From Crisis to Renewal:
One School's Journey

by

Ann M. Skelcher

B.Ed., Simon Fraser University, 1980

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in the
Educational Leadership Program
Faculty of Education

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Fall 2011

Approval

Name: **Ann Skelcher**

Degree: **Doctor of Education**

Title of Thesis: ***From Crisis to Renewal: One School's Journey***

Examining Committee:

Chair: Dr. Allan McKinnon
Position

Dr. Milton McClaren
Professor Emeritus
Senior Supervisor

Dr. Byron Robbie
Adjunct Professor
Supervisor

Dr. Robin Brayne
Director, Graduate Programs
Supervisor

Firstname Surname
Department, Faculty
Internal Examiner

Firstname Surname
Position, Department
University
External Examiner

Date Defended/Approved: December 13, 2011

Declaration of
Partial Copyright Licence

SFU SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
THINKING OF THE WORLD

STATEMENT OF ETHICS APPROVAL

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this work, has obtained, for the research described in this work, either:

(a) Human research ethics approval from the Simon Fraser University Office of Research Ethics,

or

(b) Advance approval of the animal care protocol from the University Animal Care Committee of Simon Fraser University;

or has conducted the research

(c) as a co-investigator, collaborator or research assistant in a research project approved in advance,

or

(d) as a member of a course approved in advance for minimal risk human research, by the Office of Research Ethics.

A copy of the approval letter has been filed at the Theses Office of the University Library at the time of submission of this thesis or project.

The original application for approval and letter of approval are filed with the relevant offices. Inquiries may be directed to those authorities.

Simon Fraser University Library
Simon Fraser University
Burnaby, BC, Canada

Last update: Spring 2010

Abstract

This case study describes a time period of 6 years in the history of a school, a period marked by crisis recovery and organizational response to a mandated large-scale reform. Despite its challenges, when speaking of this period a number of the staff reflected on it as a kind of magical moment in time. Twenty years later, I began to wonder what forces and factors were in play that had evoked these memories of the period.

The research questions that directed the study asked participants what their experience was and the factors they saw as contributing to the school's success, if the crises, the reform or the somewhat simultaneous presence of the two, played a role in the school's development. I also sought to understand my own role of principal in the development of the school. The goal of this dissertation was to ascertain how the responses of those both internal and external to the school facilitated and impeded the school's ability to recover and restore its legitimacy in the eyes of its community and the school district within which it operated.

The research findings revealed significant themes in the collected stories and determined that both crises and reform played a role in the school's development. This research has implications for educators seeking to resolve crises and increase the capacity of schools to better meet their future—one sure to bring change, reform, and perhaps even crises.

Keywords: Crisis recovery; reform; school development; school culture; communicative action; phronesis

Dedication

This work is dedicated to Clifford Smith, Fran Jovick, and to Oceanside students and their families.

Clifford, you were my mentor, my inspiration, and my friend. Your impact is felt in the situation described herein and in a multitude of large and small acts of generosity, grace, and wisdom expressed throughout your lifetime. The sound of your laughter touches me still.

Fran, I never got to say thank you or to fully acknowledge you for stepping up when the crisis became known, for the deep commitment and broad quest you embarked on to find tools with which to address it and to create a different future for the children of Oceanside. Your work lives on in all those you touched.

Oceanside staff, I learned so much from you then and again through this work. You created that “magic mix”. The impact of your work is profound, and I am deeply touched, that all these years later, you still “light up” when you talk about it. Thank you, my friends, for understanding that our work is work of the soul.

Acknowledgements

Deep gratitude goes to Dr. Geoff Madoc-Jones for his declaration from across the table that *this* was the topic. Thank you, too, for trusting in me that I was worthy of this work despite the absence of “The Masters”.

I am equally grateful to my Senior Supervisor, Dr. Milton McClaren, for guiding me in the process, his seemingly unbounded patience and wisdom, and for the ongoing encouragement and inspiration that came at just the right moments. Milt, your expansive experience in all aspects of education, attention to detail, and concern for quality indeed contributed greatly to giving “polish to the diamond” you saw in this study.

Thank you Dr. Byron Robbie, the second set of eyes and ears; I always knew that you were at my back. Dr. Robin Brayne, thank you for being another set of eyes and for your encouragement and wisdom shared during class.

Thank you to all the participants in this study and to my family: my two children, Kevin and Dani, who also passed major educational and life milestones in this year and to my husband, Herb, who had the belief in and patience for me in my “absence” throughout this process. Thank you to Linda Smith who, like family, gave encouragement and technical support throughout.

Thank you to Bill and Margaret, my parents, who taught me about integrity, caring, the value of education, and finding my voice. I pass this degree to you.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1.

Introduction

Situating Myself in the Research

In 1988, I received my first assignment as principal to a small rural school in a school district situated on the coast of British Columbia. As I walked across the gravel playground to the school's brilliantly painted front entrance, I was filled with excitement, unbounded energy, and fear. At 36 years of age, I was one of the youngest and least experienced staff members. As such, I was acutely aware that my professional toolbox was sparsely filled: I had no formal training in leadership or school administration. Shored by only a 5-day short course on school administration taken that summer, I remember noting that my hand trembled on the door handle as I entered Oceanside School[1] to meet the staff, many for the first time. I felt tremendous relief as several staff members warmly greeted me and instantly my confidence grew. Thus began my 6-year journey. Had I been more experienced, wiser, and more knowledgeable about the school's history, my fears and apprehensions wouldn't have been so easily assuaged.

Two years prior to my appointment as Principal, disclosure of sexual abuse in another British Columbia community revealed a trail of further unreported abuses of children that led back to Oceanside's Grade 2 classes of 1982 and 1983. Upon investigation, it became apparent that the classroom teacher, known hereafter in this study by the pseudonym of John Doe, had abused several students in these classes. It was ultimately discovered that Oceanside Elementary was only 1 of 5 jurisdictions in the province in which he had victimized students.

Oceanside School is located in the small community for which it is named situated on the southern end of the Windy Coast. Traditionally it has been home to

[1] Oceanside School is a pseudonym for the actual school name.

families of mill workers and commuters traveling to the province's major city for work. The neighbourhood school has always been small, enrolling between 75 and 175 students and it is the central gathering place for the community. Most of the school staff members did, and still do, live close to or inside the school catchment area. The school and its community are deeply, and in many respects, mutually embedded. Oceanside Elementary parents and other community members viewed the staff as caring, ethical, and trustworthy, or did until the firestorm that raged after a criminal investigation revealed that the teacher-paedophile had also victimized children in their community.

Because I lived in the area at that time, I knew of the charges and criminal proceedings and observed the shame of the known victims. Perhaps it was my naivety or self-centered determination to have an unhindered, successful first principalship that caused me to enter the assignment without consideration of this history and with the belief that the catastrophe was past. Others, including my superiors, may have shared my belief as I don't recall receiving any cautionary advice about the school's history, its culture or how its relationship with the community might have been affected by the crisis.

In retrospect my lack of concern seems almost absurd although it seems to have been grounded in the facts that the offender was incarcerated and that 5 years had passed since he left the school. Further, the students in both his Grade 2 classes were now attending high school, the local and provincial papers had stopped covering the story, and the fury that erupted in the province following his arrest and hearing had subsided. I also held the belief that once past, crises and upsets are better left alone and that talking about them would only keep the feelings alive and potentially hinder recovery.

However, within months, I was to learn that the pain of the whole crisis remained active for many in the school and the community. It was revealed when triggering events occurred such as an accusation of sexual touching brought by a student against another teacher or a photocopier malfunction that caused the school secretary to dissolve in tears and tell me that the students believed that she and others knew of and condoned the actions of John Doe. After all, she had walked into the classroom when, unbeknown to her, he was fondling a child sitting on his lap during story time. Students thought she must have seen and must have known about the offensive behaviour, and because she didn't say anything, she must have thought it was acceptable. Throughout this school

year my naivety was revealed as one incident after another erupted and I came to realize that the crisis was not yet past.

Juxtaposed with this dark period is the history that was created by the staff and community in the ensuing 6 years. In the post-crisis period Oceanside Elementary staff initiated a number of significant developments. Some initiatives were associated with the implementation of the provincially mandated educational curriculum change initiative known generally as the Year 2000 Program (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1989c). Others were staff designed extrapolations of the Year 2000 Program. I believe that others were innovations in response to the outrage and guilt that people experienced when they learned of John Doe's activity in the school. The initiatives were represented by a number of actions. Student peer mediators co-supervised the playground during break times and parents offered an array of arts and cultural activities to release teachers to work with parents and students in a Three-Way Reporting process. Parents, teachers, support staff, and students developed vision and mission statements that were to have profound effects in the time ahead. Because the school took referrals of both regular and high-needs students, it saw significant student intakes from neighbouring schools. One participant who is now Director of the Curriculum and School Services, in the Territory of Nunavut, commented recently: *"I still try to implement some of the approaches you were working on."*[2]

Even people from outside the school's immediate community also commented positively about Oceanside Elementary. I recall that a teacher from the local secondary school remarked that he could always tell when students came from Oceanside because of their strong sense of themselves as people and learners. Others found that the students were not afraid to lead, even in their early years at the secondary level. In 1995, a year after I left the school to assume a principal's role at another District school, the Chair of the External Accreditation Team that had assessed Oceanside came to visit me in my new school. She commented that although visiting former principals of assessed schools was not part of the accreditation process she wanted to tell me how impressed the Team was with Oceanside School, and she wanted to acknowledge my part in that success. I later received a copy of the report and noted terms like "standards

[2] Throughout this work, italics have been used in-text to highlight and differentiate participant quotes.

of excellence," "ethic of care," "overwhelming sense of unity," and "truly a place of learning." I recall the Team Chair saying that she found Oceanside to be extraordinary in terms of its strong sense of community and effectiveness.

