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CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN MARCOS

The Role of the District Office in Instructional Practice Reform

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements

for the degree Doctor of Education

in

Educational Leadership

by

Karen Schultz Rizzi

Committee in charge:

    University of California, San Diego

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    California State University, San Marcos

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2008

The Dissertation of Karen Schultz Rizzi is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and

form for publication on microfilm:

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2008

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DEDICATION

First, this dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Morris and Jeanette Schultz, who taught their children many important lessons about life, including the value of education and hard work. They believed that their children were capable of accomplishing anything and taught us to believe in ourselves. They also taught me that sometimes it is hard to do the right thing, but to do it anyway. And though my father is no longer here, he is always part of me. Without a doubt, it was the faith my parents always had in me that taught me to believe in myself. It was that faith as that helped guide me through the demanding dissertation process.

Second, this dissertation is dedicated to my grandchildren, Megan, Lauren, Sean, Brendon, Gianna, and those yet to come. I hope that someday I can inspire them to dream and believe that they too can accomplish anything. My wish for them is that they experience the love and joy found in working hard and learning new things every day.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AERA	American Educational Research Association	The American Educational Research Association's primary goal is the advancement of educational research and its practical application. The organization is concerned with improving the educational process by encouraging scholarly inquiry related to education and evaluation and by promoting the dissemination and practical application of research results.
AP	Advanced Placement	The College Board's program which allows students to take college-level courses while in high school. The program offers 37 exams in 22 subject areas.
API	Academic Performance Index	California's school accountability index that rates schools on a scale that ranges from 200 to 1000 summarizes a school's performance over a number of indicators, currently consisting of results from statewide tests that are based on the standards for what California students are expected to learn in every grade.

| AYP | Adequate Yearly Progress | California's version of NCLB school accountability, it sets a minimum percentage of students who must score proficient or above on standardized state assessments. Entire schools as well as significantly subgroups must meet this percentage or face sanctions. For California high schools, AYP is based upon five factors including the percentage of sophomores scoring at least 380 on the CAHSEE. |
| BTSA | Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment | State-funded teacher induction program, co-sponsored by the California Department of Education (CDE) and the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) designed to support the professional development of newly-credentialed, beginning teachers and fulfill the requirements for the California Clear Multiple and Single Subjects Credentials |

CAHSEE	California High School Exit Exam	Students must pass this two-part exam in English/Language Arts and in Math in order to graduate. Their first attempt in the winter of their sophomore year; they have additional opportunities to pass the exam during their junior and senior years. API and AYP calculations include CAHSEE pass r and proficiency results for high schools.
CDE	California Department of Education	The state level agency's core purpose is to lead and support the continuous improvement of student achievement, with a specific focus on closing achievement gaps.
CITW	Classroom Instruction That Works	Term used to describe the district's professional development activities based on Marzano's book by the same name.
CPRE	Consortium for Policy Research in Education	An educational consortium uniting five of the nation's top research institutions, Its major goal is to improve student learning through research on education reform, policy, and finance.
CSR	Comprehensive School Reform	A federally funded school reform program. It is based upon individual schools choice of one of several approved research-based models.

CST	California Standards Test.	Standardized tests administered annually in grades two through eleven. They are designed to test student performance on the California state standards.
DSC	District Service Center	The name used by Sun Valley High School District staff to refer to the facility that houses the district office staff
IESD	Instructionally Effective School Districts	Term coined by Murphy and Hallinger to describe districts with indefinable factors that demonstrated effectiveness in improving student achievement.
IRB	Institutional Review Board	An institutional review board is a group that has been formally designated to approve, monitor, and review biomedical an behavioral research with the aim to protect the rights and welfare of the research subjects. The purpose of an IRB is to assure, both in advance and by periodic review, that appropriate steps are taken to protect the rights and welfare of humans participating as subjects in a research study.

McREL	Mid-continental Research for Education and Learning	McREL serves as the Regional Education Laboratory for the Central Region Their research and development work provides teachers and administrators with valuable information about proven, effective approaches to the challenges in education today.
NCLB	No Child Left Behind	Federal legislation enacted in 2002 designed to improve public school education. It mandates that all students will be proficient in math and English by 2014.
PSAA	Public Schools Accountability Act	Legislation which authorized the creation of an educational accountability system for California public schools. Its primary goal is to help schools improve and to measure the academic achievement of all students.
SAT	Scholastic Aptitude Test	The SAT Reasoning Test is a college admissions test given by the College Bard. SAT consists of three major sections math, critical reading, and writing. Each section receives a score on the scale of 200–800.

| WASC | Western Association of Schools and Colleges | The Western Association of Schools and Colleges is one of six regional associations that accredit public and private schools, colleges, and universities in the United States. |

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

accomplish my goal. He has been insightful, supportive and engaged throughout the study. He, like the rest of my committee, was not willing to settle for "good enough." I have conducted a better study because of his gentle, yet critical eye. I would also like to thank Janet Chrispeels, who whenever asked, shared her compassion, knowledge and expertise with me.

Cohort 1 of the Joint Doctoral Program is a blend of unique, gifted educators who are committed to making a difference in the lives of our students. I am grateful to Dr. Baldwin for sending Jennifer Jeffries to my office to ask me to apply to the program. I am sure I that would not be at this point in the dissertation process without her visit. I was truly happy that I could share this experience with my veteran friends, Rebecca, John, Kevin and the incredible Mel who helped with my data collection. As well, through the program I have made new friends that I know I will see throughout my career. I value all the time spent with Peggy working on projects and sharing resources.

Finally, and most importantly I want to thank my husband Don. He supported me in every way possible throughout this study. He was selfless, patient, and loving. He knew when to make me laugh and knew when to just let me—be me. He was the inspiration for me to complete this lifetime goal. Without him, it never would have happened. I could not have a better friend or partner.

VITA

EDUCATION

1980	Bachelor of Science, University of Southern California
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1982	Science Teacher and Activities Director, Whitney High School, ABC Unified School District
1988	Activities Director, South Hills High School, Covina Valley Unified School District
1990	Assistant Principal, Poway High School, Poway Unified School District
1996	Principal, Chaparral High School, Temecula Valley Unified School District
2001	Director Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, Escondido Union High School District
2002	Assistant Superintendent, Educational Services, Escondido Union High School District

HONORS

1988	California Association of Directors of Activities, Director of the Year, Area E
2000	Riverside County PTSA, Principal of the Year
2006	CSBA/ACSA Region 18 Central Office Curriculum Administrator of the Year

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Role of the District Office in Instructional Practice Reform

by

Karen Schultz Rizzi

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

University of California, San Diego, 2008

California State University, San Marcos, 2008

San Diego State University, 2008

Professor Mark Baldwin, Chair

In the age of educational accountability, both the district and the school are held accountable for improving the academic achievement of each student, thus compelling both to implement reforms that demonstrate measurable increases in student achievement. The changes in accountability measures have revived interest in the district office's role in educational change and reform. Although elementary schools, and to a

lesser degree middle schools, seem to be rising to the challenge of standards-based

education, high schools are lagging behind. Though the research base is growing, more

needs to be learned, specifically about instructional practice reform at the high school

level, to identify the successful interactions between the school site and the district office,

both charged with undertaking the improvement effort. Acting as a participant observer,

the researcher's major goal of the study is to identify and examine the role of the district

office in supporting or constraining instructional practice reform at the high school level.

It has been suggested that districts can and should collect and analyze data from a variety

of sources to make decisions that support teaching and learning. By examining one

secondary district's reform efforts targeted at instructional practice, the study will

contribute to the small yet growing body of research on the role of the district office in

high school reform. In addition, participant observer methodology has the potential for

administrators to generate knowledge out of their own practice settings.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Context

"There are not now, as there have never been, simple answers to the questions of

what is wrong with our schools and how they can be changed" (Purkey & Smith, 1985, p.

352). Nonetheless, the lack of substantial progress toward answering these questions in

the latter part of last century led to the general dissatisfaction with academic achievement

resulting in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) ("No Child Left Behind Act",

2002). In the age of NCLB, the district and the individual school are held accountable for

improving the academic achievement of each student, thus compelling both to implement

reforms that demonstrate measurable increases in student achievement on the well-

publicized state assessments. The result is that NCLB is triggering sanctions for an

increasing number of schools and districts labeled "low-performing" or "in need of

improvement." In effect, the changes in accountability measures have revived interest in

the district office's role in educational change and reform. If a major determinant of

student achievement is the quality of classroom instruction, then researchers must

continue to study how quality instruction can prevail in as many classrooms as possible.

The study of the role of the district office in instructional practice reform is of vital

importance and cannot be ignored if practitioners and policymakers are to find answers to

the question of how our schools must change.

Although elementary schools, and to a lesser degree middle schools, seem to be

rising to the challenges of accountability in a standards-based environment, high schools

are lagging behind. EdSource reported, "A lower proportion of high schools meet the

overall goal of 800 on the API [Academic Performance Index], and a lower proportion of

high schools can show a pattern of sustained growth over time. The gap in performance by race and income is still unacceptably wide" (EdSource, 2005, p. 1). As with elementary and middle schools, teacher quality, strong curriculum, effective leaders, and rigorous processes for monitoring students affect high school student performance. In the effort to maximize student success, high schools face unique challenges. Comprehensive high schools undertake the mission to be all things to all people while managing a campus of large scope and scale. Other challenges high schools face include improving students' basic skills while also covering the prescribed curriculum and facilitating two transitions for students from middle to high school and from high school to college, jobs, or work preparation programs (EdSource, 2006).

Districts acting strategically can interpret the implementation of state and federal mandates to fit local contexts, create new roles for teachers, improve student achievement, and enhance professional practice (Marsh, 2000). Though the research base is growing, more needs to be learned, specifically about instructional practice reform at the high school level, to identify the successful interactions between the school site and the district office, studying the role the district office plays in mediating state standards for instruction and the corresponding assessments with their potential to lead district-wide school improvement and increased student achievement overall is necessary (Elmore & Burney, 1997; Massell & Goertz, 2002; Spillane & Thompson, 1997; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Research should examine the work of the district office and its interactions with high school sites–interaction that shapes the development, implementation, and sustainability of instructional practice reform efforts (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003; Togneri & Anderson, 2003).

Study Focus, Purpose, and Importance

Though university and research institutions have produced a number of studies in

the past decade in this area, more research is required to better understand the nature of

school districts and the strategies they implement to improve student achievement. It has

been suggested that "Districts undertake action research projects based on educators'

inquiries into their own instructional practices" (Shannon & Bylsma, 2004, p.57).

Districts can and should collect and analyze data from a variety of sources to make

decisions that support teaching and learning. In this study, the researcher will investigate

the often-ignored role of the district office, specifically the part it plays in the

instructional reform process. As an educator in the case district, the researcher will act as

a participant observer to examine the role the district office plays in instructional practice

reform efforts. One of the strengths of this study is that it was conducted by a

practitioner, using appropriate case study methodology. The results will provide evidence

of specific district office practices that either support or constrain instructional practice

reform efforts and will offer insights to district-level administrators working with high

schools to improve instructional practice.

The district selected for this case was an intentional choice to help fill the

knowledge gap concerning the role of the district office in high school instructional

practice reform. First, it is a high school district with three comprehensive high schools.

Secondly, it has shown improved student achievement as measured by federal, state, and

local indicators for the past 5 years. In addition, demographic factors make this a rich

case to study. Demographic changes show an increase in economically disadvantaged

(ED), Hispanic, and English Learner (EL) students, characteristics historically associated

with low-performing districts (Cawelti, 2001). This district's improvement trend is significant because many high-poverty districts serving students from diverse backgrounds and languages are the districts already in, or in danger of entering Program Improvement. Yet, in the past year, the case district awards have included one California Distinguished School, making all three high schools award recipients during this 5-year period. Additionally during the same period, one high school received the Title I Recognition Award twice, which is true for only a handful of high schools in the state. In 2006, the district received a Golden Bell award from the California School Board Association. As well, representatives from the district have presented the award-winning program at national conferences, including, at the Ed Trust conference in Washington DC. Additionally, the district was selected to represent its County Office of Education in the six-county PROMISE Initiative, which is a California collaborative effort working with "best practices" in English Learner education.

<div align="center">*Statement of the Problem*</div>

Issues to be Investigated

The major goal of this study was to identify and examine the role of the district office in supporting or constraining instructional practice reform at the high school level. Instructional practice will be defined in this study by four strategies: standards alignment, instructional strategies, professional development, and use of data. This descriptive, embedded case study of a suburban southern California high school district examined the perspectives of teachers, site administrators, and district-level administrators in relation to the district office's support of instructional practice reform. Using the district as the unit of analysis, the study investigated district office practices, policies, and the interactions

between comprehensive high school and district office personnel by using (a) teacher and superintendent interviews, (b) site administrator focus groups, (c) district office administrator focus group, (d) demographic and assessment data, and (e) available reports and documents.

Research Questions

Specifically, this study addressed the following questions: (1) How do district office strategies support or constrain the implementation of instructional practice reform? (2) How do high school district office practices change school level strategies targeted at instructional practices? (3) What are the interactions between district office and site personnel during the period of reform?

Significance of the Study

Earlier research on the role of the district office in educational reform provided a range of practices and policies, which were often classified into themes defined by the researcher, almost all of which include instructional practice. More research is required to better understand systemic reform and the relationship between district office practices and student learning. By examining one secondary district's reform efforts targeted at instructional practice, the study will contribute to the small yet growing body of research on the role of the district office in high school reform. In addition, participant observer methodology has the potential for administrators to generate knowledge out of their own practice settings. As part of a task force of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) on how to improve the research base and knowledge production in educational administration Anderson and Jones (2003) states:

> We do believe, how ever, that intentional, systematic, and disciplined inquiry on educational practice by "insiders," although fraught with unique epistemological, methodological, political, and ethical dilemmas, has great potential for challenging, confirming, and extending current theory and for identifying new dimensions of administrative practice for study. (p. 430)

The information learned will be used internally to continue to improve district office practices supporting student achievement. Additionally, the findings may be used by other district-level administrators seeking to better understand how instructional practice reform initiatives can be implemented and what strategies are most effective to support and sustain the improved student achievement. The study will also help district-level administrators uncover barriers and constraints that are at present hindering instructional practice reform implementation. Consequently, the result will provide options for district-level administrators to consider as they continue to initiate and support instructional practice reform with the ultimate goal of sustaining improved student achievement. If public education is requisite to a healthy democracy, then researchers and educators must look beyond improving individual schools and study the district-level practices and policies that improve achievement for all students.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) (2002) heightens the critical need for understanding the role of the district office in educational reform. The cry for accountability continues to add to the collection of data reinforcing the existence of demographic groups of low-performing students (Alson, 2002; Barton, 2004; Fullan, 2000; Ramirez & Carpenter, 2005). Consequently, politicians as well as educators clamor for district and school reform to resolve this crisis. The growing body of literature seeks to identify the district office practices and policies that distinguish districts that show improved student achievement from those that do not. This literature review begins with a brief historical perspective, followed by highlights from important studies on district reform efforts. It then summarizes the major themes synthesized from the literature, concluding with a detailed review of district-level instructional practice reform strategies.

Historical Perspective

Throughout the 20th century, reformers were often ambivalent and sometimes even hostile toward the basic building block of the American education system: the local district (Corcoran & Lawrence, 2003; Leverett, 2004; Tyack, 2002). The literature reveals that before A Nation At Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education[NCEE], 1983) the school reform movement produced small successes resulting from concerted efforts to fix individual "broken" parts. Many of these initiatives did not endure, standing alone as they did against the rest of a system not yet part of the change. Even so, these reform efforts provided valuable lessons for future reform strategies. Numerous studies document the characteristics of improved schools; however, less is known concerning districts showing substantial improvement in student

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achievement. Early in the Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) movement, reform models bypassed the role of the district or central office, believing it was more efficient to work directly with individual schools. A case in point is the effective schools movement. While initiating this reform model, Edmonds (1979) concentrated on the school as the unit of change, ignoring the role of the district office. In fact, many reformers believed that district offices were among the major causes of the problems with schooling (Corcoran & Lawrence, 2003; Mac Iver & Farley, 2003). Consequently, district offices were regarded as second-string players in the reform game (Foley, 2001; Louis, 1995; Murphy, 1995).

Early district office research differs from current research most noticeably by the contexts in which the research took place. Most early research on the role of the district office was centered on its implementation of new programs and practices while minimal research was conducted on how districts and schools have managed multiple innovations and continual school improvement. In the 1970s and early 1980s, the research on the role of the district office was supportive of the innovation being implemented (Anderson, 2003; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Notably, in the available research, the focus was on elementary schools: high school data were usually absent. Some researchers attempted to glean insights for district offices to use to replicate successes more widely although these conclusions lacked empirical evidence of the district-level efforts (Cuban, 1984; Leithwood et al., 2004; Murphy, 1995; Purkey & Smith, 1985).

In the mid-1980s and early 1990s research on the role of the district office was built upon "effective schools" research (Kercheval & Newbill, 2002; Mac Iver & Farley,

2003). Researchers debated the role of the district office during this period. The district office was often not considered a factor in the development and implementation of the improvement strategies. The call for the demise of the district office may have been premature. While there are certainly numerous examples of ineffective district offices, those who advocate doing away with them altogether have yet to propose solutions that will raise achievement in more than a small number of schools in any geographic area, and specifically, in the many urban areas of the country.

Today, there is a revived interest with regard to the role of the district office in educational change and reform. More and more policymakers, researchers, and reformers recognize the important role of school districts in changing the course and providing the support necessary for changing educational practice (Balch-Gonzalez, 2003; Corcoran & Lawrence, 2003; Mac Iver & Farley, 2003). Presently, NCLB (2002) has been triggering sanctions for an increasing number of schools and districts labeled "low-performing" or "in need of improvement," thus increasing the urgency to understand what improving districts do to support increased student achievement. The changes in accountability have increased the focus on the literature regarding the significance of the district office in educational reform. During the past few years "districts have moved from being perceived as a bureaucratic backwater of educational policy to being seen as potent sites and sources of educational reform" (Hightower, Knapp, Marsh, & McLaughlin, 2002, p.1).

Recently, studies have explored the role of the district office within the framework of support for school level reform, as well as how the district implements reform throughout the system. In both cases, the research has provided empirical

evidence of purposeful practices, policies, and actions that characterize improving districts. Even so, the research more often targets K-8 systems than high schools or high school districts. There is an increasing need to provide evidence that the work of the district office is essential to successful, sustained, improved student achievement in high schools. Research today must draw attention to the complex set of district office strategies contributing to the conditions that facilitate or impede the improvement of teaching and learning at the secondary level.

Major Studies

Of the several research studies related to district improvement, the researcher has selected a representative sample, which encompasses the major themes associated with district office support for educational reform and specifically offer detailed insights regarding the strategies associated with instructional improvement. Almost all the research done in this area is case studies. In this section, the researcher reviews several important studies, highlighting critical attributes, then synthesizes the findings, supplementing from other studies, as necessary, to introduce three major themes: leadership, system coherence, and collaborative relationships. The conclusion of the literature review takes a more in-depth look at a fourth theme, instructional practice, which is the focus of this study.

Elmore and Burney

In their case study of New York Community District #2, Elmore and Burney (1997) described how staff development was used as the catalyst for systemic instructional change. The district served more than 22,000 students from diverse racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. Elmore and Burney's (1997) research focused on the

role of the district office in systemic school improvement and the role of professional

development in linking reform policy to classroom practice. At the time of the study, the

district was selected because of its growing reputation for sustained improvement through

professional development. The study was designed to provide information about the role

of school districts in connecting reform policy to classroom practice. The authors

suggested that the district office's earlier attempts to improve student performance had

focused on curriculum and assessment alignment without providing teachers and

administrators with the knowledge to engage differently with teaching and learning.

District #2 demonstrated improvement in student achievement after the district office

developed an improvement strategy, which focused their initiatives on literacy and

mathematics. The initiatives became the basis for resource allocation and professional

development. Though the authors made no claim to the broad generalizability of their

study, they offered lessons and practices regarding general approaches to professional

development, which may serve districts in contexts different from those of Community

District #2. The authors offer three distinguishing characteristics of District #2. First, it

had a specific strategy focused on the improvement of teaching, second, the strategy had

the goal of sustained improvement across the system, and third, system coherence

resulted from the strategy permeating all aspects of the system.

Murphy and Hallinger

Murphy and Hallinger (1998) conducted an exploratory case study based on a

theoretical framework derived from prior research on school improvement and

organizational control and coordination. The study focused on five elementary districts,

three high school districts, and four unified school districts in California. The districts

were selected because of their effectiveness in increasing student achievement on standardized tests, though the sample included controls for socioeconomic status, language proficiency, and previous achievement. The researchers then classified the selected districts as "instructionally effective school districts" (IESD). The study had three objectives: to understand better (a) the organizational structures that characterize IESD, (b) the role of the superintendent in promoting IESD, and (c) the methods used to coordinate and control site level activities. The data for the study were collected from interviews with superintendents and an analysis of selected documents was used to validate the superintendents' self-reporting.

In this study, Murphy and Hallinger (1988) concluded that there are identifiable factors characterizing IESD. From their data, they described 17 themes categorized in four areas: (a) conditions, (b) climate factors, (c) characteristics of curriculum and instruction, and (d) organizational dynamics. Further, they stated that factors such as paying particular attention to curriculum and instruction as well as emphasizing inspection and outcomes are part of the reason that IESD are more instructionally effective than other districts. The researchers were optimistic about their preliminary findings, yet they also recognized that much more investigation was needed. In their small sample, no district had all the factors and those with similar factors did not have them in equal weights. Murphy and Hallinger concluded that it is unlikely that a single formula will result in instructionally effective school districts.

Cawelti and Protheroe

The School District Effectiveness Study was undertaken to investigate educational practices at the district-level (Cawelti & Protheroe, 2001). The purpose of the

case study was to identify school districts that had discovered ways to ensure that students in all or most of their schools were making significant progress toward meeting high standards experiences. The U.S. Department of Education, Regional Educational Laboratories, state education officials and others were solicited for recommendations for districts meeting the criteria of serving a large number of students from low-income families and where all or most of the schools had significantly improved achievement (as measured by standardized tests) for 5 years before the study. However, the term "significant improvement" was not defined before the researchers solicited institutions for case districts. The selection process narrowed the sample down to six districts: one from California, one from Idaho, three from Texas, and one from West Virginia. The district in California and one district in Texas were classified as large urban districts. The researchers conducted interviews and site visits to collect data.

Cawelti and Protheroe (2001) recognized that the districts described in the study have worked hard to achieve improvement in student achievement. The researchers also acknowledged the districts may not be representative of all districts, yet they were similar in many aspects to districts with unacceptable levels of student achievement. The study presented six common characteristics that contributed to district improvement: (a) use of assessment information, (b) a no excuses approach to accountability, (c) shared belief about high expectations, (d) targeted, effective professional development, (e) aligned curriculum and assessment, and (f) capacity building focused on district-level initiatives.

David and Shields

In 1996, Pew Charitable Trusts awarded 4-year grants to seven urban school districts across the nation to assist in implementing standards-based systemic reform. The

Trusts' primary goal in funding these districts was to test the theory and assumptions behind a standards-based systemic approach to reform. The evaluation used a modified multiple-case-study design. During each year of the study an evaluation team conducted interviews in the districts to track the progress of the reform efforts (David & Shields, 2001).

Anticipating the importance of the national standards-based reform movement, the researchers blended ideas from systemic reform and standards-based teaching and learning. They believed that the theory of standards-based reform required three components: ambitious standards, aligned assessments, and accountability, which combined serve as the starting place for increasing student achievement. From their theoretical framework, the researchers reasoned that these reform components should (a) communicate clear and high expectations for students, (b) guide changes in practice, and (c) motivate educators to improve.

Though the research sites worked hard over the 4 years of the study, a pivotal finding of the study was that the core components of standards-based reform did not produce the hoped-for educational outcomes. In general, the reform components did not communicate high expectations for students, provide information to guide instructional improvement, or motivate widespread instructional change beyond test preparation (David & Shields, 2001). High-stakes accountability did not motivate educators to avoid sanctions; rather, it more often resulted in less ambitious teaching targeted at raising standardized test scores. Even when teachers did adopt more effective standards-based practices, such as incorporating more writing, this practice was not enough to help them do a better job in the classroom. Increasing the amount of writing is not the same as

teaching writing better. However, improvements in practice do result when teachers have a clear picture of effective instruction accompanied by professional development.

Nonetheless, David and Shields (2001) documented district-wide changes in instruction where district-level leaders had communicated a clear set of expectations for instruction through curriculum adoptions or other curricular frameworks. The district office supported their expectations with intensive professional development focused on teaching specific content (reading or mathematics) and ongoing school-based assistance. In fact, the only reform effort across the districts that clearly produced student achievement gains had well-defined instructional expectations, supported by professional development. Further, the district office increased attention to formative assessments used to inform classroom instruction. David and Shields concluded that implementing standards-based reform has profound implications for district-level leadership and system coherence.

Massell and Goetz

In a study conducted for the Consortium for Policy Research in Education, Massell and Goertz (2002) sought to find district office strategies that build capacity for instructional improvement. In their 3 year study of standards-based reform across eight states (California, Colorado, Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, and Texas), 23 districts were selected based on their achievement results and standards-based reform initiatives. The methodology for this qualitative research study involved district visits in 1998 and 1999, which included interviews with district office staff responsible for accountability and assessment, curriculum and instruction, professional development, low-performing schools, and federal programs. Additionally, in a sample of 57

elementary schools in all states but Minnesota, interviews were conducted with principals and school improvement committee chairs. Observations and interviews with teachers took place in 33 of the 57 schools.

The study's conclusions relied significantly on the interviews with district-level administrators as well as with the principal and teacher interviews from the delineated subset of schools. Interviews with teachers regarding the district office's capacity-building strategies suggested that teachers valued consistency and focus, sufficient time and support to implement changes in practice as long as they saw relevance for improving their practice and student learning. Based in the findings, the researchers presented the three strategies most common among the districts studied: (a) increasing professional knowledge and skills, (b) strengthening and aligning instructional guidance, and (c) using data to guide instructional improvement efforts (Massell & Goertz, 2002). They also recognized that the factors do not operate in isolation. Rather they are based on district organizing principles, these principles that give the strategies their meaning. At the same time, the researchers did not evaluate the effectiveness or impact of the strategies.

Snipes, Doolittle, and Herlihy

The study conducted by Snipes, Doolittle, and Herlihy (2002) for the Council of Great City Schools began with the assumption that the large urban school district is an important factor in the reform movement and a potential force for increasing academic achievement. Just as many others, the researchers study accepted and further developed the premise that there is no one single policy or practice that is likely to improve academic achievement for all students. This exploratory case study was based on four

urban school districts: Houston, Sacramento, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, and New York City's Chancellor's District 2, as well as two unnamed districts, which were used for comparison purposes. The district selection process used the following criteria: at least 3 years of improved overall student achievement, a narrowing of the academic differences between White and minority students, more rapid progress than state averages during the same period, and representation of different geographical areas of the country.

The methodology consisted of two 2-day visits to case districts. In-depth, open-ended interviews and focus groups were conducted with district office and site staff, school board members, union representatives, community members, and the press. Relevant documents were analyzed along with a detailed analysis of student performance data. The researchers concluded that "[t]he case study districts developed a consensus on reform priorities, created instructional coherence, and ensured that key instructional improvement strategies were implemented at the classroom level" (Snipes et al., 2002, p.6). Further, the analysis of the data supported the following key findings: (a) student performance at the elementary level has been improving in recent years for all subgroups, (b) most elementary schools showed a reduction in racial differences in the percentage of students not meeting basic performance criteria, (c) racial difference reductions were less consistent when one looked at averages, with disparity in grade levels and content areas, and (d) less consistent progress with middle and little progress with high schools in raising achievement and reducing the gap.

Corcoran and Lawrence

The work done by the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) to evaluate the Merck Institute for Science Education's (MISE) partnership with four public

school districts, in locations where Merck has factories, offered a rare longitudinal perspective of district reform efforts (Corcoran & Lawrence, 2003). MISE is a business-led partnership seeking to improve science education in grades K-8 through professional development and technical assistance. CPRE documented the changes in practice, policy, school culture, curriculum, classroom practice, and student outcomes. Data collection took place through interviews with the district office, school and MISE staff, observation of classrooms and professional development events. Additionally, annual surveys were administered to site and district office staff for 5 years. The results of this study show that outside organizations such as MISE can help champion reform efforts sought by district-level leadership. Corcoran and Lawrence (2003) identified eight components from which they derived a framework for improvement: leadership, commitment to improving teaching, focus over time, coherent practice ad policy, adequate resources, clear expectations, professional development, norms that support improvement, and attention to data.

McLaughlin and Talbert

In searching for evidence that the district office plays an important, and often underestimated role in improved student outcomes, McLaughlin and Talbert (2003) conducted a complex, multilevel, multimethod study from 1997-2001. The quantitative data were gathered from longitudinal surveys from district-level administrators, principals, and teachers from 15 of the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative districts. Survey data were also gathered from district-level administrators representing 58 of the 118 Bay Area school districts. Longitudinal data from the SAT-9 were used to measure

academic outcomes. The qualitative data came from a four-year case study of two Bay Area districts and San Diego city schools.

The methodology provided the researchers with a significant amount of data. The teacher survey data showed that district office professionalism (support of teaching and learning, high expectations, student focus, and school support) predicted positive change in the school conditions (inquiry practice, teacher learning communities, and collective problem solving) promoted by the reform strategies. The study offered evidence that focusing on the system as the unit of change was an essential strategy used by reforming districts. The capacity to improve teaching and learning was developed and sustained throughout the system, with the district office leading and supporting school reform. The case study and district-level survey data revealed notable factors characterizing district office reform: systemic approach, district-level professional learning communities, focus on teaching and learning, ongoing professional development, and data-based inquiry and accountability (McLaughlin et al., 2004).

The study concluded that systemic change takes time, yet district office support of school reform makes a significant difference in teaching and learning outcomes across the system. Reforming districts promote and invest in learning in a systemic and coherent manner throughout the system. McLaughlin and Talbert (2003) admitted that the context conditions of the districts in the study may not be applicable across districts where size and demographics differ significantly. Nonetheless, the researchers proposed that from the results of their study the district office plays a vital role in closing the achievement gap between student populations. "We see reforming districts as context and strategy for realizing the nation's educational equity goal"(McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003, p.25).

Togneri and Anderson

An often cited study on district office reform is Beyond Islands of Excellence conducted by Togneri and Anderson for the Learning First Alliance (Togneri & Anderson, 2003). By focusing five research questions on how district offices engage in reform efforts, the researchers were interested in learning more about how districts advanced good instruction across their systems. The researchers applied extensive criteria to five selected districts in five states. Initially, standardized tests scores showing increased student achievement in mathematics and/or reading were used to narrow the search, and then additional criteria including size, demographics, location, and union affiliation were applied to narrow the study sample. The research also sought to study districts that had not been involved in previous studies. Of note, interviews with superintendents and professional development leaders were conducted as the final filter in the selection process. The research methodology consisted of more than 200 individual interviews, 15 school visits, observations, documentation, field notes, and 60 focus groups.

Togneri and Anderson (2003) found seven common strategies implemented by the study districts to improve instruction and student performance: (a) key leaders accepting ownership of challenges that are identified through public accountability data, (b) establishing a system-wide approach to improving instruction, (c) instilling a vision focused on student learning that guides instructional improvement, (d) making decisions based on data, not instinct, (e) adopting new approaches to professional development, (f) redefining leadership roles, and (g) committing to sustaining reform over the long haul. The data reflected that only three of the five districts implemented each of the strategies.

