Leadership distinctions: the impact of leadership on teachers of Second Chance Reading

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LEADERSHIP DISTINCTIONS: THE IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP
ON TEACHERS OF SECOND CHANCE READING

An Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Approved:

Dr. Victoria Robinson, Committee Chair

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Dean of the Graduate College

Rebecca Sue Williams

University of Northern Iowa

December 2012
ABSTRACT

For as long as time, struggling adolescent readers have filled classrooms and communities. In many cases, these functional aliterates typically could read, yet could not understand or evaluate text, provide relevant details, or support inferences about the written documents they had read. Second Chance Reading (SCR), an instructional framework that targets and supports struggling adolescent readers and determined to be a sound and viably researched framework, could very well be the antidote to assist teachers in building and supporting proficient and lifelong learners when implemented as intended. However, the purpose of this study was neither on the instructional framework of SCR, nor on the students who have benefitted from targeted instructional density. Rather, the purpose of this qualitative study honed in on leadership traits of building administrators to determine the impact of those traits on teachers of Second Chance Reading.

The study examined educators from five unique communities who recently implemented Second Chance Reading. Four key questions guided the research and became the focus during semi-structured purposive interviews. (1) What was the relationship between Second Chance Reading teachers and principal leadership? (2) What leadership qualities were necessary to support Second Chance Reading teachers? (3) What barriers were preventing teachers from accomplishing their mission? (4) How did administrators encourage and celebrate learning?

Data were collected through individually implemented, semi-structured interviews with teachers and principals from five school districts ranging in both size and demographics. Insightful narratives were created through storytelling and woven through
three unique vignettes where nuances and subtleties, frustrations and celebrations were captured and shared.

Themes emerged through a process of reflective analysis. Teachers interviewed reported a vast discrepancy regarding administrative support as either highly supportive or the opposite; administrators echoed similar findings through suggestive overtones or subtle references to past practice. The more positive administrators depicted traits which paralleled either transformational or facilitative leaders, whereas administrators deemed to have more significant negative leadership traits more closely paralleled bureaucratic or hierarchical administrators. Through a methodological structure of contemporary narrative inquiry, an emerging concept became evident. Successfully implementing educational reform of second order change status greatly depended on significant positive relationships based on reciprocal trust and respect, conceptual guidance, and strong ideals. Recommendations and implications for administrative leaders were explored and expanded upon.
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Dr. Peter Neibert, Committee Member

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December 2012
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my incredible family in whom I have always believed: my amazing mom, unbelievable husband, our wonderful children, and spectacular grandchildren. You have all made me feel intensely alive.

Mom, you’ve been the very best cheerleader any daughter could ask for and I have learned more from your example than I’d ever dreamed possible. I thank you and love you for everything. You truly are incredible.

John, I am indebted to you as my husband and life partner. Your unconditional love, support, and help with chores and cooking throughout these nine months have helped me move forward and continue in my work. As you crawled up the stairs each night after watching movies alone and whispered into the office, “How’s it going?” I knew that my dream for completion was coming ever closer. I truly consider the culmination of this project as ours to appreciate and celebrate together. I officially dub you honorary Dr. Husband, Extraordinaire for this accomplishment is certainly ours to share together.

And to our children and grandchildren … I have a few typical words of wisdom, as I consider the opportunity both my prerogative and obligation. Take heed: As you move forward, always do what you love. Travel confidently in the direction of your dreams and live the life you’ve always imagined. Live and laugh with intention. Walk to the edge, listen hard, and practice wellness. Play with abandon and choose with no regret. Continue to learn, always. Appreciate your friends and live as if this is all there is. Always remember that family is forever. I love you all with my very heart and soul.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The printed pages of this dissertation reflect relationships with many generous and inspiring people with whom I have had the privilege of working during my graduate program. I am especially grateful for the support of my committee members and faculty advisor. Dr. Victoria Robinson, Dr. Peter Neibert, Dr. Robert Decker, Dr. Gregory Reed, Dr. Matthew Webb, and Dr. Dewitt Jones graciously offered their time, insight, and expertise through the laborious and often solitary hours involved in bringing this research to completion.

I am deeply indebted to Dr. Victoria Robinson for serving as my committee chair. Throughout my graduate career, she has provided intellectual guidance, encouragement, and friendship. Her positive ‘can-do’ spirit kept me moving forward when the project seemed particularly overwhelming and increasingly lonely. I never felt abandoned as late night phone calls helped immensely.

To each of my committee members, I say, “Thank you!” Dr. Peter Neibert guided me through the messiness implicit with contemporary narrative inquiry. I especially thank him for the loan of the UNI computer which contained NVivo9, the amazing software program that eliminated the need for organizing thousands of post-it notes as I worked to fine tune my methodology. His time and patience helped make the seemingly impossible come to fruition. I appreciate Dr. Decker’s wisdom and guidance through the work of Balanced Leadership and wise counsel each time we met. Dr. Reed gently nudged me towards graduation and I am forever indebted for agreeing to serve on my committee and fondly recall the day we made the pact. Dr. Matthew Webb’s probing questions and
‘what if’ statements kept me continuously looking for a better way. Lastly, Dr. Dewitt Jones provided a bottom-less pool of enthusiasm for my work. I thank you all.

I want to also thank some special people that helped with proofing and being cheerleaders from the shadows. They include both Ardeth Ramsey for her eagle eye as an incredible proofreader and editor and Margie Ortgiesen, both a cherished friend and valued confidante who was never afraid to tell the truth about long sentences and structural confusion. And finally, I would be remiss if I hadn’t included my Des Moines cohort comrades as additional supporters. As they each move forward through the process of writing, I would echo the words that Sharon Ingebrand and I used as we encouraged each other over many weekend marathons of writing: Just Keep Swimming. I will look forward now to being your cheerleader as you each put pencil to paper.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

"You expect me to read one whole book by the end of the quarter? What are you, nuts?" Thirteen-year-old Ike began his first day of seventh grade alternating vocally between shouts of rapt enthusiasm and whispers of feigned disinterest. Moving from his neighborhood elementary school to a new and unfamiliar environment may have explained Ike's emotional and oratory teeter-totter. Or perhaps it was recalling his older brother's ominous warning of nonnegotiable reading requirements in most junior high classes which had caused his heightened anxiety. Whatever the case, Ike was on edge. He had barely managed the difficult academic demands of sixth grade and was moving into a new wing of an old building where he would face eight different teachers, travel to eight different classrooms, yet most alarming for Ike, he would be required to read.

His academic battles and deplorable scores on class work and year-end assessments had preceded him into the new wing and pegged him as a struggling reader. Crossing the threshold into his seventh grade homeroom, Ike sensed that the gig may be up and things were about to change. Yet Ike, the struggling adolescent reader, was neither alone nor unique. In a neighboring school district less than eight miles up a dusty road, 12 year old Cheyenne introduced herself on her first day of seventh grade: "Ms. Spencer, I'm Cheyenne and you need to know that I hate reading, and I do not plan on doing any of it this year."

Struggling adolescent readers fill our classrooms, hallways, school campuses, and communities. Anyone is susceptible, for experiencing difficulty in making sense of text
doesn’t discriminate by race, gender, political affiliation, socio-economic status, or religious belief. Certainly, some disaggregated groups have higher percentages of struggling readers, yet the distinction between subgroups, although important, was not the focus of this writing. Most importantly, the numbers of struggling readers are increasing at alarming rates and the trend line they are creating paints a dismal picture.

According to data published nearly a decade ago in Reading Next (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004), more than 3,000 students from American schools officially dropped out of high school every day in 2003. Alarmingly, as the decade marched on, the movement continued, unabated. In a fact sheet updated as recently as December 2011, those students who struggled to make sense of text made up a sizeable percentage of the nearly 7,000 students who dropped out of our nation’s high schools daily. Without taking into account population shifts, the number of students permanently leaving our public school systems each day has more than doubled in less than a decade (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011).

Statistically the picture may be painted more clearly. The 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress, (NAEP) reported that less than 40% of middle and high school students scored at or above the proficient level in reading achievement, thereby leaving more than 60% labeled as non-proficient. And those labeled in such a way typically can read; however, the problem appears to be that they cannot understand or evaluate text, provide relevant details, or support inferences about the written documents they read (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011). They are known as either word callers or functional aliterates.
Disconcertingly, there are huge numbers of adolescents and young adults in our schools, neighborhoods, and communities for whom successful reading acquisition has remained elusive. Many slip through virtual cracks and watch with envy as their more successful peers seem to just get it, almost as if making sense of difficult text occurs magically. However, all is not lost, for many who historically struggle with reading in our schools do graduate. Their families do celebrate their accomplishments and some high school graduates do earn post-high school degrees. Some even embrace recreational reading and grow to love books after their public schooling days have finished. For some students, reading for pure pleasure just takes a bit longer before becoming a reality and recreational pastime.

Let me introduce you to Rachael, a beautiful success story in her own right, who has become an avid and engaged reader after struggling for years to make sense of text. We were first introduced in October, 2011, and met for lunch at a local Chinese restaurant. As she entered the room exuding confidence, she greeted me with a firm handshake and a lovely smile. As a young woman born in the 80’s, Rachael and her elder sister were primarily raised by an accomplished educator, their mother. As she spoke, she described her educational and literary journey. She didn’t immediately qualify herself as a struggling reader, but readily admitted that reading had never been a priority. In fact, she openly acknowledged doing just enough to get by. But then her tale evolved.

She professed to a general disinterest, almost a dislike for reading as a young girl. Rachael mentioned that she felt intimidated by books. She further admitted that her leisure time was spent watching television or shopping rather than picking up any sort of
reading material, whether just to skim through or read. She told, "It wasn’t that I couldn’t read. I just didn’t want to." And the more she removed herself from literature, the more her academic difficulties developed. Gradually, Rachael became a struggling reader.

However, she also told of growing up in a literature-rich home where books, magazines, and other assorted reading materials were prevalent and reading was both encouraged and celebrated. Incredible plots, colorful characters, complex mysteries, romantic escapades, much loved protagonists and equally hated antagonists were all openly analyzed and provided a common thread for family discussions. Her mother and sister, both avid readers, deliberated over and shared books with each other and friends. Yet then there was Rachael, deprived of any literary common-ground or shared literacy experiences, slowly losing equal footing while the readers in her midst increased their capacity for and enjoyment of reading materials on solid foundations of literary bedrock.

Because she elected to forego reading, her struggles in school became her new norm rather than her exception. She mentioned certain subjects her sister helped her work through; her mom helped with others. And eventually an outside math tutor was hired. With everyone’s help, encouragement, and support Rachael graduated from high school on schedule with her class. She told of her recent graduation from a local community college with an AA degree in business and exuded pride over this milestone accomplishment. And invariably, as our conversation and the time progressed, Rachael wanted to talk about books.

*Have you ever read The Art of Racing in the Rain by Garth Stein? If you like dogs, you’ll love this book. You’ll probably love it even if you don’t love dogs. It’s really incredible. The main character and narrator is the dog, Enzo, who was so*
wise and wonderful. The book is really about life. I’d recommend it to anyone. It is my favorite book of all time! My mom and sister really got me started with the Janet Evanovich series. I also really like Stephanie Plum as the lead because she’s smart and sassy. I know I’m a reader now, because I don’t go out on Friday night any more. I’d rather stay home and read. Just imagine! That’s not even my style. But you have to read the book by Stein. It’s incredible!

Rachael’s unbridled enthusiasm for literature bubbled over as she talked about reading and her new found love of books. If her middle or high school teachers had been sitting at the next table, they would never have guessed that this poised, confident reader was the same young girl that refused to read and because of her reading deficiencies openly grappled with academia.

I asked if the teachers and building principals she grew up with knew of her academic difficulties or if she was able to keep it from them by simply plodding along or squeaking by. Rachael believed that her teachers and administrators knew of her struggles. I prompted her to continue with the thought and she responded, “I just think that if they were paying attention at all, they probably would know, I guess. And because my mom was an educator, they had faith in me and faith in her, and in us together.” Rachael was clearly one of the lucky ones. Her support system and safety net were there to catch her when she faltered while her literary environment and those that most cared gently nudged her towards eventual reading and finding joy in the written word. Clearly, not all struggling readers are as fortunate.

My struggle to comprehend what she had gone through while becoming a reader was laced with many questions. I wondered if she ever felt excluded from social conversations and whether she elected to become a reader in order to find her way into easy dialogues she had previously only skirted. I wondered if Rachael felt ill-informed
when comfortable dialogue over books occurred around her. Did she ever wonder how others were simply reading for *readings sake alone* and not because it was required? Did she ever wonder about reading purely for pleasure? I even wondered whether simple maturity had anything to do with her decision to eventually become a reader. We explored and considered my questions in an attempt to further make sense of her remarkable transformation.

Rachael initially began her journey towards literary competence and assurance with slick and glossy magazines, colorfully engaging advertisements, and photographic bylines. Her comfort with reading expanded as she further explored snippets of celebrity scandal. She moved from magazines to shorter books and eventually to mystery novels. During the transformative period, she was introduced to particular authors by family members. In the beginning she pushed back, but caring family members persisted, gently at first, until Rachael eventually became more comfortable with her ultimate status as a blossoming and promising reader. Initially, trips to the city library were made on her behalf. And eventually, a personal library card was procured. Yet her journey did not happen overnight. It was hard work, but the will to be successful eventually beat out her literary deficiencies. Rachael had arrived and no longer felt intimidated with the art and science of engaged reading.

And she had taken her new reading status seriously. She eagerly discussed favorite authors in the same way a pet owner debated beloved breeds or a chef explained favorite recipes. Preferred writers rolled off her tongue and her comfort in discussing books appeared both natural and familiar. She quickly mentioned four favorites: Sandra
Dallas, Kristen Hannah, Jodi Picoult, and Emily Griffin. And naturally, Janet Evanovich was both her catalyst for change and her professed genre of choice. At one point in our conversation, I asked about a library card. Rachael replied, “Oh, that’s funny, too. A couple years into my reading career, I still didn’t have one. I just had my mom get me some books from ‘The Book Nook.’” I appreciated her candor, sensitivity, and seriousness while our conversation progressed. For many, reading became serious business, and Rachael had made reading ‘her career.’

We closed with one final question. When I asked Rachael if she had any words of advice for struggling readers wanting to make a change and become more competent with literacy and reading in general, she simply mentioned, “Just try something easy.” In retrospect, it may seem easy. However, becoming an accomplished reader was hard work and Rachael clearly had worked hard to become the successfully accomplished reader she had become. However, if she had been born a few years later, or the instructional strategy Second Chance Reading (SCR) had made its way into our state a few years before it had actually arrived, Rachael would have been a perfect candidate for the instructional framework that specifically targeted adolescent readers who struggled to make sense of complex text and her comfort and enthusiasm with text may have come sooner.

*Second Chance Reading*

*Second Chance Reading* (Iowa Department of Education, 2009; Showers, 2004) targeted both non-proficient and minimally-proficient middle and high school students in reading achievement as determined on annually administered standardized assessments, such as the Iowa Assessments. A student deemed to be non-proficient would have earned
a score no greater than 40% in total reading, whereas a student believed to be barely-proficient would have earned a minimal achievement score of 41%. As Second Chance Reading classrooms are typically found at the middle and high school level, these student candidates are generally considered to be those who continually wrestle with reading. Rachael would have had her seat at the table, building both ability and confidence and could have foregone many of the struggles along the way that she had faced. And the intimidation Rachael felt with complex text may have been entirely eliminated.

Teachers wield an enormous responsibility for ensuring student learning. Yet having an awareness of that responsibility was a critical first step towards closing the achievement gap between the have-nots and the have-nots. Second Chance Reading was not a program, but a firmly woven structure of intensely researched strategies brought together and implemented in such a way as to build capacity within students who had struggled to make sense of reading through the help, guidance, and explicit instruction of purposefully trained teachers. The intended goal of Second Chance Reading was to rapidly accelerate the achievement abilities and levels of deficient readers well beyond the 41st percentile and furthermore ensure that a support system was in place to protect the newly proficient readers from sliding back into non-proficient status.

Direct and focused instruction in Second Chance Reading classrooms occurred at or above grade level, yet most SCR students were a minimum of two years behind grade level peers. In the SCR instructional model there was a particularly strong focus on specifically targeting higher order thinking as it related to comprehension. In fact, towards that end, 25% of the total instructional time specifically targeted higher order
thinking skills. This was accomplished through a variety of complex comprehension instructional strands including Cooperative Comprehension, Dictated Writing, Inductive Thinking, and Critical Thinking of Persuasive Writing.

Dr. Beverly Showers, architect of the Iowa Professional Development Model, was also responsible for both engineering and subsequently bequeathing the structured framework known as Second Chance Reading to the Iowa Department of Education upon her retirement. Showers' commitment to integrity and excellence in educational reform was legendary. The wisdom behind her legacy and instructional framework known as Second Chance Reading, gifted to the state of Iowa, was recently supported by the research noted in Instructional Rounds in Education: A Network Approach to Improving Teaching and Learning (City, Elmore, Fiarmen, & Teitel, 2009) that focused attention on the instructional core of teacher, student, and instructional content. As noted in the first of seven principles of the instructional core touted by City et al.,

There are only three ways to improve student learning at scale. The first is to increase the level of knowledge and skill that the teacher brings to the instructional process. The second is to increase the level and complexity of the content that students are asked to learn. And the third is to change the role of the student in the instructional process. That's it. (City et al., 2009, p. 24)

While engaged in the development process, Showers instinctively tested and analyzed her instructional framework in multiple middle and high schools across the nation. The structure of SCR intentionally and clearly focused on the critical triad of student, teacher, and instructional content. Because of significant student achievement results realized during the research and development phase of Second Chance Reading, and because Dr. Showers had previously established an admirable and trustworthy
relationship with the Iowa Department of Education through her creation of the *Iowa Professional Development Model* design, the Iowa Department of Education was made aware of and became seriously interested in pursuing and training teacher teams in the instructional framework known as *Second Chance Reading*. Danielson (2002) noted that when an approach had received good results in other places, it was likely to help a school achieve its own goals. Simply put, the Iowa Department of Education found *Second Chance Reading* a viable instructional framework to support and assist struggling adolescent students in Iowa because of the track record it had compiled in such locations as California, Arizona, and Alaska. The interest of the Iowa Department of Education was piqued and Showers came on board as the wheels of progress began to turn.

In 2004, Dr. Beverly Showers took up the charge and trained a mere handful of classroom teachers as well as some special education consultants, literacy coaches, and reading consultants from across the state of Iowa in *Second Chance Reading* through financial and intellectual support of the Iowa Department of Education. Many of those same educators became subsequent state recognized trainers sponsored and supported by the Iowa Department of Education. This *train the trainer* model became a Department of Education Teacher Academy initiative the following year, 2005. And the author of this dissertation stepped through the paces and became one of Iowa’s state approved trainers. This was in part my story. I have told it confidently.

**Role of the Researcher**

This qualitative research design naturally evolved from an interpretative stance as the researcher became an essential participant in the human experience that was studied.
And because of my role as the qualitative researcher intrinsically involved in this study, juxtaposed with my professional responsibility for training Second Chance Reading teachers, my biases, values, and judgment as the researcher naturally became entwined in the data generated, coded through multiple levels, and finally through the analytical phase.

**Regarding Bias**

According to Merriam (2009), “a central characteristic of qualitative research is that individuals construct reality in interaction with their social worlds” (p. 22). And as expressed by Neibert (2004), “it is suggested that the best cure for biases is to be aware that they exist” (p.30). I might further propose that beyond openly noted and significant levels of bias regarding the topic under study, I further maintained beneficial characteristics of theoretical sensitivity towards both Second Chance Reading and the impact of leadership. Strauss and Corbin (1990) defined theoretical sensitivity as “the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn’t” (p.42). Because of my knowledge, commitment, experience, and track record regarding the instructional framework, Strauss and Corbin’s definition of theoretical sensitivity is applicable in both definition and substance.

Having worked closely with hundreds of educators for several years around the Second Chance Reading instructional framework, I was fortunate to have both insight and sensitivity to know and understand how things most efficiently worked in this curricular arena. This knowledge, explicit though it was, had helped me understand the
events and actions both seen and heard at a rapid pace. Additionally, I was able to design a visual representation more quickly around the topic than an alternate researcher with more limited experiences around SCR may have managed. However, that said, the contemporary narrative inquiry shared in Chapter 4 and further analyzed in Chapter 5 had evolved from what I anticipated it to be prior to the research into something much different. This dissertation has truly been an unexpected journey of exploration, discovery, and delight.

Professional Responsibilities and Obligations

From the Onset

As a secondary literacy consultant employed by Area Education Agency 267 from 2004 through the summer of 2012, one of my primary professional responsibilities was to provide training, support, technical assistance, and overall guidance to local educators in the curricular arena of literacy. When Second Chance Reading was first introduced to the state of Iowa in 2005, there were initially four state-approved trainers in Area Education Agency 267. Following the first full year of SCR implementation, one trainer was reassigned and the team was reduced to three. Two years later, a second team member pursued employment with another state agency and the team was reduced to two.

During the 2009 – 2010 school year the team was reduced once again and I became the only SCR trainer in AEA 267. And in my role as primary professional development provider for the long-run, I had come to know the participants who attended training on a greater plain than as simply teachers. We laughed and problem solved together. I read their works and together we modified and tightened up lessons. I visited
their classrooms, watched them in the trenches with struggling readers, and celebrated with them over their successes. Simply put, we had built solid relationships founded on principles of camaraderie, respect, and professionalism. Many of these professional colleagues who attended both first year training and some additional colleagues that returned for follow-up training on a tri-annual basis became part of this research project.

My important research focused not only on Second Chance Reading as a steadfast resource to both support and make a positive difference in learning for burdened adolescent students, but there was also a targeted focus on the importance of leadership in support of struggling adolescents and the teachers that served them. Research supporting the placement of leaders in critical administrative positions is both extensive and significant. Furthermore, aligning highly trained and effective educators with deep content knowledge to students with the greatest needs in order to see noteworthy gains in student achievement was equally, if not more so, significant (Haycock, 1998).

Without delving deeper to understand an existing system and instructional framework where noteworthy student achievement gains for a privileged few were the rule rather than the exception, one might wonder how secondary educators could ever hope to diminish the learning gap between those that get it and those that don't.

As reported by the Alliance for Excellent Education (2010) over 7,900 Iowa students did not graduate from Iowa high schools during the spring of 2009. Eighty percent of Iowa's students from the class of 2007 graduated from high school, whereas only 69% of the nation's seniors graduated during the same year. Furthermore, a staggering 45% of Iowa's eighth graders scored below the proficiency level, and even
more alarming, an additional 23% of our state’s eighth graders scored below the basic reading level on the 2008 – 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading assessment (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010). Without pointing fingers, one has to wonder about the general lack of aptitude and ability demonstrated on this national assessment.

As a consultant of many years and an educator of many decades focused primarily on literacy attainment, I suspect that a majority of the nearly 8,000 fewer students walking across graduation stages each spring in our state alone could be attributed in great part to significant reading deficits. Furthermore, I believe that schools led with engaged leaders represent an answer and probable solution to these staggering statistics. As little as two decades ago, Nanus argued that vision was the key to effective leadership (Danielson, 2002). It was time to delve once again into the issues of leadership, albeit with a targeted focus on how administrative leadership specifically impacted teachers of struggling adolescent readers.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this contemporary narrative inquiry study was to explore and discover the influence and impact of leadership on teachers that worked with struggling adolescent readers. Through an analysis of teacher and administrator interviews, stories and reflections, educator stories were coupled with wishes, aspirations, successes, and struggles related to *Second Chance Reading* clientele. To clarify, the quality of *leadership* in this context and noted throughout this writing was generally defined as the
building administrator in each of the five buildings that represented the focus of this study.

The audience targeted for this research included teachers, principals, district administrators, universities, Area Education Agencies, the Iowa Department of Education, state legislators, the International Reading Association, the National Council of Teachers of English, and School Administrators of Iowa (SAI), for the impact of these findings are both significant and far reaching.

The stories I have collected and shared were analyzed qualitatively through a combination of narrative analyses, open and axial coding, as well as through the constant-comparative analytical process and all ultimately framed under a hermeneutical framework of contemporary narrative inquiry. I have told the story of these principals and teachers that work tirelessly to assist struggling adolescent readers make sense of and gain an appreciation for the written word. That said, there was a targeted focus on the impact of leadership for teachers of Second Chance Reading. Naturally, the parameters for this intended research design have involved the participants that elected to join forces while the ramifications and findings are more globally significant in scope.

Research Questions

This research study told the story of five diverse schools from five unique communities that recently implemented at least one section of Second Chance Reading. Their 12 stories have been told through a hermeneutical framework of contemporary narrative inquiry and shared in five comprehensive vignettes where each participant has had their voice authentically heard.
A targeted focus of the conversations was on the identification of leadership traits of the principals from each of the buildings. This was explored from both the perception of the teachers and personally perceived from the administrators themselves. And then the leadership traits were juxtaposed with the potential impact on SCR teachers. Towards that end, the researcher engaged in purposive individual interviews with both teachers and principals which revolved around four main themes. The following research questions have guided and directed this qualitative study, albeit knowing full well that tangential conversations ensued and the principal researcher on occasion elected to wander down an unknown and unplanned for path, often to discoveries of both merit and worth.

1. What was the relationship between Second Chance Reading teachers and principal leadership?
2. What leadership qualities were necessary in support of Second Chance Reading teachers?
3. What barriers were preventing teachers from accomplishing their mission?
4. How did administrators encourage and celebrate learning?

Significance of the Study

The reading demands on adolescents are expansive. Some read traditional magazines and books, but today's teens have more opportunities and more requirements to read (Bean, Bean, & Bean, 1999; Kamil, 2003; Swafford & Kallus, 2002). Many adolescents read text messages, blogs, and other electronic print. They read menus, maps, lab reports, primary and secondary source documents. Some even go so far as to read
instruction manuals. These opportunities demand strong literacy skills. Yet there is a growing pocket of adolescents who struggle to read. This second population, but particularly the educators that choose to work with struggling adolescent readers, became the focus of my study.

The educational setting of school places increasingly complex demands upon students. “There are approximately 8.7 million fourth through twelfth graders in America whose chances for academic success are dismal because they are unable to read and comprehend the material in their textbooks” (Kamil, 2003, p. 1). The targeted teachers for this study were those that taught Second Chance Reading as well as the building principals who forged the way, created the opportunity, provided the support, and shared their vision.

In order to best tell the story of Second Chance Reading students, teachers, and administrators, I utilized a qualitative structure and framework and focused the writing specifically through the lens of contemporary narrative inquiry. According to Taylor and Bogdan (1998) “qualitative researchers are concerned with the meanings people attach to things in their lives. . . . they empathize and identify with the people they study in order to understand how those people see things” (p. 7). Qualitative research “is ubiquitous in human affairs. It is not some exotic form of doing or making, but a pervasive aspect of daily life. For that reason and for others it is useful” (Eisner, 1991, p. 5).

Specifically, the format for this qualitative study was a contemporary narrative inquiry. Interviews were conducted, supported, and enhanced throughout with carefully monitored member checks. Completely transcribed interviews were followed by the
creation of vignettes which told the stories of those interviewed. The entire process was completed with an in-depth analysis of findings.

Narration became my methodology of choice as I am a storyteller. Chase (2008) reminds readers that narrative inquiry is a particular type of qualitative inquiry as a field in the making. Chase (2008) defined ‘narrative’ and was referenced in Denzin and Lincoln (2008) as

...retrospective meaning making and defines narrative inquiry as an ‘amalgam of interdisciplinary lenses, diverse disciplinary approaches, and both traditional and innovative methods – all revolving around an interest in biographical particulars as narrated by the one who lives them . . . . Narratives are socially constrained forms of action, socially situated performances, ways of acting in and making sense of the world. . . . Narrative inquiry can advance a social change agenda. Wounded storytellers can empower others to tell their stories. Testimonios, as emergency narratives, can mobilize a nation against social injustice, repression, and violence. Collective stories can form the basis of a social movement. Telling the stories of marginalized people can help to create a public space requiring others to hear what they do not want to hear (p. 45-46).

What better way to tell a story, but to share the words of those in the trenches in an attempt to better inform the world? When designing the research study, I elected to interview two groups, teachers and principals, for hearing the perspectives of key stakeholders was critical in understanding a significant portion of the work behind Second Chance Reading.

Reeves (2009) stated that “of all the variables that influence student achievement, the two that have the most profound influence are teacher quality and leadership quality.” (Reeves, 2009, p. 67) Therefore, sharing the stories, successes, struggles, and aspirations of both principals and teachers alike, albeit through an unbiased lens, has assisted in framing a snapshot of the Second Chance Reading world. And the tales have been told
specifically through the impactful lens of both perceived and professed traits of leadership.

The title of this dissertation has evolved into *Leadership Distinctions: The Impact of Leadership on Teachers of Second Chance Reading*. Terms such as *coordinated teaching and learning*, and *shared belief in the capacity to learn*, have been tossed around by district leaders and researchers alike as critical attributes of effective leadership in order to foster significant gains in student achievement. It has been further noted by Corcoran, Fuhrman, and Belcher (2001) that developing school capacity requires strong leadership (Danielson, 2002). Barthes (1977) penned the dramatic words regarding narration: “narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society” (p. 79). The time had come to tell the stories of both impassioned and disillusioned educators and to discover the impact of leadership on this special population of educators.

**Definitions**

Because this research study has evolved over time from one methodological stance into a second and third over time, it is important to share definitions of significance, both from the literary world as well as that of research methodologists. In Table 1 a compilation of key terminology has been compiled. As one may note while reviewing the collection, terminology from various methodological stances necessarily overlap. This was intentional and not an oversight.
### Table 1

**Key Methodological and Literary Terms Utilized Throughout the Research Study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Axial Coding</td>
<td>This step in the coding process followed open coding and may also have been referred to as analytical coding. The researcher first took the categories of open coding, identified one of the codes as a central phenomenon, and then returned to the database to identify key points: (1) What event[s] caused the phenomenon, (2) What strategies or actions were employed in response to it, (3) What specific context and superseding conditions influenced the strategies, and (4) What consequences resulted from the phenomenon. (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 2009; Strauss &amp; Corbin, 1990).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causal Conditions</td>
<td>In axial coding, these are the categories of conditions identified in a database that form the basis or influence around which the innermost phenomenon occurs. (Creswell, 1998).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Phenomenon</td>
<td>This is an aspect of axial coding and the formation of the visual theory, model, or paradigm. In open coding, the researcher chooses a central category around which to develop the theory. The category is chosen through a careful examination of the open coding categories and selecting one that holds the most conceptual interest, is most frequently discussed by participants in the study, and is most “saturated” with information. The central phenomenon is then placed at the center of the model and labeled as “central phenomenon.” (Creswell, 1998).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coding paradigm or logic diagram</td>
<td>In axial coding, the central phenomenon, underlying conditions, background, superseding conditions, strategies, and consequences are represented in a visual diagram and drawn with boxes and arrows indicating the course of action or flow of activities. (Creswell, 1998).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consequences</strong></td>
<td>The outcomes of strategies taken by participants in the study and identified during axial coding may be positive, negative, or neutral. They are identified as consequences. (Strauss &amp; Corbin, 1990).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Constant Comparative</strong></td>
<td>This was an early term (Conrad, 1978) in grounded theory research that referred to the analytical process when the researcher identified incidents, events, and activities and constantly comparing them to an emerging category to determine similarities and differences in order to identify patterns. (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 2009). It is to be noted that although this research study evolved from a grounded theory to a contemporary narrative inquiry, the constant comparative process was utilized to determine themes and patterns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context</strong></td>
<td>These are the particular set of conditions within which strategies occur and are specified during axial coding. They are specific in nature and close to the actions and interactions. (Creswell, 1998; Strauss &amp; Corbin, 1990).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dimensionalized</strong></td>
<td>During ‘open coding’ analysis, dimensionalized data are identified as the smallest unit of information (Creswell, 1998; Strauss &amp; Corbin, 1990).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fidelity</strong></td>
<td>Quality or exactness; accuracy in detail. When considering fidelity of implementation, the higher the degree of implementation, the greater impact on student achievement. (Waters et al., 2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Functional Aliterates</strong></td>
<td>Many students do not acquire intrinsic motivation for reading. Although they are able to read words and understand text at an adequate level, their experience does not fulfill necessary prerequisites for intrinsically motivated reading. They become those who can read but don’t. And over time, they lose ground from students that continue reading for information and pleasure.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
Measures of Academic Progress

The Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) are a set of computerized tests designed by the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA). Tests are given in reading, language usage, science, and mathematics. The purpose is not to assign a label of proficient or non-proficient, but rather to measure a student's instructional level and identify the areas of learning where a student can make the most academic growth.

Memoing

This is the process in qualitative research of the researcher capturing ideas or initial concepts in writing which may be in the form of preliminary propositions, emerging categories, or some feature regarding connections of categories as in axial coding. These are written records of analysis (Creswell, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Metacognition

Knowledge of your own thoughts and the factors that influence your thinking. As students listen to their teacher process their understanding of the text while reading aloud, they learn to and become adept at understanding and paying attention to their own metacognitive processes when tackling text independently.

NAEP

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas. Since NAEP assessments are administered uniformly using the same sets of test booklets across the nation, NAEP results serve as a common metric for all states and selected urban districts. The assessment stays essentially the same from year to year, with only carefully documented changes. This permits NAEP to provide a clear picture of student academic progress over time. It is commonly referred to as The Nation's Report Card.
Nodes

In qualitative software (NVivo9) nodes are defined as containers for themes, people, places, organizations, or other areas of interest and can be arranged through a hierarchical structure, moving from general topics at the top, known as parent nodes, to more specific topics, known as child nodes (NVivo9).

Open Coding

This is the first step in the data analysis process which involves segmenting data into categories of information (Creswell, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Propositions

These are hypotheses, typically written in a directional form, that relate categories within a study. They are written from the axial coding model or paradigm and might suggest why a certain cause influences the central phenomenon that, in turn, influences the use of a specific strategy (Creswell, 1998).

Relational Trust

Respect, personal regard, competence, and integrity are all involved in relational trust, as determined by the researchers Bryk and Schneider. Individuals analyze the behavior of others using the lenses noted above. A serious deficiency on any one criterion can be enough to undermine a discernment of trust for the overall relationship (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test

The Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, Fourth Edition (SDRT 4), provides group administered diagnostic assessment of the essential components of reading in order to determine students' strengths and needs. The SDRT is one of two recommended large scale assessments administered to SCR students in the fall and then again in the spring The scores from the SDRT are used to determine and quantify gains in student achievement and plan next instructional steps. SCR students are typically assessed in both reading comprehension and vocabulary.

STAR Assessment

The STAR Program looks at how well schools and students are performing. Students take tests in math, reading, writing, science,
and history. Teachers and parents can use test results to improve student learning. One of the schools in this research study used the STAR as their pre and post assessment tool.

**Struggling Adolescent Reader**

Adolescent students are identified as those in fourth grade and beyond. Most specifically, struggling adolescent readers have identified reading deficiencies and have scored at or below the 41 percentile on high stakes assessments such as the Iowa Assessments.

**Theoretical sampling**

In data collection for grounded theory research, the researcher selects a sample of individuals to study based on their contribution to the development of the theory. (Creswell, 1998).

**Theoretical Sensitivity**

Theoretical sensitivity refers to a personal quality of the researcher regarding an awareness of the subtleties of the meaning of data. This sensitivity occurs in varying degrees depending upon previous reading, experience, and relevance to an area. It further refers to the attribute of having insight into a topic and allows the researcher to develop a theory that is grounded, conceptually dense, and well integrated at a more rapid pace than for a researcher that lacks sensitivity. (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

**Word Callers**

This term is commonly used in literary circles for struggling readers that can read text but experience difficulty in comprehending, determining main idea, identifying details, or support inferences for the text they ‘call.’ They typically struggle to make sense of all text types: expository, narrative, persuasive, etc.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

To improve intellectual attainment and move district stakeholders toward meeting or exceeding lofty goals, high performing schools have traditionally been both pushed forward and pulled along by strong leaders, namely the site principal (Wilson, 2011). The purpose of this chapter was to provide a review of relevant literature around multiple aspects of leadership as well as how building administrators have historically impacted student learning. Finally, research will be shared regarding key components of the instructional framework known as Second Chance Reading.

The chapter was organized into the following sections: (1) An Historical Overview on Educational Leadership in American Public Schools; (2) The Efficiency Movement; (3) Bureaucratic Pattern of Organization; (4) A Shift Towards An Accountability Focus; (5) Leadership Distinctions: Hierarchical Leaders; (6) Leadership Distinctions: Transformational Leaders; (7) Leadership Distinctions: Facilitative Leaders; (8) A Discrepancy: Educational Managers or Leaders; (9) Leaders on Leadership; (10) Qualities of Leadership; (11) Leadership Traits; (12) General Impact of School Leaders on Student Achievement; (13) Key Components of the Second Chance Reading Instructional Framework; and (14) The Impact of Leadership on Student Achievement.

An Historical Overview on Educational Leadership

In the American public school system, the 20th century was one of educational growth, rapid development, and an eventual need for reorganization. During this period, schools went from serving largely rural populations to a marked increase of urban
educational systems. Large, multi-school districts were formed. Universal education extended through secondary school and students with special needs became members of all school populations. Because of expansion trends which paralleled that of private-sector companies, school leaders attempted to create educational structures that resembled organizations found in private industry. This restructuring effort established two new themes for public schools: individual growth and efficiency (Short & Greer, 2002).

