

Old Dominion University

## ODU Digital Commons

---

Educational Foundations & Leadership Theses  
& Dissertations

Educational Foundations & Leadership

---

Fall 11-2015

# The Change Process and Sustainability: The Experience of School Administrators

Heidi R. Brezinski

*Old Dominion University*, Hbrezinski@hampton.k12.va.us

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/efl\\_etds](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/efl_etds)



Part of the [Educational Administration and Supervision Commons](#), and the [Educational Leadership Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Brezinski, Heidi R.. "The Change Process and Sustainability: The Experience of School Administrators" (2015). Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Dissertation, Educational Foundations & Leadership, Old Dominion University, DOI: 10.25777/9yv8-ew92

[https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/efl\\_etds/220](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/efl_etds/220)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Educational Foundations & Leadership at ODU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Educational Foundations & Leadership Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ODU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@odu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@odu.edu).

THE CHANGE PROCESS AND SUSTAINABILITY: EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOL  
ADMINISTRATORS

by

Heidi R. Brezinski  
B.S. May 1998, George Mason University  
M.A.T. May 2001, Christopher Newport University  
Ed.S. May 2005, The George Washington University

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of  
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

EDUCATION LEADERSHIP AND FOUNDATIONS

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY  
November 2015

APPROVED BY:

---

Dr. KAREN L. SANZO, DISSERTATION CHAIR

---

DR. STEVE MYRAN, COMMITTEE MEMBER

---

DR. JODY HOWARD, COMMITTEE MEMBER

**ABSTRACT****THE CHANGE PROCESS AND SUSTAINABILITY: THE EXPERIENCES OF  
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS**

Heidi R. Brezinski  
Old Dominion University, 2015  
Director: Dr. Karen Sanzo

The aim of this study was to determine the perceptions and experiences of school administrators with change initiatives in their district to reveal the factors necessary for sustainability of effective change. The study was established on research concerning organizational change and change sustainability. For the purpose of this study, the research on organizational change was examined, while utilizing a lens of Michael Fullan's Model for Change and Eight Elements of Sustainability. In this design, the perceptions and experiences of the school administrators within Coastal City School District were examined based on a 10-year timeframe of change initiatives within the district. Using a qualitative research design founded on phenomenology, the researcher obtained the views and experiences of school administrators with at least ten years of administrative leadership experience within the particular school district. The experiences investigated focused on a set list of change initiatives within the district, including the examination of structures of the effective and ineffective initiatives as perceived by the school administrators.

The findings were derived from the individual interviews of 10 school administrators within Coastal City Schools. The results indicated the sustainability and effectiveness of the change initiatives were contingent upon five developed themes. These themes included collaborative teaming, continuous professional learning, primary

integral focus, non-negotiables with monitoring, and a needs driven purpose. The study implications affirm identifiable sustainability factors school districts can utilize as a framework for future change endeavors.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to acknowledge my daughter, Lauralynn Rose Grace Scott for her unwavering patience and her giving of time to allow me to pursue this endeavor. My hope is that through pursuing this aspiration, I will lead by example in showing her dreams are worth chasing no matter how difficult they are. I would also like to express my great gratitude to my parents, Robert and Pamela Brezinski, for their steadfast faith and belief in my dreams and aspirations, as well as their support in ensuring I had the time and reinforcement to work toward this goal. I am thankful to them for also reminding me that God can handle every hurdle. My gratitude also goes to my husband, Justin Scott, for believing in me and bailing me out more than once. As I complete this phase of my educational journey, my deepest appreciation goes to my dissertation chair, Dr. Karen Sanzo, for believing in me when it was not easy, for pushing me when I need more than one push, and for reminding me of the worth of this venture. Her steadfast faith in me never went unnoticed and remains to be one of the greatest gifts I have been given. I would also like to thank my dearest friend for always being certain that I could achieve this goal, reminding me often and inspiring me every step of the way. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my family's support and love for me during this process.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	v
CHAPTER 1 .....	1
INTRODUCTION .....	1
Overview .....	1
Summary of Relevent Literature .....	1
Conceptual Framework.....	6
Purpose Statement .....	6
Research Questions.....	6
Definitions of Key Terms.....	7
Overview of Methodology.....	8
Limitations.....	9
Limitations.....	9
CHAPTER 2 .....	10
REVIEW OF LITERATURE .....	10
School Reform Efforts.....	11
Organizational Change .....	16
Initiation.....	17
Implementation.....	19
Institutionalization.....	21
Sustainability of Change.....	23
Fullan’s Eight Elements of Sustainability .....	25
Acquiring through Professional Learning .....	29
CHAPTER 3 .....	34
RESEARCH AND DESIGN METHODOLOGY .....	34
Research Questions.....	34
Research Design .....	35
Qualitative Research.....	35
Methods Approach .....	36
Phenomenology .....	37
Social Constructivism.....	39
Research Protocol.....	39
Research Problem.....	39
Research Bias and Connection .....	40
Purpose Statement .....	42
Research Plan .....	44
Sampling Procedures .....	44
Participant Selection.....	45

Gaining Entry .....	45
Measures of Confidentiality and Safety .....	46
Interview Protocol .....	47
Data Collection Procedures .....	47
Data Analysis.....	49
Trustworthiness .....	50
Summary.....	51
CHAPTER 4.....	53
OVERVIEW OF STUDY .....	53
Findings .....	54
Administrative Roles: Change Initiatives.....	55
Personal Change Initiative Experiences .....	58
Sustainability Factors .....	65
Summary.....	89
CHAPTER 5 .....	90
FINDINGS, INTERPRETATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	90
Statement of Problem .....	91
Findings .....	92
Interpretation Section .....	100
Recommendations for Practice.....	103
Implications for Practice.....	103
Implications for Higher Education .....	105
Implications for Research.....	107
Conclusion .....	109
REFERENCES .....	110
APPENDICES.....	121
Research Protocol.....	121
Interview Documents.....	136
VITA.....	144

## List of Tables

Table 1: <i>Participant and Leader Experiences</i> .....	54
Table 2: <i>Participant Frequency of Findings</i> .....	88



## **Chapter 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Overview**

This study investigated the experiences of school administrators with the change process in their school district, and specifically looked at the factors impacting the sustainability of each change. The researcher looked to examine perceptions of the school administrator in each change process that takes place within their district, as well as the perceptions of the school administrator concerning the use of various factors within districts to sustain the change efforts. As a school administrator, the researcher experienced various change efforts in her experiences as an administrator within one district. When new results or successes are demanded of the schools, new change efforts are initiated and implemented to create the results desired. As the new changes take place, the factors present within the change efforts can impact whether the efforts are maintained, thus determining the achievement of the change efforts. The researcher proposed to conduct a qualitative study informed by phenomenology to investigate the perceptions of school administrators throughout various change efforts within their district. In addition, the researcher examined the school administrators' experiences with preparation and training in the change processes and how they impacted the sustainability of those efforts.

#### **Summary of Relevant Literature**

Throughout the history of schools in America, reform efforts have signified a need for change. This change typically focuses on refining schools to achieve greater

success and accountability for the work being conducted. With recent efforts focusing on greater accountability in terms of statistical measures of success, schools are now being task with showing success through student performance or are faced with ratings of deficiencies. Schools continue to work toward providing change that will lead to success and sustaining the change to enable greater success. To achieve effective and sustained change, schools must begin to understand the change process and demonstrate the factors necessary for sustained change.

The process of change was once understood to be a direct progression or practice; it is now understood through recent literature that change is a more complex, fluid and intricate process (Fullan, 2001, 2007; Hall & Hord, 2001; Huberman & Miles, 1984). Change within an organization is not merely an event, but instead a process of phases, occurring in order to enact change (Fullan, 1993, 2001, 2007; Hall & Hord, 2001; Huberman & Miles 1984; Kotter, 2007; Levin, 1947; McKinsey & Company, 2008; Prosci, 2006). The development of the phases or process is dependent on the decisions made throughout the process and the engagement of factors within each phase (Fullan & Miles, 1992; Glickman, 1993; Hall & Hord, 2001). There are various organizational change models and while these models vary in the number of stages each employs, the models all indicate that the change process must go through a series of phases (Fullan, 1993; Kotter, 1996, 2007; Lewin, 1947; Prosci, 2006).

For the purpose of this study, the researcher focused on change models in organizations while utilizing a specific lens of Michael Fullan's Change Model. Fullan's (2007) model of change is comprised on three distinct stages: initiation, implementation, and institutionalization. Initiation consists of the decision to embrace or resolve to select

and move forward with the transformation. This phase of the change process conducted in a top down approach; although the research supports a shared vision is imperative (George, Sims, McLean & Mayer, 2007; Kincaid, Childs, Blasé & Wallace, 2007; Sansosti & Noltemeyer, 2008).

The second stage of this model of change is the implementation phase. This stage of the process is defined as the phase in which the actual initiative is engaged and the plan is set into action (Trybus, 2011). This stage can include a trial implementation or full engagement (Fullan, 2007; Trybus, 2011). The purpose and value of the change is revealed during implementation, as people are engaged in the actual operation of the change (Fullan, 2007; Huberman & Miles, 1984).

The final stage of this model of change is the institutionalization phase. During this phase, the leaders choose to stabilize the change, yet it can also be the stage when leaders decide to cease to implement the change (Fullan, 2007). Institutionalization represents the phase in which the participants of the change decide to accept and support the change initiative as it is being implemented (Ekholm and Trier, 1987; Fullan, 2007; Trybus, 2011).

While a vast amount of research has been conducted on the process of change or on creating and supporting models of change, little research has been accomplished regarding the sustainability of the change, particularly in the area of education (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978; Datnow, 2005; Fullan, 1993; Miles, 1983). Fullan's extensive research in schools has examined how change efforts once implemented can be maintained (Fullan, Cuttress & Kilcher, 2005; Fullan, 2005). Fullan (2005) defines eight components of sustainability. These components are fundamental in ensuring change

efforts are continued. These components include: public service for a moral purpose; commitment to changing context at all levels; lateral capacity building through networks; intelligent accountability and vertical relationships; deep learning; dual commitments to short-term and long-term results; cyclical energizing; and leaders as system thinkers. The eight components as separate entities make up the plan for change continuance, while working discordant with one another (Fullan, 2005).

As part of the eight components of sustainability, deep learning plays a vital role in the change process' continuance. Encompassing progression and resolve, this component is obtained through the development of skills and abilities in leaders and teachers within the school or school district (Darling-Hammond 2008; Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson & Orphanos, 2009; Fullan, 2005; Liebermann & Darling-Hammond, 2012). This development of skills and ability is known as professional learning and is essential for success and maintenance of the change efforts (City, Elmore, Fiarman & Teitel, 2010; Friedman, 2012; Fullan, 2011; Lunenburg, 2011).

Historically, professional learning in schools consisted of "sit and get" workshops. Typically, teachers would attend, listen, and carry knowledge away to practice. The single practice of giving knowledge to teachers to take away from the workshops or courses was believed to enact change (Fullan, 2007). This frequently used practice of staff development has produced minor measureable results (Mizell, 2001). Instead teachers were left feeling isolated and disengaged from the change efforts (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Spector 2011). To engage teachers and make an impact on the change desired teachers need to be involved in learning in context or learning at work (Fullan, 2002). Learning in context is defined as collaborative efforts to build knowledge,

problem-solve solutions, and plan application (Fletcher, 2011; Fullan, 2002; Harrington & Mackin, 2008). This interactive and results oriented framework for professional learning impacts the chances for continuation of change within schools (Fogerty & Pete, 2009; Killion & Roy, 2009; Lieberman, 1995; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

As schools continue to embark on change for the betterment of the students and the success of the school, it is essential that schools begin to investigate models for change to ensure the phases are all complete in their efforts. To further ensure that the change is sustained and continued to benefit schools, it is essential to understand the necessary components for sustained change. As Fullan's model indicates the eight elements of sustainability, it is important to note how a shift of change can develop from deep learning. In moving away from isolated learning and moving toward learning in context with collaborative efforts, it is essential schools begin to make this paradigm shift. Change is inevitable but ensuring factors are present in the change process are vital to ensure the sustainability of the change and ultimately its success.

### **Conceptual Framework**

This research sought to capture the experiences of school administrators with change efforts in schools and examine the experiences of professional learning during the change efforts to support sustainability. Utilizing a qualitative research design in this study is essential as the researcher sought to gain the perceptions of the school administrators concerning their experiences. In addition, the qualitative design allows the researcher to understand the experiences while being informed through the phenomenon of focus. These experiences while revealing an intricate phenomena, also allowed the

researcher to see the individual knowledge or occurrences of the participants (Hays & Singh, 2012).

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative study founded in phenomenology was to determine the experiences and perceptions of the school administrators in the efforts of change within a district. Furthermore, this study served to examine the perceptions and experiences of utilizing professional learning within the context of change efforts of schools to impact sustainability. This study offered school administrators the ability to share their experiences on change efforts and the role professional learning plays in such efforts. It was the hope of the researcher that the study would provide school administrators on the district level the insights for more effectively planning for change, implementing change and creating a system for learning during the change initiative. With the small measure of literature on the sustainability of change in schools and the role professional learning plays in the sustaining of that change, it was the researchers' goal to further the existing literature.

### **Research Questions**

This research study examined the change initiatives of a school district through the experience of the school administrators with a focus on the sustainability of the initiatives. This study examined the following research questions:

1. What are school administrator's experiences related to the change processes implemented district-wide?
2. What factors in the change initiatives that occurred in the school district contribute to the sustainability of the change?

### **Definition of Key Terms**

Definitions are included in this section to inform the readers of key terms for the purpose of understanding the study.

- **Accountability** - the process of evaluating school performance on the basis of student performance measures (Figlio & Loeb, 2010).
- **Collaboration** – Working together interdependently toward a common goal.
- **Education Reform** – Changes planned and executed to impact a school or school processes.
- **No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)** – a standards-based educational reform that set standards and held schools accountable with the intention of closing achievement gaps for disadvantaged students. The accountability was measured based on measureable goals for schools set with high expectations. (US Department of Education, 2005).
- **Organizational Change** – the process of changing an organization’s structures, functions, processes or procedures.
- **Professional Learning** – (Professional Development) comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers’ and principals’ effectiveness in raising student achievement (US Department of Education, 2005)
- **School administrator** – the administrator responsible for leading the school, often called the principal or assistant principal of the school.
- **School district** – a local administration of schools within an area.

- Sustainability - “the capacity of a system to engage in the complexities of continuous improvement consistent with deep values of human purpose” and the development of initiatives without compromising others (Fullan, 2005; Hargreave and Fink, 2006).

### **Overview of Methodology**

This qualitative study founded in phenomenology examined a sample of ten school administrators, supporting the research on studies of this type (Creswell, 1998; Morse, 1994). The sampling of administrators used in this study met the following criteria: 1) are licensed school administrators within Coastal City Schools and 2) worked in Coastal City Schools for a minimum of 10 years as a school administrator.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher interviewed the ten school administrators to capture their experiences concerning change efforts. Merriam (2009) states the importance of examining the experiences through the paradigms of the actual participants in this type of study. The researcher captured the experiences of the school administrators, as they perceive them within their world. The researcher interviewed the participants using a set of pre-determined questions to focus on the experiences of the changes that have taken place with their district. These interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

As the sole investigator, the researcher identified the biases present as well as the identifiable assumptions. These biases were identified and recognized by the researcher to ensure awareness of the possibilities. In addition, the researcher engaged in behaviors to avoid researcher bias, such as reflective journals (Ortlipp, 2008) and bracketing



(Tufford & Newman, 2010). To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, the researcher created an accountability footprint on all interviews, transcripts, and recordings.

### **Limitations**

In effort to increase the literature on organizational change in schools and the sustainability of the change, it is also necessary to state the limitations of this study. This study looked to examine the experiences of ten school administrators within one school district. While this examination provided ample information about organizational change in schools, it also has limitations in that the results may not represent all experiences of school administrators with the change and sustainability of efforts in all districts. Additionally, while the researcher has resolved every effort to expose and attend to the researcher bias, there is the possibility the results could be impacted by the bias presented.

### **Delimitations**

To provide focus to this study, several boundaries were put into place in regards to methodology. This study investigated the experiences of school administrators in their encounters with the change efforts of their district within a recent time frame. Therefore, only the school administrators who were employed as school administrators for a minimum of 10 years were considered. While other school administrators may have experienced efforts of change within the Coastal City School District, their experiences were not utilized for this study. In addition, other school employees, such as district administrators, teachers, and administrative personnel were not examined for this study, as the focus was on the school leveled administrators.

## **Chapter 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Overview**

This study investigated the experiences of administrators in the change processes within their school district, focusing on the factors that were present to create the sustainability of change. To best explore the study of interest, the researcher looked into the various types of research literature present on change processes and sustainability. The researcher explored and investigated the historical changes in America's school efforts as well as the research regarding change and sustainability in the process of change. This chapter looked at the reform efforts that have been present in America throughout our history of schools, in order to best illustrate the ever-dynamic change process in education. Upon the presentation of the historical changes that have taken place in education throughout history to create reform, it is also imperative to focus on organizational change. The researcher explored organizational change and how the research indicates the change process takes place. As the focus on this research was to determine how change is sustainable within school districts, the researcher explored the literature to discuss the sustainability of change in organizations. The review of this literature on organizational change and sustainability was conducted utilizing a lens through the Fullan's change theory. The researcher explored this theory with supporting research to determine what occurs in organizational change and the processes necessary to create sustainability of the change. As part of a deeper investigation into sustainability, the researcher examined the literature on professional learning to connect the use of professional learning to the sustainability of the change processes within

school districts. By focusing on relevant research, this review provides a context for the research to investigate the change processes within a school district and the sustainability of those change processes.

### **School Reform Efforts**

In 1776, America celebrated its birth as a nation with a comprehensive document that captured the beliefs for the foundations of this country. Written in the Declaration of Independence was the quotation “All men are created equal.” This one statement has been woven rich throughout history, and can often be seen included in state documents and constitutions, as well as quoted in many historically famous speeches. Since this famous quotation’s origin and throughout much of the time that has past since, the equality of Americans has excluded blacks, women, Native Americans, and various other groups. This historical pattern is included in education, as well. While founded on the premise of providing free public education to all, American schools prevented many groups from benefiting in public education.

In 1635, the first “free school” opened in Virginia. These first American schools were instituted in the philosophical foundations of imparting knowledge of humans, particularly those of religious fundamentals. The goals of schools during this time served the purpose of religious training. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, schools began to show evidence of Benjamin Franklin’s push to bring European influences to America utilizing the philosophies of John Locke. Contradictory to the religious foundations, schools began to change the focus to science, secularism, and human reasoning. Schooling took a different course by the 1800’s, as Horace Mann worked to change education in America to include common schools to reach those less fortunate with the intent of receiving academics,

discipline, and training for the future employment. Energies were focused on attendance, secular training, and common curriculum for grade levels. Mirroring the “Prussian model” of schools, Mann pushed for tax-supported schools and qualified training for teachers.

By the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, John Dewey’s theories on education began to affect schools. Dewey influenced schools to become a classroom of democracy and thinking by doing or interactive learning, moving schools away from the authoritarian model and memorization. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the progressive movement encouraged schools in which students thought autonomously, creatively, and emotionally. This movement faced resistance in the historically basic American education principles, such as authoritarian models and structured curriculum. Resistance along with the development of the Cold War era of the 1950s fed into the increasing fears of American, leading schools to revert back to the “Prussian model” of schooling. To further the course, the occurrence of the Russian Sputnik created a rush for American schools to produce competitive students in the traditional curricular areas, including math and science.

Throughout the next several decades, educational reform set on a different course. The civil rights movement of the 1960’s and 70’s sparked movements to created schools void of the inequities that had long been a reality of American public schools. Spurred by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, schools began a course of integration. It was also during this time that schools educated students who were examining the ideas of freedom and democracy. Educational leaders began to experiment with novel ideas of freedoms within the school buildings, including classrooms without walls and elimination of

grades. By the 1980's, the political air started to shift as an outstretched need from citizens focused on a time with less turmoil. With conservatives now in office, the need to begin to "fix" things was imperative, particularly in education. Crafted was the National Commission for Excellence in Education to focus on the greatest concern, education. In a report entitled, *A Nation at Risk*, this commission addressed the American people in identifying the mediocrities and inadequacies of current state of school. This report declared with reverence "the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people" (Gardner, Larson & Baker, 1983). The magnitude of the statistically laden report continues to be felt in our schools decades later. Educational leaders began to view schools as a system needing rebuilt and refocused on reformulating standards with an academic element. There was a push to focus schools on being run in a business format concentrating on producing outputs and birthing terms in education such as accountability, standards-based, measurement, and achievement.

Three decades later, these concepts remained evident in education as President George W. Bush initiated the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001. This initiative was based on familiar ideas of high standards, accountability and measurable outcomes. States were faced with being held accountable for demonstrating their student academic achievement at the reality of being federally funded. The large context of this educational reform drew vocal critics, voicing concerns of "teaching to the test". Even as America transitioned to new leadership, many supporters of the NCLB movement were faced with the daunting realization that the dramatic legislation had failed to produce the intended results (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Still reveling in the effects from the NCLB,

schools continue to work toward ensuring every child receives a good education so as no one is “left behind.” However, recent focus efforts have been on endeavoring to close the achievement gaps, both within American subgroups and among the global market.