Memorable too, is a long ago conversation with the District's Primary Program Coordinator in which she initially planted the seed for this research. As I recall, her words to me were: "*You've got to figure out what's going on at Oceanside…you really have to start articulating what this is because if you don't it's not reproducible anywhere*." She encouraged us to determine the factors that were contributing to the success she perceived at Oceanside.

These many positive perceptions of the school signalled to me that Oceanside had managed to make the transition from crisis to recovery and to move on to become an effective and innovative school organization. These perceptions were the inspiration that led to the thesis research reported here. I wanted to understand how Oceanside School survived and ultimately flourished; what aspects of our response to 2 significant challenges of crisis and a large-scale, externally mandated educational reform made the difference?

I feel tremendous gratitude to have been a part of this community, to have worked with the students, parents, and staff who formed the school community, and to have had such fertile ground for learning in my first principalship and consequently throughout my career.

Personal Significance

As vividly as I remember my first day at Oceanside School, I recall my last day, sitting alone at the staff room table, crying all the tears I couldn't shed during previous few days of good-byes. The 6 years that come under the scrutiny of this case study were the most tumultuous, grief-filled, joyful, and fulfilling of my 32-year career. I look back on the accomplishments of the school community and wonder at them. I had no compelling framework for understanding the school's successes. Since that time, the focus of my work as principal and vice-principal has been to find ways to replicate the successes of the years that lie between the bookends of those two vivid memories.

In this small, rural community named like its school, Oceanside, not too far from where I lived then, it wasn't unusual for me to meet Oceanside Elementary staff members, parents or students in the street, over coffee, or at School District events where we would reminisce about our time together at the school. When speaking of that time we would often reflect that there had been a kind of "magical mix" at play. We expressed sadness that "it" was not sustained. I have felt personal and professional frustration that my attempts to replicate the accomplishments of that school have never been entirely successful elsewhere.

It is my perception that schools where I was subsequently assigned as principal or vice-principal did not reach the same level of responsiveness, implement to the same level of success, or develop the cohesiveness of community, all of which characterized my experience at Oceanside. As I approach the end of my career, post-graduate study has provided me with the opportunity to look back through the stories of those who participated in the school during this time. I have tried to discern the significance of the events of that 6-year period and to "mine" the stories in an attempt to extract or understand what contributed to the school's recovery and successes. I have also sought understanding of my own role and responses to the events of that time. I have been hopeful that the theorists and philosophers encountered in the course of my graduate studies would cast the light needed to identify some of the elements and processes that formed the mix of the school's success.

General Questions

Oceanside Elementary School's staff felt that the school was a good one. Parents expressed a similar regard for the school, and colleagues in the School District also noted its success. An External Accreditation Report conducted in May 1995 confirmed these feelings and thoughts about the school stating that, not only was the school successful at meeting its educational goals, it was also a nurturing place for children.

Yet, for some, its history of crisis and the challenge of implementing large-scale curriculum reform might predict turbulence and disorder. I believe that organizations, like people, respond to change events, such as crisis, and to challenges, such as large-scale reform, in a variety of ways. The nature of their responses likely depends on a number of

factors. While some may become seriously dysfunctional, or show important symptoms of distress, others are energized and focus their efforts to reach their goals, overcome challenges, or recover from the crisis. This study addressed three forms of change; school development, reform, and crisis. Definitions of change and of these terms are offered as follows:

> *Change.* Schools are dynamic places of constant change. The nature of the change can be described according to three dimensions. These are: (a) the amount of organizational energy associated with it; (b) time devoted to the change; and (c) impact of it, ranging from minor to transformational. Some changes are planned and occur by design, as in the case of school development. Events or external forces trigger some change, as in the case of large-scale reform initiatives and crisis. Frequently, the dimensions of a change event are not known until after it occurs.
>
> *Implementation.* Implementation, used here as a verb, means to put a plan for change into action. Plans for implementation often detail definitions, descriptions of the underlying paradigm, goals, roles, responsibilities, incremental steps, and procedures for evaluation.
>
> *School Development*. School development is typically endogenously determined change. The impact of it is usually moderate to significant and can be transformational. In schools focused on continual growth and development, these changes are the result of an ongoing press towards improvement.
>
> *Reform.* Reform, particularly that aimed at achieving systemic or large-scale change requires a large amount of organizational energy and time. Most often this kind of reform is exogenously determined. The Year 2000 Framework (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1989c) is an example of a large-scale reform that required a significant amount of organizational energy.
>
> *Crisis.* Crises differ from problems in that they have the potential to harm a school's or organization's foundational aspects A crisis is "an event or series of events that threaten…core values or foundational practices,…is obvious in its manifestation but born from complex and often unclear or uncontainable circumstances, [and]…necessitates urgent decision-making" (Pepper, London, Dishman & Lewis, 2010, pp. 6-8).

This research provided an opportunity to examine how an elementary school, both as an organization and as a group of individuals, met its serious challenges of crisis and reform. It continued to function effectively and was seen to be a successful school both by its own staff, by parents and even by an External Review team composed of

laypersons and professionals. The term *school success* in the context of this study is defined as follows:

> *School success*. The ability of a school to set and meet its goals as well as to address the challenges presented by external forces such as crisis and educational reform.

In the study, I also examine the collected data for evidence of Oceanside's success at the end of the period of study.

The first purpose of this study was to collate and record the participants' stories of Oceanside Elementary during a focal period in its organizational history. My goal was to appreciate how the participants assessed their various experiences and what they believed were the important factors that enabled the school to be effective and successful in maintaining a quality learning environment during this challenging time.

Second, I sought to discover the participants' views of the effect of a crisis event involving the serious criminal misconduct of a school staff member. I wanted to determine what the participants saw as eventual effects of the crisis on the school as an organization and on themselves and others as individual members of the school staff.

Third, I wished to understand the participants' views on the effects on the school of a large-scale, provincially mandated, educational reform initiative which occurred in the period that was the focus of this study.

Finally, since I was a member of the school staff during the period reviewed, I hoped that the passage of time since the described events would give me a clearer perspective of my role in and responses to the major challenges faced by the school post-crisis.

The story of Oceanside school is developed in the chapters that follow. The sequence of the chapters differs from some traditional research reports where a study's stated purpose, questions, and hypotheses are followed by a literature review and data-gathering stage with a focus on the validation or testing of existing theories or conceptual proposals. However, the purpose of this study is to seek meaning from the participants' stories. As such it is more aligned with approaches associated with grounded theory in which the theory emerges out of data. Thus, the sequence used here is to detail the methods of inquiry and tell the participants' stories first. Then, with the

findings related to literature and theory, the study concludes with an exploration of the implications of its findings and with a summary.

Delimitations and Limitations

Case studies seek to utilize a bounded case or defined setting to illuminate other related situations: “case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes” (Yin, 2009, p. 15). Herein lays a limitation of case study research and of this study. This case does not represent a sample of schools that concurrently experienced crisis and reform. Therefore, its findings cannot be generalized to a wider set of similar schools. Instead, its aim is to seek meaning in the participants’ stories and to relate discovered meaning to existing theories through generalizations based on qualitative analysis and description rather than statistics (Yin, 2009).

The specific limitations of this case study are as follows:

- It is unsupported by other cases, and any conclusions are tentative.
- The data gathered, though from primary sources, are historical in nature, and the participants’ perspectives are tainted by the effects of time and memory: recollections may be nostalgic and inaccurate. Convergence of perspectives and triangulation of data may help mitigate these effects (Berg, 2003; Yin, 2009).
- Absent from the study are the voices of students. I made the decision not to include student perspectives primarily because I believe that the passage of time has an increased effect on the memories and perspectives of the young. I was also concerned that reminders of the abuse suffered by several families in the school community could have harmful effects on the students and their families.

Chapter 2.

Methods and Ethical Considerations

> Concepts and theories are constructed by researchers from stories narrated by research participants who are trying to explain and make sense out of their experiences, both for the researcher and themselves. Out of these multiple constructions, analysts construct something that they call knowledge. (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 237)

This case study used three methods: interview, survey and the examination of historical records and documents. The centre-piece of the study was a set of semi-structured interviews designed to allow the 16 teachers, support staff, parents and others who participated in the events that were the focus of the case to tell their stories of occurrences in the 6-year period examined in this study. The survey and related historical records helped to clarify and substantiate the outcomes of the interviews. The study was structured in the manner of a grounded theory inquiry, such that the development of or connection to theory related to the case was largely conducted after data collection. Discussion about the relationship of theory building to case study is developed in this chapter.

The study was crafted to address the central research questions: What factors allowed Oceanside Elementary school to become strong and effective despite experiencing a significant crisis somewhat concurrent to a subsequent provincially mandated educational reform initiative? Extending this question, I asked what the experience could offer in the way of knowledge and understanding of crisis recovery, the building or rebuilding of organizational culture and school leadership?

This chapter provides a description of the ontological and epistemological considerations that led to the following decision: that qualitative research, relying on the methods of case study and grounded theory, would best serve the exploration of the research questions. The chapter also demonstrates how these methods were applied in the study.