**Efficiency Movement**

According to Short and Greer (2002), “although little attention was paid to the individual growth theme until the progressive education movement of the 1920s, the efficiency theme was embraced immediately by the nation’s school leaders” (Short & Greer, 2002, p.2). The efficiency movement progressed rapidly during the first half of the 20th century when Frederick Taylor, the leader of the scientific management movement, touted his belief that all work could be studied, designed, and measured and that clear job descriptions and task analyses could be established for every position. Written job descriptions, educational leaders believed, would streamline expectations for all, thereby increasing employee efficiencies. Such thinking appealed to over-worked school administrators who continued to face issues of educating ever-increasing numbers of students. Taylor’s belief in scientific management occurred simultaneously with the psychological measurement movement that had taken the educational community and nation by storm. Psychologists were developing assessments which enabled them to establish a student’s mental capacity and define clear levels of achievement. Ultimately,
it was believed that increased levels of academic achievement had great potential when psychological measurements were coupled with scientific management (Short & Greer, 2002).

**Bureaucratic Pattern of Organization**

The efficiency movement spotlighted the bureaucratic pattern of organization in that schools were run by trained individuals expected to adhere to pre-established rules. Short and Greer (2002) found the following:

Rules, not professional judgment or innovating thinking, govern decision making within the bureaucratic organization. Rules provide little flexibility in actions and problem solving. Rules, codified and made explicit, leave teachers few opportunities to frame problems in alternative ways. Rules narrow their choices for problem solution and inhibit creative problem solving. Most important, rules prohibit experimentation with new ideas that run up against existing rules and regulations. One of the most troublesome issues perceived by teachers is that bureaucratic rules, meant to facilitate efficiency, do not allow for the mistakes and the back-to-the-drawing-board mentality that are essential for organizations that support and cultivate innovative thinking and action. The bottom line is that standardization of procedures ensures that things will be done the same way they have always been done. Bureaucracies cannot tolerate changes in procedures, a characteristic that is directly in conflict with experimentation with new ideas and risk taking. (p. 86)

This bureaucratic structure was pyramidal, top-down, and subordinates were supervised by those of higher-ranking. During this time period, Boards of Education, superintendents, and central office administrators became decision-makers for all school personnel. Individual schools within a district were organized as smaller bureaucracies within a larger system. Top-down supervision was considered the most effective and efficient method of organization for coordinating the work efforts of large numbers of people. Principals were primarily organizational managers for the schools they served (Wilmore, 2002).
During this time, there was a societal and near cosmic shift in cultural expectations as students were arriving on school campuses in droves. While principals organized and managed their ever-growing districts, society as a whole continued to evolve. Students left school early to work the fields. Then, during the Industrial Age, fit and capable children frequently dropped out of school to fill positions in profitable jobs. However, unlike today, over-worked educators were not particularly worried about the glut of dropouts. School leaders’ casual acceptance of students leaving school early to join the work force, whether in field or factory, was simply indicative of society at the time (Short & Greer, 2002).

A Shift towards Accountability Focused

The bureaucratic method of organization continued through the second half of the 20th century. However, there were two short periods when attention became focused on the inclusion of students from diverse racial and ethnic groups as well as on students with disabilities. The educational structure in America was renamed ‘the accountability movement,’ although educational objectives regarding the efficient use of financial resources and guaranteed results in student achievement remained the same (Short & Greer, 2002).

During the 1950s, written school board policies became popular, more attention was focused on homogeneous grouping of students, and data became the educator’s tool for measuring learning. Three decades later, restructuring and empowerment became routine catchphrases and methods of doing business in schools. Educators had long embraced the efficiency model of management and rather than finding more productive
or alternate methods of organizing educational efforts, school leaders focused their efforts and attention on perfecting the system they found familiar: bureaucracy (Short & Greer, 2002).

**Leadership Distinctions**

**Hierarchical Leaders**

When considering the mission of alternate educational leadership styles, one has to consider the differentiation between three types of administrators: hierarchical, transformational, and facilitative (Lashway, 2000). Before elaborating on the attributes of each administrative subset, it is important to note that school districts remain organized as bureaucracies. According to Duffy (2006), “the dominant organization design in school districts is a mechanistic hierarchy organized as a bureaucracy. Leadership in bureaucratic hierarchies aims to enforce rigid chains of command, control resources tightly, and exercise strict command and control” (Duffy, 2006, p. xi-xii).

As noted in the research of Short and Greer (2002), a hierarchical framework involved the pyramidal approach to leadership and the components of authority, rules, and division of labor. When operating from the hierarchical (i.e., bureaucratic) leadership framework, leaders make decisions and are responsible to see that their demands are carried out efficiently (Lashway, 2000).

Bolman and Deal (1991) as well as Lashway (2000) found an emphasis on efficiency and top-down authority to be the mainstay leadership style for a majority of the 20th century. Top-down authority, simply put, identified decision-makers as those wielding power and strategically seated at the pyramidal peak. In schools designed from
the hierarchical/bureaucratic framework, teachers and students had little voice on decisions that affected them directly. Such decisions could include issues with curriculum, job assignments, schedules, or discipline. In bureaucratic systems, Hoy and Miskel (1991) found teachers working in isolation with little opportunity for collaboration or collegiality. Eaker, DuFour, and DuFour (2002) recognized traditional schools as places of isolation. “It has been said that the traditional school often functions as a collection of independent contractors united by a common parking lot” (Eaker et al., 2002, p.11). Short and Greer (2002) identified most schools as having long been “entrenched as bureaucratic organizations, offering teachers and students little say in their work life” (Short & Greer, 2002, p. 85). These same researchers identified and characterized a bureaucratic structure with a principal at the helm in the following way.

In a bureaucratic pattern that characterizes most school systems throughout the country, the principal is viewed as a middle manager whose responsibilities are to run the school in a manner acceptable to the central office. Actions of middle-manager principals reflect a bedrock belief that if something goes wrong they will be held responsible (Short & Greer, 2002, p. 67).

As recently as the 1980s, the principal was seen as a highly directive, managerial leader. As noted by Short and Greer (2002), “as soon as it was introduced during the reform effort of the 1980s, restructuring quickly became the buzzword of the entire educational establishment. Any change in grouping, instruction, or organizational arrangements became known as the school’s restructuring effort” (Short & Greer, 2002, p. 3). Then, in 1983 A Nation at Risk (Gardner, Larsen, Baker, & Campbell, 1983) was published and a renewed interest in education for all became the targeted focus of the American educational system. In fact, it appeared that the publication, A Nation at Risk,
may have been the catalyst responsible for swinging the administrative pendulum from a position of primarily management to that of true instructional leadership.

**Transformational Leaders**

When drawing a line in the sand between traits of administrative managers and that of instructional leaders, there was a clear delineation between responsibilities of the two groups. Zaleznik (1977) stated, “...where managers act to limit choices, leaders work in the opposite direction, to develop fresh approaches to longstanding problems and to open issues for new options … Leaders create excitement in work” (Covey, 2004, p. 361). Y.L. Goddard, Miller, Larson, and Goddard (2010) alluded to both the *Nation at Risk* document as well as expectations regarding the *No Child Left Behind* legislation when they noted that the revised role of principal as instructional leader had also evolved. Furthermore, promising research indicated that instructionally focused and transformational leadership positively affected teachers’ instructional practices, thereby supporting the paradigm shift of principal as instructional leader.

Bryk and Schneider (2003), along with a team of researchers, conducted a longitudinal study of 400 schools to determine the impact of reform efforts and how societal trust was developed. And through their study, they were able to link evidence on each school’s changing academic productivity with survey results regarding school trust. Their findings included conversations regarding relational trust. Through multiple factions of principal, teacher, parents, and children, Bryk and Schneider (2003) found,

The principal . . . needs faculty support to maintain a cohesive professional community that productively engages parents and students. Teacher’s work, in turn, depends on decisions that the principal makes about the allocation of resources to their classrooms. Parents depend on both teachers and the principal to
create an environment that keeps children safe and helps them learn. Such dependencies create a sense of mutual vulnerability for all individuals involved. Consequently, deliberate action taken by any party to reduce this sense of vulnerability in others— to make them feel safe and secure— builds trust across the community (Bryk & Schneider, March 2003, p. 41).

According to Wilmore (2002), the emphasis on high-stakes testing, following the publication of *A Nation at Risk* and the *No Child Left Behind* legislation had a profound impact on schools and their attempts to individualize instruction to meet the needs of each unique student. A focus on accountability and student success created another transition for school leaders. The building leader evolved from merely a school manager to that of an instructional leader and thus became a catalyst and change agent for academic success. Additionally, the principal became the school liaison for community resources including parents, caregivers, neighbors, businesses, churches, civic clubs, and other community service agencies, as was further evidenced in the findings of Bryk and Schneider (2002, 2003). Building principals essentially became the conduit between the district and the communities in which they were housed, responsible for binding all factions together with the sole purpose of providing an appropriate education for all. The principal had become the main instructional force of the learning community. Clearly there was a time in our history when administrators operated efficiently and necessarily as managers. Yet, the time had evolved for administrators to take on the instructional leadership role.

Hunter (2004) noted the opportunity for leadership any time two or more people gathered together. Often, the leader acted as the group’s emotional guide, dream keeper, and rudder in the storm to steady the ship while keeping the dream alive. Goleman,
Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) found that throughout history, across time zones, and in cultures everywhere, the leader in any human group has been the one to whom others looked for promises, confidences, coherent actions, thoughts, and directionality when facing uncertainty, threats, or when there was a task to be completed.

Lashway (2000) found that some principals successfully articulated a clear organizational vision and communicated it to their followers. Deal and Peterson (1994) noted “every school is a repository of unconscious sentiments, expectations, and hopes that carry the code of the collective dream – the high ground to which they collectively aspire” (Lashway, 2000, p.34). Visionary leaders listened carefully for deeper dreams from their constituents and then worked tirelessly to make the goals both believable and achievable, whereas Bryk and Schneider (2002) had considered the critical importance of making sure relational trust was embedded in order to positively impact student learning.

Relational trust involved four components including respect, personal regard, competence, and integrity. Respect represented the foundation or bedrock of relational trust. According to Bryk and Schneider (2002) and reported in the research of Waters, et al., (2009),

Respect involves recognition of the important role each person plays in a child’s education and the mutual dependencies that exist among teachers, principals, parents, and community members. Respectful exchanges are characterized by genuine listening and by considering each person’s perspective in subsequent actions. Even when people disagree, individuals can still feel valued if others respect their opinions. Personal regard refers to the willingness of people to extend themselves beyond the formal requirements of a job description or union contract. . . . Competence relates to the ability to achieve desired outcomes, including learning for students and supportive work conditions for teachers. If instances of negligence or incompetence are allowed to persist, trust is undermined. . . . Personal Integrity is evident when a person feels that they can trust another to keep their word. Integrity is based on a moral-ethical perspective
and a firm commitment to the education and welfare of children (Waters et al., 2009, pp.48 – 49).

Several studies (Avolio, Waldman, & Yammarino, 1991; Bass & Avolio, 1993b; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Duffy, 2006; Lashway, 2000) identified transformational leaders as highly self-confident individuals with great insight into human nature. As they are well-skilled motivators, they generate hopefulness and appear to have a certain flair for leadership roles.

Transformational leaders generate enthusiasm, spur high levels of energy, and are committed to their cause. According to Lashway (2000) they “seek to move organizations by engaging the beliefs, values, and aspirations of employees. Leaders become highly sensitive to the symbolic meaning of their actions and pay close attention to organizational structure” (Lashway, 2000, p. 23). Meanwhile, Duffy (2006) additionally defined transformational leaders as those who can stimulate motivation in followers as they work together towards long-term goals rather than short-term self interests. Furthermore, transformational leaders focus on achievement and self-actualization rather than boosting their emotional security. Kouzes and Posner (2002) defined transformational leadership in relation to interactions between people.

Transformational leadership occurs when people raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. Their purposes, which might have started out as separate but related, as in the case of transactional leadership, become fused . . . But transforming leadership ultimately becomes moral in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspirations of both the leader and the led, and thus it has a transforming effect on both (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 153).
Duffy (2006) described transformational leadership as inspirational in that there is a profound redirection of energy and potential as people work together to achieve a common vision.

Transformational leadership taps into the emotional energy of people and provides them with meaning and a sense of personal value. People inspired by a transformational leader no longer “go to work”; instead, they work for a “cause.” A sense of excitement, adventure, and enthusiasm emerges as people realize they can do more than they had ever thought possible (Duffy, 2006, p. 24).

Five factors which more fully define transformational leaders were noted in the work of Duffy (2006) although originally reported first by Bass (1985). They include leaders who (a) charismatically instill values, respect, and pride while clearly articulating a vision; (b) pay attention to their follower’s needs through the assigning of meaningful projects in order to help followers grow; (c) encourage followers to rethink rational ways to examine situations while growing creatively; (d) inform followers of responsibilities to be completed in order to receive appropriate rewards; and (e) permit followers to complete tasks without constant monitoring or supervision (Duffy, 2006).

Furthermore, Avolio et al. (1991) defined idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration as the ‘Four I’s of Transformational Leadership.’ Duffy (2006), Bass and Avolio (1993a) expounded on the concept of “Four I’s” with a more in-depth definition which stated, “transformational leaders integrate creative insight, persistence and energy, intuition and sensitivity to the needs of others to ‘forge the strategy-culture alloy’ for their organizations” (Duffy, 2006, p. 25). And in closing, as reported by Lashway (2000), yet originally captured in Burns’
transformational leadership is a blend of persuasion, idealism, and intellectual excitement rather than coercion.

Facilitative Leaders

The third type of leader noted by Lashway (2000) was facilitative. In a facilitative structure, leaders work to broaden and enrich the leadership base through empowerment of others. The principal’s role in such a structure is not so much to make good decisions, but rather to monitor that good decisions are made by others. Facilitative administrators determine choices they make by two specific factors: those related to the environment in which the students work and how they view the power they wield (Lashway, 2000, p. 23). Fullan (2008) noted that facilitative leaders found the balance between guiding and listening as well as between directing and learning in order to make the most useful contribution to organizational performance.

According to Kouzes and Posner (2002), “Long before empowerment was written into the popular vocabulary, exemplary leaders understood how important it was that their constituents felt strong, capable, and efficacious” (p. 281). In Everyone Leads, Ralph Nader was quoted as stating, “I start with the premise that the function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers” (Zadra, 2006, p. 7). Likewise, Matthew Fox, in the same book of quotations stated, “The times do not allow anyone the luxury of waiting around for others to lead. All can lead and ought to be invited to do so” (Zadra, 2006, p. 7). Betty Linton wrote like a facilitative leader when she penned, “Leadership is not about making yourself more powerful. It’s about making people around you more powerful” (Zadra, 2006, p. 10). And finally, Noel Tichy stated, “The
work, transformational leadership is a blend of persuasion, idealism, and intellectual excitement rather than coercion.

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ultimate test for a leader is not whether he or she makes smart decisions and takes
decisive action, but whether he or she teaches others to make smart decisions and take
decisive action” (Zadra, 2006, p. 14).

A Discrepancy: Educational Managers or Instructional Leaders

Multiple authors and researchers have attempted to pin down the discrepancy
between educational managers and instructional leaders. As noted in Covey (2004) and
quoted by Bennis (1993), “Management is getting people to do what needs to be done.
Leadership is getting people to want to do what needs to be done. Managers push.
further described the differential between managers and leaders in Covey (2004) as:
“Leaders are people who do the right thing; managers are people who do things right” (p.
360). Lashway (2000) further noted: “Whereas managers deal with mundane decisions
and operate through policies, committees, and top-down directives, leaders are
inspirational, reaching for the future with bold visions” (Lashway, 2000, pp. 30-31). It
was additionally noted by Lashway (2000) that followers are convinced that their deepest
values can be fulfilled when they follow convincing leaders. However, Alan Zimmerman
(2008), sent a cautionary tale in a reflection notebook provided to each participant at the
Iowa Leadership Conference in June 2008 when he wrote, “If you think you’re leading
and look behind and no one is following, you’re just out for a walk” (Zimmerman, 2008,
p.15).
Leaders on Leadership

When asked by Donald Robinson, Phi Delta Kappa International’s Director of Publications, (2000) to describe a leader, Howard Spears, former superintendent of schools in San Francisco stated:

The educational leader is active and he’s visible. He doesn’t hide himself; he doesn’t run away from the crowd. He goes where the action is. He doesn’t back away from it. But, on the other hand, he’s working behind the scenes so much, working with situations, setting up situations, and there’s a sort of a passive aspect to it. By passive I mean this: He’s known by what he doesn’t do as well as by what he does do (Robinson, 2000, p.159).

When considering whether leaders lead from the front or back of the pack, Spears described leaders as, “very visible, leading the rest of them and everybody was behind him, see. Well, as you experience leadership, these people that you’re dealing with, they’re not all behind you. Some of them are in front of you” (Robinson, 2000, p. 158). Additionally, Alvin McGwire, basketball coach from Marquette University defined a leader as: “…someone that puts himself right on the firing line; that doesn’t send memos; and I think to be a leader is that you cannot look for respect. Respect must come naturally, it must flow and you also have to eventually stand up for the people that you represent (Robinson, 2000, p. 158).”

McGwire further stated, “I think that the key to a leader is someone who treats people above him and on the same strata as he’s on and people below him equally” (Robinson, 2000, p. 158). Elizabeth Koontz, a well-known black educator and past president of the National Education Association defined charisma as an important facet of leadership, “Charisma might attract people; but without substance, that leadership is not maintained” (Robinson, 2000, p. 162). Goleman et al. (2002) found that the more
emotionally demanding the work and expectations for all, the more compassionate and empathic the leader needed to be. Covey (2004) concisely defined leadership as “communicating to people their worth and potential so clearly that they come to see it in themselves” (p. 98). Hunter (2004) also defined leadership in terms of people:

Leadership is influencing people to willingly, even enthusiastically, contribute their hearts, minds, creativity, excellence, and other resource toward mutually beneficial goals. Leadership is influencing people to commit to the mission. Leadership is influencing people to become the best they are capable of becoming. Accordingly, leadership is not synonymous with management. Leadership is synonymous with influence (Hunter, 2004, p. 46).

And finally, Donald Robinson (2000), Phi Delta Kappa’s Director of Publications, shared his thoughts on leadership in 1973 when he stated:

The one quality that wasn’t mentioned was nevertheless present but was apparently missing because of modesty. I refer to that unspoken quality of ego: just plain self-assurance. Now, this high level of confidence is the key to leadership since leadership means the ability to persuade others, and nothing is more persuasive than an unshakable faith in oneself. I still don’t know what leadership is . . . It can’t be tied up in a neat little formula and taught. It’s an essence. Just as you can analyze love in a hundred books, you still can’t teach it or learn it. All you can do is recognize it and enjoy it. So with leadership: It’s an essence, a quality to which you can give a name. Perhaps the word that comes closest is charisma. And, of course, leadership qualities can be cultivated, strengthened. But you can’t create a leader in any quick, three-unit course or any series of easy books or taped lessons (Robinson, 2000, pp. 164-165).

Qualities of Leadership

Dwight David Eisenhower was quoted as stating, “The supreme quality for leadership is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible no matter whether it is on a section gang, a football field, in an army, or in an office” (Covey, 2004, p. 146). The research regarding qualities of leaders is both far reaching and comprehensive. According to Duffy (2006), “. . . dynamic leadership means leading with
courage, passion, and vision” (Duffy, 2006, p. ix). Duffy goes on to further describe a dynamic leader as one who does the right thing even when it may be unpopular or politically incorrect. The dynamic leader influences relationships between and among multiple factions, earns and maintains trust and respect of colleagues, and uses power and influence politically in ethical ways.

Fullan (2008) supported the thinking of Duffy with an enduring list of leadership traits which were modeled by Sir Ernest Shackleton, an Antarctic explorer from the early 1900s who successfully saved the lives of his entire crew of 27, although their ship was crushed by Antarctic ice and they found themselves stranded on an ice floe for nearly two years. The leadership traits identified in the actions of Shackleton are appropriately ageless, whether for a fearless explorer or a 21st century educator. They include:
(a) cultivating a sense of compassion and responsibility for others; (b) committing to the goal and sticking through the tough learning period; (c) doing one’s part to help create an upbeat environment at work as it is vital for productivity; (d) broadening one’s cultural and social horizons and learning to see things from multiple perspectives; (e) exhibiting a willingness to venture in new directions in order to seize new opportunities and learn new skills; (f) finding a way to turn setbacks and failures to one’s own advantage; (g) being bold in vision and careful in planning; (h) learning from past mistakes; (i) never insisting on reaching a goal at any cost; it must be achieved without undue hardship for your staff. (Fullan, 2008, p. 133) Zaleznik (1966) further noted,

The exercise of leadership requires a strong sense of identity – knowing who one is and who one is not. The myth of the value of being an ‘all-around guy’ is damaging to the striving of an individual to locate himself from within and then to place himself in relation to others. This active location and placement of oneself
prevents the individual from being defined by others in uncongenial terms. It prevents him also from being buffeted around the sea of opinion he must live within. A sense of autonomy, separateness, or identity permits a freedom of action and thinking necessary for leadership” (p. 41).

This begs the question regarding seats or positions of leadership. Must one be in a position of leadership to lead? Clearly not, for Hunter (2004) noted that one need not hold a seat of positional power in order to positively impact others. One need only look around to find forces that be that stir up the masses, often from the sidelines through passion or commitment, or even a calling. Furthermore, as supported by Goleman et al. (2002), “When the designated leader lacks credibility for some reason, people may turn for emotional guidance to someone else who they trust and respect. This de facto leader then becomes the one who molds others’ emotional reactions” (Hunter, 2004, p. 9).

And finally, as much of the focus of this dissertation was focused on both the traits and impact of leadership, Goleman et al. (2002) stated, “The more open leaders are – how well they express their own enthusiasm, the more readily others will feel that same contagious passion” (Goleman et al., 2002, p. 11).

Traits of Leadership

“Visions are ultimately collective products. The principal’s role is to be the voice of conscience that keeps whispering we aren’t yet all that we can be,” (Lashway, 2000, p. 34). Some leaders move people toward shared dreams as they create a strong, impactful, and positive building climate. In some instances, adjectives describing leaders may be effective, visionary, far-sighted, or positive. These terms are somewhat interchangeable as we move forward together to further explore the traits of leaders who positively impact others. In particular, Brooks and Brooks (2005) found visionary leadership traits to
include complex capabilities above and beyond outstanding technical skills. These influential few have an innate ability to persuade and communicate with others, paired with an instinctive ability to include all, infuse passion, and build on natural energy. Those identified as *visionary* leaders modeled high levels of ethical behavior while exhibiting an intriguing sense of curiosity. Brooks and Brooks (2005) further found those in leadership positions to be passionately well-read and well-informed, paired with a keen self-awareness, and often, surprising little ego. Leaders have an intuitive ability to create a clear and complete vision from seemingly random or chaotic parts that anyone can understand and embrace. Leaders, “possess an enviable ability not only to survive, but also to thrive in an environment of ambiguity, complexity, and uncertainty, taking risks and making smart decisions with limited information or guidance” (Brooks & Brooks, 2005, p. xiii-xiv).

Furthermore, Goleman et al. (2002) found these *valuable* leaders stated their mission while setting standards and informing constituents of the work required to achieve group goals. Additionally, *farsighted* leaders were also clear about articulating the vision while setting stakeholders free to innovate, experiment, and take calculated risks to find their dreams. “Knowing the big picture and how a given job fits in gives people clarity; they understand what’s expected of them. And the sense that everyone is working towards shared goals builds team commitment; people feel pride in belonging to their organization” (p. 57). Lashway (2000) wrote of principals as the most watched people in the school. In that capacity, they are expected to live out and adhere to the visions and goals they promote. The messages they send, the time they spend, whom are
rewarded, and how they relate to all constituents circle back to the vision and directive of
the principal. As Lashway so aptly stated, “In the end, vision is as vision does”
(Lashway, 2000, p. 35).

Kouzes and Posner (2002) found that positive leaders gained commitment and
achieved the highest standards when they modeled the behavior they expected of others.
They essentially modeled the way for those that followed them. Although Goleman et al.
(2002) found there to be no fixed formula for great leadership for there were many paths
to excellence, five critical or key practices were identified in the works of Kouzes and
Posner (2002) as those possessed and exhibited by exemplary, far-sighted, and positive
leaders when extraordinary things were accomplished in organizations. They included,
(1) modeling the way, (2) inspiring a shared vision, (3) challenging the process,
(4) enabling others to act, and (5) encouraging the heart.

Traits of leadership may possess very different personal styles. One identified trait
of positive leadership was the artful use of humor. Laughter resonating through a work
environment signaled emotionally positive surroundings. Laughter was an indication of
trust, comfort, and a sense of camaraderie that all was well with the organization. On the
other hand, laughter and good spirits did not mean that leadership avoided conflict, but
rather knew when it was useful and when it should be avoided. According to Goleman et
al. (2002), “The data linking leadership effectiveness to laughter come from hundreds of
actual incidents” (Goleman et al., 2002, p. 34) for great leaders worked through emotions
and acted as the groups’ emotional guide.
As noted by a group who called themselves, ‘Commitment to teamwork,’ and noted in Zadra (2006), “The great leader is not the one in the spotlight; he or she is the one leading the applause” (Zadra, 2006, p. 111). Goleman et al. (2002) further found that followers looked to a visionary leader for more than ensuring that a job was done well. Followers also looked to and leaned on a leader for emotional support and empathy.

Lashway (2000) found that effective and efficient leaders worked tirelessly to support a vital school culture through nurturing and feeding the key stakeholders with “a continuous flow of knowledge, reflection, and inquiry” (p. 35). The flow of ideas can be as simple as a hallway conversation to discuss a newly discovered web site or intentionally scheduled visits to other schools. Lashway (2000) went on to say, “In promoting new ideas, principals will succeed to the degree they are ready to back words with actions” (Lashway, 2000, p. 35). Additionally, it was noted that principals who provided concrete support in the ways of time, training, and funding were much more likely to see the fruit of their labors.

**Key Components of Second Chance Reading**

If Second Chance Reading could be encapsulated into a nutshell and described to inform an interested bystander, it might simply be stated that SCR encompassed an instructional framework made up of multiple highly researched strategies tied primarily to literacy strands of comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency and implemented in such a way as to rapidly increase the reading proficiency of struggling adolescent readers. Instruction intentionally occurred at or above the students’ grade level in order to increase the proficiency of students that typically struggled to read, for to eliminate (or
reduce) the learning gap, also known as the opportunity gap, between the have and the have-nots, students needed to gain much more than a typical year’s growth each year.

Second Chance Reading: The Structure

Second Chance Reading is neither a canned nor purchased program of study, but rather involves an instructional framework. Weekly lesson components were created through the work and commitment of dedicated teachers and collaborative teams, often including principal leadership. The weekly strands were designed around short stories of fine literature, non-fiction, and expository text as well as key pieces of persuasive writing. The framework was highly structured in that 25% of the design focused on higher order thinking tied to comprehension. Fluency and vocabulary each encompassed 15% of the weekly schedule and independent reading during class involved an additional 25% of the class structure. The remaining instructional time was spent on lower level comprehension as well as formative assessment. Adherence to the structure and implementation with fidelity cannot be emphasized enough, for gains were not to be realized when the structured became distorted, compromised, or bastardized (Iowa Department of Education, 2009; Showers, 2004).

Second Chance Reading: On Comprehension

The essence of the instructional framework of Second Chance Reading encompassed three of the five pillars of a comprehensive reading program (Langenberg, et al., 2000). A critical qualifier of competent reading was the ability to successfully comprehend written text. One of the key strands in a Second Chance Reading classroom therefore involved an intentional focus on increasing students’ ability to comprehend
such text instructed at or above students’ grade level. It was imperative that for *Second Chance Reading* students to close the *learning gap* between peers, they must achieve far greater than an expected years’ growth on standardized assessments. For that reason, instruction occurred at or above their grade level for these lofty gains to be realized. As the great majority of *Second Chance Reading* students were a minimum of two years behind their grade level peers in total reading abilities as determined on district administered standardized assessments, and because most of these students typically had achieved much less than a year’s growth on previously administered standardized assessments due to their reading deficit, providing an instructional scaffold to ensure that supports and strategies were in place and implemented with fidelity, quality, consistency, and integrity was critical if significant achievement gains were to occur (Iowa Department of Education, 2009; Showers, 2004).

*Second Chance Reading: On Independent Reading*

The *Second Chance Reading* framework included four sessions per week of independent reading in addition to mandatory independent reading outside class time for between 15 – 20 minutes each day. In order for students to become better readers, they have to read. McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995) researched student’ attitudes regarding both independent and academic reading. Their findings were reported in Kamil, Mosenthal, Pearson, and Barr (2000) *Handbook of Reading Research, Volume III* and stated:

A total of 18,185 students responded to the survey . . . a steady decline in attitudes towards recreational and academic reading as students advance in grade level. By sixth grade, students were largely indifferent to reading. The relationship between attitude and reading frequency is critical, as reading frequency helps
comprehension. Thus, a decline in reading attitudes at middle and secondary levels has a marked impact on content learning and the potential effect of causing students to avoid difficult reading tasks (Kamil et al., p. 636-637).

In a *Second Chance* Reading classroom, with the intention of building active readers while further supporting the reading students were doing independently, they had regularly scheduled opportunities to discuss what they had read with a trusted peer (Iowa Department of Education, 2009; Showers, 2004). Langer (1990) found that students’ interpretations of books were best enriched when supported in discussion reflecting real questions that had been modeled by knowledgeable teachers. The *Pair - Share* opportunity to discuss independent reading with a trusted peer occurred twice a week in every *Second Chance Reading* classroom. Not only did it increase the comprehension around books students were reading, but the practice conducted as intended further increased motivation to share books with each other while encouraging extended reading through new genre or author discovery (Iowa Department of Education, 2009; Showers, 2004).

*Second Chance Reading: The Importance of Discussion*

Without the structure implicit in a *SCR* classroom, and particularly among less able students, Wollman-Bonilla (1994) found that discussions in classrooms were primarily teacher dominated in which there was little voluntary participation (Kamil et al., 2000). However, the *Pair - Share* structure of discussion embedded in *Second Chance Reading* classrooms eliminated the voluntary participation feature, as all students were required to partner up and discuss their reading, however briefly, over a specifically designed question. As reported by Kamil et al. (2000):
Perhaps the largest and most ambitious series of studies of literature discussions have been those undertaken by Nystrand and Gamoran (1991, 1997). In their research on many different classroom discussions, the researchers identified substantive engagement as including . . . authentic, open-ended questions (to which there is no predetermined answer). . . . As might be expected, such substantive engagement was somewhat rare in most discussions of literature, but where it was found it was associated with significantly higher achievement in written assessments (Kamil et al., 2000, p. 395).

*Second Chance Reading: On Vocabulary*

A second strong and conscientious focus of the *Second Chance Reading* instructional framework involved raising vocabulary capacity and skill of struggling readers that made up *Second Chance Reading* classrooms. Vocabulary attainment was a second key component of a comprehensive reading program (Langenberg et al., 2000). Research around the importance of increasing the vocabulary of students is far reaching and has been touted by many key researchers as a key marker of proficiency and academic success.

Becker (1977) found that vocabulary difficulties appeared to be the catalyst for academic failure for disadvantaged students in upper elementary, middle and high school grades (Kamil et al., 2000). According to the research compiled by Wilhelm (2001a), accessing and activating prior knowledge before engaging students with a new piece of text greatly enriched the learning experiences of children. Wilhelm went on to say that students should be afforded opportunities to explore new and rich vocabulary in order to boost their schematic knowledge base, whereby their understanding of complex text was enlightened (Wilhelm, 2001a). A critical point noted in the work of Wilhelm stated, “... if students do not possess or do not activate the appropriate schema, they *will not* comprehend (emphasis added) a text” (Wilhelm, 2001a, p. 97).
Essentially, struggling students often lacked schematic knowledge and thus necessarily struggled with both maintaining and growing sufficient levels of vocabulary to which they may attach new learning. Opportunities for boosting their vocabulary and appropriate schema must be afforded the struggling reader in order to attain significant gains in student achievement. It should come as no surprise therefore, that there was a strong vocabulary component in the Second Chance Reading framework (Iowa Department of Education, 2009; Showers, 2004).

Fifteen percent of the instructional framework around SCR further included vocabulary study. Baker, Simmons, and Kameenui, (1995) argued that there appeared to be no one perfect way to teach vocabulary, but that most interventions had proved effective in some settings. However, they further noted that two principal practices were suggested for successful vocabulary instruction. They included the importance of ensuring that vocabulary instruction was aligned with appropriate levels of word knowledge depth required in any setting, as well as the importance of interventions systematically implemented to further ensure that students became independent word learners. Perhaps most importantly, most studies suggested that instruction that was effective for good readers in vocabulary was similarly appropriate for less able students (Kamil et al., 2000).

In a Second Chance Reading classroom, students were introduced to new words prior to the actual reading experience so they had a context and framework from which to add and attach meaning, thereby increasing the probability that their understanding would be enhanced, enriched, and the text became more readily comprehensible (Iowa
Department of Education, 2009; Showers, 2004). Support for scaffolded and explicit instruction around key vocabulary prior to the reading was further referenced by and supported in the research of Stahl, Jacobson, Davis, and Davis (1989). They suggested that “development of prior knowledge before reading affected the students’ rating of importance of content vocabulary and associated terms” (Kamil et al., 2000, p. 511).

An additional vocabulary requirement in a *Second Chance Reading* class involved identifying and learning new vocabulary from independent books read. This was often suggested by teachers of *Second Chance Reading* as a key difficulty for struggling students to do; this finding was further corroborated by the research of Beyersdorfer (1991).

Middle-grade students working independently could use text-based clues, such as bold face and repetition of key terms, to aid in selection of vocabulary for study. However, low-achieving students relied more on prior knowledge and less on these text-based factors when selecting vocabulary for focus (Kamil et al., 2000, p. 512).

Dr. Beverly Showers designed interactive, scaffolded vocabulary instruction when introducing new terms to further help support struggling readers. The strategy she designed was known as *Numbered Heads Vocabulary*. The highly structured, teacher led method of implementation and instructional density was further supported by the findings of Kamil et al. (2000):

> It would appear that, in developing strategies for the learning of . . . vocabulary, the form of instruction that may be most necessary involves teacher scaffolding and support in the selection process, in ensuring that students are engaged in active processing, and in giving instruction and feedback on using textual and outside aids to word learning (Kamil et al., 2000, p. 513).
The researchers of Kamil et al. (2000), as well as Pittelman, Levin, and Johnson (1985) further explained that students who struggled with reading were at a distinct disadvantage in terms of vocabulary learning. More accomplished readers acquired knowledge of new words through extensive reading, whereas struggling readers not only lacked the depth and breadth of vocabulary exposure, but when they came upon unfamiliar words, the processing demands in these materials left little spare cognitive capacity for word learning.

*Second Chance Reading: On Fluency*

A third major focus of *Second Chance Reading* involved improving reading fluency, a third of the five pillars of a comprehensive reading program (Langenberg et al., 2000). There appeared to be a natural correlation between the ability to read text fluently and the ability to comprehend what was read. Allington (2009) noted that in order to be considered a fluent reader, persons should be able to both decode and comprehend the reading simultaneously. This aspect of simultaneity occurs in tandem for accomplished readers. However, for students in *Second Chance Reading* classrooms, the tandem aspects of decoding while comprehending are often complicated and compromised for students who struggle. Therefore, fluency activities were intentionally embedded in the *Second Chance Reading* framework. This was all done in a conscientious effort to rapidly accelerate struggling students’ overall aptitudes and attitudes towards reading (Iowa Department of Education, 2009; Showers, 2004).

Fluency work occurs on a regular basis in *SCR* classrooms through readers’ theatre and regularly scheduled formative assessment checks. Additionally, during book
talk opportunities with the teacher, students read aloud short passages of their independent reading books to the teacher, or often a visitor, para-educator, or administrator that supports the work through book talk assistance. This is further done as an auditory check on fluency acquisition.

*Second Chance Reading: On Phonics or Phonemic Awareness*

The two strands of a comprehensive reading program (Langenberg et al., 2000) not targeted in *Second Chance Reading* included both phonemic awareness and phonics. If a student had difficulty with decoding, an alternate instructional program was recommended and encouraged. As the minimum age of most students enrolled in *Second Chance Reading* was approximately 11 years of age, it was estimated that 96% of all students of like age could adequately and successfully decode new vocabulary. Therefore, there was no dire need to embed either phonemic awareness or phonics components in the instructional framework (Iowa Department of Education, 2009; Showers, 2004).

*Second Chance Reading: The Read / Think Aloud*

Perhaps most importantly, a vital component of direct instruction in every *SCR* classroom was that of weekly implemented read/think alouds using rich and engaging print resources (i.e., fiction, non-fiction, expository text, persuasive essays, etc.), lexiled at or above the grade level of the students. Wilhelm (2001b) explained the urgency and critical need for teaching strategically in order to positively impact student achievement and increase comprehension with difficult text through the use of the read / think aloud model.
In order for struggling students to be able to make sense of complex text, they were first introduced to difficult textual material through a teacher read/think aloud where teachers shared their thinking, their metacognition, as students listened attentively while processing talking points with a collaborative classmate or peer. The modeling aspect of the metacognitive behavior was developmentally appropriate as well as instructionally sound in that students learned to use and become adept with applying the strategy on their own, thereby paying heed to their own metacognitive processes (Iowa Department of Education, 2009; Showers, 2004, Wilhelm, 2001b). When this occurred explicitly, students began to develop an acute awareness and consciousness of their own thought processes and their learning was deepened. Often the transformation for students was implicit and students did not necessarily realize the change that was taking place, yet as they read more complex text over time, a heightened awareness of their own metacognitive processes improved and their increased capacity for learning was further enriched (Iowa Department of Education, 2009; Showers, 2004).