Nonetheless, all the districts showed improvement, though not all were classified as high

achieving and still face significant challenges. However, one limitation of the study was

that the researchers noted that other factors, such as family support systems may have

contributed to the gains in student achievement. However, ascertaining just how much

was beyond the scope of the study. What is more, the academic gains made in Language

Arts and mathematics were reported only for elementary grades. The districts appeared to

have had a deliberate focus on elementary grades, almost to the exclusion of high

schools. The implementation of high school reform began in 2000 and 2001 thus, for the

purposes of this study it was too soon to see whether or not they had taken hold (Togneri

& Anderson, 2003).

Emerging Themes on the Role of the District

The discussion resulting from the study of district office reform is complicated by

the lack of consistency in the terminology associated with the practices, policies, and

actions associated with the reforms. Elmore (1993, 2005) describes district office actions

as "policies," while other researchers use "characteristics" (Cawelti, 2001; Murphy &

Hallinger, 1988). Similarly, the term "strategy" is found in other recent district office

reform research (Massell & Goertz, 2002; Snipes et al., 2002; Togneri & Anderson,

2003). The literature also reflects descriptions for specific courses of action (e.g.,

establishing a common vision focused on improved student achievement) rather than

classifying them as a policy or practice (Anderson, 2003). Furthermore, the research does

not consistently distinguish between general reform concepts, concrete actions, practices,

and formal policies. For the purpose of this study, "strategy" will be used to describe the

broad range of descriptive terms found in the literature.

Although researchers do not always use the same label or classify strategies in the same way, the significant strategies in which improving school districts engage are often categorized into major themes. The Assessment and Research Division the Office of Public Instruction in Washington DC, recently identified 13 common areas that they synthesized into four categories (Shannon & Bylsma, 2004). For this literature review, their work served as a model to categorize the major strategies into four major themes as represented in Figure 1: (a) leadership, (b) system coherence, (c) collaborative relationships, and (d) instructional practice. (Cawelti, 2001; Corcoran & Christman, 2002; Knapp, Copland, & Talbert, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2004; Massell, 2000; Massell & Goertz, 2002; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003; Murphy & Hallinger, 1988; Shannon & Bylsma, 2004; Snipes et al., 2002; Spillane, 1996; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). For research purposes, the themes and strategies were often studied and reported on in isolation. Yet clearly, school districts are complex organizations, where in reality the strategies integrate, overlap, and intersect. Nevertheless, the literature seldom showed districts engaging in all the practices the researchers set out to study (Murphy & Hallinger, 1988; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Although instructional practice is the focus of this case study, background information will be provided on the three other themes: leadership, system coherence, and collaborative relationships, to gain a better understanding of their association with instructional practice.

Leadership

Weaving in and out of each of the major themes, knitting the fabric of instructional reform, district-level leadership is a critical thread to improving student achievement. Research on the role of the district office in improving student achievement

	Vision and focus	Shared leadership	Accountability	Standards alignment	Effective instruction	Professional development	Use of data	Resource management	Practices and polices	Sustained efforts	Professional learning communities	Culture of respect and trust	Balance external and internal dynamics
	Leadership			Instructional Practice				System Coherence			Collaboration		
Elmore & Burney 1997	x	x	x		x	x		x	x	x	x	x	
Murphy & Hallinger 1988	x		x		x	x	x		x	x			x
Cawelti & Protheroe 2001	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x			
David & Shields 2001	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x
Massell & Goertz 2002		x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	
Snipes, et al. 2002	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x
Corcoran & Lawrence 2003	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x
McLaughlin & Talbert 2003	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Togneri & Anderson 2003	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Figure 2.1: Matrix of themes from major research studies.[1]

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[1]Adapted from "Characteristics of Improved School Districts: Themes from Research,"

by G. S. Shannon and P. Bylsma, 2004, p.69

described leadership as strategies including creating a vision with high expectations for student achievement, focusing resources, policies, and structures on that vision for all students, developing the capacity to share and distribute leadership, and establishing accountability for student learning (National Study of School Evaluation, 2004).

Several studies expressed the significant role the superintendent plays in leading educational reform (Dailey et al., 2005; Leithwood et al., 2004; Shannon & Bylsma, 2004). Not only did the level of the superintendent's attentiveness to instruction indicate the level of its importance, but the superintendent's theory of action also developed the foundation for the theory of action of district office staff. The opportunity to design and implement appropriate support structures increases when the superintendent and district office develop a common understanding of the district's goals (McLaughlin et al., 2004; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Research from the Pew Charitable Trusts serves as an illustration of district-level leadership. Where the study documented district-wide changes in instruction, district-level leaders conveyed a clear set of expectations for instruction through practice, policy, and school-based assistance. Significant improvement in instruction did not occur without active support and effective leadership from the district office (David & Shields, 2001).

It is not surprising that the evidence showed that district-wide improvement and success for all students within each school are more likely when districts established a clear focus on attaining a high degree of student achievement. To accomplish the vision, district-level leadership needed to demonstrate a strong belief in the capacity of the system to achieve high levels of learning for all students as well as high standards of teaching and leadership from instructional and support personnel. "Restructuring the

roles of the district office personnel to support school improvement efforts offers the most promise of success in advancing the quality, equity and choice values of transformational reform initiatives" (Murphy, 1995, p.131). Similarly, the district office must develop site level capacity in strategic areas as another way to influence student achievement. On the other hand, Burch and Spillane (2004) argued that district-level capacity can be enhanced when district-level leaders make use of the considerable expertise of principals and teachers to design and implement reform strategies. This manifested itself in some districts through the use of teacher leaders in curriculum and professional development roles (Marsh et al., 2005). Consequently, the leadership provided at the district-level emerged as a critical factor in determining how site leaders did important work. Districts must consider setting their priorities for support and influence according to what the research has identified as effective (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Massell, 2000; Spillane & Thompson, 1997).

Finally, in improving districts, clear expectations for curriculum, instruction, and assessment provided the basis for holding the adults in the system accountable (Skrla, Scheurich, & Johnson, 2000). District-level leadership was responsible for developing internal accountability systems as well as plotting the course through external accountability demands. This necessitate the district office bringing together what is required from external accountability measures with an internal system that guides staff at every level in terms of norms and expectations for teaching and learning (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003; Skrla et al., 2000; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). In a study of the Pew Network for Standards-Based Reform, David and Shields (2001) documented the importance of clear identification of high teacher expectations for instruction as well as

high expectations for student learning. Systemic reform calls for districts to develop a

culture of personal accountability for student success. Corcoran and Lawrence (2003)

concluded that when teachers and principals receive clear and consistent messages about

priorities and best practices, these messages are more likely to be understood and acted

upon.

System Coherence

A coherent system-wide approach that impacts all schools is evident when district

office roles, policies, and practices are aligned to support teaching and learning (Leverett,

2004; Spillane & Thompson, 1997). Districts undergoing reform have defined student

learning as the focal point for actions, programs, and policies monitored by the district

office. Though studies stressed that improving districts moved forward on several fronts

and that no single strategy made all of the difference in improving student learning, it is

clear that the parts within the system must support each other to engage in consistent,

effective strategies resulting in improved student achievement (Cawelti, 2001; Corcoran

& Lawrence, 2003; Kercheval & Newbill, 2002; Snipes et al., 2002). In these improved

districts, the change efforts were system-wide rather than based on individual programs.

In their work with the Merck Institute for Science Education, Corcoran and Lawrence

(2003) substantiated the value of aligned strategies:

> When district policies send clear and consistent messages to teachers
> about priorities and best practices, these messages are more likely to be
> understood, accepted as legitimate, and acted upon. Conversely, failure to
> align policies produces inconsistent, confusing messages, and practitioners
> may respond differently, attending to the most pressing policy message or
> simply ignoring the guidance altogether. (p. 21)

The literature on organizational change is clear about the value of using information, such as data, to guide the change process. Improved districts systemically used information to align policies and practices with their reform efforts and to monitor the effectiveness of the decisions through a feedback system (Everson, 1995). The use of information created a sense of urgency, identified areas of growth and success, and provided information to make decisions related to curriculum and professional development coherence (Cawelti, 2001; Knapp et al., 2003; Massell, 2000; Massell & Goertz, 2002; Snipes et al., 2002). In a similar manner, the alignment of resources, money, time, personnel, materials, and facilities to equitably support student and professional learning goals surfaces as another vital strategy in creating systemic coherence. How districts managed their responsibility for the allocation of resources had a considerable impact on the implementation of reform efforts. As the role of the district office shifted from monitoring and compliance to that of support and service, the allocation of resources changed to better align with the new practices (Skrla et al., 2000). Districts showing improvement provided leadership and a commitment to ensure the alignment of resources to reform strategies that improve teaching and learning (Elmore & Burney, 1997; Fullan, 2000; Stein & D'Amico, 2002; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Correspondingly, Hightower (2002) observed that a lack of coherence, the apparent split between organizational practices and student learning was a major factor in initiating the San Diego city schools reform movement.

Furthermore, the leadership in improved districts concentrated on the educational reform initiatives over long periods. District leadership acknowledged that there are no "quick fixes" to sustained improvement. Changing practice to attain high degrees of

achievement for all students required a steadfast, long-term commitment (Elmore &

Burney, 1997; Massell & Goertz, 2002; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). One of the

characteristics of districts that have succeeded in moving from low to high performance

in student achievement is an intensive long-term investment in developing instructional

leadership capacity. Researchers have recognized that principals alone cannot be

expected to provide the intensity and frequency of school-based professional assistance

that teachers require to implement significant changes in practice and student learning in

the classroom (Cawelti, 2001; David, 1990; Murphy & Hallinger, 1988). In addition,

districts provided principals and teacher leaders with professional development in relation

to the change strategies in the target areas of the reform efforts (Leithwood et al., 2004).

The research also reported that despite a relatively consistent focus on instructional

leadership, principals varied greatly in the extent to which they acted as instructional

leaders. Several factors may have contributed to this outcome including, quality of

professional development, support of supervisors to develop and implement instructional

leadership skills, lack of time, and lack of credibility (Marsh et al., 2005).

Collaborative Relationships

The literature suggests that districts involved in successful system-wide reform

have developed collaborative relationships involving professional learning communities,

cultures of trust, and the ability to balance site autonomy with district-level authority. The

climate throughout the district reinforced professionalism with norms supporting

continuous learning for adults across the system. Collaborative relationships required

changes in practice such that district-level leadership worked openly with schools to

develop site level capacity to practice what DuFour and Eaker (1998) characterize as

"collective inquiry in collaborative teams." Further, the district office allowed the collaborative teams to take action, focusing on results and learning from failures and successes. District commitment to improvement efforts aided schools in persisting until the changes were internalized, developing a culture that supports new ideas without expecting immediate results (Elmore & Burney, 1997; Snipes et al., 2002; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Similarly, district-level staff strongly affected improving teaching and learning by creating communities of practice in which school personnel (principals, teachers, and other school staff) were partners with the district office in determining how instructional policies are designed, translated, and implemented (Burch & Spillane, 2004).

Trust was found to be fundamental to the relationship between district-level leaders and teachers. Where trust, mutual respect and norms for collaboration are high, educators experience a better learning environment (Spillane & Thompson, 1997). In the Dana Center study of school districts in Texas, there were increases in student achievement at times when the trust level was high between the superintendent and school board (Skrla et al., 2000). Equally important, in the report of 4 years of research on San Francisco Bay Area and San Diego school districts, McLaughlin and Talbert (2003) noted that positive changes took place when school sites recognized that the district office was there to offer help and support. Developing trusting collaborative relationships also encompasses the delicate balance between district-level authority and school autonomy (Marsh, 2000). Local school control and autonomy were exceedingly important for ensuring accountability and providing incentives for improved performance. At the same time, providing a policy context, expertise, guidance, and

support was a critical role of the district office (Muller, 2004). The organizational model in which district office control is balanced with school autonomy, providing focus and incentives for improvement, required changing many aspects of district operations. Of equal importance were the relationships that districts established with the immediate community as well as with local, state, and federal institutions and agencies. District-level leaders' knowledge and understanding of policy influenced the interaction between school districts and local, state, and federal agencies. It was the responsibility of district-level leaders to interpret what policies meant in order to decide whether to ignore, adapt, or adopt them as district office policy and practice (Firestone, 1989; Fuhrman & Elmore, 1990; Marsh, 2000).

Instructional Practice

If the focus is on all students meeting rigorous standards, which requires quality teaching in each classroom, then it goes without saying that successful districts must focus first on student achievement. Research shows that classroom instruction, good or poor, has a profound impact on student achievement (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollack, 2001). Improved districts have engaged in key strategies leading to improved student learning. Districts coordinate curriculum and assessment, ensuring alignment with local and state standards. These districts provide focused, sustained professional development that prepares teachers to meet the districts' high expectations for outstanding classroom practice based on the principles of good instruction. Finally, the districts effectively use data to monitor the progress of all students and make informed decisions about instructional programs (Cawelti & Protheroe, 2003; Massell & Goertz, 2002; Togneri & Anderson, 2003).

Standards-aligned curriculum and assessment. In an age of standards-based reform, the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment is crucial. Almost all of the major studies show that districts with improved student achievement used content standards to drive changes in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Equally important, the district office provided the professional development necessary to implement the instructional practices. Effective districts established rigor and coherence in curricular content, student learning outcomes, and instructional materials. The process of aligning curricula and developing interim assessments helped increase teachers' knowledge and understanding of content standards as well as advanced instructional practices (Massell, 2000; Snipes et al., 2002; Togneri & Anderson, 2003).

Since state assessments often served as the tool for measuring improved academic achievement, alignment with state standards was a universal concern in the districts studied. Alignment approaches ranged from tightly controlled district-level actions to less structured approaches, which allowed staff more flexibility. The study of five districts done by Togneri and Anderson (2003) showed that three of the five districts, Minneapolis, Aldine, and Kent County, used a district-wide curriculum to create coherent instructional guidance aligned to the district vision. This was not only in response to new state standards; it also addressed the need expressed by teachers for curricular guidance. Teams of district office and site administrators developed district specific curricula based on state standards and student needs. Rather than simply adopting the state standards as the curriculum, the teams engaged in professional discourse regarding what students would learn in and across grade levels. The researchers noted that even though teachers and administrators discussed the efforts to develop a strong curriculum, the scope of the

study did not investigate the actual curricular rigor. Nonetheless, the curriculum development process provided coherent, instructional guidance consistent with districts' visions. Furthermore, teachers reported that they did not feel constrained by the district-wide curriculum. They explained that district-level leaders encouraged teachers to use their professional judgment and skills to provide effective instruction. The study described the changes in conversations between and among teachers. As an example, one school reported that department meeting agendas moving from perfunctory business to discussions about curriculum and instruction (Togneri & Anderson, 2003).

In the study with CPRE, Massell and Goertz (2002) observed that districts in Maryland and Michigan had less district office control and more site and teacher flexibility in content curriculum development and instructional material adoption. In Michigan, mathematics was a notable exception as the district office saw a greater need to centralize alignment because they believed teachers to be less comfortable with this content area. In their work in Kentucky, the researchers found that state law grants schools complete authority over curriculum an instructional materials. Therefore, in the same district, schools often used different instructional materials. One reported outcome was in a district with a highly mobile student population. Teachers in the district noted that the lack of instructional consistency contributed to poor school performance. To address the concern, the district office collaborated with schools to select a common set of textbooks and develop a more coherent curriculum.

In the RAND study of three urban school districts, Marsh et al (2005) reported that all districts developed and implemented curriculum guidance documents that were intended to improve alignment of instruction with state standards and assessments. An

additional intended outcome was to increase consistency of instruction across classrooms and schools by specifying district-wide guidelines for the scope, pacing, and content of the curriculum. Two of the three districts invested significant resources into developing and monitoring teachers' use of the documents. The curriculum development tied in with other district-level initiatives including site-based coaches and district-wide assessments to monitor students' progress frequently. All districts reported the use of formative assessments, yet only one of the districts administered a comprehensive set of standards-aligned assessments across all grade levels to assess student progress on state standards. Even though administrators were positive about the new assessments many teachers believed their own classroom assessments were more helpful and questioned the benefit of the new assessments. Contributing to teachers' perception regarding the lack of value added by the interim assessments were concerns about too much time testing, interim assessments duplicating classroom assessments, and lack of time to fully use the data. Even though site and district office administrators did find the interim assessment data a valuable tool for making instructionally related decisions, the administrators did not overcome the challenges faced by teachers to do the same.

In the School District Effectiveness Study, Cawelti and Protheroe (2001) reported that districts revised curriculum based on item analysis of state tests. Furthermore, the study revealed that teachers developed pacing guides and interim assessments aligned to state tests. District-level and school staff generally viewed the curriculum guides as useful for planning and promoting consistency of instruction, as well as helping principals observe and monitor teachers. Nevertheless, teachers reported a limited effect

on pedagogy, stating that the guides influenced "when" and "what" they taught, but they did not make major shifts in "how" they taught the curriculum.

   Instructional strategies. Improving districts have created a single-minded emphasis on the principles of good instruction and have developed strategies to support and monitor classroom practices. They have developed a common understanding of quality teaching and have communicated clear expectations on what to teach. Districts that succeeded in supporting widespread and ongoing improvement in teaching practice have changed their district offices from ones that manage dollars, programs, and people to ones focused on leading and supporting improved instruction (Skrla et al., 2000; Snipes et al., 2002). Another example of improved instruction encompassed levels of interventions for struggling students, such as corrective instruction and tutoring. Active support and leadership from the district-level appear necessary for schools on a widespread basis to make significant improvements in classroom practices (David & Shields, 2001). McLaughlin and Talbert (2003) reported that improving districts designed intensive, site-focused instructional support, including professional development, in response to teachers' expressed needs with regards to the messages conveyed by the data. Similar findings came from the RAND study where the districts took a comprehensive approach to improving instruction with the intent of influencing all facets of teaching and learning, including providing support and resources for the reform efforts (Marsh et al., 2005).

   Togneri and Anderson's (2003) study of districts for the Learning First Alliance revealed that the vision for good instruction was not a single practice; rather, it was a research-based, reflective approach to teaching. They observed:

> This meant that they [districts] expected teachers to actively engage
> students in rigorous content, assess the impact of instructional methods,
> reflect on their practice, work with colleagues to research and share
> effective practice, and make appropriate adjustments to help students
> learn effectively. (Togneri & Anderson, 2003, p.15)

As well, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform established a national task force to examine the urban school district. They developed a seven-principle framework from the widely accepted beliefs about student learning and then described their implications for effective instructional practices and the systems needed to support them. Recognizing that instruction is a complex process, which significantly influences student learning, good instruction draws from a wide range of teaching strategies aimed at meeting the individual needs of students. School systems must provide a core instructional framework that defines essential knowledge and skills, provides opportunities for active engagement, and recognizes the developmental needs of students (Foley, 2002)

Professional development. Professional development is a critical ingredient that ties the recipe for improved instructional practices together. Improved districts regarded increasing teachers' capacity, knowledge, and skills as a major strategy in the reform process associated with improved student achievement (Shannon & Bylsma, 2004). These districts provided high-quality professional development programs for teachers and administrators that are ongoing and focused on classroom practice. Coherent professional development that is research-based, focuses on teaching and learning, and is aligned with the vision of the district had the most significant impact on teaching practice (Firestone, Mangin, Martinez, & Polovsky, 2005).

The literature reflected that professional learning occurred in a wide variety of formats. The less traditional methods included coaching, professional learning

communities, and peer mentoring (Massell, 2000). New York's Community District #2 was well documented and recognized for its flexible and evolving professional development programs. When asked about professional development, most district office staff reported that "they were re-energised and enthusiastic about the project… teachers seemed to value the range of opportunities available to them" (Elmore & Burney, 1997, p. 4). The district office created the Professional Development Laboratory, where teachers spent 3 weeks in intensive observation and practice with highly skilled teachers in residence. The district office provided ongoing support to the visiting teachers once they returned to their own classrooms. Summer institutes and off-site training were also followed up with support to help ensure they had a positive impact on classroom practice. The district office also hired experts in target areas to serve as consultants to train teachers so that they would become internal consultants. A network brought principals and teachers together to observe exemplary practices. Administrator training was another critical component of their professional development plan. The district-level leadership recognized that to hold site leaders accountable, they had to have the knowledge regarding how to use professional development to guide specific instructional improvements.

The studies by both McLaughlin and Talbert (2003) and Togneri and Anderson (2003) also describe new approaches to professional development. In improving districts there was an interest in delivering professional learning through less traditional formats. McLaughlin and Talbert (2003) reported that "reforming districts seek out and use cutting-edge practices, most especially in professional development where they have reallocated resources to provide site-based resources that reflect best thinking about how

to foster teachers' learning and instructional capacity" (p.17). Togneri and Anderson (2003) described the approaches in the study districts as being research-based, using the guiding principles of data-based decision-making to connect school level practices with district goals. Overall, the literature suggests that improving districts have developed research-based, coherent, district-office-organized strategies that provide site-based resources to respond to the data about student learning.

An interesting study used the perspective of the federally funded Eisenhower Professional Development Program to examine the policy mechanisms and processes that districts can use to provide high-quality professional development for teachers. This study corroborated many of the findings found in reform studies regarding district office support of professional development. As part of a larger study Desimone, Porter, Garet, and Yoon (2002) found that particular implementation strategies, such as aligning professional development to standards and assessments, continuous improvement efforts, and teacher involvement in planning, were associated with providing quality professional development for teachers. The researchers used the characteristics of high-quality professional development taken from the research literature as the measuring stick for the evaluation. Thus, in the context of an evaluation of the nation's largest investment in teachers' professional development, this study provided empirical support from a national sample of Eisenhower district-level coordinators for the link between policies and strategies of support, implementation, and the quality of teachers' professional development (Desimone et al., 2002).

Data. The use of data for instructional improvement was also found to be a common strategy in improved districts. Data ranged from student performance on state

and local assessments to district-developed common interim assessments to the

examination of individual student work. Furthermore, improved districts provided

schools with support and training in accessing and interpreting data. The term data driven

decision making stems from the formal use of multiple measures to make instructional

decisions targeted at improving student achievement (Snipes et al., 2002). Data were used

as evidence to monitor results, for resource allocations, as well as to determine

professional development needs. The work done by Massell (2000) across five states

found increasing weight given to the use of data to make decisions. The study showed

that conversations about school improvement motivated by performance data enticed site

and district office staff to ask for more and better data. To monitor student progress

toward state standards and to provide instructional feedback to teachers, districts used

commercial or district developed assessments. Many of the districts studied developed

data expertise at the site and district office level. For example, in one Maryland district,

the district office staff reviewed state assessment results with school teams examining

item analyses, proficiency levels, and progress over time (Massell & Goertz, 2002).

Another illustration of one school district's faith in the power of data to bring about

improvement was clearly reflected in the words of the district superintendent:

> There has been a major change in the culture of the district. We are now a
> data driven district. Data can be our best ally. It has not always been
> considered that way, but it is hard to dispute the data regarding student
> achievement. The data can be compiled in such a way to create a sense of
> urgency that I felt was necessary to bring about change. (Massell, 2000, p.
> 3)

McLaughlin and Talbert's (2003) study of San Francisco Bay Area schools also

found that the use of data was vital to reform efforts. Disaggregated data from multiple

sources, including state assessments and district-developed performance assessments provided feedback on the quality of the instructional program. In some cases, data management systems provided the ability for schools to monitor the progress of individuals as well as groups of students. District leadership exerted their influence through improved data collection and data analysis, as well as the use of data for decision-making and community building. One conclusion drawn from the study was that districts should examine data collection practices to ensure that data requested are used, useful, and accurate, and that they reflect a wide range of indicators that can help inform practice.

Togneri and Anderson (2003) also found that districts determined to assess progress and plan instruction needed to expand beyond standardized state testing data. As a result, study districts gathered an array of measures, including formative academic assessments, attendance rates, suspension rates, satisfaction ratings, and school climate surveys. For example, in Minneapolis the district office provided a sophisticated example of an accountability system with an variety of measures, including formative academic assessments, attendance rates, suspension rates, satisfaction ratings, and school climate surveys (Togneri & Anderson, 2003).

Conclusion

The current body of case study research on district reform offers insights into the district office practices supporting improved student achievement. Though there are instances of individual schools raising student performance, affecting all students in a district requires a system-wide approach and a well-devised improvement plan. Systemic reform is not as much a detailed prescription as it is a philosophy advocating

restructuring, rethinking, and reflecting. While the key terms and their exact definitions

may differ slightly, the research indicates that there are strategies most critical to

successful district office reform. Figure 2.2 presents the original conceptual framework

developed from the research literature. The figure displays the strategies as interrelated

and mutually supportive, although the studies do not provide a causal relationship

between the strategies. None of the districts in the major studies engaged in all the

strategies. Much is still to be learned about what districts do to support or hinder

improved student achievement. The research suggests that context, such as district size

and student demographics, is also a factor influencing districts as they implement reform

initiatives. Many of the major research studies target districts with elementary and

middle- level grade spans. There is less information available about high school districts.

The researcher's study provided evidence about how one high school district office

supports or constrains instructional practice reform. District-level leaders can use this

information to understand better the challenges associated with reform, as well as

increase their capacity for improving the academic achievement of all students.

Leadership
1. Vision with a focus on high expectations for student learning
2. Engage in shared instructional leadership supporting instructional practice
3. Adult accountability for student learning

Instructional Practice
1. Standards-aligned curriculum and assessment
2. Research-based instructional practices
3. Targeted and sustained professional development
4. Effective use of data to make decisions about instructional practice

System Coherence
1. Policies, practices, and decisions support improvement efforts
2. Strategic management of resources
3. Commitment to sustain reform efforts long term

Collaborative Relationships
1. Collaboration through professional learning communities
2. Culture of respect, and trust
3. Balance external partners, district expectations, and site autonomy

Figure 2.2: Original conceptual framework for the role of the district office in improving student achievement.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This section presents the methodology used to conduct the single case study. The methodological procedures were derived from notable researchers including Yin, Stake, Patton, Miles and Huberman and Merriam. The methodology includes the following components: (a) research design, (b) role of the researcher, (c) context of the study, (d) data collection, (e) data analysis, (f), methods of verification, and (g) study limitations

A descriptive, embedded, single case study was used to add to the research base on the subject of district office strategies that support or constrain effective instructional practices. Yin (2003) describes a case study as an empirical inquiry that "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p.13). Rather than using a large sample and following rigid protocols and procedures to examine one or more variables, a case study entails meaningful, comprehensive study of a single instance or event. A distinguishing feature of case studies is that they strive toward a holistic understanding of interrelated activities engaged in by the participants of the study. A single case study may be used to confirm or challenge a theory, or to represent a unique or extreme case (Yin, 2003). Using participant observation, the research design applied qualitative research techniques to examine the perspectives of site and district office staff regarding the district office's role in instructional practice reform.

Research Design

The research was conducted through participant observation of one high school district as an embedded single case study. A case is defined as a "phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 25). The embedded

case study design is an empirical form of inquiry appropriate for descriptive studies, where the goal is to depict the features, context, and process of a phenomenon. In general, case study design is suitable when concentrating on a single phenomenon or entity, the researcher aims to uncover the interaction of the significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). The embedded case study approach was particularly relevant to this study because it involved an environment in which the boundaries between the phenomenon of interest and context intersected and overlapped.

Within the primary unit of analysis, the school district, this embedded single case study as shown in Figure 3.1 described and analyzed three subunits: teachers, comprehensive high school administrators, and district-level administrators. The multiperspectival analysis of the embedded case study pushed the researcher to consider not only the perspectives of the individuals, but also relevant groups and the interaction between them (Tellis, 1997). The purpose of this district case, "an information-rich case from which one can learn a great deal about matters of importance" (Patton, 1990, p. 191) was to learn as much as possible about the role of the district office in supporting or constraining instructional practice reform efforts. The descriptive nature of the study provided a detailed account of the perceptions of teachers along with those of site and district office administrators regarding the role of the district office in instructional practice reform efforts. Yin (2003) notes that some case study research is designed to develop a theoretical framework which can then be used to generalize to other cases. As for generalizing the findings, the intent of this study is to "unpack" the perceptions and actions of site and DSC staff to begin to gain a better understanding what districts do in general to support improvement in instructional practice. Throughout the study,

appropriate research techniques were used to ensure construct validity. The embedded

case study was an advantageous design because it lent itself to an examination of the

interactions of the multiple units of analysis: teachers, site administrators, and district-

level administrators.
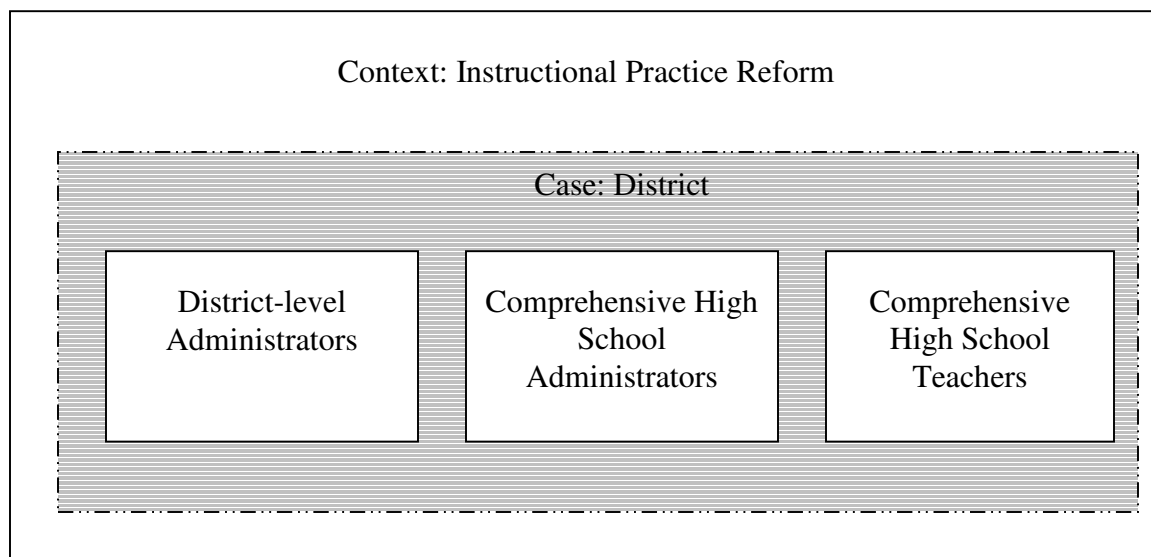
Figure 3.1: Embedded single case research design.[2]

Role as Researcher

Another important element of the research design entailed the researcher's use of

participant observation, which is a qualitative method with roots in traditional

ethnographic research, whose objective is to help researchers learn the perspectives held

by the study populations. For purposes of this study, the use of the term ethnography will

refer to ethnographic research methods such as direct observation in the field and the use

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[2] Modified from "Case Study Research Design and Methods*,"* by R. K. Yin, 2003, p. 40

of key informants, rather than a complete study done in the tradition of cultural anthropology (Patton, 1990). Stake (1995) described the participant observer as a researcher who makes first-hand observations, sometimes engaging personally in the activities. In this case the researcher's understanding was enhanced by considering the social nature of the study scene, what went on within it, and how people, including the participant observer, interpreted the events taking place (Kawulich, 2005).