As the nation transitioned to President Barrack Obama’s leadership, education continued to focus on improved standardized testing, common standards, and teacher quality and retention. Throughout his campaign speeches, particularly in his speech to Dayton, Ohio in September 2008, Obama acknowledge the appropriateness of the efforts of NCLB stating, “I believe the goals of this law were the right ones. We all want high standards. We all want world-class education. We all want highly qualified teachers in the classroom...More accountability is right. Higher standards are right.” However, he continued that while the goals were right, the law itself needed restructuring to provide the resources to support these efforts, to move toward inspired instruction through teacher and administrator supported curriculum and assessments, and to focus on problem-solving and analytical learning instead of memorizing the answers to bubble into a test (Obama, 2008). As he transitioned into office, President Obama vowed to reevaluate and reauthorize the NCLB legislation to meet the needs of today’s students, including those who continued to fail under the current law, particularly English Language Learners, special education students, and students of low socioeconomic status. With the potential of the reauthorization of NCLB looming, the recent reform efforts are remaining. Schools continued to be held accountable for their output of performance; however, the moderation of a constrictive NCLB legislation has taken course in Obama’s effort to waiver states from these restrictions of 100 percent proficiency by the year 2014. Education reform efforts today continue to revel in creating equalities in schools for all

students by focusing on the accountability of the output of standards for all students.

Therefore, while the statement “all men are created equal” was penned long before it was apparent in American schools, today the essence of the statement is more of a reality than might have deemed possible centuries ago.

Even as we continue to feel the effects over the past decades’ education reform efforts, new reform efforts continue to surface. In 2011, President Obama initiated the Race To The Top program, offering grants to states to reform their education of students based on four areas: adopting standards and assessments to prepared students for college and the workplace in our current global economy; building data systems for measuring student growth and success; recruiting, retaining, and rewarding successful, effective teachers and administrators; and improving the lowest achieving schools (Manna & Ryan, 2011). These rewards were offered to states applying for the funding based on their efforts. In addition, the President began to provide some reprieve to states in terms of the NCLB law provisions, allowing states to apply for the flexibility to develop effective way to teach students while maintaining high standards for success.

Throughout the history of education reforms in America, schools today are tasked with greatest challenge thus far. Today’s educators must continue to raise standards and be accountable to those standards for all students, not an exclusive few. “No generation of educators in the history of the United States has ever been asked to do so much for so many” (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). As educators face this challenge, and do so with extensive budget cuts and reduction of school personnel, it is noted America could be facing an educational calamity (DuFour & Marzano, 2011).

As we move to continue current reform efforts for providing high standards, continuing accountability for closing achievement gaps, and raising the bar for *all* students, it is essential that we provide a pathway of change to create sustainability for success. As indicated in the constant change in education reform throughout history, it is essential to continue to work toward reaching success and ultimately finding the sustainability in those efforts to create a successful and continuous educational environment. To do so one must clearly understand the process of change, particularly as we have seen in the past, to provide a clear understanding of the efforts of change and the elements needed for sustainable change.

### **Organizational Change**

Throughout the history of education in America, there is evidence of change, from the larger reform movements to seemingly small change processes within each building. The process schools and districts go through to make the changes is essential for change to occur, it is not simply the act of implementing change (Fullan, 2007). Once thought to be a linear process, years of extensive research in educational change has shown it is actually a dynamically complex process (Fullan, 2001, 2007; Hall & Hord, 2001; Huberman & Miles 1984). Many factors impact the process of change. Decisions made within the change process can greatly impact the proceeding phases of the process. In addition, the process is a progression where no step can be sidestepped to reach the outcome.

Change is not an exact event, but instead an effort of phases that must be maneuvered through in order to enact change (Fullan, 1993; Levin, 1947; Kotter, 1996, 2007; McKinsey & Company, 2008; Prosci, 2006). These phases of change provide



distinct, predictable stages toward change pattern, indicative that change does not happen in one step. While models vary in the number of stages or phases that the change process entails, each model designates the process involves stages (Fullan, 1993; Kotter, 1996, 2007; Levin, 1947; McKinsey & Company, 2008; Prosci, 2006).

The quantity of stages within each model is specific to the model considered. Several models identify three distinct phases of the organizational change. These stages are identified differently by name and often function, showing similarities in number and sometimes purpose. Fullan's (1993) educational change model identifies the three stages: initiation, implementation, and continuation. Like Fullan's model, Lewin's (1947) model of change includes three stages as well: Unfreeze, Change, and Freeze. Prosci's (2006) three phases of the process of change are: prepare for change, manage change, and reinforce change. Many other models of change include increased levels of stages. For example, Kotter's (1996, 2007) change model includes eight stages for creating change (urgency, coalition, vision, communicate vision, remove obstacles/empower vision, never let up/building on change, and anchor change to corporate culture). Prosci's (2006) model was later customized to include a more in-depth change model for managing individuals, illustrating five phases (awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement). While varying in number, many models of change are indicative of the fact that change occurs in progressive phases (Fullan, 1993; Levin, 1947; Kotter, 1996, 2007; McKinsey & Company, 2008; Prosci, 2006).

### **Initiation**

Throughout the models of change, the initial decision to perform change is determined in the initial phases of the model. The decision to initiate change becomes

the catalyst for the model to continue. The beginning point of the change process, this phase “leads to and includes a decision to adopt or proceed with a change” (Fullan, 2007, p. 65). This decision making factor is however often aligned with the presentation of the current problem or issue. Therefore, the process of change is initiated by the decision to arise with change based on the presentation of the current predicament of the agency enacting the change. Kotter’s (1996, 2007) model of change identifies this phase as “establishing a sense of urgency.” During this phase, the various models identify this as time for developing a motivation or support for the change. Lewin’s (1947) model of change designates the initial stage is a time for dismantling the current mindset by presenting the problem at hand.

Research literature on organizational change is plentiful, exhibiting numerous models of organizational change. For the purpose of this study, the researcher will examine the research of organizational change with a scope of depth, while utilizing a particular model as a lens for filtering the researcher. In this study, the researcher will employ the use of Fullan’s Model of Change as a scope to analyze the research. In examination of Fullan’s model, it is essential to explore the steps of this model of change process.

The first step in the change process is the initiation phase, or the phase where the decision to proceed with the innovation occurs. The actual decision to initiate the change can be attributed to many various factors. Fullan indicates these factors can include teacher advocacy, existence of quality innovations, legislative or policy changes, and recommendation from external change agents (Fullan 2007; Sansosti & Notlemeyer, 2008). The beginning point of the change process, this phase “leads to and includes a

decision to adopt or proceed with a change” (Fullan 2007, p. 65). Often the most difficult of phases in the change process, the initiation phase commonly includes uncertainty, confusion, obstacles, and aversions (Huberman and Miles, 1984). It is the position in the process where leaders must make a tough decision about feasibility, as well as the point in which one must assess the support and resources available (Trybus, 2011). While this phase of the process incorporates decision making, it is also a phase where the meaning of the change is seldom comprehensible, as the impact on other factors in the school is yet to be determined (Fullan, 2001). The decision-making in this phase is more likely to be made by administrators instead of teachers or school staff; however, despite this likelihood, research shows lack of a shared vision can have negative impacts on implementation of the reform (George et.al, 2007; Kincaid et. al, 2007; Sansosti & Noltemeyer, 2008).

### **Implementation**

Once the decision to make the change has occurred, the second phase of the change process is the implementation phase. This phase encompasses modifying practices, such as altering or eliminating procedures or systems. It includes the actual change to a program by means of the program purpose (Seidman, 1983). It is putting the actual plan for change into practice. Implementation normally involves executing an initiative and assessing its effects (Trybus, 2011). This can include trial or complete implementation. Trial implementation allows the leader to determine the potential impact of the participants involved. In addition, data from a trial implementation can be utilized for acceptance of the change when full-scale implementation sets to take place (Trybus, 2011).

It is during the implementation phase that the purpose and value of the change becomes apparent. As the implementation takes place, those involved in the implementation experience the effects of the change and actively participate in the adjustments made during the implementation (Huberman & Miles, 1984). During the implementation phase, it is not uncommon to undergo an “implementation dip” or a period of bumpiness where poor performance and confidence occurs, meaning things will get worse before they get better (Fullan, 2007). Fullan (2007) indicates it is important for leaders to understand the problems people are experiencing within the change process. The two problems commonly impacting the implementation dip are social-psychological fear of change and/or the lack of skills necessary for the change. Leaders aware of this possibility can prepare and make changes to keep the change momentum going (Fullan, 2007). Despite how much planning is done by the leader, the implementation dip is inevitable and usually occurs in the first six months of the change (Fullan, 2002).

The main issue in the implementation phase is answering the question of what changes would be required if the reform were fully implemented (Fullan, 2007).

There are at least three components or dimensions at stake in implementing any program or policy: (1) the possible use of new or revised materials (instructional resources such as curriculum materials or technologies), (2) the possible use of new teaching approaches (i.e., new teaching strategies or activities), and (3) the possible alteration of beliefs (e.g. pedagogical assumptions and theories underlying particular new policies or programs) (Fullan, 2007, p.30).

Implementation is the phase in which people experience the actual change and develop the skills necessary to cope with and ultimately achieve the change anticipated

(Phan, 2006). “People do not learn or accomplish complex changes by being told or shown what to do. Deeper meaning and solid change must be born over time” (Fullan, 2001, p.80). The actual participation in the process of change and how it affects those people and aspects is the purpose of the implementation phase.

### **Institutionalization**

The third and final phase of the change process is the institutionalization phase or the phase of continuation or incorporation (Fullan, 2007). This phase involves the decision to make the change a permanent part of the organization or discard it. During this phase the stabilization of the change is determined and the structure of the organization is adjusted to allow the change to continue beyond the initial improvement effort (Phan, 2006). Change leaders must utilize collected data, as well as assess their normative belief that the change will benefit the system to continue to develop the change throughout the passing of time. It is imperative during this phase that the leaders utilize their judgment to determine the benefit of the change on the improvement of those people involved if the decision is to sustain the change (Trybus, 2011).

To be labeled as institutionalized, the new innovation also needs to be legitimized by power holders, both within and outside of the school. Inside the school, legitimization that the new idea or practice is accepted definitely by the people using it, and is integrated with the daily implicit value system as well as in the procedures of the users through identification” (Ekholm & Trier, 1987).

The institutionalization of the change is determined based on two factors: whether the change is incorporated into the structure of the system (i.e. budgeting, policy

adjustments) and whether the change is supported by a significant amount of allies of the change who are committed to seeing the change stabilized (Fullan, 2007).

The institutionalization phase is often the phase where leaders determine not to proceed with the phase. Often many leaders abandon the change instead of choosing to follow the implementation and stabilization (Datnow & Springfield, 2000; Trybus, 2011). Several factors can affect the final decision to institutionalize a change or abandon it. Huberman and Miles (1998; Trybus, 2011) identified several of these factors, including pressure from administration and leaders, teacher- administration accord, staff turnover rate, changes to the system framework (i.e. policy change), the level of staff opposition to the change, and level of vulnerability based on structural changes (i.e. administration retention and funding). Reasons for abandonment from the change often include lack of funding and lack of commitment to the change (Fullan, 2007). It is essential that the leader at this phase in the process, if the intention is to move forward with the change, articulates the resources and identifies a timetable for gathering more support of the participants, while ensuring the gathering of support and resources are not contingent upon the change leader (Trybus, 2011).

Each phases of the change process is essential for the ultimate success of the change itself. People within the system (i.e. school district) must experience the phases of the change process in order to determine the course in which the change will take place: sustained or abandoned. This entire process of change is a lengthy process, depending upon the scale of the change. Fullan (2001) states that “moderately complex changes take form 3 to 5 years, while larger scale efforts take 5 to 10 years with sustaining improvements still being problematic” (p.52).

### **Sustainability of Change**

Throughout the history of reform in education, the focus has been on the decision to make the change and how to process the implementation of that change. Research on change in education has centered on creating and fostering the frameworks necessary for the adjustment to those change efforts. Little research has been conducted on how those invested in the change process can support the change for continuous improvement (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978; Datnow, 2005; Fullan, 1993; Miles, 1998; Phan, 2006). Research is lacking in the area of sustainability in part because very little reform efforts in education endure.

When one speaks of sustainability of reform, one is typically interested in knowing whether the reform lasts over time and becomes institutionalized feature of a school. Although in dictionary terms sustainability refers to longevity and institutionalization refers to something becoming an established practice, their definitions in the research literature are inextricably connected. For a reform to be sustained, it must become institutionalized. So too, when a reform is institutionalized, it has been sustained over time (Dutnow, 2005, p.123).

While extensive research is lacking in the area of sustainability of the change in reform efforts, it is essential to know Fullan, Cuttress & Kilcher (2005) have focused their research on examining what makes improvements from the change process continual. They have found the missing element in successful change efforts is the lack of comprehension and use of the “change knowledge”. Change knowledge is defined as the understanding of the change process and the elements that successfully support the change in actual practice (Fullan et al., 2005). Understanding the change knowledge is

an extensive process requiring time, lengthening the change process itself; however, it is essential if the leaders of change want to avoid time wasted on a process of change that does not sustain.

Fullan (2005) defines sustainability as “the capacity of a system to engage in the complexities of continuous improvement consistent with deep values of human purpose” (p.xi). Hargreaves and Fink (2006) support this definition of sustainability, stating, “Sustainability does not simply mean whether something will last. It addresses how particular initiatives can be developed without compromising the development of others in the surrounding environment now and in the future” (p. 30). These researchers state “Sustainable leadership acts urgently, learns from the past and from diversity, is resilient under pressure, waits patiently for results, and does not burn people out” (p.20). It is essential that leaders provide the levels of support to constituents impacted by the change process.

While the research available often focuses on school leader support, district level support has been noted as being equal essential to the sustainability of change efforts (Fullan, 1993, 2005; Lezotte & Jacoby, 1992). In order to achieve this level of sustainability of the change, it is essential to have supports at all levels of the educational system (Fullan, 1993). This idea for support at all levels of the system is vital for the change in educational systems, because change that is profound enough to result in reculturation will affect many parts of the systems, throughout many levels of the system (Forrest, 2007). Fullan (2001) advocates calculated, intentional efforts to be logical and coherent in the change process. The deeper entrenched the change process is in the



system, the greater the chances of sustainable change (Hall & Hord, 2001; Miles & Louis, 1990).

### **Fullan's Eight Elements of Sustainability**

Fullan's (2005) research identifies for educational system change agents, eight components or conditions that are vital for effective and sustainable change.

1. Public service for a moral purpose
2. Commitment to changing context at all levels
3. Lateral capacity building through networks
4. Intelligent accountability and vertical relationships
5. Deep learning
6. Dual commitments to short-term and long-term results
7. Cyclical energizing
8. Leaders as system thinkers

**Public service for a moral purpose.** Historically, education has had a focused purpose of improving society through schooling students. The continual process of improving society throughout changes in history has included improving the educational systems to integrate those needs, ultimately impacting the core purpose of education: learning. Concerning educational systems, the moral purpose encompasses a commitment to raising the bar and closing the gap in student achievement (Fullan 2005, 2006). Fullan (2005) states "in change knowledge, moral purpose is not just a goal by a process of engaging educators, community leaders, and society as a whole in the moral purpose of the reform" (p.2).

**Commitment to changing contexts at all levels.** Transformation of the system at all levels, including school and community level, district level and the federal or state policy level, is essential for lasting change. Instead of focus on simply changing the individuals of the system, it is imperative to create and develop a system surrounding the new beliefs of the change, where those beliefs can be practiced and nurtured. Fullan (2005) warns to “ ‘beware of the individualistic bias’ where the tacit assumption is that if we change enough individuals, then the system will change” (p.6). The focus should instead be on changing individuals and systems simultaneously in context through learning in the authentic conditions where the change is desired (Fullan, 2005). Gladwell (2000) explains that in order to change the individual’s behavior, it is vital to create or change the system surrounding the individuals, where the new beliefs mirrored in the change can be practiced, expressed and nurtured.

**Lateral capacity building through networks.** Development of systems that sustains change for the improvement of the system requires building capacity, such as “policies, strategies, resources, action designed to increase people’s collective power the system forward” (Fullan, 2005, p.2). Simply put, it encompasses working together for change. The creation and maintenance of a network of individuals who work together, learn together and share common visions together allows for a synergy that supports the change and its lasting impact (Browne-Ferrigno, 2007). This element can be difficult as it involves people working together in ways different from the ways they are accustomed to. Yet, this establishment of a community of peers achieves two valuable things, shared quality knowledge and mutual commitment (Fullan, 2005).

**Intelligent accountability and vertical relationships.** Change inevitably creates problems. These problems must be acknowledged, examined, and rectified. The importance for sustaining the change is to face these problems while ensuring ownership as a whole, or in the capacity of the school or system, while maintaining the transparency of system review and alteration in relation to district and state accountability frameworks (Fullan, 2005). It is essential that those within the school community interact around the problems faced, resulting in better practices, shared commitment, and accountability to peers (Fullan, 2006). Fullan (2006) stresses that for sustainability it is essential to engage in self-review.

**Deep learning.** Continuous improvement, adaptation and collective problem solving through inquiry powers a deeper, sustainable change (Fullan, 2005). Learning, experimentation, and difficult conversations are in essence how people change (Heifetz & Laurie, 2003). Assessment for learning is a key tool to facing challenges that arise through change. Fullan's (2005) prescription for facing such challenges includes accessing data continuously, analyzing the data to obtain meaning, formulating action plans, examining any implementations or modifications, and making necessary improvements. This often involves risk taking, as attempts are made, assessed and altered in terms of continuous improvement (Browne-Ferrigno, 2007). Sustainable changes are contingent upon the commitment to inquiry and deep learning (Fullan, 2005).

**Dual commitment to short-term and long-term results.** Sustainability incorporates both short-term and long-term results. It is essential systems show progress throughout the process. Short-term results build trust with the public and among constituents, resulting in investment of a long-term nature (Fullan, 2006). The delivery

of short-term results gains the confidence and trust, empowering the investment of the system and promoting further improvements (Barber & Fullan, 2005). Yet, it is crucial not to overlook the long-term development during the focus on short-term results, as work on the long-term results is the fundamental goal (Fullan, 2005). This is done through the commitment to and investment of the eight elements of sustainability. For sustainability of change efforts, the short-term and long-term results and goals must remain mutually exclusive.

**Cyclical energizing.** A pattern of energy and stability are necessary for sustainable improvement. The pattern or cycle between these two components are illustrated by Fullan (2005) as

‘Sustain’ comes from the Latin word ‘sustineo’, which means to keep it up, but this is misleading. Sustainability paradoxically is not linear. It is cyclical for two fundamental reasons. One has to do with energy, and the other with periodic plateaus, where additional time and ingenuity are required for the next breakthrough.

This concept is borrowed from Abrahamson’s (2004) theory that change implementation requires two conflicting components: activity and rest. The activity or energy portion of the cycle is the engagement and drive for achieving the results of the change initiative; it is the work performance toward high performance, the intense change (Browne-Ferrigno, 2007). Whereas, the rest or plateau stage enables the system to replenish itself through reflection practice (Fullan, 2005). Reflection leads the system to investigate, learn, experiment and develop better solutions, leading to continual improvement (Browne-Ferrigno, 2007).

**Leaders as system thinkers.** Leaders at all levels within the system power the sustainability of change. Fullan (2006) explains

First, if a system is to be mobilized in the direction of sustainability, leadership at all levels must be the primary engine. Second, the main work of leaders is to help put into place the previous seven elements – all seven simultaneously feeding on each other. To do this, we need a system laced with leaders who are trained to think in bigger terms and to act in ways that affect larger parts of system as a whole – the new theoreticians.

Sustained change is therefore achieved through the shared efforts of leaders at all levels of the system. It is also essential for sustainability that leaders develop leaders within their systems to ensure lasting effects of the change process and continue the process.

The eight elements of Fullan's sustainability model outline a plan for ensuring change can have effective and lasting results. All eight elements are essential to the plan. Although each element stands absolute in its function toward the ultimate goal of continuous improvement in terms of the change process a system partakes in, the elements are ultimately mutually exclusive in nature (Fullan, 2005). For the purpose of this study, the focus remains on one of the eight elements, deep learning. Nonetheless, the impact of this particular element influences all other elements of the model.

### **Acquiring through Professional Learning**

Continual improvement, adaptation and collective problem solving fuel the sustainability of the change process (Fullan, 2005). Sustained improvement in schools cannot be obtained without improving the skills and abilities of leaders and teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2008; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Liebermann & Darling-

Hammond, 2012). It is essential to know teachers, administrators, and other staff members are growing professionally to better serve the needs of the schools and continue efforts of change for improvement (Fullan, 2005). Professional learning is an important tool for change efforts and eventually the sustainability of that change (City et al, 2010; Friedman, 2012; Fullan, 2011; Lunenburg, 2011).

Professional learning, in education, traditionally involved workshops or lecture-style assemblies, where teachers attended, listened, and exited. During the lecture-style professional learning courses, teachers attended with the goal of gaining the given knowledge without discourse. Teachers were expected to walk away from these workshops or courses infused with knowledge to take back to schools and apply. Fullan (2007) describes this method of professional learning as involving workshops, courses, programs, and related activities designed presumably to provide educators with new ideas, skills and competencies for improvement with the “notion that external ideas alone will result in changes” (p.1). For too long, the professional learning practices of too many school systems and schools have led nowhere. Mizell (2001) states, “Year after year, their staff development has amounted to little more than a disparate set of adult learning activities with few demonstrable results other than participants’ mounting frustration” (p. 18-19). Fullan (2007) argues what one simply knows when they start to do the work is not powerful enough, specific enough or sustained enough to provide change in the school. The idea of bringing information learned in isolation back for application within schools is described as learning out of context; while valuable for development, it is not the type of learning that is applied and makes a difference (Fullan, 2002). Participants working in isolation to apply the knowledge learned often not only

feel isolated but also disconnected from the implementation of the change efforts (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Spector 2011). Elmore (2000) notes schools are often missing an important factor that the great improvement occurs as a function learning within a setting where the work is actually performed. He states,

The theory of action behind [this process of examining practice] might be stated as follows: The development of systematic knowledge about, and related to, large-scale instructional improvement requires a change in the prevailing culture of administration and teaching in schools. Cultures do not change by mandate; they change by the specific displacement of existing norms, structures, and processes by others; the process of cultural change depends fundamentally on modeling the new values and behavior that you expect to displace the existing ones (p.11).

