson, 2004, p. 240). The research principals, their faculties, and support staff worked to accommodate the infusion of these elements into the classroom and school.

They also worked to establish other practices that Tomlinson (2004) recommends. These include the teacher continuously assessing learners’ progress throughout the year, developing curriculum that is inviting to adolescents as a group and individually, and providing a variety of materials for students’ use in order to address readiness, interest, and learning preference (Tomlinson, p. 241).

Table 10 provides a brief summary of the findings in this final strand. It is a signpost for the points to watch for in this Strand.

Bob Richards

Bob was finishing his first year at Snowline High School, and he had not had adequate time to cyclically review his new literacy focus with the faculty. Based on his literacy experiences at his former intermediate school where he was principal, his goal was to review his literacy plan at Snowline as he did at the intermediate school. Bob used

Table 10

Brief Summary of Strand #7 Data: Review/Revise School Mission and Goals

Principals	Group modeling of importance of literacy concepts	Continuous review of school mission, goals, and programs
Bob Richards	Teacher book study, findings made available to total faculty, teachers model “razor-like” writing focus questions	Review with language arts department, evaluate group book review, share findings with faculty, make adjustments as needed, follow format used at former school
Chad Hunt	Teachers share/model what they have learned at workshops, extensive collegial work on school restructuring	School culture is informed by review/revise process, status quo is safe only if it is proven through data review to be working for students
Cindy Dillon	Teachers model problem-solving process for students, they also model reading and writing processes, teachers must model lifelong learning	#1 goal is find gaps and fill them, use data to find the gaps, research potential solutions and implement them, then review them for effectiveness
Carol Maughan	Teachers receive national training and return to model new concepts to remaining faculty, review national research and share results with faculty	Continuously review school goals as they relate to student achievement, all literacy work linked to school goals, “brain power: people power”
Gary Miller	Every teacher teaches and models reading every day, district teacher models reading strategies for Gary’s teachers	Extensive use of data, semi-weekly meetings to discuss student and school progress, changes made to programs and practices as necessary

CRISS strategies at the intermediate school with district support. He was doing the same thing at Snowline with those strategies his first year there, including a faculty book review. He discussed his goals for Snowline this way:

Our goal after we do the book review is to start developing within the language arts department this year some writing strategies and then to carry that over school-wide into another year to tie in with our accreditation goals. [S]o my goal really is to...try and have the kids do more cross-content non-fiction writing. That's really where we're trying to go with this (Field Notes, 6/20/2007).

Bob was finding that the CRISS model appeared to be working well with his faculty based on what he and his language arts team had discussed. He had already included another group book study in his goals for the '07-'08 school year. This would continue to deal with writing and CRISS strategies. He paid his language arts team and the district reading specialist to do this outside of the contract day. Their findings would then be made available to the total faculty. It would also assist the school in preparing for the school's next accreditation visit in 2010 (Field Notes, 6/20/2007).

Bob believed strongly that reading would improve when students have very specific, "razor-like" focus questions on which to write. He believed that test scores would improve dramatically when students have a frequent and consistent opportunity to write technically. This was his major goal, indeed the leading goal, in implementing positive literacy changes for his students (Field Notes, 6/20/2007).

Chad Hunt

Chad explained that the restructuring process and the development of the smaller learning communities' philosophy, along with its corresponding emphasis on literacy, were all driven by the desire and need to evaluate the status quo and change what needed

to be changed. They found that they needed help with reading and writing—and it was a need school wide. They looked at research about smaller learning communities, and they visited sites in various parts of the country where successful programs were in operation.

Their review of where they were and where they needed to be was ongoing. Chad felt that their specific approaches to reading could use improvement: “I do know that [reading is] going to be a focus for the next few years because of accreditation that we just went through. These were the key elements again—the reading, the writing, and the math scores are school goals” (Field Notes, 6/19/2007). Chad felt strongly that accreditation would rekindle the focus on specific reading activities across the school. Chad had constantly encouraged his faculty to explore different approaches to enhancing delivery of instruction. He hoped that his faculty would continue to use the review and revise process as they moved forward with their literacy programs. He knew that moving forward would involve change.

Cindy Dillon

Cindy believed that her number one goal was to find where the gaps were in the school’s instructional and curricular programs and close those gaps (Field Notes, 6/12/2007). She determined why the gaps existed and began finding ways to improve through researching potential solutions—specifically for struggling or reluctant readers. Much of this process begins with the teachers, and she believed that staff development was the key to the improvement process.

There were a number of teaching processes that one could observe in the classroom as she determined through her research and her subsequent staff development

process. Teachers showed how to break a problem down using the chalkboard, and students wrote about it at their desks. They read about how to find solutions to these problems, and Cindy noted, “The reading and the writing process go hand in hand” (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

Students found themselves in small groups and literature circles while also utilizing independent study skills. The media specialist (librarian) conducted reading activities on a regular basis in the media center. All teachers had word walls in their classrooms to assist with vocabulary development. Cindy believed that the entire school must be involved in whole language processes and that there was no one particular way to do this (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

It was very important to Cindy that teachers saw the entire school and not just their own classroom. They must stay current on what is going on around them, both from their students’ viewpoint, as well as from a curricular and instructional point of view. Teachers must be lifelong learners so that they can be good examples for their students (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

Carol Maughan

Carol found that, as she began her assignment at Eagle View Middle School, the faculty and principal had not collectively reviewed what the school’s mission statement was in a very long time. She was not only concerned that she had a number of struggling readers but also that there were many students who were reading but who were not understanding what they read. They were not critical readers or critical thinkers (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

The faculty, support staff, and community then began to revise their school's mission. Carol noted that there had to be two major components within the mission statement and goals: continued academic development and social development. The mission statement and goals then evolved around the concept of "brain power: people power," coupled with the school's three focal points: continuing learners, resourceful thinkers, and effective communicators. Posters were displayed with these themes in the classrooms, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. Carol and her faculty then linked every bit of their work in literacy development to these goals. The other part of this process stressed the need for common vocabulary across the school (Field Notes, 6/12/2007). All literacy plans, classroom goals, and all academic activities were driven by these goals. They steered the school in the direction that Carol, her faculty and staff, and parents wanted it to go.