It had been suggested that perhaps the most critical component of the weekly SCR framework involved the careful and conscientious planning and implementation of the read/think aloud in that a significant portion of the learning was tied to this 25 minute opportunity each Tuesday. Therefore, naturally implementing the Second Chance Reading framework with fidelity was critical if significant gains in student achievement were to be realized. Towards that end, thoughtfully organized and carefully implemented read/think alouds were considered the most important and critical link to learning in the SCR framework (Iowa Department of Education, 2009; Showers, 2004, Wilhelm, 2001b).
The great majority of all subsequent learning revolved around and was linked to the carefully crafted and implemented metacognitive thoughts of the instructor when such metacognition was implemented with fidelity (emphasis added). These findings were further corroborated in the work of Paris, Wasik, and van der Westhuizen (1988) and shared by Kamil et al., (2000) as “...early metacognitive papers simply extolled the virtues of metacognition for understanding reading.” Furthermore, as noted by Lambert (2002),

... it is important for educators to recognize the connection between our own learning and that of our colleagues. When we think in terms of reciprocity, we understand that we are responsible for our own and our colleagues’ learning as well (emphasis added) as that of our students (Lambert, 2002, p. 21).

Second Chance Reading: The Key Importance of Implementation

The importance underlying fidelity of implementation cannot be touted loudly enough. Research stated that implementation with fidelity occurred in only 12 % of classrooms and across districts (Reeves, 2009). Reeves went on to discover and shared the following key research point:

When 90 % or more of a faculty was actively engaged in the change initiative, student achievement results in reading, science, and math were dramatically higher than when the same initiative was introduced with only 10% of the faculty actively engaged. Therefore, the variable is not simply the program, the label, the guru, or the conference. The variable is implementation (Reeves, 2009, p. 86).

It can be implied, therefore, that Second Chance Reading implemented with a significantly high degree of fidelity to the instructional framework greatly increased the probability that the learning gap between these students and their more accomplished peers would be greatly reduced or even completely eradicated.
The Impact of Leadership on Student Achievement

Wilson (2011) noted that successful educational leadership was not a random phenomenon, but rather a series of successfully executed factors which led to higher student achievement. Wilson (2011) further reported on the significance of placing quality principals at the helm of persistently low achieving schools for, “Principal leadership has been known to be pivotal to a school’s success and particularly critical in schools that have ranked persistently low performing over time, the greater the challenge, the greater the impact of leadership on teaching and learning” (Wilson, 2011, p. 393). It had been further noted by Corcoran et al. (2001) and recorded that developing school capacity required strong leadership (Danielson, 2002).

The administrator in buildings where teachers were trained in Second Chance Reading and students were afforded the privilege of instructional density under the SCR framework played a pivotal role in the success of the initiative and in the academic lives of the students enrolled. It is this key group, both teachers and administrators that represented the targeted focus for this dissertation and subsequent study.

Second Chance Reading and Distinctions of Leadership: A Direct Correlation

It goes without saying that there may be a direct positive correlation between placing effective administrators in districts and impressive achievement gains in students. Newmann, Rutter, and Smith (1989) as noted by Danielson (2002) stated that, “Administrators will improve school performance by maintaining a focus on core instruction as well as on other aspects of the school program, such as scheduling, grading, grouping of students, and establishing a sense of community within the school”
(Danielson, 2002, p. 26). Additionally, the vision (or lack thereof), of building leaders can make or break a school system as was noted by Conti, Ellsasser, and Griffin (2000) and reported in Danielson (2002), “When administrators don’t understand the nuances of school-improvement efforts, effective instructional practices, and professional community building, school reform efforts fail” (Danielson, 2002, p. 27).

However, as it was not only vital to have a dynamic administrator in a building to provide the vision and lead the charge; research showed that it was even more imperative to place highly competent teachers in classrooms in order to impact student achievement. This was particularly so among poor and minority students. The research regarding the importance of making certain that our classrooms were led by dynamic teachers was both far reaching and timely. As noted in a landmark piece by Haycock, perhaps the most significant factor in positively impacting student achievement was ensuring that quality teachers were assigned to the students who most needed them. “There’s persuasive evidence to suggest that we could entirely close the (achievement) gap” (Haycock, 1998, p.4).

Further evidence regarding the importance of quality educators in all facets of education were noted in the research of Reeves. “Of all the variables that influence student achievement, the two that have the most profound influence are teacher quality and leadership quality” (Reeves, 2009, p. 67).

Danielson (2002) further noted in her research that, “Teachers’ knowledge and skill level significantly affect student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Brophy & Good, 1986). And because teachers regularly use their knowledge base when designing
and assessing learning activities, student learning is limited by what the teacher knows” (Brewer & Goldhaber, 1996, p. 24).

This was further supported by the research of Haycock (1998) when considering the implications of effective teachers. It had been determined that effective teachers included those with both strong verbal and math skills as well as deep content knowledge. Naturally, students performed best in classrooms where teachers indicated the greatest content expertise. Logically stated, it was imperative that quality teachers helped our students to increase their capacity and helped to eradicate the achievement gap that was prevalent in many of our schools.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH PROCEDURES

Background

As a passionate reader always looking to lose myself in a book, I had collected a basket of recommended fiction - my pleasure reading. Perusing through, I found Galway Bay, Cutting for Stone, Gathering of Waters, The Iowa Award: The Best Stories 1991 - 2000, and The Kitchen House, to name but a few of the 12 or so titles. The treasure sat near my desk, anxiously awaiting my thoughtful consideration and a bit of my time. It seemed there were moments when I could almost hear the books and main characters whispering, ‘Hey, need a break? Wait ‘til you hear what we have in store for you!”

Reading is what I love. I devour books and share what I’ve read with my reading friends and family. Many of those I prefer to spend time with are readers, and the common thread of carefully crafted words, characters, and story line binds us to each other. In my home, nearly every room has stacks or shelves of books, not displayed for décor’s sake alone, but rather consumed out of necessity, for I am a reader. And there are two libraries in my home of which I am equally proud. One in the basement holds well-worn favorites I can’t quite part with; the second library on the second floor contains both professional reading materials as well as baskets of pleasure reading. It is where I spend the bulk of my time these days. Wherever I go, I am surrounded by books.

As a reader, I instinctively instilled the love of reading in my four children. We fondly recall one warm day many years ago when a new Barnes and Noble opened in the Arizona town we called home for a while. We watched with anticipation as the largest
building we had seen in ages was slowly constructed. And then we waited, somewhat impatiently for the grand opening. We were present on the hot sidewalk the day the store first opened for business. We still talk about the day five of us walked through the massive doors together, joyously losing ourselves in the racks for hours. To this day I can’t wander into a *Barnes and Noble* without recalling that wonderful feeling of many years ago when my children and I delighted that a bookstore had made it to town.

Because reading has always been such an integral part of our lives, choosing not to read, nor having any desire to read are extremely foreign concepts. As a literacy consultant, and a state approved trainer for *Second Chance Reading* from 2005 through the summer of 2012, I felt both the responsibility and obligation to instill the love of literature in those that had missed out. And for most students that happens, that beautiful transformation from reluctant to avid reader - in *Second Chance Reading* classrooms.

**Professional Relationships**

I joined Area Education Agency 267 in August, 2004 as a secondary literacy consultant after 29 years in the classroom, until my voluntary transfer to that as the district K-12 literacy specialist in one of Iowa’s urban eight districts in July, 2012. However, in my first week on the job with AEA 267, I had the unexpected privilege of working closely with Dr. Beverly Showers. At the time of our first meeting in August, with but two full days under my belt, I had no idea whom I was dealing with, nor did I realize the impact she would have on my professional practice and this eventual dissertation. Confined to a classroom for so long in three very diverse locations, and essentially operating like an independent contractor, I was deprived of professional
development consultants, much less national researchers. Therefore, when Dr. Showers and I crossed paths, I wasn’t even remotely star-struck for I had elected to attend the workshop primarily as a brand new literacy consultant. Little did I know that crossing paths with Dr. Showers would forever change my direction, my purpose, and my professional focus.

*Second Chance Reading: Dr. Beverly Showers*

Dr. Beverly Showers, architect of the Iowa Professional Development Model and designer of the instructional framework known as *Second Chance Reading* was in Iowa holding a two-day workshop in Iowa Falls at Ellsworth Community College. Her objective and goal was to share the plight of struggling adolescent readers thereby creating a sense of urgency in the state and tossing out a few nuggets of her curricular design as a potential antidote to the problem Iowa’s students and educators were facing.

Having worked closely with the Iowa Department of Education, Showers had established significant credibility and stature in Des Moines, across the state, and throughout the nation. When she shared that an instructional framework had been designed, researched, and successfully tested to significantly assist struggling readers towards becoming proficient readers, and that she wished to share her gift with the students and teachers of Iowa, politicians and educators paid heed.

*Second Chance Reading: Research Driven*

On our first days together, Dr. Showers told of recent findings in the research she had conducted through three western states. She told of the instructional framework that was the focal point around which the research evolved which was meant to rapidly
increase reading proficiency for adolescent students that had somehow fallen through the cracks, (Allington, 2012; Showers, Joyce, Scanlon, & Schnaubelt, 1998). Following the direction and lead of the initial research cadre involving districts near the Pacific coast, an intentional group of middle and high school reading teachers from several Des Moines schools were invited to participate in an Iowa focused Second Chance Reading pilot. These teachers were coached through the instructional framework beginning in 1997. Under the guidance of Dr. Showers, implementation occurred in multiple middle and high school classrooms in the metropolitan area around Des Moines for approximately six years, (Showers et al., 1998). And her findings from the action research in Iowa, as well as her research findings conducted in multiple western states, were the focus of the two-day workshop I had attended.

As per the direction of the Iowa Department of Education, it was eventually decided that several teacher academies would be offered around specific instructional frameworks beginning in 2005 and that Second Chance Reading was to be one of those academies. Because of the efforts with the pilot group from Des Moines and the successes they compiled, Dr. Showers was asked to lead the professional development training for SCR. During the summer of 2005, I joined forces with approximately 45 other consultants from around the state. Working closely with Dr. Showers, both through that first year and for several subsequent years, I came to appreciate the sensibility, the research, and the genius behind her work.
My Role in Implementation and Training

Since those early days and in my capacity as a trainer, I had personally trained over 300 teachers in the instructional framework. In addition to the professional development training, I also provided support and encouragement through lesson development, classroom observational feedback, and reflective conversations to the teachers that had taken on the charge of helping struggling readers make sense of and gain an appreciation for literature while working to increase their capacity to understand the complexities involved in becoming a successful reader. This research brings the story of Second Chance Reading to the forefront. I have elected to share the stories, passions, frustrations, complications, and commitments of dedicated teachers and principals that have joined forces to have their stories shared. Second Chance Reading may be one of the best kept secrets in curriculum. But time had arrived to let the secret out of the bag.

Professional Obligations tied to Methodology

As my two professional obligations, curriculum and educational leadership, comfortably complement each other, I have fused the two schools of thought in my research. As noted in Chapter 1, the purpose of this contemporary narrative inquiry study was to discover the influence and impact of leadership on teachers that worked with struggling adolescent readers. Through an analysis of teacher and administrator interviews, educators’ stories and reflections have been coupled with wishes, aspirations, successes, and struggles related to Second Chance Reading, both from teachers’ and principals’ perspectives. This was all done through five carefully and creatively crafted
vignettes (1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, and 3) where I have shared the stories of 12 educators who joined me on this journey.

As previously noted, I had two goals. The first was to share the story of Second Chance Reading through the eyes of those closest to the front line, for I was anxious to hear of successes and struggles that teachers had gone through to implement the instructional framework with integrity and fidelity. Towards that end, I was anxious to also hear of barriers to implementation and how these professionals viewed their relationships with each other: teachers and principals alike. These goals were accomplished in the narration.

Secondly, I was equally curious about the correlation between perceived and professed administrative leadership traits and the impact on teachers. I chose to explore and discover the influence and impact of leadership on this specific population of teachers through dialoguing with both teachers and administrators around specifically organized questions which honed in on my goals. Utilizing a contemporary narrative structure, I have qualified my conclusion with narration and then followed the narration with an in-depth analysis. Finally, a visual has been created which specifically targeted and represented my findings. An initial glimpse through a simplistic visual has been provided in Chapter 5 whereas a more in-depth and comprehensive visual representation concludes my findings later in the same chapter.

**Methodology**

As we are social creatures and certainly live in a communicative society, we delight in enjoying a culture where conversation is king. One need only click on hand-
held, electronic devices to become party to insightful (as well as often entertaining or ridiculous) conversations, whether through talk radio, blog posts, or on political pundit television. Interviewing in one fashion or another is everywhere we look. The term *hash tag* was essentially unknown just a few years back, yet we hear it now on a daily basis as others shout out their thoughts and potential teasers to rile the masses. Text and dialogue are everywhere and interviewing in one fashion or another is rampant.

Where ever we look, conversation ensues. Consider the journalist who believes and lives by the creed and professional stance that interviewing others gleans much needed and useful information that he or she feels obligated to then reconsider, reconfigure, and regurgitate for the delight or dread of others. Conversations elicit lived experiences and shared meanings. Interviews, in the manner intended, often create negotiated text. The interview is essentially a conversation involving the art of asking questions and listening intently to responses, both visually and auditory.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2008), interviewing questions involved a conversation. Interviewing involves the art of asking questions followed by rapt listening. Neither is it a neutral tool, for at least two people create the reality of an interviewing situation. During an interview, answers are provided which therefore produces situated understandings grounded in specific interactional episodes. Interviewing is rampant. Interviews can be very formal affairs as will be noted as we move closer to our political election and debates are viewed on network television with an adept moderator managing the dialogue. They can also be excessively informal. Interviews run the gamut from highly structured to the opposite.
I elected to use interviewing as my data collection method. And because of the inherent power of discovery implicit in conversational dialogue, paired with my innate ability at raptured storytelling, I elected to utilize the contemporary narrative inquiry methodological approach as it was certainly the best fit for my needs. The process began early on with recruitment.

The Recruitment Process: A Brief History

The entire research study, in many ways, began several years ago when I initially became interested in the impact of leadership on implementation in order to determine any correlation to student achievement gains. I had been observing administrators and teachers as either tangential or collaborative partners for years and heard stories of success as well as watched as others struggled to work together for the betterment of their students. My curiosity was both raised and piqued.

I shared my passion, supposition, and curiosity regarding the potential correlation to student achievement gains between the two factions engaged in Second Chance Reading training. Because I had worked with teachers and administrators who elected to be trained and had been implementing Second Chance Reading for up to seven full years, I had a viable pool of candidates from which to draw. I shared my curiosity regarding the potential correlation with teachers and principals alike and was encouraged by several to pursue an answer. In fact, it was suggested by several educators that once I had reached the point where my research may actually begin to let some know as several expressed an interest in being party to the study.
Recruitment Began

I had had the privilege to work with and train in excess of 300 participants, both teachers and administrators, in Second Chance Reading in one capacity or another since 2005. I first compiled a list of AEA 267 school districts that had participated in training during the seven year stretch from 2005 through 2012. Utilizing the initial pool of 300 participants, I narrowed my list down significantly, to include only districts that had maintained sections of SCR during the 2011-2012 school year. I then compiled a list of eligible teachers and administrators from both middle and high school buildings as potential participants. That moved me to the next logical stage of research, that of deciding on my candidate pool.

Working through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) structure and prior to submitting my paperwork mandated that I make a final decision regarding potential candidates. When looking at sheer numbers of eligible educators, I intentionally selected middle school teachers and administrators, primarily because they represented a larger force. They were therefore selected as my targeted interviewee group. All IRB documents, including the interview questions I asked, (referenced in Appendices A and B), were submitted electronically on February 22, 2012. Permission to move forward was quickly granted.

The Participant Recruitment Process

I sent invitations to participate in my research to a specific cadre of 10 middle school administrators as well as one elementary principal. They were invited through personal phone calls paired with explanatory email invitations. Within one week of the
initial offer, I received confirmations from five of the 10 administrators that had been invited to participate. As soon as these administrative recruits were confirmed, I set to work reconnecting with the original set of eager teachers that had mentioned an interest in engaging in research with me. Pairings from particular schools were eventually matched up and purposive interview teams were organized.

I felt particularly fortunate in my selection of eventual participants from the significant pool of willing participants, for I was able to collect and create a purposive rather than a random sampling. A purposive sampling, as stated by Lewis (2012) and noted by Patton (1990) in some qualitative research instances is most appropriate for, due to a smaller sampling size, paired with the fact that generalizability is not the goal in qualitative research, the need to engage in a random sample was seen as unnecessary. Simply put, purposeful sampling leads to a greater likelihood of information rich cases for in-depth studies.

I had originally commandeered five principals and eight teachers as my purposive sampling recruits. In the end, however, one middle school principal and I could not come to a consensus for interview times so I elected to stick with and interviewed four administrators and eight teachers, thereby leaving one teacher without a corresponding principal. The actually interview process was set to begin with a tightly structured format.

The Interview Process

As the researcher, I chose to engage participants in individually orchestrated, purposive, semi-structured interviews. Twenty-four hours prior to each scheduled interview, each participant received a confirmation email reminding them of our
appointment. On May 23, I conducted the first of 12 interviews which would then continue over the course of the next 24 days. In Appendix C, I have referenced, according to pseudonyms noted in Chapter 4, when each interview took place, where it was actually conducted, and the length of time for each conversation.

Utilizing contemporary narrative inquiry methodology, my qualitative research was conducted primarily in a natural setting where I, as the researcher, became the primary instrument of data collection. With my Sony hand-held recorder, field notebook, and sharpened pencils in hand, I gathered and compiled words, gestures, and subtleties during 7.56 hours of interviews. Towards that end, I focused on the rhetoric spoken and gesticulations expressed by 12 willing research participants over 24 days in May and June, 2012.

The four principals I interviewed were asked specific questions that targeted several themes, (see Appendix A). However, after arriving at each school and prior to each conversation, the principals and I engaged in polite small talk to become either acquainted (in one instance), or reacquainted (in the other three instances). We talked of the weather, how their year had gone, and what travel plans they had in store for the summer. After my principals were comfortable, I then set to work to discover about their various experiences with Second Chance Reading, (question #1) in order to determine baseline data.

From that point, I moved into their proclaimed leadership qualities in order to determine the levels and degree of support which each of these principals exhibited for their teachers of SCR, (question #2). The third question addressed barriers that teachers
may have experienced which was preventing them from accomplishing their mission of building proficient readers. I followed that question up by asking specifically what principals were doing to remove the barriers that teachers had mentioned, (question #3). In question four I wanted to discover how the professional relationship between teachers of Second Chance Reading and the principal were maintained and managed.

This question was followed up with each principal being asked to consider one of their SCR teachers and then expand on the instructional capacity of the teacher they had considered. I posed a question about how each principal supported, encouraged, and celebrated learning with their teachers and students and finally gave them an opportunity to expand on anything I may have neglected to ask. Similar questions were asked of the teachers although had a definitive slant towards their perception of the building principal in each instance, (Appendix B).

I utilized the constant - comparative method of questioning and then coding through memoing and while capturing initial thoughts, gestures, intuitions, and suppositions in my field notes when moving in and between interviews and transcribed conversations with willing participants in order to determine initial commonalities and themes. For example, when one principal mentioned particular barriers to implementation, I made it a point to elaborate on that point with future principals to determine whether or not parallels existed between school districts. The constant – comparative method of coding and questioning was described by Creswell (1998) and Merriam (2009) as an analytical process where researchers identified incidents, events, and activities and then constantly compared them to each other to determine emerging
categories in order to determine or define similarities and differences. Although this is a key process used in grounded theory research, I elected to use it in my contemporary narrative inquiry in order to determine commonalities and differences to assist in the creation of my visual representation, themes, and patterns.

Memoed Notes and Initial Open Coding

As each participant spoke, I noted particular remembrances in text. Many of these memoed notes took place in conjunction with the interview being captured on tape for as I spoke, questioned, and responded, I also scribbled thoughts and remembrances simultaneously in my field notebook. For example, I noted such things as how I was initially addressed upon entering each of the principals’ offices. The text was not only captured and scribbled in my field notebook during the official interview, but also immediately after the participant (or I) left the interview room for I also captured additional thoughts in text, either after I returned to my car or after participants left the conference room which we had shared. This was intentionally done in order to consolidate and capture my thoughts while they were still very fresh in my mind and without the scrutiny or curiosity of the participant and/or secretarial assistant as the thoughts and reactions were my thoughts and reactions and I did not choose to be compromised or distracted by additional dialogue or potential concern over my scrawled ideas.

In addition to memoed notes, I also recognized initial chunks of data that I later coded in NVivo9 software through the open coding process. However, during the interviews and while I was memoing, I scribbled initial thoughts that were later
determined as open codes. For example, one of my participants was overcome with enthusiasm over the achievement gains her students had recently recorded on the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test. I noted that as *untamed and reckless abandon*.

**The Transcription Process**

The interview processes were immediately followed by the lengthy transcription process. I initially set up 12 separate files after I discovered that I would have 12 participants. They were originally labeled: *Principal #1, Principal #2, through Principal #4, as well as Teacher #1 through Teacher #8.* Each individual audio taped recording was then uploaded to each specific file and remain there to this day. I eventually renamed the files to match the designated pseudonym for each participant as noted in Appendix C. I then set to work on the transcription process, which I completed on my own, rather than hiring a word processor, for time consuming though it was, it allowed me the privilege of visiting and revisiting the conversations repeatedly. As soon as the transcripts were word processed, and saved in individual word documents in each of 12 separate files, I set to work to organize and create the contemporary narrative inquiry through narrative storytelling, my methodology of choice.

**Creating the Vignettes**

Once the transcriptions for all 12 word documents were completed, I set to work again on the next dissertation key component – that of creating the narrative inquiry. I essentially took the 147 pages of single-spaced transcribed material, separated the documents into three separate and sensible clusters, (groupings 1a and 1b, 2a and 2b, and then 3) and eventually created the scenarios as depicted in Chapter 4.
I began by cleaning up the text. Much of the dialogue was rife with sentence fragments and broken or random thoughts which are all very typical of conversational ease. The text of one participant in particular needed a focused cleaning as her conversational style was wildly discursive, eruptive, passionate, and rambling, all rolled into one, as she wandered from topic to topic while we visited at her dining room table. I allowed her to stroll through tangential memories and situations as this was clearly her conversational style, but I later had to tone down her rhetoric as I worked to create her vignette so that the rhetoric would more tightly and succinctly flow. I did maintain as much of her style as I deemed suitable, for I found it neither appropriate nor necessary to modify her expression to match my need. However, in order to maintain a bit of sensibility, many of her expressions, her lingo, and her redundancies were trimmed down and streamlined.

Throughout the narration, I interjected my questions as they were posed, leaving in many of my own inconsiderate interruptions, and wove a thread through to tie the scene into something more manageable. I elected to create five separate vignettes found in Chapter 4 from the stories, words, nuances, speculations, and gestures of all 12 participants. They have been captured so as to put all readers of this dissertation in the moment.

The Vignettes Explained

Four of the five vignettes were recreated specifically in the context in which they appeared so as to honor the moment and time of my participants, including such distractions as the leaf-blowing janitor and the house-scraping, putty-knife wielding
handyman. Although two of the first four conversational vignettes, *Data Driven Disaster (1a and 1b)*, specifically emphasized the disparaging views of the participants, the second set of conversations, *Hold the Applause, Please! (2a and 2b)*, showcased a pair of educators that had captured and embraced the essence of camaraderie and reciprocal respect.

In the third vignette, *Educator's Town Hall*, I took artistic license and created a contrived scenario as if eight educators and I actually sat around a table together and chatted collectively. The actual text spoken during individual interviews was honored and displayed in italics, whereas my woven imaginative thread tying rhetoric to rhetoric was not represented in italics. I was emphatic about the importance of honoring the eight educators that met with me individually; therefore I wove their conversations together as one in order to hear all voices.

In conclusion, given the fact that I had continually deliberated over ways to further clarify, nurture, and enrich the relationship between building leaders and teachers of *Second Chance Reading*, I determined that engaging in contemporary narrative inquiry research was the most pertinent and appealing research methodology appropriate to meeting my needs. And the culminating feature of this research included not only the narrative inquiry noted in *Vignettes 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b*, and *3*, but also in the creation of a visual representation explained the context of the phenomenon studied to further clarify the impact of those relationships on struggling adolescent students. My findings and analyses are embedded throughout Chapter 5.
Contemporary narrative inquiry was clearly the best fit for sharing my research findings, for I am a storyteller. The term ‘narrative’ was described by a host of researchers, (Bruner, 1986; Gubrium & Holstein, 1997; Hinchman & Hinchman, 2001; Laslett, 1999; Polkinghorne, 1995) and told by Chase (2008) in Denzin and Lincoln (2008), as “... a way of understanding one’s own and others’ actions, of organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, and of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time” (p. 64).

Bruner (1986) and Polkinghorne (1995) went on to further describe narrative communication as referenced by Chase (2008) in Denzin and Lincoln (2008) as, “... the narrator’s point of view, including why the narrative is worth telling the first place... narratives also express emotions, thoughts, and interpretations. ... narrative discourse highlights the uniqueness of each human action and event rather than their common properties (p. 64).”

Contemporary Narrative Inquiry: I am a Storyteller

Clearly this was a fine fit for me as I am a storyteller. Through the created vignettes, I have highlighted unique human actions rather than focusing on common attributes from the words and gestures of my participants. I have worked to explain, entertain, inform, defend, complain, confirm, and challenge the status quo as noted of narrative inquiry in the words of Chase (2008) from the text of Denzin and Lincoln (2008). Finally, Holstein and Gubrium (2000) explained that, “When researchers treat narration as actively creative ... they emphasize the narrator’s voice(s) (p. 65).” In
conclusion, Chase (2008) further referenced the thoughts of Holstein and Gubrium (2000) and Lincoln (2000),

when researchers treat narration as actively creative and the narrator’s voice as particular, they move away from questions about the factual nature of the narrator’s statements. Instead, they highlight the versions of self, reality, and experience that the storyteller produces through the telling. Although narrators are accountable for the credibility of their stories, narrative researchers treat credibility and believability as something that storytellers accomplish (pp. 64-65).

Analytical Procedure

Following the completion of the vignettes, I then set to work on my analysis. Because I had originally intended to work from a theoretical perspective, I borrowed a computer which housed a software program that aided in organizing individual educator files into workable strands of text in order to find themes of commonalities and differentials. Utilizing NVivo9, I prepared for the first official phase of data analysis, that of initial coding, which involved segmenting data into useful and organized categories or nuggets of information. This will certainly be more elaborated on in Chapter 5 where I have delved deeply into the analysis of this study. However, suffice it to say that I overlapped the analytical process of my qualitative research study with a smattering of open coding, axial coding, and causal conditions in order to determine the central phenomenon that became the key theme that rose to the surface and became the focus of my contemporary narrative inquiry.
CHAPTER 4
NARRATIVES

Over the course of this qualitative research study, I initially set out to discover multiple facets of the relationship between Second Chance Reading teachers and their building administrators, in part to determine the impact on student learning, yet more importantly to create a model explaining the complex relationships between two subsets of educators and the students they serve. Although my research questions purposefully directed the dialogue in which I engaged, I delighted in wandering through and delving into tangential conversations when the opportunity presented itself in order to further clarify my thinking through the exploration of personal experiences, biases, and beliefs of both new professionals as well as seasoned veterans.

Through semi-structured interviews, I investigated qualities of administrative leadership from the perspectives of both teachers and their administrators. We discussed how various barriers around instruction, perceptions of intellectual stigma, or structural constraints created either opportunities for imaginative resourcefulness or roadblocks of resistance. And finally, methods and means of celebration around student learning were explored. Towards that end, I engaged in 7.56 hours of interviews with four principals and eight teachers over 24 days. All recorded conversations were transcribed, and after a careful analysis of the transcriptions and a reexamination of the taped conversations as well as memoed field notes, I created five vignettes highlighting a synthesis of the aptitudes, attitudes, and agendas of four unique building administrators and their Second Chance Reading teachers. In order to insure the anonymity of all participants and school
districts in the study, all names, locations, and schools noted are pseudonyms and were specifically created by the principal investigator.

Hold Your Applause, Please! (Vignette 1a)

On the way to my first appointment, and traveling down a familiar tree-lined boulevard I had traveled down many times before, I passed a curbside lemonade stand set up in the front yard of a lovely Victorian home. Unable to resist the temptation of chatting with young entrepreneurs, I fished for spare change, whipped around the block, and pulled up to the curb where a hand-made sign taped to a well-worn card table invited me to buy. Three quarters and a Dixie cup of lemonade later, the freckled twins told in unison that school had let out for summer just two days prior and that they had big plans for their lazy days ahead. They spoke of weekend camping trips, an exciting summer reading program at the city library, and high school ball games at the local diamond where they would cheer on the home team. After a few minutes with the girls, I thanked them for the delicious lemonade, climbed back into my toasty car, and headed over to the junior/senior high school parking lot.

The beautiful old brick building had outgrown its usefulness and would spend one more year as the adolescent center of learning before being renovated as a senior housing complex and community center. The newest, desperately needed school in this small district was under construction across town and was due to open in one calendar year where it would house all students from sixth grade through high school.

As I walked through quiet hallways, echoing footsteps announcing my arrival, I was overcome with a sense of nostalgia as I had previously visited the school multiple
times, watching sporting events, district speech competitions, and competitive band contests when my son attended school in a neighboring district. There was something special about old school buildings; this brick edifice was no different.

My appointment with the building’s neophyte administrator had been necessarily tucked between two baseball games as Adam was not only the brand new junior high school principal, but also wore the busy baseball cap of the district’s athletic director (AD) and occasional coach. This warm Tuesday, although willing to participate as an interviewee, Adam had also considered his AD duties for he appeared to be dressed for a baseball game. As I stepped into the central office, Adam appeared, we shook hands while introducing ourselves to each other, and I was invited to join him in his office at a round table. I noticed reams of work and reports to complete. His computer screen was lit up and the district website was in full display.

We visited momentarily to become acquainted, for I had only spoken to this principal on rare occasion, and then only by phone. I had heard of his background and knew he was in the throes of finishing up his busy first year as a building administrator. I requested help in understanding where he’d come from and how he’d come to know of Second Chance Reading.

He responded, “Well, the district I was in down south had instituted Second Chance Reading three years before I came here. I was an eighth grade social studies teacher so I didn’t have to teach it. I do remember that kids were pulled out of their exploratories and were given two sections of it. So, when I came here, um, I kinda had that vision of what it looked like and saw what Diana and Elle were doing with it and
kept it going. It was pretty limited. I saw in both places, both there and here that we had a reading gap that we were trying to fill. And . . .”

I interrupted. “So, was it working? Have you seen gains in student achievement scores or a reduction in the achievement gap since implementing Second Chance Reading?”

“Yea. Yea, it was working and kids were moving. They weren’t,” he paused again to collect his thoughts, “… and I’m not sure what the proficiency statistics were, but you could tell they were applying their strategies in the general education classrooms. And because I was not privy to the information when I was in Blacksburg, my previous district, I’m unaware of what sorts of gains they realized.” He went on. “Ah, and here we definitely have a commitment to reading in our junior high, actually, in our entire building, but my primary responsible is for these junior high students. And through the schedule we’ve put in recreational reading. We obviously,” he paused, “in the changes we’re going to make for next year, we’re trying to get it so the extended reading class which currently meets every other day will meet every day.”

“Oh, tell me more.”

“Well, we’ve got a problem, and we have to fix it. One of the qualities that we’re going to show is commitment with scheduled time to make sure that those kids are being reached. Um, and I’m referring to proper allocation of resources as well. I mean, we’re taking two special education teachers out of team taught classrooms to provide opportunities for extended reading because we’ve got a problem, so....”
I was curious. It sounded as though the status quo in this district was about to change with a significant scheduling shift. I needed to hear more. “Now, you’ve mentioned a schedule readjustment. Will that be for every student in your school, or just the special education, or rather the special Second Chance kids?”

“Well,” he paused temporarily, “actually it’s for every kid. Currently, in this past year we had four sections of every core class and we’re gonna go to five which allows every,” he went on, “it allows for each group of … hang on. Let me try to explain. During every hour there’ll be a group out of the core rotation which provides us the freedom to provide kids that are in band and vocal and guided study. But it also provides …”

Again I interrupted, (something I would have to work on) not waiting for him to finish his thought. “That’s fantastic, Adam. Good for you. I appreciate that you’re being so proactive. And can … do you have just kind of an idea how long those class periods will be?”

“They’re 43 minutes apiece, same as this year.”

“Thanks. Sounds like you’ve got a good handle on the situation and understand what’s needed. Can you tell me a little more about the qualities needed to make full implementation a reality for your teachers and the students they serve?”

“Sure. Well, I think modeling it is a quality that shouts “this is important” to the kids. For kids to understand that I hold literacy as a real priority for them, I need to model the importance of reading. And I do that. For example, during recreational reading, all teachers and administrators are clearly visible. It’s just 25 minutes committed to reading – but they’re sacred minutes and they happen every day. I go into classrooms during the
recreational reading time. I do book talks with the kids. And so does the high school principal. We each do various things to show that it’s important. Umm, and then I think the other thing is just being visible. I’m a reader, and when I walk the halls, I have my independent or professional book with me, often. I rarely have time to read during the day, and never while I’m walking during the passing period, but I believe my visibility and commitment to reading speaks loudly. Sometimes kids will stop me and ask what I’m reading.

“So, tell me. Do the kids see you reading?”

“You bet. The kids here see me reading, but like I mentioned, not too much during the day. However, like I just explained, they always see a book in my hand. My own daughter at home also sees me reading. I just finished *Hunger Games*. I’m actually on book two. I have a 10 year old daughter. Gracey and I are both reading it at the same time so we can talk about it.”

“Good for you. And I’m glad to hear that you’re modeling reading with your daughter. That’s wonderful! Can you tell me, were there barriers in place here, maybe during this past year which were preventing teachers from accomplishing their mission? What might they be? If you could remove any barrier for your *SCR* teachers, what would you remove and how would you go about that?”

“Yea, I think the first thing was the schedule because we were providing extended reading opposite band and vocal. If a child was in band or vocal, the only time they had extended reading was for 25 minutes a day during our recreational reading time. Oh, and
so you understand, the extended reading is our *Second Chance Reading* class. It’s what we’ve decided to call it.”

“Okay. I actually was wondering what extended reading was. Thanks for clarifying.”

He continued with more points of emphasis. “And through that schedule, if they were in our regular *Second Chance Reading* classes, they only met every other day because it was opposite PE and band and vocal. And then,” he paused, “here’s the biggest issue…” He paused again to clarify. “That is the biggest barrier. Because there was no continuity, some weeks they’d get three sessions. And some weeks they’d get only two sessions.”

I jumped in and tracked the pattern he was creating. “And if you had a crazy week they might get one visit with the kids, right?”

“Yea, it was really a mess, but you know, my teachers made it work. They’re amazing.”

“Right. Right.”

He continued. “And then, for a lot of them, some of the assessments that the teachers were doing, they weren’t sure that the assessment was reflecting the teaching because there was so much lost time between sessions. And the other thing is just physical space. There was a real problem with where those classes were offered. Diana was never in the same class twice in one day. She actually rolled from classroom to classroom on a cart. That will eventually get resolved as we move to the new building, but until then, it’s been a problem … a significant problem. Ummm, here there are rooms
that are not conducive to learning. Kids are, ya know, junior high kids are junior high kids and they’re sitting on top of each other because our physical situation in some of these rooms is seriously defective. I quite frankly have wondered about the sense of the original architect. But I can’t go there. It is being resolved in the long run.”

“Yea, and they need to have room to stretch, both physically and mentally.”

“Exactly! But in a different sense. And I think the other thing that we faced early was proper identification of our Second Chance Reading students.”

“Can you talk to me about how you do that?” I asked.

“Yea. Last year we took the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and my predecessor said anybody under the 50th percentile qualified. So, there was 10% there that were already proficient on the test that still qualified for it. And what we ran into with that was that there were a lot of kids who’d had a bad test day yet they were great readers. And, they got into our Second Chance Reading program and were just,” he paused for emphasis, “they were reading 1,000 page books and doing great. They really didn’t understand why they were in there which caused all sorts of problems on the other end. So this year we’ve triangulated that with our Iowa Assessments. Ahhh, we have our proficiency score on our Iowa Assessments. That’s our starting point. We also take our NWEA tests — or our MAP testing data and if they compare them to their peers and then the third thing is teacher recommendation … from our language arts teachers. We value their opinions as the professional in the trenches, and they provide critical data. The teachers catch those kids that aren’t good test takers but are pretty good readers so that we’re …” he paused to collect his thoughts, “ya know, I think our Second Chance Reading classes were
saturated with kids who didn’t need to be in there. And what that did was took time away from the kids that needed that intensive assistance in that case.”

“I’m glad to hear that. Did you come up with this triangulation?”

"Yea, I did that."

“Good for you.”

“And I think it worked. We’re down to, let me remember, we have an incoming seventh grade class next year of only 17 kids. And we’re going to move kids on IEPs. And we’ll move, probably seven or eight that are good readers but just not good test takers. I am really pleased that the kids that need to be in there are the ones that are enrolled. It’s so important to serve the kids that most need the supplemental help.”

“Do you have special ed. kids in those sections?”

“No.”

“None?” I was astounded, but didn’t mean to sound so surprised.

“And again, this is a reflection of the new schedules we’re going to offer. During our guided study period we’ll also have a resource time where our special ed. teachers will be able to pull out those kids with reading goals and work with them individually. So…” he paused as I jumped in with an accolade.

“Okay. Terrific!”

‘Which may be … they may use Second Chance strategies, but they’re not in a Second Chance class.”

“So? Your special ed. teachers…would that be Elle and Diana?”

“Yep. Um hum. So, they very well could do that.”
“So, we’ve talked about how you’ve removed any barriers. Are there any other barriers that still need to be removed, Adam?”

“Well, there is a stigma because we had ahhh . . . ,” he paused to collect his ideas, “we’re trying not, . . .”

“Go on.”

“We’re just trying to make this as seamless as possible and not pull kids out and make them feel like they’re ostracized. I think that’s the only other thing. We did face that a little bit early on. I know Elle had sent an email to a parent and she signs her signature as Elle Sampson, Special Education Teacher and the dad got a little bent out of shape because he thought his kid was in a special ed. class. Ummm . . . but those situations are few and far between. But they do exist. And not being, ya know, you’re pulled out of guided study so it’s not like you’re missing any other experiences that another kid would have.”