Therefore, learning within the context or setting alters the actual environment resulting in changes and thus improvement. Rusch (2005) cautions that professional learning should not narrow or limit the possibilities for problem solving; therefore, organizations must collaboratively problem-solve to explore collaborative solutions.

In contrast to the idea of learning in isolation or “learning out of context”, Fullan (2002) defines learning in context as “learning at work”. Learning in context involves teams of participants working together to obtain knowledge, examine issues, apply knowledge, and devise solutions. Development through applied knowledge while working with collaborative equals provides crucial results (Fletcher, 2011; Fullan, 2002; Harrington & Mackin, 2008). Mintzberg (2005) urges that it is essential that we learn not just by acquiring then doing, but instead by “being able to gain conceptual insight while

doing it” (p.200). Professional learning designed to create learning in context with work in teams has the greatest possibility for the largest potential results (Fullan, 2002). This style of learning is more precise, situational and community-based, developing shared and collective knowledge and commitments (Fullan, 2002). Effective professional learning is a process. This process includes empowering participants together, cultivating a climate for learning, and fostering collaboration (Balan, Manko & Phillips, 2011; Fullan, 2001).

Professional learning that is designed for learning in context is both relevant and authentic (Hunzicker, 2011). Learning in context allows for conversations among educators. These conversations will generate concrete acts of learning and the results it produces (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). School districts can benefit by providing a social network of conversations where members of a working team can learn and examine research based practices while being interactive, applicative and results-oriented in their interaction and learning (Fogerty & Pete, 2009; Killion & Roy, 2009; Lieberman, 2000). Rosenholtz (1989) found that educators who worked and learned in collaboration were more likely to adopt the behaviors obtained. Collaborative inquiry and learning enables educators to share and develop the knowledge acquired from professional learning activities (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993). Continuous, collaborative professional learning within the context of the working environment is essential for significant change to occur in practice (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Fullan, 1995; Liebermann, 1995; Little, 1993). Without this collaboration and collective inquiry, educators cannot actively change their practice (Fullan, 1995).



The creation of a system that enables sustainable, effective change is essential for improvement. Change is inevitable. It is a process educators are regularly immersed in (Ellsworth, 2000). This process has historically been documented in the chronicle of school reform in America. The development of change that is successful and lasting is crucial, or schools will become engaged in an endless cycle of change, doing nothing more than providing change without improvement. Fullan's elements of sustainability offer schools a foundation for developing change efforts to sustain change in the long-term. Including public service for a moral purpose, commitment to changing context at all levels, lateral capacity building through networks, intelligent accountability and vertical relationships, deep learning, dual commitments to short-term and long-term results, cyclical energizing and leaders as system thinkers, Fullan's (2005) research on sustainability in change creates a well-laid plan for educators to strategically plan change efforts with the ultimate goal of change for improvement. Collaborative learning is a vital component of this research-based plan that cannot be ignored because of its impact to the overall sustainability. The development of methods for learning through collaborative professional development opportunities is an imperative function of the overall plan for sustainability. Research now points to learning within the context. This is vastly different from the past days of learning in isolation. For school districts to maintain and continue the efforts of change, they must begin to look at how the learning in the implementation of change occurs through this process.

### **Chapter 3**

## **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of chapter 3 is to discuss the research design applied to obtain the experiences of school administrators throughout change processes, to include the factors that exist leading to sustainability and effectiveness of the change. Incorporated within this chapter are the research questions, data collection methods, participant information, and discussion of study design.

### **Research Questions**

As indicated in literature review, change is a varied process within institutions. This process incorporates phases or stages of the specified process. Factors within the stages of the change process can lead to or hinder sustainability of the change being implemented. The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of school administrators in the change process, focusing on the factors or themes that are present in relationship to the sustainability of the change. Research indicates change processes occur often while sustainability of the change occurs less frequently. As indicated with the need for change in schools due to present accountability placed on districts, it is imperative that researchers begin to utilize the change process while ensuring the presence of factors necessary for sustainability of said change. Specifically, this study looked at the structures of the change and how those play into the sustainability of the change process. Therefore, this study also looked at the experiences and perceptions of the school administrators in Coastal City School District to gain knowledge of the change

process dynamics and the elements present within those change processes to determine the role each plays in sustainability. The research questions are as follows:

1. What are school administrators' experiences related to the change processes implemented district-wide?
2. What factors in the change initiatives that occurred in the school district contribute to the sustainability of the change?

### **Research Design**

#### **Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research is focused on the comprehension of verbal narratives in natural settings that are embedded in the subjects' perceptions (McMillan, 2004). Researchers utilizing the qualitative approach are concentrated on understanding the experiences people have and how those experiences are translated in their world within their constructs (Merriam, 2009). The foundations of qualitative research are interpretive in nature, allowing the research to delve into and make sense of the phenomena of the participants' surroundings and experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Researchers are interested in the experiences of the participants as they occur naturally, allowing for the discovery and realization of the particulars of their encounters (Flick, 2008).

Qualitative research is applicable for the purpose of this research study as it seeks to identify the elements within the change process that are present and contribute to the sustainability of the change enacted. Through the process of qualitative research the researcher aspired to discover how the school administrators perceived the changes and the change processes they have experienced throughout their administrative careers. Merriam (2009) illustrates the importance of viewing these experiences through the

constructs of the participants in a qualitative research study. Within this research study, the researcher encapsulated the experiences of the school administrators, as they perceive them within their world. As change is inevitable in the educational realm of achievement and accountability, it is necessary and beneficial to explore, investigate and evaluate the perceptions and experiences of current school administrators in order to decipher the sustainability factors essential for longevity of changes.

### **Methods Approach**

A qualitative research design was applied because the researcher was interested in capturing the personal experiences for the participants in an effort to gain direct insight into their experience with change processes. The researcher chose this design as opposed to a quantitative research design with the intent of gaining personal experiences firsthand from various participants within the same context of experiences. By definition, qualitative research is research

that is intended to help you better understand, (1) the meanings and perspectives of the people you study –seeing the world from their point of view, rather than simply from your own; (2) how these perspectives are shaped by and shape, their physical, social and cultural context; and (3) the specific processes that are involved in maintaining or altering these phenomena and relationships” (Maxwell, 2012).

In qualitative research, the design is variable rather than fixed (Robson, 2011). Through this design, the researcher was able to allow the participants experiences and perspectives to guide the course of the study versus allowing the study constructs to chart the course of the study.

Research by this design is inductive, seeking to understand the context or meaning of a particular situation or experience (Creswell, 2013). Merriam (2009) describes this design as gathering the data and processing it to develop concepts or theories about the particular area of study. In this study, the experiences of the school administrator in the change initiatives of the Coastal City School District were explored to determine the influence of various structures in the change initiative process on the sustainability of the change. Creswell (2013) states that focusing on the commonalities of participants' accounts as they experience the phenomenon is a phenomenological study.

### **Phenomenology**

Phenomenology, as described by Stewart and Mickunas (1974), is founded in the philosophical ideas that development is conceived in the study is only perceived through the experiences of those involved. The experiences of the school administrators in the study concerning Coastal City School District were used to identify the commonalities of the school administrators in respect to their perceptions of the change initiatives and the structures accompanying the initiatives. In this study, the researcher focused on the beliefs reflected through the school administrators of one school district; therefore, a design was chosen founded in phenomenology to assemble the theories drawn from the interviews and documents of the school district change initiatives. Using interviews and documents, the researcher "focuses on the lived experiences of the individuals and how they have both subjective experiences of the phenomenon and objective experiences of something in common with other people" (Creswell, 2013).

Phenomenology affords the researcher with the possibility to gain an understanding of the familiarity and experiences of the participants and recognize

significant themes in their experiences (Hays & Singh, 2012; Merriam, 2009). Through this study, common themes identified that summarize the core of the participants' experiences and their perceptions in light of the focused phenomena. This research looked at both the experiences of the administrators in terms of the changes that occurred within a district, as well as their perceptions of the change initiatives and the structures of those initiatives. A phenomenological research focus enabled the research of this study to focus on the deep experiences of the participants, gaining the insight of knowledge lying within the information of their points of view. With a study informed by phenomenology, the researcher utilized and focused on the human experiences of the situation to determine and gain knowledge from those experiences.

Van Manen (1990) explains that phenomenology does not present researchers with theory to control the world we study, instead it seeks to take common experiences and conduct a structural analysis of those experiences to determine the most common and recurring themes among them. This research study sought to focus on the experiences of the school administrators with change initiatives, and determine their thoughts and behaviors as they reflect upon them. Furthermore, this study looked at the experiences to determine the sustainability of the change initiatives in terms of the components of the initiatives that were in place and how those components impacted the administrators' experiences.

A qualitative research study founded in phenomenology allows the researcher to focus on experiences of the participants and their distinctive perspectives of those experiences. Through this type of inquiry, the experiences of the participants were examined as told through the voices or realities of the actual participants. As they convey

these experiences, the researcher then acquired the similarities and differences among the experiences (Hays & Singh, 2012).

### **Social Constructivism**

Social constructivism stresses the importance of the context of an experience and building the knowledge grounded in this understanding (Derry 1999; McMahon, 1997). This perspective focuses on the shared understanding of individuals in an environment and how they construct meaning through their experiences (Gredler, 1997; Prawat & Floden, 1994). As the constructivism is based on the meaning attached to the experiences, it is essential to note there is not just one reality but instead many realities, as the realities are constructs of the meanings developed by experiences (Willig, 2013).

For the purpose of this study, the researcher utilized social constructivist perspective to investigate the experiences of school administrators in regards to change initiatives experienced throughout their district career and how those experiences as described by the participants have created the perceptions of sustainability in the district, particularly focusing on the components present within the change initiatives.

## **Research Protocol**

### **Research Problem**

As researchers take on the task of researching using a qualitative approach, they build their research from a foundation of a problem or issue to be examined. The choice to utilize qualitative research is based on “a need to study a group or population, identify variables that cannot be easily measured or hear silenced voices” (Creswell, 2013, p. 48). Additionally, Creswell identifies that qualitative research allows the researchers to obtain a detailed account of the problem through hearing people’s stories without constraints of

expectations and observing the participants' environments. Upon the decision to utilize qualitative research, the researcher examined the literature to determine where the disparity was, so as not to duplicate previous research (Maxwell, 2012). Change theory has been a topic of many forms of research (Adelman & Taylor, 2007; Fullan, 2001, 2007; Fullan et al., 2005; Hall & Hord, 2001, 1987; Geijsel & Meijers, 2005; Huberman & Miles 1984; Myrick, Greer & Melvin, 1994; Schmuck & Runkel, 1985). In examining schools, change sustainability is an area for closer examination in order to determine longevity in change efforts. In recent history the utilization of professional learning to support such efforts of sustaining change is an area in need of more research, as a gap in the literature remains. Furthermore, there is not research to examine the perceptions of the school administrators in change processes within schools and their perceptions on the role that various structures, particularly professional learning, play in sustainability. This study looked to provide additional research in the area of change processes in schools, while examining the perceptions of school administrators on the process and the impact of structures in the sustainability of change.

### **Researcher Bias and Connection**

During the time of the research, the researcher and author was a 39-year-old female doctoral student in the Educational Leadership and Foundations Department at Old Dominion University. She was raised in middle class family with two working parents and two children. She attended and graduated from Coastal City School District, 21 years prior. During the research, she was employed with Coastal City School District, as an elementary principal with ten years of leadership experience in the same system. Prior to her leadership experience, she was employed in the same district as a teacher.



Therefore, she had established, professional relationships and connections with the participants of the study.

As a school administrator, the researcher experienced the changes of the Coastal City School District over the past fifteen years. With each change process that took place, the researcher experienced the elements present throughout the change, as well as the endurance of the change in the time following the change implementation. This experience created interest in investigating the perceptions of school administrators, particularly in Coastal City School District, of the change process and sustainability of change within the district, as well as how their perceptions of the impact of the present structures on the sustainability of the change.

Marshall and Rossman (2010) indicate that the same experiences, values and identity fueling the interest in the research topic, can be the same experiences, values, and identities that create bias in the study. These biases must be recognized and the researcher must participate in the self-reflection process to reveal and avoid personal subjectivities (Marshall, 1990). It is essential to recognize these biases and their impact of the research progression (Patton, 2002). As an employee and administrator of Coastal City School District, the researcher accepted the potential for bias and disclosed these biases within the study. As an administrator who has taken part in the past ten years of change initiatives within Coastal City School District and as a colleague of the participants, the researcher held self-perceptions of the change process that have taken place at Coastal City School District. The researcher had experienced the change initiatives and endured the extent or duration of the change processes within the school

district. In addition, the researcher held personal perceptions of the impact of the present structures on the change processes within the district.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of school administrators on the change process and sustainability of said change within a school's recent history and the perception of how various structures, such as professional learning, play a role in sustainability. Therefore, this study provided school administrators an opportunity to express their views of the change processes within their district and examine their understanding of the structures within the change to determine the duration of the change. Coastal City Schools is an urban school district with a mixed population of middle-class and low-income students. Current enrollment, at the time of the study, was 20,700 students with 1,530 teachers and 91 school administrators (34 principals and 57 assistant principals). Coastal City Schools was comprised of one early childhood development center, 19 elementary schools, 2 PreK-8 schools, one gifted school (grades 3-8), five middle schools, four high schools and one alternative school. Within the last ten years, two superintendents have led Coastal City School District. During this time, at least seven change processes have been initiated. These change initiatives were implemented to create change for success within the district. At the time of the study, Coastal City School District had not met all of the Annual Measureable Objectives (AMOs) for Federal Accountability, with particular deficits in the areas of reading for all students and students with Limited English Proficiency, Students with Disabilities, and Economically Disadvantaged Students. There was currently one school in focus status and one in priority status in Coastal City School District, as well as 17 schools accredited with

warning on the state level. There were 12 federally funded Title I schools within Coastal City School District due to the percentage of students within these schools who qualify with free and reduced lunch. As a school system that was working toward success in terms of accountability in schools, Coastal City School District had, within the last decade, worked toward creating a culture of success. This urge for success and the accountability of achievement moved the district to implement efforts to promote this success, including change initiatives. The implementation of these change initiatives are the basis for this study; creating a need to examine the success of these efforts and their sustainability. To further examine the change processes in Coastal City School District, the researcher analyzed the perceptions of the structures in the sustainability of these change efforts.

The research bias lead to several assumptions within this research study. The researcher assumed the participants have varying degrees of recall about the change initiatives within the past decade, particularly due to the duration of the change initiation and implementation. As school administrator within Coastal City School District, the researcher anticipated some discomfort in the participants willingness to share negative perceptions of the change as the school leaders are often the promoters of and responsible for the implementation of the change processes within each school. Sharing negative perceptions of the change processes they experienced, particularly for those that were not sustained may create a feeling of inadequacy as a school leader. The researcher anticipated the school leaders would validate the effectiveness through the use of professional learning in supporting sustainability of change efforts, as the time and effort

invested in the support of the school leaders was increased because of the professional learning opportunities.

Due to the fact that the researcher was, at the time of the study, a school leader within Coastal City School District, the participants likely feel more comfortable in sharing their perceptions with the researcher because of the level of familiarity and fellowship existing among the school leaders and the researcher. Therefore, despite the unease in sharing negative perceptions, the participants may have felt a sense of comfort with sharing their experiences with a colleague. By sharing the purpose of the research to examine the sustainability of change and the role of various structures in the sustainability of change efforts, it was the desire of the researcher to increase the comfort of the participants in sharing their experiences and perceptions.

The researcher focused on the stories of the participants through the acknowledgment of these biases, as well as avoidance of the biases that could impact the data collection and analysis.

## **Research Plan**

### **Sampling Procedures**

Within this research study, the sampling of the participants was conducted with an effort to select participants who have experienced particular events or change processes within a timeframe. By conducting research that will be founded in phenomenology, it was important in this study to select participants who have experienced the phenomenon and are willing to share their experiences for the efforts of the study (Corben 1999; Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). The sample of participants were purposeful, relying on the strength of selecting participants that have experienced the events necessary for support

of the research (Hays & Singh, 2012; Patton, 2002). For this study, the researcher enlisted participants who meet the following criteria: 1) were licensed school administrators within Coastal City School District and 2) worked in Coastal City School District for a minimum of ten years as a school administrator. Convenience sampling is advantageous to the researcher when the participants were easily obtainable (Hays & Singh, 2012). Snowball sampling can also be employed if the researcher finds it necessary. This type of sampling allows the researcher to seek from participants' references of other participants who have experienced the events sought within this study (Creswell, 2008; Hays & Singh, 2012; Streeton, Cooke & Campell, 2004).

### **Participant Selection**

The researcher employed the use of email to contact potential participants within Coastal City School District to invite them to participate in sharing their experiences in the change processes that have occurred in recent years. The researcher selected between 10-12 school administrators to assist as participants in this study. From the email sent to potential participants, 10 of the school administrators responded. The researcher then established a time with each of the 10 participants to conduct the interviews. The researcher gathered demographical information about the 10 participants to include gender, race, years of experience, and level of experience.

### **Gaining Entry**

As a member of the school administrative culture within Coastal City School District, the researcher contacted the participants to establish a meeting time once participants had been selected. The researcher met with participants in an agreed upon time and place to conduct the interview. Several of the interviews were conducted during

contractual hours within the researchers work environment or the participants' work environment, both within Coastal City School District.

### **Measures for Confidentiality and Safety**

Establishing trust, maintaining integrity and respecting privacy are essential in the ethical basics of researching. Within this study, the researcher ensured the privacy and confidentiality of the participants by utilizing measures to remove identifiable factors in the reporting. Participants were interviewed and recorded using only demographical features, refraining from creating any identifiable markers thus ensuring confidentiality for all. The recorded materials (including transcripts or recording) are being kept under locked conditions to ensure privacy and access only by the researcher. Upon use of the data obtained from the interview recordings, the researcher destroyed the recordings to ensure continued confidentiality of the interviews. Transcripts will remain available to enable the researcher to provide evidence of the research collected. Transcripts will be kept under locked conditions for five academic years to ensure that evidence is available if needed. The transcripts will then be destroyed for ultimate confidentiality of the interviews.

The researcher obtained approval from the Human Subjects Review Committee of the Darden School of Education at Old Dominion University to maintain the safety of the participants,. This approval was applied for with the basis that participants would be treated fairly, experience minimal risks and remain unidentified within the study.

Throughout the study, the researcher maintained the basis that the research was conducted with the intent of enhancing and improving the field of educational leadership.

### **Interview Protocol**

This qualitative study relied on interviewing to gather data from participants. The researcher utilized a series of open-ended interview questions to gather information about the participants' experiences in the change processes that have been experienced in Coastal City Schools. Interviewing allows the researcher to get to the root of the participants' experiences (Siedman, 2012). This type of data gathering allows the researcher to see the world through the perspectives of the participants, allowing them to experience events that they have not experienced themselves (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Interviewing is one of the most effective and central ways to collect data in a qualitative study (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2013). For the purpose of this study, the interview questions were designed to communicate the research questions. The interview questions are open-ended and non-leading, allowing the participants' experiences to lead the interview (Bernard, 1995; Jacob & Ferguson, 2012). The researcher designed the questions of this study to follow these criteria.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The researcher began the interviews with participants by providing each participant with a scripted interview protocol. This protocol allowed the researcher to provide consistent information about the purpose of the study and the interview inquiry. Upon completion of the scripted interview protocol, the researcher enlisted consent from the participants using an informed consent form. The form was explained to the participants and questions about the study and/or interview were answered before having the participants complete the form. A copy of the form will be kept on file for the

research study and an additional copy was given to each participant upon his/her completion.

Upon completion of the informed consent form, the researcher gathered demographic information from each participant. The demographic information consisted of gender, ethnicity, years of experience in leadership, and years of experience within Coastal City Schools. Gathering this information allowed the researcher to have access to information that assisted in the development of themes and/or patterns within the research, while ensuring to gather information not disclosed during the interview questions. Demographic information gathered during this process allowed the researcher a more in-depth examination into each participant's experience in collaboration with the interview responses.

Upon completion of the demographic data collection, the researcher interviewed the participants using a semi-structured interview process. Utilizing a semi-structured interview process allowed the participants freedom to express their experiences and to share particular areas of interest, while ensuring certain experiences and events could be explored in greater depth (Horton, Macve & Struyven, 2004). The interviews lasted approximately an hour in length and were recorded in its entire length. Within three days of the completion of the interview, the participants were contacted to communicate gratitude for their participation, as well as to inquire about any additional information they felt would be beneficial in sharing for the purpose of this study. The researcher gave participants the opportunity to share any additional information to reflect upon the information shared. The researcher then transcribed any additional information gathered in the follow-up conversations and added them to the original data. Participants were



informed that a copy of their interview would be available within a two-week period. This allowed the researcher ample time to transcribe all recorded conversations.