In addition, the method enabled the researcher to draw on her familiarity with the context that proved invaluable throughout the study. It gave the researcher a nuanced understanding of the environment that can come only from personal experience. Through participant observation, the researcher was able to uncover factors important for a thorough understanding of the research problem but had been unknown when the study was designed. This was the great advantage of the method because, although she may have received truthful answers to the questions asked, she may not always have asked the right questions. Thus, what she learned from participant observation was helpful in understanding data collected through other methods such as interviews and focus groups (Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005).

Since she was the principal researcher and employee of the case district, this methodology offered the researcher the advantage of engagement and active participation in the study environment. Throughout this study, the researcher was directly responsible for all data collection, except that of the Educational Services director focus group. Patton (1990) noted that participation varies along a continuum from complete immersion to complete separation. The researcher interacted and participated in a variety of contexts, yet used her discretion as to the level and extent of involvement related to data collection

for the study. The flexibility of this approach permitted her to gain insights to an extent not entirely possible through the interview process. As a veteran administrator of 19 years, the researcher had a depth of knowledge, skill, and experience with instructional practices, interviews, and document review, all of which were of great benefit during the data collection and analysis process.

As previously stated, the researcher works in the district in the position of assistant superintendent of Educational Services, adding a level of complexity to her role of participant observer. "Backyard" research, involving studying one's own organization may lead to compromise or bias. Though this type of research may make data collection simpler, it makes using multiple means of validating the data exceedingly important. However, Anderson and Jones (2000) have presented findings to the AERA arguing that research conducted by practitioners in their workplace "represents a powerful lever for personal, professional and organizational transformation" (p. 428). The increasing expectation that administrators use data to inform decision-making and the move toward collaborative inquiry and organizational learning principles in school districts and schools makes practitioner inquiry a promising and important research approach that can be used for the immediate transformation of practice. Their argument, based on a study of more than 50 doctoral dissertations, supports the methodology for this study.

The researcher's employee status in the case study district required additional safeguards to be in place before she gained university approval for the research. Nevertheless, the researcher completed all requirements to obtain Human Subjects Approval from all three universities' Institutional Review Boards (IRB). It was the researcher's responsibility to assure participants of their anonymity and confidentiality

and that the results of their participation or non-participation have no bearing on their status in the district. This was clearly delineated as required by each university in the Consent to Participate forms found in appendices A through C. Because the researcher was responsible for the supervision and evaluation of the Educational Services directors involved in the study, she chose to conduct a focus group rather than individual interviews as the method of data collection. To meet the IRB requirements, the focus group meeting and its transcription were conducted by another researcher. Finally, during the study it was essential that the researcher recognized her own biases and appropriately noted them during the study.

Context of the Study

Site Selection

The selection of the setting and the participants are critical components to exemplary case study research. Case study research does not employ probability sampling as found in quantitative research. Consequently, selecting the case and the data collection within the case must be done to maximize what can be learned in the time available for the study (Tellis, 1997). According to LeCompte and Preissle (2003) selection is a distinct process from sampling. Selection is an interactive process, which focuses the study in order to define a broader population under the study. On the other hand, sampling is the process of defining the informants to generalize to a larger population. The district selected for this study was purposeful. Sun Valley School High District engaged in instructional practice reform and demonstrated improved academic achievement with traditionally low-performing demographic subgroups. Participants,

within the case, were also purposefully selected because they were involved in the reform

efforts.

This study took place in a suburban high school district in the southern region of

California. The district's three comprehensive high schools were used as the sites for data

collection. The research on the role of the district office in high school reform is minimal,

and even less is available specifically about high school districts. Therefore, the selection

of a high school district for this study will add evidence to inform the field (Snipes et al.,

2002; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). The researcher chose this district for the following

reasons:(a) the district has had a student achievement goal with measurable annual

benchmarks in place for the past 5 years, (b) the district has demonstrated increased

student achievement in all of the measures, (c) the district provided accessibility to the

data sources, and (d) the district's interest in participating in the study.

Location and description. The Sun Valley High School District is located in

suburban southern California. The district has three comprehensive high schools that

participated in the study. The district also has one continuation and one independent

study high school, and two independent charters. For the purpose of this study, neither

charter school was reflected in the district data. In the past 5 years, the district has grown

in enrollment from 7,154 to 8,113 students. In 2005-06, 7,436 of the 8,113 students were

enrolled in the three comprehensive high schools (California Department of Education

[CDE], 2006). Additionally during this period, the district experienced changes in

demographics as reflected in Table 3.1. According to the 2006-07 data available through

the California Department of Education (CDE), the district employs 339 teachers at the

three comprehensive school sites. The most recent data available for the 2006-07 school

year showed that 97.7% are fully credentialed and 94% are highly qualified according to

NCLB standards (CDE, 2005).

Table 3.1:
Enrollment and Demographic Trends for the Sun Valley High School District

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Enrollment	7,454	7,604	7,969	8,113	8,241
English Language Learner	`19%	20%	20%	18%	19%
Hispanic	46%	48%	52%	54%	57%
White	46%	43%	39%	37%	33%
Special Education	11%	10%	10%	9%	9%
Socially-economically Disadvantaged	27%	33%	37%	38%	44%

The study encompassed data collection at the district's three comprehensive high

schools and the district office. For the purpose of this study, the district office will be

referred to as the District Service Center (DSC), which is the vernacular used in the

district. The DSC is the home to the superintendent and is composed of three divisions—

Educational Services, Business, and Human Resources—each headed by an assistant

superintendent. Educational Services and Business also have directors, who are assigned

specific areas of responsibility. The comprehensive sites were selected to focus and

narrow the field of study. Since alternative high schools by nature have unique defining

characteristics, their inclusion may have caused the need to expand beyond the scope and

time constraints built into the study.

History. In 1999-2000, Dr. Daniel Harris was named superintendent of the Sun

Valley High School District. During his first 2 years, Dr. Harris collaborated with the

board of trustees to develop district goals. During the 2001-02 school year, the board of

trustees adopted 5-year academic achievement goals, with each goal incorporating annual

benchmarks. The benchmarks, based on the 2000-01 data were multiple measures designed to provide a broad view of academic achievement. The 2000-2001 District Goals (Escondido Union High School District [EUHSD], 2001) reported that "this approach invites the highest level of accountability to our mission, student learning, while acknowledging the importance of organizational dynamics and functions that do not lend themselves to quantitative measurement" (EUHSD, 2001). Throughout the next 4 years, the district engaged in a variety of instructional practice strategies focused on improving student achievement. Though annual goal documents evolved during the 5-year period, there was a continued focus on the student achievement benchmarks and instructional practice reform. In June 2005, Dr. Harris retired, and the board of trustees appointed Mr. Eric Norris as the new superintendent. Mr. Norris served previously as assistant superintendent of Educational Services and Human Resources, as well as principal at one of the district's comprehensive high schools. During his 2 years of tenure, he has continued with the goal document format and major areas of focus.

Study Participants

   Interviewee selection. The teachers interviewed in this study were selected based on a variety of criteria, including perceived level of involvement with reform initiatives, leadership role, and length of service in the district. The researcher's rationale for these criteria was that teachers more directly involved with or influenced by the reform initiatives would provide a richer, deeper data source. A list of potential teacher candidates was compiled from archival data including lists of department chairpersons, conference attendance forms, and sign-in sheets from professional development events. A master list of teachers by site was complied. Each name was assigned a number and then

a computer program randomly selected the order that teachers would be asked to participate. From this list, three to five teacher interviews were conducted at each site in the spring and summer of 2007. District Service Center staff was another source of interview data. The present and former superintendents participated in the study and provided significant information regarding the reform efforts.

Focus group selection. Focus groups are valuable, especially when the interaction of respondents may stimulate deeper thought or generate new and valuable insights. They are particularly useful when the researcher is seeking information regarding project implementation and the project outcomes, impact, and perceptions of program (Mahoney, 1997). For this reason, the researcher selected site administrative teams and the Educational Services directors to participate in separate focus groups.

Key informant selection. Key informants are people who are knowledgeable and articulate about what the researcher may not or cannot observe or experience. Their insights help create understanding for the researcher. Their advice and feedback increase the credibility of the study. Key informants also provide particularly useful information about interactions among pivotal groups to which the researcher does not have access (Patton, 1990). It is important to note that the data collected from key informants represent their perceptions. The data must be treated as such during data analysis. Based on the researcher's knowledge of the district, she used the assistant superintendent of Human Resources as a key informant throughout the study. Employed by the Sun Valley High School District for 18 years, in 2006-07, he was serving in his second year as assistant superintendent. Before that, he spent 7 years at Sun Valley High School as assistant principal and principal.

Data Collection Procedures

One of the strengths of case study data collection is the option to gather a variety

of data sources as evidence. A case study relies on multiple sources of evidence to add

breadth and depth to data collection, to assist in bringing a richness of data together in an

apex of understanding through triangulation, and to contribute to the validity of the

research (Yin, 2003). The inquiry of this study relies on ethnographic field methods,

drawing upon multiple sources of data collection as shown in Table 3.2. Ethnographic

methods rely on firsthand observation, often conducted by a participant observer

immersing himself or herself in the culture under study (Patton, 1990). The ethnographic

approach does not always establish categories at the beginning of the study for

interpreting what people say and do. This does not mean that the research is

unsystematic, but simply that initially the data are collected in as raw a form, and on as

broad a front, as practical (Genzuk, 2003). In February 2007, the researcher obtained

formal permission from Sun Valley's superintendent to conduct the research for the case

study. Data collection took place from March through September 2007. As an employee

of the district, the participant researcher had access to meetings, professional

development events, archival data, as well as information gathered from the day-to-day

operations of the district.

Interview Procedures

Interviews were one of the most important sources for this case study data. The

interviews were conducted from May through August 2007. They provided detailed, rich

data as well as new insights into the focus of the study. In this project, two forms of

interviews were used. One interview source was informal conversation which provided

the researcher with "maximum flexibility to pursue information in whatever direction appears to be appropriate depending on what emerges from observing a particular setting" (Patton, 1990, p. 281). Informal conversational interviews occur in settings where district office strategies related to instructional practice might be in place; therefore, the situations lend themselves to data gathering. As a participant observer, the researcher had several opportunities throughout the study to use informational conversations for data collection. Field notes were taken to document the data collected.

Table 3.2:
Data Collection Sources

Source of Evidence	Strength of Source	Sample for Study
Interviews (including key informant)	▪ Targeted - focuses on case study topic ▪ Insightful ▪ Provides causal inferences	▪ 3-5 teachers from each school site ▪ Current superintendent ▪ Former superintendent ▪ Assistant superintendent of Human Resources
Focus Groups	▪ Stimulate richer response and valuable insights ▪ Challenges respondents thinking	▪ 3 Site administrative teams ▪ Educational Services directors
Participant Observation	▪ Covers events in real time ▪ Covers event context	▪ Meetings ▪ Professional development events ▪ Daily operations of the district
Document Analysis	▪ Availability- repeated review ▪ Unobtrusive ▪ Exist prior to case study ▪ Provide opportunity to study trends over time ▪ Precise and quantitative	▪ Student achievement data ▪ Board goals ▪ WASC reports ▪ Single School Plans ▪ Curriculum documents ▪ Professional development evaluations ▪ Conference expenditures

Unlike the informal conversational interview, the second type of interview used in the study was the in-depth interview, which made use of an interview guide or protocol.

The guide indicated the topics and their potential sequence in the interview. In this study, the semi-structured interview guide included topics to be covered and suggested questions. Using the interview protocol, the researcher conducted a teacher pilot interview. Since the researcher used a semi-structured interview technique, any adjustments to the protocol were made during the interviews. The final interview guides for all interviews and focus groups are found in appendices D through G. The researcher used her judgment on how closely to follow the guide and how strongly to probe a participant's response (Kvale, 1996). The interview protocol used in this study examined teacher and administrator perceptions regarding the role the DSC played in developing and implementing instructional practice reform strategies. For all interviews in this study, written consent was obtained before the interviews, and all interviewees were given full choice to withdraw at any time. All interviews were electronically recorded and transcribed. Interviewees were offered a copy of the interview transcripts as well as a copy of the dissertation upon its completion.

Effective interviewing, supported by a comfortable environment, ensures that the interviewee and interviewer feel that two-way communication is taking place (Patton, 1990). Because of the unique role of the researcher in this study it was critical for the researcher to establish a comfortable environment. The researcher made use of these explicit strategies: (a) introduced the purpose of the interview to the participants, (b) described the time period for the interview, (c) assured anonymity, (d) informed participants that they could seek clarification at anytime during the interview, (d) informed participants that they were free not to answer if they felt uncomfortable, and (e) provided a safe and comfortable location (Murphy, 1981).

Focus Group Procedures

Focus groups provide the researcher with the opportunity to capitalize on the outcomes of interviewing while making use of "group interaction to generate data and insights that would be unlikely to emerge without the interaction found in a group" (Mahoney, 1997, Section 3, p.9). Though there are considerable similarities between focus groups and interviews, there is one critical difference: in focus groups, the dynamics between the participants are significant and should be noted as part of the data collected. Focus groups are a gathering of people who share some characteristic relevant to the topic of the study, where people can consider their views within the context of others. These groups also are useful when the researcher is interested in identifying project strengths and weaknesses, as well as obtaining perceptions of project outcomes and impacts. Focus groups provide quality controls on data collection in that participants often provide checks and balances on each others comments (Patton, 1990). An open-ended focus group protocol was used to elicit responses from the participants.

As with effective interviewing, focus groups require that the interviewer and focus group members feel that safe for meaningful communication to take place (Patton, 1990). Because of the researcher's role in the district, she has previously established relationships with members of each of the focus groups. Presently, the relationships can be characterized as collegial and comfortable. Nevertheless, to help ensure genuine and accurate responses, it was incumbent upon her to assure all study participants of their anonymity and confidentiality as well as of the separation of her role as researcher and her role as district-level administrator. All focus groups were electronically recorded and transcribed. Focus group members were offered a copy of the focus group transcripts. As

noted in the section on research design, because of ethical considerations, the Educational

Services directors' focus group was conducted and transcribed by another researcher.

Document Analysis Procedures

Archival documents are a particularly rich source of information that provided

increased knowledge about the instructional practice reform efforts. The relevance and

importance of archival evidence vary by case (Yin, 2003). For this case, archival

evidence was collected to build a descriptive case of the district's role in instructional

practice reform. The researcher had access to all the data sources requested.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined documents as any written or recorded materials

that are not prepared for the purposes of the study or at the request of the researcher.

They further classified documents as public records or personal documents. Careful

review of documents is necessary to avoid incorrect data being included in the

researcher's database. One of the most important uses of documents is to corroborate

evidence gathered from other sources. Case study critics note the potential for over-

reliance on documents as evidence (Yin, 2003). Therefore, in this study their use was be

closely monitored.

Data collection included both internal and external public records. External public

records consisted of student demographic and student achievement data from multiple

measurements such as the Academic Performance Index (API), Adequate Yearly

Progress (AYP), Advanced Placement (AP), and Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT). The

selected assessment data sources aligned with the benchmarks set in the board of trustees

goals. Internal public records such as Single School Plans and Western Association of

Schools and Colleges (WASC) reports were reviewed. Curriculum documents and

adopted instructional materials were also reviewed. Additionally, professional development resources were used to provide evidence of the district office's instructional practice reform strategies.

Notes Collected through Participant Observation

The researcher, acting as a participant observer had access to principal's meetings, Educational Services meetings, superintendent's cabinet meetings, professional development events, and the daily operations of the DSC. The researcher took field notes during and after these events. The notes were either transcribed or kept as handwritten notes.

Data Analysis

This section describes the strategies used to analyze the data collected. "The analysis of case study evidence is one of the least developed and most difficult aspects of doing case studies" (Yin, 2003 p. 109).The test is to make meaning from enormous amounts of data, reduce the volume of information, recognize important patterns, and build a framework for conveying the essence of what the data disclose (Patton, 1990). Yin's (2003) preferred strategy for analysis is to rely on the theoretical propositions that led to the case study design and research questions that shaped the data collection, thus allowing the researcher to focus on certain data and ignore other data. Following the traditions of case study, data collection and analysis took place concurrently. The multiple data sources used in this descriptive case study included rich, thick descriptions to get sufficient information to check for trends, to rule out competing explanations, and to corroborate findings (Yin, 2003).

Miles and Huberman (1994) described qualitative data analysis as three processes taking place concurrently: (a) data reduction, (b) data displays, and (c) conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction involves the analytic choice that "sharpens, sorts focuses, discards, and organizes" (p.11) data so that conclusions can be made and verified. Data reduction involves activities such as summarizing, coding, clustering, and memoing. It is a process continuing until the final report is finished. Data displays help make meaning from the data reduction, causing further analysis or action. They may take the form of graphs, matrices, or charts to organize and display the data in an easily accessible compact form. This results in clearer insights into events so that the researcher is able to draw conclusions. The third analysis activity is conclusion drawing and verification based upon confirmable evidence. The overall goal of qualitative data analysis through the integration of the three processes is to understand, provide evidence, and suggest inferences based upon the data and then to derive meaning from a given situation.

Patton (1990) proposed that "the purpose of basic research is knowledge for the sake of knowledge" (p. 152). One way qualitative inquiry contributes to research is through grounded theory. Real-world patterns are generated from the data gathered by close contact and interaction within the world being studied. The grounded theory method differentiates from other research in that "[i]t does not test a hypothesis. It sets out to find what theory accounts for the research situation as it is to discover the theory implicit in the data" (Dick, 2005, p.4). Constant comparison is at the heart of case study methodology: taking one piece of data and comparing with others that are similar or different to conceptualize the possible relationship between the various pieces of data. In

studies such as this one, where the purpose was to generate knowledge about common patterns and themes, the process continued with each new data source until all had been compared with each other. The theory or explanation emerged out of the analysis (Glaser and Strauss as cited in Thorne, 2000).

Organizing the Data

One of the greatest challenges in qualitative research is the quantity and multiple sources of data. Each phase of data collection requires disciplined, systematic condensation and analysis. At the beginning, all artifacts were labeled so that they were catalogued appropriately. Transcription of the electronically recorded interviews and focus group sessions took place in a timely manner. Pseudonyms were given to all participants. To write notes on the evidence collected, the researcher made at least one paper copy of each data piece, including transcriptions of interviews and focus groups. Most of the original documents were electronic. The original electronic versions of all documents were backed up on an external password-protected hard drive, so that they were available to make additional copies if the need arises. As well, an electronic inventory was established for all the data collected. The data coding system was also stored electronically. Data collection and analysis took place from March through September 2007.

Coding the Data

The analysis of the data collected was similar for interviews, focus group, and archival documents. Specifically, content analysis was used to analyze the three types of data. Content analysis can be synthesized into three major steps: (a) coding the primary patterns in the data, (b) chunking the data, and (s) interpreting the data. Content analysis

required the researcher to identify, code and categorize the patterns in the data (Patton,

1990, p.381) by first coding the transcriptions and documents into meaningful parts

(Miles & Huberman, 1994). This required the researcher to thoroughly read the

transcriptions and documents multiple times to identify the patterns and themes. Data

were first coded according to the conceptual framework, such as reform expectations,

leadership, direction, opportunities, and alignment.

The second phase, known as chunking, entailed assigning codes to meaningful

words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Two computer

programs were used during this phase of data analysis. HyperRESEARCH was used for

the initial analysis of archival documents. Later the researcher used NVivo to analyze the

interview and focus group transcriptions, as well as a secondary analysis of the archival

documents. After importing the data files into the computer programs, the researcher

identified "chunks" of data that surfaced in relation to the research questions or themes

from the literature review. After importing the data files into the computer programs, the

researcher assigned codes to "chunks" which Miles and Huberman (1994) defined as

"meaningful words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs" (p. 94). The data were chunked in

several ways, including by participant type (teacher, site administrator, and district

administrator) and by theme or constructs stemming from the conceptual framework. To

increase reliability, the coding process was completed twice. Fifty-seven initial codes

emerged during this stage of the analysis process.

Interpreting the Data

The final step in the data analysis required the clustering of the codes derived in

the previous step conceptually into "data bins" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 62). The

data were clustered in several ways, such as in relation to the interview protocol questions, the research questions, and themes from the conceptual framework. The researcher used data displays including a checklist matrix, which is useful when there are several components of a condition and order or sequence are not critical (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher also used a simple conceptual matrix, which arranged items from all three research questions in relationship to the same overarching themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Validating the Findings

The case study was conducted by one researcher; therefore, there were no partner researchers with whom to cross check coding and interpretation. The researcher did informally share ideas and insight with the study's key informant. However, to increase reliability, multiple sources of data were collected through participant observation, interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. This allowed the researcher to triangulate evidence to ensure consistencies and patterns among sources (Yin, 2003). In the context of the data collection for this study, triangulation served to corroborate the data gathered from other sources as shown in Figure 3.2. It not only offers the opportunity to establish validity but also provides more global understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Merriam, 1998). The researcher also had to work to ensure that her own perceptions and own biases were put aside while she was conducting the research and analyzing the findings. The study's key informant was a helpful sounding board for this important part of the study.

Case Summary

The next step in the analytical process involved the use of an interim case study. This process provided a synthesis of what the researcher learned about the case as well as what was left to find out. The process entailed (a) a review of the findings, (b) a thorough appraisal of the quality data supporting the findings, and (c) the recording of questions to revisit through observation or questioning (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The interim case study resulted in the development of a draft that consolidated the data into a single descriptive analysis to derive the first attempt at "a coherent overall account of the case" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 79).
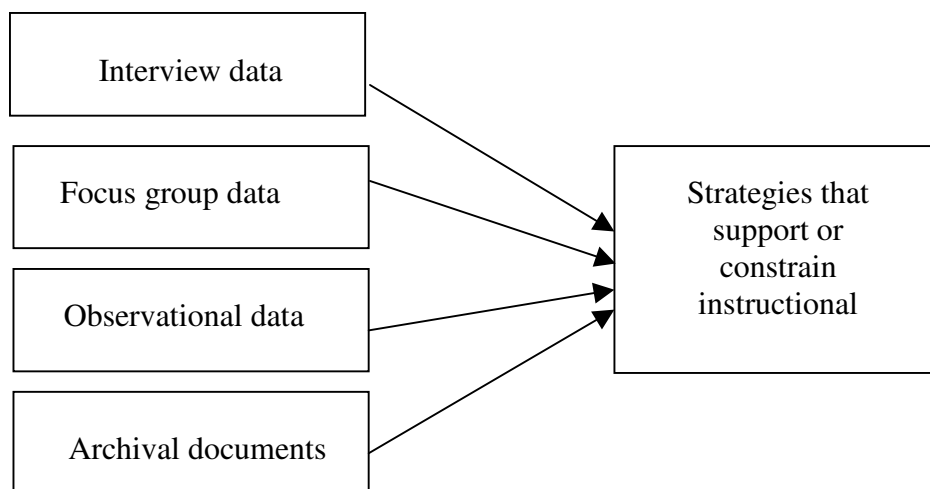
Figure 3.2: The convergence of evidence for data triangulation. [3]

To conclude, the final case study report was perhaps the most important facet of the case study research. A well-designed research project with conclusions that are not well-written or well-explained will fall into disuse (Tellis, 1997). The case study report should take the reader into the setting and focus on the phenomenon being investigated. A well-written report should provide concise context for understanding the conditions in

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[3] Modified from "Case Study Research Design and Methods," by R. K. Yin, 2003, p.100

which results were obtained as well as the factors that affected the findings. The goal of this final report is to transport the reader into the experiences, perceptions, successes, and challenges of the participants within the context of their natural school and DSC settings. Now that it is complete, this single embedded case study report provides meaningful and accurate descriptions of the role of the district office in instructional practice reform.

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

This embedded, single case study was conducted on one southern California high school district for gathering detailed information on how the district office strategies support or constrain instructional practice reform. The case district was selected because over the past 5 years it has engaged in instructional practice reform and has shown improvement in student achievement. The three subunits for analysis were comprehensive high school teachers, comprehensive high school administrators, and district-level administrators. The teachers selected for interviews were those who had been involved to some degree in the reform process. The teachers' experiences in the instructional reform process provided more insights than those of teachers not directly involved. The study was conducted from March through September 2007.

As with all research, there are limitations to this case study. The first limitation was that regardless of the steps taken, because of the researcher's position in the district, assistant superintendent of Educational Services, participants might have been reluctant to share all their insights and opinions. Second, three to five teachers from each school were selected for the interviews. Their experiences in the reform process may have been unique to them and may be not be representative of district teachers as a whole.

Third, there may not be a clear link between the district office role in supporting instructional practice reform and the effective instructional practice strategies in place on the school campuses. The study used participant observation, interviews, focus groups, and archival evidence to determine how the district office has supported or constrained the implementation of instructional reform; however, the study does not confirm long-term changes in classroom practice. In the interviews, the teachers may have stated that the district office has supported individual and school-wide improved practice, yet this can be substantiated only through long-term observation.

Chapter 4: Findings

Overview of Data Presented

This chapter provides a description of the instructional practice reform events in the Sun Valley High School District, concentrating on the role of the district office in the reform efforts, changes in practice resulting from the reform efforts, and the nature of the interactions between the district office and school sites during the period of reform. This chapter presents the data in four sections, beginning with the historical context of the district office's approach to instructional practice reform between the 2002-03 and 2006-07 school years. The next sections present the findings for the study's three research question. The research questions are closely related, and portions of the information presented in the response to the primary research question are referenced in the responses to the other two questions: (1) How do district office strategies support or constrain the implementation of instructional practice reform? (2) How do high school district office practices change school level strategies targeted at instructional practices? (3) What are the interactions between district office and site personnel during the period of reform?

The researcher's role as a participant observer and district office administrator in the district made it crucial to protect the anonymity of individuals, group identifiers serve to describe the key participants without identifying individuals from within each group. For example, "district office administrator" describes administrators working at the DSC and "site administrator" describes site principals and assistant principals from all three schools participating in the study. Teachers are also documented in the aggregate, and to protect their identities and no site affiliation is provided. However, because the former superintendent and current superintendent were the sole representatives of their group,

they are identified as by their pseudonyms or as "former superintendent" and "current

superintendent" respectively. Furthermore, any district or county employee interviewed

or identified by name in an interview or on an archival document was also given a

pseudonym. All pseudonyms used in the study are presented in appendix I.

Historical Context of District's Instructional Reform Practices

In 1999, Dr. Harris, the former superintendent, joined the Sun Valley High School

District. As a way to learn more about the instructional practices in the district, he spent a

great deal of time in classrooms. Based on his observations he recognized that "[t]here

were pockets of excellence everywhere, but generally, generally speaking, this

[excellence] is how people characterized the district's instructional program and people

believed that" (Former superintendent interview, July 2007). Knowing that the district's

instructional practices had room for improvement, he engaged in targeted dialogues with

teachers and site and district administrators. Dr. Harris was confident that he could

accurately describe classroom practices and defend his recommendations for change. He

pointed out:

> It bought me some credibility. To get involved in some of these
> discussions about what's going on and what may need to be happening
> and so forth and so on. I could say with a straight face that there was
> nobody in the district that knew more about what's going on in the
> classroom district-wide than me. (Former superintendent interview, July
> 2007)

Initially, he found the staff reluctant to see his point of view. Changing

demographics, lack of parental involvement, and unmotivated students were the reasons

given to him for students not achieving as well as he would have liked. Nonetheless, he

offered a different point of view "So there are lots of reasons the kids are where they are,

but there's no reason they have to stay there. And we're in the position that has the

responsibility to do something about it" (Former superintendent interview, July 2007).

Dr. Harris thought he saw his opening while in conversation with a particularly resistant

group of teachers. While engaged in discussion, the teachers admitted that there were

students in need of something other than what they were getting. He reflected,:

> That was an insightful moment for me because it appeared to be as a part
> of a lot of people, you know with that attitude 'we don't want to, we
> shouldn't have to' kind of the thing. It was really 'I don't know how to.'
> So I thought—wow—'we don't know how to' is an easy one. It really did
> tie into professional development. (Former superintendent interview, July
> 2007)

Consequently, his instructional practice conversations continued. At one point he

responded to teachers by saying, "If you get that we need to do something, but you don't

know how, we are more than halfway home" (Former superintendent interview, July

2007).

During this same period, Dr Harris collaborated with the school board to develop

goals for the district. During the first years of Dr. Harris's tenure, the district goals

document focused on three major goals related to instructional practice: (a) high

expectations for student achievement, (b) programs and systems that support student

learning, and (c) staff that is skilled, caring, and committed to helping students learn. In

the succeeding years, the district continued using the themes from the initial goals as the

basis for future instructional practice reform goals. Subsequently, the District Goals

documents served as the umbrella under which many of the reform efforts took place. In

a similar manner, the district office's philosophy regarding instructional practice became

the cornerstone on which the district office built the instructional practice reform

initiatives as described in one of the first District Goals documents of Dr. Harris' tenure:

> The first step in achieving high levels of student performance is to expect
> that they can and will meet challenging goals. Having high expectations is
> not enough. Students must be provided with the help and support needed.
> Of primary importance is an instructional program that builds on the skills
> and knowledge that each student brings to us. Also needed are textbooks,
> instructional materials, technology, and other resources that support and
> assist students. The most important single person in any instructional
> program is the person delivering it. No program can be successful without
> a teacher who is highly skilled in both their subject area and in
> instructional strategies. (District Goals, 2001-02)

In 2001-02, the superintendent, along with other district office staff decided on

several measures that were to be used as benchmarks to monitor student achievement.

The criteria used to select the measures included validity, reliability, accessibility, and

suitability for longitudinal analysis. The district office also believed that though the

measures did not determine the full breadth of what students achieve, the measures

provided a picture on how well students were prepared to enter the workforce or to

pursue further education and training. The 2000-01 student achievement data were used

as the baseline, and 5-year goals were set for each benchmark.

The progress report on the 2001-02 District Goals was the first to describe student

progress on the academic achievement benchmarks. Over the next five years, as a result

of federal and state accountability measures and changes in state assessments,

benchmarks were added or deleted. For example, the CAT/6 (California Achievement

Test, edition 6) benchmark was deleted when the state no longer used results from norm-

referenced tests to calculate a high school's API. Table 4.1 reports the results for the

student achievement benchmarks through 2006-07.