Choosing the Qualitative Perspective

In qualitative research approaches, the phenomena being studied emerge from natural settings, with the researcher exploring them at their sources, seeking to understand and portray them in all their complexities (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). In their treatment of qualitative research, these authors make the following claim:

> To answer some research questions, we cannot skim across the surface. We must dig deep to get a complete understanding of the phenomenon we are studying. In qualitative research, we do indeed dig deep. We collect numerous forms of data and examine them from various angles to construct a rich and meaningful picture of a complex, multifaceted situation. (p. 133)

Qualitative research is oriented to the study of real world circumstances through description of their qualities. In differentiating between qualitative and quantitative research, Dabbs (cited in Berg, 2003) asserts that qualitative research seeks to describe "the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things. In contrast, quantitative research refers to counts and measures of things" (p. 3). Additionally, "assessments in qualitative research most often come in the form of words while in quantitative research, these are most frequently expressed in numbers" (Dabbs cited Berg, 2003, p. 4).

In considering the choice of methods, my goal was to lay open the stories of the 16 participants in order to reveal their complexities and richness. This purpose led me down the road of qualitative research as it would allow me to not only *dig deep* to portray the stories of the participants in their richest forms, but also to build meaning and understanding of the school's circumstance from the participants' perspectives.

However, the differences between the quantitative and qualitative approaches extend beyond the forms of data collected. Perhaps the most significant difference arises in terms of how the data is treated or interpreted—its knowledge claims. Justification for any method or groups of methods also need to rest on the knowledge claims that can be made based upon the application of the method. Postmodernist qualitative researchers base their epistemological conceptions on the claim that human phenomena are best examined in the contexts in which they occur, and that knowledge is constructed and is to be understood on the basis of how it is interpreted by those who live it. It is "these interpretive acts of meaning making [that] lie at the heart of what is to

be understood through qualitative, interpretive research" (Piantanida & Garman, 2009, p. 52) where the researcher attempts to say something applicable beyond the context of the case. Knowledge claims in this kind of research "entail a movement from the specific to the general, from the concrete to the abstract, from the idiosyncratic to the universal—in short, from the situational to the conceptual" (p. 53). Moving from circumstantial specifics and idiosyncrasies to theory, interpretive researchers make *assertions*. "For assertions, we draw from understandings deep within us, understandings whose derivation may be some hidden mix of personal experience, scholarship, assertions of other researchers" (Stake, 1995, p. 12).

Some question this approach to the construction of knowledge claims as being less valid and the research methods less rigorous and non-scientific (Berg, 2003). With this perspective, some propose a hierarchical listing of the methods that places scientific experiments at the top and qualitative methods below (Yin, 2009) and assert, "experiments are the only way of doing explanatory or causal inquiries" (p. 6). Other non-experimental methods such as surveys and case studies are described as appropriate only for descriptive and exploratory phases of research investigation (Yin, 2009). The natural sciences hold standards for research to develop "ideal theory" (Piantanida & Garman, 2009, p. 49) and some theorists believe that social and natural sciences should be studied with the same standards in order to achieve ideal theory (Berg, 2003; Piantanida & Garman, 2009). However, social science research, a discipline that attempts to understand human behaviour, has shifted to qualitative approaches and away from an emphasis on positivist approaches focused on empirical, quantitative methods (Berg, 2003). The reasons for this are many. In the study of human beings and their circumstances, significant variables cannot be controlled. Methods associated with scientific approaches require representative, sufficiently sized samples in order to make statistically significant claims. Very often, cases of human behaviour occur in unique circumstances that do not provide a representative or sufficient sample. Mills argues:

> Research methods on human beings affect how these persons will be viewed (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). Methods used to gather data will impact the interpretations that can be made. If humans are studied in a symbolically reduced, statistically aggregated fashion, there is a danger that conclusions—although arithmetically precise—may fail to fit reality." (cited by Berg, 2003, p. 8)

Flyberg offers the argument that the study of natural and social sciences phenomena is significantly different and that different paradigms need to apply. He states that:

> A critical difference between natural and social sciences: the former studies physical objects while the latter studies self-reflecting humans and must therefore take account of changes in the interpretations of the objects of study. Stated in another way, in the social science, the object [of study] is a subject. (cited in Piantanida & Garman, 2009, p. 50)

While Flyberg may be accused of oversimplifying the aims of natural science as the study of "physical objects," his point that the study of self-reflecting human beings is something quite different, is an important one according to Piantanida and Garman (2009). They state that "such scholars see the consciousness and self-consciousness of human beings as integral to the knowledge generating process" (p. 50) rather than a hindrance to it. They also trace the development of qualitative methods in the social sciences as being aided by other approaches such as phenomenology, hermeneutics, and constructivism. These approaches help to account for this self-reflecting attribute of human beings rather than regarding them as problematic.

The use of qualitative methods, rigorously applied, can still support research that results in valid description and causal explanations (Yin, 2009). The argument that seeks to have one approach dominate over the other seems to be waning. Many current theorists have shifted their stances and encourage researchers to find the approach that best fits their research question (Berg, 2003; Lapan & Quartaroli, 2009; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Stake, 1995; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Yin, 2009). Yin (2009) suggests that a "more appropriate view may be an inclusive and pluralistic one: Every research method can be used for all three purposes—exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory…the goal is to avoid gross misfits—that is, when you are planning to use one type of method but another is really more advantageous" (p. 8).

Yin's view led me to ask a particular set of pragmatically oriented questions about my methods for this study. What methods will best assist me to answer the questions posed in this study? Which will allow the development of rich description of the case that is its focus? Which methods will allow me, as the researcher, to build knowledge based on the participants' experiences and, because I was also a player in this case, my own experiences? I came to the conclusion that the knowledge claims of qualitative research would allow for the most full and rich exploration of this case. Thus,

the knowledge claim of the study is that the case particulars allowed me to rely on its participants' interpretations to make some assertions related to the circumstances—assertions, perhaps, about what it means for a crisis to be resolved, about school reform, and about conceptions of leadership, school development and culture.

However, right from the time the topic was proposed and the questions were formulated, others challenged me. They suggested that I would struggle to maintain objectivity throughout the course of this study, and inferred that perhaps I was not best suited to research it. That challenge came because I had lived the circumstances of the case. The questions raised by the situation have been part of me since the beginning of my career in leadership. As sometimes occurs in qualitative studies, the *case* or circumstance presents itself to the researcher. Stake (1995) claims:

> It is not unusual for the choice of case to be no "choice" at all. The case is given. We are interested in it…because we need to learn about that particular case. We have an intrinsic interest in the case, and we may call our work intrinsic case study. (p. 3)

I was a player in the case under study. As such, I was aware that the phenomenon and its context were complex and clearly overlapped. It was also evident that the perceptions and perspectives of the participants would permit access to its internal and external complexities.

Thus two major considerations were present in determining appropriate and helpful qualitative methods for this study: how could I reveal the richness and complexity of the phenomena while maintaining some objectivity in all aspects of it? Certainly, while qualitative research is appropriate for illustrating multifaceted circumstances, could I identify methods that would provide a more distant, somewhat objective view?

Objectivity concerns challenge interpretive research. Such concerns are heightened when the researcher is embedded in the study, not only as researcher but also as participant, as in the circumstances described here. Situated as I was among its subjects, making sense of my own experience and interpreting the experience of others', the need to justify choices of method and interpretation became critical and transparency was essential. I stood on quaking ground, unsure if I should be the one exploring these research questions. However, I was encouraged by the words of Corbin and Strauss (2008), who asserted that notions about objectivity should be challenged in both quantitative and qualitative approaches: "Fortunately, over the years, researchers have

learned that a state of complete objectivity is impossible and that in every piece of research—quantitative or qualitative—there is an element of subjectivity" (p. 43).

These authors drew on the words of Guba and Lincoln to support this point: "Researchers bring to the research situation their particular paradigms, including perspectives, training, knowledge, and biases. These aspects of self then, become woven into all aspects of the research process" (cited in Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 32). On the other hand, in acknowledging the presence of subjectivity in all approaches, the theorists are not implying that researcher bias should go unleashed and unchecked. "What is important to recognize is that subjectivity is an issue and that researchers should take appropriate measures to minimize its intrusion into their analysis" (p. 43).

Corbin and Strauss suggest the following strategies for control of subjectivity: comparing data and literature, obtaining multiple viewpoints, maintaining an attitude of scepticism, and adhering to recommended research procedures. In terms of grounded theory, these authors state that "Although researchers may pick and choose among some of the analytic techniques that we offer, the procedures of making comparisons, asking questions, and sampling based on evolving theoretical concepts are essential features of this methodology" (p. 46). Although, as will be discussed later in this chapter, rigid adherence to a particular procedure is not prescribed by all grounded theorists (Charmaz, 2000, 2003), it is important to emphasize at this juncture that techniques are available to temper researcher bias.

But are these measures sufficient to quell the concerns of their critics? In exploring this question, the tensions between the scientific and qualitative traditions once again emerge. The role of science, according to some, is to reveal the one true reality of our world; others seek rationality in human activity and objectivity in the means by which it is studied. For them, these measures will likely not reach the standards of reliability, validity and freedom from bias traditionally sought by positivists and post positivists. Howe (1992) describes this tension:

> Positivism, with its "spectator view" of knowledge and human conception of causation, encourages a view of humans as passive and determined by exogenous causes; interpretivism, with its constructivist view of knowledge and intentionalist conception of causation, encourages a view of humans as active and self-creating. In their purest forms, the positivist conception construes human being as not significantly different from other things explained by methods of the natural sciences, whereas the interpretivist conception construes humans as so radically different from

> other things in the natural world that they are totally inexplicable in terms of such methods. (p. 243)

Between the two extremes, however, is a more pragmatic view that holds a place for each, acknowledging that humanity is neither wholly self-determining nor is it fully passive. Howe (1992) takes the stance that:

> The general point holds that human nature is partially determined by how humans see themselves and partially determined by things of which they are unaware and over which they have no control. Accordingly, insofar as interpretivism remains trapped within the first perspective and positivism within the second, neither view can give an adequate account of human nature. (p. 243)

Within the interpretivist view, there is also considerable debate. Some interpretivists are singularly concerned with the insider's perspective such that data gathering and interpreting that data are based on the interpretations of the participants.