I was curious about Adam’s professional relationship with his teachers. He responded without hesitation. “Well, I think part of it is, is recognizing the feedback that they provided me and trying to come up with a way to make that, to take that feedback and turn it into something positive for them.”

“Go on.”

“Yea, we’ve been kind of maneuvering through this year and focusing on what’s working, what’s not working, and why it isn’t working. And finally, we work on how to fix it. And so we’re trying to support them any way we can because this group, this population that we’ve got in that class is our most mobile. It’s the one we can move,
probably the fastest and quickest. And it’s the one with the most needs because they are not proficient. So there is a lot of pressure on Elle and Diana to do that. We recognize that and try to make it as best we can.”

Having recently visited with Diana over her year-end data, I decided to take a tangential leap and share my delight in her with her principal. I began with a bit of hesitation as I didn’t want to neglect the work of Elle. My intent, however, was on the good work happening in Diana’s classroom.

I began. “I don’t know if you’ve had the chance to review Diana’s year end scores yet, but they were amazing. She’s done great things, ummm, so, clearly what she’s doing is working. She’s just an incredible teacher. I was sorry that Elle didn’t come back for the year two training, ya know, the follow-up which we’ve done for multiple years. But she’s sure welcome to do that if it would be of benefit to her.”

Adam listened attentively, nodded at appropriate times, and moved back to the topic at hand. I wondered if he’d had the time to review her students’ scores, as he neglected to respond to my probe. I didn’t push further as I did not want to jeopardize or complicate the interview.

Adam noted, “There is one more thing I want to talk about regarding my relationship with these two teachers. I think that what we’ve tried to do is create an open exchange, ummm … where, ya know, I think … I think that if Elle and Diana have a problem with how this is done or what’s done they both feel comfortable enough to come in and express that. And I think that’s important in this case because they were a lot of things that weren’t helping them succeed along the way.”
“I’d like for you to consider one of your Second Chance Reading teachers. How would you describe the one you picked in terms of instructional capacity as well as her commitment and support of the SCR instructional framework?”

“Sure. Extremely,” he paused to again collect his thoughts, “I think two things that come to mind with Diana. She is completely committed to junior high kids. Ummm … you have to be a unique person in order to handle and motivate this age group. And she is equipped for it as well as anybody. Um, if you can get past the behavior and get past their social development then you can teach them. And she does a nice job with that. She gets ‘em. And the second thing is, I know her special ed. background has helped her a ton with our general ed. kids who are struggling. It provides her with an extra set of patience. It provides her with a great skill set for accommodations and instructional strategies that maybe a general education teacher who is teaching Second Chance Reading wouldn’t be able to do.”

“Right. She has so much enthusiasm and passion for these kids. They know she’s there for them, every one of them.” I had known and worked with both Elle and Diana for several years.

Adam responded, “And I think it’s a great asset. She does a great job.”

I posed another question. “She really does do a great job. Would it have been beneficial for you to have joined her for some of the training days, and if so, in what ways?”

“Yea, I can see that as definitely beneficial cause then ya, I mean, it’s like anything … if I’m going to support it, I have to know what’s going on and all I know is
what she’s done in her room. Yea, so, … just to provide even an extra set of ears to evaluate what we’re doing versus what’s supposed to be done would have benefitted the entire team.”

“Well, you’re sure welcome to join her. And I don’t know if she can come next year, but you’d be very welcome. So, I want you to know that. Time for another question, Adam, but we’re almost done. Thanks again for agreeing to meet with me today. I really do know how busy you are. Can you talk to me for a minute about the ways you support, encourage, and celebrate learning with your SCR teachers?”

Adam quietly considered the celebrations he’d put in place as well as those that were on his back burner as a first year administrator. Then he began speaking.

“That has been a challenge. I suspect that every first year administrator has great visions of doing that and what it’s going to look like and then reality sets in and takes time away. But what we did … um, we’re going to try to do this more often,” he paused to contemplate and put his thoughts into words, “but at the end of the year we have an academic awards assembly where we celebrated a whole host of successes. For example, we celebrated kids with a certain GPA. We celebrated kids that moved our test scores. We celebrated Presidential Physical Fitness awards, TAG, just a whole awards assembly to celebrate. And through that process, we really highlighted and targeted the 8th grade. There were some seventh graders that were brought up too, but, um…we did that on purpose to try and show the seventh graders what they can strive for and achieve.”

“Is there more?”
"You bet. The other thing I think is just building and using a common vocabulary that we stress and use across the board, the grade levels, and the content areas. Having conversations as a staff that we have significant numbers of kids on our “D” and “F” list ... which is pretty high as we proceed through a quarter. And by the end of the quarter they kind of cleaned it up, and we figured out why that’s happening along the way and what we can do to fix it. But some of that involves classroom and content area expectations. Some of that is about classroom management. A lot of it is just our demographics. We have kids that go home to nobody and they don’t do homework because they’re taking care of their brothers and sisters or whatever. We have a large demographic of that, so ... again, trying to address those things and have those conversations. So ..."

He went on. "I really see it, not as any different than my core classroom teachers’ regular curriculum. I try to model and share my belief and faith in them. I want them to know that there are goals they can achieve – no matter which class they’re scheduled for. I want them to know that their reading class is as important as our core curriculum and succeeding in there is going to allow them to do a lot of other things in other realms. We are only limited by our breadth and depth of reading."

"Tell me. I have a couple questions. Do you ever go in and chat with the kids in that room regarding the importance of their reading class? And if so, what might those conversations look like with them?"

"Ah, I’ve covered for it twice for different reasons. I kinda fell into it, but my position as the building administrator provides a great opportunity to do that. Because
I’ve explained to them that this is a great opportunity for those kids to take advantage of. And in our society you have to be extremely literate. And we’re also finding through technology some things that we’re moving with - that kids are more motivated with a digital screen - and what the effects of that are. I’ve learned that those conversations don’t happen if you don’t take the time to talk to those kids. They’re not going to search me out and I’m not gonna find out what they’re feeling and thinking if I’m not invited into their circle of trust. As a teacher, one might assume that they’re not reading. But until you talk to them you might not know that they can and do read on a digital screen, but that they’re struggling on paper. We live in a very digital age and flipping old fashioned pages is becoming a bit obsolete for some of our students. We need to provide the resources to help them become successful. I wouldn’t know that if I didn’t talk to and with them.”

“That’s interesting, isn’t it?”

“Yea, that’s something that even applies to us... when we take the Iowa Assessments. That’s our only way of measuring it. That’s a paper, pencil, read a paragraph, and mark your response but put that on our MAP testing which they can scroll and they can block text, they can work their way down and it’s a different experience for those kids. So, ya know, those conversations I would not have thought of if I had not gone in there and talked to those kids or had that opportunity to teach it for a day. Yea, and you also see where kids are at. Even in our next reading class, we’re trying to kinda bring together a lot of the same learning sets while still having a wider variety of kids that
are in there for different reasons. Trying to evaluate what we need to do to reach all those, cause even motivating them that way is good. So…”

“Do you ever talk to kids about the books that they are reading?”

“Ahh, I do. I do that a lot. And that’s just what I call one-legged interviews where I’m standing next to them at their lockers, and I see the book that they’re reading. ‘Hey, I’ve read that,’ or ‘have you thought about this?’ Sometimes that’s a way for me to connect with the kids that are not out for sports, and it’s been a good tactic for me because it’s not in my office.”

“Right.”

“Ya know, so he’s not a discipline problem, so I don’t see him in any other realm, so it does provide a nice ice-breaker if you want to call it that too. Then they get excited, and they’ll see me a couple days later and say, ‘Hey, I finished it …’ And, ya!”

Adam went on. “Ya know I’m just so proud of both of these teachers. They’re doing such a great job and just think how much better it will be when we clean it up with even better scheduling. I can’t wait to see what happens. Diana in particular had to tweak her instruction a lot in order to do that and what she thought her extended reading, ah, her Second Chance Reading class was gonna look like. But I think every day allows them to … to get that consistency.”

“What do you know about Diana – in particular, her Stanford scores? What did she share with you about that?”

“She shared with me just the spreadsheet with no names on it. She just shared the trajectory they were on. I don’t have,” he paused, “I can’t remember how much growth
there was empirically, but I could clearly see that every kid grew, and some grew significantly.”

“It was phenomenal. Her kids really knocked it out of the park. Pardon the pun, but I know you have a ball game today.”

“Yea, it has proven to be an extremely beneficial program for our students. It’s clearly evident that it works for the majority of our students.”

As we wrapped up our conversation, I again thanked Adam both for his time and commitment to student learning and headed on my way. As I checked the industrial school clock on the wall, I noticed my timing was perfect, as I had scheduled Diana’s appointment for 11:30. It seemed that I had 30 minutes to get to the library where we’d agreed to meet. I might even have time for a second cup of lemonade.

Hold Your Applause, Please! (Vignette 1b)

I found the community library, a wonderful new building tucked into another part of town. This neighborhood was accessorized with beautifully landscaped Victorian homes. I spotted Diana, a vivacious, passionate, fast-talking, cliché wheeling, Second Chance Reading teacher of three years and an educator for nearly 30. Although we had planned to meet at the library, it was abuzz with dozens of excited youngsters and a guest speaker featuring live bats. So as not to be a distraction to all the children, we elected to walk to Diana’s home, just over the hill from the library. I left my car in the parking lot and we headed out.

Diana’s roots were deeply embedded in this community, having attended all of her public schooling years in Iowaville. She was a homeowner, deep in the throes of a
massive remodeling project and her historic home was being scrapped and readied for new paint. We first talked of her choice of vividly interesting house colors, then stepped inside for a tour of her home. I met her three cats and we eventually settled in at the dining room table. Diana jumped right in with her initial knowledge of *Second Chance Reading*, my first question. And her enthusiasm for every question was eruptive as she spoke with rapid abandon. I could barely keep up and my field notes ended up being all a-jumble. Because I had wandered onto her turf, Diana’s level of comfort and ease in communicating was exceedingly heightened. I wondered if her responses may have been more guarded if we’d stayed at the library, although I doubted it, for we had known each other for several years. However, as I wanted to experience her reality and enthusiasm, I allowed her free reign to speak her mind in her own way. She clearly felt at ease in her home and I worked to capture her thoughts, both in my field notes and then eventually in the transcribed recording. Diana’s enthusiasm was evident in her stylistic lingo. It was clear that much of her language and many of her mannerisms came from extended time with middle school students.

“Um, this is my third year. And it’s kind of funny because I had to sub for another teacher before I taught this. She was teaching it, and I helped out one day.” Tracking Diana’s random and tangential comments was going to be exhausting, and I knew it as I’d visited with and known her on a personal level for some time. She could be all over the place in one conversation and often in one sentence. And for that she proved fun to be around while potentially exhausting at the same time. Above all, this teacher was
wholeheartedly devoted to her students, and teaching was her life's work and professional passion.

She went on. "She has since left our district. So anyway, I had to cover one of her classes one day. And it was Second Chance. And, I went in the room and said, 'Okay, do you guys have copies of the story?' And they just told me, 'No, no, she reads to us,' and I'm like, 'You guys never read the story.' And I was just like, I didn't get it. It was so funny, stepping in blindly not knowing and I'm like, 'What do you mean? She just reads it out loud to you?' Where's your copy or where's your ... you know. 'We don't have 'em,' and I'm like, 'I don't get this.' It was so funny because I just thought, what kind of class is this? What do you mean you don't...?"

She paused to take a breath. I knew this was going to be a fun interview if I could keep up with her spit-fire approach. She nodded and moved on.

"Yea, and so now, having been in it for, ya know, teaching it for a couple of years, I totally see, ya know? It totally makes sense now. I've seen the results. I know it works, and I've come just full circle from not getting at all why it is you were doing these things. So, yea, I'm kinda glad I had that crazy experience that day when I was substituting. I think it's gone really well. You know, for every year that we've been doing it here, there's always huge growth. I always see huge growth. Um ... and in some kids it's just like unbelievable. I'll get some kids that's just like, wow!"

My field notes were filling up with targeted observances and scribbled notes. I later found this thought: 'Diana: reckless abandon paired with ecstatic enthusiasm.'
"Can you talk to me about your schedule and how tightly you’ve been able to adhere to it, especially given the fact that you have class only every other day at best, which certainly complicates things? Would you share how you manage that with me?"

Diana jumped in and responded with, “Sure. You know, Elle and I, we work together, ya know, and go back and forth a lot and,” again she paused to collect her thoughts before continuing, “at the end of the year and beginning of the year we’re going over things. And this year I said to her, ‘this year felt extraordinarily fragmented.’ We’re having this issue because of our schedule and different things that happened. We only have it every other day and when you have it every other day and then it’s MAP testing time, or it’s Iowa Assessment time, or it’s homecoming week....”

I could hear a rising tension in her voice as she listed off the distractions and tangential obligations that kept her kids out of class. She continued, “It’s different because now that we’re sharing the high school building,” she paused temporarily. "When there’s a pep assembly to send off the kids to wrestling, we get invited. Those invitations of course never happened prior to this year, but they are our current reality. We get pulled into all this high school stuff that sometimes we haven’t really had to ever do and so class is thrown off on a crazy, mostly unpredictable schedule. So those things happen, and we have to go in order to support the upper classmen, and class is shortened or completely dropped for a period.”

“That has to be tough. Is there a way in your system to make up for classes missed, or are they just missed?”
“Well, it’s a set program, ah schedule, and that means that when it’s missed it’s really missed and can’t be made up. If it were a rotating schedule of “A, B, C, D, and E” days that would be one thing, but no... when it’s missed, we have to chalk it up as an evaporated class with a fleeting chance of revising the content. We’re just forced to continually bump things back further and further. It’s frustrating.”

She continued and it was clear I’d struck a nerve. “I mean, there were times when we should have had a vocab. test – but I’d go to class and say to the kids, ‘You got the words a week and a half ago.’ And I’d have to say, ‘No, we’re not gonna do it; not now anyway,’ ya know, so... it was really harder, I found. I think the issue and the difference between this year and last year can be explained simplistically. Last year was our first year sharing the high school building, all with the knowledge that a new school was in the works. Well, that first year they forgot about us a lot, quite honestly. You know, for example, they’d tucked us on the bottom floor. It’s kind of like the basement. And they forgot we were down there for the most part. We didn’t get invited to much, and we were really perfectly happy about that, but I think now they’re really trying to include us in things, almost to make up for the omissions of the previous year.”

She went on. “And so I noticed it more this year... that it just seemed more fragmented. And because of that, I spent a lot more time I think reviewing things. We’d go over the story and review content and text. I never really have had to do that before. I was really forced to make up for lost time this past year because of the constant flood of distractions. And I did that a lot more with vocabulary. I threw in a lot of vocabulary study. I also had a lot of good stuff that was just like ... basic test prep stuff. I know it’s
not part of the typical \textit{SCR} structure, but in our instance and with the needs my kids showed, it made sense to work with that.”

“So, it sounds like you may have veered away from implementing the program in the way it was intended, and I do understand why. With half the necessary and minimal time on your roster, there was no way to stick to the program as recommended. It sounds like there may have been an inordinate amount of time with vocabulary. Could I make that statement?”

“Well, yea. I think it’s important that I help the kids build up their vocabulary so until we can implement the program in the way it’s meant to be done, I will spend probably more time than I should with vocabulary development. But like I said, I do believe that’s really important.”

“Sure. I understand and can see where you’re coming from. Thanks for clarifying.” Can you talk to me for a minute or so about the qualities Adam has as principal that he uses or exemplifies to show that he supports you in your work?”

“Well, first of all, he’s amazing.” She twinkled as she spoke of him. I knew a bit of the history of multiple administrators in just a few years in this district and was anxious to hear her take of the new guy on board. So far, he sounded like what they’d needed. “He’s wildly supportive of our work and the gains we’ve seen in kids.”

I was hoping to hear more about the principal, but I allowed her to ramble a bit, as it was her way of communicating. I wondered if we’d ever get back to the topic of Adam. I would have to wait and see.
“And I have my kids set goals. I ask them to realistically figure out how many pages they’ll read in a given quarter and then dangle that incentive carrot every chance I get. When it’s time to cash in on the parties I’d step into his office and say something like, ‘Hey, fourth quarter I’d like to walk the kids to the Dairy Queen. Could those who made their reading goals walk with me to the Dairy Queen?’ And then he’d say, ‘Yea, no problem.’ I mean, he’s supported any kind of incentive idea that I’d propose. He has totally supported me and the kids. He supported the World Book Night. He’s always supportive of any of the ideas that I have. And I appreciate that.”

I was happy to see we’d come full circle. She had more to offer. “Good.”

“Anything that,” she paused to collect her thoughts and then continued, “he knows and understands that it takes a lot of work. There is no book. There is no manual. All lessons are created strictly by the teacher. This work is certainly no walk in the park.”

“Does he allow you and Elle to work together … to plan together … or perhaps I should instead ask, do you plan together or do it on your own time? Can you explain how collaboration works between the two of you?”

“We,” she paused. “I have.” Again she paused. Then she began with fervor, wearing the first claim almost like a badge of honor, “My planning period is the only one at that time in the whole building. Nobody else has the same planning period as me in either the junior or senior high. So, besides being kind of lonely, Elle and I plan as the big picture because we have certain lessons that we have for seventh and then certain lessons for eighth. And we certainly do that on our own time, simply because we have no common time when we could have those important conversations during the school day.”
“Right.”

“But a lot of times we’re just right across the hall from each other so we will get together, you know, before school or after school and go over things. We do work well together when we actually can find time to do just that.”

“Perhaps next year Adam can tuck a common planning time into the new schedule for you. It is really important that collaboration time is embedded into your day. And besides, because you’re such a social creature, you need that time to work together and to problem solve. Can we talk about how Adam is with the kids? I understand he’s a first year administrator. What have you seen when he’s reacting with the students … that is, if he does?”

“He’s great. He’s awesome with the kids. He is …ohhh…”

“Can you give me an example?”

“Well, I can, sure. First of all, he’s always asking me how they are and what we’re doing in class and then he takes what I’ve told them and uses it to frontload incidental, accidental, and intentional conversations with them. For example, I have one group right before lunch. And one week, some time ago, he asked what we were working on. I explained that it was about vocabulary and using tactile movements to act out words in order to increase their trip to their long-term memory bank. So, he asked for a list of words. And so, down in the lunch line, because he’s always monitoring the lunch line he’d say, ‘Who can show me how to swagger?’ That’s just one example, but he is really tuned into what they’re doing and supports it outside the classroom walls. It’s important that he knows these kids and he really does. He knows who the kids who are in Second
Chance. And he even knows all their names, what sports they participate in, and whether or not they’re musically or vocally inclined. He’s gone out of his way to connect with our students. It’s fantastic.”

“That’s terrific.”

“I mean, I think it’s great that he knows which kids are in which section. And like I said, he knows their names and can call them by it. Our last principal, actually our last few principals never came out of their office. Adam is always in the hallway and talking to the kids. He knows them and they know him. There are a lot of kids in this school but he knows them all. He talks to them about school and what they’re reading. He’s genuinely interested. He just really knows them. He has a great sense of humor with the kids, but he also respects them. And ya know, if the kids aren’t doing…”

I interrupted, again. “And they respect him as well?”

“Yea... Yes! Oh yea. Adam, ah, Mr. Raymond works great with the kids.”

I brought up, momentarily the beautiful library that we had met in earlier in the day and remarked about the wonderful community facility and clearly supportive town. Diana mentioned that her home town also has a wonderful summer reading program sponsored by the city library which had become almost competitive between age groups. It took me back momentarily to my days as a kid when the neighborhood book mobile would park in our grocery store parking lot each Tuesday and I’d ride my bike down to pick up books for the week. Community support is so important.

My thinking led me to my next question. “You’ve mentioned multiple ways that Mr. Raymond supports you in your work, and we’ll talk about that again in a minute, but
can you think for a minute of any barriers in place which are preventing you from accomplishing your mission? And if so, what they might be?"

“Well, that’s pretty easy. The first and biggest problem lies in the fact that I don’t have a classroom of my own. I have an office, and you saw that. It’s actually an old closet that was renovated. The problem lies in the fact that it only holds about six kids, and of course, my books. And I had a great classroom at the last building.”

“Oh, that’s right. Your space at the last building was cozy. I just wanted to grab a book and a quiet corner and read. Your homey touches with lamps, posters, and books, made for an environment that shouted learning. Did I hear that you taught in seven different classrooms during this past year?”

“Nope.” She paused for emphasis. “You heard wrong. It was actually nine.”


“Well, you know, I’ve just made it work this year because I know there’s one more year of this and then I get my own brand new beautiful classroom. The problem this year is that when my classroom library is in the one room, but I don’t teach in that room, it makes it hard. And when you have to go to somebody else’s…”

She paused to collect her thoughts and her breath, “one class is in one room, one class is in another room,” and again she paused before moving on, “and then I’m borrowing the classroom from a teacher that has a prep and I hate to kick them out of their own space, because I really am sort of a guest, it’s just difficult. And add on top of that, I don’t have really the right to any bulletin board or wall space to post my things or expectations, or goal charts, or anything. I’m just living in limbo this year ... and then
again next year. And so, just the physical – the physical arrangement is difficult. It’s a huge barrier. But it’s being dealt with because the bond issue was finally passed.”

“I can see that that’s a very real limitation, but that’ll be better when you get in the new building. You have one more year of this, but then the payoff will be fantastic.”

“Well, and that’s just it. It’s like,” she composed her thoughts. This was a sensitive subject for Diana and I braced myself and my field notebook for a barrage of issues. Her eyes blazed as she continued. “Okay. I only have to do this for two years, and then we’ll be in the wonderful new space. We all have one year down, and because the years go so fast, next year will really fly. It’ll be a lot easier, because I just find for my … for my first year of teaching it when I was in my classroom to pull books off the shelf and say, ‘Okay, now why would this book be a historical fiction?’ Ya know, and I would pull books and say, ‘You can’t open the inside cover, but you get to classify ‘em.’ And I can just pull random books and stuff. But now, I have to plan so far ahead, and then haul everything with me. It’s so much more cumbersome and confining.”

Diana continued. “Essentially, I have to plan everything ahead of time, put it in a crate, ya know, have kids help me bring it in. Ya know, it just makes it harder to do. Umm, really, that’s the only limitation that I can,” she paused, “what I’ve seen most is that I’ve lost the opportunity to have a teachable moment in many instances, because the resource I needed was down the hallway in another room that we couldn’t all fit into if we tried.”

“Can you talk to me about your schedule? You’d previously mentioned it, but could you talk a bit more?”
“Well, that is something that I think is going to be changed, because Adam is changing the schedule for all junior high classes for next year. He mentioned it to both Elle and me one day. In fact, it was kind of funny.”

“Go on.”

“Umm, Elle and I were actually talking to him and he is gonna,” she paused as a sense of enthusiasm bubbled and her eyes twinkled while remembering past conversations, “he thought at the time when he was doing the schedule that he might be able to make it every day and he said to us, ‘If everything works out okay, I think I might be able to get it so that it’s every day.’ Ya know, cause, at first Elle said something about well, ya know, ‘Yea it’d be really great if we could have it,’... and he countered with, ‘You would want it every day?’ We’re like, ‘Yea!’ He’s like, ‘Oh. I think it might work.’ Ya know, so ...”

Again, not wanting to compromise the enthusiasm of this teacher, I allowed and have captured her language in full context. She was comfortable with me and understandably enthusiastic about the opportunity and significant chance that her allotted time with Second Chance Reading students may be doubled for the new school year.

“You know, I recently met with him, and he mentioned to me that he’s trying to make the schedule work so that you can meet with your students every day. And we all know that you certainly need that and that your students would benefit even more significantly with double the instructional exposure.”

“And he shared that with you? Awesome! I’m really glad to hear that. I’ll call Elle and tell her after you’re gone.”
"Yea, he seems to really have his head on straight. I really enjoyed my visit with him."

"Yea. Oh, my gosh. He’s wonderful. You know, we’re all trying really hard to be really, really nice to him because we’re afraid we’re gonna burn him out. We’ve had some significant issues with administrators over the past several years. We finally found one that fits us and we don’t want to lose him."

"Oh-h-h-h, don’t burn him out."

"Yea, well, he’s also our activities director."

"I’d heard that. And I believe he has a ballgame today that he’s also attending."

"Yea, and he has said this to us all the time. He’s said, ‘You guys work so well together as a team that you get about 20% of me.’ And he goes, ‘And I know that’s not fair, and it’s not fair to you guys to have to function on your own,’ but he’s like, ‘Right now, nobody else can do the activity director part’ and it’s his first year and he’s always kind of torn. He has a lot on his plate."

"But could I assume that he’s there when you need him?"

"Oh, yea, absolutely. But he is … when you need him to … he’s there…”

"Does he step into your classroom?"

"Oh, yea."

"And what does that … what does that look like? If I was sitting in the corner and he stepped into your room, what might I see him doing?"

"Well, he’d walk around. He’d look over shoulders and see what the kids were doing. Sometimes he’ll visit with them. ‘So, what are you guys talking about?’ A lot of
time he comes in the room, and if we’re doing a vocabulary game or something, I’ll include him. I might say something like, ‘Mr. Raymond, if you had to choose a vocab. word to act out, which word would you choose and how would you do that?’ And he’d jump right in, pick a few words, and act them out. You can bet the kids don’t ever forget that. He gets down to their level. He operates with the four-legged stool mentality. It’s great.”

“What do you mean by that, the four-legged stool? Please explain.”

“What that means is that he figuratively and literally gets to their level. He doesn’t think or act like he’s better or more important. Kids appreciate it, and I know I do, too.”

“You’ve talked about this a little bit, but I’m wondering if you could elaborate. What might Adam be able to do to further help you? What might he be able to attend to that’s not being addressed or happening right now?”

Without a moment’s hesitation, Diana responded simply, “Time.”

“Okay, can you expand on that a bit? Please, go on. It sounds to me like Adam’s going to be addressing that. Would it help for you and Elle, for example, to have a common planning time or what exactly do you have in mind?”

“Oh, yea. That would be amazing. A common planning or even just time set aside to plan the lessons would be amazing. Ya know, I mean, I would just love that. I’ve done all this planning by myself for a full year and only had the chance to talk with Elle in passing. Time is so underrated and undervalued. Our time is precious. And I think Adam knows that.”
“Awesome! Can we talk about your recreational reading class for a minute? From what I understand, kids have the chance to read every day for 25 minutes or so. Let me ask you. Do?...” I hesitated and went on, “is it just reading or do your kids have discussion time where they can talk with a trusted peer or teacher about what they’ve read? Do you incorporate a little pair share or anything like that? Help me understand your expectations.”

“Um, it was actually a class that was, that was,” she hesitated, “it was actually a class that was, that was,” she hesitated again, “it was actually created to solve a problem we inadvertently had. You see, it was thrown in right after lunch so that we could be back on schedule with the high school bell schedule, so that we’d have the same partial schedule. If you can even imagine the craziness of this, but our first year in this building we had completely different bells from the high school classes. First the dismissal bells rang, and then three minutes later the tardy bells rang. That amounted to 18 bells a day, but that was for the first floor. Down in the basement we operated on a slightly different schedule, so our basement bells also rang 18 times a day. You can do the math and see how many bells went off during the day! We knew we were in for three years when they moved us. When our first year ended, we told them they had to do something about the inordinate number of bells. They were killing us.”

“So, help me understand. You incorporated a recreational reading time in order to coordinate the bell system between the first two floors and the basement, but not because reading is good for kids? It just ended up being a benefit for everyone, like a welcome
gift you hadn’t anticipated in order to punch a hole in a barrier that was dictating your lives and schedules the previous year. Is that right?"

"That’s exactly right. Those 25 minutes bought us the time to get back in line with high school after lunch. Because of recreational reading, we’re on the same bells for the entire afternoon, actually now the whole day we’re together. It’s awesome. So let me answer your previous question. You asked if it was just silent reading or if kids had the chance to discuss. Absolutely, we have teachers and even Adam that wander into classrooms, and we can do a pair share or have discussions with books."

"Sure. Sure."

"And then Friday was kind of an activity day during recreational reading. Kids could bring in magazines. I started reading them a short story at the end of the year. You know, all kids love being read to. At the end of the year you can’t use the library anymore because it shuts down. So, I had a funny book, a collection of hilarious short stories, and I was reading that out loud to the kids on Fun Fridays. And I showed some of my colleagues how to do a pair share activity to further support their students with independent reading books. The recreational reading class has been really beneficial for our kids, even though it only became a reality because of an issue with an extraordinary amount of bells. We were tempted to change our name for these three years from the ‘Tigers’ to the ‘Tintinnabulators.’"

"Cute! Okay, thanks. I’m glad to see it was so helpful. It’ll be interesting to see if it’s in your schedule next year, knowing that you’ll be getting a new schedule. Now, can you describe for me the working relationship between you and Adam?”
"You bet. It's great. It's open."

"Are you referring to an open door policy?"

"Oh yea. Oh yea, open door and I," she paused again to collect her thoughts, "any time I showed up at his door, I'd knock and he'd ask, 'What ya got?' I'd usually ask how much time he had and because I'm really aware of his time, too, 'cause he's really short on time, but he always made time for me. And his first question always seems to be, 'Is it something urgent? I have a couple minutes,' There is always an open door culture with Adam. Always. He's great. He's always willing to try. He'd tell me, ya know, that he'd look into solving my problem, or whatever. If I came to him with a question or concern or something, he'll actually try to find the answer and come back later and let me know. If he said he'd find an answer to a question I might have, he always followed through. And I mean always."

"So, tell me. Is that unique, as far as principals go for you in the last few years?"

"Yea, well, I mean, when you tell Adam something, or a concern or something, if you tell him, you know it'll be handled. He's always willing to listen and asks what part he needs from me or what he's willing to do to rectify a situation. He's just extraordinarily supportive. He's like 180 from the past principals we've had here. You know, we went through about four principals in five years. It's why we're working so hard not to bum him out. We want to keep him for the long haul. And I'm not the only one that thinks that. We all do. He's fantastic."
“Can you talk to me about how you celebrate learning, or how Adam helps you celebrate learning with your Second Chance kids? Or perhaps I should instead ask, do you celebrate student learning and what might that look like?”

“Oh yea. Oh yea. Um, of course every quarter … every term we have like an incentive party that we’ll do.”

“Tell me more.”

Again, knowing Diana’s style, she would skirt the question but eventually get back on track and provide me an answer. I would just have to be patient. “Um, and he’s always supporting that. For example, we celebrate both big successes and the small successes, too. Um, when basic skills came back and I had the MAP results, I sent a letter to the kids’ parents explaining the three different test results, and then I put the results down so that way they get to see and gain an understanding of what they said. Parents that are not educators may not necessarily understand how to read the reports. This past year I had one girl who is not yet proficient, but she gained 30 points in all three areas on the MAP test. It was phenomenal! You can bet that when I passed her results back I acknowledged her success. In fact, I remember that I wrote, ‘These are un---believable gains!’ Ya know, and I share all the results with him and he told my class …”

She paused, again clearly excited for this new principal that was so hands-on and supportive of her efforts and those of her students. “He’s come in to different kids or said to different kids, ‘You did awesome,’ or ‘You knocked it out of the park!’ He often uses coaching analogies. I think it’s the athletic director part of him. It’s great having Adam in
our building, and I hope – we all hope – it’s a long term proposition. We’ve needed
someone like him for a long time."

“How about that for public affirmation! Oh, wow. It’s wonderful to hear your
enthusiasm for an administrator … and then to hear that he publically acknowledges
student successes does my heart good. I remember being in your previous building and
watching the principal at work in the office. He had clearly built a culture that seemed
almost poisonous from my limited outside perspective. There’s a very different feel in
your building these days. It’s warm and appealing and the enthusiasm for true learning
comes out in multiple ways. You’re very lucky to have found this great guy. I’m so
happy for you.”

“Yea! yea! And every year,” again she was overcome with enthusiasm and paused
momentarily to collect and organize her thoughts, “I’ve always done this. I don’t know
why I started doing it, but every year I’ve sent the copy over to our curriculum director so
that her office is informed of the great things going on in at least my classroom.”

“Help me understand. What did you send a copy of? … your year-end results?”

“Oh yea! Sorry. My Stanford and MAP scores. And I always give a copy to the
principal, and then I send a copy to the curriculum director and then, umm, actually last
week I had a meeting to plan professional development for the district and, ah, we were
looking over all the data and the superintendent, Patricia Johnson, was there and we were
all looking at data, and I decided to also send her the results.”

“Great! Good for you. I’m sure that some of these alternative assessment
measures aren’t always reviewed or potentially known about at the district level. Good
thinking. Did you hear anything after forwarding your scores?” I was curious to hear what a superintendent might do with such information.

“Well, let me tell you what I wrote. I just sent it in an email and it said something like: ‘So, I’m just following up on our meeting about data and I thought I’d brag a little here. I’m pretty proud of my kids.’ I then attached my spreadsheet and the results. She sent back a lovely email thanking and congratulating me on a job well done. It meant a lot to me. I’ve always been a huge advocate of this program, ah, Second Chance Reading and wanting to share our good news. I thought it was a good idea to share our results with those at the top. It’s important that I get the superintendent’s support as well as that of the school board.”

“I couldn’t agree more. That’s awesome.”

“And actually, our superintendent, Dr. Johnson, had me come to a school board meeting last fall and explain Second Chance Reading to the board. It was great.”

“Oh, my gosh! You really are in a good place here. I love hearing about the public support for your good work. What were the reactions of the school board?”

“Well, it was really affirming. They were like, ‘Wow! You guys are doing this,’ and, ‘This is what you’re doing for these kids who are struggling? That’s great. That’s wonderful.’ And the more they kind of hear about it and saw that it really was working has really helped both the kids and me. It’s sure easier to go to work when you know you have the support of the folks in central administration.”
“Sound like everything’s pretty great around here, Diana. You’ll be getting a new building in a year, a new schedule and class every day, and a supportive administrator. Things don’t get much better than that, do they?”

“Oh, I just thought of something else, too. When school started this year, Adam said he wanted to take the makeup of extended reading, er, Second Chance Reading to reach the most valuable group of kids. See, before he came on board, anyone that had scored below the 50th percentile got in.”

“I understand.”

“Yea, well, that included a 9% student.”

“Wow…”

“It was tough, but my previous principal held the view that it was all or nothing, 50 and below. He didn’t want to hear about “The Names Test.” He really kind of had his blinders on and saw Second Chance as the end-all, be-all, but I can be realistic. It also has its limitations. I will give you that. It’s not going to save all the kids, but it is wonderful for its targeted audience. And don’t get me wrong. It’s a nice big target, but it doesn’t reach the very lowest kids. And Adam gets that. And so, he’s like, ‘I want it … I want it to be … for you and Elle to really look at the kids and decide who would most benefit.’ Again, he has the support and the vision and is guiding us along. It’s terrific.” She paused to catch her breath and then went on. “Oh, and there’s another thing. He appreciates input from me and Elle. We really feel valued, and appreciated, and important. That also never happened with our past principals.”
“So you really,” I began, searching for the right word, “you went beyond triangulating the data. You almost,” I continued searching and nearly gave it up but that created a new word, “you almost quad-angulated the data...I know that’s a new word, but whatever the next level would be, you were doing it. That’s terrific!”

“So you really,” I began, searching for the right word, “you went beyond triangulating the data. You almost,” I continued searching and nearly gave it up but that created a new word, “you almost quad-angulated the data...I know that’s a new word, but whatever the next level would be, you were doing it. That’s terrific!”

“Yea. To really look at ...”

I interjected, “Every kid ...?”

“To really look at each kid, ya know? And then the sixth grade teachers would write, ‘Yea, I would recommend extended reading,’ ya know, cause they, they ... the sixth grade teachers were my old colleagues, my co-workers, and they get it. They know me, and they know the program. And they would say, ‘Yea, that kid would really benefit,’ or, ‘No, really, they’re just not a good test taker.’ It’s great to have their input and he encourages those conversations. It’s terrific. It really is.”

Diana and I had come to the end of our session. Her enthusiasm had equally inspired and exhausted me, and I wished her well as I prepared for my next duo.

Data Driven Disaster (Vignette 2a)

Late May and early June often hums with symphonic emotionality for those adults that work in schools. The whir-r-r of noisy leaf blowers can be heard in empty hallways as busy custodial staff clear away chewed pencil stubs and crumpled papers while they gear up for the annual scrubbing – waxing – buffing triathlon. Tenacious teachers and dogged administrators recall the recent sending off of both hesitant and euphoric teenagers who directed days and consumed evenings with both concern for uncertain futures or exhilaration for educational triumphs. And cherished secretaries continue
chipping away at year-end obligations as the intercom and bell system announces the passing of time and overworked fingers on computer keyboards tap out a crisp cadence while they contemplate the dreaded sending off of cumulative records to new schools for children they've delighted in watching grow up.

Walking through the semi-vacant parking lot, I initially wondered when school had dismissed for the summer as we had not yet celebrated Memorial Day and I'd heard tell of community parades being orchestrated in county court houses across our nation. Entering the building through the usual door, I heard a leaf blower humming down an adjacent hallway and headed towards the whir-r-r and Breanne’s room, for I had arranged a scheduled visit with this Second Chance Reading teacher. As I headed down a shoe scuffed hallway, the busy custodian flipped off the blower, allowing the dust and paper scraps to settle. I thanked him for his consideration and good work, wished him a wonderful summer, and continued on my way. The muffled buzz of the machine reconvened just as I turned the corner. Opening Breanne’s door, I found her standing and looking sad.