They reviewed national statistics about students who are struggling and/or are dropping out of school. Carol and her team continuously reviewed their goals and related directions in which they were headed. They asked questions as they reviewed where their literacy program was. Who are these students? What do they look like? Why is it that they are dropping out? She and her team noted that almost all of these struggling students were nonreaders. This process of statistical review became an important key to the success of their planning (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

They also used research from the National Middle School Association, the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), and the National Association of Secondary School Principals. They used research from Phi Delta Kappa

and No Child Left Behind to gain insight in how to help all students in general and struggling students in particular.

Gary Miller

The faculty came together a number of years ago to assess where they and their students were in terms of literacy progress. What they found was an alarming concern: middle school students reading at the second grade level. Gary and his faculty began monitoring the progress of their students and the effectiveness of the various instructional programs. Gary and his faculty soon realized the importance of knowing every student—from the newly arrived child from half way around the world without even a word of the English language in his or her vocabulary to the college-bound eighth grader looking to maintain his or her perfect straight-A average—every student had to take reading for an hour a day every day (Field Notes; 6/21/2007, 6/28/2007). Every teacher taught, and therefore modeled, reading every day. The teachers monitored what their students' literacy levels were. Continuous assessments of students' performance were reviewed to ensure proper instructional level for their students. A district reading specialist and facilitator provided extensive training for Gary's teachers in his school's reading lab (Field Notes, 6/28/2007).

Gary and his faculty used data extensively to monitor student progress. They researched various instructional programs as noted earlier in this chapter that were geared to assisting the struggling reader. Gary and his literacy team evaluated student progress on a regular basis—about twice a week. The data were reviewed and compared against where they thought the school should be. These findings were shared with teachers in

separate meetings for their feedback. Program evaluation was central to the success of the students, and that evaluation occurred frequently. Changes were made as they became necessary.

Summary of Strand 7

Group modeling of importance of literacy concepts. Bob Richards was new to his high school with only a year of experience there at the time of my interview with him. He was still in the process of assessing literacy goals and practices with his language arts department. His plan was to duplicate in large part what he and his faculty had done at his former school utilizing CRISS strategies and faculty book study groups. His emphasis was on improving student-writing skills utilizing very specific writing topic questions. Chad Hunt had extensive teacher modeling of what these teachers learned at conferences related to school restructuring and literacy. Cindy Dillon's main message to her teachers was that they must model lifelong learning skills to their students, especially in the areas of reading and writing. Carol Maughan emphasized training and research at the national level. Teachers shared what they learned with the entire faculty. Gary Miller enlisted the help of a district reading specialist in assisting all teachers to teach reading and how to monitor literacy progress. His own literacy specialist was also an integral part of this process.

Continuous review of school mission, goals, and programs. Bob Richards monitored the writing skills of his students and made changes accordingly along with input from his language arts team. His focus was to improve reading through writing. Chad Hunt's central message was that the status quo could remain intact only as long as it

could be determined through consistent review that it was helping students. Cindy Dillon's primary goal was to use student and teacher data to determine where the instructional and curriculum gaps were in her school. She also used data to find ways to fill those gaps. Carol Maughan maintained that all literacy plans from her teachers must tie back into the school goals. She and her faculty constantly reviewed school goals to make sure that they were appropriately connected to student achievement. Gary Miller used data extensively to determine student and school progress. He used findings from biweekly meetings with his literacy coordinator to help determine the direction of programs, practices, and policies.

Sociocultural theory informed this Strand in a number of ways. The process of reviewing/assessing instruction and programs and revising them when needed has been recommended by researchers for years (Irvin et al., 2007; Marzano et al., 2005; McEwan, 2003; Taylor & Collins, 2003). Faculty discussions often centered on how teachers could improve the literacy skills of their students. This was culturally responsive pedagogy. Staff development activities utilized sociolinguistic opportunities for teachers to dialogue together and make revisions to their programs based on these discussions. Principals encouraged teachers to be role models for their students in reading and writing. This was another example of culturally responsive pedagogy.

Students not only benefit from being part of a classroom of readers, "this experience may be especially important to students of diverse backgrounds, by giving them a reason for staying in school" (Au, 2004, p. 398). This concept of giving students a reason to stay in school was a driving force of why these principals did what they did.

Summary of the Seven Strands and Sociocultural Influences

The Seven Common Strands were not determined before the principal interviews took place. They emerged only after the data had been collected, analyzed, and categorized. They are a summation of *why* these principals did *what* they did with literacy. All of the seven common strands, with the exception of long-time belief in and commitment to literacy, are also grounded in the literature, as noted in the review of literature chapter of this study.

The influences and impact of the home, the school, and the community are critical to the reading process as evidenced by the sociocultural research. Sociocultural theory informs and supports the concepts, programs, practices, policies, and procedures noted in the analysis of each Strand. Sociocultural influences seem to be ubiquitous and omnipresent in each of these Strands.

This study is not intended to convey the suggestion that these seven common strands, and *only* these strands, can create a successful or effective adolescent literacy program or a guarantee that if a school uses only these seven common strands an effective program will emerge. What this study does suggest is that these five secondary school principals were dynamically engaged in the implementation of (a) a strong commitment to literacy, (b) a collegial designed staff development program, (c) an active involvement from the principal, (d) the use of teachers and others in the design and implementation process, (e) a clearly communicated vision of literacy by the principal, (f) an evaluation process of faculty and literacy practices, and (g) an ongoing review and revision—when necessary—of literacy policies and programs. Their involvement has

helped to create an effective approach (by their districts' standards) to implementing data-based and student-centered adolescent literacy policies and practices.