> This places the researcher in the position of being a mere data gatherer who then operates as little more than a functionary, withholding, or revising in the light of the insiders' perspectives, perspectives on the situation that might disagree with those of the insiders. (Howe, 1992, p. 249)

Without external criticism or examination in the light of external frameworks, interpretivism is open to accusations of relativism, researcher bias, and lack of rigor. Geertz (cited by Howe, 1992) states that "an adequate account…requires engaging in "dialectical tacking" between what informants think they are up to, expressed in their own terms, and the special vocabulary and theoretical premises of social theory" (p. 242). Howe advocates a form of interpretivism called "critical social research". He describes that:

> In virtue of embracing a proper role for technical (e.g., functionalist-structuralist) social scientific explanation, critical social research grants to researchers special expertise and knowledge not possessed by ordinary citizens. In virtue of also embracing a proper role for intentionalist explanation, as well as an activist conception of human nature, critical social research subjects such knowledge to scrutiny with respect to its accuracy and its implications for social life…Critical social research is thus more akin to interpretivism than it is to positivism…The key difference is that critical social research consists in challenging citizen interlocutors with (expert) social research findings rather than merely facilitating mutual understanding of the rules of the game. (p. 249)

Howe (1992) proposes that the interpretive researcher must scrutinize the participants' views as well as their own and hold their interpretations up to the light cast by related literature and social theories.

I was thus cautioned in my reliance on interpretive qualitative research methods and approached the study with a greater awareness of the need to interpret the data thoughtfully, crosscheck my interpretations, and rigorously challenge them with "(expert) social research". These steps allowed me to take advantage of my own sensitivity to the phenomenon because, in fact, the researcher who studies from within a circumstance or phenomenon may make meaningful, significant contributions. The advantages are sensitivity as well as a deep sense of knowing and understanding, an advantage termed by Corbin and Strauss (2008) as *researcher sensitivity*. Acquisition of inside knowledge is essential for qualitative investigators studying from the outside; yet, they struggle for the deep understanding that offers empathy and sensitivity to their participants. As a result of my "insider" position in the proposed research, I may have been more sensitive to the data and thus gained greater insight into the participants' interpretations. The contribution I felt I could make was in seeing the data clearly, determining its significance, and building the connections that others may have failed to conceptualize. I sought to find the balance necessary to ensure that I effectively and appropriately identified and interpreted multiple perspectives while, at the same time, ensuring that I did not force my perspectives as I interpreted the participants' stories.

Case Study and Grounded Theory

My search for methods that would allow undisturbed examination of the historical circumstances of the case and the creation of an authentic portrayal, led me to choose case study, a form of research designed to draw out rich descriptions about a particular event or topic. Lapan & Quartaroli (2009) describe cases that involve the study of people as "narrative research," and as, "concerned with the contemporary retelling of how people interacted with significant past events (re-storying)" (p. 166). This approach allowed me to investigate the participants' stories and to build, through interviews and historical records, a detailed description of what occurred.

However, the biases I carried into the study were evident even in the questions I posed. Embedded in them was my perception that crisis and the subsequent, large-

scale educational reform initiative played a role in the outcomes. As an inexperienced student of qualitative research, I found myself engaged in a preliminary literature review focused on the role of school leaders in crisis resolution and educational reform. I formulated my suppositions before the stories of the participants were articulated. The trap was laid: I was in danger of hearing my own perceptions echoed in their words.

Grounded theory, structured to begin from the data and build towards conceptual and/or theoretical levels, offered a means of stepping away from my preconceived notions. Not all methodologists endorse the use of grounded theory with case study. Berg (2003) describes the role of theory in case study from two perspectives: theory-before-research and theory-after-research. Yin (2009), a classic case study methodologist, endorses the development of theory before data collection. Others, most notably Strauss and Corbin (1998), have developed grounded theory as an approach to deriving theory from data. With this approach, "A researcher does not begin…with a preconceived theory in mind (unless…[their] purpose is to elaborate and extend existing theory). Rather, the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data" (p. 12).

This study is a form of instrumental case study (Stake, 1995) where the case is used to gain an understanding of something beyond the case itself, to inform a particular phenomenon, concept or theory. When used to construct theory, grounded theory methods guide "the investigator [to consider] the case as a device or set of findings to be applied beyond the case being studied" (Lapan & Quartaroli, 2009, p. 167). Data collection relies on interview, observations, historical records, etc. "The only restriction is that the data collection must include the perspectives and voices of the people being studied (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p. 140).

Grounded theory also provides methods of data analysis. Some experts, like Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe very specific and structured steps. Others, like Charmaz (2000, 2003), call for more flexible approaches. All grounded theorists declare that related literature exploration should not be used to develop conceptual frameworks or theories. Instead, literature should be used to build a rationale or describe a context. Only after the theoretical concepts have been drawn from the data are related theories examined for comparative purposes and their relation to the developed or emergent theory (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). A grounded theory approach would allow me to use the literature on topics such as crisis, reform, leadership and organizational culture in order

to convey, in its introduction, the importance of entering into such a study. The literature could then be bracketed and held until the discussion phase of the study. Other forms of case study or methods calling for a full literature review for the purpose of establishing conceptual or theoretical frameworks might diminish my capacity to adopt a more distantive view.

Different forms of grounded theory method arise from two somewhat distinct approaches: objectivist and constructivist. The objectivist perspective sees data as a real and external entity, the meaning of which is inherent in the data, and therefore can be revealed through data collection and analysis. As described by Charmaz (2003), "this perspective assumes an external reality awaiting discovery and an unbiased observer who records facts about it. Objectivist grounded theorists believe that careful application of their methods produces theoretical understanding" (p. 314). Alternatively, the constructivist approach views both data and analysis "as created from the shared experiences of researcher and participants and the researcher's relationships with participants" (p. 314). Charmaz's view lies within the constructivist stance, based on the assumptions that there are multiple realities, that the data are a result of mutual constructions between the researcher and participants, and that there is interplay between the researcher and participant:

> This approach explicitly provides an interpretive portrayal of the studied world…The researcher aims to learn participants' implicit meanings of their experiences to build a conceptual analysis of them. A constructivist approach takes implicit meanings, experiential views, and grounded theory analyses as constructions of reality. (p. 314)

A constructivist approach is particularly applicable to this study because it allows for a full, open hearing of all of the participants' voices. Each participant's reality is unique and each informs the whole picture. In the study of Oceanside Elementary, there is not one objective reality. Rather, it is the experience of each individual that will help portray the school organization in all its rich multifaceted dimensions. Also significant in this study is the concept that the constructivist view accounts for the researcher's place in all phases of the research. It assumes interplay between participant and researcher, something inherent in this case.

Participants

Two subgroups were solicited for participation in this study. The first group, “Internal Participants,” was comprised of teaching and support staff who were employed at the school for more than 2 years during the time period that was the focal point for the research. The rationale for excluding those associated with the school for less than 2 years is that they would be less familiar with the details of school culture as well as other factors at the time. Sadly, one vital member of that team, the school counsellor, passed away several years ago.

The second group, termed “External Participants” was composed of parents whose children attended the school at that time; other members of this group were school district staff and local school administrators who had played roles during this period. The school principal whose term immediately followed mine also participated in this group. Another significant person in this group, the Superintendent of Schools during the focal time of the study, recently passed away. Consequently the data does not include his impressions and insights.

Participants from each of the two groups were selected on the basis of their involvement with and connection to the school during the period from 1988 to 1994. Members of the External Participant Group were parents and school district staff who played central roles or who maintained ongoing communication with the school. Members of the Internal Participant Group were teachers and support staff who were employed at the school for a significant length of time. In this way, the selection of participants was not random. This factor may have biased the findings in that those individuals chosen and willing to participate may have been more predisposed to speak positively about the school, its staff and leadership. Triangulation of data, discussed below, might have helped to mitigate this concern.

Of the 20 people identified as potential members of the two groups, three persons solicited for participation did not contribute. All of these were potential members of the External Participant Group. The Parent Advisory Chairperson and a parent who participated in many events in the focal time period were both dealing with family emergencies and therefore were unable to participate. It is unfortunate that it was not possible to include their voices in the study. As well, I was unable to locate the Chair of

the External Accreditation Team that examined the school's operation in the year immediately following the time frame of the study.

Listed below are the participants, introduced according to their participant group:

Internal Participants

Biggy (Teacher 1) began his work at Oceanside five months after charges were laid against John Doe—the same year that the new principal was assigned. He said, "*I suppose that I always envisioned that I would be able to walk to the school that I taught in and so was very determined to get to Oceanside School at some point in my career.*" Biggy taught in Grade 6/7 and Grade 4/5 classrooms in the 6-year period of this study. He was an experienced teacher, just past the mid-point of his career. I remember him as a thoughtful and insightful person.

Carla (Teaching Assistant), began as a Playground Supervisor in 1989. Over the next 2 years she trained to be a Special Education Teaching Assistant (SETA). Taking this position at Oceanside immediately after completing her training, Carla worked with students of all grades although mainly in primary classrooms. She was also a very involved parent of an intermediate student enrolled at the school. During the interview, Carla remarked, "*See, I don't remember any issues. I just remember it being a harmonious staff and that everybody got along well.*" Still today, Carla works at Oceanside as a SETA. Thinking back, I remember Carla as a highly energetic and a caring person.