She turned when she heard the creak of the old hinge, smiled when she saw me, and I could see she’d been crying for she wiped at a tear, saying, “I always have a hard time closing out a school year. I get so attached to these kids and now they’re gone. There’s some I’ll probably never see again. It just gets to me. But I really love those kids. When I get those kids that first day, from then on they’re just like my own and I treat ‘em and give ‘em advice just like with my own kids. But now they’re gone.”
As I allowed her to regain some composure, I looked around her now deserted room and saw faded rectangles of paint on a vacant word wall which would potentially enjoy a summer painting. Breanne regrouped and invited me to take a seat. At times, her thoughts poured out passionately; at other times she spoke with fractured hesitation. But she always spoke with purpose.

She began before I had the chance to pose a single question. "I had to tell the kids goodbye yesterday. I'm just so proud of them. You know, I can rest a little easier knowing that most of them left me as confident readers. I think that's the one thing that you need to give to kids. I really believe the key to their success is getting that confidence back. You know, most kids start school as really confident little kids – but then lots of them lose that somewhere along the way. I want to give it back to them, and I always work very hard to get it done. I know that high school will be intimidating for all of them, but I hope they can at least reach down and find a little bit of that confidence as freshmen."

Breanne paused to take a breath after speaking rapidly without any prompting and then went on. "Ya know, this class really offers the opportunity to intensively teach vocabulary and have conversations with kids about what they read. And I just think that that is so important for them. I just really think that this is so important in building kids' confidence and I know I said that before that I really believe it. Confidence and belief in your own ability is the ticket to success for all kids. You know, they may never be that huge scoring ACT person but they now at least can be confident and figure this out. And you know, probably the, this is probably going to sound really stupid, but ..."
"Not at all, go on." I encouraged her to continue.

"The biggest compliment *that* they gave me at the end of the year was that they all wanted me to move to high school with them. And I don’t very often get," she was clearly choked up and paused to again regain some composure, "ya know, emotional, but I cried with my *Second Chance* kids that last day, and I just said, ‘Don’t you ever let anybody tell you that you can’t do anything.’ I said, ‘Don’t you ever.’ And I told them email’s wonderful and ‘If you need help next year going through a paper, you need help with anything.’ Well, actually," she giggled, "I said, ‘Don’t call me for math, but let me know if you need anything else.’ We laughed about that, because they all know that math is definitely not my strong suit."

This veteran teacher had attended *Second Chance Reading* training two years prior and had agreed to be part of my study. As she clearly felt more comfortable with my presence, giggling at times and leaning forward to make a point, I felt it was time to officially begin our conversation. I began by asking about her principal’s perception of the *Second Chance Reading* class and the struggling students that made up her roster. She initially frowned, seemed to be planning an appropriate response, and eventually began speaking.

“Well, if he’s got his numbers and his data in front of him, he’s fine. I don’t mean that in a negative way. He’s a math man, and I have two children that are math minds, and I understand that’s how they work. It’s the black and white numbers for them. It’s very crisp and there are no allowable grey zones. And, he was fine with that. His bottom line involves the necessity of raising the test scores and so, I saw through MAP testing
that I think some of my kids were really able to do that. I think it’s basically just Mike’s type of personality, ya know?”

“Tell me a little bit more about that. Do you know how Mike, er, Mr. Jameson manages the data or what he does with it, or even whether he has an assessment team, who might be on it, and how often they meet? And finally, help me understand how Stanford scores and MAP scores are utilized and analyzed by Mike and the assessment team. I hope that’s not too many questions at once, but I’m really curious how this is all managed here in your district.”

“Well, first of all, I didn’t want to share the Stanford scores with him this year because they were so bad, but I tried to talk to him about the MAP scores. I did. I knew he’d probably never ask for clarification about the SDRT scores, because he’s basically unaware that we even assess with them. So I didn’t feel bad about that. However, my MAP scores were good – some were even great. I just slipped the Stanford scores in a folder and asked Amanda to give it to him. He hasn’t asked me anything about them at all.”

“Interesting. And what did he say about the student gains on the MAP? Was he excited for you and your kids?”

“Well, no. He just put my spreadsheets with my stuff and didn’t even look at the scores when I tried to talk to him. I could see that he was busy with something. He usually is, so I just handed them to him. That kind of hurt my feelings, but there are some things you have to worry about, and I know that’s his personality, so I wasn’t really surprised when he just took the data and didn’t even give it a glance. Like I say, I wasn’t
surprised. But I did feel a little guilty about the Stanford scores. The thing is, he only worries about the ITBS, I mean, the Iowa Assessments. In Mike’s mind, no other scores matter. Oh, and there’s another thing. This year we took the MAP test for like two weeks and then right away I gave the Stanford because I was running out of time. I felt so bad for the kids. They did really well on the MAP but messed up big time on the Stanford. I think they were just sick of testing, and I couldn’t even blame them. I would have been sick of it, too.”

“So help me understand. You kind of talked about this, but help me a minute. Am I hearing you say that there was no celebration or even a bit of acknowledgement – or even a smile or anything, for a job well done? Do you know, did he say anything to the kids that did well – or remind those that didn’t that they need to focus? Was anything said?”

“Oh. Not with me. And not with the kids. No. His big focus is ITBS, or rather the Iowa Assessment. He really hones in on that. That’s really his baby. Nothing else really matters.”

I asked this veteran teacher to talk about the leadership traits that would be most appreciated and helpful as a Second Chance Reading teacher. She immediately jumped in and rapidly answered. It was clear that she had thought about it well before I asked it. I recalled that she had received the questions from me within the past 24 hours and attached to an email reminder that I was arriving.

“Well, I guess my ideal look at his leadership traits or maybe what needs to be improved on would have been, first of all, supporting an availability of necessary
materials. Because I didn’t know I was moving to the junior high two years ago, I first
ordered for my fourth grade classroom like I did at the end of every year. So then when I
moved to the junior high over the summer, I could not order any more materials. So, …”
She paused and then went on, “bottom line was, I needed materials, but was told I’d
already spent my budget. But realistically, because I needed things that were not in the
room, I went out and bought a lot on my own. I just wish he had the sense and ability to
see what was needed in that classroom in order to succeed or to have those tools that
make the teachers’ job more manageable. I know that sounds crazy to have enough
vocabulary boxes, to have enough file folders. You know those seem like minute things,
but in a Second Chance classroom they’re all important. And um, the second thing would
be that he would pay attention to the numbers. In our building, any new student that
comes in is often dumped in…”

I interrupted. “Are you talking about student achievement numbers or physical
bodies in your classroom?”

“I’m talking about the physical numbers of students in there. I’m talking about
students that …” She paused to collect her thoughts and then went on. “I guess his
position has always been that if there’s a new student that’s coming into the district we
just dump them in Second Chance because often times it’s the slightly smaller section.
And I wish that he would understand that it’s important that the SCR sections are
significantly smaller. The kids, I mean the students in a SCR class, have major learning
issues and will grow further and gain that necessary confidence if they’re scheduled into
smaller sections. However, last year I was up to 22 in my one Second Chance section and
this year in my eighth grade Second Chance class I gained three new students during the year. In my seventh grade Second Chance class, I gained two new students and one who had … one who should never ever have been in Second Chance Reading. She was a top notch student.”

I dug a little deeper, curious about the apparent status of an accomplished student in an intervention intended specifically for struggling readers. “So, how long did the girl you’ve labeled as a ‘top notch girl’ stay in your class? I need to be able to understand how long it took to rearrange her schedule and tuck her into the class she would most benefit from.”

“Oh, well, guess what? First of all, I think it’s important to put names to these kids, ahh, students. I’ve always been an advocate of attaching a face to a name. This seventh grader’s name was Tia. She was an awesome kid with red hair and a splattering of freckles. Tia was a great reader. And I loved having her in my class, even though her placement was an accident. Unfortunately, she was with me in Second Chance Reading all year long. Mike’s position is that once kids are in a section, there’s no way to move them out. Once they’re in, they’re in.”

Trying to wrap my mind around what I’d just heard and wondering about the sense of such actions, yet without intending to sound judgmental of administrative decisions, I unintentionally yet sarcastically quipped, “Oh-h-h, so it’s kind of a life sentence?” I paused and apologized. “That was uncalled for by me. I apologize. Do you know why that was his stance?”
“Well, that’s just his belief. He always says it’s so hard to move kids and once the numbers for each section are determined and schedules are set, it’s really important to maintain the equity between teachers. Essentially, there’s just no sense in moving them out. In fact, even for them to get out or graduate if they’ve received significant gains in student achievement, if they’ve risen to proficiency status, for example, I had to …” It was clear she was revisiting an uncomfortable conversation and eventually continued with, “when I got my list this year for my seventh graders from last year, he had moved kids out that had no sense being moved out, and others that he moved in that had been in my middle literature class. There was really no reason nor rational for them to be moved into Second Chance, but he did it purely based on ITBS scores that were given in November of their seventh grade year. That action alone was very frustrating for me. Because it basically was saying it didn’t matter what I did with them from November till April. And the other thing is,…”

She paused again and seemed almost pained as she eventually continued. “There was no consultation with me about it, ever. It was just that when I got my lists in the summer for who was in my classes, it got my dander up. And so I went in and he and I had some discussions because there were just some gross inequities. But Mike was very, very immovable on a lot of it. In fact, I had one parent whose daughters were moved into Second Chance and she’s a teacher in our district. There was no reason for it. And she went in and he said, ‘Well, I already moved six kids for Breanne….’ She paused and then emphasized sarcastically, “FOR Breanne…. Ya know, and I resent the fact that there was just no respect for my knowledge and what I knew about these kids. I’d had them in my
classroom for months and he was going to place them for the next year – seven months before the year was completed, based on one little black and white score that he saw in a box over an assessment given in November – on a test that doesn’t really assess them over what they’d learned. It’s multiple choice, for heaven’s sake. And I think that’s so unfair to both the children and to me. I mean, I don’t know. I just don’t get it. I feel completely undervalued … actually, devalued as a teacher. Some days it’s really tough to come to school, but I come because of the kids. They need me – I mean, they needed me.”

I could feel her pain, but had to press on. “And what did the kids think of that, or did you get any sense of how the kids felt about the immovability regarding their class placement following scores achieved in November, about all of it?”

“It’s very … ahh, ahhh, and this is one of the things in my philosophy that I struggle with,” Breanne caught her breath and finished her thought, “when we ability group, kids who were moved into Second Chance really felt that they were moved into the dumb class and that’s very, very sad. And students who were put into that middle group had no reason for being there, but, I will be very honest with you. When I taught reading and language arts to those sections of students, I taught them no differently. Because, for one thing, I wanted all of them to believe that they were readers and like I said, they are good reading strategies. Probably the most disappointing thing for me is that this coming up school year, Mr. Jameson told me that Second Chance Reading isn’t working and that he’s not going to allow me to teach it anymore. He’s removing it from
the junior high school schedule. And again, I was not at all consulted about it. He never spoke with me at all."

She went on. "I bounce back and forth between the mixed grouping and then keeping those Second Chance kids out. I will do my darndest to continue building that confidence as readers with everyone. But I’m not sure. I’ve got 28 years of experience. Ya know, I’m not …"

Breanne paused to collect her thoughts and eventually went on. “Experience is sometimes so much more important than knowledge. And I see some of these young teachers coming in and they just want to be their friend. And that’s … you can be their friend but you can still be … tough love - that type thing. Most of these kids are screaming for structure because they don’t have it at home.”

Her pitch and tempo had risen and she looked angry but even more so, frustrated. I gave her a minute of silence and she went on. “The only good thing about that is that I get to teach all the literature now so I can teach those Second Chance Reading strategies to everyone. And I will. I mean, I think that’s something you can base your whole curriculum on.” She sighed deeply and again looked like she might cry. This teacher was very passionate about her craft, and I again empathized with her.

I sat quietly again while she collected her thoughts. And while I sat and waited, I mentally revisited, considered, and became curious about a comment she had just made. I decided to probe. "A few minutes ago, you mentioned something about the ‘dumb class.’ That really saddens me. Did you hear that label from kids or parents? Can you talk to me about that ugly tag? I don’t mean to be judgmental of what goes on in your school, but I
am insulted and find it completely repulsive that such a thing is even allowable anywhere, much less that kids are exposed to the stigma.”

“I know. I know. And, yes ... I heard it from kids. I heard it from parents.”

Breanne leaned towards me, rutted her brow, and went on, “But I NEVER used that. And I ALWAYS give a speech on the first day about, um, ‘We are all readers. And we may read at different rates,’ and I give an example of myself and my husband. My husband is one of those people that can read right now and he knows it. He can go back and take a test on it in college. No problem. He did that all the time. I would have to take it, make myself note-cards. Highlight. Reread it again. We’d get the same result, but how we got there was different. And I would always talk to the kids about that and so I spend a lot of time, but, again, he channels those kids; he pigeon-holes those kids as seventh graders based on scores they received as sixth graders. It is so wrong. And the kids know it. Because they get to take, well, it makes me mad but the ‘high’ class gets to take a different math. And...”

“Wait a minute,” I interrupted. “Are you telling me that placement in math class takes precedence over placement in an important reading intervention?”

“Yes. That is absolutely true, yet it makes limited sense to me. Actually, it makes no sense at all. Remember when we talked about Tia? Equitably-sized classes are really important to Mike, ah, Mr. Jameson, because when I look at the numbers or other teachers and I talk about it, every section in all classes in our junior high are within one or two students of each other. I don’t know if the school board is behind it, or the union, or it’s just Mike with his math mind, but these equitable class sizes are not working for
the kids. Doesn’t it seem to you that the best thing for kids should be the driving force behind student placement?”

She didn’t wait for my answer, but continued. “Oh, and there’s something else.” She went on. I’d clearly hit a nerve and her eyes blazed. “And that’s one of the reasons he’s not allowing Second Chance Reading next year. He says he’s going to mix those bottom two groups. But the ‘top group’ will still stay the ‘top group.’ Those kids that are best in math will be in the top group forever, because around here, like I already said, there’s no moving between groups. It’s so unfair and everyone knows it apparently, except Mike. What he’s doing is essentially creating an elite group, and it’s not what we need around here; not at all.”

I had to ask, “So, if you could be principal of this school, what would you immediately do to most positively impact student achievement?”

Again her eyes blazed as she spoke. Breanne’s passion was once again evident. “I would mix those kids, but I always think like an elementary teacher. It’s what I did for 26 years. You can teach differentiated learning in your classroom. I always did. When I had fourth graders in math I taught three different math groups. Kids that needed to accelerate came to the back table. I naturally had kids that needed to be right on grade level and then those kids that needed a little extra help. And I did that in my fourth grade room. And, I don’t understand why that can’t be done in junior high. And, ah, math is the one and only thing that holds us up. And, um, I just think it’s very unfair. It really is. And I just don’t understand. If there are those kids that are doing algebra level work, leave them in there,
but okay, take them to the back table. We have aids crawling all over our school. They need to be used to best support teachers and students. But that’s not happening.”

She went on. “And that’s where I’m coming from because I look at it from a coaching philosophy, a coaching perspective. If I would have always had the kids who didn’t dribble well and didn’t shoot well, play with the kids that didn’t play well and didn’t shoot well, there were never any of them going to dribble well or shoot well. But if you put them with kids with better skills and they get some confidence, oh, they can all really grow.”

I felt compelled to ask this seasoned veteran, “On that vein, can you explain to me how and why Second Chance works? We both know it is grouped and organized by ability, or at least it is supposed to be. The kids that struggle to make sense of written text are grouped together, but it’s been my experience that when it’s implemented in the way it is intended, that children will see significant gains in student achievement. What do you think, because you’re putting all those kids that can’t read together. Help me understand what you see and why it works.”

Although she spoke without a moment’s hesitation, her response seemed a bit fragmented, and I struggled a bit to track her thinking. “I think that is because in there, there are good readers and I think it draws on those kids’ strengths. They have to use ‘em. Because up until this point they’ve been just, ‘Oh, they’re way better readers than I am...they’re way smarter than me.’ But then when they’re together, at least in that situation, they draw on those strengths. I think there’s a reader in everybody. It’s just finding out how they get to that end result. I’ve always treated them with dignity and
confidence that I believe they’re the best students in the school. And I believe they are because they have work ethic. And you give me a kid with work ethic, any day over the kid with the top ACT scores. I can give you kids out of my own kids’ classes who had phenomenal ACT scores, and they’ve dropped out of school. And they’re not in college anymore. But you give me that kid that has to work a little bit. I’ll take ‘em any day.”

“Breanna, I’m hearing some frustration with your situation here in this school, although not necessarily with the kids in your classroom. It seems to me that it’s more so with the structure and some of the administrative decisions and mandates that seem to be driving instruction in this building. Could you,” I hesitated and prepared myself for her answer as I anticipated that it might be painful for her, “would you elaborate on some of the barriers to learning or implementation that have perhaps tied your hands or complicated your situation?”

Again without hesitation, she jumped right in and responded, “I think the biggest thing with Second Chance Reading is those kids don’t have any way to move out, though by about December none of them want to go anywhere because they know, you know, they just love our room. I mean they love to come to class. And I wouldn’t take that away from any of them. Now, book talks are still a struggle to get them to do, but my eighth graders were much better. My seventh graders were a real headache and nightmare this year. Um, but they know those expectations are in place and that their grade’s going to count because of it. I’ve talked to them about it. I’ve told them that their grade is like their pay check. You know, some day you’re going to go to work and that’s your pay check.”
"Go on."

"And if you don’t show up and you don’t put your best foot forward …"

I interrupted, “So, are there barriers in place that complicate your life and that of your students? You mentioned that kids can’t move once they’re locked into place. Is there anything else?”

“Yes, as a matter of fact, there is,” she went on. “It’s just the fact that I don’t feel that Mike has the, um, belief. I don’t know that he doesn’t have the belief in me, because sometimes he says things that I really do think maybe he thinks I’m doing a good job, but it’ll just be very, ah, rare. I’m sorry I’m stammering, but this is really personal. When he left my evaluation at the beginning of this year, back on October 10th, he turned around in the door and said, ‘Oh, by the way, I think you’re doing a good job.’ And then he turned around and left. And I remember the date and the moment like it was yesterday even though so much time has passed, because from him fleeting compliments are just that, fleeting and rare. You know, so it’s almost like it’s hard for him to say that it’s …that you’re doing well. Um, but, the biggest thing is that he doesn’t have those conversations with me about who I think should exit and enter Second Chance Reading, ‘cause I did have some kids in the middle group that I really felt could have benefitted from Second Chance that he didn’t put them in this year. It kinda comes down to a lack of trust or respect for my professional opinion.”

“So, are you saying he operates like the biggest head in the building, and that he’s not willing to share or even really communicate with his teachers? I don’t want to put words in your mouth, but is that what you’re saying?”
“Well, kind of. He doesn’t talk with me, anyway. He doesn’t talk to me about any of those responsibilities. But yet, some parents can come in, throw a fit, and he’ll move those kids around in a minute. It sends really mixed messages to the teachers and gives parents so much power. For example, we had a student who was self-contained for language arts, literature, and math. Actually, quite a bit of everything and inadvertently he got on the wrong list for literature and was supposed to be in the other literature teacher’s class which,” she paused for emphasis, “well, there’s no way he would have been successful. This kid had never been in any regular classroom and would never have managed successfully on the grade level track. So, his schedule went out and it was incorrect and of course, Anna caught it. Anna’s the special education teacher. Well, … oh, the...” she stammered, “but the kid’s mom came in and threw a fit in Mr. Jameson’s office because she wanted this student to have Mr. Palmquist. And um, so he went from self-contained literature to straight on literature. It made no sense at all. This kid was able to completely bypass Second Chance because Mike’s afraid of parents. And the rest of the kids know what’s going on and the pressure from parents also gives the kids power. The bunch this year, especially the seventh graders, are really naughty. And it’s because of Mr. Jameson’s fear of their parents. They know he won’t do anything about anything.”

I was frankly dumbstruck by what I was hearing, yet felt the need to keep my thoughts to myself. However, I squeaked out, “That’s really incredible to me.”

“So those kinds of things make no sense to me. And when you’ve got other kids who were strong, ah … I have one student that was in Second Chance this year that he’s just … he’s probably one of the top readers in the class. And he was in Second Chance
because he was just dinkin' around on his basic skills, I'm sure. He's just a kinda 'fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants' kinda guy. But he had vocabulary better than most of the kids, even better than some of the teachers. It's amazing, yet there he was in my Second Chance class 'cause he screwed up and Mr. Jameson wasn't willing to move him to the class he belonged in.”

"Help me understand. So, can I assume that the assessments that are given aren't really used to make instructional decisions? It is what I'm hearing. Am I right about that - they're given, but they're not ...?"

“Oh. Let me be clear. Mike uses them to place kids in Second Chance ... but all he uses are the ITBS scores, or now I guess they're called the Iowa Assessments. And the kids take those in November. I'm the only one that uses the scores they earn to see what their gains were, because that's most important to me and to the kids. They also want to know how they've grown because we talk about it all the time in my class. And to be honest with you, I don't even look at ITBS. I mean, it's there. I look at it, but, there are so many things that basic skills do not measure. I am a firm believer that it isn't always about test scores. Some kids just don't test well, and if you've never performed well on tests, you freeze up. You don't do well on tests. And so I think there's a lot more to take into consideration when you're looking at a child's reading. I want to know if kids can write about what they read. I want to know if they can talk about what they read.”

I found myself curious about the working relationship between Breanne and Mike. I didn't want to bring up anything that might cause her to be uncomfortable, but decided to press on and gently probe. She hesitated momentarily but then replied.
“I think that Mike has an issue with women. I think that it’s a power struggle with him, that he really feels that he needs to dominate women. And there are just a lot of other things that many women teachers in this building really do feel. Most of us see it as a power struggle with him. He has to be dominant over the women. Sometimes he tosses out a very rare accolade but they’re few and far between. For example, and because he’s a data guy, he did point out to me that the freshmen reading scores were up this year for the kids that I had had as eighth graders. But he said it when no one was around to hear. It was really bold for him, because he holds any sort of compliment or anything even remotely positive very close to the chest and next to never tosses them out. He did tell me that at the beginning of the year. And I have to give him that. But I had checked their scores right away when they had come out, so I had already known it. I was actually surprised that he even told me anything about the kids I had sent to the high school a year ago.”

“Okay. I have to ask a question. Could you, or any of your other female coworkers, feel comfortable stepping into Mike’s office and suggest that you’d like to visit about something professionally, or does he put walls up to either protect or guard himself? Help me to understand.”

“Well, he kinda puts the walls up. I don’t ever just feel like I could just stop in and say anything, because he just sometimes, it’s gonna be his way or the highway, but just to prove that it’s gonna be his way. But I mean there are times when I felt really passionate about something. When he said he wasn’t gonna give me that job because he didn’t think I would do a good job at it, I really lost it at that point and I actually wrote a
letter to both Mr. Jameson and the superintendent. It just really hurt when he recently said, ‘I just don’t think Second Chance is working,’ because he didn’t … I mean, he doesn’t even know what goes on in my room, most days. He doesn’t … I bet he’s been maybe to my room, well, more this year because he had to evaluate me three times, but, um…”

“How often is Mike in your room, say on a yearly basis? Can you give me a rough estimate?”

“Maybe five, maybe six times this year, but like I said, this was my evaluation year so it was more often than usual. But usually he just comes in to get a student. And usually it’s one of these, ‘I need to see so-and-so,’ and then he turns around and leaves. It’s almost like he’s uncomfortable being in my room.”

I attempted to probe about Mike’s relationship with students by asking, “Does he talk to kids about …” when Breanne interrupted and cut off my line of questioning.

He doesn’t talk to kids, not very much anyway. Wait, that’s not really true. He only talks to them if they’re in trouble. And to be honest with you, Becky, most of us handle the discipline because the kids would rather deal with him than us.” She continued, but her thoughts seemed fragmented somehow. “Because he just, you know, everything’s,” she struggled to collect her thoughts, “he doesn’t want,” and then she finished with, “he’s scared of parents. That’s the bottom line. He’s scared to death he’s gonna get sued, and he’s scared of parents. And therefore we have a lot of discipline issues with our seventh grade. Our seventh grade is very naughty. They’re very naughty and they’re very … they’re very truant. Ummm, they don’t come to school. There’s no
follow-up. They don’t…” Again she struggled before continuing, this time with an example to back up her claim, “I have one kid that probably missed my first hour class two to three days a week. Sometimes he’d show up third hour. He just doesn’t want to come to school. Mom and Dad don’t make him. He wants to sleep in. He’s tired.”

I was awestruck by her story and encouraged her to go on.

“And there’s just a lot of that that goes on with him. But he’s scared to death of those parents. Those parents have him running. He’s scared. We’ve had letters from parents about, ‘This is the naughty class, and it’s the teacher’s fault.’ What does he do? Well, he just forwards those negative and accusatory emails to us. He doesn’t stand up for us. He never really has. You know, we’ve tried to discipline. And that’s why this next year I’m gonna write a letter at the beginning of the year. Actually, I’m going to write it during the summer and send it out when school starts, outlining my literature and class expectations for all seventh and eighth graders. And I am sending it to the parents in the mail.’”

“Will a letter of that magnitude be required to cross Mike’s desk before it’s sent out?”

“Oh, I’ll give him a copy, but I’m sending it. I’m not asking for permission. You can bet that I’ll be sending it.”

I wanted to know what Breanne thought of Mike in terms of his support of Second Chance Reading, although she had alluded to his lack of support at this point. I pushed her thinking and she responded.
"I mean, I think in the beginning he was supportive. He was behind it in that he said to me right off the bat, ‘You have to take the class.’ I remember when I took the job. That was one of the things. ‘Well, if you’re gonna take this job, you have to take Second Chance Reading.‘ Okay, it’s the best class I ever took."

I thanked her as I’d been her instructor. “Well, thank you. I love everything about Second Chance Reading. Anyone that knows me at all knows it’s my true professional passion, and the best work I believe I’ve ever done. I’m really proud of the training we have put together.”

“It really was, you know. It was one of …,” she stammered and went on to reference our veteran status, “we’ve both been in education long enough that we’ve sat in those things and thought, ‘Okay, if I can take one thing from here it’ll be great.’ But this was one of those classes where every time I came I took several things back. And that is so important to me. And I was confident enough that I could use them the next day in my classroom. And you know that means a lot as a teacher when you’re away from your kids that you’re doing something that’s going to make you a better teacher and make them better readers in this case. And so I guess I have to say yes, he supported that and that was the one good thing. He made me take that class.”

She seemed to work to follow her train of thought. “And, um, I don’t think he has the complete comprehension of what it takes to truly make SCR successful. He thought it was just gonna be that little, ‘Well, she’s going to know how to do this, and that’s going to raise our scores,’ kind of thing. I kinda think he wanted one of those interventions that worked like a quick fix, but struggling readers and those kids that really hate to read need
a lot more than a simple band-aid. You can’t repair what’s so broken with just a quick fix. Some things take a long time. This is one of them. But, that’s the way it was with him in the beginning.”

“Can you talk to me for a minute about how Mike supports your students in their learning or even how he celebrates learning with your students?”

As Breanne began responding to the question about celebrations, her voice dropped in tone and volume and was barely louder than a whisper. In fact, I had to lean forward to hear her speak. It was almost as if she were embarrassed for her principal.

“He has no involvement. There’s no involvement whatsoever, from him. I’d like to make up that there’s something, but there isn’t. It’s really sad for me and even sadder for the kids. They don’t know anything about him or even think that he cares at all. It’s so wrong.”

“Why do you think that is? No, never mind.” I didn’t want to delve where I wasn’t invited. I retraced my steps and asked instead, “Help me understand how you celebrate with the kids?”

The excitement leaked back into her voice after the moment of hesitation when talking about Mike’s lack of involvement. She again became animated. “We do. Oh boy. We look at test scores and we’ve done little parties. And it doesn’t have to be anything big. I give tootsie rolls, ya know, when they read. And they bring me their book log every week to get a tootsie roll. And they get red tickets. And with those red tickets they can buy their way out of a spelling test at the end of the week in the language class. We do little celebrations now and then. They get cupcakes for their birthdays, ya know
there are things like that. And they love that. And we sing ‘Happy Birthday.’ It’s just that, 

... that building of mutual respect amongst your peers is critical. You don’t have to be 
their best friends, but you do have to respect them in my classroom. And you have to be 
able to work with everyone.”

I had run short on questions so we wrapped up our conversation with a list of 
projected pleasure readings, weekend trip conversations, and lazy days ahead. I thanked 
Breanne for her time and commitment and then wished her a calm and restful summer 
before heading to the main office. It was time to meet with Mike Jameson.

Data Driven Disaster (Vignette 2b)

Amanda, the principal’s secretary, greeted me as she did each time I entered her 
sanctuary. She told me, as had Breanne, that this day was the first without teachers and 
the second day without students, and that she welcomed the tranquility and hoped for 
minimal distractions in order to clear off her desk for her work space was cluttered with 
multiple files, folders, and phones.

The hub of any school is the secretary’s domain and Amanda, a veteran in the 
district for over 30 years, had a firm grasp on the pulse of both the community and the 
school. I had visited this rural community on multiple occasions and always felt 
welcomed when entering her zone. We made small talk, discussed her family’s 
anticipated summer trip to the Grand Canyon, and shared tales of our children. She told 
of a pending family wedding when her phone rang and I was invited by Amanda to join 
Mike in his office.
Not having seen Mike since November, for we moved in different circles, I first noticed a fatigued principal who had visibly aged over the months. Having worked with this junior high school principal over multiple years and in multiple capacities, he had always reminded me of the lovable yet depressed A. A. Milne character, Eeyore, for the spirit and drive he must have once had had clearly waned and I suspected he was counting the days until retirement became his welcomed reality. Mike welcomed me and shook my extended hand as I joined him in his dimly lit, windowless office.

As I entered his fairly spacious area, I took in the scene. A single desk lamp lit his space as the overhead fluorescents were not burning. His computer screen glowed with a spreadsheet of some apparent importance. Mike’s main work area was cluttered with several opened binders, stacks of reports haphazardly leaned against each other in the corner, and boxes of what appeared to be assessment documents sat askew on an untidy credenza. Much of the work he appeared to be tackling seemed to be in progress while other components seemed barely touched and barely analyzed. His office was clearly not yet ready for him to head home for a few weeks of vacation, yet I had called weeks earlier and requested a few minutes of his time.

Suggesting that he wrap up the school year and send kids on their way before I took some time, we decided to wait until school was dismissed for the summer before arranging our few minutes together. Although he clearly had pressing issues and reports with which he had to deal, I felt like I might be a welcomed distraction from the untidiness of it all and promised not to hold him up for long. I took a seat at his table.
I began my line of questioning to determine Mike’s level of understanding regarding *Second Chance Reading* and how he came to know about it.

“Well, my first experience was seeing a need in school, in our building, for improving the reading level of our junior high students. I had talked to some other districts that had used *Second Chance* and thought it’d be good to give it a try. I selected two teachers, a seventh grade teacher and an eighth grade teacher to do the training and to provide administrative support I decided to join them. And so I went through the training, and I did everything they did except actually teach the class. And I found that very beneficial because I knew what they needed to be doing.”

He shared some of the history over the past several years and then shared his vision for the new school year and that *Second Chance Reading* would be modified and used building wide. “Ah, currently the plan for next year is to have that teacher teaching both seventh and eighth grade again. The difference is we’re not going to be sorting out the lowest kids. We’re going to use the *Second Chance* with all of them.”

“Really, all seventh and eighth graders? Help me understand your thinking regarding this decision.”

“Sure. Let me explain. Well, we’re not really doing it with everyone in the junior high, but rather we’re going to have three sections and we’re going to do it with two of the three sections.”

I struggled to understand his thinking and continued probing. “So, you have three sections of seventh and three sections of eighth graders - and you’re gonna have … so then you’ll essentially have four sections of *Second Chance Reading*?”
"Yes. Well, we haven’t tried it yet so I don’t know if Breanne will be able to, you know, implement it in its truest form, but she’ll be using a great extent of the Second Chance platform. And that will be the responsibility of the teacher that has had the experience with it."

Not wanting to question the sense of his decision, I moved forward with a new line of questioning. “Ok. Thanks. Can you talk to me a little bit about what happened when you would walk into a Second Chance classroom? What would you sort of expect to see – or what did you see when you wandered into Breanne’s room, for example?"

“Well, it depended upon what day of the week I walked in. Sometime I would see book talks going on in the room while other students were reading. Sometimes I would go in and I would see vocabulary work being done. Other times I would see the teacher reading to the group. I would also see, in each case, you’d see the teacher discussing the read / think aloud.” His answer evidenced that he had a working knowledge of some key components of SCR as well as the fact that different days of the week dictated a different structure and schedule.

“Mike, can you talk to me about the leadership qualities you exhibit in order to support your Second Chance teachers and the students in their classrooms?”

“Well, with the teachers, I think the point was getting the training right with them. So, from the beginning I supported the training and provided time during the school year to make that happen. And then I make sure they always receive what they need for their classroom.”

“Can you elaborate on that? What sorts of things do they need?”
"Well, book sets, ya know, and ordering the Jamestown every year – or I, excuse me, the Stanford. You know, I make sure they’re provided the materials that they need."

I recalled Breanne’s comment about having to purchase her own supplies because she’d spent her fourth grade budget. However, in order to keep this conversation from sounding confrontational, I chose not to bring it up but rather to allow him to continue his train of thought.

“For the students in the beginning it was providing that letter to go out when the book logs weren’t coming in.”

“So Mike, would you describe yourself as a hands-on administrator, or do you allow the teacher to do most of her own management? From what you’ve said, it sounds like you provide administrative support when dealing with difficulties from the home.”

“I’d describe myself primarily as a hands-on principal although I don’t spend much time in the classroom. I work best out of my office.”

I didn’t pursue nor latch onto his line of thinking although I perhaps should have asked him to elaborate. Again, in order to keep our interview from feeling and sounding like an interrogation, I moved to the next line of questioning.

“Okay. Thanks. Can you talk to me for a minute about the structure in your building so that I can get a better grasp of your schedule? For example, do your kids have the opportunity and support in a study hall period where independent reading might be encouraged and supported?”

“Actually, in some instances the only way we would get any sort of outside the classroom assistance is if they did read in study hall. A lot of our kids come from homes
where they tend to themselves at the end of the day, or in many instances they’re the responsible quasi-adult for the family and take care of siblings or younger cousins.”

“We were talking about methods and means of support from your perspective and office. Can you think of anything else you’d like to add?”

Mike seemed to contemplate momentarily before responding, “Well, I think just, ya know, ah, moral support for the people doing it.”

“It kinda goes without saying that that’s very important. Help me understand what that looks like around here. How do you provide moral support?”

“Well, yea. I probably did not do as good a job that first year because I lost one of the teachers. I mean, I had to take him out. I probably didn’t watch that situation close enough. His strength really wasn’t in the middle school. You know, you have certain people in positions and his strength probably was not along the academic area. His strength was along the character building area. And he was very good at that.”

I noted that Mike had managed to side-step the question. Unfortunately, I didn’t catch the slick evasion at the time and let the opportunity to drill deeper slip through my fingers for I had pressed onto the next question.

“Can you talk to me about some of the barriers you faced with Second Chance implementation and perhaps how you tackled or at least managed those barriers?”

“Well, in Second Chance ... some of the difficulty with Second Chance was getting the reading logs back in. I mean, you have students whose parents sign them without ever listening to them read and you have students who don’t like to read that just do not turn them in. And I think if there’s a fault to the process it’s that you’re taking the
most difficult group and then you’re asking them to do something that is the biggest
difficulty.”

“Can you explain to me about the biggest difficulty? What are you referring to
here, Mike? Help me understand.”

“Well, I’m referring to the expectation that students read on their own outside of
the class period and tie that to the expectation that students get autographs from
responsible adults. It just seems that that’s an unreasonable expectation because we have
parents that refuse to cooperate with that expectation. Now, on the other hand, the
vocabulary building works well because that can be done right in the classroom. They
can do some reading in the classroom, but that extra reading that’s so important to build
on. It isn’t, I mean, it just doesn’t seem to get done. And you know it’s not because we
don’t stress it to the students. It’s not because we don’t stress it to the parents. It’s just not
a priority for these particular families. In the beginning, or rather the first few years, we
did have informational meetings from the beginning of the year. I would send a letter
right at the start. And we have done a letter through the year that I’ve sent out that request
to stress the importance of getting those reading logs back, but it doesn’t seem to make a
difference to these students and their families. And so our solution, in part is that, …let
me back up a minute. One of the reasons that we’re spreading it out is that we have a
situation in junior high where we do pre-algebra in seventh grade and algebra in eighth
grade.”

“OK …?”

“Which sorts the kids.”
“Right . . . ”

“Then we also have Second Chance where we took the non-proficient which was also sorting the kids. And it was tying a connotation on those kids that they were dumb. And that may have been one of the bigger drawbacks, even more so than the reading log.”

“Help me understand. Who tied the connotation to the Second Chance kids that they were adversely labeled with such a horrendous label, and might I ask what your office, and particularly you, as the building administrator, did to counteract that seriously demeaning label? It seems to me that we’re talking about bullying at a district wide – or at least a school wide level. Help me understand, please.”

“Well, let me explain. First of all, it’s part of the reasons why I’m shifting away from it.”

“Go on. I’m confused. Please, Mike, correct me if I’m wrong. Did I hear you explain that you’re cancelling Second Chance Reading because of the negative connotation tied to placement in the class, rather than addressing the cultural issue that may be at the root of the problem?”

“Well, no. But the negative label was based on feedback from students, at least the early students that had taken part in it, and their parents.”

“Um,” I collected my thoughts, and worked to clarify my question, trying to make sense of this dangerously poisonous and demeaning culture I was being made privy to.

“How did you address that when the kids would come in, or the parents would come in
and say, you know, ‘I don’t want my Billy in this class because it’s the dumb class,’? I mean, did you ever hear things like that?”

“Oh yea, yes.”

“Really? How did you respond to those sorts of things?”

“Well, I said they have a deficiency in reading, and this is the way we’ve decided to best deal with it. But, let me continue. One of the problems we had is that,” he continued, “well at least four of the children were teachers’ children. No, that’s not right. At least six of the kids were teachers’ children. They were the ones that were in the building and saw it the most. A lot of parents would probably not even know it unless their son or daughter mentioned it, but…”

“So tell me, did you see success in Second Chance?”