So what is next? The final chapter of this study is an analysis of my conclusions and recommendations for next steps in the ongoing process of adolescent literacy implementation and support.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to determine what selected secondary school principals in northern Utah believed about leading and supporting the implementation of adolescent literacy frameworks and practices in their schools and how they perceived they were doing this. The goal was to shed light on the day-to-day processes of adolescent literacy implementation and support that could provide assistance to other principals in Utah and perhaps other states.

In-depth interviews were conducted with purposefully selected secondary school principals who were at varying levels of adolescent literacy implementation in northern Utah. A cross-case analysis approach (Merriam, 1998) was used to explore the lived experiences of these principals through thick description of these experiences.

Summary of Key Findings

The literature reviewed in Chapter II and the research findings explicated in Chapter VI provide us with some insight into the needs of adolescent readers and suggest some options as to how those needs might be met. What have we learned thus far?

Adolescents need to be able to navigate their way through a changing textual and media landscape. Adolescents in the 21st century will need to be able to read and understand what they read more than any other time in history. Despite the importance of

being able to read, many adolescents struggle with reading. Approximately 3,000 adolescents drop out of high school across the U.S. every day (Alliance for Excellent Education as cited in Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). A major reason for the large number of dropouts is their struggle with reading or their inability to read. Moreover, the concepts that are found in high school texts are becoming increasingly more complex, demanding that students have the skills to read and comprehend them. Low-level literacy skills in adolescents have been identified as the root cause of failure in many classes, resulting in low self-esteem, discipline issues, and eventually dropping out of school. Students are certainly negatively affected by their difficulties with reading, but their families feel frustration and sadness for their children, as well (Daley, 1999).

The success of any instructional program literally hangs upon the principal's understanding and support of the components of that program, and principals need to know how to support adolescent literacy implementation. Principal leadership provides a key element in improving student achievement. Secondary school principals should be trained in and held accountable for the development, implementation, support, and evaluation of reading programs in their schools. The principal can make a major difference in the literacy achievement of secondary students by leading and supporting teachers' efforts in trying to improve the literacy achievement of their students (Shanahan, 2004).

Much of the literature on adolescent literacy is framed by a social constructivist perspective (Au, 1998; Bean, 2000), which in turn, focuses on the sociocultural nature of literacy practices. Researchers who adopt a social constructivist framework are concerned

about the experiences and views of social actors. Key assumptions of this perspective are that (a) reality is created through processes of social exchange which are culturally and historically situated, (b) meaning is socially constructed between and among people in particular social settings, (c) knowledge is socially constructed by groups and through interaction in groups, and (d) learning is a way of being or participating in social settings (Au, 2000; Gee, 1998, 2000, 2001; Schifini, 1996; Tracey & Morrow, 2006).

Most social constructivists' views of literacy instruction are derived from the work of Vygotsky who placed social interaction at the heart of cognitive development. Vygotsky focused on understanding the ways students acquired socially valued knowledge and skills through interactions with adults and older or more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1979). From this perspective, schools are seen as sociocultural institutions designed to induct students into culturally valued ways of knowing and thinking. Language is seen as the central tool used in social interchange and in the construction of meaning and knowledge. Learning occurs as teachers and peers mediate students' everyday or informal knowledge. Sociocultural researchers contend that the sociocultural influence on students' literacy learning is made up of four vital elements: (a) the family, (b) the classroom, (c) the school, and (d) the community (Au, 1998, 2000, 2004; Bean, 2000; Gee, 1998, 2000, 2001; Graves, 2004; Tracey & Morrow, 2006).

Seven common strands of adolescent literacy implementation and support emerged after extensive review of each principal's interview data. I looked for similarities and emergent themes to determine what, if any, commonalities existed between and across these principals' adolescent literacy experiences. The questions I

used to interview the principals were explained in the research methods chapter. They were designed based on extensive review of adolescent literacy research specifically detailed in the literature review chapter. They were not designed to match any preconceived commonalities; the Strands were not determined until after all of the interview data had been collected and analyzed.

The seven common strands that emerged from my data were: (a) a long-time belief in and commitment to adolescent Literacy, (b) staff development, (c) principal involvement—observing in classrooms, participating in staff development, staying informed of literacy-related research, and the principal’s role in adolescent literacy, (d) use of literacy team and faculty involvement, (e) clear communication of the principal’s literacy vision to constituents (faculty, staff, students, parents, and community), (f) literacy and the evaluation process of program and teachers, and (g) review and revision of school mission and goals.

All strands were viewed through the lens of sociocultural theory. The key elements that emerged within each strand were all grounded in sociocultural research (Almasi, 1996; Au, 1998, 2000, 2004; Bean, 2000; Gee, 1998, 2000, 2001; Graves, 2004; Schifini, 1996, Tracey & Morrow, 2006). Sociocultural factors have a significant impact on each of the seven common strands.

We know that students’ social and cultural backgrounds play a significant role in the learning process. We also know that much learning takes place as groups of learners work together, striving to make themselves understood and to understand others. Sociocultural theory informs us that this sociolinguistic process is a mainstay of learning.

Finally, we know that the influences and impact of the home, the classroom, the school, and the community are critical not only to the reading process, but they exert a strong influence on what is and what is not learned in school (Graves, 2004).

Strand #1: A Long-Time Belief in and Commitment to Adolescent Literacy

Four important elements that emerged from this strand were: (a) strong, long-time commitment to literacy; (b) need for faculty to develop relationships with teachers, students, and the community; (c) need for a culturally responsive curriculum; and (d) impact of family members. This strong, long-time commitment seemed to drive the principals in their goal of providing and supporting adolescent literacy practices. These principals developed a positive relationship with teachers, students, and the community; they also believed that positive relationships between these constituencies also needed to be developed and nurtured. The need for a culturally responsive curriculum became apparent early in the study. Each principal had a student body with diversity in terms of race, socioeconomic status, and national origins. There was a need for teachers to be sensitive to all the needs that their culturally diverse students brought to the classroom. Finally, it was clear that the importance of the family's influence in their students' education was a vital component of the sociocultural experience at each school.