### **Data Analysis**

The researcher transcribed all recorded interviews and any additional follow-up interview information. Each transcription was reviewed and proofed to ensure accuracy. Any errors were corrected and recorded. Any requested copies of the transcription were forwarded to the participants.

Upon completion of the transcribed interviews, the researcher reviewed the data to begin the process of data reduction. During the process, the researcher began to organize, identify and document any themes occurring within the data. Initially, the researcher began by annotating significant thoughts or responses within the interviews. The researcher then created a list of the annotated responses through a numbering system. The A-priori coding in the interview questions allowed the researcher to initially group the responses based on this coding. The numbers were then grouped together using categories. The categories and listings were reviewed again to determine themes within the interviews by continuing to collapse the categories into more in-depth themes. This process also included organizing and identifying patterns within the data. The goal was to determine patterns, ideas, explanations and understandings through organization, summarization and interpretation (McMillan, 2004). The organization and identification process of the data analysis was followed by a coding process, in which the researcher categorized and “chunked” the data to determine the meaning of the data (Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p.171). The categories in the coding process were then reduced to create a distinct coding system for the data obtained (Creswell, 2013). The final themes or

patterns were represented in the final coding system of the textual data. The researcher then synthesized the themes or patterns found to draw inferences about the research topic using the research questions to guide the synthesis (McMillan, 2004). It was during this process that the researcher engaged in the awareness of the biases she holds to ensure the data collected was represented in the inferences and synthesis. The researcher ensured that her experiences, opinions and background were not reflected in the data analysis through her awareness of their presence and through self-reflection of the biases. The themes were shared with participants to ensure their concurrence with those that developed from the research. The participants through this process noted no discrepancies.

### **Trustworthiness**

In conducting qualitative studies, the researcher desired to study the phenomena of interest to enable others to utilize the results for further improvement of the area of interest. In this study, the researcher desired to create a study that provided information on the improvement of change processes to allow for sustainability of the change, while focusing on the structures present to accomplish this task. To ensure this is the case, the researcher endeavored to ensure the credibility or trustworthiness of the study, allowing the readers to utilize the information obtained from the study to make future applications or improvements.

To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, the researcher embarked on several processes. The recognition of the researcher's biases and the bracketing process with those biases allowed the researcher the opportunity to view the data without the partiality of her views of the phenomena (Carpenter, 2007).

In an effort to ensure the credibility of the findings, the researcher followed several measures. The researcher provided a reliability measure by providing participants with a copy of their interviews to ensure the researcher captured an accurate representation of the data collected. In addition, the researcher also maintained an inventory of the recorded materials, the transcribed interviews and the notes from the coding and analysis procedures. The findings of the study were made available to all participants as a member-checking process, in which the participants reviewed the findings and determine their views of accuracy (Creswell, 2013). To further ensure the credibility of the study, the researcher also took part in a process described by Creswell (2013) as peer debriefing, allowing a research peer to review the findings and question the researcher to ensure the understanding for future readers.

### **Summary**

Through a qualitative study founded in phenomenology, the researcher examined the perspectives and experiences of school administrators in various change process within their school district. The researcher further examined these experiences to investigate school administrators' perspectives on the utilization of present structures in the process of change to sustain the change presented. A sample of 10 school administrators was interviewed using a semi-structured interview process and a follow-up procedure to gather data. To maintain the credibility of the research, the researcher utilized various methods including inventory of data materials, member checking, bias bracketing, interviewee review, and peer debriefing. The data collected was coded and then synthesized to determine themes, patterns, and understandings. By conducting this study, the researcher presumed the study's findings would assist in allowing school

districts to better sustain the change efforts they employ and determine the value of change components in sustaining these change efforts.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **OVERVIEW OF STUDY**

Chapter 4 illustrates the findings and analysis of the data collected in the study on change processes within Coastal City School District. The researcher within this study examined the perceptions and experiences of administrators in the district regarding the change processes. The study further examined the factors that the administrators perceived to be responsible for the sustainability of the change process, particularly focusing on the perspectives regarding professional learning in the process.

Developed using the interviews of administrators within the Coastal City School District, the researcher was able to identify several themes regarding the change initiatives within the district in the past 10 years, indicating what the administrators perceived to play into the sustainability of the initiatives. The themes developed from these interviews included: collaborative structures for community, continuous professional learning, needs-driven focus and purpose, assessment processes and accountability through non-negotiables, and integral focus in all areas of work. The themes that emerged were drawn from the chronicled interviews, as well as the private notes of extended discussions ensued from the interviews. The researcher utilized an A-priority coding system to categorize the interview questions, based on the experiences of the researcher as an administrator within Coastal City Schools. Utilizing the transcripts and the notes, the researcher then employed a coding system to identify “chunks” within the categories of the data. The codes were further analyzed to develop the themes regarding perceptions and experiences of the change initiatives and the sustainability of

said change initiatives. From these themes, the researcher was able to synthesize the five identified findings from this study regarding the sustainability of change initiatives within a district and the potential applications of the findings.

### **Findings**

Change initiatives, including cultural or instructional, occur in schools with the intention of creating change for achievement. This change could be initiated to enact success or improvement in the area of student achievement or create a cultural change that will transform the status quo. Within a ten-year history of Coastal City Schools, no less than ten change initiatives have been documented. These change initiatives were activated to create change in the district through district-wide cultural changes. The participants of this study were selected based on their administrative leadership within the district throughout the 10-year period. Each of the initiatives that were documented within this district during 10-year period was utilized for the purpose of this study. Participants were given the opportunity to include any additional change initiatives they could recollect during this timeframe. The change initiatives originally included varied in duration throughout the Coastal City School District. While the perceptions of the each initiative varied, each of the administrators was present in the Coastal City School District in an administrative role during its duration. This study sought the perceptions and experiences of the school administrators with these change initiatives with the intent that the school administrators had experienced in some form each of the change initiatives. As leaders of various buildings, these school administrators' experiences were examined to determine the experiences of the district in sustaining the change initiatives or not sustaining them per se. As leaders charged with leading their school

staff, the school administrators were viewed by this study as having an insight or perspective in the charge each initiative assumed within the Coastal City School District.

In gathering the experiences and perceptions of the school administrators in Coastal City School District, the researcher interviewed the participants using questions partitioned into three categories: change initiative roles, individual change initiative experiences, and factors of sustainability.

### **Administrative Roles: Change Initiatives**

The first section of the interview involved asking administrators about their role or level of leadership in the change initiative experiences. Administrators were asked to review the list of initiatives that had occurred in Coastal City School District within the past 10 years. Each administrator was asked to place a check next to each initiative they experienced as participant and an X next to each initiative they experienced as a leader. Administrators were selected for the study based on their administrative experience in the district, seeking only administrators with a minimum of ten years of experience within Coastal City School District. The researcher sought to determine the role each administrator perceived they held with each initiative. As an administrator within the district, the researcher anticipated the administrators would identify their roles as leaders for those initiatives they deemed effective or sustainable. Within the ten interviews conducted, the researcher noted the administrators marked only one to three initiatives as a leader and nine to eleven as a participant. Table 1.1 shows how many administrators identified themselves as participants and leaders with each change initiative.

Table 1: *Participant and Leader Experiences*

Change initiative	Administrators indicating experience as a participant	Administrators indicating experience as a leader
FISH Philosophy	7	4
Good to Great	9	4
Get the Right People on the Bus	4	3
Who Moved My Cheese?	7	3
Professional Learning Communities	6	10
True North	8	0
The Carrot Principle	3	1
QBQ: The Question Behind the Question	8	4
Lift	0	1
Bucket Filling	8	8
Marzano Strategies	9	7

**Roles as leader and participants.** In indicating which change initiative the administrators experienced as a participant and/or as a leader, the researcher found when administrators identified with the experience as a leader they also inclined to identify themselves as a participant as well. However, several administrators indicated several initiatives within their checklist that were only viewed through the experience as a



participant. One of the ten administrators, Mr. Identity indicated experiencing most of the initiatives as a leader without indication he was a participant as well. During this phase of the interview, the administrators were asked to simply mark the experiences as directed leading to little dialogue about the experiences during this time. One of the school level administrators, Ms. Frank indicated the list was difficult for her as she could remember them but nothing about them; stating, "I'll be honest with you. I think all have good pieces to them. I think we spend too much time on programs. And programs are bullshit. So I may have disengaged in some of these. But I showed up to the meeting." Further dialogue was achieved in the subsequent categories of the interview.

Based on the information gathered during this category, the researcher was able to identify three change initiatives that the majority of administrators identified with as leaders. These three initiatives are Professional Learning Communities, Bucket Filling, and Marzano Strategies. In these three initiatives, seven or more administrators identified their experiences with these initiatives as leadership experience. With Professional Learning Communities, all ten administrators viewed themselves as a leader during this experience. Of those ten administrators, six also identified themselves as participants in this experience. This was the only initiative that all participants identified themselves as leaders during the change initiative experience.

To ensure the list of change initiatives was comprehensive, administrators were asked if there any other whole scale initiatives within this district not included on the list. Three administrators indicated they had been involved in the evocative coaching program as a leader. One of these administrators, Ms. Structure, also indicated she had experienced the visible learning initiative recently as a leader. Each of the administrators

that made additions were asked to be sure to include these as options for further questions. All other administrators indicated no other initiatives to add to the list at this time.

### **Personal Change Initiative Experiences**

The second category of the participant's interviews spoke to the experiences the participants had with the initiatives listed. Previously the participants were asked to mark each change initiative as a participant and/or a leader in their personal experience with those initiatives. This category of the interview concentrates on the specifics of the experiences of each participant with the listed initiatives. The researcher allowed the participants to speak on the initiatives that they had indicated having experience with. The goal of this category within the interview was to determine the perspectives of the participants with the initiatives. Deriving from their experiences, the researcher sought to determine common themes among the administrators' experiences.

**“Textbook” initiatives.** During this category of the interview, many of the participants expressed that their experiences with several of the initiatives consisted of little more than being given a book and asked to read. The information regarding these types of initiatives provided little detail from the participants regarding these “textbook” initiatives. Mr. Identity, now on the district level, described these types of experiences:

With Good to Great, all I remember, as I was just coming in, was specific chapter references to a book read. With True North, I remember mentions of a book read with [the deputy superintendent], but I cannot tell you any last components from the book. QBQ was the one book that I remember reading and thinking I hope we do more with this book but then we didn't that I recall. I remember it being about

personal accountability and thinking that would be great because we were losing people and people were doing more. But then we never did any more with it.

And the Carrot Principle, I remember the book and I know I have it and that I was supposed to keep it. I don't remember anything about it. I probably still have it.

School administrators often struggled to remember details concerning the initiatives even when they were present for the introduction. Mr. Identity further stated:

I have no idea...I've heard of the Carrot Principle but I have no idea. I can take a guess. I remember True North. This was years ago when [director] was in Human Resources. I know somewhat what it is about but I never really embraced it. I don't even know if I was in a leadership role back then. I know we were handed the book and I never read the book. I know the basic tenets of it because [principal] uses it a lot in his leadership. Lift I have no clue. You recall that?

Ms. Complete further describes her experience with several of the initiatives as a collection of book that she has gained throughout the years:

I remember so many of these by the books that cover my bookshelf. I know I was there to receive the books but I do not recall many of the principles within the books. Instead of getting trained and prepared on the initiatives for several of these, they became the collection books that followed me from school to school, collecting space on my bookshelf. There may have been merit to many of these but it was never explained or the values never share when we were given the books.

Another school level administrator, Ms. Pleasant, with 11 years of experience, indicated her struggled with the introduction of the books and lack of follow-up afterward:

Many of them you try to make that the theme for the year. With all of them except for PLC, it kind of fades out by January. And you have to know of do a reintroduction the week you come back from winter break or the professional development days between semesters. Then it goes good to March and then it's gone. Who Moved My Cheese was kind of a beginning of the year thing. It was more like a self-assessment piece.

One administrator, Mr. Impact, with over 15 years administration experience within Coastal City School District indicated a similar yearly trend with initiatives, indicating a concern with the impact it did or didn't have on the school:

I participated in them because it was required by the district. Now, the results or the impact that it has had on the district or the school, most of them had little to none because it always seemed like we were looking for something new every year. We didn't have anything that had any sustainability or longevity that we stuck with and used within the district. Now Professional Learning Communities that has had the most impact of all that you have listed on this list.

Mr. Identity, with experience in multiple levels at Coastal City School District explained the experience of creating change based on the latest trend before developing the previous initiatives:

As a whole, based on my experience, and my experience has only been in [Coastal City School District] but I have friends that are throughout this state and other states and it's very similar, we are quick to jump on the new thing without seeing what we first thought was going to be great and seeing it through. We are not giving it time to actually see if it's going to work. We move onto the next

best thing. We spend an inordinate amount of time and taxpayers dollars on the next best thing. And I don't think it's to the benefit our students and families. There are a lot of things out there that work that are very simplistic. But often times we have to be so complex and sound so smart. And we are trying to integrate something into a school system when in fact if we just stuck to what we know is working and grow from there I think we would see even greater gains. I have no idea...I've heard of the Carrot Principle but I have no idea. I can take a guess. I remember True North. This was years ago when [director] was in Human Resources. I know somewhat what it is about but I never really embraced it. I don't even know if I was in a leadership role back then. I know we were handed the book and I never read the book. I know the basic tenets of it because [principal] uses it a lot in his leadership. Lift I have no clue. You recall that?

In the sustainability factor category of the findings, the researcher will revisit the idea of the "textbook" initiatives. Throughout the interviews the researcher affirmed that administrators often noted experiences with these initiatives; however, they had difficulty sharing specifics of these initiatives as they remembered little beyond being given the textbook to read.

**Initiatives with personal connections.** When asked to describe their experiences of the initiatives, several administrators spoke of finding personal connections to the initiatives presented over the years. These experiences were described as experiences that applied to their personal leadership and their assigned school. These initiatives were often the change initiatives that had lower numbers in recalled experiences among the participants.

Ms. Frank with more than 15 years as an administrator communicated her experiences with a particular initiative:

I do think there were threads of things that were strong. Like Good To Great had some strong threads to it and so did Move My Cheese. That was one that I always tried to apply at [my school] but I didn't know there was a book about it until I read it later. But I think that was a really important when I took over that school because it was not in a really good place. There was high turn over and the kids were kind of off the chain. There was that balance of creating change and moving some folks. I became more of cheese mover as I was there because that was only way to create change. That's the basic tenets of it.

Mr. Identity, with more than 15 years experience in all levels of administration within Coastal City School District describes his experiences with one initiative that connected on a personal level of need:

The book Good to Great, I don't recall us having any training on but instead we were given the book. I remember reading it in preparation of my principalship at [school]. So I introduced all the principles of the book Good to Great to the staff there. I made sure we had the right people on the bus and making certain we faced the brutal facts in ensuring that we truly understood that good was the enemy of great and not settling with just being good. I introduced the whole concept of being competitive and saying that we're going to ensure that our school is known for academic excellence. We could compare ourselves to like school and constantly compete with them in friendly ways. What person wouldn't want an administration or school to say we're competing to be the best

for your students or for your child? I sort of infused that with them along with some of the other things, because they needed some positive reinforcements like the bucket filling piece or opportunities where we were catching staff members doing great things. We shared that in faculty meetings or in newsletters or on the marquee when the opportunity presented itself. So that Good to Great philosophy I think they are still using over there because it permeated throughout that building during my tenure there. Even parents remember it. Because even in speeches or things that I gave had the Good to Great feel or even had some tenets in it throughout the presentation. That is the one that still resonates with me today because I have to look at not ever settling with mediocrity. And so it's funny we didn't have training but this one was more meaningful to me as a leader than a lot of the other things we have had training on.

Additionally, Ms. Green spoke of her experience with one particular initiative based on the need it filled for her:

For some reason bucket filling is standing out the most for me. I remember Bucket Filling because I was just getting to Coastal City Schools during that time. I remember the big buckets we had to have on the back of our door or on our walls. I remember being conscious every time that I filled someone's bucket. That I would make sure I said something positive to a teacher and not something negative especially when we were going over observations. I had to make sure I said something positive and not something negative. It stuck with me because I was new and because it was something I was looking for myself from my supervisors.

The participant's experiences as noted in the interviews indicated a personal connection administrators often make to initiatives. Demonstrated in these interviews, the researcher established that with each initiative administrators are introduced to, the potential to make a personal connection with the initiative is possible. The researcher was able to ascertain that if the change initiatives made the connection to the administrator through personal need as a leader or through a school need. While one initiative designated as a personal connection with one administrator may not have been recognized as a significant experience with all or most of the participants, it was significant to the particular administrator. This significance to each participant was thematically present across the participants as a whole. Throughout the interviews, the researcher was able to see the personal association administrators felt to particular initiatives, even when the change initiative was not popularly remembered as a whole.

In conclusion, the themes developed in the personal experiences category of the interviews indicated that "textbook" initiatives and introduced within the past year impacted the administrators little in their leadership of their schools. The presentation of these initiatives was found to be ineffective in their impact on the administrators and their ability to carry this initiative into their school. In addition, this category demonstrated a theme in personal association of the initiatives. Administrators were found to have demonstrated the use of and persistence with the change initiatives if they made a personal connection with the initiative based on their own personal leadership need or school need. It was demonstrated in the interviews that the personal connection was often self-driven and not compelled by the district's management of the change initiative.



### **Sustainability Factors**

Category 3 centered specifically on the factors or structures that administrators perceived to impact effectiveness of the change initiatives. Participants were asked to identify an initiative that they viewed as effective from the list of change initiatives at Coastal City Schools. Each participant was asked to discuss the introduction, preparation, structures, and management of the initiative they deemed effective. In addition, participants were also asked to specify which initiative they considered ineffective, as well as deliberate on the introduction, preparation, structures, and management of this initiative. To conclude the interview, administrators participating were asked to describe their views on what makes initiatives successful or unsuccessful. With the responses from the interview questions within this category, the researcher anticipated gaining information to derive themes regarding the perceptions of factors that are significant to sustainability. It was the researcher's intentions to not only examine those initiatives perceived as effective by the administrators, but also to determine what aspects of the initiatives were perceived to be missing or what factors were present, allowing the administrator to view an initiative as ineffective. It was the researcher's goal to establish the factors a district would need to initiate and implement a sustainable and effective change initiative as perceived by administrators within the district.

In the first question of this category, the researcher asked the participants to identify one initiative that they deemed effective of the list of recent change initiatives within Coastal City School District. The participants were also asked to further discuss this initiative and describe how it was introduced, what made it unique, what structures were in place, and how they were prepared for the initiative.

Of the administrators interviewed, 9 of the 10 participants stated that Professional Learning Communities was the most effective change initiative initiated and implemented within Coastal City Schools. The significance of this commonality in perceptions of the administrators' experiences allowed the researcher to clearly identify the themes that developed from the interviews. The clear consensus of opinion from the participants provided a clearer focus on the descriptions of the elements in place for this initiative, allowing the researcher to identify the common thematic structures in place for the initiative deemed effective in Coastal City Schools. The researcher was able to identify three themes from the interviews on the effective change initiative: collaborative structures, non-negotiable fidelity, and collective, continual training with direct application.

**Collaborative communities.** In identifying the effective change initiative and discussing the structures and elements contributing to the effectiveness, the researcher found that administrators recognized collaborative structures as an element crucial in the effectiveness of the initiative. Administrators perceived that the element of collaboration, was an element of the initiative prominent in the determination of effectiveness from the administrator's perception. This collaboration was viewed as occurring on all levels, including teachers, administrators, and among schools. Administrators discussed the value of collaboration in its role in the change initiative. A current school level administrator, Mr. Impact, shared this value,

I think that from my experience the PLC has had the most impact on my school as a whole because it has promoted collaboration amongst grade levels, core levels, and the entire school. Matter of fact, we met today in reference our school

learning plan and the PLC model is one that we want to build on – collaborating, meeting our objectives and goals and initiatives for the 15-16 school year. That's one that has some sustainability moving forward. The rest of them are fly by night.

Another, Ms. Frank, explained the importance of collaboration directly through her personal experience with various changes,

It was interesting coming from [another high school] for ten years. [That place] was so wonderful because it was open classrooms. So if all hell was breaking loose in the classroom next door, teacher collectively helped one another. It was the nature of the school. So that was a very good thing. Seeing that kind of communal helping of each other. They common planning and common planning rooms where they all each lunch together. So they were very good at nurturing and supporting one another. Really brand new teachers could be successful. It was really important in the PLC and was there even before we even talked about Professional Learning Communities. When I was getting my masters I had gone over to [another school in another district] and it had many of the same principles and profile as [the school I was in]. Fast forward and go to [the school I was principal for] teachers were teaching more individually. Of course they had the teaming. So it was more about personalities and whether they would mess together and not eat the children and the parents when they came in. It was a school where teachers would look at you like why are you in my classroom. You are interrupting my instruction. It was very different from [my last school] where teachers were like 'I'm going to do my job but I need 15 to 20 minutes to get

things going.’ There was a whole lot more relationship piece there. Fast forward to [my next school] where everybody is very isolated and lots of competing and very strong personalities. There were really kind of tough kids at that point and teachers were like ‘what the hell is the admin doing, they are all kind of clueless.’ The perception was that the kids were out of control and the teachers were just like ‘I’m doing my thing’. So getting [the school] to work, as a professional learning community was the one thing that I really said we are going to do this. I had gone to see Rick DuFour, a very long time ago before I was at the school, in New Orleans. The whole pyramid to intervention thing and working together to help kids was needed. If something was going to happen at [the school] it was going to be hell or high water.