“I saw success in Second Chance with the students that followed the procedure. The ones that did not do their reading, well, if they did better it was with the vocabulary aspect of it more than anything,” he paused and went on, “you know, they were accomplished with significant word recognition skills.”

“It seems to me it’s the same with anything, Mike. It always comes down to implementation. And if the kids aren’t willing to step through the paces, and the teachers or the administrators are not tracking for or monitoring implementation, it’s very difficult to see gains in achievement.”

“I agree. And it seems to me that many times students do not see their own deficits. And because they don’t have a comparison from earlier grades where they do a
lot of choral reading, like that, they see it. But once you get into fifth grade and do a lot more of text reading, it doesn’t show up as drastically.”

“Okay, Mike. I have a question. If you could remove the barriers and stigma that seem to be tied to SCR,” I paused to organize my thoughts while recalling the points Mike shared with me, “and it sounds like you’ve begun that process. Remind me again what you would do to most significantly help your teachers.”

His thoughts and words came in fragmented chunks. “Since we have to,” … “we have to do the eighth grade algebra,’ … “I mean that provides the students that extra year in high school where they can take calculus. And because eighth grade algebra is a static class, that automatically sets one of three sections. So the other two sections are going to be more of a mixed group and ya know, it’s not always” … “I’ve had Second Chance students that should be in Second Chance that end up in algebra because they’re very good at math. But at least now we can spread that and can’t use it as an excuse that they’re the ‘dumb’ group. I suppose I could say that if they’re not being successful now, then it gets back to something we’re doing with the implementation.”

“So, let me ask a question. If you had a student, let’s call her Elle, and she should have been plugged into algebra, but also qualified for SCR, which class took precedence?”

“Algebra.”

“Algebra. Hmmm, why is that? I’m curious.”

“Well, I don’t know. I really don’t know why, but it did. It always has since Second Chance Reading arrived in this district.”
"I find that interesting. So, let me understand. You’d expect your teachers to differentiate for reading instead of math, is that correct?"

"Right. The thing we run into with Second Chance, depending on the year is the number of students, using the old way, ah, ... that would qualify. Ya know, sometimes we’d have 14. Some years we’re a little shorter. And this year I was able to remove some of those students from the SCR and gave them their own pull-out for language arts and reading with the middle group which kinda made the groups balanced a little better as far as, ya know... I will no longer hear or live with the stigma that some kids have lived with. They’ll now instead be thinking, ‘We’re not in the dumb group...we’ve spread out.’"

"So, I heard you refer to them as the ‘dumb class.’ Is that how you qualify or think of these struggling readers, Mike?"

"Well, no, but that, it’s just the, I think ... when ya’ use the term ... you know that should be a good way of doing it, but I can’t guarantee I’ll do that every year, but it’s just the term Second Chance now that’s associated with the lower end, ability wise."

"That sounds like a cultural issue, Mike. And excuse me for being so bold and perhaps speaking where I should keep my thoughts to myself, but it sounds deeper than..., well, never mind. Let’s not go there.” Again, I did not want to compromise nor cancel this interview through an interrogative stance that may have pulled the plug on an interesting conversation. I elected to drop my line of questioning.

"Well, some of it is culture. It’s parents’ perception. It’s more important that the student feel good about what they can do rather than whether they can do it or not. I
mean, well, that’s a reality. There’s nobody in there that’s so terrible that they’re not going to be able to be successful later on. If they’re at that level then they’re in special education."

“Can you talk to me about the professional relationship between you and Breanne? From what I recall, you’ve worked together for a while.”

“Well, it’s like it would be with any other teacher, you know. I go in, and I walk through. I go in and I do a formal observation every three years. We don’t really talk in terms of Second Chance or you know,” he paused for emphases, “it’d just be classroom procedures. We do talk about Jamestown, or…not the Jamestown, but the Stanford scores.”

When I brought up Breanne’s name, Mike seemed almost a bit uncomfortable and shifted in his seat. He went on. “Ya know, the sorting thing has been a problem, to put them in the Second Chance had been the ITBS and the 40th percentile. But what I saw was, that there wasn’t a lot of core-,” he hesitated, “there was no,” he paused again, “…there was no pattern, true pattern other then you could be fairly certain students didn’t do their reading log were not going to move out of that group. But it’s very strange to look at it and see students that did do it, and were successful, scored well on the Stanford that were still not proficient. There was not, … the correlation wasn’t there. The lack of a correlation between student achievement and implementation was always one thing that has concerned me. Sometimes they did, sometimes they didn’t.”

“You know, there were students in there that sometimes had been proficient, but maybe at the 48th percentile, so there’s the chance they could fall back that we had them
in there. Well, sometimes, you know, they’d come back in there at the 10th percentile.

Well, you know, you don’t lose that much. It has more to do with the predictability of the test than anything. And that’s probably a very poor screen. I think Breanne’s low scores on the Stanford had something to do with the fact that we ran two straight weeks of MAP testing and then she had her kids take the Stanford. I don’t know how close she was to that, but I suspect it was too close.”

“Mike, can you talk to me about the instructional capacity of Breanne? How does she manage in the classroom?”

“Well, it’s kinda,” he composed his thoughts, “I’ve had, I’ve been able to use co-teachers in there for different times for special ed. kids. It’s been the same person. And…”

He appeared to have something he wanted to say, yet was hesitant to say it. I encouraged him to finish his thoughts. “Go on.”

“And I don’t notice it, but she, that’s Anna, tells me that Breanne does things quite a bit different than how Louise used to do things.”

“Really?”

“Yea, but I haven’t recognized that. But I don’t know if it’s in her expectations of how work gets done. Or, ya know? I’m not sure what Anna saw, but I just noticed that she had made that offhand comment one time to me. I’m sure it’s different. A lot of… any success in the classroom has to do with the relationship the teacher has with the students. Ya know, if there’s a determining factor that’s probably the factor. And I know
Breanne has been very successful with some students that have struggled because she’s taken the time to work with them.”

“Let me take you back to the comment that Anna made. What year did the three of you go through the training? It makes me wonder if it had anything to do with the fact that Louise was getting ready to retire about the time she took the training. In my opinion, and I’ve sat through multiple observations in both Breanne and Louise’s classes, I found them both to be fantastic teachers. I mean, when I’ve been in Breanne’s room it’s been just a pleasure. It’s really a treat to be in your building and in her room. And she’s top notch. You’re very lucky to have her. Ah, how does she, that is, Breanne, support the framework…the instructional framework? Does she, are you aware of her adherence to implementation with fidelity?”

“Well, I think so.”

“How often are you able to walk through her classroom, or just even just sit in or walk through to observe?”

“Um...ya know? Like I told you, I don’t get in there very often. I have lots of obligations outside the occasional walk-through that I have to tend to every day.”

I dropped my line of questioning, even though my findings may have been interesting. The last thing I wanted to do was isolate this administrator. “Okay, thanks, Mike. Can you talk to me for a minute about how you celebrate learning and student successes with both the Second Chance kids and Breanne?”

“Well, I don’t know if we do celebrate, because there’s such a...for every one or two that’s successful there’s always one that isn’t and that’s mainly what we discuss are
the ones that aren’t. Ya know, when we look at scores and go through those, we probably
don’t celebrate enough. We probably don’t celebrate enough with all the students. We’re
trying to do some more of that. But ya know, now with that new Iowa Assessment, it’s
hard.”

“It is hard. And it’ll take a while to get that under your belt. But if I could say
anything, I’d encourage you to spend time in those classrooms. The kids deserve to have
you around. And it might be good to get away from the office for a bit of time, on
occasion. So, you don’t know that you celebrate all that much here? Can you tell me, how
do you provide support to Breanne, that is, above and beyond the things that you
mentioned earlier with providing the materials that she needs and through moral
support?”

“Well, if she has a problem with a student within her classroom, ya know, I’ll pull
the student out and talk to them about behavior, like that.”

“Ok. Does that happen frequently?”

“It doesn’t happen frequently, but it does happen. You know, she had some move­
ins during the year that went into year two. And this year, especially the seventh grade,
have been naughty kids. That was probably ... having those new kids move into her
section was probably detrimental to what she was trying to get done.”

Our conversation had run the gamut and knowing that Mike had reports to
complete and a summer to get ready for, I thanked him for his time and wished him well
while offering wishes for a restful and reenergizing summer. I headed out the door and
was on my way.
Educator’s Town Hall: Setting the Stage

In the midst of a political year and hoping to work with both sides of the aisle, I found the concept of a respectfully insightful interchange between building administrators and the teachers in the trenches around the topics of leadership and *Second Chance Reading* to be an interesting concept. However, in order to allow all parties to speak freely and without duress, each of the 12 interviews in which I engaged was held individually. Through that process, an inordinate amount of data and views from impassioned educators were collected. However, not wanting to leave any of my compiled data undocumented, I elected to share the remaining eight educators and their views in a contrived phenomenon utilizing actual conversations between myself, two principals, and six teachers of *Second Chance Reading*. Although the condition was artificial in that the eight never sat around the table with me during a single sitting, the text shared in this third vignette actually occurred as the responses to questions are as they were when we visited one-on-one. Essentially, the dialogue was genuine although the situation and scenery were from my imagination.

As previously noted in Chapter 3, I took very limited creative license and wove a thin thread between conversations and respondents merely to tie the rhetoric together. The actual text spoken by each participant during our individual interviews has been *italicized* to further honor the words of all willing participants. That said, all dialogue italicized in the forthcoming scenario was completely original and captured by me in both field notes and on my hand-held Sony tape recorder during individual interviews which encompassed 297 minutes, or just short of five hours of time. However, the actions and
movements woven through the scene you are about to read are as I have imagined they might have occurred if I had actually collected these eight educators around a common table at a common time for in many ways they were of like mind. Again, my contrived and woven thread was NOT italicized, although the dialogue which actually occurred was italicized.

Educator’s Town Hall (Vignette 3)

Because the eight remaining teachers and principals you are about to meet were of similar stature in their attitudes around Second Chance Reading, and because they all independently professed a great respect for each other, I elected to share their conversations through an educator’s town hall. I was to be the moderator and the rules were stated up front as these were also the protocol shared during our individual interviews. Participants were free to pass on any question. They were able to take the conversation down a tangential avenue if they felt the desire. And they were expected and encouraged to be forthcoming as what they were sharing would be beneficial for future generations of educators.

I informed them as we sat together that my ultimate goal was simply to inform each other of their beliefs and concerns, perceived successes, and roadblocks to success, as well as to identify qualities of leadership required for sustainability and high levels of implementation of Second Chance Reading. Collaboration and celebrations might also be potential topics of discussion. As the moderator, I would ask the questions, and participants could only speak when questions were directed to them. We elected to meet at a local community college’s conference room large enough to accommodate us all on a
warm summer evening. My guest speakers and I, all casually dressed in summer attire, sat in cozy chairs around a large conference table. Besides myself, there were two principals and six teachers from three separate schools. We introduced ourselves to each other and then set to the task at hand.

I posed the first question in order to determine baseline knowledge regarding *Second Chance Reading*. Wally, an administrator from an alternative educational placement facility that maintained a steady enrollment of approximately 150 students, was the first responder.

“Sure, um, I think it goes back to, I kind of knew a bit about *Second Chance Reading* from some of my experiences in previous districts. However, none of those districts had *Second Chance Reading* per se, but I was in a *Reading First* district. And in that capacity, I had the opportunity to hear from and work with Beverly Showers. If I remember right, she was the designer of *Second Chance Reading*, right?”

“Yes, that is right, Wally,” I affirmed.

“Well, when I ended up at the school where I now hang my hat, one of the first things I discovered is that my teachers had just been awarded a substantial grant from Dollar General and wanted to institute a class that targeted struggling readers as they make up the majority of our unique population. Most of our students struggle in one realm or another, yet a great majority of them struggle academically. *Second Chance Reading* seemed to be a good fit for our kids,” Wally continued, “and I was all for the implementation of SCR to reach our needy students, but I said to my teachers, ‘What do we mean, we’re just buying materials and doing *Second Chance*?’ I did some inquiring
and found that it worked in our schedules that you could come out and train them and then I got to sit in on some of the trainings. If I was to do it all over again, we’d go somewhere and see you, instead.” I noticed Mamie and Helen, two of his teachers, nodding in agreement as he spoke about the training they’d all engaged in together.

Hank Davis, an elementary principal from a rural school of nearly 200 students recalled his initial knowledge of the *Second Chance Reading* framework. Three of his teachers, Kelsey, Susie, and Wanda, leaned forward as he spoke. His comments appeared to piggy back off of Wally’s statement about helping struggling readers when he stated, “Finding out about Second Chance Reading really did stem from my teachers looking for something that they could do to help our struggling readers at the upper levels of elementary. We had kids that weren’t excited about reading and kids that had tried other things. We had kids that had habitually, every year, been in summer school. We had kids that were in our Title One reading program, and had maybe made progress, but not at the same rate as others. I am really fortunate that I have such strong teachers that are always looking for a better way, who are never satisfied, who always want to do the best they could for the kids and were willing to participate in extra trainings and implement new programs and learn new strategies. They had come to me because they had heard great tales from our middle school teachers that had previously implemented it, ah, Second Chance Reading, and seen great gains in student achievement. We figured it was worth a try.” I saw a smile from Hank’s three teachers when he acknowledged them as strong teachers. He leaned back in his chair, evidently pleased that his voice had been heard.
I could see that teachers were anxious to share their experiences with Second Chance Reading. Susie, the youngest teacher from Hank’s building spoke first. “Well, it was a positive experience for me. I began the training last summer and finished it throughout the school year. And it was just really neat to see that the students that I had for reading that were pulled out during my first year were experiencing success in a classroom setting. It’s great to see how they’ve grown through this program.”

Kelsey, also a teacher from the school Hank was leading and a colleague of Susie echoed similar sentiments. “Yes, we have been participating in Second Chance Reading with our fifth graders for three years. This will be our fourth year next year, and I absolutely love it. I have a wonderful group of teachers that I work with so, of course that makes it all the more fun. But most importantly, we’ve had wonderful results with our kids. We always start out the year, of course, with those kids that obviously struggle in reading, but year after year we’ve seen some really tremendous gains and feel that it is really an asset to our building. We are really happy that we are able to do it with our fifth graders.”

Helen, a language teacher from the alternative school where Wally led the way, spoke up and also echoed similar sentiments and remembrances. “I remember that Wally brought this training to our school when he joined us three years ago. Actually, it kind of started with the Dollar General grant. The school librarian and I had written the grant because we realized that we had an inordinate number of struggling readers and minimal materials in the library to support them. The problem was, we didn’t have anybody that was really trained to help our struggling readers and as Wally came on board he knew
where we could get the training. We used some of the funding from Dollar General to help with the training and to get boxes of books. We were clearly in need of something for our lowest readers because so many of our kids were really low. Two of us, Mamie and I, were told we had to take this seven day training and I was really kind of angry. I’ve always been content to just get a manual and find the pieces I wanted to do. The last thing I had in mind was sitting through seven tortuous days of training. And besides that, I didn’t want to be a reading teacher. I started my career as an English, writing, and grammar teacher. Those were my strong suits. And I’ve always loved to read, but I didn’t connect the dots. So then, as I got into Second Chance Reading I just fell in love with the whole process because it’s not just for reading. The read/think alouds I do all the time with the kids and it hooked them into everything that we do, but especially into reading.”

“Let’s move onto another question or we’ll be here much longer than I’d anticipated. After all, you’re on vacation and the sun is still up.”

“Hang on a minute. Can I say something about my experience with Second Chance Reading?” Mamie, one of the lead teachers at Wally’s school spoke up.

“Oh, yes. Please go ahead,” I prompted her. I’d not meant to neglect Mamie and forgotten that this teacher had a propensity for speaking her mind. I appreciated that in her. She had spunk. We all sat back and waited.

“Well, the thing is, I think it’s important to hear my perspective because I wasn’t at all happy about this - not at all. To start with, it caught me off guard. I had only one day notice before you showed up at our school and let me just say, it was really bad timing. We had just had a horrible wind storm the night before and then you showed up
at our school with your boxes of books and slick posters. I was not happy to see you, not
at all.”

“I understand.”

“I doubt it. Now, you have to remember, our whole town was affected by the storm
and the last thing I wanted to think about was going to the class where I had to practice
and try things. My house lost windows in the storm. The siding was ripped from my entire
western exposure. It was really just an overwhelming week and the timing couldn’t have
been worse. But, once I got past that and started doing the reviews and started practicing
and trying things, it’s been good. It’s been really good. Actually, I didn’t like much about
it at all in the beginning, but I will confess that I’m really happy with the work and my
kids have grown. In fact, they have really grown. The one thing I’ve noticed is that some
of the work really helped my kids step outside their comfort zone. And some have learned
that that’s totally cool, and they really liked it. I kind of hate to admit it, but Second
Chance Reading really has been good for our program and our kids. And you know what,
I’m kind of one of those that never admits that something’s good for kids. It’s why I
wanted to speak.”

As I looked at my participants while making eye contact with Mamie I stated,
“Well, my thanks go out to everyone, but perhaps especially Mamie for her blatant
honesty. Okay, anyone else care to speak about their background and initial knowledge of
Second Chance Reading before we move on?” I paused temporarily, looked at those that
hadn’t yet spoken.
“This question is specifically for our teachers. I’m wondering what qualities you felt were necessary to support both you and the students and how that has been evidenced in your principal? I trust that we can all continue with honest and respectful exchanges. I’d like to hear from the teachers.”

“I’ll go first,” Susie spoke. “I think for a principal to stand by and support this work, he or she had to make sure that it was set in our schedule to have that weekly meeting. Teachers have to have the training in order to make sure they’re doing things according to the grand plan. And Hank did that for me. I think that was really beneficial. So, that was really nice to have that so then I could talk to those teachers about what I’d learned and what was expected in the classroom. He supported me to attend the training during three school days when class was in session. I appreciated that.” Hank smiled at the remembrance and nodded as she spoke.

“Anything else, Susie?”

“Actually, yes. “Hank stops in and observes our kids a lot. He comes into the back of the room and observes. Sometimes he talks to the kids. Other times he just listens. And this year I was in charge of entering all our assessment data into the spreadsheet which I periodically shared with him. He was really interested in how the kids were doing and whether or not we needed anything. I guess I could simply say he was visibly and intentionally interested.”

“I’ll go next.” It was Kelsey this time. “I think the most important thing that our principal did for us was to provide time to meet, which we were given. That was very important. I can’t imagine – especially in the first year of teaching it, ya know, without
having any time to talk about kids and where we were going next and that kinda thing.

Um, I guess the ability to have as many teachers as we have. I mean, three teachers has been wonderful. But, um, so I think that was huge in itself just because I know it was very hard to, ya know, have her give up a period of ... but a lot of her kids are in that room too, so she’s serving them, also.” She referenced both the special education teacher, Susie, and the teacher of Title One known as Wanda. “So, I guess having time … you know, a common time where everybody can meet as a teacher with the kids and then a separate common time during the day ... a period of time when we can all be together was probably, it’s tough, but also important. I know Wanda’s schedule is very full and her only time is the third period that we have which ... so we’ve just kinda put that aside as, ‘okay, this is always gonna be Second Chance time.’”

Wanda leaned forward and spoke deliberately. “He’s pretty open. I mean, you’d have to be...to be able to, um...I think he’s really hands on, um, because he’s one that, ok ... just by thinking about what happened at the end of this school year, he wants to know who’s selected for the next year; he gets that. I mean, he has that list ready for the middle school if and when they want it.”

“Nice.”

Wanda continued. “And he goes to the board with all of our data from the year. Now, Susie did it this year, but I’ve done it in the past where, um, the Stanford and the MAPs results ... he takes that to the board. So, really, he’s....I mean, they have to be able to ... he sells it. I mean, that’s what Hank does. He sells it. He’s probably our biggest advocate in the entire district and why we’re doing so well and why our kids are flying
skｙward and cracking that glass ceiling. It’s awesome, and we all have Hank to thank for our success.” I noticed that he blushed while all three of his teachers nodded their agreement.

“When I think about Wally and how he’s supported us,” countered Helen, “I think about leading and reading. Wally makes time for reading. He’s always stressing the importance that every kid needs a book in his hand. When he started, I’m not sure how soon after he started, we started having sustained silent reading 10 minutes a day. Everybody in this building is supposed to sit down. That includes the secretary, janitor, principal, psychologist, teachers ... and we all read for ten minutes. And there’s another thing. He’s doing what’s best for kids and that’s what we’re here for. That’s really what he’s about.”

“I’d like to echo Helen’s sentiments,” Mamie said. “When Wally joined our staff three years ago, he started right off saying we needed to support kids in reading. And that’s why he chose this program. Um, he was not aware that they had to have certain phonetic bases, so that kind of caught him off guard. It’s not doing everything he was hoping. But he supports it in making sure I’m able to order things. He supports it so the kids are able to perform if they feel like it and he doesn’t mind if they back out if they’re kind of chicken, which is fine. He goes with the flow with that. So, ya know, that’s just kind of his style anyway.” I noticed a smile on Wally’s face as Carol spoke of his laid back attitude. These educators were all respectful of each other and I was feeling pleased with my Educator’s Town Hall concept. It was going well.
“I’m pleased with what I’m hearing so far and appreciate everyone’s comfort levels. It doesn’t seem that anyone’s being hesitant or reluctant to speak.” I had noticed that we hadn’t heard from Wendy yet and glanced her way.

“Let me remind you that you are welcome to pass on any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. Are we ready for another question? I’d actually like to hear from the principals with a similar question. What leadership qualities do you believe you exhibit in order to support your teachers and the students in their classrooms? This is actually your opportunity to sell yourself to your teachers. Who would like to go first?”

“I’ll go first,” Wally jumped in. “I think it starts with the push to get them the training. Because I was adamant that we weren’t just gonna buy books, but I think that’s what the teachers had in mind.” Helen and Mamie both nodded in agreement as he continued. Helen blushed slightly while Mamie sat stoically. Wally continued. “Um, and there was a leadership vacuum here before I started, so, I began with making sure they had the training before we did this and then I have supported their continued training. In fact, they’ve gone to the training for follow-up for three straight years and it’s always beneficial for both the teachers and our students. Sometimes that means I have to battle with our central office. There’s the issue of open communication. I think that’s really important. I’d have to say that I visit with both Helen and Mamie on a semi-regular basis. We probably have our conversations about Second Chance at least once a month, if not more. And I’m visible. And I am always checking on the data and how the kids are progressing. It’s important, heck ... it’s critical that administrators have their heads around the data while also paying attention to the human spirit, especially here, but
probably everywhere. Our kids need to know that we care. And I work hard as do my teachers to make sure our kids know that.”

It was Hank’s turn to respond. “I appreciate this question because I’ve thought about it a lot. Two qualities that are really necessary are organization and communication. Um, ... and when I say that, I think about the importance of building a schedule that,” he hesitated, “that allows us to have those three teachers co-teaching together. I make it a priority when kids are scheduled for this class and it’s registration time in the fall, that they have the chance to get to meet the principal and not somebody else first. I don’t want there to be big walls in between, even if they’re symbolic walls. When they walk into our office if my office door is always closed, that sends a subliminally negative connation that I’m completely opposed to. And so when new fifth graders come in over the summer or before school starts – or... you know very often it’s during that first week of school you’ve got a new fifth grader coming in, you know that’s where we have to make a quick decision about how we’re going to schedule this child and what classes they’re gonna be in to meet their needs. And we would hate to put them in a class and then a little bit later switch things around.”

“So, could I assume that this means you’re involved in the data collection, assessment, analysis, synthesis, and scheduling and not leaving that to the guise of the secretary?” I asked.

“You bet. I have to get my hands and head around the data. I’ve had to place calls to other districts to get data and permanent records for kids new to our district. And lots of times it’s somebody that doesn’t know me, but I’m willing to place the call, and
that’s what I’ll do for most of the other small districts around is I’ll call the principal, um, or I’ll ask to talk to a former teacher. I’ll describe this class and some of them have heard of Second Chance Reading and some haven’t, but I’ll describe the program and this class. I’ll ask them about test scores and have to make kind of a quick decision as to whether placement is appropriate. We try not to make changes in that until a trimester when we have a ... everybody gets a new schedule at the trimester so that there’s no, ahhh, stigma or anything with it. So when they come in that’s something that, ah, I do ... is try to make a quick decision with good data. I also ... ya know, I’ve asked parents before, I’ve just said, ya know...and I don’t ever promise anything, I say, ‘Now, I want to talk to your child’s former teacher, I want to talk to people in school, I want to find test data, and I want to tell ya about a class that we have,’ and explain it to them and ask, ‘oh, that’s exactly what she needs,’ or others say ‘she’s probably one of the top readers in her class, and I don’t know about that, but go ahead and call,’ and ya know, so.”

Hank paused to take a breath and then went on after a heavy sigh. “As far as communication goes, it’s just that ... that piece about ... ya know, I’m sure it’s somewhat public knowledge, but I’ve still tried to communicate with the other building and encouraged them to participate. I think that’s important, and I keep our data out there, ya know. Once a year I do report. One time I included our teachers on that data discovery, and they gave our board a background on Second Chance Reading. The board loved it. The very first question they asked was, ‘Are they also doing this at the other elementary?’ And our teachers had a very good, political ... ya know, a good answer. And it was a truthful answer, too. Since then too, every year I’ve reported on how our Second Chance
students are doing and how this program is doing and that’s important. That communication is also hopefully encouraging it to ... ya know, continue to happen or ... be beefed up at the other building as well. Other leadership qualities I would say include being supportive of the program by talking with the students, having conversations with the teachers, providing them with the ability to have their team meetings so they have some joint planning time.”

“Can you explain how you make that work, Hank, especially in these days where time is such a precious commodity? How often do your Second Chance Reading teachers have the opportunity to collaborate? Is it a sacredly scheduled and static time? Additionally, can you talk about the opportunity for an additional planning period? Can you share your structure?”

“Sure. What it is ...is that our contract day starts at 7:30, and our kids start arriving at 7:40. So, most of our teachers have at least a few kids in their rooms at 7:40. And ya know, by about 7:50 they have about half of them there. Now, our school day doesn’t start until 8:20, but by 8:10 most of the kids are here and there are a few stragglers at the end. So the teachers have developed morning routines and,” he paused to catch his breath before continuing, “... but they’ve still got – ya know, they’ve got kids in their rooms. And, well, what I’ve done for Second Chance Reading is I’ve provided some associates to go in and supervise the kids during the morning routine in three classrooms so that once a week the teachers can meet from 7:30 until, ya know, they can meet up to as late as 8:15. It kinda depends on what they’re discussing. And ya know, every once in a great while I’ve had to have a building meeting that same day or
something and so they haven’t had the chance to meet, ya know, but it’s on the calendar for I go ahead and put it on the calendar myself, ya know, for every Tuesday during the school year. That was something we started the first year, and it’s worked and I haven’t seen any reason to back off on it, so ... and especially this year with bringing the new teacher in. Ya know, that tie in is really, really important. I just wish that I could plan ...that I could provide that common planning time for all of our other teams. But at this time that’s not been possible. With Second Chance we’ve just made that extra planning period a priority. And it’s worked out very well for us. And I’m particularly pleased to report that during our first year of implementation, I was able to join them in those collaborative meetings nearly every Tuesday."

“Nice job, principals. I would like to thank everyone again for your honesty and respect of each other. I’d like to now move into the next area that is of particular interest to me. Can you talk to me about any potential barriers that you’re facing which may be preventing you or slowing you down from accomplishing your mission? And again, I’d remind you of our rules and would request both a continued respectful and open interchange between all parties. I don’t have any preference regarding who goes first, but I would like to hear from both principals and teachers.”

Wally leaned forward in his seat and began speaking first. “Well, I think it starts with, ah, the push to get them the training. A barrier that we face, nearly anytime I want to provide additional training for my teachers, comes down from central office. Also, I would reiterate that I was adamant that we weren’t just gonna buy books, so a bit of reluctance from my teachers was something I faced, especially since I was new in the
school. They had to figure out what made me click and I needed to know that from them, too. But we've really grown together to help our unique population. Additionally, we have really struggled with our schedule. You know, I have to make sure we have sufficient numbers in each class. There's ah, I also make sure that once they give me that list of kids that could benefit, we start going through the list again and making sure that we're not missing some kids that need to be in Second Chance."

Hank spoke. "Ah, I wouldn't...I wouldn't say there are huge barriers in our school, but maybe one at the district level I'd perhaps mention. First of all, though, you'd always like to have more funding, ah, so you could improve classroom libraries. I would reiterate that scheduling is the big one and realizing that I think it is definitely more powerful for the kids when they can be taught by more than one teacher. And there may be years, I've said since day one, there may be years when we can't do three teachers. I think we're generally in a pretty good place."

"Go on."

Hank took a breath and continued. "If I look at the big picture, district wide – it's probably been a barrier that we haven't had, or rather, been on the same wavelength with the other building. You know, even though I see our kids doing really well, um, you know, if it...maybe at the outset if it had been done a little bit differently there'd be some different attitudes from the staff over there that would help, because I...ya know, I wonder what...ya know, I've heard positive things about our kids coming over there from the seventh grade teacher that teach Second Chance Reading. And,....and..."
nobody wants to cut anybody down and say anything bad about the others, but by saying
the positives sometimes you get that unspoken message. So, that’s probably a barrier.”

Wendy, the only teacher present without a corresponding administrator, spoke for
the first time. “I was waiting to speak until a question kinda kindled my fire and this is it.
One of the barriers in my school involves making sure you really need to know how
you’re going to identify your kids for this program. First of all, we look at the ITBS, the
MAP scores, and teacher recommendation.”

“So, you triangulate the data?”

“That’s right, and a lot of it is just,” she paused, “by the time they’re in eighth
grade we’ve had some of these kids in sixth and seventh grades so we know the struggling
readers. Our building is sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. But what I’ve found
throughout the year is we had four students move in throughout the year and they always
got put in my room. And I asked why they were always scheduled for my class without
really looking at their cumulative records, because a couple of them did not need to be
there. That is a significant barrier. It’s not that it hindered us, but it doesn’t give those
students who are more reluctant to answer ... it often denies them an opportunity to
grow. So I really think looking at the data to identify who you want in there is critical.
And then I also think just make sure as you add kids throughout the year that they really
are where they need to be. We have never exited someone from Second Chance Reading
throughout the year. And that might also be another avenue you could take to just...ya
know, I think offer kids who really don’t need it anymore the chance to go to the regular
curriculum.”
Kelsey leaned forward, looked at Wendy to see if she was done, and began speaking. "Um, I think sometimes our schedule during the week, um, especially towards the end of the year when we’re down to four days a week it is so hard to get things done. By the time you have field trips or, ya know what I mean, just, different things, it seems like the end of the year especially is just really hard, but, um, I just, I don’t know. I wish we could have more five day weeks. I feel like our skills lessons are hurting a lot right now because we don’t get those in like we would like to, because that’s the first thing to go, it seems like, when you have to."

"Let me hear about that."

"Well, when kids first start with us, obviously, their confidence is not very good when it comes to reading or when it comes to talking with each other. Um, and you can see, ya know, when we first start out and we have independent reading and they’re just not real thrilled about starting to read, ya know, and ya have to go around and encourage them with an occasional, ‘come on now.’ Um, but by the end of the year, oh my gosh, they beg for independent reading time which to me is just crazy. They’ll come in and say stuff like, ‘Oh, we don’t have independent reading time, today?’ because our schedule sometimes, ya know, gets goofy at the end of the year and we’d say, ‘well, we’re going to pretend that today is Monday, even though it’s Friday.’ Ya know, whatever, and so, Tuesday then is their biggest complaint because they did not have time to independently read, but then, it’s such a great tradeoff because they love hearing us read, too. And I just remember that the beginning of the year’s always this way.\" Kelsey caught her breath before continuing again.
“This group of kids, though, I would say probably was one of our best in that, I
mean, just outside of the box thinkers. You don’t always see that in Second Chance kids.
But anyway, learning to communicate with each other is always, ya know, a hard thing at
first. But ya know, we set the rules with them at the beginning and say, ‘Ya know, you’re
gonna be partners with everybody in this room, and maybe even twice ... obviously twice
before the end of the year,’ and they’re okay with that. And so, by the end of the year,
I’ve just,” she bubbled with enthusiasm, “oh, my gosh. It’s so cool to step back and see
them talking with their partner and you can be back here just listening to them instead of
encouraging them, ‘Come on, you guys gotta talk about this.’ As a reader and obviously
on their Stanford scores, it’s obvious that they’ve improved as well. When you talk with
them by the end of the year they’re excited to share with you about what they’ve read.
Um, I don’t know. I ... there’s just a few of them that I just think, ‘Ya know, I think this
kid could probably be without it next year.’ You know, we’ve had so many that just
blossomed, so, yea, I see a big change with them.” Again she paused to catch her breath.

“There’s another thing,” she went on. “Absences are hard. Usually those kids
that are, you know, struggling anyway, like our,” she paused to collect her thoughts and
chose her words carefully, “the lowest kids are gone a lot and so it’s just,” again she
paused, “it’s so hard to try to figure out how to catch them up. And so, especially when
they miss, Tuesdays, ya know, or ... um, with three of us it’s nice because usually one of
us will pull that kid and read the story with them and at least get ‘em familiarized enough
so they can work with their partner and whatever.”

“Anything else?”
“Well, yea. It’s not an issue for us at my school, but I know that when we first started it, I’m not sure Second Chance Reading was done with fidelity at our neighboring school during that first year. And then, during the second year I don’t think they did it at all. They didn’t think there was a need for it, which floored me ’cause I thought, my gosh, . . . Really? . . . There’s nobody that can’t benefit from this? I could find more than usually not enough, but anyway...ummm, and the third year, I’m trying to think. This was our third year. Barb taught it this year, and I think there was probably a little more, I don’t know. I think fidelity I guess is the word I’m looking for. She did have a co-teacher. She had one of the Title One. And I shouldn’t really bring this up because it doesn’t affect me at all at our building, but these are all our kids. They’ll all feed into the same middle and high school. These are my potential neighbors and the friends of my children. That’s why it’s a barrier for me. It’s frustrating but there’s a lot of work to do yet and I don’t know how to fix that...I’m so glad we don’t have that in our building, but it’s frustrating and hard when you try to, ya know, be on the same page.”

“We struggle with some of the technology things.” Helen, the reluctant English teacher, jumped into the conversation. “And I would love for the kids in our school to be able to experience a Kindle or Nook and reading electronically. But they’re not allowed because some of them have internet access and we have limitations. Another problem is finding age appropriate, yet low enough, reading level boy books. We can find a ton of girl books, but to hit the male population is an issue. A huge barrier all by itself is our population. These kids don’t believe they need to be able to read. They throw up self-imposed barriers every day.”
Helen continued. “There’s another thing I meant to mention a few minutes ago. You know, one of the ways that Wally supports us is in building up people and embracing and ensuring quality relationships with those we work with. People get cut down all the time for building those relationships, but it’s what we’re trained by our superintendent and principal at training to do. You have to have respect for these students. You have to have rapport with these students. You have to build relationships or anything else we do doesn’t matter. Reluctance to building relationships is a barrier for some of the people I work with and a barrier for the kids in our school. Our kids are just not familiar with healthy relationships. It’s part of why they ended up with us.”

I could and perhaps should have continued with an elaboration on the subject of relationships. However, Mamie jumped into and joined the conversation. “I absolutely agree with what everyone’s said. The scheduling ... ya know, not having enough kids some of the time, but we’re designed to have small classes, but that’s a barrier. Sometimes too few kids is also a problem.”

“I’d like to thank you again for this thoughtful and beneficial interchange,” I said. “Let’s move forward to our next question. Consider for a minute about how you celebrate learning in your individual situations, both at the student level, and administrators, how you celebrate learning with your teachers. Who would like to go first?”

Hank jumped at the chance to answer. “This is a little bit of a problem for me, because I would say that probably I have not celebrated enough. You know, I would say when we started out that I attended more of their meetings and looked at the data with them more, rather than now it’s, I get a copy of their data. I kinda turned it over to them
in a way. Ah, but, when you see those successes, when you’re right there looking at it together that’s a great way that you can just, you know, celebrate right there just by,” he paused, “and ya know it’s probably more incidental and like I said, I have the data from the end of the year and I haven’t even looked at it yet. And now they’re off contract, even though they’re all here today,” he smiled at his teachers around the table and tossed them an incidental thumbs up, “but, ah, I need to do a better job with that, but I do think that they know that I,” again he paused to collect his thoughts before continuing, “it’s not something I do as part of a routine. I think there are some principals that, well, every year we gather all this data and then it just sits on the credenza. And the teachers wonder if they’re even looking at it or not. I think that our teachers know that I’m not only looking at this but I’m sharing it with the board. Increasing intentional celebrations is something I will work on. It is really important, actually critical, that teachers and students feel valued for their good work. I will make it a priority.”

“I’d like to go next,” ushered in Susie. “I don’t agree with what Hank just said. First of all, I think he’s great. He’s always an encourager for the kids. He talks to and supports our kids all the time. He may be my first principal, but it’s really clear to me that he cares and supports and celebrates learning with all of us, with our kids and with us as teachers. You can,” she blushed, “he just,” she leaned forward and smiled at Hank, “you can just see it. He just truly cares. He wants to be there. He wants to help the kids. He wants to help the kids and he’s very supportive of them, too. You know, kids are so excited, even at fifth grade. They’re so excited to show him a test that they did well on. And to get a high five or a hug or a ... you know. Ummm,” she paused again, “throughout
the school year even, we have a theme for each month. And Hank, ah, Mr. Davis does presentations. He’s put up slide shows to encourage kids for reading. This past school year, one month the theme was the luau. And if the kids read so many minutes, he promised he would wear a grass skirt to a luau that we could all attend. Yea, you can just imagine how that motivated our kids. So they all read like crazy and we ended up clearing out the cafeteria to host a luau for all the kids as a celebration for their excessive reading."