This strand was an unexpected finding as the analysis of the data developed. Every principal had a story to tell that reflected a sincere desire to make literacy work for his or her students. These principals demonstrated that such a commitment was a driving force to break through barriers of language, illiteracy, and socioeconomic challenges so

that literacy practices could work for all students. Each principal communicated powerfully how important his or her philosophy of literacy, especially adolescent literacy, was to him or her.

Three of the five principals had especially strong feelings about the importance of literacy because it affected their lives as far back as their early adolescent years. I included a long-time commitment to literacy as the first Strand because I believed the data confirmed that such commitment became the driving force behind almost everything, *if not everything*, these principals did to enhance literacy for their students.

Strand 2: Staff Development

Three key elements were found within this strand: (a) faculty awareness of students' backgrounds and needs, (b) importance of group interaction when learning, and (c) importance of training opportunities for teachers. Teachers' awareness of their students' backgrounds was reflected in a culturally responsive curriculum as mentioned in strand 1. Teachers must know who their students are and generally what types of experiences they have brought into the classroom. Group interaction is important not only for students, but for teachers in staff development settings, as well. Social interaction, we have learned, is a critical component of the learning experience. Teachers must have training opportunities in various forms of adolescent literacy practices. This training must be grounded in student performance data and teacher needs. All five principals utilized the talents of their faculty to plan and implement staff development activities.

Staff development is critical to the success of adolescent literacy practices as was

noted in the review of literature chapter (Guskey, 2003; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Sykes, 1999). Staff development is, in fact, imperative to the implementation and support process of adolescent literacy. Each principal was unwavering in providing the kind of staff development that was needed for their teachers and their students. Staff development had to be relevant. These principals designed the offerings with extensive input from their faculties and based on student achievement data. They kept the training simple and to the point. Several of them utilized Bandura's observational learning theory (as cited in Tracey & Morrow, 2006) as they assigned a number of their own faculty members to model literacy teaching behaviors for the rest of the faculty. They all attended staff development activities *with* their faculty. They encouraged an atmosphere for staff development that was upbeat. The principals were committed to participating in staff development with their teachers.

*Strand 3: Principal Involvement—Observing in Classrooms, Participating in
Staff Development, Staying Informed of Literacy-Related Research,
and the Principal's Role in Adolescent Literacy*

Key elements which emerged from the analysis of this strand's data included (a) a student-centered curriculum, (b) enhancing the family's positive influence on their children's education, (c) building a positive school climate and culture, and (d) funding for adolescent literacy endeavors. Principal involvement is critical to the success of adolescent literacy programs and practices. A key element of this involvement is seeing to it that the curriculum and the teaching of it is centered around the student.

Meaningfulness and practical application are two important components of this process. Principals in general need to focus on the importance of the family in their student's education and provide opportunities for parents to accomplish this. This can be done through parent workshops, newsletters, and speaking to parent groups. All five principals indicated their desire to improve or enhance their work in this area. The building of a positive school climate and culture is another important aspect of what a principal does for literacy and the school in general. These principals were dedicated to doing this. This involved classroom needs and staff development activities.

Each principal had extensive involvement with their adolescent literacy programs. They collaborated with their faculties on a consistent basis. Collaboration turned out to be a cornerstone of the implementation and support process. Teacher involvement was a benchmark of the involvement of all five principals. The five principals reported studying research from various authors. One principal saw some educational applications from effective business management models.

Each of the five principals was active in seeking funding for their adolescent literacy programs. This is a necessary process until state and local district decision makers find a way to make funding available through the local district.

The research findings of Marzano and colleagues (2005), McEwan (2003), and Taylor and Collins (2003), as noted in the review of literature, supported the notion that principal involvement was important to the successful implementation and sustaining of adolescent literacy programs and practices. The five principals were examples of how a school administrator could be involved in literacy. They spoke more to this issue than to

any other of the seven common strands. Their involvement included regular classroom visits, literacy research, potential funding source review, collaboration with faculty, student achievement data analysis, and regular monitoring of literacy program effectiveness, to name a few.

Strand 4: Use of Literacy Team and Faculty Involvement

Key elements in this strand included (a) observing and learning from others, (b) data-based decision making, and (c) student choice and relevancy. Observing and learning from others is an important and effective way for staff development to take place. Each of these five principals placed a strong emphasis on making decisions that were data driven, particularly in determining staff development needs. Finally, student choice is a critical attribute of adolescents. They are typically able to determine meaning and see the relevance of their studies when they are given the opportunity to choose along with the guidance of their teachers.

These principals utilized their faculties' potential extensively. Faculty collaboration, corroboration, and cooperation were pillars in the building of adolescent literacy programs. Principals utilized both language arts departments specifically and total faculty representation generally to further the needs of adolescent learners. The goal was to spread adolescent literacy practices across the school. One principal emphatically declared that students must be taught meaningfulness and application of what they are learning for the present and that teachers needed to model for their students what it means to be a good reader and a good writer.

An important consequence of students reading daily is that they hopefully develop an “ownership of literacy” (Au, 2004, p. 398). Such an ownership allows students to value literacy, have a positive attitude towards it, and get in the habit of using literacy.

The five principals believed the collegial and collaborative process was critical to the success of all that they were doing. This involvement came in various forms: literacy teams, department teams, ad hoc committees, and total faculty.