Dr. Harris shared that he had conceived an instructional practices improvement plan focused on providing professional development to teachers and administrators:

> I recall that Bill Craig said maybe very early, maybe even before I'd taken over officially. He said 'Is there anything you want to this budget?' and I said, 'Yeah, carve out $100,000 for professional development.' So he did that, and that money was earmarked. He set up an account. So there was that sort of initial time to develop and the potential to do those things. (Former superintendent interview, July 2007)

This defined the beginning of purposeful decisions made by the district office to change instructional practices. Recognizing that professional development was an important resource to provide teachers, Dr. Harris negotiated with the teacher's union to put the optional state-funded professional development days into the teachers' contract. He explained:

> We did away with buyback days and we put them into the work year and paid for it. So conceptually that says this is part of your regular job, you get to do professional development. That was an additional cost because that money doesn't cover it. When you looked at what the cost is over the state reimbursement and then isolated that cost and walked up to any sane superintendent and said would you spend this amount of money to make sure that every teacher in your district spent three days in professional development in days that you get to pick what they're doing a high percentage of the time? Is that a worthwhile expenditure? It's a bargain; it is a bargain. (Former superintendent interview, July 2007)

Table 4.1:
Annual Student Achievement Benchmarks

Benchmark	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
API (Academic Performance Index)	n/a	n/a	677	684	689	701
AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress)	n/a	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
CST-English (Percentage of 11th grade students proficient or advanced on California Standards Test)	n/a	37%	35%	38%	33%	36%
CST-Social Science (Percentage of 11th grade students proficient or advanced on California Standards Test)	n/a	38%	37%	42%	38%	42%
California High School Exit Exam (Percentage of seniors passing by graduation)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	96%	95%
UC/CSU a-g Completion Rate (Percentage of seniors meeting UC/CSU a-g Requirements)	27.8%	29.0%	29.8%	30.2%	31.9%	32.2%
SAT I VM 1000 Rate (Percentage of 12th grade students scoring 1000 per 100 12th Graders)	22.4	22.3	25.1	25.1	24.9	20.2
AP Qualifying Rate (Number of 12th Grade Students Scoring 1000 per 100 12th Graders)	16.2	19.1	25.7	29.7	32.9	35.3
AMAO 1-CELDT[4] (Percent of students meeting annual growth objectives on California English Language Development Test)	n/a	n/a	69.2%	77.5%	68.1%	44.0%

[4] CELDT re-scaled in 2007

Table 4.1:
Annual Student Achievement Benchmarks, Continued

Benchmark	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
AMAO 3-CAHSEE (Percentage of students achieving ELA proficiency on California High School Exit Exam)	n/a	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Key Course Completion Rate (Percentage of 10th grade students passing English 9 and Algebra I)	59.5	61.9	69.6	75.2	71.4	74.5

Dr. Harris concluded that by the time he left the district in 2005, he believed that people were coming to instructional practice reform efforts with a different frame of mind than they had when they started in the district in 1999. He recounted:

> It was what I perceived to be generally a very good attitude, feeling good about what is involved with it, at welcoming the chance to interact with people across the district. That attitude versus 'I am going to go because I can get paid for it.' So, the whole mind shift for the teachers for professional development and what it's about I think there really is the kind of change that sustains the professional development focus. (Former superintendent interview, July 2007)

District Office Approach to Instructional Practice Reform

The District Goals reflected that the board of trustees was responsible for directing the work of staff by identifying the top priorities and major initiatives. Under Dr. Harris' leadership, the Sun Valley High School District used a multifaceted approach to instructional practice reform, combining different tactics based on the need or circumstance. At times the approach was top-down, while at other times it was collaborative. In a similar fashion, data influenced top-down and collaborative approaches as recognized by:

> My perception is that it comes from multiple levels and the directionality isn't always top-down. In the sense that we have a structure for Subject Area Committees they get together once a month and have conversations about practice. My experience is that a number of conversations have happened in those SAC meetings, which led the district office staff to use their resources and their time to pursue staff development in those areas, to pursue initiatives in those areas. (Site administrator focus group, May 2007)

Site administrators viewed the initiation of the specific reform efforts as coming directly from the district office, rather than from the school board. One site administrator commented, "So you ask where it did come from, I don't feel like they came from the

board. I do feel like the district office staff is definitely pushing for reform" (Site

administrator focus group, May 2007). Another administrator observed:

> So I think justifiably some of the direction we've taken with regard to
> Classroom Instruction That Works in my opinion is a notion that is
> promoted very heavily most probably, most probably presented by district
> office staff. I wouldn't characterize our school board as being heavily
> involved in saying we favor this form of staff development versus this
> form. (Site administrator focus group, May 2007)

Teachers also observed that the district office was a driving force in initiating the

instructional practice reform efforts as explained by:

> I believe that initially there was a little push, so to speak, by the district to
> start moving in a direction because for a long time we weren't going
> anywhere. This is 10 years ago. We just weren't going anywhere. We,
> kind of, just existed. That was a different time with a different
> superintendent. The time with Dr. Graham, it was just a different time.
> Then we started moving when Dr. Harris came in, we started picking a
> direction and going somewhere. (Teacher interview, May 2007)

One example of top-down reform can be found in the approach taken to bring the

three comprehensive sites more into alignment. When Dr. Harris arrived at Sun Valley,

he acknowledged the need to bring the three sites together to have more consistency and

uniformity. He believed this reform work had to be initiated and advanced by the district

office. Both the current and former superintendents described the necessity to bring the

individual schools together as a district. The former superintendent observed:

> At that time there wasn't a lot of pressure to do anything to pull people
> together. Everybody wanted to teach out of the books they wanted. That it
> took some effort to get people to agree on textbooks or to even agree that
> all the schools should be using the same textbook. And so, that's a little far
> away from professional development, but it established the foundation for
> some of some the professional development. It wasn't just curriculum, it
> was sort of a general belief that if we were going to report to be a school
> district then we had to be doing certain things for all the kids. The basic
> opportunities needed to be equivalent to regard as a school or street
> address. (Former superintendent interview, July 2007)

The current superintendent supported this belief:

> To me, it's the greatest success. Because the transition to go from the high school principal at the site to the district-level and having experienced what it was like in a district our size to work as independent empires versus what we have now which is a more collegial and collaborative organization is phenomenal. We were developing curriculum on our own. We were adopting textbooks on our own. We were fragmented in our curriculum. We had different types of curriculum at different sites. The fact we brought unity behind in collective conversations behind adoption of curriculum is phenomenal. People don't understand I don't think from the outside just how far that conversation has come. (Current superintendent interview, April 2007)

On the other hand, the district office used an integrated approach to the reform practices focused on improving student reading. The initial benchmark data provided evidence that many students in the district struggled with reading. The former superintendent shared this data in conversations with the school board, which resulted in a critical top-down decision:

> I met with the board; we were actually at a CSBA retreat. While we were away and were meeting together, they asked what it is the number one priority for the school district. I said I think the number one priority is to teach the kids that don't know how to read to read. And they bought it. They did buy it. They knew it to be true. I have huge respect for the board on this issue in particular. Because you do know in this community not knowing how to read was almost 100% Hispanic kids. The dominant culture in this community doesn't pay a lot of attention to that part of the population. And so for them to say that teaching reading is the number one priority was a very courageous stance for them. It stood above local politics. They weren't going to get any praise from the community for taking that on. (Former superintendent interview, July 2007)

The decision to focus on supporting struggling readers significantly changed the district professional development practices. When asked about the district office's approach to instructional practice reform one site administrator pointed out:

But I think Robert is right from the overall goals, looking at the data that is top down. But that speaks to the areas of need. I think if it wasn't that way at the district-level, we would not have that kind of growth that we've had across the district. (Site administrator focus group, May 2007)

Still yet, once the direction was established, the district office used a collaborative approach to develop and implement a plan. District office administrators, along with site administrators and teacher leaders were trained in reading strategies so that they could provide professional development to all teachers in content area reading strategies. One of the district office administrators described the significance of the collaborative effort had on overall district plans as follows:

Well, the literacy initiative or reading across the content area came about, obviously by looking at student data and failing classes, not just reading but the learning of the content. It's not just teaching reading but do you want your kids to learn social science, science, or whatever? So kids are struggling and we knew this as a result of data. We took teachers to study teaching reading in the content areas to McREL in Denver, along with administrators and made a plan there, and as Linda said, we could have done that without taking 23 teachers. But that 23 people went and made a plan and that were our district-wide professional development days for 3 years with teacher leaders and administrators leading content groups. (Educational Services director focus group, May 2007)

Following the initial analysis of the reading data, the district office continued to use data to make the decisions regarding what instructional reform practices to pursue. The annual District Goals established benchmarks in 2000-01 to evaluate student achievement on a variety of measures. The benchmark data evolved into pivotal information that focused the district's instructional practices. The data were also used to develop instructional practice goals in site documents such as WASC reports and Single School Plans. Teachers and administrators described a number of the other reform

strategies as collaborative efforts between the district office and sites as illustrated by the following:

> There's value that the district has placed and the time that we have to make some decisions. I would say that for most of the things, there has been interaction between the district and the site. It has been more of collaboration. (Teacher interview, July 2007)

When asked about how the district office approached the reform efforts, site administrators commented on the fact that the district office defined specific goals and then allowed site staff to have a say in how the work was to be done. They suggested that this approach gained site-level support for the initiatives:

> Though I think sometimes, it comes out of a process that is district office created in the sense that SAC [Subject Area Committee] are attended by somebody from the district, and there is the district influence there. But it very much is intended to give teachers a voice in the leadership and curriculum process. (Site administrator focus group, May 2007)

Another site administrator noted:

> But at the same time, I think there's been a lot of opportunity for collaboration. So in some of that curriculum development including teacher leaders provides opportunity for discussion. Whether it's what we're doing in Learning Centers or with PLATO, to the new Success Skills course, I mean all kinds of things. I think there's an opportunity for teacher and then administrator participation, site administrator participation. (Site administrator focus group, May 2007)

As previously noted, at the beginning of Dr. Harris's tenure as superintendent, he recognized the need to change in instructional practices in the Sun Valley High School District. By using available data, he directed district office staff to develop benchmarks for student achievement, and then tasked the sites and district office with achieving the benchmarks. Both top-down and collaborative approaches were taken with the instructional reform practices the district office chose to implement. The next section

describes the major strategies used by the Sun Valley High School District to implement the instructional practice reform efforts.

How do district office strategies support or constrain the implementation of instructional

practice reform?

The instructional practice reform efforts in the Sun Valley High School District took place on three fronts: (a) professional development, (b) standards-alignment, and (c) use of data. The next section describes the events and activities for each of the strategies that the district office engaged in during the period of the study. The findings provided in response to the primary research question also inform research questions two and three.

Professional Development as an Instructional Reform Practice

During the 5-year period of this study, the district office used three major methods of providing teacher and administrator professional development: (a) district-wide professional development days, (b) district-sponsored institutes, and (c) academies, conference, and workshop attendance. Teachers and administrators believed that the district office's instructional practice reform initiatives centered on the professional development opportunities given to site and district office staff. Regardless of the method, most of the professional development focused on a variety of activities and events targeted at instructional practice. Table 4.2 indicates the major professional development events sponsored by the district office over the previous 5 years.

Table 4.2:
Sun Valley High School District's Major Professional Development Events Targeted at Instructional Practice Reform

Year	Event	Description	Participants
2002-03	Professional Learning Community Conference San Diego, CA	4-day workshop on the practices associated with professional learning communities.	Not available
	District-wide Professional Development Days	2 days of options from which teachers selected their choice o workshops	All teachers and administrators
2003-04	Classroom Instruction That Works (CITW) Denver, CO	4-day training at McREL on instructional strategies	(8) Teachers leader (7) Site administrators (3) District administrators
	Teaching Reading in the Content Areas Denver, CO	2-day training at McREL on content area reading strategies	(11) Teachers leader (7) Site administrators (2) District administrators
	District-wide Professional Development Days	3 days of teacher and administrator led workshops on reading strategies for content area literacy	All teachers and administrators
	Classroom Instruction That Works Institute	Two 5-day institutes on Marzano's work with researched based instructional strategies	(19) English 9 and 10 teachers (18).Any interested teacher
	Teaching Reading in the Content Areas Institute	5 -day institute focusing on content specific literacy strategies	(19) Science and history/social science teachers (40) Teachers
	Algebra Institute	5-day institute during summer and a 5-day institute during school year using the lesson study model to develop standards-aligned, project based units	Not available

Table 4.2:
Sun Valley High School District's Major Professional Development Events Targeted at Instructional Practice Reform, Continued

Year	Event	Description	Participants
	Effective Teacher Evaluation	3 after-school workshops for administrators focused on the California Standards for the Teaching Profession	(12) Site administrators (3) District administrators
	What Works In Schools Conference, San Diego, CA	2 site teams attended 5- day institute on research-based school factors that impact student achievement	(8) Teachers leaders (3) Site administrators (2) District administrators
2004-05	Summer Institute on Content Area Literacy, Palm Springs, CA	3-day training on literacy strategies	(9) Teachers leaders (8) Site administrators (4) District administrators
	1st Annual New Teacher Academy	Optional 3-day workshop for all teachers new to the district	
	District-wide Professional Development Days	3 days of teacher and administrator led workshops on reading strategies for content area literacy	All teachers and administrators
	Classroom Instruction That Works Tier I Institute	5-day institute on Marzano's work with research-based instructional strategies	(19) Veteran and new teachers
	Classroom Instruction That Works Tier II Institute	Two 5 day institutes on Marzano's work with research-based instructional and teacher factors for improving student achievement	(31) Science teachers (30) Social Science teachers
	What Works in Schools, Dallas TX	3 day conference to study Marzano's work on research-based school strategies that impact student achievement	(14) Teachers (6) Site administrators (2) District administrators

Table 4.2:
Sun Valley High School District's Major Professional Development Events Targeted at Instructional Practice Reform,
Continued

Year	Event	Description	Participants
	International Reading Association Annual Conference San Antonio, TX	Literacy training in order to continue to support district literacy goals	(8) Teachers (1) Site administrators (1) District administrators
	The Comprehension Connection San Diego, CA	Literacy training in order to continue to support district literacy goals	(37) Teachers (1) Site administrators (3) District administrators
	National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Convention Anaheim, CA	National convention on current math issues and strategies to support struggling Algebra students	(15) Teachers
2005-06	Third Annual Literacy Institute at Laguna Cliffs Laguna, CA	Literacy training in order to continue to support district literacy goals	(6) Teachers (1) District administrators
	Literacy Leaders Institute Chicago, IL	Literacy training in order to continue to support district literacy goals	(3) Teachers (2) Site administrators (2) District administrators
	2nd Annual New Teacher Academy	Optional 3-day workshop for all teachers new to the district	
	District-wide Professional Development Days	2-days with Kate Kinsella on academic vocabulary 1-day with Mike Schmoker on how to use the "Results" model	All teachers and administrators

Table 4.2:
Sun Valley High School District's Major Professional Development Events Targeted at Instructional Practice Reform,
Continued

Year	Event	Description	Participants
	Classroom Instruction That Works Tier I Institute	4-day institute focusing on Marzano's work with researched based instructional strategies	(25) First year and veteran teachers
	Classroom Instruction That Works Tier II Institute	5-day institute focusing on Marzano's work with researched based instructional and teacher factors for improving student achievement. It was mandatory second year teachers.	(22) Second year and veteran teachers
	SDAIE Strategies for Algebra	2-day training on using SDAIE strategies in Algebra	(15) Teachers
2006-07	3rd Annual New Teacher Academy	3-day workshop for all teachers new to the district	
	District-wide Professional Development Days	3 days content specific workshops on reading strategies and or/standards alignment for instructional materials or lesson design.	All teachers and administrators
	Classroom Instruction That Works Tier I Institute	4-day institute focusing on Marzano's work with research-based instructional strategies	(27) First year and veteran teachers
	Classroom Instruction That Works Tier II Institute	4-day institute focusing on Marzano's work with research-based instructional and teacher factors for improving student achievement	(22) Second year and veteran teachers
	Supervising Learning	4 half-day trainings for administrators to train administrators to support teachers participating in Classroom Instruction That Works	(15) Site administrators (5) District administrators

Table 4.2:
Sun Valley High School District's Major Professional Development Events Targeted at Instructional Practice Reform, Continued

Year	Event	Description	Participants
	California Math Conference	Math conference on upcoming changes in framework and successful strategies for at-risk math students	(12) Teachers (1) District administrator
	AB 2913 Training	Two 6-day institutes to provide certification for teachers who did not have their CLAD or B-CLAD credential of SDAIE certification	(40) Teachers

District-wide professional development days. For the last 4 years during district-wide professional development days, the district office concentrated on content area reading strategies. This was in response to Dr. Harris and the board of trustees' commitment to improving student achievement in reading. During each of these years, the calendar provided 3 full days of professional development. In almost all cases, the district office organized the morning, and each site developed and facilitated the agendas for the afternoons. As shown in Table 4.2 during the summer of the 2003-04, teams of teacher leaders along with site and district administrators attended Classroom Instruction That Works and Teaching Reading in the Content Areas training at McREL (Mid-continent for Research Education and Learning) in Denver, Colorado. On the district-wide professional development day in August 2003, as part of the training all teachers were given a personal copy of Teaching Reading in the Content Areas. (Billmeyer & Barton, 1998)

The following year, more teacher leaders, along with site and district office administrators attended additional training at the Summer Institute on Content Area Literacy. The district office believed that by sending the teams to the trainings teachers and administrators would gain a common understanding, which would allow them to facilitate the content area reading strategy trainings on the professional development days. Many teachers recognized that this consistency and continuity provided a sense of direction to school sites as signified by the following comment:

> That we worked on developing and implementing the classroom instructional strategies that that allowed it enough time for some of the teachers who were reluctant the first year were starting to come around the second year because they saw practices in classrooms of their peers that were effective. Then by the third year you had almost a large majority of

teachers, at least on this particular campus utilizing the strategies. Whereas if you only ran it for 1 year, you've got a small percentage of people doing it and they're going to continue to do it but there's not an opportunity really for the knowledge to spread out and say "Hey this is what's working this is a good idea." Rather than just doing kind of the flavor of the month type of thing. (Teacher interview, June 2007)

As well as:

The other thing that's been really for me helpful is there's been very much I like I feel like the district is sort of adopted were going to follow kind of this research. We're not going to do a 100 different things. We're going to build on it every year, that so it's not something brand new every 3 years or whatever. For teachers it's like "Remember we did this last year, it seemed to be successful, I want to keep doing that and the next logical step seems to be that this would be our next focus." And, so, then we add that to the path, it makes more sense. Really, for me, that has been key. (Teacher interview, June 2007)

In 2005-06, the district office hired two nationally recognized consultants to present during the district-wide staff development days. The district office felt that there decision was a need to increase capacity of the teaching staff. The district administrators felt that outside experts would be able to go deeper into the strategies than district, and site staff. In August and November, Dr. Kate Kinsella conducted workshops "Narrowing the Language Achievement Gap," concentrating on developing students' academic vocabulary. Together in the same facility at the same time, all district teachers and administrators attended the 3 ½ hour workshops on the 2 of the 3 professional development days.

In evaluating the workshops, teachers were asked to comment on the connection between the new workshops and the preceding focus on literacy during the district-wide professional development days. In support of the connection to as well as the building upon previous training, many teachers wrote comments such as, "We've been moving in

the right direction with Reading in the Content Areas and I like how the speaker

integrated vocabulary strategies in all disciplines The focus on vocabulary recognition is

very important for student overall academic achievement. The focus on literacy is the

same, but the strategies are different" (Evaluation forms, Kinsella 2004-05). However,

not all teachers saw the connection between the previous training and the work Kinsella's

work. The evaluation forms contained a few comments expressing this concern such as,

"No obvious connection between what we have done and what we are doing" (Evaluation

forms, Kinsella 2004-05).

In February, the district office shifted focus from content area reading strategies

and brought Mike Schmoker, author of Results (Schmoker, 1999), to preside over a

workshop on developing a protocol for analyzing student work. This decision was based

on the district office's expectation that teachers and site administrators would monitor

student progress in reading by examining achievement results, including student work

and assessment data. District administrators determined that it would be helpful to have

consistent practices from which site and district teams could work. The district office had

worked with Schmoker the summer before in an abbreviated workshop where he taught

the strategies to site administrators and a handful of teachers. Based on the interest

generated by this workshop, the district office decided to bring him back to present to the

entire certificated staff.

The district office coordinated with the presenter to personalize the training to meet

the needs of the district. They provided individual school and department data and

organized the facility so that site departmental teams could work together. Further, they

e-mailed Schmoker requesting changes in his PowerPoint presentation and provided him

with the background and history of previous district-wide professional development events. Schmoker did not follow the district office's request and presented his usual workshop using generic student data, rather than the data the district had prepared.

The presentation was not well received by most of the staff. Many teachers complained about his negativity toward teachers, the lack of relevance, as well as the sense that teachers already knew this information. The evaluation forms contained numerous harsh comments including the following:

> The District does not have an accurate pulse on the needs of what our sites need. Once again, I learned that name-dropping high-paid consultants are more important than teachers' wants/needs at this time; It is more important to have teachers repeat trainings they've already had than give collaboration time; If this man taught like he presented today, he would be fired! What a waste of time and money! This was a very poor decision and the result is that many teachers are leaving here feeling angry and negative–not a good combo! (Evaluation forms, Schmoker, 2005-06).

Nevertheless, a few teachers and administrators did find some value in the presentation "I learned to use a structured format when we get together in meetings, writing things down, set goals that are measurable; Importance of teamwork, brainstorming rules of order, importance of goal setting with backwards design" (Evaluation forms, Schmoker, 2005-06).

Based on the negative feedback at the end of the workshop, Eric Norris, the current superintendent, e-mailed all the teachers and administrators explaining that the speaker did not provide the presentation that had been expected and apologized for the negative comments Schmoker made. When asked about professional development, one site administrator remarked, "You know examples were like, what we did with Schmoker. Everybody knows that was a bomb. Some of it was out of our control" (Site

administrator focus group, May 2007). As a consequence of the level of teacher

disapproval, the Educational Services director in charge of professional development

wrote Schmoker a letter sharing the district office's dissatisfaction with his presentation

and the damage that it had done to the forward progress of the district's previous

professional development events. Another site administrator reflected on the event:

> I think that since Schmoker, I think that the district has been better at
> getting in with the teachers. What happened was that we had a big in-
> service at the district office. The presentation that he gave us was very
> repetitive with steps that we've already taken. People at our site thought
> that it was steps that we've already taken or at least people at our site felt
> like it was of no use because we've already passed this point. So to make
> sure that the district puts on, you know, things that are appropriate and get
> input from teachers and be on the same page. We have to make sure that
> we're giving them is something that's useful and meaningful. Since then
> the district is done a good job of doing that. (Site administrator focus
> group, May 2007)

After the Schmoker incident, the district office went back to teacher-and

administrator-led district-wide professional development days. Over the next year, the

agendas were expanded to include opportunities for standards alignment, lesson design,

and instructional materials adoption. However, these activities were often integrated with

content area reading strategies and academic vocabulary development. Before the 2006-

07 school year started, all teachers received a letter from the district office sharing

professional development plans for the upcoming year. An Educational Services director

acknowledged that the letter served two purposes. First, it informed teachers about the

upcoming professional development days and secondly, it let teachers know that their

concerns regarding the use of consultants had been heard. The letter contained the

following:

Our focus for the District-wide Professional Days will continue to be on content area literacy. The level of reading and writing skills necessary to read, comprehend, and react to the appropriate instructional materials used in our subject areas. During the 2003-04 and 04-05 school years, you worked in content-specific groups to increase your knowledge and strategies to help students become literate in your subject areas. Last year, we met as a district to learn from Kate Kinsella about the importance and practice of teaching academic vocabulary.

After analyzing each site's WASC plan and reviewing teacher feedback from last year, you will be back in content-specific groups for the 2006-07 school year during the three student-free District-wide Professional Development Days: August 9, 2006; October 25, 2006; January 24, 2007. The specific content of each session will be differentiated, based on the needs in the individual departments. (Teacher letter, August 2007)

In an interview with a teacher who had been involved in the literacy professional

development activities, she attested to the need for content-specific workshops:

 I know when it's focused on department's people really like it. I know that all the VAPA people love having Ray Jacobs come. Although he talks way too much and doesn't give us enough time to actually work together, we love him and what he has to say. We wish that he would talk for about an hour and go away so that we would all have collaboration time together. So I think people really like it when it's department specific. (Teacher interview, May 2007)

Teachers involved in the literacy training recognized that the district office did respond to

the professional development feedback given by teachers as captured by:

You know, at times its been a tug of war, and sometimes we've gotten what we wanted and other times we haven't, in terms of the amount of time we want for professional development. It's been a rollercoaster, I'll tell you that it's been a rollercoaster. But at times, we've been very successful with things that we have created, we felt we needed, and sometimes we've been, ah, very successful in terms of what the district has offered after hearing what we needed. (Teacher interview, July 2007)

A teacher summarized the district-wide professional days in the following manner:

In terms of the vocabulary reform, I think it is the one that probably stands out the most. The Classroom Instruction That Works using vocabulary strategies within specific disciplines and be able to provide teachers with

strategies that are tailored to fit their specific disciplines rather than generic model. But the benefit came I think in giving teachers real time examples of how to use the strategies within their disciplines. (Teacher interview, June 2007)

District-sponsored institutes. As another way to support instructional practice reform the district office offered teachers the opportunity to attend institutes designed around the book Classroom Instruction That Works (Marzano et al., 2001). Teachers participating in the institutes were provided the book, which presents findings from a meta-analysis conducted to determine the classroom instructional strategies that best support student achievement. The author presents nine strategies, with a discussion of how and when to use them for maximum impact on student achievement.

Beginning in the 2003-04 school year, the district office contracted with Marzano and Associates to provide two 5-day institutes on the nine instructional strategies found in the book. Over the last 4 years, the same consultant, Marla Faulkner, has conducted all the Classroom Instruction That Works (CITW) trainings. The first year, one session was for English 9 and 10 teachers; the other session was for any teacher interested in the training. The institutes were held throughout the school year on the instructional day. Additionally, the district office hired a consultant from McREL to work with history/social science and science teachers to develop content-specific reading strategies. In both cases, the district paid for substitute teachers to release teachers from their classroom duties so they could attend the workshops. Evaluations of the trainings overwhelming affirmed the value teachers found in the training. Teachers reported that they learned a variety of instructional strategies, including many related to content area reading. By the end of the series, many of the teacher comments made specific references

to the use of graphic organizers, vocabulary tools, and learning goals. On evaluation

forms, teachers reflected on the types of strategies they had learned and used in their

classroom, as exemplified by:

> I have used narrative frame, compared rubrics, and identified learning
> goals for students; Training has validated my use of graphic organizers
> and other nonlinguistic representations; challenged me to articulate
> learning goals more clearly/effectively to students, challenged me to
> incorporate exercises that challenge students to work with notes; My
> students have used mind maps and graphic organizers in class for many
> lessons on plant and animal science; they enjoy them. (Teacher evaluation
> forms CITW, 2003-04)

In the 2004-05 school year, the district office took a different approach with CITW.

Though once again offering two five day sessions they were now referred to as Tier I and

Tier II. Much as with the previous training, Tier I was designed so that participants would

become familiar with the nine research-based strategies proven to increase student

achievement. However, the training had a focus on vocabulary and reading

comprehension strategies. Participants learned about the strategies through demonstration

and modeling of the techniques. The targeted audience included new teachers to the

district and interested veteran teachers who were not involved in the 2003-2004 trainings.

In order to increase continuity and sustain the practices learned in the previous

year, the district office offered a second year of training. The second year of training, Tier

II, was also designed to concentrate on specific strategies to increase vocabulary,

comprehension, and complex thinking skills in all content areas. However, the training

also integrated the strategies into lesson and unit planning for the specific courses the

participants taught. The consultant used the action steps for curriculum design from

Marzano's (2003) What Works in Schools. Participants aligned strategies from

Classroom Instruction That Works (Marzano et al., 2001) and Billmeyer and Barton's (1988) Teaching Reading in the Content Areas with their content area standards. In addition, teachers in Tier II worked collaboratively with other teachers in the district to design units of study aligned with the content standards. Teachers were expected to implement the lessons and units in their classes and share the results with their colleagues. The targeted audience included teachers involved in the 2003-2004 trainings. Once again, most teachers in both institutes found that they were able to apply what they learned to classroom practice. Along with vocabulary strategies and learning goals teachers also remarked that they had learned more regarding note-taking, homework, assessment, and lesson design. The evaluation forms included comments about the strategies teachers would apply what they had learned including homework practices, assessments, rubrics, and lesson design such as:

> I'm going to start with more basic learning skills before presenting lessons such as note taking, reading skills; I'm going to use the classification of characteristics with a song I'd planned to present to students and have them compare with a song from their repertoire; The morning jigsaw was very helpful. We came up with a way to have student/peer evaluation essay for comprehension of developed rubrics; I will try new assessment technique and re-evaluate the current point system. (Teacher evaluation forms, CITW 2003-04)

During the 2004-05 school year, conversations took place at the district office on how to best sustain professional development using the Tier I and Tier II model. According to district office administrators, the goal was to systematically train teachers in the instructional strategies, so that over time the majority of teachers would have a common understanding of instructional practice. Furthermore, during this time period there were changes in teacher credentialing procedures that enabled districts with BTSA

(Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment) Induction Programs to grant teachers their

Professional Clear credential. In order to help meet the new requirements, the district

office decided to use Tier I and Tier II as part of the BTSA Induction Program. The 2-

year institutes shifted from 5 days to 4 days and were now offered to all interested

veteran teachers and required for all teachers new to the district. The new structure

ensured continuity in that all new teachers would have the opportunity to learn and apply

the instructional strategies adopted by the district. The new and experienced teachers

commented that they valued learning several different vocabulary strategies.

Most teachers responded positively to the new format. On their evaluations, they

wrote about the importance of learning or relearning the instructional strategies. A few

examples include statements form evaluation forms such as the following:

> I came into this as a 4th-year teacher who is new to this district. I was
> familiar with Classroom Instruction That Works from my previous district,
> but not to the point that I understood specifics like the teachers who had
> gone through Tier I the previous year: This will allow me to tailor lesson
> plans that have congruity and are focused. Students will be clear on what
> they are doing and why they are doing it: This has helped me focus my
> teaching to benefit my students. I have had the time to learn new strategies
> (vocabulary, assessment ideas) that have helped my students succeed. I
> plan to continue reading and reflecting on the material from the last 2
> years so that I can continue to refine and improve my teaching. Thank you
> for everything. (Teacher evaluation forms, CITW 2005-06 and Teacher
> evaluation forms, CITW 2006-07)

Though most of the feedback was positive, an Educational Services director

commented that some of the newly hired teachers with years of teaching experience

initially did not want to attend the training for reasons such as they already knew the

material, or they did not want to be out of their classrooms. The assistant superintendent

of Human Resources shared that he had also been contacted by principals who asked

about the required participation of their experienced new hires. Even though the assistant superintendent and site administrators wanted the veteran new hires to participate, they voiced the concern that there were not always enough substitutes on the institute days.

In the 2006-07 school year, another change was made to CITW training. The district office recognized that it was difficult for site administrators to attend 4 full days of training, yet the administrators believed it was crucial for site administrators to be knowledgeable about the instructional practices found in CITW. They decided to add Supervising Learning, which was designed to provide site administrators with strategies to support teachers participating in or already completed Tier I and Tier II of CITW. Administrators attended four half-day workshops conducted by Marla Faulkner, the same consultant doing the CITW training. The workshops provided foundational knowledge of the nine instructional strategies. The training also required the administrators to conduct classroom observations and collect samples of student work from the lessons observed. Then in the following workshop, the observations and student work were reviewed based on the CITW practices. Site administrators appreciated the opportunity to learn about the strategies, acknowledging that the information would help with both supervision and evaluation. Further, they observed that it was helpful for them to know what Tier I and Tier II were learning as exemplified by comments on the feedback forms:

> Overall, I learned how to apply the knowledge from Marzano's book to the classroom in my capacity as an administrator. I know what to look for when entering a classroom (learning goals) and how to identify aspects of good teaching: I learned what Tier I and II teachers are required to complete. This will help when we talk about it. (Feedback from Supervising Learning, 2007)

Academies, conferences, and workshops. .As well as providing district-wide

professional development days and CITW institutes, the district office provided teachers

and administrators the opportunity to attend other district organized trainings and outside

conferences and workshops. Often, the district office funded conference attendance.