Another participant, Mr. Identity, added that his experience defined collaborative practices through shared experiences to impact the entire district for success,

So if you look at having those CLTs, smart goals, and short/long term goals, and embrace that concept of being interdependent. It’s not so that [principal name] can do what’s best for [school name] and she’s not sharing that information but that [principal name] can do what’s best for [school name] and is sharing those best practices to what’s best for Coastal City Schools to shine. A kindergarten teacher has made great gains with literacy in isolation but she’s not sharing what she’s doing with her grade level and team. Whereas with PLC, what she’s doing is not looking at herself being success but she’s looking at the entire team or the school being successful and that would benefit the school overall looking at the literacy piece. The same would hold true if you’re not doing well in kindergarten

or first grade, let's bring in some folks from other schools to showcase what we are doing in effort to ensure that all our students in Coastal City Schools are doing well. Having CLTs with principals, there may be quite a few things that you are good and at and could share experiences and wealth of information. And in turn someone could share something they are really good at. Even as a new principal, that person may bring new ideas to table that you never thought about. You have that wisdom from that experience that you can share. 'This is what I've done in the past.' Not that I'm saying you should do this because you know your school and community best but you might want to look at a couple of these options. Even as the secondary principals, we had meetings that were a smaller group and we created the agenda, things we wanted to talk about and we had norms on the agenda. We sat down and met and there was a lot of information sharing.

One administrator, Ms. Natural affirmed collaboration in her discussion based on the conversations and discussions that ensued from working together,

I would probably say the PLC initiative. It has forced groups to communicate. It's forced...forced may not be the right word. It's allowed teams to focus on that we are not longer doing this for ourselves and shutting the door. There are some teams that work really well together and some that are so entrenched in "this is my lesson and my work". For the teams that have worked so well together it is such a validation of what they are doing. I always look to some of the lower grades that it is a matter of breathing. They did PLC before it was called PLC. They were coming together and sharing ideas.

Ms. Green, an elementary level administrator discussed the collaboration supported through data results that drove conversations,

So if you're on a team together, you have someone working with you to lean on. You're working as a team. One school I worked at, we had a teacher that didn't want to participate. And when the data came out, the teachers that worked together had scores that were phenomenal and hers were not. When we went to the data meeting and asked what did you do, she admitted that she should've been with them. It forced her to see it. It was only one nine weeks, but she got it. So you see the results and it's based upon data. When we saw what wasn't working, we could ask what are you doing and how are you doing it. And we could remediate students the best. Based upon the fact this teacher said I am good at this. When you hear that kind of communication among the teachers, you get excited.

Throughout their discussion on effective change initiatives, administrators discussed how Professional Learning Communities support the positive benefits of the collaborative structures and nature,. They discussed the benefits of teachers and administrators working together to succeed in schools. The researcher discovered administrators feel collaboration is a vital aspect to success in their schools as demonstrated through observations of the teams and the work accomplished. Several administrators spoke of structures designed to allow teachers to collaborate. They discussed the awareness that developed from teachers concerning the benefits of working together. Throughout the interviews, the researcher noticed the use of the term "forced", such as forced to work

together or forced to collaborate, but several administrators were quick to clarify that “forced” was not used to designate coercion.

**Non-negotiable structures.** Throughout the interviews, the researcher was able to recognize another theme that developed from the administrator’s discussions. In their discussions of effective change initiatives, the participants noted the use of non-negotiables with the initiative as a structure supporting the effectiveness of the change initiative, particularly in Professional Learning Communities. The participants spoke of these non-negotiables as a means for ensuring fidelity in the initiative. Ms. Structure noted this structure in reference to fidelity,

And then if the administrators are monitoring or non-monitoring then you don’t know if the implementation is accurate because you really do have to watch it happen and set the structures up. But the structures are what make the right conversations happen. The mindset goes with the conversation and the structure goes with the components, but all of those have to be there. So effectively if everybody in a particular setting with the leaders understood the purpose of the division as a PLC and your school as a PLC then the structures help answer those four questions in making sure that kids are learning.

Ms. Natural added that her experiences with setting structures within a school she was charged with leading,

When I came here, they had a set time frame. The only thing I did was scheduling wise to make sure it had a better fit in their daily schedule. Maybe one team was on Tuesday and one was on a Friday and they had a different resource. I made sure we had a consistent day, either a catch up day with no resource or a

double block for resource to meet. A lot of the logistics were taken care of. They knew to expect an administrator to attend, not facilitate but just to be “I’m going to Google if you have a question, if you need data I’m going to help with that piece to keep the process moving. There were things like that in place. I did bring an agenda to them and they are expected to send notes back to me and we house them year-to-year. I don’t know that they go back and look at them but that was formalized here.

Ms. Second responded about the importance of fidelity in executing the actions of an initiative,

I think if done correctly the Professional Learning Communities has been very effective. It has to be done with fidelity. You can’t just say your meeting but when you have those meetings they are meaningful and that your discussing the curriculum and the pacing, the common assessments, the intervention strategies for your students, and your properly documenting all that and keeping data on what is working for your particular group and what isn’t working.

Mr. Identity further indicted the importance of non-negotiables and the need to revisit those before the initiative falters,

Out of the list if I had to pick one I think if we embrace the Professional Learning Communities model the way that is suppose to be and have some non-negotiables. I understand that we need some autonomy, but if we have a really solid framework. So that when you come to Coastal City Schools that PLC framework looks like this, not when you come to Coastal it looks like 30 different things because everybody is doing something different. Those essential questions that



outline in that PLC model, we've gotten away from that but if we go back to it.

We are not too far removed that we can't go back to it.

The researcher noted this set of structures was deemed important by administrators in demonstrating the initiatives effectiveness and importance in the work that was conducted with Professional Learning Communities within Coastal City Schools.

Throughout the interviews, the researcher observed that the participants indicated the non-negotiables within the Professional Learning Communities model referred to components such as time, meeting focus questions, agendas, monitoring systems, and documentation. The participants noted that if these structures were in place, the effectiveness of the program was more substantial in their experience. In addition, the researcher discerned from the interviews that the administrators who provided structures within the change initiative created a clear expectation from the district for the implementation of the program within their school.

**Continual professional learning.** Another theme developing from the discussion of effective change initiatives for this school district was the use of a professional learning system for staff to develop their knowledge of Professional Learning Communities, while working within their school and among their colleagues. Throughout the interviews, the researcher noted the administrators communicated the importance of the development of their staff's knowledge over a continuum as a crucial aspect of the effectiveness of this initiative. The administrators spoke of continually developing the staff for the next level of what they needed to learn about the initiative, as well as the ability to learn as school team. Ms. Green stated,

The reason I think it was the most effective was because it was everyone. I think the teachers had more of a participatory role in everything with Professional Learning Communities. There was a buy in from teachers, administrators. We were all learning it together, making sure that it worked. It was a learning process for all of us that went through it. But I think now that we know it, it is more effective and it is getting results with the students. It is a collaborative learning process that promotes student success to me.

She further noted the “learning through working” demonstration of professional learning within the change initiative,

I remember it was introduced at the second school when I was in [Coastal City Schools]. I remember everyone wasn't – how I can I put this – we didn't know it well enough to be telling one another what to do, but we actually had the trainers come in and work with the teachers and administrators. They watched us in groups and how we interacted with one another to make sure everything was going well. By the time I got to my fourth school, we were looking and the teachers actually stated, “We don't know what we are doing”. They said, “Since this was a while back and no one has revisited it, and we wanted to learn all over again and be more effective.” It was powerful at my last school because we did it and the administration at the time didn't make it a priority but when the new administration came on they validated it by saying ‘we did this at my last school’.

We learned it then bit by bit and did it correctly.

Mr. Impact explained his experience with a change initiative that developed the participants throughout the implementation,

Some of things that are on list, we heard about them once and then it kind of became ‘you don’t say nothing, I won’t say nothing’ thing. But with PLC we had the initial introduction then professional development meeting then we had professional development with our staff then they introduced different phases or branches of professional development or check-ins that related to PLC model. And for the three years or more that we’ve been doing it, it has continued to be part of our conversation as we move forward. I was prepared the same as the other administrators. I was trained at our school leadership conferences. I was also trained by the PLC originators- the DuFours. Then we were given bits and pieces to build on and more forward with that model.

He further noted that experience provided a “work while learning” type structure,

With PLC, I remember learning in a work session. And that’s why I think it had a bigger impact than those on the list because it wasn’t just one particular way. We got it in a way that a guy like me could understand. Don’t preach it teacher. I got the opportunity to see first hand and in action how this could help be a better leader or teacher and a lifelong learner.

One participant stated the impact that learning throughout the development of the initiative had versus gaining front-loaded knowledge,

We went through several professional developments with Professional Learning Communities. I didn’t go on any of the trips. But meeting here with the DuFours and having the DuFours develop our professional development and then we developed those for our schools with [PD coordinator]. We developed those over a course of several years and introduce different components of the Professional

Learning Communities. It was a train the trainer kind of format. That professional development evolved as time went on.

Ms. Second added her experience with transitioning schools and providing various levels of professional learning based on need,

With Professional Learning Communities, I had just come from a high school where we had just implemented PLCs. They were all functioning and meeting regularly. When I got over here, they said that they were doing PLC but they weren't really sure what it meant. They hadn't really moved into CLTs. The first year I was here we talked about CLTs and what you would accomplish. We talked about unpacking the standards and that we were looking at the curriculum together and what we were teaching. We talked about pacing and that we were all on the same pacing. We also talked about common assessments and had teachers make common assessments. We ensured that they were not exactly alike but were sharing results. We've gone through the process and pretty much gotten [school] caught up to where the other high schools were. So we had professional development to start and then more professional development over the next two years.

Continuing on that notion, Ms. Structure spoke on working while learning through consistent sessions,

One year it seemed that it was about people getting the components...like we know that collaborative learning teams are a part of this process. How do you do yours? What support do you need? And a planning piece because people never have time. One time I presented on...I presented on common formative

assessments. This is what they are and this is what they are not and that played into the whole learning part of the Professional Learning Communities. And people would all walk away and make some decisions about things. And I have seen first hand where teams that collaborate and get the ‘let’s talk about the learning versus teams that talk about the kids’ make more gains. Then when you are not talking about it at all you have superstar teachers the data is not there to support what one person is doing by themselves. I’ve seen that purpose be two fold...get the information, collaborate with people outside of your building and plan. Assess and plan.

Administrators discussed the value in their experiences in creating an environment of learning for their staff that was continuous in nature, providing learning while working, and developing the staff and teams together in a collaborative manner. Study participants spoke of the value in continuing to build on what teachers can learn versus the “learn and go do” method. Their experiences indicated the initiative was deemed more effective when schools could continually come together as a team and learn for the next level of success.

Throughout the interviews, the researcher was able to develop the themed structures that administrators perceived to be necessary for effectiveness in the change initiatives implemented or induced within the school district. The researcher was able to determine the significance of continual ‘at work’ learning, fidelity of the program through non-negotiables control, and collaborative structures. Administrators perceived these themed aspects as crucial to the sustainability of an initiative directed by a district.

To further investigate the sustainability factors of change initiatives, the researchers also inquired with participants concerning ineffective change initiatives to determine what structures were or were not in place. With upwards of 10 change initiatives within the past 10 years, it was important to examine not only what factors perceived to impact sustainability but also consider the factors present or absent in an initiative plan. Through this examination, the researcher looked to identify the factors impacting sustainability of the initiative.

In the second question of this section, the researcher asked the participants to identify and discuss the least effective change initiative from Coastal City School District. They were additionally asked to discuss the structures in place for this initiative, its induction, implementation and groundwork. The researcher's purpose of this discussion with participants was to identify the structures and constraints that were lost in the introduction or implementation of the initiative, causing it to be labeled an ineffective experience for administrators. Examination of the interviews revealed two themes regarding ineffective change initiatives and the sustainability of those initiatives. The themes the researcher identified were independence beyond introduction and lack of needs driven purpose.

**Monitoring structures for fidelity.** In examining the ineffective initiatives identified by administrators in Coastal City Schools District, the researcher discovered administrators recognized the independence of the initiative beyond the introduction phase as a structure contributing to the ineffectiveness. The administrators' interviews revealed the structure of the initiative frequently involved introducing the initiative to the administrative staff and then allowing the leaders to determine the course of action on

their own. Administrators also noted that the independence of the implementation often meant no follow up on the districts' part to ensure its use or execution. One administrator noted, "I don't see the Who Moved My Cheese as a division wide focus. It was here you go read this and do with it whatever you want. Whereas, with the PLC it was 'these pieces are non negotiable'." Another administrator indicated the lack of maintenance in several initiatives noting this ineffectiveness in her statement, "I don't remember any meaningful conversations or studies or follow-ups. I remember a lot of things but I don't remember that." Ms. Pleasant explained her frustration with initiatives that had no follow-through,

I still don't think it was the best use of time. Like with True North, I zoned out.

QBQ was when I became a new administrator. True North was like Oprah's Book Club. It was referred to throughout the year in our meetings. I remember being told to read it and I never did. I remember getting QBQ but because we weren't required to do anything with it, it just ended up on the bookshelf.

Because we weren't required to do anything with it, it just ended up on a shelf. I think the stuff we are required to.... like evocative coaching, I don't think I would have learned anything except I had to.

Ms. Second stated the lack of development and vagueness of implementation were contributing factor,

The FISH philosophy I remember going over one or two times and we tried to do activities using the FISH model. But that was one of those initiatives that we did and I haven't heard anything else about it. There hasn't been any development on it. No check-ins have occurred. No one has asked how it's going or if there were

any results from that. I am even very vague as to what we were doing. But there has been no follow-up.

And Mr. Identity responded regarding one initiative that provided continuous learning but lacked the follow-up and monitoring of those learning opportunities,

I think the things that they did; you could tell were kind of stretched out. I think it's their fault. As a leadership team, we did that. We stretched it out for a whole year. I think a lot of what they did, maybe it would've had more value to it, had you not done such small chunks like that. Maybe it could've been done in a couple of session at most. Then the people could've done some follow-up, instead of spreading it out. It was like you're going to give me a little bit of this chapter and yet you're still not giving me anything. When is it coming? When is it coming? I think towards the end it had a little bit more value for me personally but it was too little too late because you had already lost me from the previous ten sessions. Even now, where is the follow up? If it's so valuable, why are we not still talking about [it].

Mr. Identity offered the following statement concerning the absence of any follow-up structures in initiatives that were introduced:

The ones that were not successful are the ones where we're handed a book and said read this and we'll come back to it. There was little to no follow up to this. It was as if folks appear to need to spend money, so they buy these books for them and hope they read and talk about them at some point. So I can't recall, technically, I can't recall The Carrot Principle or Lift. Maybe I was somewhere, because I don't recall. But the one I see be not effective are the ones with no



follow-up. It was a book that was given and we'll talk about it the next meeting. And we probably did talk about it. But I see no value in things like that because you are not being practical in how you're applying those things.

Throughout the interviews, administrators perceived the lack of follow-up or the independence in the implementation played a significant role in the ineffectiveness of the change initiative. The administrators discussed the frustration in receiving initiatives that never made it past the point of introduction. The researcher noted the theme of lack of follow-up within an ineffective initiative was relevant in connection with the theme of nonnegotiable structures within the effective initiatives. Administrators' experiences revealed the determination of effectiveness or ineffectiveness is based upon the development of the initiative or the follow-up as directed from the district.

**Needs driven purpose.** Another theme developing from the administrators' interviews concerning ineffective initiatives was the districts' inability to drive the purpose of the initiative through the needs of the schools. The researcher found administrators often indicated that the initiatives did not fit the needs of the school. Administrators shared their frustration with the initiatives' purpose not fitting with the needs of their schools.

Ms. Going noted her frustration with one initiative and how it did not fit the necessities of the school, "There maybe certain people in the district that need that on how to talk or treat people. Have that candid conversation with those people. Address them with the people that need them. Send them on training or whatever they need." Ms. Pleasant explained the disconnect between the initiative and the needs of the school,

To be honest with you, I can't say that it was unsuccessful. I don't think we really tried it. Like the true north, it was nothing we needed at the time. I think that is something we need to be careful with at the time of these district wise initiatives. What I need at my school is not the same as what you need at your school. We don't have the same needs. I may need true north but that may not be what you need. It is the same with evocative coaching. I may not have a need for learning how to have difficult conversations and may not need to sit in these sessions. I liked getting together with my colleagues but I don't have a problem with having a conversation. I need to know how to say it or how to say tough conversations, not provide feedback. I don't think it was best use of our time.

There was good information but it wasn't something that we all needed to know.

Ms. Frank described experiences with knowing how a particular initiative fit the needs of the schools she led,

A lot of it was we got the book and now take it back to your faculty. I think that one of the problems that I always faced with was what do you want me to do at [this school]. We have a school that the [HR Director] said we will not go into it, the leadership team will not go into it. It's out of control. The [special] program was a mess. So part of it was I'm not good at not buying into it. What do you want me to do? I mean I know the three big things I do and I will try to do those very well. But I don't know if it fits into what you're doing. I would go and smile and nod and read the book and discuss the book and then go back and do what I did. I think it makes people schizophrenic and it frustrates the shit out of me. It frustrates the hell out of teachers.

Mr. Identity with experience on all levels explained his experience with one initiative and the decision to implement based on needs,

With evocative coaching, I can't say that it was a total loss because it sort of validated a lot of what some people are doing and I believe it did help some, from the standpoint of them embracing some of those strategies that the presenters had. I just don't know how they came about making the decision that every leader in the division, building leader in the division, needed evocative coaching. I think we need to differentiate a focus of PD for folks; one size does not fit all. I don't know if we got, basically, our monies worth out of it. I think there are some other things we could've done to promote professional growth and development for our administrators.

Mr. Impact described an initiative that did not fit the current need for student achievement,

It wasn't something that I felt that I could get the staff to buy into, because of our needs. It didn't hit me right. Like the PLC, that is something that you know and can see the benefits and the impact it will have division wide and in your school. It fits not only where you work, but if I move it works there too. PLC is PLC. You know you have different levels, different scales but you have that commitment to collaborate. The feel good is all good but nowadays we need something that is going to make a strong impact on student achievement. Not only do I believe in it, but teachers believe in it because they see what we can do and how to utilize our time effectively to help our kids be successful. It seems like the FISH philosophy was a feel good type of initiative. We all want to feel

good but before we can feel good we need to do good. If you do good, you can feel good. I don't even remember training on Fish, if we did it wasn't meaningful because I just recall doing it. While it was presented, I remember thinking how can I use this to impact student achievement.

Throughout interviews, study participants indicated the needs of their schools were crucial in determining the effectiveness of the initiative. The researcher determined through the interviews that if an initiative did not fit the needs of the school or the administrator, the administrator perceived the initiative to be unsuccessful.

The initiatives deemed ineffective as described through administrators' experiences indicated that lack of follow-up and the lack of focus on the school needs played a significant role in the sustainability of the initiatives and the success of those initiatives. Study participants' experiences derived that administrators expressed a need for follow-up structures in initiatives, as well as a clear purpose for the initiative driven by the needs of the schools.

The final question in the category of Sustainability Factors asked participants to describe why some initiatives have continued and why others have ceased to continue. The researcher's purpose was to determine in a focused manner what administrators perceived to be factors in sustainability in whole district initiatives. The researcher determined that the study participants focused on how to sustain the initiatives given within a district. Administrators expressed a clear need for districts to ensure initiatives fit the needs of schools and are assessed often to determine if the results show the fulfillment of those needs. Ms. Green indicated,

I think when you see the results and it's making a positive impact then you want to continue, you want to sustain it. However, when you see it and you don't do anything with it. There might be complaints about it but it goes nowhere. Why continue on the train when you're not going anywhere? When you see that it's working, when you see that it is something positive, that's really good.

Mr. Identity stated his experience with finding the connection between the need and the work of the initiative,

Handing a book with no follow-up is not an effective way. I think the only time that actually does work is when the person is personally interested in and are intrinsically motivated by it. Because it is something that has peaked their interest. I'll go back to when [the previous director of accountability] came to our building. I don't know about you but I made certain that when she was with us I was going to sit there and listen and be part of it because it had value and merit. I think it empowered me to be more articulate about our road map to success as it related to the data.

Ms. Chatter stressed the importance of follow-up through monitoring, "It has to be about the monitoring. So we always know what gets monitored gets done. If any of these things stop getting monitored or another priority hits." Administrators expressed the importance of choosing an initiative that is driven from a district need and is then monitored through data. Ms. Structure described the need to monitor with results driving the initiative to ensure the success has impacted the needs, "There are a lot of great books that we could all be reading right now. But when we look as a division what do we want great leaders to have that would trickle down to impact the kids."

**Primary integral focus.** Within this question, study participants also expressed that sustainability is contingent upon having continual professional learning to create ongoing growth in the area. Administrators further explained that it has to be an integral part of what they do. This was defined as connecting learning and conversations back to the initiative given. This integral work focus pointed toward a need for a primary focus when introducing and implementing an initiative. Ms. Frank explained,

I think it needs to be an integral part of all your core work. I think that's what happens is we never go back and tie it back to...it always has to be the basis of your conversation. Every meeting and training you have has to tie back into it. I think that is the thing we miss. We buy in and pay a 15,000 consulting fee and then we got new shit that next year. It has to be a core foundation for everything we do.

Ms. Pleasant noted an example of a clearly communicated focus within the district,

With PLC, I think the district did a very good job of not sharing it as another initiative but instead they said 'this is how we do business.' I think it waned off this year for some. When we went to the conferences, we came back fired up. I like the way they didn't give it to us all at once. They gave it to us in pieces, in stages, which I think really helped. The school leadership team, the people that went to those training, did an awesome job.