*Strand 5: Clear Communication of the Principal’s Literacy Vision to Constituents
(Faculty, Staff, Students, Parents, and Community)*

Two key elements emerged from the data in strand 5: (a) communication with the community/families, students, and faculty and (b) learning activities that were tied to culture. Principals indicated that they wanted to either improve in this area or enhance what they were already doing. They believed in the importance of communicating their literacy vision to all those affected by it. They also worked on providing curriculum and instruction that were beneficial and respectful to the many different types of cultures that they served.

Several of the principals had goals to improve in this area, specifically in better communicating the school’s literacy vision to the community. All five principals had a clear vision of what they wanted to accomplish with their literacy endeavors and communicated that vision to their faculty. Each principal demonstrated what Taylor and Collins (2003) considered to be mandatory in communicating both the vision and the commitment to the vision: (a) finances and budget for literacy, (b) allocation of literacy

personnel, (c) professional development, (d) appropriate instructional materials, (e) appropriate learning space, and (f) learning time (p. 11).

All the principals believed that literacy was critical to the success of their students both now and long after they graduated from high school. Students needed to be lifelong learners. Several felt that they needed to improve on communicating their vision to the community and have set goals to do so—including the use of their school’s Web site, PTA newsletter, literacy announcements to parents, discussions with parent and school organizations, and so forth.

Strand 6: Literacy and the Evaluation Process of Program and Teachers

An analysis of the data in strand 6 revealed two key elements. They included (a) assessment of students and programs and (b) importance of teacher evaluation. The principals considered assessment as one of their top priorities. It was a major factor in determining how students, faculty, and programs were progressing.

The five principals took this process seriously and created literacy evaluation instruments from the generic forms provided by their districts. Several principals reviewed program and student progress as many as four times a year although school district mandates typically required only two such meetings. These meetings occurred with one at the beginning of the year and one at the end.

All teachers were required to authenticate how they were implementing literacy in their classrooms. Principals discussed teachers’ literacy goals with them at the beginning of the year. The principals then discussed the quality of implementation at the end-of-

year teacher evaluation conferences. The five principals realized the importance of feedback and evaluation to the literacy achievement process and committed to ongoing feedback and evaluation. Consistent classroom visits and dialogue with teachers provided the principals with the data they needed to provide necessary comments and advice. The principals also believed that their evaluation meetings should accentuate the positive in what teachers were doing, pointing to accomplishments while assisting where improvement was needed.

Strand 7: Review and Revision of School Mission and Goals

Key elements that emerged from the data analysis of this strand were: (a) group modeling of importance of literacy concepts and (b) cyclical review of school mission, goals, and the literacy program. The principals utilized small faculty groups multiple times to model various literacy concepts to the rest of the faculty. They also practiced a cyclical process of implementation, review, assess, and revise as needed. This process continued whether the program/practice was new or had been revised from an earlier format. In other words, the status quo of literacy practices was safe only if it could be determined that these practices were helping students progress in their literacy skills.

All five principals made it clear that the adolescent literacy process was not over once it had been implemented. Review and necessary revisions were standard principal expectations across all five schools. All five principals employed faculty collaboration in the review and revision process. The process was data driven: both quantitative and qualitative data. The principals' actions in this Strand substantiated the belief that the

status quo was safe only if it could be determined that current classroom and school-wide practices provided effective literacy instruction, as determined by student achievement data.

Implications of Results

An analysis of the research findings and the literature related to adolescent literacy and sociocultural theory reveals a number of implications from this study. The study actually addresses two target groups: (a) principals/faculties and (b) the students they serve. The following reveals implications based on these two groups. I realize that since this is a qualitative study, the findings and implications may apply only to principals, faculties, and students in similar schools and situations. Keeping that in mind, here are some possible implications.

Principals/Faculties

1. The findings suggest that the principal should have a strong commitment to implementing and supporting adolescent literacy practices.

2. Staff development is vital to the success of these literacy practices. It should be (a) based on teacher needs, (b) based on student needs, (c) simple and upbeat, and (d) a collegial effort between principal and faculty with the principal attending staff development activities.

3. Results of this study indicate that principals should visit classrooms regularly to know what is happening in the classroom and to better determine how literacy practices

are progressing.

4. Most of the principals and faculties in this study reviewed the popular literature related to adolescent literacy. Nevertheless, they were not familiar with the actual research-based adolescent literacy practices. This suggests that principals should stay current on adolescent literacy research and practices. I recommend that principals involve themselves with research that is specifically grounded in adolescent literacy. I suggest reading the literature from such noted adolescent literacy researchers as Donna Alvermann, Michael Pressley, Richard Vacca, Tim Shanahan, Pat Alexander, Elizabeth Birr Moje, and Thomas Bean, to name a few. I suggest that all secondary principals become familiar with *Reading Next: A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy* (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). It is a landmark national report with exceptional suggestions for implementation and support. Principals should obtain an institutional membership in the International Reading Association. This will allow their schools to receive journals that reflect some of the most recent and effective (by student achievement and observational data standards) adolescent literacy research that currently exists. The information that principals gain through this type of research could provide excellent subject matter for staff development. An adolescent literacy professional library section should be maintained in the school's media center. Books and articles from the above-mentioned researchers would be a good way to launch this adolescent literacy professional library section.

5. Principals in this study were committed to utilizing their faculty members' expertise *extensively* for implementation, support, and analysis of school literacy needs—

including the formation of a Literacy Team made up of a representative from each instructional department in the school. Such faculty utilization is recommended here, including principals' incorporation of literacy in the faculty evaluation process.

6. The findings also indicate that principals should have a clear vision of what they want adolescent literacy to accomplish for their students and communicate that vision to all constituencies. This can be done through several means. The school PTA or similar parent organization newsletter provides an opportunity to tell the community about literacy practices in the school. Several paragraphs in the newsletter each time it is published will go a long way in spreading the word about literacy accomplishments. Other options include the school's Web site, attending parent organization meetings and discussing literacy, and discussing literacy endeavors at major parent gatherings such as the National Honor Society induction ceremonies.