Table 4.3 shows the amount of money spent during the previous 4 years on conferences

related to instructional practices.

Table 4.3:
Sun Valley High School District's Funding Allocation for Conference Attendance

	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Amount spent on conferences related to instructional practices	$232,838	$296,479	$232,377	$191,051

As shown in Table 4.2 earlier when the district office sponsored the conference

attendance for a significant number of teachers, an Educational Services director often

attended with the teachers. This provided the occasion for the district office to collaborate

with teachers as well as help organize any follow-up. The significant number and types of

professional development opportunities provided to teachers were recognized by site and

district administrators:

> I think that the accessibility to professional development for teachers is
> probably the best that I've seen in the five districts that I've worked for.
> The fact that it's not just this menu of things they can choose from but it's
> focused specific reasons for the professional development let's do this and
> then go back and put into place and aligned with the district goals. (Site
> administrator focus group, May 2007)

An Educational Services director added this perspective:

> From my point of view, having worked in two different districts, one a
> unified, and one high school that had middle schools as well, neither one
> of those districts had the degree of professional development that was
> available to teachers or administrators. Often, the administrators in those
> districts had no clue what was happening for the teachers. . . if they were

going to conferences or meetings or professional development opportunities. So I was pleasantly surprised to see that it was a very different creature in this district and that the administrators were intentionally included in participating so that they were able to monitor instruction to a higher level. (Educational Services director focus group, May 2007)

Teachers also acknowledged the opportunities to attend conferences and workshops outside of the district:

You know, one of the things that's really nice is that I have my wife is in another district, so I see the type of professional development that they're offerings and what they are encouraged to go to which is practically nil. Since I've been with the district to I've had the opportunity to attend any sort of in-service or conference that I've really wanted to with a valid desire and need to go and be completely supported by the district in terms of being able to go and further my professional development. I have never been in a position where I've asked to go for professional development that would fit what I was doing in the classroom that's been denied. (Teacher interview, June 2007)

When asked about feeling supported during the instructional practice reform efforts teachers often remarked about the ability to attend conferences and workshops. Indicative of many of the responses, one teacher who had been involved in many of the reform efforts remarked, "Yes, very much so. I do feel that if there's been something significant that I've wanted to attend and had reason to attend that I've been personally very much supported in that" (Teacher interview, June 2007). A long-time teacher in the district added:

I think providing the opportunities for teachers to go to professional programs we know are good. For example, Advanced Placement, going to things that have value, such as the AVID Institute. And those are expensive, that's a lot of money that the district is putting out for those that are tried and true. (Teacher interview, August 2007)

One teacher observed that there had been a change in criteria for teacher's conference attendance from previous years:

> Now, it has to be somehow connected to standards, and improving what we do in the classroom, which is good, I'm not complaining. I'm saying in the old days it was kind of like, "You want to go to this thing on clay, sure; you want to go to this thing on newspapers, sure." Now we can ask and be sent to professional development seminars or workshops, but it has to somehow be connected to what you do. (Teacher interview, July 2007)

Along with conferences outside the district, the district office hosted academies and workshops. Two notable events were the New Teacher Academy and Conscious Classroom Management. The New Teacher Academy began in 2004-05. It was a 3-day event that introduced teachers to the vision and philosophy of the district as well as provided specific training in helpful instructional practices for the first days of school. Teachers attending the academy were given resources including Billmeyer and Barton's (1998) Teaching Reading in the Content Areas as well as their content-specific curriculum. After the first academy, BTSA Support Providers were asked to provide input into the academy's agenda. Their observation was that new teachers are in need of as much help as possible with classroom management strategies. The following year, a workshop on classroom management was added to the academy. The first day still focused on an introduction to the district, available instructional resources, and first day strategies. However, on the second and third day, Rick Smith, author of Conscious Classroom Management (2004) presented a variety of practical and constructive classroom management strategies. The district office understood that classroom management strategies were useful all teachers, so all veteran teachers were invited to attend the last 2 days of the academy. All attendees were given copies of the book. Additionally, in 2005-06 the agenda for the New Teacher Academy included presentations by the BTSA Support Providers. Though the academy was never made

mandatory, the teachers attending the event appreciated the support and collaboration, the

targeted instructional strategies, and the variety of resources provided during the event, as

demonstrated by some of their responses on evaluation forms:

> Reinforcing first-day procedures and syllabus building; I am thrilled with
> some of the texts given. But most of all I am starting to calm down and
> focus on what is needed for the first week of school; The whole thing –
> being able to meet other teachers in the same place – ground zero.
> Building support system even from district-level. Knowing that there is a
> continuation of this support."(Teacher Evaluation, New Teacher Academy
> 2006)

> Rick Smith's presentation as part of the New Teacher Academy was also

considered a success. The district office contracted with him to come back for two after-

school workshops in 2005-06 and again in 2006-07. Smith also presented at the 2006-07

New Teacher Academy. Teachers commented on the useful information, including the

specific strategies offered on how to teach procedures. Teacher responses on workshop

evaluations included many positive comments regarding the information presented as

well as the opportunity to hear the information for a second time:

> Procedure pictures to show things like what students should be doing at
> beginning of class & dismissal; I am committed to provide my students
> with a safe and orderly learning environment. I want to learn from
> experienced teachers and trainers on how best to teach procedures and
> content matter; It just makes more sense to come back to your 2nd
> orientation and seeing some of the things you talk about in my classroom.
> (New Teacher Academy evaluation, 2005-06 and 2006-07; Conscious
> Classroom Management, 2005-06 and 2006-07)

One teacher, when asked about ways the district office has supported teachers, offered

that she appreciated the opportunity to attend this training without being out of class:

> Last year I took advantage of it in the evenings. For two evenings, there
> was a classroom management class, which I thought was really nice.
> Yeah, because it was in the afternoon, we didn't have to miss class, it was

totally voluntary. That I thought was very cool, I took advantage of that. (Teacher interview, May 2007)

Challenges to professional development efforts. Regardless of the professional development event, almost all of the feedback and evaluation reports contained comments from teachers on the value of and need for time for collaboration. Teachers appreciated the opportunity to meet in content-specific groups and wanted to use the time to share best practices, examine student work, and develop lessons and units. They felt that time was well spent when they were able to work together and exchange ideas in a collegial setting. They also noted that there was not enough time to follow up with colleagues about the instructional practices they had learned about at the professional development events. There was consistent feedback on professional development evaluation forms regarding the need for more time for teachers to meet. The following are examples of their comments:

Time to share ideas with colleagues and to plan a unit, reviewing some of the main ideas from last time; Achievement should be positively impacted because I have been able to get new ideas and bounce my ideas off someone else." (Evaluation forms, 2004-05, 2005-06, and 2006-07)

The recognized need for more time was echoed in almost all teacher interviews as illustrated by the following:

There's always the time issue and that's speaks for itself. So more time to meet you know, whether we're paid for it or whether we get subs or something or if we could somehow put it into the schedule so that every Monday or every other Monday we can meet as a department and that would really help. (Teacher interview, July 2007)

When teachers were asked what type of support the district office could provide teachers, the following comment brings to light the frustration some teachers felt:

Time, yet you still get paid hourly, but I mean to do that [reform efforts] on top of your additional classroom responsibilities of wanting to be a

good professional and be involved in district stuff, it just becomes challenging. You have to you really be committed to it—to basically give up your life to be committed to school reform. I think [that's] how a lot of people see it. (Teacher interview, May 2007)

In the same manner, when asked about factors that constrained the overall reform efforts, all site administrator focus groups also remarked that the lack of time hindered their efforts as signified by one site administrator's observation: "And in terms of things that constrain our efforts I would say to having the time for collaboration is huge. We just don't have that time" (Site administrator focus group, May 2007). They also expressed their thoughts on the challenges in finding more time for collaboration, as illustrated in this comment:

I think that is a consequence of having an ineffective bell schedule. If you want a relate it back to the teacher contract and the ineffective means for us to create a real time for teachers to sit down and have conversations with each other. So time becomes a very coveted a resource and how do I get to spend these two hours. (Site administrator focus group, May 2007)

On the other hand, a long time teacher offered his thoughts on why there is not more time for collaboration:

That has been the thing that teachers, I am sure at all the sites but, especially here at Lemon Grove, we have always wanted more time to do that and for some reason, whether it's district or school board or community, looks at teachers working on campus without students as wrong. (Teacher interview, May 2007)

One school, La Paloma, found some resolution to this dilemma. Because of their site's bell schedule, they were able to bank instructional minutes so that students could be released early 1 day a week. This provided teachers the opportunity to work as departments or as project-specific teams for approximately 80 minutes each week. During

the 2006-07 school year, Lemon Grove worked with the district office to carve out some

collaboration time from their bell schedule. One site administrator revealed:

> I can identify conversations that we can we've had through our WASC
> process, our Focus on Learning process, where we redid our bell schedule
> for next year. So we can have more frequent time for teachers to get
> together and discuss common assessments and also evaluate department
> goals and work together. And now that it comes out of the desire to
> complete the work that that is necessary in order to stimulate student
> success. (Site administrator focus group, May 2007)

During the 2006-07 school year, the district office entered talks with the union on

ways to create time for collaboration to develop professional learning communities to

further the work of the district goals. A suggestion was made that the hours from the

district-wide professional development days be distributed in smaller units of time spread

throughout the school year. To help further this effort, in June, the superintendent, two

assistant superintendents, and site principals attended a 4-day workshop on professional

learning communities. During the summer of 2007, the district office in conjunction with

the union sent out a brief survey regarding the potential change to teachers to solicit their

feedback. The conversation between the union and district office will continue in 2007-

08, with the goal to have time to collaborate in professional learning communities for the

2008-09 school year. One teacher wrapped it up by saying, "Well, you know what, here's

the thing: We have computers and dictionaries and books. I don't think we need stuff;

honestly, I would trade time for stuff a hundred times over" (Teacher interview, May

2007).

Another challenge that teachers and site administrators associated with the district

office professional development efforts was that many of the events required teachers to

be out of class. The site administrators pointed out two concerns. The first was that often

the same teachers were out of class. The second was that at times it was difficult to get

enough substitute teachers, as noted in this administrator's explanation:

> Just to support the staff development efforts sometimes when teachers are
> pulled out in mass for training it hits us really hard because quite often we
> don't have enough subs. I don't know if there's anything that district can
> do about that or soften the impact of that. We don't want the staff
> development to go away, but those days are really rough here on campus.
> (Site administrator focus group, May 2007)

Many teachers also commented about the challenge of balancing the desire to participate

with the need to be in the classroom.

Lack of accountability for the teachers choosing not to engage during the

professional development events or to implement the instructional practices was also

remarked about by teachers and site administrators as a challenge. Some teachers

commented that there are no consequences if a teacher chooses not to participate during

the training or use the information learned, as illustrated by this teacher's comment,

> But I've never been held accountable for it [writing strategies learned
> during professional development]. No one's ever asked me if I have really
> used them. So there is no, I mean, if you want to be a rebel and just say
> you're not going to do it. There's not a single person who's going to bust
> you for it." (Teacher interview, May 2007)

The impact of the teachers not participating was felt by other teachers as noted in this

insight:

> Okay, I've been to so many meetings where people don't have the buy-in.
> And not only do they remove themselves which is a person's right to do,
> but they provided barriers to the collaboration of other individuals. That is
> extremely sad to me. So, what I'm trying to imagine how would those
> barriers not be there. If I were a magic genie, it would be that we could
> address that head on and objectively. We could talk about the 800lb.
> gorilla that is in the room that is not spoken about. (Teacher interview,
> June 2007)

Site administrators explained that though they want to be in the classroom more, they are too often pulled away by other duties. This site administrator's remark reflects remarks made by all site administrator focus groups:

> With all the minutiae stuff that has to happen now in schools for assistant principals we are cheating teachers. We are not supporting teachers. For us to sit here and say, "Yes, we are the instructional leaders, isn't right. We aren't. It gets pushed way down because of that phone call, because of that kid that was in a fight, for these kids that are constantly out of class, and all this other stuff. (Site administrator focus group, May 2007)

Site administrators and teachers noted that the lack of teacher accountability for not participating or engaging in the reform efforts was a constraint. Furthermore, site administrators offered that inability to spend more time in classrooms equated to less support for teachers.

Standards Alignment as an Instructional Reform Practice

The district office provided several opportunities for teachers and administrators to engage in standards-alignment reform efforts. The district office provided time to develop standards-aligned curriculum as well as the funding to purchase the corresponding instructional materials. The district office also afforded teachers the opportunity to collaborate on the implementation of the curriculum and how best to use the newly adopted materials. As well, the district office sent teachers and administrators to specific standards-alignment workshops and conferences. Table 4.4 shows the major standard alignment events sponsored by the district office.

Table 4.4:
Sun Valley High School District's Major Standards Alignment Events Targeted at Instructional Practice Reform

Year	Event	Description	Content Area/Participants
2002-03	Content Area Workshops	Content-specific workshops for teachers to continue to development and implementation of standards-aligned curriculum	Career and Technical Education , English, Foreign Language, Math, Science, and Visual and Performing Arts
2003-04	Content Area Workshops	Content-specific workshops for teachers to continue to development and implementation of standards-aligned curriculum	Career and Technical Education , English, Foreign Language, Health, Science, and Visual and Performing Arts
	Writing Project Conference	Workshop on ELA writing standards	(6) Teacher leaders (2) District administrators
2004-05	Content Area Workshops	Content-specific workshops for teachers to continue to development and implementation of standards-aligned curriculum.	Agriculture, Career and Technical Education, English, Foreign Language, Physical Education, Science, and Visual and Performing Arts
	NWREL 6+1 Trait Writing Assessment Institute, Portland, OR	Workshop to collaborate on the writing strand section of district-wide Literacy Plan	(6) Teachers leader (1) District administrators
2005-06	Content Area Workshops	Content-specific workshops to continue development and implementation of standards-aligned curriculum.	Career and Technical Education , English, English Language Development, Foreign Language, Health, Physical Education, Science, Social Science, and Visual and Performing Arts

Table 4.4:
Sun Valley High School District's Major Standards Alignment Events Targeted at Instructional Practice Reform, Continued

Year	Event	Description	Content Area/Participants
	Summer Institute for Lesson/Unit Design	5-day institute focused on backwards lesson/unit design, products shared with colleagues	(27) Teachers
	High School Physical Education Series	3-day workshop aligning physical education program to new standards	(12) Site teachers (1) Site administrator
	College Board Regional Conference, Las Vegas, NV	Site team invited to present alignment of EL program and Spanish for Spanish Speakers course	(7) Teachers (1) Site administrators (1) District administrator
	Educational Trust, Washington DC	Site team invited to present alignment of EL program and Spanish for Spanish Speakers course	(7) Teachers (1) Site administrators (1) District administrators
2006-07	Content Area Workshops	Content-specific workshops to continue to development and implementation of standards-aligned curriculum.	Career and Technical Education , English, English Language Development, Foreign Language, Health, Math, Physical Education, Science, Social Science, Success Skills, and Visual and Performing Arts
	New Mexico School Board Association, Albuquerque, NM	District team invited to present alignment of EL program and Spanish for Spanish Speakers course	(2) Teachers (1) School Board member
	NM College Board Regional Conference, Los Angeles, CA	District team invited to present alignment of EL program and Spanish for Spanish Speakers course	(1) Teacher (1) Site Administrator (1) County office program coordinator

Standards in the curriculum. Beginning in 1997, the State Board of Education began the process of adopting content-specific standards. The corresponding content specific frameworks were revised to support the implementation of the standards. Soon after the state adoptions, only standards-aligned instructional materials could be purchased with the instructional materials funds provided by the state. The Public School Accountability Act (PSAA) and later NCLB required districts to assess student progress on how well they were mastering the content standards. The progress report on the district goals annually reflected the courses being revised to align with the standards, as well as the courses adopting standards-aligned instructional materials. Table 4.5 shows the dates that the Sun Valley Board of Trustees adopted standards-aligned curriculum and instructional materials. In 2002-03, the preface of the District Goals document noted, "Research and experience show that successful school districts provide a variety of programs, systems, and opportunities that support the day-to-day efforts of teachers and site administrators. These include ongoing work in curriculum development, materials development, textbook adoption, and technology" (District Goals, 2002-03).

At present, the curriculum and instructional materials adoption process begins with content-specific meetings in which a group of teachers write the standards-aligned curriculum and make recommendations for the instructional materials to adopt. The final curriculum document and instructional materials selection then go through several groups (Subject Area Committee, Site Department Chairs, and Instructional Program Review Committee) whose responsibility it is to suggest changes or approve the recommendations. After each group has had an opportunity for input, the recommended curriculum and instructional materials are taken to the school board for final adoption.

Table 4.5:
Sun Valley High School District's Adoptions of Standards-Aligned Curriculum and Textbooks

Content standards adopted by State Board of Education	District Courses	Last curriculum and textbook adoption by Board of Trustees
English (1997)	English 9	1999
	English 10	1999
	English 11	2000
	English 12	2000
English Language Development (1999)	ELD I	2003
	ELD II	2003
	ELD III	2003
	ELD IV	2005
Mathematics (1997)	Algebra 1	2002
	Geometry	2002
	Algebra 11	2005
	Pre-Calculus	2001
	Calculus, AP	2001
	Probability and Statistics, AP	1999
History-Social Science (1998)	World History	2007
	United States History	2007
	Government	2007
	Economics	2007
Science (1998)	Earth Science	2005
	Biology	2002
	Chemistry	2005
	Physics	2001
Visual and Performing Arts (2001)	Art	2001
	Ceramics	2001
	Dance	2001
	Instrumental Music	2002
Physical Education (2005)	9	2001
	10	2001
CTE (2005)	Culinary Arts	2006
	Wood	2007
	Auto	1989
	Child Development	2006

However, this is not the adoption process that was always in place. The process

changed after Dr. Harris came to the district. As previously noted, the sites often operated

independently, and there was no expectation that they would collaborate on curriculum

revisions or adoptions. There were many older textbooks, and some curricula had not

been revised in more than 10 years. Further, there was a significant amount of

unallocated funds in the district's instructional materials account. He did not have the

history on why more had not been done; however, he saw the need for a change:

> There was a mentality, a structure, and a process for curriculum
> development that was really unhealthy. At the time, it seemed like the
> teachers and the staff of would do everything that they could to keep any
> parental or community input out of the process. They didn't want them
> involved in any discussions anywhere along the line. And of course the
> board had a different perspective and felt like they needed to have some
> and given the political pressure to get them involved. And so what
> happened was that the parent group got involved at the end, but they had
> essentially veto power over everything that had taken place. And so, sort
> of inadvertently, the district had created what it had feared the most.
> (Former superintendent interview, July 2007)

The current superintendent, Mr. Norris, seconded the need for change. He reminisced

about his time in the district as a principal: "We were developing curriculum on our own.

We were adopting textbooks on our own. We were fragmented in our curriculum"

(Current superintendent interview, July 2007).

To overcome this challenge, in 2000, Dr. Harris directed the current

superintendent, who at the time was assistant superintendent of Educational Services to

write a new board policy for curriculum and instructional material adoption. The policy is

still in practice today. Dr. Harris noted:

> We've developed a new structure which said that parents were involved at
> earlier stages and that they could say they didn't like it but actually
> nobody could stop the process from moving forward. It would move
> forward to the superintendent. The superintendent would make the
> recommendation to the board. Everybody that had a minority opinion
> could state and present so that their opinions were presented. The people
> that had the veto power were the Board of Education. Everything worked

as it was designed to work and all of the sudden the air got let out of that issue. (Former superintendent interview, July 2007)

He recognized that this was a significant and crucial change for the district. He believed the curriculum and textbook adoption process "became a non-issue for the district." (Former superintendent interview, July 2007) The new policy provided a system that allowed meaningful discussion and full participation by teachers from all sites, as well as community members, yet the final decision rested with the school board. The current superintendent remarked about the impact of the change in the adoption process:

> The fact we brought unity and collective conversations behind adoption of curriculum is phenomenal. People don't understand. I don't think from the outside just how far that conversation has come. To hear the conversations that happen now with the math practitioners across the district from three or five different sites working collaboratively together to work on benchmark assessments or aligning curriculum district-wide to the standards. Or even the conversation around textbook adoptions. The dialog is more specific to the content within the curriculum and then the instructional practice behind its delivery to me is more common than it's ever been. (Current superintendent interview, July 2007)

The adoption process is considered a major component of the district office instructional practices. Each phase of the adoption process is viewed as important. One of the site administrators discussed the impact of the changes:

> It's fair to say you can see the importance of the SAC [Subject Area Committee] meetings you know they used to be meetings that were sparsely attended but not a lot of focus in the last 5 years they've been very focused on aligning curriculum to standards textbook adoptions that support that same deal. I think they're much more focused and results oriented than they've ever been. (Site administrator focus group, May 2007)

Further, the district office gave teachers the time to write the standards-aligned curriculum, as well as to review the practices and instructional materials associated with the curriculum once it has been adopted. Once again, the district office offered teachers

release time to meet, while substitute teachers took over their daily classroom

responsibilities. In some cases, teachers requested to do the work after school or during

the summer. For their time, teachers were paid the hourly wage designated in their

contracts. When asked about instructional form successes, teachers remarked about how

important it was to address the standards:

> In terms of, you know, gauging how we do that, I know that in our
> department meetings we discuss the standards. Sometimes we're prompted
> to by the district, you know, it's an assignment that's given to us to look at
> what we're doing and discuss how we've actually connected to the
> standards. (Teacher interview, July 2007)

Another example remarked about the work done at the site level after the curriculum was

adopted:

> With the successes here at this site, getting together in site teams mainly
> through departments we've been able to actively put together a Scope and
> Sequence from grade level to grade level and have the time to collaborate
> among the different levels to make sure it flows. And from there as an
> ELD teacher I was able to use what was coming out of those meetings to
> scope and sequence my ELD courses. (Teacher interview, May 2007)

Equally important, the former superintendent pointed out, was the financial support from

the district office to purchase standards-aligned instructional materials. Table 4.6 shows

the amount of money expended by the district on standards-aligned materials between

2001-02 and 2006-07.

Table 4.6:
Sun Valley High School District's Expenditures on Standards-aligned Instructional Materials

2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
$505,313	$100,372	$513283	$320,032	$469,102	$467,905

Teachers remarked that they had the necessary standards-aligned resources as suggested by:

> We have been supported through getting, like I was saying, more materials than we could possibly use, so, we have all the choices there, so, it's not necessarily bad that we have too much, you know, that's a good problem I think, because now we can discuss what it is we can really use and what fits our goals and our Power Standards (Teacher interview, May 2007).

Teachers reported that aligning the curriculum to the standards had produced positive outcomes for the district. First, teachers felt that the alignment process provided a more rigorous and consistent curriculum for students across the district. When asked about the instructional practice reform successes, one teacher offered this perspective to summarize district efforts:

> Students have the opportunity to take better, richer curriculum. I consider that a change. I think that has been supported much by our district. I don't always agree with the way they always do it for example, but I definitely think that they're trying to make sure that we are better teachers than we were. We are helping the kids access more demanding curriculum, and really trying to send kids into the workplace or into their adult life with an education. (Teacher interview, August 2007)

Standards and assessment. The standards alignment process engaged teachers in dialogue about common expectations. Since sites and individual teachers had operated for so long in isolation, there were no common expectations for assignments or grading. Even though there were no district-wide mandated assignments, assessments or grading policies, in certain cases individual departments have collaborated to develop their own. In these cases, there were common expectations for student achievement. Teachers offered that some of the benefits arising from the standards movement included the development of similar assignments and common grading practices. One teacher summarized the advantage as follows:

That's been huge. It has made a vast difference in what each kid gets in each grade level. It is fairly equal. I mean, we had situations where some teachers would require eight essays and some would require one. It's really helped bring us together. And then, the second part of that is its helped us talk and share and collaborate a lot more because we're all doing about the same thing at about the same time, so that's been huge. (Teacher interview, May 2007)

An outcome of the conversations about standards alignment and consistent student expectations was a discussion regarding common assessments. The district adopted curriculum included sample assessment strategies; thus far, no specific assessments have been mandated in any of the revised curriculum documents. Even so, individual departments at sites decided to develop their own common assessments. Each high school's WASC report referred to the need for departments to develop common assessments. Table 4.7 shows the site-developed common assessments. Most of these tests were summative assessments, given at the end of a unit or at the end of a grading period. In all cases, teachers were not mandated to give the assessments.

Table 4.7:
Matrix of Site-developed Common Assessments

Department	Sun Valley	Lemon Grove	La Paloma
English	English 9 English 10 English 11		English 9 English 10
Math	Algebra I	Algebra I Algebra II	Algebra I
Science	Chemistry		Biology
History/Social Science	World Cultures U.S. History Economics Government	World Cultures	World Cultures U.S. History

Teachers using the common assessments commented on their value in terms of improving student achievement. They believed that common assessments have helped ensure that teachers are instructing the material that is expected of the course as well as

evaluating students in a similar way. Some believe that there is a correlation between the improving results on the tests and the standards-aligned assessments. Other teachers commented on the positive direction that schools and the district are moving in the standards alignment process:

> We will be able to implement that more across the board. We're probably at about 60% of our department is using the common assessment on an annual basis or a biannual basis to assess overall student knowledge with relation ship to the standards. With regards to working with the standards, one of the things that the social studies department in the district has been doing is going through the state standards and reviewed frameworks that had been adjusted last year. That was a real positive success because it enabled some of the teachers that are new to the district to contribute input in terms of where our standards are going and ways that we can update how we use them. (Teacher interview, July 2007)

Nonetheless, there were still several challenges associated with standards-alignment and common assessments. In most focus groups and interviews, the lack of time for teachers to collaborate was described as a roadblock: "Common assessments, we're still working on that. We need the time which is something the district can give us, specifically, more of it get together as a group and really, take a look at different things" (Teacher interview, July 2007). Another issue was that there were teachers fearful that the data generated from the assessments might be used in the evaluation process. One site administrator noted:

> Referring to common assessments, you've got some people who were not going to get on board. They will say things like "Does the district mandate us to do this? I'm not going to do anything unless the district mandates it." They respond this way because they feel that it's going to be used as an evaluation tool. (Site administrator focus group, May 2007)

Teachers also commented on the challenges presented within the departments when the assessments are not mandated. Some teachers felt that it might be easier if

administrators stepped in to direct teachers to give the tests. One teacher described the

complexity of implementing common assessments:

> I mean, they won't confront you, they won't say, "I'm not going do this,"
> you know, but they just won't do it and so you have those type of people.
> And then the other people will flat out say, "I'm just not doing this… I'm
> not giving the common assessment for these reasons." You're going, ok, I
> mean, because really, at that point as a teacher, and some people have, you
> know, gotten upset and said, "Yes you will!" and there's this fight and,
> you know, you try to calm those people down. You say, it's not our job,
> we're just teachers. If the administration wants to step in and somehow
> coerce this person then that's great, but, you know, fighting amongst
> ourselves is just wasting a lot of time. You probably won't ever be able to
> convince these people by yelling at them. (Teacher interview, July 2007)

Throughout the 2006-07 school year, the district office discussed the need to develop

district-wide common assessments in core content areas. At a mid-year principal meeting,

the principals offered their support for moving in that direction. The district office staff

thought that history/social science was the best place to begin the work since the teachers

of that subject had just completed their new adoption. The project became part of the

district goals for 2007-08.

Use of Data as an Instructional Reform Practice

With the advent of state and federal accountability, not only access to but

understanding data was identified as a need in the district. Annually, the district goals as

well as the District Goals Progress Report described the activities the district office

undertook to support the use of data. For example in 2003-04 the goals document

indicated one use for data as, "[i]dentify trends in progress of all students and significant

subgroups in meeting district and NCLB goals to help establish professional development

goals." (District Goals 2003-04). Table 4.8 shows the major district initiated reform

events associated with the use of data.

Table 4.8:
Sun Valley High School District's Major District Use of Data Events Targeted at Instructional Practice Reform

Year	Event	Description
2002-03	Jim Cox Workshop	Jim Cox presented 2 days of training for site and district administrators and teachers leaders to analyze district STAR[5] data
	PSAT	College Board partnership All 10th grade students take PSAT
	District Goals and Benchmarks	Presentation to board of trustees on the student achievement benchmarks established in the District Goals
2003-04	District Goals and Benchmarks	Presentation to board of trustees on the student achievement benchmarks established in the district goals
	Jim Cox Workshop	Jim Cox presented 3 separate half-day trainings at each comprehensive site on analyzing STAR data
	Edusoft	District purchased Edusoft and provides training
2004-05	District Goals and Benchmarks	Presentation to board of trustees on the student achievement benchmarks established in the district goals. Individual school data provided to each site.
	Classroom Assessment for Student Achievement	Richard Stiggins workshop on writing formative assessments and using the data to improve student achievement
	Edusoft	District office offers additional training on the use of Edusoft
2005-06	District Goals and Benchmarks	Presentation to board of trustees on the student achievement benchmarks established in the district goals. Individual school data provided to each site.
	Edusoft Best Practices	Full day workshop on Edusoft to share best practices and develop strategies for future training
2006-07	District Goals and Benchmarks	Presentation to board of trustees on the student achievement benchmarks established in the district goals. Individual school data provided to each site.
	Edusoft Advocates	District office provides additional fiscal support to pay a stipend to two teachers per site to support Edusoft training and use on campus

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[5] STAR is an acronym for Standardized Testing and Reporting

Table 4.8:
Sun Valley High School District's Major District Use of Data Events Targeted at Instructional Practice Reform, Continued

Year	Event	Description
	SMART[6] Goals Data Retreat Aurora, CO	Site and district administrators, along with teachers leaders attended three-day workshop on analyzing data and developing goals targeted at student achievement
	SMART Goals minimum days	2 minimum days on data analysis, writing improvement goals, and implementing instructional practices to support goal attainment

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[6] SMART is an acronym for specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely.

Accessing the data. The district office wanted to find a way to help all teachers monitor individual student progress towards mastery of the standards. In 2001-02, the district purchased EDMIN, a computer-based program that allowed teachers and administrators to aggregated and disaggregate STAR and CAHSEE data. Unfortunately, the program was fraught with problems, and after 2 years, the district ended the contract. The 2003-04 district goals spoke of the need to find a better system. The document stated the following objective for one of the goals, "[i]mplement a data management system that allows tracking of cohort data and disaggregation of data by school, grade level, ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic status" (District Goals, 2003-04). Based on the API score, Sun Valley High School became an II/USP school during the same time period. The school chose to pilot Edusoft, which provided teachers access to the same state assessment information as EDMIN. In addition, Edusoft allowed teachers to monitor student progress on teacher developed, course specific standards-aligned assessments. Mr. Norris explained the value Edusoft brought to the district:

> To me Edusoft is key. Because it provides what EDMIN didn't, which are timely and accurate results so that teachers can see the impact of their instructional practices or changes in instructional practices on actual learning within the classroom. This provides opportunities for teachers to meet collaboratively to discuss establishing SMART Goals on a uniform basis. (Current superintendent interview, April 2007)

Before the purchase of EDMIN or Edusoft, the simplest way for site administrators and teachers to obtain data was through the district office, and more specifically, the person in charge of data management, Arturo Aguirre. Aguirre was responsible for maintaining the student information system. He was also the person

whom administrators and teachers would work with to get specific student assessment

and grade reports. One Educational Services director attested:

> You show teachers and announce what was exciting about that data. Look
> at where we focused our time and look at the growth that we've seen. So
> we've had a lot a good direction from Elizabeth, and we have a master
> Arturo who takes care of our data and we can make meaning of it and
> celebrate the successes so that they see our efforts. (Educational Services
> director focus group, May 2007)

The District Goals Progress Report in 2002-03 reflected that data requests were

coordinated through Arturo Aguirre. Reports were often generalized to make them meet

the needs of each site. Based on direction from both the district office and school sites, he

was responsible for developing and distributing regular reports regarding student

progress. For example, he provided site administrators and English Language

Development teachers and administrators with information about student progress on

multiple measures, which were used to determine redesignation. Aguirre also provided

English Learner and Special Education teachers' longitudinal strand data on student

progress on the CAHSEE. In 2003-04, the District Goals Progress Report noted, "Special

Education teachers were provided with a notebook of all of the assessments and grade

data for students on their caseload. Teachers were able to review the data to work on

specific skill areas for individual students" (District Goals Progress Report, 2003-04).