Claire (Administrative Assistant), worked at Oceanside first as a Library Clerk beginning in 1981. One of Claire's daughters attended Oceanside for her Kindergarten and Grade 1 years. After Claire and her family relocated to another school's catchment area, Claire requested that her daughter remain at Oceanside so that she could do her Grade 2 year in John Doe's class. Fortunately, that request was denied. In 1985 Claire moved into a time-durated [temporary] Administrative Assistant position for 1 year. She later returned to the school in the same position and we worked together for 2 years. Claire began her interview by stating, "*Well I came into a strong sense of community in that school. Part of the advantage was that it was small but a lot of work had been already focused on the three powers that be that participate in education: the staff, the kids, and the parents.*" I worked closely with Claire in the office and remember her for her deep commitment to the school and the care she extended to everyone in the school community.

Katie (Teacher 2*),* taught at Oceanside from 1986, five months after John Doe was charged. She began as the school's music teacher and

after her first year, also taught Grades 2, 3, and 4. As well, she organized the school's annual Christmas musicals. Katie described how she came to be at the school: "*The reason why I was hired at Oceanside—the school was in a real, real mess. It's probably just totally destroyed by the circumstances of abuse by a teacher.*" Later, I facilitated workshops with Katie presenting different innovations from Oceanside School, It was my impression that Katie was highly committed to and articulate about programs such as Three-Way Reporting and Key Words.

Kay (Teacher 7), began his work at Oceanside in 1988, the same year as I took the principalship there. He taught in Grade 6/7 and Grade 4/5 classrooms in the 6-year period of this study. Kay came to the school as an experienced teacher, and like Biggy, was just past the mid-point of his career. In his first year at the school, one of Kay's students made allegations about him which were investigated and determined to be substantiated. In spite of that experience, Kay described his experience at Oceanside as, "*super in my mind. What a way to go out. I am glad I retired after that—such a high of ending your career—it's been really wonderful*." I recall that Kay was very energetic and positive in his approach to all aspects of school life.

Mary (Teaching Assistant*),* served as a SETA in Primary classes and was also a Playground Supervisor in the 6 years of this study. She is Biggy's wife and came to the school in 1989 because as she said, "*I was attracted by the people that were working there and the proximity to where I live*." She described her experience at Oceanside as "excellent." I worked with Mary in another school prior to coming to Oceanside and recall feeling very happy to have her join this staff to contribute her skills and strong sense of caring about students.

Mia (Teacher 3*),* was an early Primary Teacher, often taught multi-age classes and for some time, taught French to the Grade 6/7 students. She began her teaching career at Oceanside in 1989. As we began our interview, Mia remarked, "*Well I have to say I've been thinking about that time which is very interesting. It's a long time ago now and something that I feel I should say right off the bat is that that was my first teaching contract in this district.*" That statement came as a surprise to me in the interview. Mia taught my daughter and I don't recall awareness that this was early in her career; I do recall that she was a very skilled and thoughtful teacher.

Redhead (Teacher 4*),* was the Special Education Teacher at Oceanside and worked with students from all grades. She taught for 2 years prior to coming to Oceanside in 1990. Redhead described her start at the school: "*I was fairly young in my career. I had taught for a couple of years and this was kind of the first position….It was my neighbourhood school so, that was wonderful and it was a*

small school." I recall that Redhead was very supportive of classroom teachers and worked very hard to ensure that her students were integrated into classroom settings.

Scarlett (Teacher 5*)*, was a Primary Teacher at Oceanside beginning in 1983. She was teaching at the school in the last year of John Doe's employ, was there when charges were laid against him, and remains a teacher at the school still. She reminded me that she has "*been teaching the [Grades] 2, 3, 4 for probably 14 years now.*" I recall that Scarlett was very diligent, reflective about her practice, and hard working. She had three children of her own, all under the age of 7 at the time.

Ruth *(*Teacher 6*),* began her teaching career at Oceanside in 1990. She taught multi-age primary classes and felt right from the beginning, "*This is where I want to work and this is where I want to be*." Despite this being her first teaching position, she described that she had, "*a lot of fun at Oceanside once I…had my grounding there and I kind of had a sense of belonging*." It was my impression, also, that Ruth *fit* with Oceanside right away and that she enjoyed trying new approaches and programs.

Jane (Teacher 8*),* came to the school in 1992, filling the position created by Mia's maternity leave. After Mia returned, Jane remained at the school in the position of Kindergarten teacher. She commented, "*I have such positive memories of my beginning year at Oceanside. I really felt like we were a strong community. Perhaps that is why I am still there!*" Due to the time constraints of family obligations, Jane was unable to participate in an interview. She responded to interview and some follow-up questions by email. My memories of Jane are that she came to Oceanside with many beliefs and approaches consistent with those held by the staff and that she was a strong addition to the school.

External Participants

Bella began as District Coordinator of Special Education in 1981, prior to taking a principalship in the District in 1988, the same year as I was assigned as Oceanside's principal. She came to the School District as an experienced educator. Bella began the interview by describing her early impressions of Oceanside: "*The school generally had had a very positive, good reputation as a great place for kids; a good sort of parent oriented community that had been seriously disturbed or disrupted by the events [John Doe's actions] that had happened previously*." I included Bella in the study because she had a district role during the time that John Doe taught in the School District and was convicted and so was more informed about the proceedings and outcomes. I also included Bella because as colleagues at the time, she was aware of some of the directions being taken at Oceanside.

Elphy was the principal of the secondary school for which Oceanside was a feeder school and I included him for this reason. He began his work there in 1986 as an experienced principal. In describing the years under study, he explained that, "*when we get into the years 1988 and so on, one of the things that I began to become aware of a very high degree of parent concern and involvement in the school….Quite often [Oceanside] parents would…be a bit more involved in the parent aspects of the secondary [school].*"

Dedwyn is referred to as a member of this group only in the sense that his time at the school was outside the time period of this study. Dedwyn replaced me as the principal of Oceanside in 1994 and served in that position for 4 years. He was well into the second half of his career when he came to Oceanside. He commented: "*I came into a school where that [ownership] was already kind of the way things were. So…it was historical but it was also something which was easy to build on and increase or to modify…but staying within the culture that existed in the school.*" I included Dedwyn in the study in order to crosscheck his impressions of the school with those of others.

Karen was a parent of three students at the school. Early in the time period of this study, her daughter was in the intermediate grades, her eldest son in the late Primary Grades, and her youngest son in Kindergarten. Karen participated on the Parents Advisory Council (PAC) and for some time, served on the PAC Executive. She began the interview by commenting, "*There were many times that are memorable…I think what it really was, was the atmosphere of the school.*" I included Karen in the study because she was a very involved in her role as parent of three students in the school and as a member of the PAC. Her involvement provided her with more knowledge of the inner workings of the school.

Sunshine was an experienced educator and the Coordinator of the Primary Program coming to the School District in 1990. After her first year in the District, she requested to transfer her daughter to Oceanside's Grade 2/3 class taught by Katie. She said, "*I did switch my child from the school she had been going to, to that school on purpose because I wanted her to experience what was going on educationally and socially and emotionally in that school.*" I included Sunshine in the study because as a parent and Coordinator of the Primary Program, she had more opportunity to observe at the school and to hear Primary Teachers talk about their innovations and programs.

It is important to note that only three of the participants worked in the school or in Windy Coast School District[3] during the time of the crisis involving John Doe. Internal participant, Scarlett, was a young, beginning teacher during the latter half of the 2-year period that John Doe taught at Oceanside. All other internal participants were employed or involved in the period after charges were laid against John Doe and became public. Two of the external participants, Bella and Elphy, worked in the School District during this time.

Another important note is later, in Chapter 5, where emergent themes are described in the words of the participants, not all participant responses were relied upon equally. For example, Dedwyn's comments were used less frequently in the reporting of the data. This is because he was not employed at the school in the time period of the study and the content of his interview was more focused on the time in which he was Oceanside's Principal. Similarly, Elphy, principal of the local secondary school at the time, was not as familiar with the workings and circumstances of the school and as such was not able to comment about some of its aspects. All participants' responses were valued and appreciated. However, some responses were more relevant to the study's questions than others and so the voices of these participants are heard more frequently.

Instrumentation

Interviews

This study is a story of a case or situation retold by 16 people who lived it some years ago. The interview method, when applied as a means of understanding an experience and the meanings given to it by the participants, could logically support the unearthing of the participants' stories. Thus, the interview was a central means of data collection in this study.

Conventional views of the interview approach, as strongly influenced by positivist research traditions, provide rules and common methods focused on finding fact, observable truth and logic (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Within this framework interviews are considered as asymmetrical events in which the interviewer carefully frames

[3] This is a pseudonym for the School District in which Oceanside School is situated.

questions designed to solicit information from passive subjects; the interviewer's role is to ensure that inquiry is done in a way that will avoid biasing the subject's responses. Such an approach here would appear contrived since researcher and participants are conversing about a shared experience and have enjoyed trusting and open relationships in the past.

The interview approach selected for this study was based on an epistemology of hermeneutics or the interpretation and meaning of text or discourse. Kvale and Brinkman (2009) describe it as "an inter-view, where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and the interviewee. An interview is literally an interview, an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest" (p. 2). The perspective here is that knowledge is constructed, and that in the interview the narrative is developed—it is co-constructed. The role of interviewer is that of "the interviewer-traveller…[who] walks along with the local inhabitants, asking questions and encouraging them to tell their own stories of their lived world" (p. 48). This metaphor powerfully captures the essence of the journey embarked upon in this study in which I, as researcher, moved back in time with the participants, walking together with them through its events: reconstructing, interpreting, making sense and giving meaning to what happened. This view of the interview is consistent with that of the constructivist grounded theorist, who sees:

> an interview as starting with the central problem (which defines suitable participants for the study) but proceeding from how interviewer and subject co-construct the interview. Their constructions are taken as the grist of the study, but constructivists frame much of this material as "views," rather than hard facts. (Charmaz, 2003, p. 314)

Semi-structured Interviews

The nature of this research aligned appropriately with the narrative and interpretive approach to the interview and the semi-structured interview format best supports the purposes of the research. For example, a highly structured interview could limit the narrative of the participants and the shadings of the questions might colour their responses. The openness of the semi-structured interview gives participants the liberty to describe and interpret the events, allowing them to share a more symmetrical space, and take more active roles. The open structure also facilitates the narrative analysis that follows the interview phase.