7. It would behoove all school leaders to take a page from Carol Maughan's daily routine. She saw her primary role as setting the tone for the school. She asked herself, "What is it that I want to see and have happen in my school as I walk in every single day?" She lived her day by the following guidelines: (a) Interact with everyone, (b) always be welcoming and treat everyone with respect, (c) treat others how you would like to be treated, (d) visit classrooms every day, (e) greet every staff member every day, (f) learn together (in her words, "How important it is to say, 'I am learning with you and we're learning together.'"), (g) know what kind of teaching and learning is happening in every classroom, (h) generally speaking, keep your office door open, and (i) create an atmosphere where suggestions about improvement can flow *both ways* between principal

and staff (Field Notes, 6/12/2007).

Students

1. Keeping in mind that this is a qualitative study that addresses the need for adolescent literacy implementation, it is recommended that secondary schools should have some form of adolescent literacy available for their students.

2. This study suggests that implementation and support are inseparable. It is recommended that schools should also plan on how adolescent literacy practices will be maintained and supported.

3. Several principals in the study addressed the need for adolescents to have some form of choice regarding what they read. It is recommended that adolescents have the opportunity to make certain choices during the reading process. The process of choice is a critical attribute of adolescents. The choice process also helps students have a buy-in to or ownership of literacy.

4. Several principals also addressed the importance of student group activities in the reading process, also known as student discourse or discussion. It is recommended that schools focus on such student discourse in reading.

Questions for Further Research

There are several questions that arise from this study. These involve potential research at the classroom, school, district, state, and national levels.

1. Two of the principals in this study indicated that their experiences as an

elementary school principal prepared them well for adolescent literacy implementation and support. Are there connections or similarities between elementary and secondary literacy practices? If so, what are the implications for adolescent literacy?

2. What adolescent literacy policies, practices, and procedures are most effective in developing an ownership of literacy?

3. What additional Common Strands might be discovered in a study involving a larger number of principals with regards to adolescent literacy implementation and support?

4. What are the differences in reading achievement between secondary schools with a literacy specialist/reading coach and those without?

5. What models or examples exist that indicate collaboration and coordination between state, district, and school adolescent literacy policies, practices, and procedures? Is there evidence that federal funding will enhance adolescent literacy implementation and support?

Conclusion

How, then, do districts get started with adolescent literacy implementation? The answer is, as these five principals did, *get started*. There is an old saying: After all is said and done, there is often more said than done (author unknown). There is a point where the talking must cease and the action begins. These principals provided us with examples of how schools can implement literacy practices in their curriculum, instruction, and culture.

There are rays of hope for the eight million struggling adolescent readers in our country. There is adolescent literacy research to read and there are directions and suggestions that we can follow. What we have to do now, however, to make hope a reality for adolescent readers everywhere is, in the words of Principal Gary Miller, “Let’s get crackin’!”

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Requirements of the Institutional Review Board (IRB)

IRB Requirements

Retrieved from the Informed Consent Checklist – Basic and Additional Elements

(Section 46.116)

Utah State University, Logan, Utah

All participants (principals) in the study must read and sign a form (see next page) that indicates their understanding of the following:

1. This study involves research.
2. Participants have been given an explanation of the purposes of the research.
3. They have been told the expected duration of their participation.
4. They have received a description of the procedures to be followed.
5. They understand that there are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to the subject.
6. They have received a description of any benefits to the subjects or to others which may reasonably be expected from the research.
7. They have received a statement describing the extent, if any, to which confidentiality of records identifying the subject will be maintained.
8. They have received an explanation of whom to contact for answers to pertinent questions about the research and research subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject.
9. They understand that participation is voluntary and that refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled, and the subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled.

Sample Letter (Department of Secondary Education Letterhead on each page)

Perspectives of Principals: Adolescent Literacy Implementation in Secondary Schools

Dear _____,

Thank you very much for your consideration of participating in this doctoral study. I am conducting this study for the purpose of obtaining selected principals' perspectives about adolescent literacy and its implementation in their schools. It is hoped that this study will provide insight into the practices and procedures of these principals regarding adolescent literacy for consideration by other principals who are at some point on the continuum of implementing adolescent literacy practices in their schools. Dr. Kay Camperell of the Department of Secondary Education at Utah State University is the Chairperson of my doctoral committee. Should you have any questions about this study, you may reach her at (435) 797-2222 or you may call me at my cell number, my school office, or at my home.

You have been asked to take part in this study because your school district has indicated that you have an interest in and are involved with adolescent literacy implementation in your school. There will be approximately five secondary school principals in northern Utah involved in this study.

Procedures: I will conduct at least three interview sessions with you. The first will be to gather biographical information about you (how long you have been in education, how long at this school, etc.) and demographical data about your school. The second interview will be to elicit your thoughts and perspectives about adolescent literacy

and how you have gone about the adolescent literacy implementation process. The third, and any potentially additional interviews, will entail questions that will help to clarify those answers that we have previously discussed. My preferred procedure is the face-to-face oral interview. Depending on our schedules, however, there will be times that may require a telephone interview or discussions through e-mails. I am hoping that your time commitment will not exceed a total of ten hours over a three month period. I will also provide you with my analysis of our discussions to make sure that my data analysis is accurate. Any artifacts (e.g., staff development agendas, test score summaries, summaries of adolescent literacy implementation procedures at your school, etc.) that you feel will help clarify your adolescent literacy activities will be greatly appreciated.

New Findings: During the course of this research study, you will be informed of any significant new findings that might cause you to change your mind about continuing in the study, although this is highly unlikely. If, however, new information is obtained that is relevant or useful to you, or if the procedures and/or methods change at any time throughout this study, your consent to continue participating in this study will be obtained again.

Risks: At this time there are no perceived risks as a result of participating in this study. Confidentiality of you and your statements will be maintained, as explained later.