Though Edusoft was available, not everyone took advantage of it. Aguirre still

received a variety of data requests. Several administrators noted that not all teachers had

taken advantage of the available training; therefore, they could not access the data. The

district office implemented a strategy to help build capacity in accessing data. Rather than

providing all the data requested, Aguirre directed teachers and administrators to where it

was in Edusoft first; if they could not get the data they needed there, he supplied the necessary reports.

Another challenge associated with the use of Edusoft was the lack of reliable technology. Teachers were reluctant to depend on the technology when it was not dependable. One teacher commented on an evaluation form, "Make Edusoft work or get something else. We need a Teacher on Special Assignment to help with the implementation, resources, and coordination of teams." (Teacher feedback, 2005-06) A site administrator reinforced this frustration with the observation:

> Because they get boxed into the technology itself, and if they are not computer literate person, if they don't have a lot of luck of getting online and doing those things then Edusoft never becomes a useful tool for them. (Site administrator focus group, May 2007)

Using the data. The purchase of Edusoft allowed data to be used in a variety of ways. Using various strategies, teachers and administrators were provided training on accessing and using data. After 2 years of purchasing the software, the 2004-05 District Goals Progress Report affirmed, "Information about accessing various Edusoft reports have been provided and demonstrated to teachers in the four core content areas during district Professional Development days as well as in Tier I and Tier II instructional strategies trainings" (District Goals Progress Report, 2004-05). In an interview, a teacher observed:

> I think that for a small amount of teachers on campus Edusoft has been a real valuable tool for them. I think that they are able. I know speaking personally, what I have been able to do is to tweak edges off so that I can use it to assess my Advanced Placement kids prior to the exam. So I can pinpoint and find areas where they are deficient in order to target those prior to the exam and hopefully kind of give the last minute teaching. I think that on a small scale that has been a success for us. (Teacher interview, June 2007)

Yet, teachers and administrators recognized that there was not buy in from everyone to use Edusoft. They noted that there was still a perception that it was the district office's responsibility to provide the achievement data. Many indicated that it might be better if there had been a mandate from the district regarding Edusoft's use.

Another use of data was connected to the district office's attention to content area reading strategies. Teachers maintained that district-wide there had been a consistent thread of examining student achievement data and then looking at the associated instructional practices, specifically in terms of literacy. Starting in 2003-04, at the beginning of each year all content area teachers were provided with grade-level English Language Arts CST strand data in word analysis, and vocabulary, reading comprehension, and literary analysis. This data, as summarized in Table 4.9, was used as one measure to monitor growth student achievement in reading.

Table 4.9:
Sun Valley High School District's California Standards Test English Language Arts Strand Data

	Grade 9		Grade 10		Grade 11	
Strand	2003	2007	2003	2007	2003	2007
Word analysis and vocabulary development	52.5	58.8	55.0	63.8	63.8	63.8
Reading Comprehension	57.8	62.2	53.3	58.3	61.6	55.3
Literary Analysis	55.0	63.8	51.2	56.2	48.2	54.1

One district office administrator explained:

> Teachers saying they are not a reading teacher, non-English teachers thinking they don't know how to teach reading. Or it's not their job to teach reading, and I think they've made some major changes because Elizabeth is such a leader with data collection and analyzing. (Site administrator focus group, May 2007)

In general, teachers and administrators reported an increase in the use of data. For

example, teachers reflected on the use of data to evaluate the Advanced Placement

program, for example,

> We look at who's taking the AP classes, how many kids are starting in
> ninth grade and actually making it to AP, and so that helps us with, not
> only what we do in the classroom, but also with our scheduling." (Teacher
> Interview, July 2007)

Another instance was how site staff shared assessment results with students. For the last

four years, the district office provided the sites individual student charts with up to three

years of STAR results. Students then set personal goals for the upcoming tests. Sites have

found a variety of ways to recognize the students who have increased achievement on the

tests.

Teachers and site administrators remarked about the increase in the amount of

data reported at the site level. Over the past 5 years, principals have increased the number

of times that they shared and discussed data with individual teachers, departments, and

leadership teams, as well as the entire staff. One teacher discussed how the reported data

were used to support student achievement:

> Here's our number, here is what this means. I feel that that has sort of
> driven some of the different strategies that departments are using.
> Definitely, their focus is more on the scores that need to go up. We
> recognize that certain groups of students need to be helped more. I think
> we used CAHSEE [California High School Exit Exam] results and
> specifically talked to the kids to say, "Look this is where you are, just this
> much will make a difference." So I think even the communication with
> that with the student a lot more a proactive and really using the data.
> (Teacher interview, June 2007)

Another example of how the district office used data to support student

achievement started in 2006-07. In the early fall, the district office organized a minimum

day for sites to write SMART goals based on the analysis of STAR data. Each site was provided longitudinal site and grade-specific STAR data. Departments were then asked to reflect on the success shown in the data and share the strategies they used to achieve these results. They were also asked to identify areas for growth, set a growth target, and then collaborate on strategies that they should use to achieve these results. In March, there was another minimum day where teachers shared the instructional practices that had been implemented during the school year. Furthermore, they discussed what still needed to be done before administering the spring STAR assessment. It was noted that the agenda for the two minimum days was designed using the meeting model that had been taught in the 2005-06 not-so-successful Schmoker presentation. In September of 2007, teachers were provided another minimum day in which they compared the test results with their growth targets. They celebrated successes and reflected on areas in need of further development. They also set new growth targets for the coming year.

Although the use of data increased during this time period, there were issues that confronted site and district staff. Getting and keeping buy-in from all teachers was noted as an ongoing issue. Some teachers still struggled with what the student achievement data meant and how to use it to inform instruction. It was suggested that the district office offer further professional development in this area. Teachers and administrators also reported that they did not have regular time to make meaning of all the available data, which limited the use of the data.

The Sun Valley High School District employed three main strategies (professional development, standards alignment, and use of data) to change instructional practices in hopes of improving student achievement. As described in this section, the district office

initiated efforts that were either new practices or changes in practices already in place. The next section describes the findings regarding how site-level strategies changed in relationship to the implementation of the instructional practice reform efforts.

How do high school district office practices change school level strategies targeted at instructional practices?

By their very nature, the district office instructional practice reform efforts triggered changes in site level instructional practice. Changes in practice at the school-level were attributed to the district office's three major instructional reform strategies: professional development, standards alignment, and use of data. Site teachers and administrators pointed out particular examples such as the increased use of data, the development of common formative assessments, and the selection of power standards as changes directly related to reform efforts. Along with the data from interviews and focus group questions targeted specifically at this research question, the data gathered to answer the primary research question also provided insights into site-level changes. In this section, rather than repeating the information, references will be made to the findings in the previous section.

Relationship between Site and District Goals

The district goal documents were written annually by district office staff. The documents included Sun Valley's major instructional practice reform efforts. Regardless of the exact phrasing, the documents focused each year on two major areas: improvement in student achievement and professional development. Annually, the progress report documents detailed progress on the academic benchmarks, and after a few years, each school also received the data disaggregated for their own site. Site goals were written as

part of the WASC and Single School Plan processes. Each site reported that WASC goals were developed by site focus groups and leadership teams, while Single School Plan goals were taken from the WASC goals and fine-tuned to meet the requirements of this compliance document. Nonetheless, the goals for both WASC Action Plans and Single School Plans resulted from needs assessments, which included reviewing student achievement data.

At first, the district goals were loosely related to individual school goals as reflected in their WASC reports or Single School Plans. The former superintendent commented that he did not recall having specific conversations with principals about making the reports and plans congruent. Rather he recollected initially telling the principals, "If you can make them [goals] fit, that's great" (Former superintendent interview, July 2007). He specifically remembered meeting with one school's leadership team regarding WASC recommendations. The team was concerned that WASC was asking them to focus on six or seven areas, only one of which was improving student achievement. Dr. Harris told them, "You have my permission to focus on that and let the others go. If WASC as a problem with that then you could just tell them that was my suggestion, if there's fallout on that I'll take that one" (Former superintendent interview, July 2007).

All site administrative teams and most teachers recognized some connection between site and district goals. They reported that the goals from the WASC reports written during the 2004-05 school year were specifically aligned with the district goals as seen in Table 4.10. Site administrators also commented that district goals and WASC goals were directly embedded annually into schools' Single Site Plans "It was a very

conscious effort to have that alignment. It wasn't difficult to have that alignment because

they were all based on data" (Site administrator focus group, May 2007). Another

connection between the goals was made by referencing the use of data to develop goals:

> I think there's been a change. There have been teachers at our site with an
> expectation that they use data, not just go on based on a whim. But there
> was a need to have some basis for the things that we do. (Site
> administrator focus group, May 2007)

Teachers responded in a similar manner. For example, one teacher noted:

> Definitely, I mean, just from what we've been talking about, the district
> desire to have us look at the student data, to you know, to use the research
> to improve what we do. I think that connects directly with our site goals.
> (Teacher interview, May 2007)

Table 4.10:
Presence of Sun Valley High School District Goals in 2004-05 High School WASC Plans

2004-05 District goals addressed in WASC Plans	Sun Valley	Lemon Grove	La Paloma
1) Improve the academic achievement of all students			
a) Achieve annual benchmarks	Yes	Yes	Yes
b) Use data to make informed decisions regarding instructional programs	Yes	Yes	Yes
c) Develop and implement a plan for use of categorical funding to provide support services and special programs	Yes	Yes	No
d) Examine potential changes in practice ad policy to raise academic performance of students	Yes	Yes	Yes
e) Provide a guaranteed and viable curriculum to all students	Yes	No	Yes

Table 4.10:
Presence of Sun Valley High School District Goals in 2004-05 High School WASC Plans, Continued

2004-05 District goals addressed in WASC Plans	Sun Valley	Lemon Grove	La Paloma
2) Provide professional development activities that will positively affect instruction and learning			
a) Provide professional development which focuses on lesson design using a variety of instructional strategies and examining student data to plan instruction	Yes	Yes	Yes

Nonetheless, there were misgivings associated with the relationship between site and district goals. A few teachers remarked that the only time they heard references to the district goals was at the beginning of the year, exemplified by a teacher's comment,

> We have the superintendent or someone come in and show us the district goals and then we don't hear or see anything about that until, maybe, the end of the year when, miraculously, they've gone back to the board and created their new goals for the following year. (Teacher interview, May 2007)

Additionally, those teachers no longer directly involved in a leadership position pointed out that they were not as well informed regarding the specific district goals: "So then you've got a good idea of what the district goals are. But really, right now, since I've been out of it, I don't really know what the district goals are" (Teacher interview, May 2007). Still, a few teachers reported that they saw more connection between the work at their site and their site goals than the connection with district goals as reflected in this teacher comment:

> You know, we make up goals within our departments each year of what we want to accomplish and some, some of those come from our WASC

> Action Plans and the goals we set there. That is more of a force here at
> Lemon Grove than the district goals are. (Teacher interview, May 2007)

Site-level Changes

  Working with other schools. As referenced in the data collected for the first

research question, the district office strategies targeted at instructional practice reform

were noted by teachers and site administrators as the catalyst for some changes that had

taken place at the three high schools. Some of practices associated with the district-

initiated reform efforts continued or sparked the implementation of new practices at

school sites. As documented previously, prior to the reform efforts, sites operated in

isolation. Very little collaboration took place among the three comprehensive high

schools. One of the site-level changes observed by site and district staff was the increased

collaboration between teachers from the three sites. During the period of district-initiated

reform, teachers became more willing to come together to share ideas and best practices.

One teacher explained, "We've gotten to the point where teachers don't feel like if I stand

in front of my colleagues I'm going get shot. So they're willing to put themselves out of

there" (Teacher interview, June 2007). In interviews, almost all teachers responded that

they appreciated the opportunities provided for collaboration regarding curriculum and

instructional practices.

  As described in the first research question in the section on district-wide

professional development, almost all of the evaluation forms from district-wide

professional development days contained positive comments about the opportunity to

work with teachers from other sites. When the evaluation forms asked teachers what they

valued and what they wanted to continue they responded that they appreciated being

together as illustrated by: "Fellow teachers sharing activity ideas that worked for them

and incorporated all students; Meeting with people and working with the CAHSEE; and

Continue to set aside major blocks of time to work collaboratively" (Teacher evaluation

forms, 2004-05 and 2005-06). When asked what the district office could do to support

sites, comments such as the following reflected the importance teachers found in the

opportunity to collaborate:

> The other one would be to continue to allow us to meet in our
> departments, as we have done. Allowing the Social Science departments at
> all of the sites to get together and to share instructional practices and the
> different kinds of resources and assignments that have worked for
> different people, for Advanced Placement, for World History, for U.S.
> History, for whatever courses, and allowing that to happen. Teachers are
> very willing to share. (Teacher interview, June 2007)

Professional development. In the same way that the district office instructional

practice reform efforts changed the interaction between teachers at different sites, the

reform efforts caused individual site practices to change as well. As described in the first

research question in the section on challenges to professional development, school sites

had relatively little site professional development time to continue working on the

strategies learned during professional development days. Nevertheless, one change in

site- level practice that site administrators and teachers recognized was that they used the

time they had to continue the efforts of the district office: "We make a very concerted

effort to have it piggyback on some of the things that we're doing in the district, so there

is a consistency and access to professional development services" (Site administrator

focus group, May 2007). Teachers spoke about spending professional development time

working on site goals, which came from their WASC plans. The activities included

developing power standards, talking about best practices, and examining student

achievement data. One teacher described the relationship as follows:

> The WASC process has really gotten us to focus on instructional practice and strategies as well as the alignment of curriculum. So, the WASC process has, has been a very positive thing for us over all. Coupled with that would be a degree of leadership from the district office and some of the trainings that we have had. (Teacher interview, May 2007)

A case in point of site-level change in practice was found at La Paloma, the high school that had been able to realign its bell schedule to allow weekly time to collaborate. Teachers and administrators referred to the impact attending the conference on What Works in Schools had on their site professional development practices. As shown in Table 4.2, the district office sent a team of 22 district and site administrators and teachers to a conference sponsored by the Association of Curriculum Development and Supervision on the practices described in Marzano et al.'s (2003) What Works in Schools. The site team returned from the conference and developed an implementation plan as expressed in this comment:

> For the What Works in Schools conference, where a number of staff from each site was sent, as the team, to Texas for the ACSD [Association of Curriculum Development and Supervision] conference. The strategies we learned there about Classroom Instruction That Works were brought back to the site. Then we made a site decision as to which strategies we were going to focus on rather than learning all the different ones in 1year. (Teacher interview, July 2007)

Another example of a site-level change in practice came about through in the implementation of classroom practices learned on the district-wide professional development days as well as those learned in Tier I and Tier II. As discussed in the previous section on professional development plans, teachers talked about the positive classroom impact of the trainings. After completing Tier II, one of the participant's comments particularly stood out regarding how the training has changed classroom practice:

> I've had multiple successes utilizing tools I've learned in CITW. In the future, I plan to continue to utilize the 10 questions that should be considered when lesson planning. I'm also making it a goal of mine to utilize the 6 step vocabulary instruction model as part of my classroom routine for introducing new vocabulary terms. (Teacher evaluation forms, 2005-06).

When asked about the site-level changes resulting from district office instructional practice strategies a veteran teacher offered this opinion:

> I think that the delivery in classrooms is different. I think there is a better understanding of techniques that work with the student body—with young people today. They're all really different from what they used to be. I think delivery has changed as a result of this. I think the teachers are more knowledgeable about their fields has a result of stuff the district has tried to do for teachers. (Teacher interview, August 2007)

> The district office also recognized that a relationship had developed between the professional development being done at the site and the goals and the direction of the district office. One Educational Services director pointed out:

> One of the goals of professional development is to have it on site. Even though there are common areas, the sites are all at different spots and the content areas at each school are in different spots, too. But, it's always good to use their recommendations because that's their voice. (Educational Services directors, focus group, May 2007)

As previously addressed in the section on challenges to professional development, the district office administrators also acknowledged the need to find more time for site staff to work in professional learning communities. The superintendent and assistant superintendent of Human Resources remarked that working with the teacher's union to find a solution would be a priority in upcoming negotiations. One site administrator summarized the need for links between the site and district professional development as, "Because I believe, for me if we're not all headed in the right direction we're all going to

end up going different place and pointing the finger at each other" (Site administrator focus group, May 2007).

   Standards alignment. The district office's focus on standards alignment also influenced changes at school sites. Math, English, and Social Science teachers at each high school described how they came together during the afternoons of the district-wide professional development days or at other time that had been carved out to fine-tune the curriculum and determine power standards or essential learnings:

> With the successes here at this site, getting together in site teams mainly through departments we've been able to actively put together a Scope and Sequence from grade level to grade level and have the time to collaborate among the different levels to make sure it flows. And from there as an ELD teacher I was able to use what was coming out of those meetings to Scope and Sequence my ELD courses. (Teacher interview, May 2007)

Site WASC Action Plans included the steps departments were to take to ensure that students were being taught rigorous, standards-aligned curriculum:

> As a result of creating some pretty solid WASC goals and our action plan, even though it was a large action plan, it did focus us, focus us on some very important things in the classroom. The first was to take your curriculum, well, to take the state standards, and to align them correctly with the curriculum. And we participated in that. In fact, we turned that into what we call Essential Learnings. So, for each of our units of study in all of our courses we began creating Essential Learnings. (Teacher interview, May 2007)

   In addition as noted in Table 4.7, certain departments then wrote common assessments based on the work they had been doing with the adopted standards-aligned curriculum. One teacher explained the impact of this alignment work at her site, "Since this is my 9th year here, that's been the number one best thing that's happened in English." (Teacher interview, May 2007). When teachers were asked about changes in

site-level practices, the following response exemplifies how the standards alignment

process altered departmental practices:

> But we also do it independently as the Foreign Language Department,
> We've sat down, we've discussed what we're doing in our rooms and how
> that aligns with the state standards, and, you know, the best practices, and
> of course, as teachers we like to say, "What are you doing, what works,
> what doesn't work." So we make it more practical, but it's certainly
> standards driven nowadays." (Teacher interview, July 2007)

> Even so, there were doubts about the standards alignment work at the site level.

First, regardless of the instructional practice reform, teachers and administrators

acknowledged that not everyone engaged in the reform. One site administrator recounted,

> And you know, someone that's been teaching the same lesson forever,
> only it's not as tested. So, they have to cut it out, but it is their favorite
> thing to do. You know, some are having a hard time doing that. (Site
> administrator focus group, May 2007)

At each site, there were teachers who remarked that the lack of administrator monitoring

made it difficult to fully implement the instructional practices: "We evaluate essential

learnings for each course each year, but then trust each other to teach them. We also have

informal ongoing discussions of English Learner's during year as we teach the units. No

one directly checks" (Teacher evaluation form, 2004-05).

Another difficulty associated with implementing changes at the site level was the

lack of district office mandates for common assessments. As previously discussed in the

first research question section on standards and assessment, teachers and site

administrators discussed the significance that such a mandate might have at the site level.

One site administrator expressed it as:

> We've been having conversations trying to show people the real purpose
> of it is to help students and improve their scores. But I think if it does
> come down that this is the district expectation, that you guys are going to

have common assessments it will help us get over the next hurdle. (Site administrator focus group, May 2007)

Use of data. The district office's use of data was one of the original components of Sun Valley's instructional practice reform efforts and was continued to varying levels at each of the high schools. As previously noted in the data collected for the first research question in the section on the using data, the strategies included (a) providing training on Edusoft and data interpretation, (b) providing access to a variety of data sources, and (c) presenting opportunities to use data to guide instructional practice. For example, more than one teacher reported that as a department they had begun to use state assessment data to direct conversations on the subject of instructional practice: "There is evidence of progress, and when we get the results back we do take time to look at the results and figure out what we did right and what we did wrong and make changes." (Teacher interview, May 2007) Although teachers in departments with common assessments talked about the use of Edusoft to score tests and prepare the data analysis reports, they believed that not all teachers still made use of this resource.

According to several teachers, site-level use of data depended upon the principal. For example, a few teachers from one site discussed that the former principal shared data at almost every staff meeting and asked the teachers for their thoughts and ideas regarding what the data meant. When the principalship changed, so did this practice. As one teacher explained:

> I mean he [former principal] just used to put it [data] on the overhead and be like "OK here's kind of like what I'm seeing. Do you see that too? This is what it means for us and this is why we need to work on this."… But I guess it was discouraging to me to have our principal say, "Well our test scores went down, but you guys don't really worry about it because you

know the targets always moving and the test criteria has changed so that's
probably what it is." (Teacher interview, May 2007)

Other teachers reported that the principal regularly talked about data and provided data to

teachers. He was developing the expectation that teachers use data to make instructional

decisions:

> Dominick is a big, he's pro, you know, a numbers pro, I say that in a
> positive way. I'm not saying that in a negative way, but I mean he's
> certainly data driven. I hadn't even looked at that stuff outside of my
> coursework for my doctoral program. I don't remember ever looking at
> any of that stuff . . . in my first 8 years. We never even talked about it. I
> think that's kind of a left-over from the old days. You know, that's what
> you all did at the district office. We do the teaching, you do the number
> crunching up there, you know what I mean. And now, we are all doing it
> together which is much better. (Teacher interview, July 2007)

> Nonetheless, most teachers acknowledged the changes in conversation at staff and

department meetings. For instance:

> Yeah, department meetings tended to be nuts and bolts for a long time,
> through most of the nineties it was the nuts and bolts. It was, you know,
> "Do we have the materials we need?" It was more of equipping the
> teachers with the material things that we needed to do what we wanted to
> do . . . I think a natural progression, whether it be intended or not, but it
> was certainly our reaction to the whole idea of API came to be, we wanted
> to measure what students were learning. We weren't forced to have those
> kinds of conversations, we just had them. (Site teacher, July 2007)

As well, the school-wide focus on improving student achievement included conversations

regarding student progress. Consider as an illustration this teacher's description of how

the use of data became a school-wide effort:

> I think there's been an increase in the use of data and certainly in the end
> an increase in the reporting of data between the staff. Here's our number,
> here is what this means. I feel that that's sort of driven some of the
> different strategies that departments are using. You know, definitely their
> focus is if the scores need to go up, so this group needs to be helped more.
> I think we even used CAHSEE [California High School Exit Exam]
> results and specifically talk to the kids to say, "Look this is where you are.

Just this will make a difference." So I think even communicating that with the student is a lot more a proactive and really using the data. (Teacher interview, June 2007)

District-level Changes

Along with changes at the site level, there were recognized changes in practice at the district-level as well. Over the period of the study, the district office engaged in system alignment in order to facilitate the instructional practice reform efforts. The district goals stated that Sun Valley would "[e]xamine potential changes in practice and policy to raise academic performance of students" (District Goals, 2004-05). For example, the goals documents presented that budget allocations would align with the reform efforts. This included maximizing categorical funding to support the educational programs and increasing the funds dedicated for professional development. A case in point is Table 4.3, which displays the amount expended by the district office on conference attendance that aligned with the district goals. Further, the district office provided the sites necessary resources, including data and release time to further the reform efforts. One site administrator summarized the systemic alignment as:

> We've had district staff development. One of the things that's been an issue for me is that many times in many districts when you're working on the same thing or similar things and everyone throws this money out and there's no support. And what were getting is support at the site. And that was an issue that we realized it had to be changed at the site, and then the district realized it. So all of us were working together towards the same goal. Towards dealing with that issue of instruction or dealing with the issue that you're talking about with algebra or the issue with regards to vocabulary or reading. All those sorts of things. So it's been very focused and that's been key to our success. (Site administrator focus group, May 2007)

As a result of the reform efforts, district office administrators observed that they also changed their practices. For example, the Educational Services directors commented

on how they had come to work more as a unit, rather than separate divisions, as they had done in the past. They also observed that the DSC had to treat the sites differently than they had in the past. For instance, the directors pointed out that to support the growing collaboration across the district, the district office had to ensure that teachers from all sites were included in instructional practice reform efforts, such as curriculum writing, not just those teachers willing to participate. District office staff reflected on the increased interactions between the sites: "I think it's almost shocking to find out how different the schools evolved. Especially with the high level, now, of collaboration across departments, I think that has made a big difference, because they shared practices that weren't occurring before" (Educational Services directors, focus group, May 2007). One example of an outcome from this change in practice is found in this teacher's comment expressing the value of collaboration between the sites:

> The other one [support] would be continue to allow us to meet as, in our departments, as we have done. Allowing the Social Science departments at all of the sites to get together and to share the instructional practices and the different kinds of resources and assignments that have worked for different people; for AP, for World, for U.S., for whatever courses, and allowing that to happen. (Teacher interview, May 2007)

All three site administrative team observed that site-initiated reform efforts influenced practices at the district-level:

> I think some of the ideas got sparked at the district-level, and also some of it was sparked at the site and was taken on to the district-level. I think that some of the things that we're doing here at La Paloma and Sun Valley sparked discussion and staff development on the district-level." (Site administrator focus group, May 2007)

> Although the district office was responsible for the district-wide implementation

of the instructional practice reform, the school sites initiated and implemented changes in

instructional practices. The sites experienced changes in how they practiced professional development, standards alignment, and use of data. As discussed earlier in this section, one of the changes was in how the sites interacted with each other. The next section discusses the interactions between site and district personnel during the period of reform.

What are the interactions between district office and site personnel during the period of reform?

As previously mentioned, the data collected to answer the primary research question also provided information regarding the interactions that occurred between the district office and site personnel. The nature of the instructional practice reform efforts required the district office to interact with staff at the school sites in a variety of ways. In reference to the first research question, the section on the district office approach to instructional practice reform describes the perceptions about the top-down and collaborative interactions between the district office and school sites. The section below further details interactions that occurred during the instructional practice reform efforts discussed throughout the finding for the primary research question.

Opportunities for Interaction

The district office engaged with the school site personnel in multiple ways during the period of reform. One of the strategies designed to develop relationships and increase collaboration was that of district office administrators attending major conferences as well as workshops with site administrators and teachers as denoted on Table 4.2. The district office administrators said that they believed this helped build collegiality and a common sense of purpose. In the conferences and workshops that focused on reading,

this led to site staff working with district office administrators to provide professional

development during district-wide professional development days:

> We took teachers to study Teaching Reading in the Content Areas
> (Billmeyer & Barton, 1998) to McREL in Denver. Along with
> administrators, teachers made a plan there. We could have done that
> without taking 23 teachers, but that 23 people went and made a plan and
> that became the agenda for our district-wide professional development
> days for 3 years with teacher leaders and site and district administrators
> leading content groups. (Educational Services directors focus group, May
> 2007)

As well, administrators at all three sites echoed the positive impact that this strategy had

on bringing teachers and administrators together to work on a common goal, such as

improving content literacy.

Increased engagement and collaboration was also viewed as an outcome of

initiatives such as aligning the curriculum to the standards. The progress report on district

goals annually gave an account of the content areas in which curriculum revisions had

taken place. The curriculum revision and adoption process provided opportunities for site

teachers and administrators to work with district administrators on the standards

alignment process:

> We have a structure for Subject Area Committees. They get together once
> a month and have conversations about practice. And my experience is that
> a number of conversations have happened in those SAC [Subject Area
> Committees] meetings, which led the district office staff to use their
> resources and their time to pursue staff development in those areas, to
> pursue initiatives in those areas. (Site administrator focus group, May
> 2007)

An Educational Services director also commented that the professional development and

the standards movement provided the likelihood for more teachers and administrators

interact: "I mean in all kinds of things. I think there are opportunities for teacher and

administrator participation and site administrator participation." (Educational Services

directors' focus group, May 2007)

An example of collaboration and engagement between the district office staff and

sites resulted from the change in the level of support given to school sites. Many teachers

talked about feeling supported because they could call or e-mail any Educational Services

director with a request or question and they would get a response. Site administrators

discussed the increased level of responsiveness from the district office as they worked

together to meet district goals. One site administrator explained:

> I would say that I've found the past 4 years, 5 years the district offices are
> more supportive and responsive to the sites than they had been previously.
> We have a greater collaboration between the sites then there hat has ever
> been. If I need a question answered, somebody will help me out and that's
> not always the way it was. (Site administrator focus group, May 2007)

One teacher expressed the change in interactions with the district office as follows:

> I don't have any fear of asking and being made to feel like I'm stupid
> because I don't know the answer. I don't feel that at all in the any
> department. I think all the directors are that way and that's you know
> that's a great support and they genuinely care. (Teacher interview, May
> 2007)

The assistant superintendent of human resources, who was Sun Valley High School's

principal at the time, remarked that much of the school's academic improvement could be

attributed to the support provided by the district office.

Another example of collaboration and engagement with the district office was

offered by teachers and administrators at Sun Valley High School. They discussed the

high level of support and involvement that was provided to their site when they were

identified as an II/USP school. One of the Educational Services directors was designated

to be their internal evaluator, and responsible for supporting Sun Valley in writing and

implementing their II/USP plan. Sun Valley High School District was one of the few

districts in the state not to hire external consultants for this process. The director was on

campus regularly working with teachers and administrators to examine student

achievement data and discuss instructional practices to develop a research-based

improvement plan. One particularly involved teacher in the II/USP process stated:

> Well, I don't know if you count it as the district or not, but the way
> Elizabeth came to lead the IIUSP. Through the research she brought, the
> work that she did planning with the teachers and administration here at the
> site. I mean if that was a district provided effort that was huge, very much
> appreciated, and very beneficial. (Site teacher interview, May 2007

> Nonetheless, not all interactions between the district office and school sites led to

engagement or collaboration. One teacher summarized the challenges associated with

district office and site relationships as follows:

> I think if we could spend more time together professionally then you'd
> break down these, these, these perceptions and find out whether the
> perception is accurate or not. If you can break down false perceptions, you
> have a much better chance at accomplishing things, if you're really
> interested in working together to accomplish it. (Site teacher interview,
> May 2007)

Site staff also observed that the change in superintendents has altered the interactions

between the district office and sites. Teachers and administrators mentioned the number

of times that Dr. Harris had been seen on campus, compared to the times the current

superintendent has been seen: "Now, we rarely see the superintendent unless there's

something going on at the site" (Site administrator focus group, May 2007). This

teacher's statement synthesizes the positive interactions, while recognizing the remaining

challenges remaining:

> A lot of feedback was given, and it's been very appreciated. I think, right
> now the most frustrating thing for staff as it relates to and, again, I don't

even know if its just related to the. . . the disconnect between district and site right now, I believe, is more of a function of frequency in which the groups get together. (Site teacher interview, July 2007)

Avenues for Communication

The early district goals documents addressed the subject of communication. For example, in 2002-03, the document articulated that one of the goals was to "[i]mprove internal communications within the district" (District Goals, 2002-03). The document reported that the district office believed that open communication was essential to the functioning of the organization. Further, the document stated that a high level of communication fostered the trust and cooperation necessary to accomplish the goals of the district. One site administrator shared his thoughts about the importance of district office communication:

> And I can only speak for the 4 years I have been here. But, my first at least 2 years in this district that was very key. That we communicated. I was allowed to run my school and supported in that and there was great communication between me and all the parties that were involved in the district office. (Site administrator focus group, May 2007)

The district office's accessibility and responsiveness may have influenced site staffs' perception concerning communication as reflected on one hand by:

> He [Dr. Harris] was the best listener in the world. Anybody from the custodian to the Advanced Placement teacher to 1st year teacher felt comfortable. They could go talk to him. That's not the feeling now. The feeling of staff is that he has his mind made up already and he's not a good listener. And that's and that's 180 degrees from what we had before." (Site administrator focus group, May 2007)

On the other hand, another site administrator remarked of district office staff, "I feel like I can pick up the telephone or e-mail at any time, and I will get an answer to my question. And if I don't get an answer, I'll get 'I'll find out for you'" (Site administrative focus

group, May 2007). Almost all teachers responded that they felt as if they knew who they needed to communicate with at the district office regarding instructional practices and received responses when they initiated communication.