“You wore a grass skirt, Hank? Why didn’t I think of that?” Wally chuckled as he joined the conversation. My participants were clearly becoming more animated and comfortable with each other. “I’ve had to build up the culture in this new school as a new face at the helm. So sometimes I have to share the message like, ‘Don’t worry about that. Worry about the ... focus on the fact that, ya know, we’ve had a lot of success with a lot of kids that have made a lot of progress.’” Wally continued, “We have grown readers, and I’m so proud of that. I tell my teachers, and I tell my kids. And it is just that, some of that is our structure, ya know? This is a major shift for us. We have a lot at stake and out of our population we have grown a lot of readers. We have a lot of readers, and some of those kids haven’t read books before. So we always celebrate that.”

Wendy had been sitting back and taking it all in. However, she leaned forward in her chair and it was clear to me that she had something to share. “Celebrating learning? We give them good grades on their report cards. Let’s see. With the book talks, they get to ... um, when they finish a book they get ... we have a chart on the wall. And they can do that. Um, The Hunger Games have been huge this year with my kids. There’s a
character named Rue, and Rue had a whistle. Now I have that as one of the tones on my phone, so the kids will hear it once in a while. And it’s become almost a movement or a following of sorts. If you go into the hallway and you do the whistle you hear kids whistle back. I mean, it’s almost eerie. But it’s really cool when you connect with kids like that, and I think that’s celebrating reading."

She went on. “We also celebrate that they’ve been reading. We have to have semester tests in our middle school. So, what I did was I had blogs, and I had five reflection questions that they had to do three. One of the three questions was only for those who’ve read The Hunger Games trilogy. And I had about a half a dozen kids in each class that could answer that one question. And it was just to compare and contrast The Hunger Games to The Diary of Anne Frank. And so, I do think that’s celebrating their reading, it’s celebrating their success in completing the books. We don’t have parties or anything; they get acknowledged. You know, their page totals - they get a grade for page totals. They get a sticker on the chart when their books are done. We get to put the books in the box and have a book talk with the teacher. Eighth graders, I do let them do book talks among each other.”

Wendy paused and collected her thoughts before continuing. “They love it. And the most exciting part of my day is when I can sit, and kids are reading silently, but kids that have to do book talks will ask somebody else to do book talks with them. And I’ll go back and hear kids answering those questions to each other. The person who is recording their answer, and then, I love it when I hear, ‘Ya know, I’ve got to read that book.’ It’s amazing. It’s just amazing. And that helps me with my eighth graders. I do all my seventh
grade book talks, and I start the year doing eighth grade book talks, but by the end of the year I’ve given them the responsibility of doing it. And they always have to do it near me. It’s just amazing. And I think they’re celebrating what they’re doing, what they’re learning, what they’re reading, with a peer. Ya know, it’s positive. It’s very positive.”

“I love hearing how other people celebrate student successes and I agree with Susie. Hank does help us celebrate with the kids,” Kelsey cut in. “And I see Hank celebrating students’ successes every day. For example … okay, let’s see. When he does come into the room sometimes he’ll talk to the kids about what they’re talking about. I think he enjoys talking with them and learning about they’re thinking. I mean I think he’s definitely supportive of the kids that way. Like I said, the whole scheduling thing is a wonderful gift to us and he’s always very good about making sure that we get the time we need in our rooms, but especially as it relates to collaborative planning in my room. He celebrates with us, especially when he sees our scores. Obviously he’s very excited. And he brags us up a lot at meetings. Um, you know, he always encourages.”

Susie paused momentarily before continuing. “You know, I think he encourages us to talk to the kids about how they’re doing and when we conference with them we write in their folders about we’re very open. I would like to be probably more open with our kids about their Stanford tests. We don’t talk about that as much as I’d like to. But when they do their Jamestown readings and things like that, we talk about what to work on and I think he’s very supportive of the conversations that we have with kids. He also encourages us to help students set goals for themselves. I guess he’s very cool about that.”
She went on. "And he supports us when we do readers theatre and have presented the scripts to other classrooms. This past year we practiced for a week or two and then we presented it to other classrooms. Hank would come and watch and celebrate with the kids and sometimes he's videotaped and I know the kindergarten teacher, Tonya Layton did a thank you for us on a CD and we played it for the kids. Hank gave us a copy of the CD and we showed the kids how they looked when they were reading and that was cool, too. When they watched it they said things like, 'Oh, I need to use more expression,' or 'I need to work on my fluency.' You know, it just gave them the opportunity to be more reflective and what a wonderful way that is to celebrate student learning. It was just really cool."

Wanda stated excitedly, "Hank's really excited about everything our kids do. You know, he puts," she paused for emphasis, "he usually says, 'What a wonderful job,' and ya know, he puts his arm around the kids. He's very supportive of them in that respect. To celebrate reading at our building level, we kinda had a picnic. Each group had a picnic in the cafeteria and they had all the luau stuff and lights and stuff and we decorated and Hank danced with all the kids and stuff. He's very, very supportive. And ya know, that was our celebration, in that respect. It was awesome. It'll be interesting to see what he comes up with next year for the reading celebration."

"Our principal is also supportive and celebrates learning." piped in Helen. "Wally'll come in when we're reading or when I'm doing a read/think aloud and he'll stop and listen. And he'll put his two cents in and then he walks out. Or he'll come in and he'll say, 'What are you reading today?' Being interested in students is critical and he
exemplifies that for us. We are very fortunate to have him with us. He walks through the library every Friday when I’m over there and will ask kids, ‘What’s a good book that you’re reading?’ He talks to our kids about reading but he doesn’t do it in an intrusive way. It’s conversational and he’s consistent.’”

Mamie, the second teacher at Wally’s building spoke. “He’ll come in and actually say, ‘Good job,’ which is something our previous couple principals never did. They always just sat in their office and we never saw them much. Ya know, after they’ve done their readers’ theater, um, I don’t know what he tells them in the hallway. Ya know, he may ... I know he talks to kids quite a bit in the hallway, just a little here and a little there. He may be saying, or pumping them up a little bit more. He likes doing that. He likes them coming in to talk about something positive and I don’t really get too many in that particular class...whining and wanting to go tattle on me or go fix something that’s not in this room....because we tend to fix it ourselves.”

“We’ve been at this for an hour and a half and I want to again thank everyone for your time today. We’ve come to our last question. I’m going to give you the opportunity to make a final statement or include anything that hasn’t yet been addressed.”

“I’ll go first again,” Wally emphasized. “First of all, well, we’re really happy to have that as part of our program. Ya know, when I came here we just did not focus on reading. And it did not take me long to diagnose what was going wrong here. And so this has been a huge part of our vision to get kids back on track. And, ah, so that the support we’ve gotten from AEA and from Dollar General has been critical. But it wouldn’t have happened if I didn’t have some teacher leaders and I want to thank them for that.”
Hank noted, "You know, I would like to think the successes we have had here could be carried over into some other elementary settings. I definitely am proud of all things related to Second Chance Reading. I'm proud of my kids. I'm proud of my teachers. And this definitely would not have been successful, it would not have happened without our teachers. And it could have totally flopped, ya know," he paused, "and there could be cases out there where that happened. The teachers that are really going above and beyond are teachers that are doing individual and small group interventions and all the different subject areas."

Wendy shared her thoughts again. "Well you know, I think the really fun part of reading with kids is when you're walking down the hallway and a kid stops and says, 'I finished my book.' Or um, 'I really liked this author.' Sharing authors has been really fun with kids. You know, sharing different genres that they like. And when they see you in the hallway, not in your classroom ... that they're thinking about it and talking about it, ya know. It's really kinda cool."

The teachers around the table looked to Kelsey to continue. "I can't think of anything right now. I just know that I love teaching it. I think it's made a huge difference and I'm so glad we got involved because I ... you know, when we were first taking the training, we were kinda like, 'oh-h-h, fifth grade,' and, 'I don't know' but it has been wonderful, and I am so glad for the," she paused for emphasis and looked at me before continuing, "for you pushing us to," she paused again to almost apologize. "Pushing? I'm not sure you were really pushy, but you encouraged us to be involved and so that was
really great. No, I can't think of anything else. I guess it's just that I love it and don't wanna ever quit teaching it.”

Helen spoke for the final time. “I agree with everyone. In fact, I think Second Chance needs to be in every school because I wouldn't have to teach it if every school had the course. I wouldn’t get kids that can’t read. So, I think every school needs to be well – versed.”

“I have one final thought,” stated Mamie. “Yea, you focused a lot on the leadership thing and, um, you know, I saw that more at the beginning when he was kinda pushing us in and so, he’s good with letting us run with it, ya know? Well, ah, it’s been good. It’s been very good for all of us.”
CHAPTER 5
INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

Introduction: A Moment of Reflection

Completing the final chapter of my dissertation, I exhibited contrasting emotions of both grand elation and identifiable levels of what appeared to be regret. Elation, certainly, because I had retained some leisure time back into my schedule and our dusty home has once again received some much needed attention. I became almost giddy with excitement as I once again took control of closets that had been ignored for months. Then there were my gardens. In many ways, it was fortunate that we had had such a poor year for gardening, due in great part to the drought, because our gardens did not look too much worse for wear from others in the neighborhood. And so recently stepping into and through the gardens, I assured my plantings that their days of neglect were finally over.

And then there were baskets of leisure books that I recently revisited after months without a pleasure reading to fill some quiet hours. Yet most importantly, my neglected husband and I have our lives and marriage back. It’s been a tough ride. It has been very nice to have returned to some semblance of normalcy.

And then there’s the opposite emotion identified as regret. One might ask why. It seemed to me that any time something of this significance comes to an ending point, there’s an unexplainable sadness of sorts. I have felt that way when I’ve come to the last paragraph of a great book and there was no sequel, or when my children had reached a milestone and I had been there all along, encouraging or nudging and the task we had
worked on in tandem was complete. It was certainly a meshing of overwhelming pride and sadness.

The final formatting and approval of the dissertation had a very real sense of closure about it in that I was no longer able to tell those that had inquired along the way, “Well, I’m writing,” for my answer had become, “Well, I’m done. It is now complete!” It was an odd sensation, as the entire writing process took the better part of a year, and truly encompassed the great majority of my free time and certainly every weekend in one aspect or another. For me, it had been a journey … almost a calling, but certainly a personal goal. I now have my life back to share with my husband who has been exceedingly understanding, patient, and supportive through this crusade. The time has come to rejoin my family while relishing, momentarily at best, this milestone accomplishment.

The Research Process

Through this arduous and lengthy dissertation process, I have discovered multiple facets of the human spirit as well as complex emotions tied to positions of leadership that I had not considered prior to delving into this research opportunity. This was due in part to my targeted and focused attention to detail regarding both perceived and proclaimed traits of leadership. Although this process began as an exploration revolving around and guided in great part by components of Second Chance Reading, it evolved into something much greater and truly took on a life of its own. Interestingly enough, in speaking with other doctoral candidates working at this stage in their dissertations, it seemed that
similar phenomenon had occurred for them as well. I suspected this may have been related to the methodology I chose.

The Dissertation Journey Began

The entire research process began several years back when I initially became interested in the impact of leadership on implementation in order to determine any correlation, either positive or negative, to student achievement gains. And through reflective conversations, I shared my passion and intrigue regarding the potential relationship between the two factions engaged in Second Chance Reading training. At the time, several participants encouraged me to dive in and further explore the topic, many going so far as to say that if I ever elected to engage in research they would be willing participants in a study. Thus, this dissertation dream and doctoral process were born and I had numerous eager participants from the outset.

Participant Selection Process and Ethical Considerations

More recently, of course, the dream became a reality. Because I had worked with teachers and administrators who elected to be trained and had been implementing Second Chance Reading for up to seven full years, I had a viable pool of candidates from which to draw. I first compiled a list of AEA 267 school districts that had participated in training since 2005 and found that approximately 90% of the nearly 70 original districts had sent teachers to Second Chance Reading professional development training at some point during that time. And, as the state approved trainer for that entire duration, I had had the privilege to work with and train in excess of 300 participants, both teachers and
administrators, in one capacity or another during my years as an employee with Area
Education Agency 267.

Utilizing the initial pool of 300 participants, I narrowed my list down
significantly, to include only districts that had maintained sections of SCR during the
2011-2012 school year. Naturally, due to teacher retirement, transfers, and new hires, my
list necessarily narrowed as I dug into the pool of potential research recruits a bit deeper.
This took some leg work on my part, both through email communication, multiple phone
calls, and face-to-face visits to school districts to talk to administrative teams in order to
determine their status in regards to SCR implementation. And in so doing, I moved from
a list of districts that had been involved at one time to creating a list of particular schools
within districts that had implemented Second Chance Reading during the 2011-12 school
year. After determining which schools had been implementing, I then compiled a list of
eligible teachers and administrators from both middle and high school buildings as
potential participants. That moved me to the next logical stage in the research design.

Trimming the Pool of Potential Candidates

I needed to determine the pool of candidates from which to pull as I had eager
implementers from both middle and high school settings. Working through the
Institutional Review Board (IRB) structure mandated that I make a final decision about
the candidate pool, for key decisions had to be made prior to completion and submission
of those critical documents. Essentially, I needed to decide whom to recruit and invite as
participants in my research. Thus, when looking at sheer numbers of potential candidates,
I intentionally selected the pool of middle school administrators and teachers as their
numbers appeared to be greater. They were therefore selected as my targeted interviewee group. The IRB documents were submitted electronically on February 22, 2012 and permission to move forward was granted in the early spring.

**The Recruitment Process**

Because of the time spent with teachers through professional development training, classroom observations, and reflective conversations around their instructional capacity, paired with the fact that they had all attended a minimum of seven full days of professional development training with me over the course of one year, I had developed strong relationships with classroom teachers of *Second Chance Reading*.

As my research design included the recruitment of both principals and teachers, I anticipated – due to busy schedules and additional responsibilities of administrators, that I might have a more difficult time recruiting principals than teachers. For that reason, I contacted principals first to determine which school districts and teacher-principal teams I may be able to compile. I personally made contact with administrators through personal phone calls or email communication as soon as IRB approval was granted.

Within one week of the initial electronic offer inviting participation in my important research study, I received confirmations from five of the 10 administrators that had been contacted. I was pleased to receive many willing participants following my first inquiry. I hoped to match principals with teachers from like schools that had previously agreed, albeit verbally, to engage in the study so that I could gain the perspective of both parties regarding leadership, barriers, and celebrations at each building level.
As soon as administrators were procured, I set to work and reconnected with the original set of eager teachers that had mentioned an interest in engaging in research with me. However, prior to any calls placed to the large contingency of teachers, I first attempted to match up principal and teacher teams from like districts as I had chosen a purposive rather than a random sampling from which to work and my intent was to gain a district perspective. And in each instance, after phone calls to teachers were completed, I created pairings of principals and at least one Second Chance Reading teacher from five distinct schools.

When I considered educators from the schools that I was able to recruit, I was able to match up the following principal and teacher teams: (1) School #1 had one teacher and one principal: Mike and Breanne; (2) School #2 had one teacher and one principal: Adam and Diana; (3) School #3 had one teacher and one principal, although this principal and I were never able to coordinate our calendars and therefore an interview was never conducted. Therefore, the teacher known as Wendy was a solo educator without a coordinating principal; (4) School #4 had one principal and two teachers: Wally, Mamie, and Helen; and (5) School #5 had one principal and three teachers: Hank, Susie, Wanda, and Kelsey.

Pairings from particular schools were put in place and the purposive interview teams were organized. As previously noted, Wendy’s middle school principal and I could not come to a consensus for interview times. After three emails and four unreturned phone calls, due in part to busy schedules and conflicting responsibilities, I elected to stick with and interviewed four administrators and eight teachers.
Interviews Commenced

With semi-structured interview questions (Appendices A and B) in hand, I arranged individual interview times for both administrators and teachers. And because these interviews to be conducted were set to begin in late May, I determined that it would be best if teachers and administrators could wrap up the school year prior to engaging in important conversations. Twenty-four hours prior to each scheduled interview, individual participants received a confirmation email reminding them of our appointment. Attached to the email were the appropriately tagged interview questions that I would ask, (Appendices A and B contain the complete list of the initial questions posed), although tangential conversations naturally occurred as some participants skirted the issue before returning full circle to respond to the question. Additionally, as was often the case, one thought led to another and we often found ourselves off topic. My task as interviewer was to stay the course.

The principal interviews began on May 23, 2012 and concluded on May 29th, 2012, whereas the teacher interviews began on June 2nd and concluded nearly two weeks later, on June 15th. In total, I conducted and audio tape-recorded 7.56 hours of interviews and completed all of the word processing transcription. The net total page count for interviewed transcripts came to be 147 single-spaced pages of transcribed text. The transcriptions were completed on July 14, 2012, one month after the final two interviews were completed.

It is important to note that prior to any interview being conducted, I required each participant to complete the IRB agreements and permission forms. Each interview was
planned at a location chosen by the participant. If the participant chose to be interviewed at the school site, an appropriate letter of cooperation was obtained from the district regarding research conducted on sight. These letters of cooperation will be retained in the home office of the principal investigator for five years, until 2017. In most instances and as appropriate, I traveled to the community where the school district was located.

Over the course of 24 days, I drove into four of the five districts, walked into four principal offices, made myself at home in three separate classrooms, sat at one dining room table, and walked quietly through an overcrowded city library. I also utilized two separate AEA conference rooms while also logging over 650 miles on my vehicle. On May 23, I conducted the first of 12 interviews which would then continue over the course of the next 24 days. In Appendix C, I have referenced, according to pseudonyms noted in Chapter 4, when each interview took place, where it was actually conducted, and the length of time for each conversation.

Each conversation was captured on a tape recorder while I noted additional thoughts, reactions, and initial codes in my field notebook during the dozen semi-structured interviews. Prior to beginning any of the interviews, I spent a few minutes going over the protocol I had previously set up and referenced in Appendices A and B. I assured them that I would enforce all levels of confidentiality, both in what they said and whether any individuals or communities were mentioned that would potentially lead to their discovery. All references would be assigned a distinct and unique pseudonym that only I would understand. I further assured participants that if they were feeling uncomfortable or uneasy with any of the questions, they could pass. Furthermore, they
were also informed that it was their right and prerogative to discontinue the conversation at any time. After the protocol was reviewed and we had spent a few minutes engaging in polite small talk so that I could be assured they were truly comfortable, we moved forward and I pressed the record button on my Sony recorder.

Parallel Interviewing Questions

Once the interviews began, I utilized identical questions for each of my four principals (Appendix A) and then asked extremely parallel questions to my eight teachers (Appendix B) so that a near match or parallel theme would be clear when the analytical process was to begin.

With both principals and teachers, I began by addressing and discovering baseline data. In the initial question, I asked principals to consider and share what they knew of the instructional framework prior to engaging in the training or finding it implemented in their respective schools. I asked an identical question of teachers. This was done to determine the levels of experience going into the interview as it related to Second Chance Reading.

In question #2, I asked principals the following question: What leadership qualities do you exhibit in order to support your SCR teachers and the students in her classroom? I asked a very similar question of the teachers, although it was stated as such: What qualities do you feel are necessary to support SCR teachers and students? How is that evidenced in your principal? I thought it would be extremely telling to discover what building administrators considered necessary to support their teachers, especially when paired against the views of their own teachers. I was anxious to hear how these educators
viewed the traits of the building principal: both professed traits and those that were perceived.

In the literature review from Chapter 2, Donald Robinson (2000), Phi Delta Kappa's Director of Publications, stated, in part, the following regarding qualities of leadership:

The one quality that wasn’t mentioned was nevertheless present but was apparently missing because of modesty. I refer to that unspoken quality of ego: just plain self-assurance. Now, this high level of confidence is the key to leadership since leadership means the ability to persuade others, and nothing is more persuasive than an unshakable faith in oneself (Robinson, 2000, pp. 164-165).

In question #3, my goal was to discover barriers that may have prevented teachers from accomplishing their mission and then what principals were doing to remove the barriers. The principals were asked, Are there barriers in place which are preventing teachers from accomplishing their mission? What might they be? If you could remove any barrier for your SCR teachers, what would you remove and how would you go about that?

Adversely, I asked the teachers the following question: Are there barriers in place which are preventing you from accomplishing your mission? If so, what might they be?

As previously noted in the literature review, Fullan (2008) identified a substantial list of leadership traits of accomplished and significant leaders that included the following: (a) cultivating a sense of compassion and responsibility for others; (b) committing to the goal and sticking through the tough learning period; (c) doing one’s part to help create an upbeat environment at work as it is vital for productivity; (d) broadening one’s cultural and social horizons and learning to see things from multiple perspectives; (e) exhibiting a
willingness to venture in new directions in order to seize new opportunities and learn new skills; (f) finding a way to turn setbacks and failures to one’s own advantage; (g) being bold in vision and careful in planning; (h) learning from past mistakes; (i) never insisting on reaching a goal at any cost; it must be achieved without undue hardship for your staff.

As I considered that question #3 referenced potential barriers and the ways around barriers, I further thought of the work of Fullan and specifically his point’s b and f previously noted above. Significant leaders didn’t bail ship when the going got tough for they showed an iron will, persistence, and fortitude. Administrators committed to goals and kept their eye on the prize through the tough learning period. Furthermore, successful leaders turned setbacks and failures to one’s own advantage. I was again anxious to hear the range of responses from both principals and teachers regarding this question.

The fourth and fifth questions involved relationship issues between principals and teachers and then tied their answers to one regarding instructional capacity of Second Chance Reading. For example, I asked principals about the relationship between teacher and principal leadership and then to further describe one of his SCR teachers in terms of instructional capacity as well as her commitment and support of the SCR instructional framework. On the flipside, I asked teachers to describe their working relationship with the principal and then to describe the principal in terms of leadership and his support of the SCR instructional framework.

Research of Goleman et al. (2002) noted that traits of leaders are packaged from multiple perspectives. One such identified trait of positive leadership involved humor. Positive work surroundings resonate with laughter and are an indication of trust, comfort,
and a sense of camaraderie. According to Goleman et al. (2002), “The data linking leadership effectiveness to laughter come from hundreds of actual incidents,” (Goleman et al., 2002, p. 34) for great leaders worked through emotions and acted as the groups’ emotional guide. As I read and reviewed this research, I could not help but picture one of my principals from Educator’s Town Hall, celebrating reading success while enjoying a motivational luau dressed in a grass skirt. Laughter had to resonate through the building the day Hank donned his new outfit, albeit for a brief while. Furthermore, Zadra (2006), noted “The great leader is not the one in the spotlight; he or she is the one leading the applause” (Zadra, 2006, p. 111). However, on the day that Hank wore his grass skirt to school and danced at the cafeteria luau, I suspect the spotlight shone brightly on him.

The final question for both groups involved levels of encouragement and support. I asked principals: In what ways do you support, encourage, and celebrate learning with your SCR teachers? Teachers were alternately asked, How is your building principal supportive of the students in your SCR classrooms? In what ways? How does he or she encourage and celebrate learning? The responses from the various factions regarding support and celebration were significant as noted in each of the vignettes.

The Transcription Process

Following the completion of individual interviews, I immediately set to work and began the transcripts of the conversations in which I had engaged. The transcription process, although time consuming and dauntingly extensive, proved to be beneficial in that while transcribing, I visited and revisited conversations, constantly coding and analyzing throughout the arduous process.
Initial Open Coding

As soon as the transcripts were word-processed and the narrative vignettes were tucked into a safe place, ready and waiting to be reread, I set to work and readied myself for the next phase of analysis, that of initial coding which involved segmenting data into useful and organized categories or nuggets of information. Open coding is a key analytical strand specifically tied to grounded theory, although when reviewing the impact of such an analytical tool, I found it to be a viable process for identifying themes implicit in the narrative I had compiled. Therefore, I elected to use it.

The Analytical Process: Open Coding

In order to manage this potentially overwhelming task, I was loaned a computer equipped with NVivo9, computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software. I set to work and familiarized myself with the capabilities of the software through the tutorials that were embedded in the program. Through tutorial exploration, I found that NVivo9 was designed specifically to compile analyzed qualitative data into working categories or strands. It proved to be a worthwhile venture when learning how to maneuver through the software, for I had collected and compiled significant amounts of information (147 pages of single spaced text) that needed to be inductively organized and categorized in as seamless a fashion as possible. Following my initial exploration of several tutorials, I felt confident enough to begin.

Constant - Comparative Method of Analysis

I utilized the constant - comparative method of coding as I moved through my memoed notes and while capturing initial thoughts, gestures, intuitions, and suppositions
in my field notes when moving in and between interviews and transcripted conversations in order to determine initial commonalities and themes. The constant - comparative method of analysis was utilized in two specific instances: both while I was actually interviewing in that the questions I asked were parallel so that I automatically was able to constantly compare responses from one participant to another. These processes as well as the questioning and a review of the memoed notes occurred simultaneously.

Additionally, I constantly compared responses as I moved into using the *NVivo9* software loaned to me on the UNI computer, in that the coding process lent itself beautifully into the constant - comparative method of data analysis. Although the constant - comparative method of analysis was typically referred to in grounded theory research, I elected to utilize it in my contemporary narrative inquiry research as it fit the bill for what I hoped to accomplish. Essentially, constant - comparative analysis refers to the analytical process when the researcher identified incidents, events, and activities and *constantly compared* them to any emerging category to determine similarities and differences in order to identify patterns. The themes I noted and deemed to be prevalent were referenced in a visual representation as an addendum to the contemporary narrative explained in Chapter 3, represented as a narration in Chapter 4, and elaborated upon and further analyzed in Chapter 5.

**An Initial Stab at Open Coding**

I initially uploaded four completed sets of individually arranged principal documents into *NVivo9*. These files were originally arranged by principal interviews and arranged in a systematic fashion. For example, Mike’s file was coded as *PI*; Hank was
designated as P2, and so on. The open coding process began with the first interview conducted. As I moved methodically through the first principals’ nine single-spaced pages of textual responses slowly, grabbing nuggets of information when deemed appropriate, and then through the process defined in the tutorials, I identified key phrases or ideas that I believed needed to be coded one way or another. I was feeling fairly confident.

For example, Mike stated early in our conversation that he had attended training with his teachers. I coded that particular nugget of information as prior knowledge of SCR framework, as well as attended training. In several instances, multiple codes could and were assigned to individual comments collected and transcribed during the interviewing process.

I moved through the entire first principals’ nine page transcript and set to work on the second transcript when I realized a major flaw in my thinking. Because I had arranged the interviews as one complete file for each principal that encompassed individual responses to all questions I asked, the coding of those interviews was extremely comprehensive and represented an inordinate continuum of administrative experiences and viewpoints from my significant sampling, particularly because several phrases were coded in multiple ways. For example, one question involved perceived leadership traits whereas another question involved the celebration of student successes. Because the variance between these two question types was so broad, the coding of the responses was equally broad. I found that tracking and managing the initial open codes proved to be much more cumbersome than I had anticipated so I decided to regroup and begin again.
Open Coding, Take Two

I promptly removed the completed documents for all participants from the desktop of the borrowed computer, while also deleting the work I'd completed so as not to become confused when my initial coding was finally finished. I then set to work to more carefully and thoughtfully rearranged the transcripted data I had compiled into a more manageable format.

In order to more tightly control the management of the data I would eventually code, I reorganized all 12 educator files prior to moving forward. I essentially took each of the principals’ responses from Question #1 and combined them into one new document entitled Principal Question #1 and designed a recognizable acronym: PQ1. I engaged in the same process for each of the seven questions for all principals’ interviews and labeled them appropriately as PQ1, PQ2, PQ3, PQ4, etc. I then rearranged and reordered all teachers’ interview responses in the same way, TQ1, TQ2, TQ3, etc.

After uploading the newly reorganized documents into NVivo9, the coding process was much more orderly and streamlined the initial open coding process and the work moved forward without too much more confusion. Additionally, the constant comparative process lent itself beautifully when the interviews were organized by question response rather than by respondent. Although I moved from 12 to 13 files, for I had 12 participants although 13 separate questions, the 13 separate documents were more easily maneuvered and proved to be much more manageable.
Key Finding #1: A Time Differential

While engaging in the 12 interviews, and then through the process involved in transcribing the documents, I found an interesting discrepancy in time spent between participant interviews as both a fascinating and interesting analytical marker. Although I certainly hadn’t considered and looked for the discrepancy prior to beginning, it became clear to me after I had completed the first interview.

The first four interviews were conducted with principals and I used the first as an indicator of sorts, anticipating that they would all be of similar length. However, as noted in Appendix C, that was not the case at all, for there was a significant discrepancy between participants regarding the time spent at the interview table. Some of the disparate time was due to busy schedules, additional obligations, or unforeseen distractions which necessarily cut short allotted interview time, whereas in other instances, significant amounts of time were spent sharing either concerns or celebrations with individual educators. Some participants were simply enthusiastic to have a captive audience willing to hear their stories.

When I originally placed phone calls to schedule the interviews, I suggested that each participant reserve approximately one hour for the conversation, although I anticipated that most of our conversations would be done in less than that amount of time. Given the fact that summer vacation had begun for most of the teachers and most principals were wrapping up a school year, I further anticipated that these educators had other obligations that would put them on their way quickly. However, in examining Appendix C, one would see a conversational interviewing range from 17.20 minutes to
65.52 minutes. The average length of time engaging in all 12 conversations was calculated as 37.7283 minutes. The average time conversing with administrators alone was 39.9125 minutes, whereas the average time with just the teachers was 36.63625 minutes. I was not surprised that the lengthiest time spent was with an administrator, nor was I surprised that the average time spent in dialogue with administrators was more significant than with teachers.

Adam: A Time Differential

The day I met with Adam, for example, he had double-booked his calendar for he wore the hat, not only of the building administrator, but also as the districts’ athletic director, (AD). The conflict between our scheduled conversations, coupled with his responsibility to attend the district baseball game as AD, was further compromised by the fact that we were unfamiliar with each other and had neither prior background nor many common experiences besides Second Chance Reading on which to draw parallels or conversational tidbits. All of these factors provided an explanation and glimpse into the minimal time spent conversing with this middle school administrator, for I spent only 23.49 minutes in his office.

Susie: A Time Differential

Then when I considered Susie as an eager participant, I noted that our conversation was also somewhat brief, only 23.3 minutes in length. I attributed that minimal amount of time conversing to the fact that she was a very young teacher, just two years out of college, and her experiences in the trenches were significantly less than, for example, Breanne, a veteran teacher of nearly three decades. I suspected that if I had
the opportunity to interview Susie again in 25 years, she would have a great deal more to share and our time together talking about Second Chance Reading would be much more significant and lead to a richer and more insightful conversation than the one in which we engaged. In most instances, and not surprisingly so, experiential depth, wisdom, and time at the table were more evident in the seasoned veterans with whom I visited.

Mamie: A Time Differential

When reviewing the time spent with each participant, one might be drawn to the fact that Mamie and I, both seasoned veterans of several decades, spent only 17.2 minutes conversing. Upon deeper investigation, however, I would share that she received a disturbing personal phone call midstream through our conversation which interrupted our dialogue and created an unfortunate disconnect between where we were going and where she had mentally gone. I have always found Mamie as a feisty and passionate educator, deeply concerned with the students whom she serves. Her special-needs son, however, became the necessary focus for her on the day we visited which attributed greatly to our seriously diminished time at the conversational table. I would add, however, that we made the most of the 17.20 minutes that we were able to visit as her feistiness and passion was clearly evident even in a condensed fashion as noted in the third vignette, Educator’s Town Hall, in which Mamie sat at the imaginary table and showed her typical panache.

Hank: A Time Differential

As I revisited the conversation with the principal noted as Hank, I recalled hundreds of trips traveling to the rural community where I had previously taught and my
youngest son had attended both elementary and middle school. Parking in front of the brick building with the stately school bell displayed proudly in a brick edifice, I was taken back in time and remembered dropping off Sam, a junior at the University of Northern Iowa, at the same front door years before for his first days of public education and considered how the decades had flown.

I initially found myself locked out of Hank’s building as school had closed for the summer and the building was locked up tight. After being permitted access, I eventually met Hank in his outer office and we began our time together, first with a tour of the new wing in his building which housed conference rooms, a music room, and wonderful practice rooms for instrumentation. We then stepped into his office for the formal interview which lasted in excess of one hour, the longest of the twelve in which I engaged. Following the interview, Hank then took me on a second tour to the new district preschool facility, also housed under the same roof. Although the tangible interview noted in Appendix C stated a 65 minute time allotment, I actually spent well over two hours in Hank’s building visiting, exploring, and remembering the days when my son wandered the same halls, while this principal exuded delight over his position, his teachers, and the school where he spent his days.

Breanne and Mike: Time Differentials

When considering the interviewing times spent with both Breanne and Mike, and especially after reviewing the second vignettes, *Data Driven Disaster*, Vignettes 2a and 2b, that embodied the essence of the two culminating conversations between these two
educators and me, there appeared to be both significant issues as well as a time differential at play.

During individual conversations, Breanne shared personal concerns, professional mandates, and instructional decisions her principal had recently made. Mike, on the other hand, was much more reserved and might have been described as adversely guarded in his responses. In retrospect, after reviewing the transcript and my field notes, I believe that Breanne viewed our interview almost as a counseling opportunity with a trusted confidante, for at one point she dropped her voice to a whisper and said, "This is confidential and anonymous, isn’t it?" I found it interesting that Mike’s interview was 34.27 minutes in length, the second shortest principal interview, whereas Breanne’s was the lengthiest of the eight teacher interviews at 51.43 minutes.

Given the fact that Breanne and I have known each other for a few years, paired with the fact that she had issues that she wanted to discuss, may have contributed to our extended conversation. However, when those facts were paired against Mike whom I had known longer, and balanced his conversation against hers in that he seemed distracted, disappointed, and almost defensive over some significant changes he planned to initiate regarding Second Chance Reading, symbolically tipped the scales and told a tale all in itself. Mike had made up his mind and taken on the role of purveyor of information. The somewhat diminished time we spent discussing was not unusual. He typically cut to the chase, shared his information, and succinctly closed down the dialogue. Opportunities for in-depth discussion or dialogue were not on his menu as viable options and when recalling past conversations with this same administrator, I could not remember any
conversation of much significance at any juncture during our eight year acquaintance. For many, the interview processes told a tale just through the time differential between individuals, which became even more evident after exploring the vignettes.

Memoed Field Notes

An interesting memoing by-product I had neither anticipated nor expected found its way into my field notes and certainly belonged in Chapter 5. After each of the four administrative and teacher interviews were completed and upon returning to the car, I elected to scribble a few important notes prior to driving off. This was done in great part because I didn’t want to forget subtle innuendoes, suggestions, or even observances that may not have even been mentioned during the interviews. And I did not want to do so within the watchful eye of either administrators or secretaries, so I did my memoing in the car in instances where I wandered onto the turf of the participants. However, when the participants came to me as happened for four of the interviews, I waited to scribble additional remembrances after the teachers had left our interviewing room.

My first interview was with Mike. After our visit and upon returning to the nearly vacant parking lot, I had memoed in my field notebook that his secretary, a woman I had visited on numerous occasions was both kind and generous with her time. My field notes referenced that we had inquired about each others’ families and talked about the upcoming summer vacations and weddings. I noted a few additional tidbits about our conversation that I later captured in my field notes before I was invited into Mike’s office.
Interestingly enough, when Mike was ready to meet with me, he did not leave his office, but rather buzzed his secretary on her phone and asked her to let me know he was ready for our appointment. He did not greet me in the outer office. Then, upon entering his office, I first extended my hand in greeting and he reciprocated with a handshake. I did not think much of that point at the time, although when I compared what happened in Mike’s building against the other three building principals, there was a definite differential regarding simple gestures of acknowledgement and camaraderie in that he operated from a defensive stance while I took the offense and moved first in acknowledgement.

Additionally, I noted that when particular questions were asked, Mike went to his computer screen and looked for answers there, rather than remaining at the table where we were sitting. I found it particularly interesting that Mike returned to his computer prior to responding to the question about successes and celebrations. It was almost as if he felt the need to justify his lack of a celebratory stance in a culture that frowned upon such actions and he was hoping to justify the thinking of the administration with hard data housed on his computer. These items were noted in my field notebook. For example, I found the following notes after my visit to Mike’s school: (1) intercom used to summon me; (2) principal did not come to outer office; (3) computer held potential answers/interesting and curious; (4) difficulty with small talk, eye contact, etc.; and (5) eight year relationship between me and Mike ... only a minimal acquaintance after all this time.

When I engaged in the next three administrative interviews, they were all extremely similar in the sense that they began the same way which was different in
substance from the first onset with Mike. Again, I noted various recorded memos and remembrances in my field notebook after each interview concluded. Each of the remaining principals met me in their outer offices prior to allowing me to join them in their own offices. Each of the three remaining principals extended their hands prior to me doing so, although I have always made it a point, prior to beginning a conversation, with a firm handshake. I found it interesting that three administrators set the stage and agenda with a positive stance prior to the interview beginning, whereas one administrator exhibited a very different style. And none of the remaining principals looked at nor referred to their computer during our conversation, but made eye-contact and remained at the conversational table with me throughout the entire interview.

I had not considered these subtle innuendoes initially as points of curiosity when I first scribbled the memoed notes while I sat in the car. However, in hindsight, the subtleties seemed completely relevant and demystified the questions I had had while the factions more clearly divided themselves and the subtleties became obvious. The differential between leadership styles was not only evident in grand scale instructional decisions from the four that were interviewed, but as well in common courtesy expectations typically demonstrated with the general public. There seemed to be a filtering out of nuances regarding relationships the deeper I dug into the data.

Continued Analysis: Axial Coding

Because the crux of this research involved the impact of leadership on teachers and students of Second Chance Reading, I elected to couch my analysis with an examination of the administrators that were interviewed through the creation of both the
contemporary narrative inquiry as well as a visual representation while tying my research back to the literature review from Chapter 2. In addition, I have juxtaposed my textual synthesis with a visual representation of my analysis and findings to further clarify my thinking.