Benefits: The benefits to you are anticipated to be in the area of what you can both share and gain regarding adolescent literacy implementation as a result of participating in this study. It is noted, too, that the information gained from this study may have either direct or indirect benefit to you now or in the future.

Explanation and Offer to Answer Questions: It is noted that I, Jack Robinson, have explained this research study to you and answered your questions. If you have further questions or research-related problems, you may reach Dr. Kay Camperell.

Extra Costs: There will be no extra costs to you related to your participation in this study.

Voluntary Nature of Participation and Right to Withdraw Without Consequences: Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without consequence of loss of benefits.

Confidentiality: Research records will be kept confidential, consistent with federal and state regulations. Only the investigator (myself) and Dr. Camperell will have access to the data which will be kept in a secure file in a secure room. Pseudonyms will be used for both you, anyone else who may be deemed to have pertinent information for this study, and your school name to further maintain confidentiality. Tape recordings of our interviews will be maintained for one year and then destroyed.

IRB Approval Statement: The IRB (Institutional Review Board for the protection of human participants at USU) has reviewed and approved this research study. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights, you may contact the IRB at (435) 797-1821.

Copy of Consent: You have been given two copies of this Informed Consent. Please sign both copies and retain one copy for your files.

Investigator Statement: “I certify that the research study has been explained to the individual, by me or my research staff, and that the individual understands the nature

and purpose, the possible risks and benefits associated with taking part in this research study. Any questions that have been raised have been answered.”

Signature of Dr. Kay Camperell

Signature of Jack Robinson

Principle Investigator

Doctoral Student

Signature of Participant: By signing below, I agree to participate.

Participant's Signature

Date

Appendix B
Potential Interview Questions

First Interview:

1. Tell me about your background.

Probes:

- A. How long have you been in education?
- B. Did you teach middle school, junior high, or high school?
- C. What subjects did you teach?
- D. How long have you been principal in this school?
- E. What, if any, has been your experience promoting adolescent literacy?

2. Tell me about your school's demographics.

Probes:

- A. What is the enrollment?
- B. What types of socioeconomic communities do you serve?
- C. Approximately what percentage of English Language Learners do you serve?

Second Interview:

1. What were your reasons for deciding to develop/implement an adolescent literacy program?

Probes:

- A. Test scores?
- B. Current literature, professional research literature?
- C. What have you read/learned about effective programs?

2. Describe your adolescent literacy program for me. How long have you been doing this?

Probes:

- A. What types of instruction do your teachers employ in their classrooms (lecture, direct instruction, small/large group discussions, etc.)?
 - B. What type of classroom activities do your teachers use that might engage their students relative to their students' outside-of-school interests (e.g., student-selected books, discussions of lesson application to students' lives, etc.)?
 - C. How do your teachers determine what students' outside interests might be?
 - D. Is it a total school program or are you concerned about a particular population (e.g., ELL, special education, struggling readers, etc.)?
 - E. How many pages a day would you say your students are reading for both school and homework?
3. How does your program address (a) content area reading, (b) motivation and engagement, and (c) information and communication technologies?

Probes:

- A. How do your teachers provide their students with opportunities to develop critical perspectives toward what they read, view, and hear (e.g., small group discussions, large group discussions, teacher-led discussions, group projects, individual projects, etc.)?
 - B. How do your teachers address the needs of their struggling readers?
4. What kinds of involvement have taken place in the development of your program?

Probes:

- A. Teachers?
- B. PTA, School Community Council, parents?
- C. Students?
- D. Community resources?

5. How do you plan for and offer adolescent literacy staff development?

Probes:

- A. Have your teachers had prior experience with adolescent literacy?
- B. If only certain teachers are involved in this program, why and how were they selected?
- C. Do you have a Literacy Team? If yes, who is involved?
- D. Do you attend staff development with your teachers?

6. What do you see as your role in the program?

Probe:

- A. What kind(s) of financial resources do you allocate for the program?
- B. How do you communicate your vision of this program to the school and community?

7. How do you evaluate your adolescent literacy program?

8. How do you incorporate adolescent literacy into your teacher evaluations?

9. What artifacts might you have to further clarify what you are doing with your program?

Appendix C
Transcript Notes

#4
DECIDED TO
HAVE A
READING
SPECIALIST

And obviously we have a huge issue with our students who are with our language arts teachers because the crux of the teaching often comes to them. But every teacher has accepted that responsibility. So, in our plan we have decided that we would have a reading specialist. And she has been with us for a number of years. She was here even before I came. Then she was not here my first two years. Then I said, "What about our reading specialist that we had before helping us to facilitate all of our learning and helping us to work together?" And everybody said, "Yes, we love her." So, brought her back two years ago and again this past year.

Is she paid for by the district? Is that an FTE?

#3
DUNNINGS

No, it is not. We had the grant [a local grant], and now we have used all of that money as of this year. We would use that for professional development, to pay our reading specialist, then we would also use it to pay our teachers. So that if they completed one of these—everyone was expected to and everyone did—when they completed this [training] they would receive \$60. And if they wished to take the next one, they received \$60, and so on.

LITERACY
LEADERSHIP
TEAM

We developed our [literacy plan] with our specialist and what our plan would be. For instance, this last year we said, "We would like to have four strategies." And the way that we did this is interesting. It wasn't just with our specialist. We had a leadership team. These people came together and they represented all of the disciplines. And we said, "What is it that we can help our teachers to do?" So, we all start talking and we mill around. Well, we can do this or we can't do this. This is a great thing, and so on and so forth. What do our students really need? Well, that's how we came up with a plan with our reading specialist. Our students need reading strategies that we can teach in woodshop and they're the same strategies that we're teaching in PE. So, the vocabulary is the same. So, we would meet with our specialist and say, "Oh, this is the time that we're going to talk about 'rafting' [a strategy designed to use writing-to-learn activities to enhance understanding of informational text (Teaching Reading in the Content Areas, Billmeyer and Barton, p. 151) R=role of the writer, A=audience who will be reading the writing, F=format, or the best way to present the writing, and T=topic or the subject of the writing], what does rafting really mean?" And then our specialist would get us several examples. We would look at some literature and articles together. And we'd say, "Yes, we believe that we have enough information to take back to our own content area and use the rafting strategies."