Teachers and administrators described two ways that communication usually took place between the district office and site. The first method was explained as when the district office staff communicated directly with the principal, who in turn gave the information to department chairs or teacher leaders, whose responsibility it was to share the information with other department members or teachers. The second method was explained as when the district office staff communicated directly with the department chairs or teacher leaders and then asked them to directly relay information to their department members or other specified teachers. Both teachers and site administrators commented that the level and accuracy of communication often depended on the department chair or teacher leader responsible for communicating with teachers:

> Probably the best way is if you have a department chair that is doing his or her job. The best way is for the district personnel to the chairperson to staff. To some extent, it depends on who is the department chair. (Teacher interview, August 2007)

Often, district office staff directly communicated with teachers and site administrators through e-mail Information regarding upcoming curriculum meetings and professional development events was frequently conveyed by e-mail. Many teachers responded that this was the expected norm for communication as exemplified by "I think e-mail works. Personally, I love the e-mail" (Teacher interview, May 2007). However, a few teachers commented that at certain times, such as asking someone to participate in a particular activity, a phone call or a site visit would have been a better way to ask, as

represented by this teacher's comment: "I think the most effective way is a face-to-face visit, probably middle of the road is a phone call in terms of communication" (Teacher interview, June 2007).

Professional development was an area singled out as needing more communication regarding long-and short-term plans and the calendaring of events. Both teachers and site administrators remarked about the need for more timely information about scheduling, participation, and changes in professional development events. Teachers observe that sometimes there was not enough lead time before professional development events. One site administrator shared frustration about the need for information regarding when events were going to take place:

> And so, whether you accomplish that through every site having a professional development plan that's approved. Then it goes through the district, which has a professional develop plan with calendars and dates with activities, with everything that's board approved a year in advance or even a few months in advance. (Site administrator focus group, May 2007)

When asked what the district office might do to support school sites this teacher confirmed the need to communicate long-term plans:

> So being able to work on a regular basis and perhaps a really clearly laid out 1- year, 5-year, 10-year district plan that I helped make, If being people who are going to be impacted by this with clear goals to what we want to see at this point and what it will look like and what it will take. You know, to be sure we've built this long-term thing. Because there probably is one at the district office, but I don't know what it is. Another teacher summarized the lack of communication regarding planning by saying, "I'm not quite sure if there is . . . no, that sounds bad, of course there's a long-range plan. I don't know if we know what that plan is. (Teacher interview, June 2007)

The time to communicate, or rather the lack of time to communicate influenced the interactions between the district office and the sites as explained by the following

comment: "That filtering out process, I think it is not very efficient. Again largely because of the time constraints we just don't sit down and talk to each other that much" (Teacher interview, May 2007). When asked about the interactions between the sites and the district office, one teacher offered this reflection:

> I think if we could spend more time together professionally, then you'd break down these perceptions and find out whether the perception is accurate or not. If you can break down false perceptions, you have a much better chance at accomplishing things. If you're really interested in working together to accomplish it. Now, if you're not, if the district is not interested in working together to accomplish something, then just say it and go, "Here's how it's going to be done." All right, at least we know where we are. But if there is this attempt to work together, then break down those perceptions, and, and let's meet together more often even if it's in not such a formal setting. (Teacher interview, June 2007)

Finally, whatever the outcomes of district office communication were, both site administrators and teachers were concerned that the information was not put in writing as noted in the following comment: "We just had a request this morning from a teacher who said that it would be helpful to teachers and I think it would be helpful to me as well if there were more things in writing" (Site administrator focus group, May 2007). The need for written communication was endorsed by this teacher when she was asked about communication from the district office: "I'll say one other little tiny thing. Put it in writing. So many of the misunderstandings that that I've experienced over time are because whatever the decision was it wasn't in writing. So it was misinterpreted or forgotten" (Teacher interview, May 2007).

Summary

This chapter presented the context of Sun Valley High School District's instructional practice reform efforts during the 2002-03 to 2006-07 school years. The

chapter also included a discussion of the findings relative to the three research questions:

(1) How do district office strategies support or constrain the implementation of

instructional practice reform? (2) How do high school district office practices change

school level strategies targeted at instructional practices? (3) What are the interactions

between district office and site personnel during the period of reform? The discussion

throughout the chapter provided description and analysis of the results through careful

consideration of the data presented. The following chapter will summarize the study, and

then offer conclusions as well as implications for future research and practice.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

The final chapter presents a review of the study and the significant conclusions drawn from the data presented in chapter 4. The chapter begins with a brief summary of the previous chapters including an overview of the problem, a review of the methodology, and a summary of the major findings. The chapter ends with a discussion of the findings, the study's limitations, implications for practice, implications for future research, and concluding remarks.

Statement of the Problem

As described in chapter 1, in the age of NCLB, the district and individual schools are held accountable for improving the academic achievement of each student, thus compelling both to implement reforms that demonstrate measurable increases in student achievement. In effect, the changes in accountability measures have revived interest in the district office's role in educational change and reform. A study of the role of the district office in instructional practice reform is of vital importance and the importance of the district office cannot be ignored if educators are to improve achievement for all students.

Accountability measures have increased the need to find the answers to how districts as well as schools must change. Although elementary schools, and to a lesser degree middle schools, seem to be rising to the challenge of standards-based education, high schools are lagging behind. As with elementary and middle schools, teacher quality, strong curriculum, effective leaders, and rigorous processes for monitoring students affect high school student performance. Purposeful implementation of research-based strategies can support state and federal mandates to fit local contexts, create new roles for teachers,

improve student achievement, and enhance professional practice (Marsh, 2000). Although the research base is growing, more needs to be learned, specifically about instructional practice reform in high schools. Successful strategies and interactions between the school site and the district office must to be identified. Increasingly, there is a need to study the potential to increase student achievement through the role the district office plays in how a school system aligns state standards with classroom instruction and develops corresponding assessments (Elmore & Burney, 1997; Massell & Goertz, 2002; Spillane & Thompson, 1997; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Further, the research should examine the strategies put into practice by the district office and its interactions with high school sites that influence the development, implementation, and sustainability of instructional practice reform efforts (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003; Togneri & Anderson, 2003).

The major purpose of this case study was to examine the role of the district office in supporting or constraining instructional practice reform at the high school level. In relationship to the district office strategies, the study further examined changes in site-level practice and the interactions between site and district office staff during the period of reform. Instructional practice was defined in this study by three strategies: professional development, standards alignment, and use of data.

Review of the Methodology

This case study of a southern California high school district investigated how district office strategies supported or constrained the implementation of instructional practice reform. The district was purposefully selected because it had defined benchmarks for student achievement, and had shown growth on all benchmarks during

the period of time included in the study. Specifically, this descriptive case study examined the perspectives of teachers, site administrators, and district-level administrators in relationship to the district office's support or constraint of instructional practice reform during the period 2001-02 to 2006-2007.

The case study relied on four primary data sources: interviews, focus groups, field notes, and archival documents. The researcher acted as a participant observer throughout the study. The 13 teacher and two superintendent interviews took place between April and August 2007. The three site administrative team and one Educational Services focus groups took place in May 2007. Archival records were examined from April through September 2007 and field notes were taken throughout the study. The data were coded, clustered, and then analyzed. Triangulation was used with the data to increase reliability and corroborate the data gathered from the multiple sources

Summary of Findings

The data indicated that the district engaged in three instructional practice reform strategies: professional development, standards-alignment, and use of data. Within each strategy, district office practices and polices supported or constrained the instructional reform effort. The findings for the three research questions were related and helped inform the responses to each of the questions.

Research Question 1: How do district office strategies support or constrain the implementation of instructional practice reform?

Approach and direction. The data indicated that the approach taken to instructional practice reform by Sun Valley's district office was purposeful in that it provided rationale and direction and was viewed as a support in the implementation of

instructional practice reforms. The district-level leadership regularly used student achievement data, combined with top-down and collaborative approaches to the reform efforts. The district office efforts began with the recognition that students were not reading as well as they should be. In the following 4 years, the district office facilitated district-wide professional development focused on content area reading strategies, which later included work on standards-aligned curriculum as well as other research-based classroom instructional strategies. The long-term commitment to these particular reform efforts was viewed as beneficial to the goal of improving student achievement.

The district office also provided direction to the reform efforts through the annual district goals. Further, within the goals the district office established benchmarks, which were measured annually and reported in a public forum, thus focusing the instructional practice reform efforts on specific targets. Since the majority of the goals benchmarks did not change over time, this also provided consistency and continuity for the reform efforts. The district office engaged teacher and site administrators in ongoing professional development, standards alignment, and use of data in decision-making, all of which focused on increasing student achievement as determined by the benchmarks. The data also pointed out that teachers and site administrators acknowledged the considerable role the district office played in determining the direction for the specific reform efforts.

The findings indicated that the lack of accountability among teachers and administrators as well as district office mandates for implementing the instructional practice reform strategies constrained reform efforts. Specifically, teachers and administrators reported that not all teachers implemented the instructional strategies or used the data analysis tools provided through professional development. Participants also

reported that teachers did not always follow the standards-aligned curriculum. Furthermore, respondents also stated that there were no consequences for teachers who did not engage in the strategies. Some teachers felt that sometimes site administrators did not know about the instructional practices or what should be expected of teachers. Site administrators acknowledged that they were not able be in classrooms as much as they would like. Teachers at each site commented that the district office needed to create a system-wide expectation that all teachers engage in the professional development activities and implement the strategies and practices learned. As well, teachers believed that the implementation of common assessments was hindered by the district office not mandating the development and use of teacher developed formative assessments.

Opportunities and resources. The findings showed that Sun Valley High School District offered teachers and administrators many opportunities for professional development, standards alignment, and use of data. These efforts were viewed as supportive reform practices. For example, professional development events for content area reading strategies during district-wide days, the New Teacher Academies, as well as Tier I and Tier II for CITW were viewed as successful supportive practices of the reform efforts. These events gave teachers the chance to collaborate and share information. The data also revealed that teachers and administrators valued the opportunity to attend their choice of conferences and workshops, which also focused on the reform efforts.

Another noteworthy support directly related to the instructional practice reform opportunities provided to teachers and administrators were the resources allocated to them. The findings indicated that the district office supported instructional practice reform by funding professional development, standards alignment, and instructional

materials. In contrast, the findings suggest that the resources targeted at using data, including technology, were not adequate. Teachers and site administrators suggested that the district office should supply additional human resources with the capacity to train teachers as well as invest in reliable technology to better support the access and use of data for decision-making. The findings further showed that the lack of time to collaborate on the strategies learned was viewed as a major constraint to all the instructional reform efforts.

Research Question 2: How do high school district office practices change school-level strategies targeted at instructional practices?

Congruence between goals. As previously noted, the district goals set the direction for Sun Valley's instructional reform practices through annual district goals documents. At first, there was little connection between site and district goals. However, during the period covered in the study, sites worked to align WASC and Single School Plan goals with those of the district. The data clearly shows in Table 4.10 that the goals in the WASC documents and district goal documents were congruent for most of the instructional practice reform efforts. Nonetheless, the findings also revealed that not everyone was aware of the district goals or recognized the alignment.

Collaboration at and among sites. One of the findings from the research was that through the instructional practice reform efforts the three high schools stopped working in isolation. There was evidence that teachers at different sites were willing to come together to write curricula as well as share strategies and best practices. Interviews and focus groups also revealed that teachers worked together at their school sites to implement the instructional reform practices. Further, site staff described changes in

professional development, standards-aligned lesson design, and use of data resulting from

the district initiatives. However, once again the lack of regular time for teachers to

collaborate with other sites as well as on their own site was viewed as a deterrent to the

reform efforts. Additionally, the findings for this question continued to point out that the

lack of accountability for implementation of the instructional strategies and common

assessments and had a negative effect on the reform efforts.

　　　Unanticipated finding. Though the research questions did not specifically focus

on this area, the interviews and focus groups revealed changes in district office practices

as well as at those at the site levels. One noted change was that during the 5-year period

covered in the study, the district office engaged in systemic alignment in order to

facilitate the instructional practice reform efforts. This included a change in the way

resources were allocated for professional development and instructional materials. More

funds were spent on targeted conference and workshops. Another perception of site staff

was that the district office staff was more responsive and helpful than they had been in

the past.

　　　Furthermore, the Educational Services directors commented on how they worked

more cohesively than they had done previously. The directors also observed that to

support the increasing collaboration the DSC had to treat the sites differently than they

had in the past. For example, they had to be sure to include representatives from all sites

in curriculum and instructional material adoptions. All three site administrative team

observed that site-initiated reform efforts influenced practices at the district-level. The

teams believed that some of the reform ideas, including the work on the common

assessment came from the site level rather than from the district office.

Research Question 3: What are the interactions between district office and site personnel during the period of reform?

    Opportunities for interaction and engagement. The instructional practice reform efforts provided the district office and site staff the opportunity to work together. Sending district office administrators with teachers and site administrators to conferences was one way to build a sense of common purpose. Additionally, the findings seem to point to increased collaboration when site and district office staff worked together on the standards-aligned curriculum. The data provided evidence that as support from the district office increased there was more engagement with the school sites. Nonetheless, in spite of the increased interactions, the lack of time to develop and sustain relationships between site and district staffs was viewed as a challenge. Furthermore, site administrators and teachers observed that when they collaborated as professional learning communities the collaboration was more often internal than with district office staff.

    Strategies for communication. The Sun Valley High School District used meetings and e-mail as major methods for communication. In meetings, district office staff communicated with principals or teacher leaders, with the expectation that they would pass the information on to other teachers. Though teachers seemed comfortable with this method of communication, the data showed that teachers also recognized that its success depended on the teacher leader. E-mail was used to communicate successfully with most teachers, though the data illustrated that in certain circumstances, some teachers felt that personal contact would have been better than e-mail. The data also showed that site staff felt the need for the outcomes of meetings and decisions to be put in writing more often.

Discussion of Results

To better understand district-initiated systemic reform and the relationship with student achievement, this study sought to examine the role of the district office in instructional practice reform efforts. The literature and evidence from this study revealed that the district office plays a significant and sometimes overlooked role in improving student achievement. The case study was designed to find (a) the district office practices that support or constrain reform implementation, (b) how those practices changed site-level practices, and (c) how the district office interacted with site staff during the period of reform. The research drew attention to the complex set of district strategies factoring in the circumstances that either support or deter improving student achievement. The original conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 5.1 acknowledged that district-level reform includes practices from the four major themes (leadership, instructional practice, system coherence and collaboration) described in the literature. The research on district-level reform seldom if ever portrays one district as having all the practices and strategies in place. The findings from this study confirmed the presence of all four major themes found in the original conceptual framework. However, the data did not provide evidence that all of the practices associated with each of the themes were in play in Sun Valley's instructional practice reform efforts.

From the finding in this study, the researcher developed an alternate way to look the original conceptual framework. The new conceptual framework diagrammed in Figure 5.2 displays instructional practice, system coherence, and collaborative relationships embedded in leadership. Further, the figure uses arrows to demonstrate the connection between all the major themes. The conceptual framework does not place

greater value on any of the themes; rather it shows that leadership influences the

implementation of the other three themes. In addition, Figure 5.3 represents the strategies

and practices reflected in the research findings for Sun Valley High School District.

Leadership
1. Vision with a focus on high expectations for student learning
2. Develop capacity to engage in shared instructional leadership supporting instructional practice
3. Adult accountability for student learning

Instructional Practice
1. Standards-aligned curriculum and assessment
2. Research-based instructional practices
3. Targeted and sustained professional development
4. Effective use of data to make decisions about instructional

System Coherence
1. Policies, practices, and decisions support improvement efforts
2. Strategic management of resources
3. Commitment to sustain reform efforts long term

Collaborative Relationships
1. Collaboration through professional learning communities
2. Culture of respect, and trust
3. Balance external partners, district expectations, and site autonomy

Figure 5.1: Original conceptual framework for the role of the district office in improving student achievement.

Leadership
1. Vision with a focus on high expectations for student learning
2. Capacity to engage in shared instructional leadership supporting instructional practice
3. Adult accountability for student learning

Instructional Practice
1. Standards-aligned curriculum and assessment
2. Research-based instructional practices
3. Targeted and sustained professional development
4. Effective use of data to make decisions about instructional practice

↔

System Coherence
1. Policies, practices, and decisions support improvement efforts
2. Strategic management of resources
3. Commitment to sustain reform efforts long term

↔

Collaborative Relationships
1. Collaboration through professional learning communities
2. Culture of respect, and trust
3. Balance external partners, district expectations, and site autonomy

Figure 5.2: Revised conceptual framework for the role of the district office in improving student achievement.

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                              Leadership                                   │
│         1.  Vision with a focus on high expectations for student learning │
│         2.  Capacity to engage in shared instructional leadership         │
│                       supporting instructional practice                   │
│  ┌────────────────────┐                                                   │
│  │ Instructional      │                                                   │
│  │ Practice           │   ┌──────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────┐ │
│  │ 1.  Standards-     │   │ System           │   │ Collaborative        │ │
│  │     aligned        │   │ Coherence        │   │ Relationships        │ │
│  │     curriculum     │   │ 1.  Strategic    │   │ 1.  Collaboration    │ │
│  │     and            │◄─►│     management of │◄─►│ 2.  Balance          │ │
│  │     assessment     │   │     resources    │   │     district         │ │
│  │ 2.  Research-      │   │ 2.  Commitment   │   │     expectations,    │ │
│  │     based          │   │     to sustain   │   │     and site         │ │
│  │     instructional  │   │     reform efforts│  │     autonomy         │ │
│  │     practices      │   │     long term    │   └──────────────────────┘ │
│  │ 3.  Targeted and   │   └──────────────────┘                           │
│  │     sustained      │                                                   │
│  │     professional   │                                                   │
│  │     development    │                                                   │
│  │ 4.  Effective use  │                                                   │
│  │     of data to     │                                                   │
│  │     make           │                                                   │
│  │     decisions      │                                                   │
│  │     about          │                                                   │
│  │     instructional  │                                                   │
│  │     practice       │                                                   │
│  └────────────────────┘                                                   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```
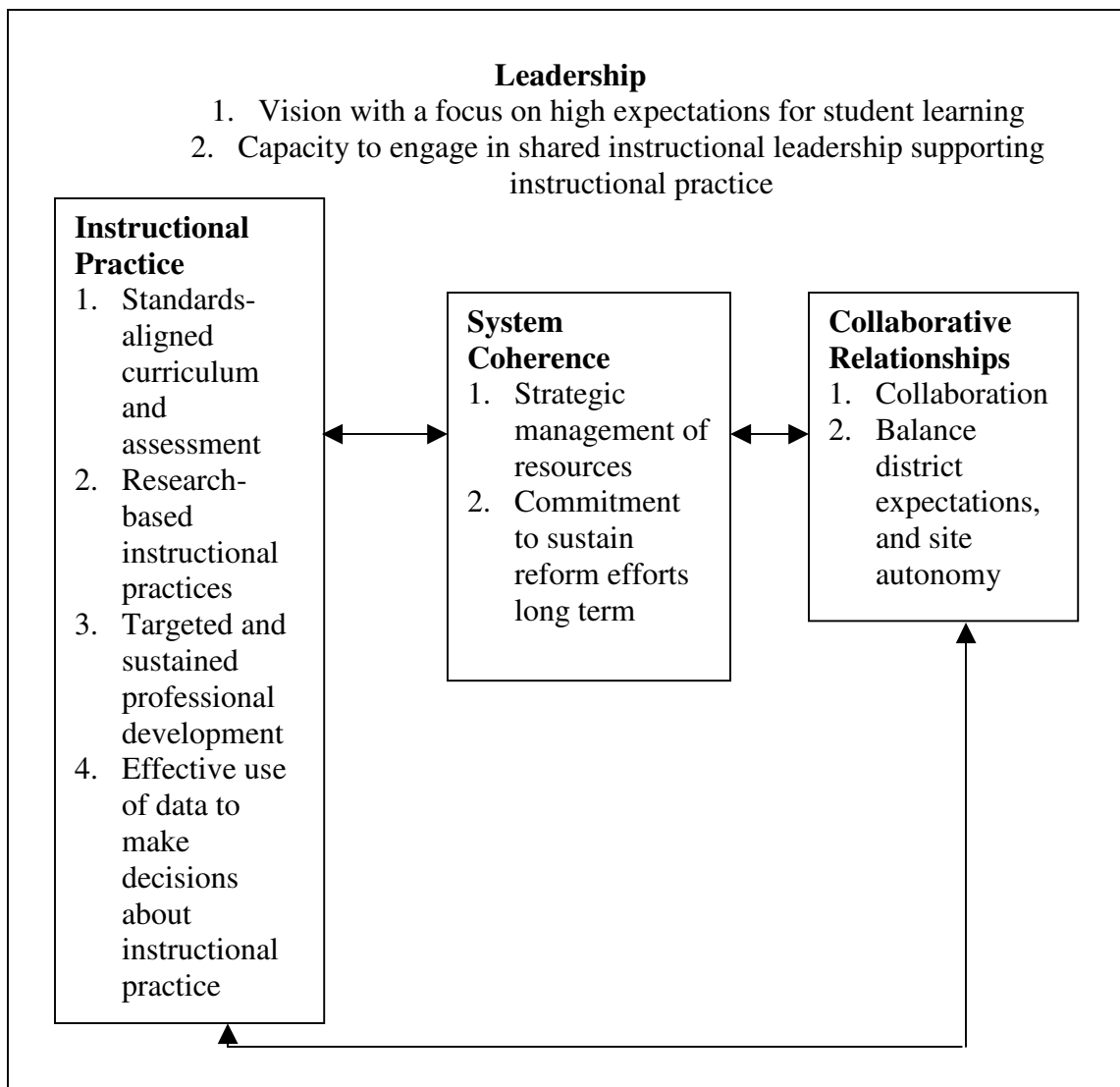
Figure 5.3: Conceptual framework for the role of Sun Valley's district office in improving student achievement.

The findings indicated that the strategies and practices associated with the other three major themes found in the literature affected the role of the of the district office in the instructional practice reform efforts. It should be noted that even though the strategies are listed in Sun Valley's conceptual framework, they were not observed in the same degree.

The following section discusses the findings in relation to each of the four themes found in the conceptual framework.

Leadership Providing Direction

The new conceptual framework places leadership as the underlying foundation for other three themes. Previous research confirmed that district-wide improved student achievement for all students is more apt to happen when the district office provides clear focus and direction (National Study of School Evaluation, 2004). The literature also shows that most often the superintendent who defines the theory of action for the district (Dailey et al., 2005; Leithwood et al., 2004). The district office leadership is responsible for believing in the capacity of the system to achieve high levels of learning for all students (Murphy, 1995). Further, the leadership is responsible for providing direction to the instructional practice reform efforts as well as the alignment of the resources to sustain the efforts. Active support and leadership from the district office appear necessary to support teachers and site administrators in improving classroom practice (David & Shields, 2001).

In Sun Valley, the former and current superintendents provided purpose to and direction for the reform efforts. With the deeply held belief that there were students in the district that needed more instructional support, the former superintendent, in collaboration with other district office administrators, established annual goals with measurable benchmarks for student achievement. The district goals provided direction to the instructional practice work at both the district office and the school sites that were responsible for improving student achievement. Based on the district goals and student achievement benchmarks, the district office provided multiple opportunities for

professional development in reading in content areas, research-based instructional

strategies, standards alignment, and use of data to make decisions. The targeted

professional development was viewed as providing direction and support to teachers and

site administrators. These events gave teachers the opportunity to learn together,

collaborate, and share strategies and practices, all of which helped build capacity. As

well, they were viewed as supportive practices for the reform efforts.

However, the data showed that leadership that established the district goals and

direction was not enough. Even though the district office supported teachers and site

administrators with the opportunity to participate in district-wide professional

development events, institutes, conferences, and workshops the district office leadership

did not hold staff accountable for failure to use the strategies learned. This caused

varying levels of resentment in some of the teachers who were engaging in the reform

efforts. It also put pressure on site administrators as well as teachers who felt that it

would be helpful if a directive came from the district for mandated implementation of

reform efforts, including common assessments. In general, the teachers viewed the lack

of such mandates as a constraint.

Instructional Practices

This study focused on the Sun Valley's district office implementation of three of

the four instructional practices found in the literature: (a) professional development,

(b)standards alignment, and (c) use of data (Elmore & Burney, 1997; Massell, 2000;

McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003; Snipes et al., 2002; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). The

research did not directly study classroom instructional strategies; though it did collect

data on instructional strategy professional development. The district office at Sun Valley

recognized that attempting to improve student achievement by aligning curriculum and assessments with standards was not enough. Teachers and administrators also required the knowledge of how to engage differently in the classroom as well. Therefore, the district office's reform initiatives centered on the professional development opportunities given to site and district office staff.

Over the 5 years covered in the study, teacher and administrator professional development regularly encompassed research-based classroom instructional strategies, standards-based curriculum, and student achievement data analysis. The sustained efforts gave continuity as well as direction to the initiatives, which were viewed by all parties as a significant support system for teachers and administrators. For the last 4 years, Sun Valley organized district-wide professional development days around content area reading, which sometimes incorporated work with standards-aligned curriculum. Teachers collaborating with site and district administrators often conducted these events. To build instructional leadership capacity for these events, teachers and administrators attended nationally recognized trainings. Professional development in classroom instructional strategies was offered to site administrators as well as to new and veteran teachers, thus developing a common understanding of research-based practices. Through the reform efforts, the district office offered teachers and administrators many more chances to attend conferences and workshops in order to build internal capacity for teaching and learning. The multiple opportunities, along with consistency and focus, were viewed as important practices that supported the instructional reform efforts.

The reform initiatives at Sun Valley High School District included a major change in the curriculum development and instructional material adoption process. Unlike past

practices, the district office now facilitated the sites working together to write the

standards-aligned curriculum. The district office provided the fiscal resources for the

purchase of the corresponding instructional materials, which also required more

collaboration between the sites. Additionally, some departments at each site were given

time to develop common formative assessments. Once the curriculum and instructional

materials were adopted, the district office again provided teachers the opportunity to

collaborate and share best practices directly related to the new curriculum and

instructional materials. All of these were thought of as supportive practices to

instructional practice reform. However, teachers and administrators clearly held that the

time was not sufficient for the amount of work that needed to be done. As well, the lacks

of accountability for implementation of the standards-aligned curriculum or mandates for

the development of common assessments were viewed as constraints to the reform

efforts.

  Finally, the district office provided access to data as well as the necessary training

on using the data to support instructional reform efforts. The district office purchased an

improved data management system and then developed data analysis processes to help

inform practice at the district office and school sites. For example, the district office staff

regularly used data from the annual student achievement benchmarks to help determine

the professional development needed for continued improvement. The benchmark

achievement results showed improvement in all areas over the period of the study, which

may in part be due to the use of data to inform instructional practice. The sites reported

changed practices that resulted from access to and use of the data, which allowed sites to

have departmental and school-wide conversations regarding what the data showed and what instructional changes they may need to make.

System Coherence Providing Resources and Sustainability

The literature reflects that no single strategy is responsible for improving student achievement. For the district office to engage in consistent and sustained reform efforts, the practices within the system must support each other (Leverett, 2004; Spillane & Thompson, 1997). Sun Valley High School District made changes in practices in order to develop a more coherent systemic approach to the district's reform efforts. At the onset of the reform initiatives, the district office changed their resource allocations. First, the superintendent purposefully set aside funding specifically for professional development. The district office also negotiated with the teachers' union to add three professional development days to the contract. These increased resource allocations targeted at professional development provided new opportunities including sending teachers and administrators to be trained in reading strategies, which they then used to train other teachers during the newly acquired professional development days. The additional funding also allowed many more teachers to attend conferences and workshops. The district office also ensured that there were sufficient standards-aligned instructional materials and access to student achievement data. Sun Valley's considerable investment of time and money in providing the New Teacher Academy, Tier I, and Tier II to all new teachers to the district demonstrated the value the district office placed on research-based instructional strategies. Further, it established the trend toward sustained reform efforts that had the potential for long-term impact. The district office practices for resource allocation allowed for consistency and sustainability in the initiatives employed.

Particularly, the fiscal resource alignment practices were considered significant supports

for the instructional practice reform efforts.

Nevertheless, the resource of time was considered a major constraint to the reform

efforts. Whether engaging in professional development for instructional strategies,

writing standards-aligned curriculum, or analyzing student achievement results, teachers

and administrators consistently mentioned their concern about the need for more time.

Two of the three high schools had found interim solutions by manipulating their bell

schedules; yet, they, too, recognized that more time was needed to focus on the

instructional practice reforms. The lack of a regular time to work collaboratively to share

practices and examine student work was deemed a significant barrier to the district

office's reform efforts.

Collaboration and Autonomy

Previous research suggests that district offices engaged in successful reform

initiatives have developed collaborative relationship and cultures of trust, and balance site

autonomy with district expectations (Burch & Spillane, 2004; Elmore & Burney, 1997;

Snipes et al., 2002; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). This case study specifically looked at the

interactions between site and district office staff during the period of reform. In general,

due to the reform initiatives there was increased collaboration between district office and

site staffs. They worked together during professional development events, curriculum

alignment, and instructional material adoption. The teachers and site administrators felt

the district office responded to needs and were helpful when asked for resources. The site

administrators and teachers acknowledged that the district office was instrumental in the

reform effort. Though site staffs referred to their work as that of professional learning

communities, they did not include district office staff in this reference. Teachers and site administrators also disclosed that the lack of time inhibited the level of collaboration and communication between the sites and the district office. This was viewed as a constraint to the reform efforts. Though communication is not specifically referenced in the conceptual framework, it was referred to by teachers and administrators when discussing the interactions between the sites and district office. Communication at meetings through site administrators or teacher leaders was viewed as an acceptable form of engagement between the district office and sites. However, direct communication from district office staff was viewed as supportive, and especially valued when it was done in person.

Before the reform initiatives, the sites operated quite independently from each other and even from the district office. As the district staff and teachers began to work as a more cohesive unit, site administrators and teachers identified that they had made changes in their practices based on the district office initiatives. Though they had the autonomy to write their own goals, what they developed closely aligned to those of the district. To accomplish their goals, the sites initiated some of their own instructional practice reforms. From these changes, site and district staffs observed that the district office also changed practices during this time period. Some changes were based on the recognized need from district office staff, others from the practices being implemented at the sites.