Ms. Second described her experiences with the same initiative to describe the focus that was set by the district around the work being done,

The reason PLC has continued is that it is a good philosophy. We have received a lot of training on it. Our teachers have received a lot of training on it. It is one of

the initiatives by the school system that works and is constantly being developed and added to. When teachers see that we are continuing to add to and build on, that buy in is getting stronger and stronger each year. As long as we continue to relate what we are doing to initiatives and things, how it works into what we already have and what teachers are doing all along. I told teachers ‘you’ve been doing this all along...you just didn’t know that was what it was called.’ The knowledge and practice now has to increase in intensity so the teachers are into it because they do it every day. We have to have that training and support for them.

Mr. Identity expressed the need for the continuation of connecting the work being done to the initiative at hand,

I think as a whole, things are sustained based on the follow-up. And with that program, having someone to serve as a resource to continue to answer questions and look at ways we could continue to reinvigorate people on whatever program or model we are trying to implement at that time. When that doesn’t exist, your interest tends to wane and often time staff observes that in you. They can tell what you are passionate about and what you are not passionate about.

Category 3 focused on sustainability factors. Study participants expressed these factors through descriptions of effective and ineffective initiatives within Coastal City School District. The researcher determined through these experiences, descriptions of ineffective and effective initiatives that successful and sustainable initiatives are contingent upon follow-up structures, collaborative arrangements, non-negotiable elements, and continuous professional learning. Based on administrators’ perceptions and experiences, whole district initiatives are successful and sustainable when these

elements are in place and planned for initially. Administrators expressed that when the district incorporates these components within the initiatives, the administrators perceived them to be lasting and sustainable.

Table 2: *Participant Frequency of Findings*

Themes	Representation in Administrator's Interviews
Collaborative communities	80%
Non-negotiables	60%
Fidelity	50%
Professional learning	80%
Needs driven	80%
Primary integral focus	60%

In conclusion, the 10 interviews theorized that four themes were significant in the sustainability and success of effective initiatives. These five themes were derived from the rich conversations with the school administrators concerning their authentic experiences with whole district initiatives within Coastal City School District. These themes resulted from the common aspects that were revealed in the areas of administrator roles, individual experiences, and sustainability factors.

The interviews conducted in this study resulted in a comprehensive analysis of the Coastal City Schools change initiative history within the past 10 years, as based on the experiences and perceptions of administrators. Participants of this study were asked 6 open-ended questions to determine their experiences with the district's initiatives. The transcribed interviews were then coded to establish the themes that were present from the



compilation of interviews collected. Chapter 5 will present an overview of the study, a discussion of the findings, the researcher's interpretation of the findings and the recommendations for future use.

### **Summary**

In examining the experiences and perceptions of the administrators in regards to the change initiatives occurring within the past 10 years at Coastal City Schools, the researcher found several themes developed from an A-priori coding system used to categorize the questions presented to the participants. The researcher discovered that initiatives introduced and implemented within a district were sustainable when several factors were present, as based on the administrators' experiences. The interviews conducted revealed that the administrators perceived an initiative to be effective when the initiative was designed to include collaborative team organization, non-negotiable structures, and continuous profession learning. Further examination of the ineffective initiatives divulged the need for the district to ensure that initiatives were presented and implemented with monitoring structures for fidelity and a primary focus of the initiatives in all areas of a school's work.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **FINDINGS, INTERPRETATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Study Overview**

The study examined the perceptions and experiences of administrators involved in district-wide change initiatives to determine factors crucial to sustainability. In order to examine these phenomena, the study looked at the experiences of administrators with these initiatives within a ten-year timeframe in one particular district. The researcher sought the experiences of the administrators with specific change initiatives within a specific timeframe. To further investigate their experiences with the district-wide change initiatives, the researcher inquired with participants about their perceptions of change initiatives they deemed successful and unsuccessful. During this inquiry, the researcher probed into their experiences to determine the constructs present or absent within these initiatives. By identifying these constructs, the researcher sought to analyze what factors should be present in order to sustain future district-wide initiatives.

The study explored the structures, the preparation, the introduction practices, and implementation procedures of the change initiatives through in-depth examination of the initiatives that participating administrators found to be successful and unsuccessful throughout their duration in Coastal City School District. The researcher found four themes relevant in the sustainability of the initiatives through the analysis of the interviews of the 10 administrators within the district with experiences as a leader during the ten-year timeframe of change initiatives. These themes were derived from the direct experiences of the administrators through their interviews with the researcher. Chapter 5

concentrates on the analysis of the results, as well as the recommendations for future use in research and practice.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Schools today are tasked with more than just teaching students the curriculum. School districts in today's educational world are instead tasked with ensuring that all students learn and are successful. This level of accountability in recent times has school districts searching for change geared at creating success. Districts are charged with finding a means for increasing student achievement and in doing so looked to change their current practices. Districts often employ change initiatives to enact change for improvement. This employment of change is not a single event, but instead is a process involving a series of phases (Fullan, 1993, 2001, 2007; Hall & Hord, 2001; Huberman & Miles 1984; Kotter, 2007; Levin, 1947; MckInsey & Company, 2008; Prosci, 2006). Change in organizations is a widely researched topic, but the research details many various theories of change (Adelman & Taylor, 2007; Fullan, 2001, 2007; Fullan et al., 2005; Geijsel & Meijers, 2005; Hall & Hord, 2001, 1987; Huberman & Miles 1984; Myrick et al., 1994; Schmuck & Runkel, 1985). While the research is vast for change processes and theories, the sustainability of change is an area in need of further examination. In addition, the research on structures, such as professional learning or training, in order to sustain the change is a need as well.

With the demand school districts face rapidly increasing in this era of accountability, school districts are exploring new means for increasing student achievement. With each induction of change, the district's goal is to impact student achievement in a positive means. It is essential for the district to enact structures and

processes to ensure sustainability, particularly if the change impacts improvement in student achievement.

The rationale for this study was to understand the factors that are essential for the sustainability of change within a school district. This study examines the change practices of one district as determined through the experiences of school administrators to determine the factors of successful initiatives within the district. The researcher also seeks to determine what aspects impacted those initiatives administrators viewed as unsuccessful. District level involvement in change efforts is recognized as having crucial impact in sustainability (Fullan, 1993, 2005; Lezotte & Jacoby, 1992). Therefore, the researcher sought to determine how a district could plan, initiate, and implement change to support sustainability of the change with the aspirations to impact success.

A qualitative study founded in phenomenology was conducted using the following research questions to determine how districts could implement change for improvement and include essential factors for sustainability and success.

1. What are school administrator's experiences related to the change processes implemented district-wide?
2. What factors in the change initiatives that occurred in the school district contribute to the sustainability of the change?

### **Findings**

Analysis of interviews of the school administrators were conducted to determine the common themes in the experiences of the administrators with change initiatives, as well as the factors essential for the sustainability of the initiative. This study utilized a qualitative research approach found in phenomenology to conduct the research on change

initiatives as determined through the perceptions and experiences of the school administrators. Participants were asked a series of questions pertaining to their experiences within a ten-year timeframe within Coastal City School District. Based on the personal experience the researcher has with the district's initiatives, the researcher categorized the interview questions into three categories. Through this categorization, the researcher utilized an A-priority coding system based on those personal experiences. Using this classification of questions, the researcher interviewed intentionally selected participants based on their number of years in the administrative roles within the district. The researcher analyzed the interviews, deriving themes that convey factors in sustainability with change initiatives. With the developed themes of the school administrators' experiences, the researcher was also able to provide recommendations for future application in the area of effective district-wide change initiatives with sustainability.

### **Finding #1**

The researcher found that the examination of the interviews concerning the experiences and perceptions of the administrators within the district regarding the change initiatives in Coastal City School District revealed the significance of collaborative communities. Participants in the study indicated that initiatives supporting collaborative teaming were deemed effective.

**Collaborative teaming.** Participants in this study expressed the importance of collaboration among those involved in the initiative as essential for the success of the initiative. The presence of sharing and trust that is developed in team building to reach a common goal was expressed throughout the interviews. The researcher noted the

participants communicated that when this element was present and supported, those involved in the initiative found success. In addition the persons involved often conformed easier to the initiative when the level of collaboration was initiated from the start.

The researcher found that school administrators noted the collaborative communities had greater impact on the initiative when the collaboration took place with on all administrative levels of the initiative. Collaboration was significant when it took place not only at the leadership level but also at the level of the teachers, specialists, and coaches. The researcher noted collaboration was mentioned frequently throughout the interviews as impactful when it was present among school administrators, teachers, and curriculum leaders. In addition, the collaborative communities also were significant when constructed on the district level (i.e. collaborative teams of principals) and within the school level (i.e. grade level teams).

The research indicates school administrators specified that collaborative work allowed members of the initiative to work out of isolation. Instead initiative participants could rely on one another through challenges and mishaps, as well as share effective practices and trials. Building this support provided teachers and administrators involved in the initiative the nurturing and partnership to work toward a common goal in a new manner (Browne-Ferrigno, 2007; Fullan, 2005).

School administrators referred often to teams being “forced” to communicate and work together. This reference was automatically followed by a clarification that “forced” did not refer to coercion but instead referenced the constructs in place to promote

collaboration. School administrators suggested that these constructs supported the idea of collaboration until the team's work took shape.

### **Finding #2**

The sustainability and success of a change initiative within a district was perceived by school administrators as being reliant upon the continual professional learning that is in place. This emerging theme supports the research on professional learning as a vital tool for change efforts (Ellsworth, 2000; Fullan, 2005, 2007).

**Continual professional learning.** The interviewees strongly believed that continuous professional learning was a key element to the effectiveness of a change initiative. Participants noted the learning that took place throughout an initiative was essential for growth and development as a district for the initiative at hand. It was significant to note the professional learning was discussed as a series of learning opportunities for participants of the initiative in manner to build their capacity.

Throughout the interviews, the school administrators indicated the importance of professional learning for all constituents involved in the initiatives. The experiences and themes that emerged revealed a need for creating an environment of learning for all involved. School administrators spoke of learning taking place on the teacher level, school administrator level and district level as an aspect necessary for development of the initiative and those involved in the initiative.

As experiences were shared through the interviews, it was noted the professional learning that was deemed most effective in supporting initiatives was one in which participants would work while learning. School administrators spoke of work sessions that not only allowed participants to learn new concepts and skill but also allowed them

to do so in connection to their own personal work. A key to the sustainability and success of the initiative was to create an environment of learning to support members “working while learning” versus a “sitting and getting” (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Fullan, 1995; Liebermann, 1995; Little, 1993).

### **Finding #3**

Based on the interviews conducted with the school administrators and their perceptions, the researcher found the endurance and effectiveness of the change initiatives are contingent upon the non-negotiables and monitoring of the implementation of the initiative. Through the experiences of the administrators, it was found that these structures provided a framework for fidelity of implementation.

**Non-negotiables and monitoring structures for fidelity.** Participants in this study spoke frequently of structures established by the district to ensure fidelity. School administrators noted that non-negotiables established by the district during the initiation and implementation ensured those who were participating were doing so with fidelity. These non-negotiables for a particular change initiative provided all participants in the initiatives a defined structure to work within. By defining the fixed restraints to work with in developing the initiatives, the members of the district, including administrators, teachers, and district leaders allowed for clear expectations. The researcher found the school administrators felt these clear expectations created a specified implementation across a widespread number of schools. In addition, the administrators noted these structures assisted in ensuring that diverse implementations and interpretations of the initiative did not develop.



Furthermore, school administrators also indicated that in addition to the non-negotiable structures, the initiative was perceived as more successful and sustained when the district monitored these non-negotiable implementation structures. The researcher noted school administrators communicated that the monitoring included follow-up from the district, systematic check-ins, and evidence verification of the non-negotiables. School administrators' interviews revealed the importance of these monitoring structures to create accountability for the expectations set. In addition, the monitoring structures allowed the participants of the initiative to continue to view the initiative as pertinent. Without this reassurance, the participants, can begin to feel as if the initiative is being abandoned (Datnow & Springfield, 2000; Trybus, 2011). As determined through the school administrators' interviews, the researcher determined the monitoring processes, along with non-negotiable structures, created a system for fidelity. The participants expressed how accountability ensured fidelity, and was essential to the sustainability of initiatives as based on their experiences.

#### **Finding #4**

The conversations that ensued during the interviews with school administrators indicated the importance of a needs driven purpose behind the selection of change initiatives within the district.

**Needs driven purpose.** In their discussions of the change initiative experiences, the school administrators strongly believed the change initiatives were more successful and sustainable when the initiative was chosen and implement based on the needs of the schools. Administrators spoke of experiences when initiatives were introduced and executed that did not meet their schools needs leading to frustration on all participants.

During the interviews, the administrators often referred to initiatives popular in the establishment of education but not representative of the needs of their schools as ineffective or not sustainable in their district. Frequently throughout the interviews, the researcher noted the school administrators' experience with such initiatives often include vague recollections of the introduction, training, or installation. They expressed frustration in the district acting on initiatives or movements trending in education but not corresponding to the needs of district and its participants. Change models often indicated that the time for initiating the change is the time to ensure the constituents of the purpose and problem at hand to create a sense of urgency (Kotter, 1996, 2007; Lewin, 1947).

In describing sustainable initiative experiences, the school administrators revealed that when the change initiative met the needs of their school, those involved could clearly see the purpose and potential impact. The researcher noted the school administrators felt that when the needs of the district were taken into account in the selection of the change initiative, those involved had more of a vested interest in engaging in the initiative. Throughout the interviews, the study participants referred often to the Professional Learning Communities as a sustainable initiative within Coastal City School District. In their shared experiences of this initiative, school administrators expressed how important the communication of how the initiative met the needs of increasing student achievement, a current critical need in the district. Essential to sustainability of change initiatives is the need to understand the purpose and how it will impact those involved.

**Finding #5**

The findings of the study indicated the sustainability of change initiatives is significantly impacted by the consistent concentration on all actions or decisions to the initiative.

**Primary integral focus.** Throughout the interviews conducted, school administrators disclosed that an initiative's sustainability was impacted by the district's ability to ensure the initiative was a focus throughout the practices, decisions, and actions of the district. In communicating their experiences, administrators expressed the importance of creating an environment driven by the initiative. In this environment, the district utilizes the initiative and its core values to direct the actions, conversations, and training that take place. Administrators shared that it should be clear to all participants involved that the initiative is primary focus of every aspect involved in the district's current work. To create sustainability, those involved with and in the district should clearly be able to see what the core focus of the district is (Ekholm & Trier, 1987; Fullan, 2007). The experiences of the administrators demonstrated how essential it is that the district connects decisions, actions, conversations, and training to the initiative being implemented. If the district ensures the initiative is the primary focus of all aspects throughout their work, it in turn invigorates and energizes the participants to continue the work of the initiative. School administrators shared the energy of the participants concerning the initiative drives the continuance of the initiative within their district. Therefore, it is crucial for the district to ensure the initiative is a primary integral part of all the work the district does.

### **Interpretation Section**

The study investigated the experiences and perceptions of the school administrators with change initiatives within the Coastal City School District for the purpose of determining the sustainability factors of initiatives implemented. In addition, the researcher sought to determine the impact of the structures in place, such as professional learning, in determining the sustainability. What emerged through the interviews of the school administrators with at least 10 years experience in the district were themes that signified sustainable indicators.

Research indicates the change process is not an event but instead is a series of phases to enact change (Fullan, 1993; Kotter, 1996, 2007; Levin, 1947; McKinsey & Company, 2008; Prosci, 2006). The change process begins with a phase in which the change is initiated. This initiation is driven by a sense of urgency or need (Fullan, 2007; Kotter, 2007). Interview findings concur that the initiative is driven more effectively when the change initiative meets the needs of the district's schools. As found in the experiences of the school administrators in this study and within the research, the change initiative can be negatively impacted when the participants involved do not understand the purpose of the initiative, as well as the vision of the impact (George et.al, 2007; Kincaid et al., 2007; Sansosti & Noltemeyer, 2008). The interviews indicate the understanding of the purpose as it pertains to the needs of the schools is essential in the effectiveness of the initiatives introduced and implemented. Without this understanding of the purpose and the support based on the needs of the schools, the initiative's sustainability is at risk if it makes the initiative makes it past the initiation phase.

Even though the research on sustainability is not extensive, the review of the research indicates that the stabilization or sustainability of the change is driven by several factors. The findings of this study are supported through this research. Essentially the research focus of this study was on Fullan's model of change, implying that the change must become an incorporated part of the system (Fullan, 2007). Findings from the interviews within this study support the idea of the initiative becoming a primary focus of the district where it is implemented. This integral focus on the change initiative is essential for the initiative to survive and the lack thereof is often the reason for abandonment of the initiative (Trybus, 2011). Findings for an integral focus of the initiative within the district are supported in the research. This research indicates that the deeper entrenched in the system a change initiative is, the greater the sustainability (Hall & Hord, 2001; Miles & Louis, 1990).

Research also indicates the sustainability of the change initiative is contingent upon the lateral capacity building through networks (Fullan, 2005). The findings of this study indicated a significant factor in the stabilization of the initiative is the creation of supports for collaborative teaming. The synergy that develops from the collaborative structures, including learning together, working collectively, and sharing a vision, propels the initiative forward and into stability (Browne-Ferrigno, 2007). Interviews from this study support the concept that the collective work with others on a given initiative is a driving factor in sustainability of the change. The creation of a community of peers within a change initiative develops the shared knowledge and commitment to the initiative (Fullan, 2005), as demonstrated in the findings of the interviews conducted.

Equally important to the stabilization of a change initiative, the research supports the concept of continual learning or deep learning as a tool for sustainability (City et al, 2010; Fullan, 2005, 2011; Friedman, 2012; Lunenburg, 2011). This concept involves the idea of creating a learning environment within the change process that involves more than learning in isolation with later application (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Fullan, 2002; Spector 2011). Findings of this study indicate that the continuous learning in change initiatives is necessary for sustainability. This continuous learning identified through the findings indicates a process that involves learning within working environments. This concept is reinforced in research with the concept of learning in context with collaborative equals produces substantial results, including stabilization (Fletcher, 2011; Fullan, 2002; Harrington & Mackin, 2008; Mintzberg, 2005). Learning in context is defined as collaborative conversations, experimentation, examination and assessment of concepts and principles, and sharing of developments (Fogerty & Pete, 2009; Killion & Roy, 2009; Lieberman, 2000; McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993; Rosenhotlz, 1989). Conclusions of the interviews within this study indicate that these defined practices are effective in the sustainability as defined by school administrators' experiences.

Throughout the research conducted in this study it was not specified that the presence of non-negotiable structures and monitoring for the purpose of fidelity was significant in the sustainability of the change process. However, the findings of this research indicated these concepts were important in the sustainability as described in the perceptions of the school administrators' experiences. The interviewees specified these structures created a sense of accountability for those involved in the change process. The

study participants expressed significance in utilizing systems for structure and monitoring to guide the implementation process into stabilization.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

Throughout the course of history concerning schools in America, change has become a catalyst for improvement. Particularly in this current day of accountability, schools are charged with creating change that will impact student achievement. Therefore, changes that are initiated and implemented in schools with the purpose of impacting positive transformations should be designed and implemented with sustainability in mind. The work performed in schools to enact change and produce positive results is change that districts will want to stabilize to ensure continued success. This study's purpose was to examine the change initiatives of Coastal City School District within the past 10 years as perceived and experienced by the school administrators to determine what factors are essential for sustainability. The implications of this study's findings can be employed to benefit school districts, higher education and additional research.

### **Implications for Practice**

Creating and working through change are two tasks that districts are often tasked with performing. To enact long-lasting change enables school districts to accomplish work with positive, enduring results. As documented in the findings of this study, Coastal City School District enacted many change initiatives within the past 10 years and very few were deemed sustained and effective according to the school administrators' experiences. Therefore, it is essential for school districts to ensure time and energy are not wasted and efforts are directed on change processes that can be stabilized.

**School districts.** The findings of this study illustrate that districts often enact change resulting in short-lived results or lack of sustainable facets. As noted in the interviews with school administrators and the findings, several factors need to be in place to ensure the change is sustainable. Ensuring these features are in place will increase the likelihood that the change will withstand the future outlook. Before deciding on the change initiative that the district will introduce and implement, district leadership should ensure the initiative meets the needs of the school. A needs assessment and examination of the initiative based on those needs will ensure that the purpose is clear to the participants of the initiative. School districts should begin to look at the factors in place when initiating change and implementing the change process. District leaders need to ensure collaborative practices are established, non-negotiables and follow-up monitoring systems are in place, and continual professional growth opportunities are connected to the work performed. The likelihood that the initiative will sustain into the future is dependent upon ensuring these factors are in place. In addition, district leaders need to make certain the work conducted within the district and the discourse taking place is consistently connected to the initiative. As indicated in the experiences derived from the interviews in this study, the district can take measures to safeguard their work on a given initiative with the goal of sustainability.

**School administrators.** While this study looked at change initiatives on the district level, the implications for school administrators is essential for the growth and sustainability of the initiatives. School administrators' roles in implementing the initiative is important for the continuance of the initiative. As indicated in the findings, the factors needed for sustainability are factors that indicate school level support as well.