#4
ALSO INCLUDED
IN THE DAILY
ANNOUNCEMENTS

You say that you are running out of grant funds this year. How will you fund your reading specialist next year?

#5
DUNNINGS
NEED FUNDING
FOR THE READING
SPECIALIST IS
TRUSTLAND'S
FUNDING

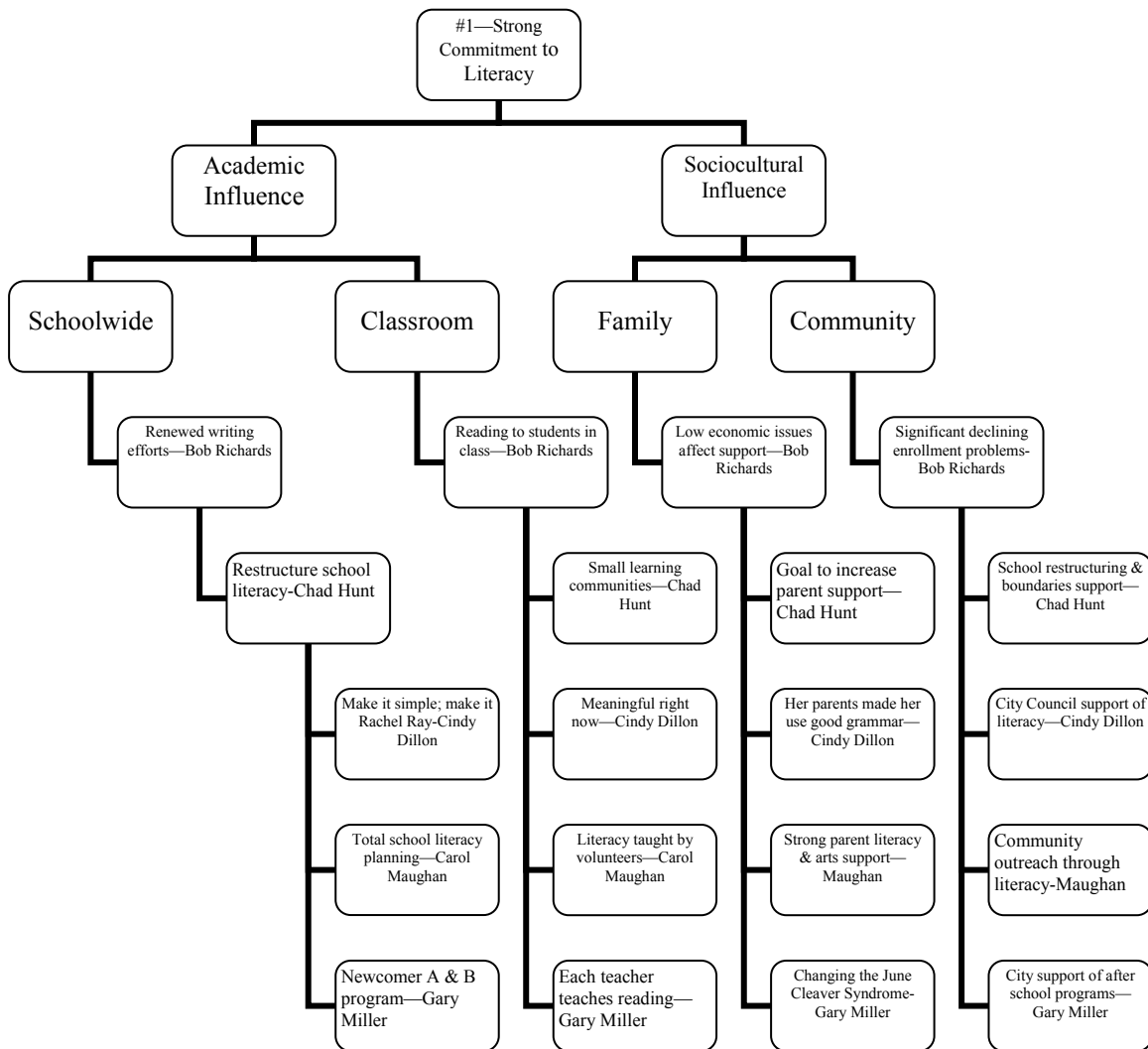
She and our professional development will be paid for out of Trustland funds. So, Trustlands is the vehicle that we'll use.

So, every teacher, no matter what the discipline, would describe what they have done. And then provide samples of student work that they have done.

It really was just amazing because I would be reminded on morning announcements. "Oh, students. This week you'll see that our teachers are working on the strategy of rafting. This will help you to..." And then I would explain a little bit about that. "So, teachers, please write this note on your board: Rafting and what does that actually mean? So, teachers in advisory this morning, please take just a few minutes

Appendix D

Taxonomic Analytic Scheme: How Data Were Reduced for Strand #1



CURRICULUM VITAE

JACK A. ROBINSON

CAREER OBJECTIVE

To maintain my career appointment as a high school principal and eventually teach preservice teachers and administrators at the university level.

EDUCATION

- B.A. Speech Communications, California State University at Long Beach
- M.A. Educational Administration, California State University at Long Beach
- Ph.D. Education, Utah State University, Logan, Utah. Emphasis in adolescent literacy and principal leadership.

EXPERIENCE

Thirty-five years in public education, serving in two states. Served as a district Director of Instructional Support, elementary school principal of three schools, middle school principal of three schools, assistant principal of a high school, principal of a high school, and middle school teacher teaching ten different subjects including reading. I have served 32 years in various administrative assignments.