In designing the interview questions, I placed emphasis on allowing the participants, "ample freedom and time to unfold their own stories, [with] follow-up questions to shed light on the main episodes and characters in their narratives" (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, p. 131). The questions invited participants to describe their experience at the school in the 6-year period of this study. As suggested by Charmaz (2003), I designed questions that provided an examination of the broad topics, seek the participants' meanings and interpretations and reveal each individual's experience. Table 1, lists the general interview questions used with the Internal and External Participant Groups. The interview questions provided points of access to the central themes of the research questions. These questions or access points asked the participants to identify and describe, if possible, memorable events, changes, issues, challenges and school tone. The questions also addressed individuals' personal feelings about being in the school during this time, and their impressions of the Year 2000 Program along with other related change initiatives. The questions also asked participants to identify people who played significant roles.

Table 1. General Interview Questions for Internal and External Participants

Internal Participants' Interview Questions	External Participants' Interview Questions
From the beginning, tell me your story, your personal point of view of your experience at Oceanside School during the 6-year period from 1988 to 1994.	From the beginning, tell me your personal point of view regarding Oceanside School during the 6-year period from 1988 to 1994.
I believe you were a member of the staff at Oceanside School during the 6-year period from 1988 to 1994. When you reflect on your experiences at the school at that time what events stand out for you or are particularly memorable about that time?	As an outside observer of the school during the 6-year period from 1988 to 1994, when you reflect on your impressions of that time are there any events that stand out for you or are particularly memorable about that time?
In your view were there significant changes in the school during that time? Can you describe particular features or high points of the changes? For example, did certain people play particular roles in the changes or were there particular issues or challenges that had to be overcome? When you reflect on the changes what do you consider to be their overall effects or outcomes?	In your view were there significant changes in the school during that time? Can you describe particular features or high points of the changes? For example, did certain people play particular roles in the changes or were there particular issues or challenges that had to be overcome? When you reflect on the changes what do you consider to be their overall effects or outcomes?

Internal Participants' Interview Questions	External Participants' Interview Questions
During the period from 1988 to 1994 the provincial government received the report of the Sullivan Royal Commission on Education and moved to implement some of its recommendations in the program known as the Year 2000. If you think back to that time, do you have particular impressions of the Year 2000 Program and other related efforts at educational change as they affected Oceanside School?	During the period from 1988 to 1994 the provincial government received the report of the Sullivan Royal Commission on Education and moved to implement some of its recommendations in the program known as the Year 2000. If you think back to that time, do you have particular impressions of the Year 2000 Program and other related efforts at educational change as they affected Oceanside School?
In the period we've been discussing from 1988-1994 at Oceanside School, do you consider the overall effect on the school of the various events as being negative, positive, or some combination of both?	In the period we've been discussing from 1988-1994 at Oceanside School do you consider the overall effect on the school of the various events as being negative, positive, or some combination of both?
What do you consider to be some of the most important learning experiences or personal changes that you took away from your work and involvement at the school in that time period? If you were to summarize your experiences in that period at the school, what would you like to say that would best capture your feelings about that time?	What do you consider to be some of the most significant impressions of the school? If you were to summarize your impressions of that period at the school, what would you like to say that would best capture your feelings and thoughts about that time?
Are there any subjects or topics we haven't discussed in respect to that period of time and that you'd like to add to the conversation?	Are there any subjects or topics we haven't discussed in respect to that period of time and that you'd like to add to the conversation?

As with all semi-structured interviews, many more questions arose spontaneously as I sought to clarify the intended meanings of the participants' responses. It is noteworthy that while the data collected provided information about crisis and the relationships between the crisis and reform, I did not ask questions related to these two topics unless the participants first raised them. The open-ended nature of the questions allowed the participants to raise these or any topic of their choosing. Questions of this type helped to reduce the likelihood of embedding my biases into the questions thus influencing participants' responses and affecting their stories. Only when the participants initiated these topics or equivalent language did I explore them by probing further with clarifying questions. The Year 2000 Program was addressed in one of the questions because it was the significant educational reform during this time.

However, the question served only as a prompt designed to encourage participants to focus on the specifics of the Year 2000 Program or any other perceived change initiatives.

Survey

Multiple data sources and triangulation are recommended in case study design (Yin, 2009, p. 114). Triangulation, as a validation approach, allows the researcher to identify points of convergence in the data, thus building on the strengths or identifying the weaknesses of each source (Lapan& Quartaroli, 2009). As one means of triangulating data, this study relied upon two surveys developed by and used with permission of Stoll and Fink (1996): "How Effective is Your School?" (Appendix A) and, "Do the Cultural Norms of Your School Promote School Improvement?" (Appendix B). The surveys were developed for schools to assess cultural aspects; they are also used to seek criteria information regarding cultural norms and school effectiveness, aspects that are purported to aid organizational development (i.e., shared vision, goals, beliefs, values, and responsibility for success; collegiality and collaboration; continuous development, and life-long learning; safety for risk taking, instructional leadership, celebration, purposeful learning environments, and a focus on student learning). The Internal Participant group completed the survey by rating the school on each of the aspects as they remembered it at the focal time period of this study. The surveys are beneficial because they do not rely on the participants' detailed memories; rather, answers are based mainly on memories of more general aspects. The aggregated results of the survey convey general impressions of the school culture as recalled by the informants. Therefore, along with the examination of historical records, the surveys provided triangulation of data during analysis. Initially, I had planned to use the survey to check for consistency of internal participants' responses between the survey and those of their interviews. However, many of these were completed anonymously so it was not possible to crosscheck each with the corresponding interview data.

Review of Historical Records and Relevant Documents

This aspect of the research supported the triangulation of data and concluded the data collection sequence. It involved a review of School Accreditation Reports, and a thesis (Koutetes, 1994) the topic of which related to the crisis that occurred in the school

prior to the time period examined in this study. In addition, where they were willing, participants were invited to share excerpts from their own journals, diaries, or personal records of their time at the school for appropriate inclusion in the study. Two participants chose to share personal documents and notes related to school-based Professional Development activities. I also used my own personal records related to programs which participants identified as being memorable and factors contributing to the school's success.

Study Sequence

Letter of Introduction and Invitation to Participate in the Study

The "Letter of Introduction" (Appendix C), along with an attachment containing the "Study Information Letter" (Appendix D) and the two surveys (Appendices A and B), were distributed by email to all those solicited for participation. Upon reply, an interview time was determined and a "Consent Form" (Appendix E) and the survey forms were mailed to those expressing an interest in participating. Interviewee signatures were procured and pseudonyms were established before the beginning of the interviews.

An Interview of the Researcher by an Independent Reporter

To ensure that my biases and preconceptions were clearly articulated, and that my story could be included in the overall research process, an independent reporter (here-in referred to as Reporter) interviewed me prior to my conducting the interviews with participants. The Reporter had no direct experience with the school or the events under scrutiny in this research. However, she is an experienced educator with a strong professional reputation (Personal Communication, 2010). We conducted the session via the Internet using the software application *Skype* (2010). I recorded the conversation, as with all interviews, using a small hand-held recorder. I then transcribed the interview verbatim using the voice recognition software program, *MacSpeech Scribe* (Nuance Communications, 2010). Immediately following the interview, the Reporter provided me with feedback about my personal biases related to the study. Later, in reviewing the transcript and reflecting on my responses, I was able to discern some of my personal biases and preconceptions as well as some of my feelings about my personal experience at the school during the time period studied.

This step in the research helped me not only to discern my emotional tone in regard to the case but also provided a further point of triangulation. My close association with the case necessitated this step prior to the data collection phase (Lapan & Quartaroli, 2009). In their discussion of researcher bias, Onwuegbuzie, Collins, and Leech (2008) suggest researcher interviews as a means of identifying, "the role that bias plays in the research process in general and in shaping the findings and interpretations in particular" (p. 3). Onwuegbuzie et al. cite the work of Schwandt (1997) in describing how such "systematic reflexivity" can aid the researcher to examine "one's theoretical commitments to see how they serve as resources for generating particular data, for behaving in particular ways vis-à-vis respondents and participants, and for developing particular interpretations" (p. 3). While Schwandt and Onwuegbuzie et al. recommend that this strategy involve debriefing the researcher subsequent to data collection, in this study, it was deemed more useful to conduct the Reporter's interview with me prior to the subject interview phase of the research. This sequence was felt to help me be more cognizant of my biases on entry to the research and thus to avoid influencing the participants. Onwuegbuzie et al. recommend that the interview be audio or videotaped, conducted by someone with interviewing skills and who has no vested interest in the research. These criteria were met in my interview with the Reporter.

School Culture and Effectiveness Survey

The two surveys were collected from the participants prior to the interviews only if they brought their completed surveys to the session. Otherwise the completed surveys were faxed or mailed to me some time after the interviews.

Semi-structured Interviews

An interview session was scheduled with each of the participants at a mutually agreeable time and in a quiet setting. Most participants chose to meet in their homes or in mine. One particular interview was conducted using the Internet and *Skype* (2010) software as the participant lives a considerable distance away and a face-to-face session was not possible.