School administrators must ensure the measures in place for initiative are followed for the purpose of sustaining the change. While the district leaders can enact practices for collaborative teaming, monitoring, and continuous professional learning, it is the task of the school administrator to respect and comply with these practices. Without the support of the school administrators in these practices the district's ability to sustain these efforts will be difficult. School administrators must support the practices of collaborative teaming, creating environments where teachers and staff can work and learn together. In addition, school administrators need to support and practice a culture of professional learning where the learning takes place through the work that is being conducted. No longer are the days of learning and bringing back to the building for practice. School leaders are now tasked with developing learning environments within the work that actually being conducted. Once these environments of collaboration and learning are established, school administrators are essential in monitoring the non-negotiable factors of the initiative to establish the process of follow-up, indicative in this study's findings as essential. Furthermore, based on the findings that demonstrate the initiative should be a primary focus, it is essential for the school administrator to communicate and demonstrate the experiences and discussions for teachers and staff in connection to the initiative. School administrators play a vital role in being the connection between the district and the school level work; therefore, it is necessary the school administrator is an active part of the change initiative work and communication.

### **Implications for Higher Education**

Challenged with training leaders who are skilled at addressing the needs of the school, university school leadership programs can benefit from the findings of this study.

In their work with aspiring school administrators, higher education programs in school leadership can utilize the findings of this study to train and educate leaders about the change process in schools and their role in the process to impact sustainability.

**Training for aspiring leaders.** University school leadership programs are tasked with grooming school leaders who can address the school's needs and impact improvement. As part of the task in training leaders who can address needs and impact improvement, leadership programs must ensure leaders are prepared through knowing the change process, enacting the change, and monitoring the success of the change. The findings of this study implicate that school leadership programs in higher education should be preparing and training school leaders in how the change process works, how needs are determine to decide on change, and how to monitor the process for change. In addition, leadership programs must ensure that potential leaders are trained in areas of collaborative teaming techniques to ensure they can support the collaborative processes necessary for sustainable change. Leadership programs must also be certain to train school administrators in developing and employing professional learning opportunities to support learning through work and working together. Leadership programs are tasked with training school leaders who are skilled in developing professional learning opportunities for more than just obtaining knowledge given but instead provide opportunities for learning through doing.

**Cooperative work with school districts.** While higher education institutions in school leadership often focus on training aspiring school leaders, these institutions also provide opportunities to support current school districts in training and working with current school administrators and district leaders in refining their proficiencies in school

leadership. With the findings of this study indicating necessary factors for sustainability of change, current school leaders will need to refine or adapt current practices to ensure these factors are in place. Universities can provide the training and support measures necessary for ensuring current school leaders are learning and utilizing practices to support change processes and the sustainability of those processes. In partnering with school districts, universities can provide training in collaborative practices, professional learning development, and effective monitoring practices. As defined in the findings of this study, this level of support from higher education institutions will enable districts to support school administrators in learning to work in cooperation with change efforts.

### **Implications for Research**

This study conducted research on the sustainability of change initiatives based on school administrator experiences and perceptions within a particular district. Emerging from this research study are several themes indicating what elements should be in place to sustain change initiatives within school districts. School districts and university institutions have implications for future practice to improve the practices of the initiating and implementing change within schools. In addition to the future implications for practices, this study also lays ground for future research.

Within this study, the researcher focused on the school administrators' experiences with change initiatives within one school district. The first recommendation for future research is to examine the administrators' experiences with change initiatives within multiple districts. Education research could benefit from investigate the emerging themes from several districts. In addition, researchers could create comparisons of the emerging themes to derive common thematic findings are sustainable factors in change

initiatives. The creation of this larger scope of experiences could assist education research in gaining findings that would support work in change processes within school districts.

The second recommendation for future research concerns research design. This study examined the school administrators' experiences to determine factors necessary for sustainability. Future research would benefit from investigating not only the school administrators' experiences but also the district learning plans. Examination of the district's learning plans, the researcher would be able to relate the practices of a district through the action steps with the interviews of the school administrators. This form of document review, along with the interviews could extend the findings of the study.

Research efforts on professional learning should also be the aim for future studies. The findings of this study indicated professional learning was a factor in the sustainability of the change initiatives. With recent research literature examining professional learning in organizations, it would be advantageous of researchers to look at specific links between professional learning structures and sustainability of change initiatives. Additional research in the other factors of sustainability could be the primary focus on continued research efforts as well.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher examined only the school administrators' experiences for those who had been involved with change initiatives within the past ten years within Coastal City Schools. Future research would benefit from expanding this focus to the district leaders. The examination of the experiences and perceptions from a district level viewpoint could provide additional evidence in the area of sustainability with change initiatives. This viewpoint could then be related to or used

in connection with school level administrators to determine factors necessary for sustainable change. In addition, future research should also examine the experiences and perceptions of teachers within a school district to determine the impact of teachers with change initiatives. This examination could also determine the factors teachers perceive as important to the sustainability of the initiative, particularly since teachers participate in implementation activities of the change initiatives within a district.

### **Conclusion**

The themes determined from the rich conversations with the interviews conducted with school administrators on their experiences with change initiatives provide a framework for future research and research design. The findings from this study can benefit school districts and schools within districts in development of change initiatives, introduced and implemented within a district. This study concentrated on the factors and structures of the change initiatives that support sustainability and provide effective experiences. The school administrators' experience and perceptions revealed that establishing collaborative structures, providing continuous professional learning, integrating the initiative as the primary focus, setting non-negotiable standards and follow-up procedures, and matching the needs of the districts to the actions create effective and sustainable efforts in their implementation.

## REFERENCES

- Abrahamson, E. (2004). *Change without pain: How managers can overcome initiative overload, organizational chaos, and employee burnout*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press.
- Adelman, H. S., & Taylor, L. (2007). Systemic change for school improvement. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 17*(1), 55-77.
- Balan, R. M., Manko, T. P., & Phillips, K. F. (2011). Instructional improvement through professional development. *Transformative Dialogues: Teaching & Learning Journal, 5*(2), 1-18.
- Barber, M., & Fullan, M. (2005). Tri-level development: It's the system. *Education Week, 24*(25), 32-35.
- Berman, P., & McLaughlin, M. W. (1978). *Implementing and sustaining innovations* (Vol. 8). Santa Monica, CA: Rand.
- Bernard H. 1995. *Research methods in anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (Second edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Browne-Ferrigno, T. (2007). Developing school leaders: Practitioner growth during an advanced leadership development program for principals and administrator-trained teachers. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education, 2*(3), n3.
- Carpenter, D. R. (2007). Phenomenology as method. In H. J. Streubert & D. R. Carpenter (Eds.), *Qualitative research in nursing: Advancing the humanistic imperative* (pp. 75- 99). Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott.
- City, E. A., Elmore, R. F., Fiarman, S. E., & Teitel, L. (2010). *Instructional rounds in*

- education: A network approach to improving teaching and learning*. Boston, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Corben, V. (1999). Missing phenomenology in nursing research: identifying the research. *Nurse Researcher*, 6(3), 52-56.
- Creswell, John (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W. (2008). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Creswell, J.W. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2008). Teacher learning that supports student learning. *Teaching for Intelligence*, 2, 91-100.
- Darling-Hammond, L., & McLaughlin, M. W. (1995). Policies that support professional development in an era of reform. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 76(8), 597-604.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Wei, R. C., Andree, A., Richardson, N., & Orphanos, S. (2009). Professional learning in the learning profession. *Washington, DC: National Staff Development Council*.
- Datnow, A. (2005). The sustainability of comprehensive school reform models in changing district and state contexts. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 41(1), 121-153.
- Datnow, A. and Springfield, S. (2000). Working for reliable school reform. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 5(1 & 2), 183-204.
- Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (2005). *Handbook of qualitative research* (3rd. ed.). Thousand

Oaks, CA: Sage.

Derry, S. J. (1999). *A Fish called peer learning: Searching for common themes*. In A. M.

O'Donnell & A. King (Eds.), *Cognitive perspectives on peer learning* (p. 177-

211). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Diaz-Maggioli, G. (2004). *Teacher-centered professional development*. Alexandria, VA:

ASCD.

DuFour, R., & Marzano, R. J. (2011). *Leaders of learning: How district, school, and classroom leaders improve student achievement*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

Ekholm, M., & Trier, U. P. (1987). *The concept of institutionalization: some*

*remarks*. In M.B. Miles, M. Ekholm, & R. Vandenberghe (Eds.), *Lasting school*

*improvement: exploring the process of institutionalization*, (p.13-21). Leuven:

Acco.

Ellsworth, J. B. (2000). *Surviving change: A survey of educational change models*.

Syracuse, NY: ERIC Clearinghouse on Information & Technology.

Elmore, R. F. (2000). *Building a new structure for school leadership* (pp. 1-46).

Washington, DC: Albert Shanker Institute.

Figlio, D., & Loeb, S. (2011). School accountability. *Handbook of the Economics of*

*Education*, 3, 383-421.

Fletcher, S. (2011). *Partnerships for new teacher learning: A guide for universities and*

*school districts*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Flick, U. (2008). *Designing qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Fogarty, R., & Pete, B. (2009). Professional learning 101. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 91(4), 32-

34.



- Forrest, L.M. (2007). *The five year change process at a secondary school: A case study*. Las Vegas: University of Nevada.
- Friedman, A. (2012). *Continuing professional development: Life long learning of millions*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Fullan, M. (1993). *Change force: Probing the depths of educational reform*. London: Routledge.
- Fullan, M. (1995). The school as a learning organization: Distant dreams. *Theory Into Practice*, 34(4), 230-235.
- Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Fullan, M. (2002). The change leader. *Educational Leadership*, 59(8), 16-21.
- Fullan, M. (2005). *Leadership & sustainability: System thinkers in action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Fullan, M. (2006). Change theory. *Seminar Series: A force for school improvement*. Victoria: Centre for Strategic Education.
- Fullan, M. (2007). *The new meaning of educational change*. London: Routledge.
- Fullan, M. (2011). *Change leader: Learning to do what matters most*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Fullan, M., Cuttress, C., & Kilcher, A. (2005). Eight forces for leaders of change. *Journal of Staff Development*, 26(4), 54.
- Fullan, M. G., & Miles, M.B. (1992). Getting reform right: What works and what doesn't. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 73, 745-752.
- Gardner, D. P., Larsen, Y. W., & Baker, W. (1983). A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform. *Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office*.

- Geijsel, F., & Meijers, F. (2005). Identity learning: the core process of educational change. *Educational Studies*, 31(4), 419-430.
- George, B., Sims, P., McLean, A. N., & Mayer, D. 2007. Discovering your authentic leadership. *Harvard Business Review*, 85(2): 129-138.
- Gladwell, M. 2000. *The tipping point: How little things can make a big difference*. New York: Little, Brown.
- Glickman, C. D. (1993). *Renewing America's schools: A guide for school-based action*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Gredler, M. E. (1997). *Learning and instruction: Theory into practice* (3rd ed). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Hall, G. E., & Hord, S. M. (Eds.). (1987). *Change in schools: Facilitating the process*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Hall, G.E. & Hord, S. (2001). *Implementing change: Patterns, principles, and potholes*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Hargreaves, A. & Fink, D. (2006). *Sustainable leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Harrington-Mackin, D. (2008). *Team-building: Tips and tactics for effective workplace teams*. New York, NY: AMACOM.
- Hays, D. & Singh, A. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry in clinical and educational settings*. New York: NY: The Guilford Press.
- Heifetz, R. A., & Laurie, D. L. (2003). The leader as teacher: Creating the learning organization. *Ivey Business Journal*, 67(3), 1-9.
- Horton, J., Macve, R., & Struyven, G. (2004). Qualitative research: Experiences in using semi-structured interviews. *The real life guide to accounting research*, 339-357.

- Huberman, A. M., & Miles, M. B. (1984). *Innovation up close: How school improvement works*. New York: Springer Science & Business Media.
- Huberman, A. M. & Miles, M. B. (1998). Data management and analysis methods. In Norman K. Denzin & Yvonna S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials* (pp.179-210). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hunzicker, J. (2011). Effective professional development for teachers: A checklist. *Professional development in education*, 37(2), 177-179.
- Jacob, S.A. & Furgeson, S.P. (2012). Writing interview protocol and conducting interviews: Tips for students new to the field of qualitative research. The Qualitative Report 2012 Volume 17, T&L Art. 6, p. 1-10. Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR17/jacob.pdf>
- Killion, J., & Roy, P. (2009). *Becoming a learning school*. Oxford, OH: NSDC.
- Kincaid, D., Childs, K., Blase, K. A., & Wallace, F. (2007). Identifying barriers and facilitators in implementing schoolwide positive behavior support. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 9, 174 –184.
- Kotter, J. P. (1996). *Leading change*. Boston: Harvard Business Press.
- Kotter, J. P. (2007). Leading change: Why transformation efforts fail. *IEEE Engineering Management Review*, 37(3), 42-48.
- Lezotte, L. W., & Jacoby, B. C. (1992). *Sustainable school reform: The district context for school improvement*. Okemos, MI: Effective Schools Products Ltd.
- Lewin, K. (1947). Frontiers of group dynamics: Concept, method and reality in social science, social equilibria, and social change. *Human Relations*, 1, 5-41.
- Lieberman, A. (1995). Practices that support teacher development: Transforming

conceptions of professional learning. *Innovating and Evaluating Science Education: NSF Evaluation Forums, 1992-94*, 67.

Lieberman, A. (2000). Networks as learning communities: Shaping the future of teacher development. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 51(3), 221-227.

Lieberman, A. & Darling-Hammond, L. (2012). *Teacher education around the world: Changing policies and practices. Teacher quality and school development*. Florence, KY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Little, J. W. (1993). Teachers' professional development in a climate of educational reform. *Educational evaluation and policy analysis*, 15(2), 129-151.

Lunenburg, F. C. (2011). Professional development: A vehicle to reform school. *Schooling*, 2(1), 1-7.

Manna, P., & Ryan, L. L. (2011). Competitive grants and educational federalism: President Obama's race to the top program in theory and practice. *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*, 41(3), 522-546.

Marshall, C. (1990). Goodness criteria: Are they objective or judgment calls? In E.G. Guba (Ed.), *The Paradigm Dialog* (p.188-197) Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2010). *Designing qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Maxwell, J.A. (2012). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

McKinsey & Company. (2008). *Creating organizational transformations: McKinsey*

*global survey results*. McKinsey Quarterly, August. Retrieved from  
<http://mckinseyquarterly.com/link/31143>

McMahon, M. (1997, December). Social constructivism and the world wide web: A paradigm for learning. Paper presented at the ASCILITE conference. Perth, Australia.

McMillan, J.H. (2004). *Educational research: Fundamentals for the consumer*. New York: Pearson.

Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to implementation and design*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Miles, M. B. (1983, November). Unraveling the mystery of institutionalization. *Educational Leadership*, 41(3), 14–19.

Miles, M. B. (1998). Miles, M.B. (1998). Finding keys to school change: A 40-year odyssey. In A. Hargreaves, A. Lieberman, M. Fullan, & D. Hopkins, *International handbook of educational change: Vol. 5. (Part one, pp. 37-69)*. The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers..

Miles, M. B., & Louis, K. S. (1990). Mustering the will and skill for change. *Educational Leadership*, 47(8), 57-61.

Mintzberg, H. (2005). Developing theory about the development of theory. In K. G. Smith & M. A. Hitt (Eds), *Great minds in management: The process of theory development* (pp. 355-372). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mizell, H. (2001). How to get there from here. *Journal of Staff Development*, 22(3), 18-20.

Morse, Janice M. (1994). Designing funded qualitative research. In Norman K. Denzin &

- Yvonna S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp.220-35). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Myrick Short, P., Greer, J. T., & Melvin, W. M. (1994). Creating empowered schools: Lessons in change. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 32(4), 38-52.
- Obama, B. (2008). *Obama education speech in Ohio Transcript*. Chicago Sun Times. Retrieved from [http://blogs.suntimes.com/sweet/2008/09/obama\\_education\\_speech\\_in\\_ohio.html](http://blogs.suntimes.com/sweet/2008/09/obama_education_speech_in_ohio.html)
- Ortlipp, M. (2008). Keeping and using reflective journals in the qualitative researcher process. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4). 695-705
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Phan, G.Q. (2006). Exceeding expectations: An exploratory case study of how a high-poverty elementary school sustained the high performance (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). The University of Texas, Austin.
- Prawat, R. S., & Floden, R. E. (1994). Philosophical perspectives on constructivist views of learning. *Educational Psychologist*, 29(1), 37-48.
- Prosci (2006). *Best practices in business process reengineering and process design*. Retrieved from <http://www.prosci.com/bpr-benchmarking.htm>.
- Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C. M., & Ormston, R. (Eds.). (2013). *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Robson, C. (2011). *Real world research: a resource for users of social research methods in applied settings*. Chichester: Wiley.

Rosenholtz, S. J. (1989). *Teachers' workplace: The social organization of schools*.

Boston: Addison-Wesley Longman Ltd.

Rossmann, G.B. & Rallis, S.F. (1998). *Learning in the field: An introduction to*

*qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2011). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*.

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rusch, E. A. (2005). Institutional barriers to organizational learning in school systems:

The power of silence. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 41(1), 83-120.

Sansosti, F. J., & Noltemeyer, A. (2008). Viewing response-to-intervention through an

educational change paradigm: What can we learn?. *The California School*

*Psychologist*, 13(1), 55-66.

Schmuck, R. A., & Runkel, P. J. (1985). Organization development in

schools. *Consultation: An International Journal*.

Seidman, I. (2012). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in*

*education and the social sciences*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Seidman, S. B. (1983). Network structure and minimum degree. *Social networks*, 5(3),

269-287.

Spector, B. (2011). *Implementing organizational change: Theory into practice,*

*international edition*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Steubert, H.J. & Carpenter, D.R. (1999). *Qualitative research in nursing: Advancing*

*the humanistic perspective*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, Williams, & Wilkins.

Stewart, D., & Mickunas, A. (1974). *Exploring phenomenology: A guide to the field and*

*it's literature*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association.

- Streeton, R., Cooke, M. & Campell, J. (2004). Researching the researchers: Using a snowball technique. *Nurse Researcher*, 12(1), 35-45.
- Talbert, J. E., & McLaughlin, M. W. (1994). Teacher professionalism in local school contexts. *American Journal of Education*, 102, 123-153.
- Trybus, M. A. (2011). Facing the challenge of change: Steps to becoming an effective leader. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, 77(3), 33-36.
- Tufford, L. & Newman, P. (2010). Bracketing in qualitative research. *Qualitative Social Work*, 11(1): 80-96.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2005). *Improving teacher quality state grants*. (Title II, Part A). Retrieved from <http://www.ed.gov/programs/teacherqual/index.html>
- Van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Willig, C. (2013). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill Education.



**APPENDIX A**

**Research Documents**

Appendix A

**APPENDIX B  
OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY  
APPLICATION FOR EXEMPT RESEARCH**

Note: For research projects regulated by or supported by the Federal Government, submit through IRBNet to the Institutional Review Board. Otherwise, submit to your college human subjects committee.

**Responsible Project Investigator (RPI)**

The RPI must be a member of ODU faculty or staff who will serve as the project supervisor and be held accountable for all aspects of the project. Students cannot be listed as RPIs.

<b>First Name:</b> Karen	<b>Middle Initial:</b>	<b>Last Name:</b> Sanzo
<b>Telephone:</b> 757-683-6698	<b>Fax Number:</b>	<b>E-mail:</b> Ksanzo@odu.edu

<b>Office Address:</b> 168-7 Education Building Old Dominion University		
<b>City:</b> Hampton	<b>State:</b> VA	<b>Zip:</b> 23529
<b>Department:</b> Education Foundations and Leadership	<b>College:</b> Darden College of Education	

<b>Complete Title of Research Project:</b> The Change Process and Sustainability: Experiences of School Administrators	<b>Code Name (One word):</b> Change
--	-------------------------------------

**Investigators**

Individuals who are directly responsible for any of the following: the project's design, implementation, consent process, data collection, and data analysis. If more investigators exist than lines provided, please attach a separate list.

<b>First Name:</b> Heidi	<b>Middle Initial:</b> R	<b>Last Name:</b> Brezinski
<b>Telephone:</b> 757-593-6313	<b>Fax Number:</b>	<b>Email:</b> hbrezinski@hampton.k12.va.us

<b>Office Address:</b> 127 Alleghany Road		
<b>City:</b> Hampton	<b>State:</b> VA	<b>Zip:</b> 23661
<b>Affiliation:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Faculty <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Graduate Student <input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate Student <input type="checkbox"/> Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Other		

<b>First Name:</b>	<b>Middle Initial:</b>	<b>Last Name:</b>
<b>Telephone:</b>	<b>Fax Number:</b>	<b>Email:</b>

<b>Office Address:</b>		
<b>City:</b>	<b>State:</b>	<b>Zip:</b>

<b>Affiliation:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Faculty <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate Student <input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate Student <input type="checkbox"/> Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Other		
--	--	--

List additional investigators on attachment and check here:

## Type of Research

1. This study is being conducted as part of (check all that apply):

- |                                     |                       |                          |                                       |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Faculty Research      | <input type="checkbox"/> | Non-Thesis Graduate Student Research  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Doctoral Dissertation | <input type="checkbox"/> | Honors or Individual Problems Project |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Masters Thesis        | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other _____                           |

## Funding

2. Is this research project externally funded or contracted for by an agency or institution which is independent of the university? Remember, if the project receives ANY federal support, then the project CANNOT be reviewed by a College Committee and MUST be reviewed by the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

- Yes (If yes, indicate the granting or contracting agency and provide identifying information.)  
 No

Agency Name:  
Mailing Address:  
Point of Contact:  
Telephone:

## Research Dates

3a. Date you wish to start research (MM/DD/YY)      6  /  30  /  15  

3b. Date you wish to end research (MM/DD/YY)      12  /  15  /  15  

NOTE: Exempt projects do not have expiration dates and do not require submission of a Progress Report after 1 year.