Implications for Future Research

This study poses at least three implications for further research. First, the study suggests that though opportunities for professional development exist, participation may not change classroom practice. Though several studies, including this one, incorporated

findings based on interviews with teachers regarding the changes in their instructional

practice, few actually use classroom observations to demonstrate the level

implementation of the strategies learned in the professional development reform efforts.

Future research should study short and long-term implementation of classroom

instructional strategies and their influence on improving student achievement. A

comprehensive study of this kind could also explore how a district office successfully

mandates and hold teachers and administrators accountable for the implementation of the

instructional practice reform efforts. As well, the study should include the barriers that

keep some staff from engaging in the reform efforts.

Additionally, the federal accountability of NCLB poses unprecedented challenges

to schools and school districts. The findings from this study seemingly showed that there

was a relationship between site and district goals targeted at instructional practice reform.

With school sites and district offices moving in the same direction, how they engage in

their work toward common goals is important. For example, from this study it appears

that lack of communication and engagement is a barrier to instructional practice reform.

Therefore, it makes sense study the specific strategies that the district office uses to

communicate and engage with staffs at school sites while undertaking reform efforts.

This type of study could include the process districts use for determining student

achievement goals and benchmarks and how the site and district teams work together to

improve student achievement.

Finally, the study presented an unanticipated finding. Not only did site practices

change based on the reform efforts, but district office practices changed as well. Further

research should be conducted in districts showing sustained improvement in student

achievement to determine how the district office undergoes the change process in relationship to instructional practice reform strategies. The study could focus on district offices that have implemented internal changes in job responsibilities, practices, and policies which ultimately result in improved student achievement. The findings could provide evidence for successful strategies for district-level change, which could be used by districts that may be mandated to implement changes because of the program improvement requirements of NCLB.

Implications for Practice

The findings from this study offer suggestions for practice. As mandates such as NCLB continue to impact state as well as district contexts, districts are faced with increasing challenges as they assume the responsibility for all students learning. Neither schools nor districts alone can design, encourage, and sustain instructional practice reform that results in increased student achievement. School districts are complex organizations, where reform strategies and practices do not operate in isolation. School sites and district offices are compelled to work together in order to hit this illusive target. The literature, as well as the study show that district offices engaged in instructional practice reform needs to "be in it for the long haul." They need to provide consistent direction and communicate their short and long-term plans to site staff. Further, that communication needs to be two-way.

Another proposition is that as leadership at the district office implements the reform efforts, it needs to determine what practices to mandate and how to develop a system of internal accountability. It is not enough to provide professional development in instructional strategies for teachers and administrators. The district office must also

develop comprehensive expectations for how site administrators use that knowledge to engage and support teachers in the using strategies in the classroom. The district office should also determine which aspects of the reform efforts are mandatory, which are optional, and what alternatives are acceptable. The district office leadership then should clearly communicate this information to the school sites.

Further, the findings show that site staffs feel supported when the district office offers a wide variety of purposeful opportunities for teachers and administrators to engage in professional development, standards alignment, and analysis of data. Teachers and administrators have taken what they have learned through these opportunities and changed site-based practices. The district office should ask to engage in the work of the site-level professional learning communities. This practice would allow the district office to gather input and advice from teachers to help ensure that the opportunities and support they offer meet the needs at the site as well as to ascertain what additional or different needs individual schools or departments might require.

As important as any of the implications the district office should work with the teachers' union and school sites to find the much-needed time for teachers to collaborate. The time would be used to share the best of instructional practices, build the capacity of site staff, and provide more opportunities for the personnel communication teachers indicated was important. Without the time to engage in this meaningful work, the district will not reap the full benefits of the instructional practice reforms.

Like many others, this case study further developed the premise that there is not a single strategy or practice that will improve the academic achievement of all students. This study as well as other research in the literature reflected that district offices do not

implement all the strategies and practices, and those employing similar practices do not

necessarily implement them in the same manner or with the same emphasis. At this point

in time, the research leads to no single recipe of strategies and practices that will work for

all school districts. However, these findings support previous research indicating the

ingredients for the role of the district office in improving student achievement. It is up to

each district office to determine the combination that is the right recipe for them.

<div align="center">*Concluding Remarks*</div>

The case study findings resulting from this research conducted by a participant

observer were made even more meaningful to the researcher because it was done in her

own district. The challenges associated with this type of research including protecting

anonymity and confidentiality, as well as putting the participants at ease were well worth

the effort. The researcher made every effort to put aside personal bias to present the

findings in as neutral manner as possible. District-initiated reform is not a detailed list of

things to do; rather it is a way of thinking, promoting researching, restructuring, and

reflecting. Even though causality is not an outcome of case study research, the insights

gleaned from this work and its implications for practice have already triggered changes in

how Sun Valley's district office implements its instructional practice reform efforts.

Appendixes

Appendix A

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
Joint Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership
University of California, San Diego: California State University San Marcos: San Diego
State University

The Role of the District Office in Instructional Practice Reform

Karen Rizzi, a student in the Joint Doctorate in Educational Leadership
(UCSD/CSUSM/SDSU) under the supervision of Dr. Mark Baldwin, Dean,
Education at CSUSM, is conducting a research project to explore the role of the
district office in supporting or constraining instructional practice reform.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
This form is to seek your permission to participate in a research study on the role of
the district office in supporting or constraining instructional practice reform
strategies. The study is being conducted as part of the Joint Educational Leadership
Doctoral Program at the University of California, San Diego, Cal State University
San Marcos, and San Diego State University. Specifically, the researcher is
interested in the perspectives of teachers, site administrators, and district
administrators regarding the role of the district office in instructional practice
reform. For this study, instructional practice is characterized by four strategies:
standards-aligned curriculum and assessment, instructional strategies, professional
development, and use of data. You are invited to participate in this study because of
your involvement in the district's instructional practice reform efforts during the
past five years. There will be approximately 30 participants in this study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS:
Although there may be no immediate personal benefits to you for participating in
this study, finding more about the role of the district office in instructional practice
reform will provide valuable information to extend the present knowledge in the
fields of school and district reform. The school and district in general may benefit as
a result of what is learned about the district office practices that support or constrain
instructional practice. The objectives for the study are:

1. To better understand the district office practices and policies that support or
   constrain the implementation of instructional practice reform.

2. To better understand how district-level practices change school level
   strategies targeted at instructional practices.

3. To better understand the interactions between district and site personnel
   during the period of reform.

POTENTIAL RISKS:
There are minimal risks associated with this study. Participation in the study is entirely voluntary. Though considerable effort will be made protect confidentiality, there is always a small risk that confidentiality may be breached. Additionally, in order to protect confidentiality and anonymity, you may choose not to answer any question or to stop your participation entirely in the interview or focus group, and/or the survey.

PROCEDURES
You will be interviewed individually or in one of four focus groups. The focus groups will consist of site or district administrative teams. The conversational style interview will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes and will be audio taped with your permission. In addition to the interview, you will be asked to complete a brief informational survey regarding your career history and your participation in workshops, trainings, or other events related to instructional practice strategies. The interviews will take place in your classroom, office, or your school's conference room at a time convenient to you.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your employment with Escondido Union High School District, or relations with University of California, San Diego, California State University, San Marcos, or San Diego State University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to stop your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are allowed. It is your right to decline to answer any question that is asked, and you are free to end the interview at any time. You do not have to participate in this study if you do not want to. If you agree to be in this study, but later change your mind, you may drop out at any time. Should you choose to withdraw from an interview, recording of that interview will be destroyed and the information you provided prior to your decision to withdraw will not be transcribed or included in subsequent analyses, reports, presentations, or other products resulting from this research. If you do not wish to participate, just let me know at any time. There are no penalties or consequences of any kind if you decide you do not want to participate.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Every effort will be made to minimize the risks of breaching confidentiality attached to this study. Your interview and survey responses will be kept confidential, available only to the researcher for analysis purposes. Your name will not appear on any tapes or transcripts resulting from the interview and your name and identity will remain confidential in any publications or discussions. Your name will be linked to a pseudonym and a unique identification number. This will be done to ensure your responses remain confidential and that you feel free to respond

as freely as possible. Interview recordings and transcriptions will be kept in a secure location away from the district. Only the transcriber will listen and transcribe the recorded interviews. The recordings will be erased or destroyed once this study is completed.

INCENTIVES:
The participants will not be paid to participate in this study.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS
If you have any questions about this study, I will be happy to answer them now. If you have any questions in the future, please contact Karen Rizzi at 760-291-3251 or at krizzi@euhsd.k12.ca.us or my advisor Dr. Mark Baldwin at 760-750-4311 or at mbaldwin@csusm.edu . If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Institutional Review Board at San Diego State University (619) 594-6622, irb@mail.sdsu.edu or the University of California, San Diego Human Research Protections Program at (858) 455-5050 or the CSUSM Institutional Review Board at (760)750-4029.

☐ I agree to participate in this research study.

_____   _____

Participant's Name   Date

_____
Participant's Signature

_____
Researcher's Signature

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Joint Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership
University of California, San Diego: California State University San Marcos: San Diego State University

AUDIO TAPE RECORDING RELEASE CONSENT FORM

The Role of the District Office in Instructional Practice Reform

As part of this project, an audiotape recording will be made of your during your participation in the research project. Please indicate below the uses of the audiotapes recordings to which you are willing to consent. This is completely voluntary. In any use of the audiotapes, your name will not be identified. You may request to stop taping at any time or request to erase any portion of your taped recording.

The audiotapes can be studied by the researcher for use
in the research project   _____
                                                               Initials

The audiotapes can be used for scientific publications   _____
                                                               Initials

You have the right to request that the tape be stopped or erased during the recording.

You have read the above description and give your consent for the use of the audiotapes as indicated above.

_____   _____
Participant's Name   Date

_____
Participant's Signature

_____
Researcher's Signature

Appendix B

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

California State University
SAN MARCOS

The Role of the District Office in Instructional
Practice Reform

This form is to seek your permission to participate in a case study on the role of the district office in supporting or constraining instructional practice reform strategies. The study is being conducted as part of the Joint Educational Leadership Doctoral Program at the University of California, San Diego, Cal State University San Marcos, and San Diego State University. Specifically, I am interested in the perspectives of teachers, site administrators, and district administrators regarding the role of the district office in instructional practice reform. For this study, instructional practice is characterized by four strategies: standards-aligned curriculum and assessment, instructional strategies, professional development, and use of data. You are invited to participate in this study because of your involvement in the district's instructional practice reform efforts during the past five years.

This study has three objectives:

4. To better understand the district office practices and policies that support or constrain the implementation of instructional practice reform.

5. To better understand how district-level practices change school level strategies targeted at instructional practices.

6. To better understand the interactions between district and site personnel during the period of reform.

You will be interviewed individually or in a focus group. The conversational style interview will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes and will be audio taped with your permission. In addition to the interview, you will be asked to complete a brief informational survey regarding your career history and your participation in workshops, trainings, or other events related to instructional practice strategies. The interviews will take place in your classroom, office, or your school's conference room.

Participation in the research study is voluntary. Your participation or non-participation will have no bearing on your employment in the district or your relationship with UCSD, CSUSM, or SDSU. It is your right to decline to answer any question that is asked, and you are free to end the interview at any time. You do not have to participate in this study if you do not want to. If you agree to be in this study, but later change

your mind, you may drop out at any time. There are no penalties or consequences of any kind if you decide you do not want to participate.

There are minimal risks attached to this study. Your interview and survey responses will be kept confidential, available only to me for analysis purposes. Your name will not appear on any tapes or transcripts resulting from the interview and your name and identity will remain confidential in any publications or discussions. To further help assure confidentiality, the Educational Services Director focus group will be facilitated by a researcher not employed in the district. Your name will be linked to a pseudonym and a unique identification number. This will be done to ensure your responses remain confidential and that you feel free to respond as freely as possible. Interview recordings and transcriptions will be kept in a safe place away from the district. Only the transcriber or I will listen and transcribe the recorded interviews. You will be given the opportunity to review the transcription of your interview or focus group. The recordings will be erased or destroyed once this study is completed. Additionally, you should know that the Cal State San Marcos Institutional Review Board (IRB) may inspect study records as part of its auditing program, but these reviews only focus on the researchers and the study, not on your responses or involvement. The IRB is a committee that reviews research studies to make sure that they are safe and that the rights of the participants are protected.

Although there may be no immediate personal benefits to you for participating in this study, finding more about the role of the district office in instructional practice reform will provide valuable information to extend the present knowledge in the fields of school and district reform. The school and district in general may benefit as a result of what is learned about the district office practices that support or constrain instructional practice. Once the study is completed, you will be provided a copy if you would like one.

If you have any questions about this study, I will be happy to answer them now. If you have any questions in the future, please contact me at 760-291-3251 or at krizzi@euhsd.k12.ca.us or my advisor Dr. Mark Baldwin at 760-750-4311 or at mbaldwin@csusm.edu . If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Institutional Review Board at 760.750.4029.

☐ I agree to participate in this research study.
☐ I agree to be audio taped.

_____   _____
Participant's Name   Date

_____
Participant's Signature

_____

Researcher's Signature

Appendix C

UCSD   California State University SAN MARCOS   SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

CONSENT TO ACT AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT

Joint Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership UCSD: CSUSM: SDSU

The Role of the District Office in Instructional Practice Reform

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

<u>Investigators</u>: Karen Rizzi, a student in the Joint Doctorate in Educational Leadership (UCSD/CSUSM/SDSU) under the supervision of Dr. Mark Baldwin, Dean of Education at CSUSM, is conducting a research study to explore the role of the district office in supporting or constraining instructional practice reform.

<u>Purpose of the Study</u>: This form is to seek your permission to participate in a case study on the role of the district office in supporting or constraining instructional practice reform strategies. The study is being conducted as part of the Joint Educational Leadership Doctoral Program at the University of California, San Diego, Cal State University San Marcos, and San Diego State University. Specifically, I am interested in the perspectives of teachers, site administrators, and district administrators regarding the role of the district office in instructional practice reform. For this study, instructional practice is characterized by four strategies: standards-aligned curriculum and assessment, instructional strategies, professional development, and use of data. You are invited to participate in this study because of your involvement in the district's instructional practice reform efforts during the past five years. Approximately 15 teachers and 15 administrators are being asked to participate in the study.

<u>Description of the Study</u>: You will be interviewed individually or in a focus group. The conversational style interview will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes and will be audio taped with your permission. In addition to the interview, you will be asked to complete a brief informational survey regarding your career history and your participation in workshops, trainings, or other events related to instructional practice strategies. The interviews will take place in your classroom, office, or your school's conference room at a time convenient to you. To help assure confidentiality, a sign will be placed on the closed door, noting an interview is in progress.

<u>Risks or Discomforts</u>: There are minimal risks associated with this study. Though considerable effort will be made to assure confidentiality, there is the possibility that

confidentiality may be breached. You may choose not to answer any question or to stop your participation entirely in the interview or focus group, and/or the survey.
Benefits of the Study: Although there may be no immediate personal benefits to you for participating in this study, finding more about the role of the district office in instructional practice reform will provide valuable information to extend the present knowledge in the fields of school and district reform. The school and district in general may benefit as a result of what is learned about the district office practices that support or constrain instructional practice. I cannot guarantee, however, that you will receive any benefits from participating in this study.

Confidentiality: Every effort will be made to minimize the risks of breaching confidentiality attached to this study. Your interview and survey responses will be kept confidential and confidentiality will be maintained to the extent allowed by law. Your name will not appear on any tapes or transcripts resulting from the interview and your name and identity will remain confidential in any publications or discussions. You will be provided a copy of the interview transcript to review and edit. Your name will be linked to a pseudonym and a unique identification number. This will be done to ensure your responses remain confidential and that you feel free to respond as freely as possible. Interview recordings and transcriptions will be kept on a password protected computer in a home office. Only the transcriber will listen and transcribe the recorded interviews. The recordings will be destroyed once this study is completed.

Incentives: The participants will not be paid to participate in this study.

Voluntary Nature of Participation: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with San Diego State University of California, San Diego, or Cal State University, San Marcos. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to stop your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are allowed.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the research now, please ask. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact. If you have any questions in the future, please contact me at 760-291-3251 or at krizzi@euhsd.k12.ca.us or my advisor Dr. Mark Baldwin at 760-750-4311 or at mbaldwin@csusm.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the Division of Research Administration San Diego State University (telephone: 619-594-6622; email: irb@mail.sdsu.edu), the Institutional Review Board at San Diego State University (619) 594-6622, irb@mail.sdsu.edu or the University of California, San Diego Human Research Protections Program at (858) 455-5050, or the CSUSM Institutional Review Board at (760)750-4029.

Consent to Participate: The San Diego State University, University of California, San Diego and California State University, San Marcos Institutional Review

Boards have approved this consent form, as signified by the Board's stamp. The consent form must be reviewed annually and expires on the date indicated on the stamp.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this consent form

_____
Name of Participant (please print)

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Investigator   Date

Appendix D

Interview Protocol
Site Teachers

Introduction: I appreciate your willingness to take time out of your schedule to meet with me to discuss your experiences with and understanding of the instructional practice reform strategies that the district has engaged in over the past five years. As you may know, over the course of the next 12 months, I will be studying the role of the district office in instructional practice reform. One of my goals is to learn about how teachers perceive the role of the district during the instructional practice reform efforts that have taken place. This data, along with a variety of other information will be used to help find how out the district office can support instructional practice reform that makes a difference for teaching and learning. The interview will take about 60 minutes. With your permission, the interview will be recorded and later transcribed. This will help increase the accuracy of my notetaking as well as data validity. Everything you say in the interview, as well as your identity, will remain confidential. You are free to ask me to turn off the recorder at any time during the interview. Here is the consent form. It details the pertinent information for you as a study participant. Your signature will serve as your approval for participation in the study. At the end of the interview, I will ask you to complete a brief informational survey.

For the purposes of the interview, instructional practice will be categorized by four strategies: curriculum and assessment alignment, instructional strategies, professional development, and use of data. It will be helpful for you to differentiate between the strategies when you feel that what you are discussing does not relate to all four strategies.

Research Questions: Specifically, this study will address the following questions:

1. How do district office strategies support or constrain the implementation of instructional practice reform?

2. How do high school district office practices change school level strategies targeted at instructional practice?

3. What are the interactions between district office and site personnel during the period of reform?

Interviewee's role in instructional practice reform

1. How would you describe the instructional practice reform efforts that have taken place over the past five years? (Probe for specific strategies: alignment, instructional strategies, professional development, data)

2. How did the reform come about? (Probe site and/or district)

3. How would you describe your roles in the reform work?

4. What success have you personally had? What are some of the reasons?

5. What challenges have you had? What are some of the reasons?

District role: support, and constraint

6. How would you describe the district's approach to instructional practice reform? (Probe top-down, collaborative, data driven)

7. How has the district supported the teachers and the school in improving instructional practice?

8. What have been the most useful and least useful ways the district has offered support? (Probe site/individual)

9. If you had three wishes for how the district could support (or continue to support) teachers in instructional practice reform, what would they be?

District-level practices changing site level practices

10. What is the relationship between site goals and district goals targeted at instructional practice? (Probe for district influence)

11. From your perspective, how does the district determine what is needed to helps schools improve instructional practice?

12. In what ways have the district instructional practice reform efforts changed the improvement or reform efforts in place or planned at your school?

Interaction between site and district personnel

13. Whose support in the district office is important to successful instructional practice reform at your school? (Probe what the support is, how sites/individuals get the support)

14. How does the district office interact (engage and communicate) with teachers regarding instructional practice

15. What have been the most and least successful interaction strategies? What was it about the strategy that made it successful (or not successful)?

16. Is there anything about the district's role in instructional practice reform that I have not asked you about that you would like to share with me at this time?

Appendix E

Interview Protocol
Superintendents

Introduction: I appreciate your willingness to take time out of your schedule to meet with me to discuss your experiences with and understanding of the instructional practice reform strategies that the district has engaged in over the past five years. As you may know, over the course of the next 12 months, I will be studying the role of the district office in instructional practice reform. One of my goals is to learn about how you perceive the role of sites and the district during the instructional practice reform efforts that have taken place. This data, along with a variety of other information will be used to help find how out the district office can support instructional practice reform that makes a difference for teaching and learning. The interview will take about 60 minutes. With your permission, the interview will be recorded and later transcribed. This will help increase the accuracy of my notetaking as well as data validity. Everything you say in the interview, as well as your identity, will remain confidential. You are free to ask me to turn off the recorder at any time during the interview. Here is the consent form. It details the pertinent information for you as a study participant. Your signature will serve as your approval for participation in the study. At the end of the interview, I will ask you to complete a brief informational survey.

For the purposes of the interview, instructional practice will be categorized by four strategies: curriculum and assessment alignment, instructional strategies, professional development, and use of data. It will be helpful for you to differentiate between the strategies when you feel that what you are discussing does not relate to all four strategies.

Research Questions: Specifically, this study will address the following questions:

1. How do district office strategies support or constrain the implementation of instructional practice reform?

2. How do high school district-level practices change school level strategies targeted at instructional practice?

3. What are the interactions between district and site personnel during the period of reform?

Interviewee's role in instructional practice reform

1. Can you describe for me the instructional practice reform efforts that have taken place over the past five years? (Probe for specific strategies: alignment, instructional strategies, professional development, data)

2. How did the reform come about?

3. How would you describe your roles in the reform work

4. What would you describe as the greatest successes? What are some of the reasons?

5. What would you describe as the greatest challenges? What are some of the reasons?

District role: support, and constraint

6. How would you describe the district's approach to instructional practice reform? (Probe top-down, collaborative, data driven)

7. How has the district supported the teachers and administrators at the site in improving instructional practice?

8. What do you believe have been the most useful and least useful ways the district has offered support?

9. If you could change something about the manner in which the district has undertaken instructional practice reform, what would that be?

District-level practices changing site level practice

10. What is the relationship between site goals and district goals targeted at instructional practice? It that the relationship you would like it to be? (Probe for district influence)

11. From your perspective, how does the district determine what is needed to help individual schools improve instructional practice?

12. In what ways have the district instructional practice reform efforts changed the improvement or reform efforts in place or planned at each school site?

Interaction between site and district personnel

13. Whose support in the district office is important to successful instructional practice reform at your school? (Probe what the support is, how sites/individuals get the support)

14. How does the district office interact (engage and communicate) with teachers regarding instructional practice

16. What have been the most and least successful interaction strategies? What was it about the strategy that made it successful (or not successful)?

15. Is there anything about the district's role in instructional practice reform that I have not asked you about that you would like to share with me at this time?

Appendix F

Focus Group Protocol
Site Administrators

Introduction: I appreciate your willingness to take time out of your schedule to meet with me to discuss your experiences with and understanding of the instructional practice reform strategies that the district has engaged in over the past five years. As you may know, over the course of the next 12 months, I will be studying the role of the district office in instructional practice reform. One of my goals is to learn about how you perceive the role of sites and the district during the instructional practice reform efforts that have taken place. This data, along with a variety of other information will be used to help find how out the district office can support instructional practice reform that makes a difference for teaching and learning. The interview will take about 60 minutes. With your permission, the interview will be recorded and later transcribed. This will help increase the accuracy of my notetaking as well as data validity. Everything you say in the interview, as well as your identity, will remain confidential. You are free to ask me to turn off the recorder at any time during the interview. Here is the consent form. It details the pertinent information for you as a study participant. Your signature will serve as your approval for participation in the study. At the end of the interview, I will ask you to complete a brief informational survey.

For the purposes of the interview, instructional practice will be categorized by four strategies: curriculum and assessment alignment, instructional strategies, professional development, and use of data. It will be helpful for you to differentiate between the strategies when you feel that what you are discussing does not relate to all four strategies. Research Questions: Specifically, this study will address the following questions:

1. How do district office strategies support or constrain the implementation of instructional practice reform?

2. How do high school district-level practices change school level strategies targeted at instructional practice?

3. What are the interactions between district and site personnel during the period of reform?

Site Administrator's role in instructional practice reform

1. Can you describe the instructional practice reform efforts that have taken place over the past five years? (Probe for specific strategies: alignment, instructional strategies, professional development, data)

2. How did the reform come about (Probe site or district)

3. How would you describe the role(s) of site administrators in the reform work

4. What success has your school had? What are some of the reasons?

5. What challenges has it had? What are some of the reasons?

District role: support, and constraint

6. How would you describe the district's approach to instructional practice reform? (Probe top-down, collaborative, data driven)

7. How has the district supported your school in improving instructional practice?

8. What have been the most useful and least useful ways the district has offered support? (Probe site/individual)

9. If you had three wishes for how the district could support (or continue to support) school in instructional practice reform, what would they be?

District-level practices changing site level practices

10. How does the school develop site goals for instructional practice?

11. What is the relationship between site goals and district goals targeted at instructional practice? (Probe for district influence)

12. From your perspective, how does the district determine what is needed to helps schools improve instructional practice?

13. In what ways does the district office support your site goals for instructional practice reform?

14. In what ways have the district instructional practice reform efforts changed the improvement or reform efforts in place or planned at your school?

15. Are there any specific district practices, policies, or procedures that have supported/obstructed work at the site on instructional practice improvement?

Interaction between site and district personnel

17. Whose support in the district office is important to successful instructional practice reform at your school? (Probe what the support is, how sites/individuals get the support)

18. How does the district office interact (engage and communicate) with the school regarding instructional practice reform?

19. What have been the most and least successful interaction strategies? What was it about the strategy that made it successful (or not successful)?

20. Is there anything about instructional practice reform that I have not asked you about tat you would like to share with me at this time?

Appendix G

Focus Group Protocol
Educational Services Directors

Introduction: I appreciate you taking time out of your schedule to meet with me to discuss your experiences with and understanding of the instructional practice reform strategies that the district has engaged in over the past five years. As you may know, over the course of the next 12 months, I will be studying the role of the district office in instructional practice reform. One of my goals is to learn about how you perceive the role of sites and the district during the instructional practice reform efforts that have taken place. This data, along with a variety of other information will be used to help find how out the district office can support instructional practice reform that makes a difference for teaching and learning. The interview will take about 60 minutes. With your permission, the interview will be recorded and later transcribed. This will help increase the accuracy of my notetaking as well as data validity. Everything you say in the interview, as well as your identity, will remain confidential. You are free to ask me to turn off the recorder at any time during the interview. Here is the consent form. It details the pertinent information for you as a study participant. Your signature will serve as your approval for participation in the study. At the end of the interview, I will ask you to complete a brief informational survey.

For the purposes of the interview, instructional practice will be categorized by four strategies: curriculum and assessment alignment, instructional strategies, professional development, and use of data. It will be helpful for you to differentiate between the strategies when you feel that what you are discussing does not relate to all four strategies

Research Questions: Specifically, this study will address the following questions:

1. How do district office strategies support or constrain the implementation of instructional practice reform strategies?

2. How do high school district-level practices change school level strategies targeted at instructional practices?

3. What are the interactions between district and site personnel during the period of reform?

Ed Services role in instructional practice reform
1. Can you describe the instructional practice reform efforts that have taken place over the past five years? (Probe for specific strategies: alignment, instructional strategies, professional development, data)

2. How did the reform come about (Probe site or district)

3. How would you describe your roles in the reform work

4. What successes have the district/ schools had? What are some of the reasons?

5. What challenges have it had? What are some of the reasons?

District role: support, and constraint

6. How would you describe the district's approach to instructional practice reform? (Probe top-down, collaborative, data driven)

7. How has the district supported the school in improving instructional practice?

8. What have been the most useful and least ways the district has offered support? (Probe site/individual)

9. If you had three wishes to support instructional practice reform, what would they be?

District-level practices changing site level practices

10. From your perspective, how does the district determine what is needed to helps schools improve instructional practice?

11. How does the school develop site goals for instructional practice?

12. What is the relationship between site goals and district goals targeted at instructional practice?

13. In what ways does the district office support your site goals for instructional practice reform?

14. What specific district practices, policies, or procedures have supported work at the site on instructional practice improvement?

15. What specific district practices, policies, or procedures have obstructed supported work at the site on instructional practice improvement?

Interaction between site and district personnel

16. Whose support at the school site is important to successful instructional practice reform?

17. How does the district office communicate with school's regarding instructional practice

18. What have been the most and least successful communication strategies?

19. Is there anything about instructional practice reform that I have not asked you about that you would like to share with me at this time?

20. Is there anything about instructional practice reform that I have not asked you about that you would like to share with me at this time?

Appendix H

Interview and Focus Group Participant Pseudonyms

Pseudonym	Role	Site
Thomas Barnett	Teacher Interview	Lemon Grove High School
Derek Burroughs	Teacher Interview	La Paloma High School
Elizabeth Corel	Teacher Interview	Sun Valley High School
Erica Danson	Teacher Interview	La Paloma High School
Karla Davis	Teacher Interview	La Paloma High School
Kris Drake	Teacher Interview	Lemon Grove High School
David Evans	Teacher Interview	Lemon Grove High School
Sean Farrell	Teacher Interview	Sun Valley High School
Rachel Gardner	Teacher Interview	Sun Valley High School
Joe Harris	Teacher Interview	Lemon Grove High School
Mark Howard	Teacher Interview	Sun Valley High School
Stuart Matthews	Teacher Interview	Sun Valley High School
Patricia Zeamon	Teacher Interview	La Paloma High School
Sandi Evers	Site Administrator Focus Group	Sun Valley High School
Jamie Ralston	Site Administrator Focus Group	Sun Valley High School
Robert Weber	Site Administrator Focus Group	Sun Valley High School
Karl Winters	Site Administrator Focus Group	Sun Valley High School
Matthew Green	Site Administrator Focus Group	Lemon Grove High School
Gerald Morgan	Site Administrator Focus Group	Lemon Grove High School
Eileen Stevens	Site Administrator Focus Group	Lemon Grove High School
Andrew Watson	Site Administrator Focus Group	Lemon Grove High School
Mitchell Adams	Site Administrator Focus Group	La Paloma High School
Daryl Cooper	Site Administrator Focus Group	La Paloma High School
Richard Ditmer	Site Administrator Focus Group	La Paloma High School
Dominic Ojeda	Site Administrator Focus Group	La Paloma High School
Sandi Evers	Site Administrator Focus Group	Sun Valley High School
Daniel Harris	Former Superintendent Interview	District Service Center
Eric Norris	Current Superintendent Interview	District Service Center
Judy Graham	Superintendent prior to Dr. Harris	District Service Center
Elizabeth Gardner	Assistant Superintendent	Educational Services, DSC
Linda Coleman	Director Focus Group	Educational Services, DSC
Steven Fisher	Director Focus Group	Educational Services, DSC
Peter Holmes	Director Focus Group	Educational Services
Barbara Owens	Director Focus Group	Educational Services
Lucy Locke	Director Focus Group	Educational Services
Scott Brady	Assistant Superintendent, Key Informant	Human Resources
Bill Craig	Former Assistant Superintendent, Business Services	Fiscal Services

Pseudonym	Role	Site
Arturo Aquirre	Data Management Specialist	Educational Services
Ray Jacobs	County Office Specialists	VAPA
Marla Faulkner	Consultant	Marzano and Associates
Sun Valley High School	Comprehensive High School	Sun Valley High School
Lemon Grove high School	Comprehensive High School	Lemon Grove High School
La Paloma High School High	Comprehensive High School	La Paloma High School

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