Prior to the actual questioning, I gathered consents, reminded participants of confidentiality and inquired if they had any questions about the interview or study. For the digital voice recognition software, *MacSpeech Scribe* (Nuance Communications,

2010) used in the interview transcriptions, participants were asked to read a 1-minute training text. The actual interviews varied in length from 40 to 90 minutes, depending on the participant's narrative and the number of clarifying questions required.

The interviews were recorded and transferred to MP3 audio files. Participants were informed that after I had an opportunity to review their responses, I might want to contact them again to ask follow-up questions. Once transcribed using the *MacSpeech Scribe* software (Nuance Communications, 2010), an interview transcript was sent to each interviewee giving them the opportunity to check, confirm, comment on, edit, or revise their responses. This process gave them an opportunity to validate the contents of their interviews.

I felt warmly received by each of the participants. Although some expressed a certain initial nervousness about being recorded, they soon relaxed and became fully engaged in the dialogue. Without exception, all participants expressed views that they were happy to be involved in the study; many communicated their appreciation for the opportunity to converse about the time we had shared at the school.

Ethical Considerations

The use of human beings in any research demands close examination of ethical consideration. "Most ethical issues in research falling into 1 of 4 categories: protection from harm, informed consent, right to privacy, and honesty with professional colleagues" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p. 101). It is imperative that research participants not be exposed to situations or conditions that might result in physical or psychological harm. Leedy and Ormrod note that participants should not be exposed to conditions involving "…risk [of] losing life or limb, nor should they be subjected to unusual stress, embarrassment, or loss of self-esteem" (p. 101).

For this reason, the "Study Information Form" (Appendix D) detailed the study's foreseen potential risks and benefits and provided detailed information about the purpose and design features of the study. It alerted potential participants that some of the topics could be personally sensitive. They were assured that if they experienced emotional upset, arrangements would be made for them to receive support from a qualified counsellor. The "Study Information Form" and the "Informed Consent Form" (Appendix E) stressed that participation was strictly voluntary and that participants had

the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. In order to avoid any potential embarrassment or other emotional discomfort, participants were ensured that pseudonyms had been assigned to all discussed in the study: the school, school district, the community, and the teacher convicted of criminal activities. Participants would be assigned a pseudonym of their choosing with confidentiality assured through data being identified according to pseudonym: data would be protected with a secured code.

Assurance was also given that transcripts, video, audio, and MP3 recordings, as well as surveys, would be destroyed when the study is complete or after the time required by policy at Simon Fraser University in regard to data retention. Participants were also informed that publication of any part of their interview would only occur with their consent. A "Confidentiality Agreement" (Appendix F) was also developed for use with the Internal Participants in the event that a Focus Group was conducted with them. The research assistant who assisted with the analysis of data, although not privy to the actual names of the participants, signed the Confidentiality Agreement.

Analyzing the Data

Each method selected for use in this study, the semi-structured interview, survey, and review of historical records, received specific treatment in terms of the analysis phase of the study. Once analysis was complete for each, the results were contrasted and compared for the purposes of triangulation. The need for using multiple sources of data (triangulation) is especially important and is "a strength of case study data collection…[and] the need to use multiple sources of evidence far exceeds that in other research methods, such as experiments, surveys, or histories" (Yin, 2009, p. 114). As previously stated, triangulation allows for the "the development of converging lines of inquiry" (p. 115). In this study the two types of triangulation used were:

1. Data triangulation, which is aimed at corroborating the same information amongst the data sources. This type was especially necessary in analyzing the transcripts and surveys as well as the perceptions of the participants and those documented in the External Accreditation Team Report. (External Accreditation Team, 1995). The data collected from my researcher interview was also used for this purpose.

2. Investigation triangulation whereby there is corroboration found in different evaluators. During the analysis phase of the research, I

> employed an assistant who reviewed the interview transcripts in order to identify emerging themes. I provided her with some examples based on those I had initially identified while conducting the interviews. She then proceeded in search of themes and highlighted references to them in each of the interviews. Thus, investigation triangulation was involved in identifying corroboration with the assistant who also identified themes in the transcripts.

Each of the three methods, interview, survey, and review of historical records, is discussed in the sections that follow and convergence of data is identified in the data analysis Chapter 5.

Analysis of the Interviews

The interview and transcribing phases of the project provided the initial opportunities for data analysis. During each interview, I listened to responses and made rough notations about emerging ideas and themes. This way, I could retain those ideas that called for clarifying questions without interrupting the flow of the participant's narrative; I could begin to hear the themes embedded in the interviews. When possible, I transcribed immediately after each interview so that the conversation was fresh in my memory. During the transcription phase, I also noted emerging themes. This practice of simultaneously gathering data and analyzing is common to all grounded theory. As described by Charmaz (2003):

> Grounded theory provides researchers with guidelines for analyzing data at several points in the research process, not simply at the 'analysis' stage. Coding is the first pivotal analytic step that moves the researcher from description towards conceptualization of that description. Coding required the researcher to attend closely to the data. Nonetheless, the codes reflect the researcher's interests and perspectives as well as the information in the data. (p. 319)

In the above Charmaz (2003) also emphasizes the role of the researcher in this process. With constructivist methods, such as those advocated by Charmaz, the researcher enters into the world of the participant, and together they reconstruct the story; together they develop "an interpretive portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it" (p. 314). Given my situation as a player in the focal case, my close association with its participants and my years of pondering the events and circumstances, I instinctively engaged as a co-constructor with the participants.

However, I did so cautiously, with the intent to clearly hear their stories and not overlay mine.

Once all interviews were completed, I continued with a more formal analysis by reviewing each transcription and coding for themes and central ideas. This coding stage was “concept-driven”: “Concept-driven coding uses codes that have either been developed in advance by the researcher, either by looking at some of the material or by consulting existing literature in the field” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 203). As I was relying on grounded theory methods, I used the interview sessions, transcribing phase and the initial reading of the transcriptions to arrive at the conceptual codes, rather than relying on related literature. It is also important to note that the codes I distilled from the interviews were also a function of my own knowledge set. Perhaps, a layperson or person associated with another field of study would discern a different set of themes.

As previously described, in order to verify the initial codes and to include investigation triangulation, I engaged the services of an assistant. She was provided with the examples of codes I had initially identified through the interviews as well as a copy of each transcript with which she repeated my steps of reviewing each transcript and identifying codes. In hindsight, it may have been better to have the assistant identify codes independently with no previous knowledge of the initial codes. However, having the initial list to corroborate provided her with examples of emergent themes with which to begin. Together, we compared our results, in some cases verifying the initially determined codes and in others, identifying new codes. We then categorized the codes according to themes and assigned a colour to each. As we checked for the themes, we generated a list of synonyms for each of the code words that emerged in the transcripts; these word clusters helped us to identify and describe each theme.

Over a period of 1 month, my assistant and I independently highlighted the sections of the text in which participants made reference to the identified codes or themes. We met on three occasions to review our notations and theme/code identifications. New codes emerged as we worked through the data, each of us identifying previously unidentified concepts. We created a spreadsheet, listing each of the participants on the column headings and then listed codes, categorized by theme along the row heading. Each cell was then reviewed for consistent coding and, where there was discrepancy, the transcript was reviewed for evidence to include or exclude the code. Though labour intensive, the process appeared to provide considerable

opportunity to check the matching of text with the code, the naming of codes, the identification of themes, and the categorization of each of the codes within the themes. Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe this process as integration:

> One might say that it begins with the first bit of analysis and does not end until the final writing. As with all phases of analysis, integration is an interaction between the analyst and the data. Brought in that interaction is the analytic gestalt, which includes not only who the analyst is but also the evolution of thinking that occurs over time through immersion in the data and the cumulative body of findings that have been recorded…Although the cues to how concepts are linking can be found in the data, it is not until relationships are recognized as such by the analyst that they emerge. (p. 145)

For the most part, the process described by Strauss and Corbin demonstrates our engagement in the analysis stage; through immersion and interaction with the data relationships emerged.

It is important to emphasize that the analysis of the interviews and emerging themes proceeded from a holistic approach to the data rather than from a question-by-question approach. Given the semi-structured nature of the interviews, the codes and themes, to a significant degree, emerged at various points in the thread of conversation; they were dispersed throughout the interview rather than being attached to any particular question. This meant that a question-by-question approach to analysis was not fruitful except in relation to the questions like that which specifically asked about the Year 2000 reform initiative.

After the codes were identified and categorized, I reread the participants' narratives looking for conceptual meanings to support the themes. To this end, I created word clusters relating to particular concepts and constructed meanings for each theme. At the conclusion of this process, I felt confident, as did the research assistant, that we had mined the stories of the participants thoroughly and, that I had done what I could to avoid forcing myself on the data. I felt that I was hearing their stories and in the analysis could hear the themes, both when different from mine and when similar.

I became increasingly aware of two aspects of conducting research and the tension created at their interface. First, there was a need to hear the stories of the participants as clearly and accurately as possible; second, there was a need to bring my knowledge of the situation to bear so that I could more fully understand and interpret the stories about it. More succinctly stated, there was a need to minimize researcher bias

while at the same time, maximizing researcher sensitivity to the data. Working side-by-side with a research assistant in the interpretation phase of the study helped me to address this tension and find a better balance between the two aspects.

In writing the report, and in consultation with my supervisor, themes were renamed and reorganized to better reflect the participants' meanings; these revisions provided a more succinct presentation of the data and emphasized what was foreshadowed by Corbin and Strauss (2008) in their words that began this chapter: "Out of these multiple constructions, analysts construct something that they call knowledge" (p. 237).