## Human Subjects Review

4. Has this project been reviewed by any other committee (university, governmental, private sector) for the protection of human research participants?

- Yes  
 No

4a. If yes, is ODU conducting the primary review?

- Yes  
 No (If no go to 4b)

**4b. Who is conducting the primary review?****5. Attach a description of the following items:** Description of the Proposed Study Research Protocol References Any Letters, Flyers, Questionnaires, etc. which will be distributed to the study subjects or other study participants If the research is part of a research proposal submitted for federal, state or external funding, submit a copy of the FULL proposal

Note: The description should be in sufficient detail to allow the Human Subjects Review Committee to determine if the study can be classified as EXEMPT under Federal Regulations 45CFR46.101(b).

**Exemption categories**

**6. Identify which of the 6 federal exemption categories below applies to your research proposal and explain why the proposed research meets the category. Federal law 45 CFR 46.101(b) identifies the following EXEMPT categories. Check all that apply and provide comments.**

**SPECIAL NOTE:** The exemptions at 45 CFR 46.101(b) do not apply to research involving prisoners, fetuses, pregnant women, or human in vitro fertilization. The exemption at 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2), for research involving survey or interview procedures or observation of public behavior, does not apply to research with children, except for research involving observations of public behavior when the investigator(s) do not participate in the activities being observed.

(6.1) Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

**Comments:**

(6.2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; AND (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

**Comments:**

<p>____(6.3) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under paragraph (b)(2) of this section, if:                  (i) The human subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office; or (ii) federal statute(s) require(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.  <b>Comments:</b></p>
<p>____(6.4) Research, involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.  <b>Comments:</b></p>
<p>____ (6.5) Does not apply to the university setting; do not use it</p>
<p>____(6.6) Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, (i) if wholesome foods without additives are consumed or (ii) if a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, or agricultural chemical or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe, by the Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.  <b>Comments:</b></p>

Human Subjects Training
<p>7. All investigators (including graduate students enrolled in Thesis and Dissertation projects involving human subjects) must document completion of the CITI Human Subject Protection course.                  (Attach a copy of all CITI Human Subject Protection completion certificates.)                  Date RPI completed Human Subject Protection training: ____6/2/15____</p>

<b>PLEASE NOTE:</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. You may begin research when the College Committee or Institutional Review Board gives notice of its approval.</li> <li>2. You MUST inform the College Committee or Institutional Review Board of ANY changes in method or procedure that may conceivably alter the exempt status of the project.</li> </ol>

**THE CHANGE PROCESS AND SUSTAINABILITY:  
EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS**

Throughout the history of schools in America, reform efforts have signified a need for change. This change typically focuses on refining schools to achieve greater success and accountability for the work that this being conducted. With recent efforts focusing on greater accountability in terms of statistical measures of success, schools are being task with showing success through student performance or are faced with ratings of deficiencies. Schools continue to work toward providing change that will lead to success and sustaining the change to enable greater success. To achieve successful and sustained change, schools must begin to understand the change process and demonstrate the factors necessary for sustained change.

The process of change was once understood to be a direct progression or practice; it is now understood through recent literature that change is a more complex and intricate process (Fullan 2001, 2007; Hall & Hord, 2001; Huberman & Miles 1984). Change within an organization is not merely an event, but instead of process of phases that must occur in order to enact change (Fullan 2001, 2007; Hall & Hord, 2001; Huberman & Miles 1984; Fullan, 1995; Levin, 1947; McKinsey & Company, 2008; Prosci, 2006; Kotter, 2007). The development of the phases or process is dependent on the decisions made throughout the process and the engagement of factors within each phase (Fullan & Miles, 1992; Glickman, 1993; Hall & Hord, 2001). There are various organizational change models and while these models vary in number of stages that each employs, the

models all indicate that the change process must go through a series of changes (Fullan, 1993; Lewin, 1947; Prosci, 2006; Kotter, 2007, 1996).

For the purpose of this study, the researcher focused on change models in organizations while utilizing a specific lens of Michael Fullan's Change Model. Fullan's (2007) model of change is comprised on three distinct stages: initiation, implementation, and institutionalization. Initiation consists of the decision to embrace or resolve to select and move forward with the transformation. This phase of the change process is one in which is usually made in a top down approach; although the research support that a shared vision is imperative (Sansosti & Noltemeyer, 2008; George et.al, 2007; Kincaid et. Al, 2007).

The second stage of this model of change is the implementation phase. This stage of the process is defined as the phase in which the actual initiative is engaged and the plan is set into action (Trybus, 2011). This stage can include a trial implementation or full engagement (Fullan, 2007; Trybus, 2011). The purpose and value of the change are revealed during implementation, as people are engaged in the actual operation of the change (Fullan, 2007; Huberman & Miles, 1984).

The final stage of this model of change is the institutionalization phase. During this phase, the leaders choose to stabilize the change, yet it can also be the stage when leaders decide to cease to implement the phase (Fullan, 2007). Institutionalization represents the phase in which the participants of the change decide to accept and support the change initiative as it is being implemented (Trybus, 2011; Fullan, 2007; Ekholm and Trier, 1987).

While a vast amount of research has been conducted on the process of change or on creating and supporting models of change, little research has been accomplished regarding the sustainability of the change, particularly in the area of education (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978; Datnow, 2005; Fullan, 1993; Miles, 1983). Fullan's extensive research in schools has examined how change efforts once implemented can be made maintained (Fullan, Cuttress & Kilcher, 2005). Fullan (2005) defines eight components of sustainability that are fundamental in ensuring that change efforts are continued. These components include public service for a moral purpose, commitment to changing context at all levels, lateral capacity building through networks, intelligent accountability and vertical relationships, deep learning, dual commitments to short-term and long-term results, cyclical energizing, and leaders as system thinkers. The eight components as separate entities make up the plan for change continuance, while working discordant with one another (Fullan, 2005).

As part of the eight components of sustainability, deep learning plays a vital role in the change process' continuance. Encompassing progression and resolve this component is obtained through the development of skills and abilities in leaders and teachers within the school or school district (Fullan, 2005; Darling-Hammond 2008, 2009; Liebermann & Darling-Hammond, 2012). This development of skills and ability is known as professional learning and is essential for success and maintenance of the change efforts (City et al., 2010; Friedman, 2012; Fullan, 2011; Lunenburg, 2011).



Historically, professional learning in schools consisted of “sit and get” workshops. Typically, teachers would attend, listen, and carry knowledge away to practice. The single practice of giving knowledge to teachers to take away from the workshops or courses was believed to enact change (Fullan, 2007). This frequently used practice of staff development has produced minor measurable results (Mizell, 2001). Instead teachers were left feeling isolated and disengaged from the change efforts (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Spector 2011). To engage teachers and make an impact on the change desired teachers need to be involved in learning in context or learning at work (Fullan, 2002). Learning in context is defined as collaborative efforts to build knowledge, problem-solve solutions, and plan application (Fletcher, 2011; Fullan, 2002; Harrington & Mackin, 2008). This interactive and results oriented framework for professional learning impacts the chances for continuation of change within schools (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson & Orphanos, 2009; Fogerty & Pete, 2009; Killion & Roy, 2009; Lieberman, 2000).

As schools continue to embark on change for the betterment of the students and the success of the school, it is essential that schools begin to investigate models for change to ensure the phases are all complete in the efforts. To further ensure that the change is one that will sustain and continue to benefit schools, it is essential to understand the necessary components for sustained change. As Fullan’s model indicates the eight elements of sustainability, it is important to note the shift in change that develops from deep learning. In moving away from isolate learning and moving toward learning in context with

collaborative efforts, it is essential that schools begin to make that paradigm shift. Change is inevitable but the steps taken to ensure that change are vital to ensure the sustainability of the change and ultimately its success.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study founded in phenomenology is to determine the experiences and perceptions of the school administrators in the efforts of change within a district. Furthermore, this study will serve to examine the perceptions and experiences of utilizing professional learning within the context of change efforts within schools to impact sustainability. This study will offer school administrators with the ability to share their experiences on change efforts and the role professional learning plays in such efforts. It is the hope of the researcher that the study will provide school administrators on the district level the insights for more effectively planning for change, implementing change and creating a system for learning during the change initiative. With the small measure of literature on the sustainability of change in schools and the role professional learning plays in the sustaining of that change, it is the researchers goal to further the existing literature.

### **Research Questions**

As indicated in literature review, change is a varied process within institutions which incorporates phases or stages of the specified process. Factors within the stages of the change process can lead to or hinder sustainability of the change being implemented. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of school administrators in the change process, focusing on the factors or themes that are present in relationship to the sustainability of the

change. Research indicates that change processes occur often while sustainability of the change occurs less frequently. As indicated with the need for change in schools at a high level due to present accountability placed on districts, it is imperative that researchers begin to utilize the change process while ensuring the presence of factors necessary for sustainability of said change. Specifically, this study will also look at the role professional development plays as a factor for sustainability within the change process. Therefore, this study will look at the experiences and perceptions of the school administrators in X school district to gain knowledge of the change process dynamics and the elements present within those change processes to determine the role each plays in sustainability, particularly looking at the effect professional development has. The research questions were as follows:

1. What are school administrator's experiences with the change process?
2. What factors in the changes that exist in the school district contribute to the sustainability of the change?
3. What role has professional development contributed to the permanency or sustainability of change?
4. How do the stages of change theory impact the effectiveness of change?

### **Research Plan**

#### **Sampling Procedures**

Within this research study, the sampling of the participants is conducted with an effort to select participants who have experienced particular events or change processes within a timeframe. By conducting research that will be founded in phenomenology, it is important in this study to select participants who have experienced the phenomenon and are willing to share their experiences for the efforts of the study (Corben 1999, Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). The sample of participants will be purposeful, relying on the strength of selecting participants that have experienced the events necessary for support of the research (Hays & Singh, 2012; Patton, 2002). For this study, the researcher will enlist participants who meet the following criteria: 1) are licensed school administrators within Coastal City Schools and 2) have worked in Coastal City Schools for a minimum of 10 years as a school administrator. Convenience sampling is advantageous to the researcher when the participants are easily obtainable (Hays & Singh, 2012). Snowball sampling can also be employed if the researcher finds it necessary. This type of sampling allows the researcher to seek from participants references of other participants who have experienced the events sought within this study (Creswell, 2008; Hays & Singh, 2012; Streeton et. al, 2004).

### **Participant Selection**

The researcher will employ the use of email to contact potential participants within Coastal City Schools to invite them to participate in sharing their experiences in the change processes that have occurred in recent years. The researcher will select between 12-15 school administrators to assist as participants in this study. The researcher will gather demographical information about the 12-

15 participants to include gender, race, years of experience, and level of experience. With this information, the researcher will create a varied sampling of participants.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

To begin the data collection, the researcher will begin the interviews with participants by providing each participant with a scripted interview protocol. This protocol will allow the researcher to provide consistent information about the purpose of the study and the interview inquiry. Upon completion of the scripted interview protocol, the researcher will enlist consent from the participants using an informed consent form. This form will be explained to the participants and questions about the study and/or interview will be answered before having the participants complete the form. A copy of the form will be kept on file for the research study and an additional copy will be given to each participant for his/her completion.

Upon completion of the informed consent form, the researcher will gather demographic information from each participant. The demographic information will consist of gender, ethnicity, years of experience in leadership, and years of experience within Coastal City Schools. The gathering of this information will allow the researcher to have access to information that will assist in the development of themes and/or patterns within the research, while ensuring to gather information that may not be disclosed during the interview questions. The demographic information gathered during this process will allow the researcher a

more in-depth examination into each participant's experience in collaboration with the interview responses.

Following the demographic data collection, the researcher will then begin interviewing the participants using a semi-structured interview process. Utilizing a semi-structured interview process allows the participants freedom to express their experiences and to share particular areas of interest, while ensuring that certain experiences and events can be explored in greater depth (Horton et al., 2004). The interviews will last approximately an hour in length and will be recorded in its entire length. Within three days of the completion of the interview, the participants will be contacted to communicate gratitude for their participation, as well as to inquire about any additional information that they feel would be beneficial in sharing for the purpose of this study. By connecting with participants after the interview, the researcher will give the participants the opportunity to share any additional information in reflection of the information shared. The researcher will transcribe any additional information gathered in the follow-up conversations and add them to the original data. Participants will be informed that a copy of their interview will be available within a two-week period. This will allow the researcher ample time to transcribed all recorded conversations.

### **Data Analysis**

The researcher will transcribe all recorded interviews and any additional follow-up interview information. Each transcription will be reviewed and proofed

to ensure accuracy. Any errors will be corrected and recorded. Any requested copy of the transcription will be forwarded to the participants.

Upon completion of the transcribed interviews, the researcher will review the data to begin the process of data reduction. During the process, the researcher will begin to organize, identify and document any themes that occur within the data. In addition to the theme, the researcher will also organize and identify the data to determine any patterns that occur within the data. The goal is to determine patterns, ideas, explanations and understandings through organization, summarizing and interpreting (McMillan, 2004). The organization and identification process of the data analysis will be followed by a coding process, in which the researcher will categorize and “chunk” the data to determine the meaning of the data (Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p.171). The categories in the coding process will then be reduced to create a distinct coding system for the data obtained (Creswell, 2013). The final themes or patterns will be represented in the final coding system of the textual data. The researcher will then synthesize the themes or patterns found to draw inferences about the research topic using the research questions to guide the synthesis (McMillan, 2004). It is during this process that the researcher will engage in the awareness of the biases she holds to ensure that the data collected is represented in the inferences and synthesis. The researcher will ensure that her experiences, opinions and background are not reflected in the data analysis through her awareness of their presence and through self-reflection of the biases.

**APPENDIX B**

**Participant Interview Documents**



## Appendix B

**Initial Inquiry to Participants****To: <Participants>****From: Heidi R. Brezinski****Subject: School Administrators & Change****Sent: <Date>**

School Administrator Colleagues:

I am reaching out to school administrators within the school district at the permission of the Executive Director of Research, Planning and Evaluation.

Have you experienced various change initiative within your school district within the past 10 years? Have you contemplated why some initiatives continue and some cease to exist? What training experiences were you given regarding the initiatives? As a researcher, I am interested in hearing your experiences and sharing your stories.

I am interested in conducting a research study about the experiences of school administrators with various change initiatives within the last 10 years.

If you are interested and willing to assist in this research or would like to know more, please email me at [hbrezinski@hampton.k12.va.us](mailto:hbrezinski@hampton.k12.va.us).

Thank you for your help!

Heidi R. Brezinski  
Principal  
John B. Cary Elementary School  
Hampton City Schools  
2009 Andrews Blvd.  
Hampton, VA 23661  
(757) 850-5092

## Appendix B

**Email to Identify Potential Research Participants**

School Administrator Colleague:

The Carrot Principle? From Good to Great? Who Moved My Cheese? Are you familiar with these change initiatives? What experiences did you encounter during these initiatives?

I am conducting a research study to explore the experiences of school administrators in our school district with change initiatives within the last 10 years. If you have leadership experience within our district for a minimum of 10 years, please contact me at [hbrezinski@hampton.k12.va.us](mailto:hbrezinski@hampton.k12.va.us). I look forward to working with you on this research and hearing about your experiences and stories.

Upon receipt of your email response, I will contact you to discuss your involvement in this research project.

I sincerely appreciate your assistance. Thank you in advance for your assistance in this matter.

Heidi R. Brezinski  
Principal  
John B. Cary Elementary School  
Hampton City Schools  
2009 Andrews Blvd.  
Hampton, VA 23661  
(757) 850-5092

## Appendix B

**Interview Protocol****Opening Script**

Good morning (afternoon) \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Heidi Brezinski and I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership and Foundations program at Old Dominion University. As part of my dissertation, I am conducting a research study to investigate the experiences of school administrators in regarding change initiatives. I am also exploring what factors, particularly professional learning, play in the sustainability of the change initiative.

Please be aware that my goal is to research the above-mentioned topic. I will not judge your experiences or hold on opinion of the stories you share. I am only interested in learning more about your experiences and perceptions of you as a school administrator. This means I will ask you details about your experiences, but these details, along with your experiences will remain confidential.

I greatly appreciate your willingness to participate in my research study. I understand that your time is valuable, so I am thankful that you have given your time to participate. This interview should last no longer than one hour. Throughout the interview process, I will record our conversation so that I do miss any important details. This recording will be kept confidential and in a locked environment. The recording will only be utilized to transcribe this interview for future analysis. Your identity will remain anonymous and your individual responses will be kept confidential. Please note your participation is voluntary and you reserve the right to discontinue it at any time without any penalty.

May I have your permission to begin recording this interview?

Thank you.

*Turn on audio or video recorder.*

Each interview participant is required to sign a consent form to acknowledge that you are aware of the process. By signing the consent form, you acknowledge that you understand that the following:

- (1) Your participation is voluntary and you can discontinue it at any given time,
- (2) Your identity will be kept anonymous and your responses confidential,
- (3) Your transcribed interview responses will be shared with you to ensure that your experiences are accurately represented,
- (4) Your interview responses will be stored in a secure and locked location.

Please take a moment to read through this consent form and sign accordingly if you agree with its terms. Do you have any questions or concerns at this time? Please let me know if you do.

*Provide interview participant with a copy of the consent form for their signature.*

Thank you for your signature. I will keep a copy of this page for documentation. Here is a copy for your records.

*Take time to answer questions and address any concerns.*

At this time I will ask you some demographic information. This information will allow me to get an accurate representation of each participant.

Please let me know if you have any questions as you complete the form and remember that you may reserve the right to not answer any question that you choose. All information will be kept confidential.

*Conduct the semi-structured interview. Be sure to review the participant demographic information to determine if there are any responses that need further clarification.*

Thank you for your time today and for sharing your experiences. In the next few days, please take a moment to think of any additional information that you would like share. I will send you a follow up email to inquire about anything further you would like to share. I will contact you briefly in a few weeks to share your transcribed interview for review. Thank you again for your time.

## Appendix B

**Informed Consent Form**

I agree to participate in a research study conducted by Heidi R. Brezinski, a doctoral student in the Education Leadership and Foundations program at Old Dominion University. I understand that the interview will last no more than one hour and will be recorded and transcribed for research purposes. In addition, I understand the following:

- My participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any given time.
- My identity will remain anonymous and my responses will be kept confidential.
- I will be contacted via email approximately one week after the interview meeting to provide additional information about the interview process.
- My interview responses will be shared with me via a copy of my transcribed interview.
- My interview responses will be stored in a secure and locked location at the conclusion of the research process.

I realize that I can direct any questions or concerns to Heidi R. Brezinski or Dr. Karen Sanzo, Old Dominion University professor and dissertation chair, by using the contact information listed below. I understand that if I am dissatisfied in any way regarding my participation in this study, I can contact Dr. Eddie Hill, member of the ODU Darden College of Education Human Subjects Review Committee, by using his contact information listed below.

---

Heidi R. Brezinski  
Doctoral Candidate  
Department of Education Leadership and Foundations  
Old Dominion University  
[hbrezinski@hampton.k12.va.us](mailto:hbrezinski@hampton.k12.va.us)  
(757) 593-6313

Karen Sanzo  
Program Coordinator & Associate Professor  
PK-12 Educational Leadership  
Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership  
Old Dominion University  
Director, School Leadership Preparation and Development Network  
SLPDN.com

Eddie Hill, Ph.D., CPRP  
Member, Darden College of Education Human Subjects Review Committee  
Assistant Professor  
Human Movement Sciences Department  
[ehill@odu.edu](mailto:ehill@odu.edu)  
(757) 683-4881

---

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

**Semi-Structured Interview Questions**

1. Please take a look at the following initiatives:

- a. FISH Philosophy
- b. Good to Great
- c. Get the Right People on the Bus
- d. Who Moved My Cheese?
- e. Professional Learning Communities
- f. True North
- g. The Carrot Principle
- h. QBQ: The Question Behind the Question
- i. Lift
- j. Bucket Filling
- k. Marzano Strategies – School Leadership that Works

Place a check next to those you experienced as a participant and an X next to those you experienced as a leader.

2. Have you experienced any other whole scale culture initiatives in this district that are not on the list?

3. Describe you experiences with the initiatives you indicated with a check or X above:

- a. FISH Philosophy
- b. Good to Great
- c. Get the Right People on the Bus
- d. Who Moved My Cheese?
- e. Professional Learning Communities
- f. True North
- g. The Carrot Principle
- h. QBQ: The Question Behind the Question
- i. Lift
- j. Bucket Filling
- k. Marzano Strategies – School Leadership that Works

4. What is one initiative that you would consider very effective and why? How was this initiative introduced? What was unique? What types of structures were in place? How were you prepared for this initiative?
5. What was one initiative that you would consider unsuccessful and why? How was this initiative introduced? What was unique? What types of structures were in place? How were you prepared for this initiative?
6. Describe why some initiatives have continued and others ceased.

### VITA

Heidi R. Brezinski was born in Hampton, VA. After completing her schoolwork at Hampton High School in 1994, Heidi entered George Mason University in Fairfax, VA. She received a Bachelor of Science with a major in psychology from George Mason University in May 1998. During the 2001-2002, she attended Christopher Newport University. She received a Masters of Arts in Teaching in May 2002. Upon completion of this degree, Heidi began her educational career as a teacher in Hampton City Schools. In 2004, she entered The George Washington University, earning an Educational Specialist degree in 2005. In 2006, she was promoted to an administrative position within Hampton City Schools. She currently serves the role of principal within this school system. In fall of 2007, she entered Old Dominion University Doctorate of Philosophy program in the Department of Education Leadership.