To begin and while initially engaging in the research, I found two distinct factions of administration from the group interviewed as exhibiting attributes that could be defined as polar opposites: either positive or negative. The differences between positive and negative traits of administrators were evidenced in multiple places: in my memoed field notes, in the transcripted interviews, during the initial open coding process and then more specifically when reorganized into parent nodes which were crystallized during the axial coding process. These distinct factions became the first layer of my eventual introductory logic diagram, Figure 1.

As noted in the definitions found in Chapter 1, nodes were defined in the NVivo 9 software as containers for themes, people, places, organizations, or other areas of interest and could be arranged through a hierarchical structure. As I worked through the open coding process, I found numerous instances and nuggets of information that were eventually grouped together and identified as either positive or negative traits. The groupings were organized into parent nodes as the two main categories: (1) positive attributes of leadership and (2) negative attributes of leadership.

Although Figure 1 may appear as simplistic in design, it had become apparent to me through the research and analysis I have conducted that effective leadership was significant for multiple reasons. In 1998, Kati Haycock, Director of The Education Trust,
shared the critical importance and impact of providing quality instruction in all classrooms with highly qualified teachers at the helm. I would echo the importance of that fact, yet pair it with the value inherent in placing a passionate and dedicated administrator with her hand on the rudder to lead the charge towards sustained, significant, and positive change. Fullan (2008) noted the inherent value of quality administrators guiding and listening while also directing and learning in order to make the most useful contribution to organizational performance.

Negative attributes directly correlate to negative attitudes, a negative culture, and a general lack of cohesion among administration and staff. Participants are often not willing to take risks in such an environment for fear of repercussions.

Positive attributes directly correlate to positive attitudes, a positive and healthy environment, and an eagerness to creatively solve problems together. Generally, working in such an environment is invigorating and participants will work more diligently towards meeting a goal. Risk taking is encouraged and celebrated.

Figure 1. An Introductory Visual Representation Depicting Generalities Tied to Building Principals, Specifically Those Determined as Exhibiting Positive or Negative Attributes
Analytical Coding Results

Following the open and axial coding process with the 13 separate documents previously mentioned, I moved into the next analytical stage, that of engaging in the inductive process of categorization implicit in qualitative methodology. I naturally traveled back into the data to review field notes, transcribed interviews, and dimensionalized data as determined while engaging in the initial open coding process. I was essentially experiencing a modified zigzag process of data analysis as described earlier by Creswell (1998). He noted that the data analysis process would not be described as a linear process, but rather as a zigzag route for researchers in that they gathered information, analyzed the data, returned to the field to gather additional information, and continued with the inductive, zigzag process of data analysis.

At this point, my data were collected and the time had come to delve into inductive categorization in order to determine and build the foundation of my visual representation which necessarily had to be on substantial bedrock to house all components. As I examined the components I had collected over time as well as the conversations of which I was party, it appeared to me that the foundation implicit in all leadership traits was necessarily tied to relationships. Therefore, I began with a closer look into the traits and habits of mind of both positive and negative administrators to determine a central phenomenon.

Key Finding #2: Positive Administrative Attributes

When reviewing the first vignette, I noted that the great majority of Adam’s language, gestures, and attitudes were categorized in a similar fashion during open coding
and then when reorganizing during the axial coding processes as being primarily *positive*. For example, when I asked him of his working knowledge of *SCR*, he mentioned that he *had a vision of what it looked like*. He later noted, *I think modeling is a quality that shouts, ‘This is important’ to the kids. For kids to understand that I hold literacy as a real priority for them, I need to model the importance of reading. And I do that*. I initially coded both *vision* and *priority* as dimensionalized units of information which were later encapsulated as *positive attributes* for this administrator.

Later in our conversation, Adam disclosed that *I believe my visibility and commitment to reading speaks loudly*. Again, this was eventually coded as a *positive attribute*. I continued through his transcription and found similarities throughout the text before moving to the next two administrators, both Hank and Wally.

When I looked back into my memoed notes and reviewed the conversations I had had with Hank, I identified and eventually reorganized the following statements into parent nodes entitled as *positive traits*. For instance, Hank mentioned, *I am really fortunate that I have such strong teachers that are always looking for a better way, who are never satisfied, who always want to do the best they could for the kids, and were willing to participate in extra training and implement new programs and learn new strategies.*

Hank did not see these proactive teacher leaders as a threat or detriment to his leadership style, but rather as an extreme benefit and extension of him as they shared common goals and values. I easily identified and coded that particular comment in
multiple ways which eventually spilled into the *positive attributes* parent node. Again, I continued on with all of Hank’s coded text.

Then I moved into the transcription for Wally. At one point, I found that Wally had mentioned and was axially coded with a *positive trait* when he mentioned, *I began with making sure they had the training before we did this and then I have supported their continued training. In fact, they’ve gone to the training for follow-up for three straight years and it’s always beneficial for both the teachers and our students.* He clearly was an instructional leader in his building and not just in a managerial role. The list of openly-coded *positive traits* for three of the principals was both extensive and significant.

It is important to mention that I utilized all teacher interviews and codes in like fashion. For example, at one point Susie mentioned the following comments about her principal Hank: *I think for a principal to stand by and support this work, he or she had to make sure that it was set in our schedule to have that weekly meeting. Teachers have to have the training in order to make sure they’re doing things according to the grand plan. And Hank did that for me. I think that was really beneficial. So, that was really nice to have that so then I could talk to those teachers about what I’d learned and what was expected in the classroom. He supported me to attend the training during three school days when class was in session. I appreciated that.*

This was clearly a comment that was eventually axially coded as a *positive attribute*. Helen reiterated, *You know, one of the ways that Wally supports us is in building up people and embracing and ensuring quality relationships with those we work with.* Having such a strong belief and support in her principal afforded her an eventual
axial code labeled as a **positive attribute**. Each of the principals and teachers were coded throughout their entire transcription. However, I have elected to and highlighted just a handful of the hundreds of comments.

Of the four administrators that were interviewed, as well as the corresponding teachers from each building, there was a preponderance of evidence that 75% of the group were coded as exhibiting **positive attributes of leadership** whereas 25% of the administrators exhibited **negative attributes**. However, I would again reiterate, before moving forward, that my goal through this purposive sampling and contemporary narrative inquiry was never to create a generalization, but rather to tell the story of these 12 impassioned educators.

**Key Finding # 3: Negative Administrative Attributes**

I would expand on the negative attributes I saw in the principal known as Mike and reiterated in one of his teachers known as Breanne. I moved through the process with these two transcriptions in the same way I worked through the other 10. And periodically I found nuggets of information that were openly coded in one way or another and then axially coded to represent parent and child nodes of more general information. For example, Breanne described Mike at one point as, *He's a math man, and I have two children that are math minds, and I understand that's how they work. It's the black and white numbers for them. It's very crisp and there are no allowable grey zones. And, he was fine with that. His bottom line involves the necessity of raising the test scores and so, I saw through MAP testing that I think some of my kids were really able to do that. I think it's basically just Mike's type of personality, ya know?*
When Breanne described Mike as very crisp and there are no allowable grey zones, I took that to mean that he was inflexible which is how this comment was originally open coded.

That code of inflexibility eventually rolled into an axial coding parent node designated as a negative attribute. However, I also coded her comment regarding the necessity to raise test scores as focused which eventually rolled into the parent node as a positive attribute. At one point later in our conversation she went on and stated, He just put my spreadsheets with my stuff and didn't even look at the scores when I tried to talk to him. I could see that he was busy with something. He usually is, so I just handed them to him. That kind of hurt my feelings, but there are some things you have to worry about, and I know that's his personality, so I wasn't really surprised when he just took the data and didn't even give it a glance. I saw this glimpse into their relationship and defined it as either null or void. I noted it as such which again rolled into an eventual negative attribute.

Then there was the entire dialogue regarding the negative connotation tied to students in Second Chance Reading sections in this building. Mike and I nearly came to blows when I posed questions that were far removed from my intended script and structured interview questions as I could feel the barometric pressure drop in his office. It was certainly my opinion and perception that this principal had buckled under the pressure of parents and had chosen to eliminate the instruction from his junior high school rather than confront the cultural bias that was eroding the faith in educational practices. (Data Driven Disaster, Vignettes 2a and 2b.)
A final comment that was most certainly eventually coded as that of a *negative attribute* came when I asked Mike about the ways he celebrated with students. The portion of the dialogue noting his response and further referenced in *Data Driven Disaster* has been reprinted below:

*Can you talk to me for a minute about how you celebrate learning and student successes with both the Second Chance kids and Breanne?*

*Well, I don't know if we do celebrate, because there's such a...for every one or two that's successful there's always one that isn't and that's mainly what we discuss are the ones that aren't. Ya know, when we look at scores and go through those, we probably don't celebrate enough. We probably don't celebrate enough with all the students. We're trying to do some more of that. But ya know, now with that new Iowa Assessment, it's hard.* It was clear to me that Mike operated from the *glass-half-empty* stance. These comments and many more from his transcript and interview were coded as *negative attributes*.

**Qualitative Research: A Disclaimer Regarding Analysis**

It is important to note that analysis of qualitative research data is significantly subjective. For example, as recently mentioned during the axial coding process involving comments from the principal known as Mike, another researcher may have coded the comment *It's the black and white numbers for them. It's very crisp and there are no allowable grey zones as predictable* whereas I designated it as *inflexibility*. However, that said, this research was my research and the traits and coding I had identified are
significant to this study alone. They cannot nor should not be extrapolated upon other situations or instances.

Roadblocks as Opportunities

Administrators with positive attributes and leadership stances viewed barriers and roadblocks as opportunities to become creative problem solvers. They were energized by the opportunity to think outside the box. And the enthusiasm they brought to the table further built on the passion and excitement of their colleagues. This was not only evidenced in Hold Your Applause, Please! when Adam saw the necessity first to make certain that the right students were being served in SCR classes, unlike his predecessor, but then again when he elected to restructure the entire middle school to afford SCR teachers with a reading class daily in the new school year, something that should have been done prior to his arrival in the school. Similar findings were also prevalent in the research around both transformational and facilitative leadership.

As previously noted in Chapter 2, Lashway (2000) found that some principals successfully articulated a clear organizational vision and communicated it to their followers. Deal and Peterson (1994) noted, “Every school is a repository of unconscious sentiments, expectations, and hopes that carry the code of the collective dream – the high ground to which they collectively aspire” (Lashway, 2000, p.34). Additionally, Avolio et al. (1991) defined the four I’s of transformational leaders as (1) idealized influence; (2) inspirational motivators; (3) intellectual stimulators; and (4) noting individual considerations and needs.
Visionary leaders listened carefully for deeper dreams from their constituents and then work tirelessly to make the goals both believable and achievable. Bryk and Schneider (2002) considered the importance of ensuring that relational trust was embedded in the structure and culture of the organization in order to positively impact student learning. They identified relational trust as involving four key components including (1) respect, (2) personal regard, (3) competence, and (4) integrity. The undergirding or bedrock of relational trust was found to be respect. Additionally, according to Bryk and Schneider (2002) and reported in the research of Waters, et al., (2009), the four key attributes of relational trust involved learning.

It seemed abundantly clear through my analyses that three administrators whom I had interviewed exhibited traits which strongly paralleled those of transformational or facilitative leaders. However, as was previously noted, my purpose was not towards generalizability but rather to tell the story of these particular educators. No trend line could or should be crafted given this relatively small purposive sample.

Roadblocks as Dead Ends: The Principal Known as Mike

Adversely, negative administrators viewed barriers and roadblocks as dead ends. When I considered the causal conditions that may have created the poisonous culture in which Mike had found himself, I could point to multiple factors. He had elected to drop SCR as a learning opportunity because of the connotation that the class was for the ‘dumb’ kids. Rather than address the culture that had created the fiasco, he restructured the system and dropped the instructional opportunity from the junior high school course catalog. Mike saw that sorting or tracking students was a roadblock he could not get
around. This was clearly evidenced in *Data Driven Disaster, Vignette 2b*. When I considered the administrator known as Mike, I could not help but think of the story told of the Antarctic Explorer, Sir Ernest Shackleton, who saved his crew after they found themselves stranded on an ice floe without a ship for two years. Clearly, Mike and Sir Ernest Shackleton had completely opposite professions, although I would venture to say that even though they were both leaders, they additionally exhibited opposite traits of leadership. Shackleton’s leadership traits paralleled those as told by Fullan (2008) in that, accomplished and significant leaders cultivated a sense of compassion and responsibility for others, committed to the goal and stuck through the tough learning period, created an upbeat environment at work to boost productivity, broadened cultural and social horizons and learned to see things from multiple perspectives. Furthermore, they exhibited a willingness to venture in new directions in order to seize new opportunities and learn new skills. Leaders of such stature found ways to turn setbacks and failures to one’s own advantage while acting boldly with vision while they were equally careful in planning, learned from past mistakes, and never insisting on reaching a goal at any cost. Subjective though my opinions may be, for I had but a glimpse into his leadership style, I did not recognize many of these traits or attributes in the spine or spirit of the principal known as Mike.

Burns (1978) defined transformational leadership as a blend of persuasion, idealism, and intellectual excitement rather than coercion. I might add that I did not identify these traits either in the principal known as Mike, nor did I feel or see examples of such behaviors expressed by the teacher known as Breanne. Because my time with
Mike was relatively short, it would be difficult to pinpoint specific factors which tied him to a bureaucratic administrative style. However, the great majority of his traits leaned towards the hierarchical framework and at least one of his teachers was not at all pleased with his leadership style. Further research would need to be necessarily conducted to look deeper into the factors which created the fiasco in which he had found himself entangled.

**Determination of Central Phenomenon**

I found as I first engaged in the literature review, then moved into the interview stage, and finally worked through the open and axial coding process, that I had created a visual representation of the relationship between the three factions of stakeholders on whom I had focused my attention: students, teachers, and administrators. Although my attention for the entire dissertation was primarily on the administrative strand and impact of leadership on *Second Chance Reading* teachers and students, I had first created a logic diagram which preceded the final coding paradigm and was designed to aid in identifying a central phenomenon tied to causal conditions. This was done to further clarify my initial thinking and supposition and had been noted as Figure 1.

To further expound on Figure 1, I identified specific traits and contingencies of those administrators that surfaced and appeared as prevalent during open and axial coding. The traits and implications of those traits have been elaborated on and are referenced in Figure 2. Along the vertical sides of the figure are two pentagons labeled as *administrators*. The pentagon to the left was labeled as an administrator exhibiting *positive attributes* of leadership, whereas the second was designated as an administrator with *negative attributes*. Positioned opposite each other on the top and bottom in the
Figure 2: A Visual Representation Regarding Perceived Attributes between Second Chance Reading students, teachers, and administrators and based on a Foundation of Relationships

figure were two different geometric shapes representing Second Chance Reading students and teachers. Again, specific attributes were first determined during the open coding
processes and more specifically as I moved into the axial coding process for it was during
the second analysis where I first examined the wealth of initial specific codes (child
nodes) and then moved them into more general codes (parent nodes).

The parent nodes became the two main factions of Figure 1, negative and positive
attributes of administration. Through a careful examination of the right side of Figure 2,
administrators determined as exhibiting negative attributes were further described as
guarded, reserved, or judgmental. Additionally, the principal that appeared to maintain
more significant negative traits and attributes further administered from a top-down
stance rather than with open arms and open doors. The one-way only communication
style was represented by the one-way arrow from administration to teachers or students,
for neither students nor teachers appeared to engage in any sort of reciprocal relationship
of give and take or trust with the administrator determined as leading negatively. A
pessimistic or poisonous environment appeared to be the culminating culture when
negative administration sat at the helm of the ship. This was further evidenced in the
general lack of reciprocal relationships or respect in the district where Mike and Breanne
were employed.

Students and teachers alike appeared to experience either a devoid, neutral, or
unhealthy relationship with negative administrators, almost as if relationships between
stakeholders were totally lacking, or as if a power-struggle dictated the day. Interestingly,
from both interviewing comments as well as memoed field notes, I found that parents in
particular appeared to have a great deal of power in such a system, whereas teachers and
students wielded limited if any power or influence at all upon the educational
organization. And finally, administrators exhibiting negative traits appeared to have attributes which paralleled those of *hierarchical administrators* as earlier referenced in the literature review.

Robinson (2000) noted that leadership involved high levels of confidence, the ability to persuade others, and an unshakable faith in oneself. I did not see these traits exhibited in the principal known as Mike for he appeared to lack confidence through even the simplest of gestures of polite camaraderie. Duffy (2006) stated, “Leadership in bureaucratic hierarchies aim to enforce rigid chains of command, control resources tightly, and exercise strict command and control” (Duffy, 2006, p. xi-xii). This was evidenced early on in the conversation with Breanne when she noted that she was told she’d spent her classroom budget on materials in her fourth grade classroom and would therefore be given no funding to support her students in seventh grade, even though she’d been moved to the new classroom at the discretion of the administrator. The financial purse strings were held tightly by this bureaucratic administrator.

There was a clear distinction between those in positions of leadership as they made decisions and were responsible to see that their demands were carried out. Furthermore, the researchers of Lashway (2000) as well as Bolman and Deal (1991) found an emphasis on top-down authority in that decision-makers wielded the power and that teachers and students had little voice on decisions that directly affected them. I found this to be true in the school that was operated from a negative administrative stance and were described as either a bureaucratic or hierarchical administrative regime as noted in Figure 2.
Adversely, those administrators that appeared to have more positively exhibited traits of openness, caring, and compassion created an optimistic and nurturing environment. *Second Chance Reading* students and teachers that worked and learned in such a school with positive administration at the rudder were determined, through the open coding process, to have a reciprocal arrangement between the three stakeholders of teachers, students, and administration. Reciprocal respect, collaboration, and shared decision-making appeared to be the mantra of such administration as represented by the double arrows on the left side of Figure 2. In schools led by positive administrators, a concern for the whole child was evident as explained in the textual comments found in *Hold Your Applause, Please!* as well as during many conversational tidbits in *Educator’s Town Hall*.

It appeared that administration with positive attributes noted in Figure 2 shared similar traits that paralleled those of either transformational or facilitative administrators. For example, in such an environment, according to Zaleznik (1977), “Leaders create excitement in work.” The levels of excitement in each of the three schools led by positive administrators were clearly evidenced in two of the vignettes by the teachers that shared their views, passion, and commitment for their professional positions and respect for their building administrators, (see *Hold the Applause, Please!* (Vignette 2a) as well as *Educator’s Town Hall.*) Additionally, according to Wilmore (2002) and as previously noted, the building leader evolved from a school manager to an instructional leader and in such an environment, the principal had evolved into the main instructional force in each of these learning communities. I saw this clearly evidenced in my memoed field notes,
During the interviews, and it became unmistakably evident during the open and axial coding process. In the schools that operated from the transformational and positive leadership stance, I found administrators that were the groups' emotional guide and dream keeper.

Wally stated that his school had had an administrative leadership vacuum prior to his hire (See Educator’s Town Hall). And most assuredly, I found well-skilled motivators that generated hopefulness and had a clear flair for leadership as evidenced through both my field notes, during interviews of principals and teachers, and again through the initial open and eventual axial coding process. All components of such an administrator were clear parallels to that of both transformational and facilitative leaders.

**Summary and Discussion**

I have found this entire comprehensive dissertation process as both interesting and evolutionary in many respects. My original intent, well over a year past, was to discover the impact of building leaders on both the students and teachers of Second Chance Reading and specifically on gains in student achievement. I had originally intended to compare student achievement gains (or lack thereof) between two subgroups of administrators, both those who had engaged in training and contrasted the student achievement gains of their students against those of administrators that had not been trained to determine the correlation between these two sub-groups to determine the impact of informed administration. However, after a lengthy process where I worked to intentionally focus my purpose, I whittled down and finely tuned that comprehensive and global purpose and goal to something much more manageable.
Because of the findings of Haycock (1998) and the critical importance determined in placing quality educators in every classroom in order to eradicate the achievement gap, I chose to focus and fine tune my research towards the next layer of educator removed from the student, that of the building leader, in order to determine the impact of leaders on teachers that served our struggling adolescent students. Towards that end, I would be remiss if I had neglected to include the research of Waters et al. (2009) as both extensive and significant.

Haycock (1998) found that aligning highly trained and effective educators with deep content knowledge to students with the greatest needs in order to see noteworthy gains in student achievement was significant. My important research focused not only on the components of Second Chance Reading as a steadfast resource to both support and make a positive difference in learning for burdened adolescent students, but there was also a targeted focus on the importance of leadership in support of struggling adolescents and the teachers that served them. As stated well over 200 pages ago, my purpose in this contemporary narrative inquiry study was to explore and discover the influence and impact of leadership on teachers that worked with struggling adolescent readers. This was to be done through an analysis of teacher and administrator interviews in that educators’ stories and reflections were coupled with wishes, aspirations, successes, and struggles related to Second Chance Reading clientele.

Because my targeted intention was to determine the impact of leadership on Second Chance Reading teachers, I would be remiss if I had neglected the research of Waters et al. (2009). Because the educators with whom I worked were from the building
level, and because the researchers at McRel referenced Second-Order Change and attributes that either positively or negatively correlated to the responsibilities therein, at the building level, I have chosen to share the findings of Waters et al. (2009) in its entirety as they are a perfect correlation for my research. Table 2 references positively correlated responsibilities, whereas Table 3 denotes the negatively correlated responsibilities as found from the researchers at McRel.

As I considered the research of Waters et al. (2009) and the administrators whom I have had the pleasure to work with, I saw significant correlations between three of the principals and the responsibilities tied to associated practices as noted in Table 2. Suffice it to say that I could move through each of the responsibilities and associated practices with each of the three principals deemed as exhibiting positive traits. However, I have elected to target one principal for each of the responsibilities and coordinated associated practices to further drive home the point.

Wally was knowledgeable about curriculum and instructional practices when he refused to simply allow his teachers to teach SCR without proper training. Furthermore, he exhibited traits and responsibilities of an optimizer in that he inspired his teachers and staff to achieve things beyond their grasp. This was clear through his simplistic although significant comment that prior to his hire, there was a leadership vacuum at the helm of the ship. He has allowed his staff to grow and move outside their comfort zone to achieve things they’d previously never considered. An example of this was evidenced in the vignette Educator’s Town Hall when Wally and his teachers talked about the ways

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Associated Practices</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment</td>
<td>• Is knowledgeable about the curriculum and instructional practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Is knowledgeable about assessment practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provides conceptual guidance for teachers regarding effective classroom practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimize</td>
<td>• Inspires teachers and staff to accomplish things that might seem beyond their grasp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Portrays a positive attitude about the ability of teachers and staff to accomplish substantial things</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Is a driving force behind major initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitors / Evaluates</td>
<td>• Monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>• Is comfortable with major changes in how things are done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Encourages people to express opinions that may be contrary to those held by individuals in positions of authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Adapts leadership style to needs of specific situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Can be directive or non-directive as the situation warrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideals / Beliefs</td>
<td>• Holds strong professional ideals and beliefs about schooling, teaching, and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Shares ideals and beliefs about schooling, teaching, and learning with teachers, staff, and parents</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Demonstrates behaviors that are consistent with ideals and beliefs</td>
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they work together to celebrate student learning, something that had apparently not occurred in this district prior to the hire of Wally. It was noted in its entirety in
Educator’s Town Hall, but paraphrased here to drive home the point: “Our principal is also supportive and celebrates learning,” . . . “Wally’ll come in when we’re reading or when I’m doing a read/think aloud and he’ll stop and listen. And he’ll put his two cents in and then he walks out. Or he’ll come in and he’ll say, ‘What are you reading today?’ Being interested in students is critical and he exemplifies that for us. We are very fortunate to have him with us. He walks through the library every Friday when I’m over there and will ask kids, ‘What’s a good book that you’re reading?’ He talks to our kids about reading but he doesn’t do it in an intrusive way. It’s conversational and he’s consistent.” . . . “He’ll come in and actually say, ‘Good job,’ which is something our previous couple principals never did. They always just sat in their office and we never saw them much. Ya know, after they’ve done their readers’ theater, um, I don’t know what he tells them in the hallway. Ya know, he may ... I know he talks to kids quite a bit in the hallway, just a little here and a little there. He may be saying, or pumping them up a little bit more. He likes doing that. He likes them coming in to talk about something positive . . .”

A second administrator, Adam, inspired his students and staff as an optimizer to accomplish substantial things when he supported such initiatives as World Book Night. Although the World Book Night initiative was not elaborated on during the vignette, it was a significant cultural phenomenon for the school and a wonderful public relations ploy for the district. Furthermore, Adam provided conceptual guidance and direction regarding classroom practices as he restructured the broken scheduling system into a more effective and conducive instructional framework. Adam further exhibited traits of
an administrator who was responsibly flexible in that he adapted his leadership style to needs of specific situations. For example, he clearly always made time for his teachers when they needed to visit about curricular or student issues and maintained an open door policy. He was forthcoming and approachable, all traits that clearly had been missing in administrators from the district prior to his hire.

Adam was both encouraged and revered by his staff to express their opinions even though that may have been contrary to those held by individuals in positions of authority. In this particular instance, this was a bold move for him, as he had entered the field of administration as a first year principal in a district that had maintained a fairly lousy track record of poor administration for many subsequent years. However, that said, he was highly touted and respected as a new administrator and his teacher that was an active participant noted, we don’t want to wear him out. He may had found his niche in the new district.

Hank further exhibited many traits apparent as a monitor and evaluator as well as traits inherent around knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment in that he provide conceptual guidance for teachers regarding effective classroom practice. Hank had his finger on the pulse of the curriculum, instruction, and assessment processes of his school while further empowering his teachers to take up the baton and move forward as building leaders. This was evidenced in the restructuring and support of an additional planning period for the SCR teachers on his staff as well as the structure inherent when he assigned three co-teachers to one Second Chance Reading classroom. For example, as noted in Educator’s Town Hall, Hank responded to my question involving data
collection, assessment, analysis and scheduling when he stated: "I have to get my hands and head around the data. I've had to place calls to other districts to get data and permanent records for kids new to our district. And lots of times it's somebody that doesn't know me, but I'm willing to place the call, and that's what I'll do for most of the other small districts around is I'll call the principal, um, or I'll ask to talk to a former teacher. I'll describe this class and some of them have heard of Second Chance Reading and some haven't, but I'll describe the program and this class. I'll ask them about test scores and have to make kind of a quick decision as to whether placement is appropriate.

. . . We try not to make changes in that until a trimester when we have a ... everybody gets a new schedule at the trimester so that there's no, ahhh, stigma or anything with it. So when they come in that's something that, ah, I do ... is try to make a quick decision with good data."

Additionally, Hank was clearly the optimizer on his staff, among other things. He was comfortable with major changes he implemented regarding how things were done. Hank also portrayed an incredibly positive attitude about the ability of teachers and staff to accomplish substantial things and did so with a sense of camaraderie and laughter. He was clearly the major and driving force behind key initiatives.

The researchers at McRel and led by Waters et al. (2009) further found responsibilities and associated practices around Second-Order Change which negatively correlated to both cultural and student achievement deficits. As noted in Table 3, the responsibilities include four key responsibilities: culture, communication, order and input. I have taken a few moments to extrapolate on the responsibilities and associated
practices as they seemed evident in my findings around two of the educators with whom I worked, but particularly the principal known as Mike.

Table 3


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Associated Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Culture        | • Promotes cooperation among teachers and staff  
                 • Promotes a sense of well-being  
                 • Promotes cohesion among teachers and staff  
                 • Develops an understanding of purpose  
                 • Develops a shared vision of what the school could be like |
| Communication  | • Is easily accessible to teachers and staff  
                 • Develops effective means for teachers and staff to communicate with one another  
                 • Maintains open and effective lines of communication with teachers and staff |
| Order          | • Provides and enforces clear structures, rules, and procedures for teachers, staff, and students  
                 • Establishes routines regarding the running of the school that teachers and staff understand and follow |
| Input          | • Provides opportunities for input from teachers and staff on all important decisions  
                 • Provides opportunities for teachers and staff to be involved in policy development  
                 • Involves the school leadership team in decision making |
Unfortunately, Mike did not promote a sense of well-being in his building, nor did he develop a shared vision for the changes he made as they were those that appeared to be dictated and demanded of him by a group of powerful parents. Furthermore, Mike did not provide opportunities for input from teachers and staff on important decisions. This was made abundantly clear in Breanne's comments regarding the lack of respect and input. The culture in the district where Mike and Breanne were employed seemed somewhat poisoned, albeit from only our limited glimpse. I neither heard nor saw evidence that there was a sense of cooperation nor well-being among teachers and staff. I did not hear a sense of purpose or a shared vision.

When I consider the importance of communication, from the statements Breanne made around her administrator, I did not find nor come to believe that he was approachable or accessible. Neither did I walk away and believe that there were effective lines of communication between teachers and staff.

When the responsibility of order was considered around the principal deemed to have more significant negative traits, it seemed abundantly clear through our conversations that there are clear structures, rules, procedures, and routines in place for Mike was defined as crisp. However, I took that to mean that he was painfully inflexible. Although routines are important when considering how things need to be accomplished, a tangential component of routines, rigidity, could certainly be considered as a detriment to order.

The final responsibility highlighted that negatively correlated to Second-Order Change was that of input. From both the conversations and interviews with Mike and
Breann, and considering the associated practices as noted in Table 3 regarding input, I did not see much evidence supporting a structure where input from others was valued. Mike clearly made important decisions from his office as was evidenced through multiple statements that Breanne shared, (see Data Driven Disaster).

And finally, coming back full circle to the purpose behind this dissertation, to determine the impact of leadership on students and teachers of Second Chance Reading, I have found that buildings with powerfully positive administrators positively impacted student achievement whereas buildings with administration that were deemed to have negative attributes interestingly enough have determined that SCR did not meet their needs. This translated to a negative correlation.

In electing to further test the model I created in Figure 2, I chose a Discriminant Sampling of prior administrators to determine and test the validity of my visual representation. I considered three recent administrators for whom I had worked. I would qualify each of them as maintaining high levels of credibility as they could all be considered accomplished educators in their own right. According to my visual representation tied to the contemporary narrative inquiry and represented in Figure 2, two of the three I have considered would be noted for exhibiting more significant positive attributes whereas the third would be deemed as more negative. When reviewing the criteria embedded in Figure 2, the implications hold true for each of the three individuals I have considered in that the administrator determined as exhibiting negative attributes of leadership appeared to struggle with building relationships, the culture of the organization was less engaging, and the spirits of the masses was a bit downtrodden, whereas the
opposite could be stated when the organization in which I was employed was led by those
deemed to be *positive administrators*.

Naturally, it must be stated that the standards by which I have determined either
*positive* or *negative traits* are as I have seen and witnessed them, for they are certainly
subjective traits in many ways. However, that said, it appeared to me that visual
representation I had created was valid and the implications tied to it are significant in its
simplicity. Most simply put, the implications for sustained and significant positive impact
on student achievement comes from two sources: placing a highly qualified teacher in all
critical classrooms as noted by the work of Haycock (1998) and equally significant,
placing a highly qualified and far-sighted administrator at the helm to lead the way and
steady the ship.

**Implications for Educators**

As previously noted, I designed this research study in order to determine and hear
the perspectives of key stakeholders in order to glean a clear understanding of the
complete picture of *Second Chance Reading* in the targeted schools that had agreed to
participate. This was intentional, for I wanted to take a cursory glance into classrooms to
discover the impact of building leadership on teachers as well as to determine in part the
degree of implementation in the schools that had joined forced, for although there was no
targeted question regarding the degree of implementation, I suspected in part that a
perceived lack thereof may rise during the interview process. I was correct in that
scheduling of *SCR* was a barrier which many participants mentioned. Reeves (2009)
stated that "of all the variables that influence student achievement, the two that have the
most profound influence are teacher quality and leadership quality.” (Reeves, 2009, p. 67)

As we are in the full throes of a political year as evidenced by nightly phone surveys and political pundits actively discussing every nuance while we prepare to elect the next leader of our nation, I inadvertently heard a comment that struck a nerve just two days ago. A journalist noted that on April 11, 1945 Franklin Delano Roosevelt wrote an address that was to be delivered via nationwide radio broadcast three days later to honor the annual Jefferson Day Address. However, Roosevelt died from a cerebral hemorrhage before delivering his words. One line from the speech that was never shared aloud by this president, although captured in text, clearly encapsulated my research findings. Roosevelt penned, “Today we are faced with the preeminent fact that, if civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships -- the ability of all peoples, of all kinds, to live together and work together, in the same world, at peace.” I would extrapolate and slightly alter his hallowed words and state that if schools are to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships.

Most simply put, the significance and critical importance of mindful hiring can never be discounted nor underemphasized, especially when one considers the value of leadership. In a wonderful little book, Mandela’s Way: Fifteen Lessons on Life, Love, and Courage, by Stengel (2010), Nelson Mandela spoke candidly about fine qualities of leadership. The titles of many of his chapters, simplistic though they may be, beautifully paraphrase what school leadership should also emulate: (1) Courage is not the absence of fear, (2) Be measured, (3) Lead from the front, (4) Lead from the back, (5) Look the part,
(6) Have a core principle, (7) See the good in others, (8) Know your enemy, (9) Keep your rivals close, (10) Know when to say no, (11) It’s a long game, (12) Love makes the difference, (13) Quitting is leading too, (14) It’s always both, and (15) Find your own garden. Cultivate and grow where you are planted.
REFERENCES


Zimmerman, A. (2008, June). *How to get it and keep it*. Keynote speaker at Iowa Leadership Academy, Des Moines, IA.
LITERATURE REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

PRINCIPAL INTERVIEWING PROTOCOL AND INITIAL QUESTIONS.

Time, Date, and Location of Interview: ________________________________

Interviewee and Assigned Pseudonym: ________________________________

First of all, let me again thank you for participating in this research study. I want you to know that everything you say will be maintained with the highest levels of confidentiality. Your identity will be coded in my final research and you will be assigned a unique pseudonym. Additionally, the district in which you are employed will not be noted or identifiable in anyway. If you are feeling uncomfortable or uneasy with any of the questions, you’re welcome to pass on them. And finally, your involvement in this research is completely voluntary. If you’d like to decline involvement along the way, that is also your prerogative. Shall we begin?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Posed …</th>
<th>Field Notes</th>
<th>Initial Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Tell me about your experience with Second Chance Reading.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What leadership qualities do you exhibit in order to support your SCR teachers and the students in her classroom?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Are there barriers in place which are preventing teachers from accomplishing their mission? What might they be? If you could remove any barrier for your SCR teachers, what would you remove and how would you go about that?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What is the relationship between teacher and principal leadership?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Pick one of your teachers. How would you describe her in terms of instructional capacity as well as her commitment and support of the SCR instructional framework?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. In what ways do you support, encourage, and celebrate learning with your SCR teachers?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
First of all, let me again thank you for participating in this research study. I want you to know that everything you say will be maintained with the highest levels of confidentiality. Your identity will be coded in my final research and you will be assigned a unique pseudonym. Additionally, the district in which you are employed will not be noted or identifiable in anyway. If you are feeling uncomfortable or uneasy with any of the questions, you’re welcome to pass on them. And finally, your involvement in this research is completely voluntary. If you’d like to decline involvement along the way, that is also your prerogative. Shall we begin?

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<tr>
<th>Question Posed …</th>
<th>Field Notes</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Tell me about your experience with <em>Second Chance Reading.</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What qualities do you feel are necessary to support SCR teachers and students? How is that evidenced in your principal?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Are there barriers in place which are preventing you from accomplishing your mission? If so, what might they be?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. From your perspective, what can be done from a leadership stance to support you in accomplishing your mission?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Describe the working relationship between you and your principal.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How would you describe your principal in terms of leadership and his / her support of the <em>SCR</em> instructional framework?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. How is your building principal supportive of the students in your SCR classrooms? In what way(s)? How does he/she encourage and celebrate learning?</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX C

**LOCATION AND LENGTH OF INTERVIEWS FOR RECRUITED EDUCATORS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educator's Role</th>
<th>Educator's Pseudonym</th>
<th>Interview Date</th>
<th>Interview Location</th>
<th>Pseudonym of Professional Colleagues</th>
<th>Interview Length in minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>May 23</td>
<td>Principal’s Office</td>
<td>Breanne</td>
<td>34:27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Wally</td>
<td>May 24</td>
<td>Principal’s Office</td>
<td>Helen &amp; Mamie</td>
<td>36:37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>May 29</td>
<td>Principal’s Office</td>
<td>Diana</td>
<td>23:49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Hank</td>
<td>May 29</td>
<td>Principal’s Office</td>
<td>Susie, Wanda &amp; Kelsey</td>
<td>65:52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>June 2</td>
<td>Phone Conference</td>
<td>No Interviewing Administrator</td>
<td>33:43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Susie</td>
<td>June 5</td>
<td>AEA 267</td>
<td>Hank, Wanda &amp; Kelsey</td>
<td>23:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Breanne</td>
<td>June 5</td>
<td>AEA 267</td>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>51:43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>June 5</td>
<td>Helen’s Classroom</td>
<td>Wally &amp; Mamie</td>
<td>45:09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Mamie</td>
<td>June 5</td>
<td>Mamie’s Classroom</td>
<td>Wally &amp; Helen</td>
<td>17:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Diana</td>
<td>June 6</td>
<td>Diana’s Home</td>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>46:08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Wanda</td>
<td>June 15</td>
<td>AEA 267</td>
<td>Hank, Susie, &amp; Kelsey</td>
<td>34:38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Kelsey</td>
<td>June 15</td>
<td>AEA 267</td>
<td>Hank, Susie, &amp; Wanda</td>
<td>42:18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Range of time spent:** 17.2 – 65.52 minutes  
**Average time with principals:** 39.9125 minutes  
**Overall average with educators:** 37.7283 minutes  
**Average time with teachers:** 36.63625 minutes