Surveys

The surveys were then scored as per the instructions provided by their authors (see Appendices A and B). The composite score is then used to locate the school in the "School Typology" framework identifying it as 1 of 5 types of schools (Blankstein, 2004, pp. 215-217). The types were: Moving Schools (improving and effective indicated by scores equal to or greater than 7+ and 7+), Cruising Schools (declining but effective with scores between 7+ and 4-), Strolling Schools (neither declining nor improving with scores of 5 and 6), Struggling Schools (improving but not effective with scores approximately 4- and 7+), and Sinking Schools (declining and not effective with score equal to or less than 4- and 4-).

Historical Records

The following records were reviewed and summarized in text form with the aim of keeping as close to the facts as possible. First, I reviewed a thesis (Koutetes, 1994) based on research conducted on John Doe prior to the time focus of this study. The thesis helped me to summarize the crisis that the school community had faced prior to the time under study. Second, I reviewed, the 1995 School Accreditation Report. Finally, I examined my own personal records made during the period that was the focus of the study as well as those of study participants who volunteered to allow their use.

The conventions of case study and grounded theory guided this inquiry as it sought the unfolding of the participants' stories of this period in Oceanside's history. The methods of semi-structured interview, survey and the examination of historical records were used so as to let those stories be told and to allow for investigator and data

triangulation important to qualitative study. Analysis of the data relied upon coding to reveal the underlying themes in the participants' accountings. In the coming chapters, the participants and their stories will come to life as each of the themes is articulated in their words. Prior to describing what the data revealed however, it is important to provide an accounting of the facts that surrounded the crisis at Oceanside, the large-scale provincial reform that it was challenged to address, as well as the provincial accreditation process it engaged in the year after the focal period of this study.

Chapter 3.

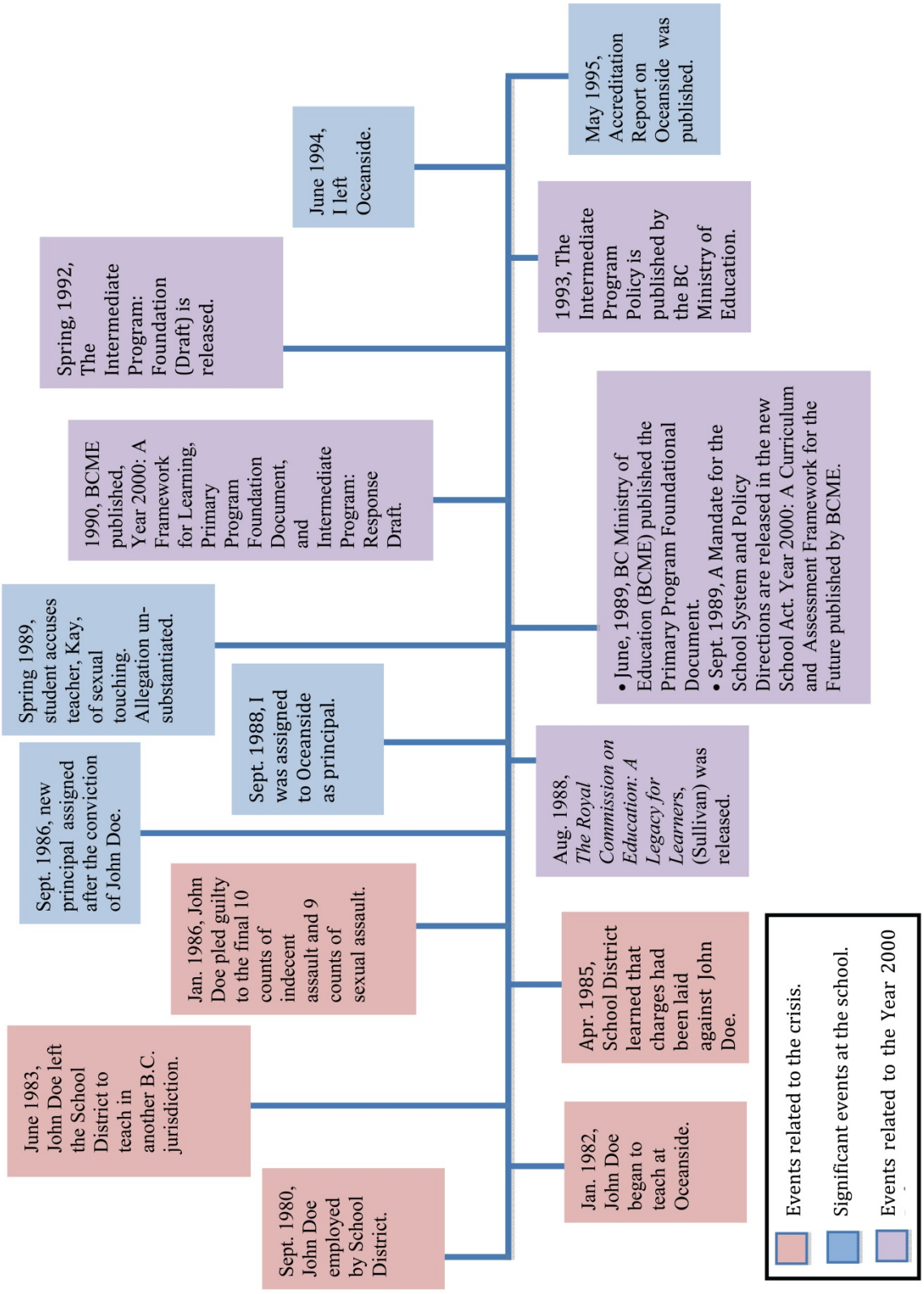
The Facts of the Case

This study questions the role of crisis and reform in the history of Oceanside Elementary School. In order to provide context and greater depth of understanding in relation to these events, this chapter supplements the words of the participants with an accounting of the necessary facts and details related to both the crisis and the large-scale reform initiative. Both were very significant and challenging events in the life of the school. The crisis was catastrophic in that it destroyed the trust that existed between members of the educational community as well as between the school and its school community. Many aspects of Year 2000 (1989c) reform marked a significant departure from previously held paradigms and practice and required the school staff and community to enter into a serious reflection on current practices and develop plans to implement necessary change. A broad understanding of the crisis and the reform will not only give context for this period in the school's history, it will also provide a greater understanding of the magnitude of the crisis brought on by John Doe and of the response needed to heal from it. Additionally, it will allow for greater appreciation of the significant demands brought by Year 2000 Program that coincided as it attempted to heal from crisis.

The chapter also provides details about the accreditation process engaged in by the school in the year immediately following the time-period that is the focus of the study. The outcomes identified in the External Team Accreditation Report (External Accreditation Team, 1995) are later used in Chapter 4 to triangulate with data arising from the participants' interviews.

In order to help the reader see the meshing of events that occurred in relation to the crisis recovery and the Year 2000 reform, Figure 1 provides a chronology of events to begin this chapter.

Figure 1. Timeline of Events at Oceanside Elementary School



This time line signifies the many events to which the school staff was called to respond. While this study focuses on the period from 1988 to 1994, the events that came before and after also shaped the retelling of the story. Thus, the period addressed in Figure 1 extends from September 1980 to May 1995.

What follows is an accounting of a number of these events and changes.

The Crisis

In the Spring of 1985, some British Columbia newspapers reported that a public school teacher, referred to in this study as John Doe, had been charged with two counts of sexual assault involving students in his classroom. This teacher had taught at Oceanside Elementary School for 2 years ending in 1983. The investigation into his activities was soon broadened to include other jurisdictions, including Oceanside School as well as other schools in the Windy Coast District. Soon, the charges were increased to 32 instances. Help was brought from the provincial Ministries of Education, Health, Human Resources and the School Boards of the jurisdictions involved. By the time of the trial, the number of charges was set at 10, some of which involved students from Oceanside. The teacher pled guilty to all charges and as a result the students were not required to attend court proceedings.

John Doe's offences were considered so serious that the court designated him a Dangerous Offender during a 1986 hearing tried by then senior barrister, Barry Sullivan. (This was the same Barry Sullivan, QC, who later oversaw the 1987-1988 Royal Commission on Education and authored the report, "The Royal Commission on Education: A Legacy for Learners" described later in this chapter.) Dangerous Offender provisions against child sex offenders specify that the offender is likely to cause "injury, pain or other evil to other persons through failure in the future to control his sexual impulses" (*Criminal Code*, 1985, section 753 (b)). Over the course of this hearing evidence indicated that John Doe's offenses had begun and were reported even before he began his teaching career. Despite his history, he was accepted into a teacher education program and a major university (Koutetes, 1994, p. 98). While teaching in other jurisdictions and in the Windy Coast School District some of Doe's behaviours were questioned. van Dam (2001) described how John Doe was finally charged with his crimes:

> His conviction only finally occurred because of one little girl's response. The cloak of secrecy, individually maintained by several school districts and treatment providers who were all well aware of his sexual proclivities began to unravel when this girl, who had previously been sexually abused by someone else and knew the system, called the police....Only through a thorough police investigation initiated by this elementary school child were each of those individual "indiscretions" revealed to be part of an ongoing pattern of abuse. (p. 30)

John Doe is said to have molested between 50 and 70 children (van Dam, p. 31). He has impacted individuals and organizations throughout the province. Oceanside serves as an example of the harm done to these organizations.

It is beyond the scope of this study to examine where the fault lay for the failure to prevent, detect, appropriately respond, and ultimately to halt his offenses against children. However, it is likely and noteworthy to this study that those who knew of his activity experienced guilt and remorse. It is also probable, in fact verified by Bella later in this study, that some of those who associated with John Doe and didn't see what he was doing also experienced guilt. Certainly, the victims and their families sought to know where the responsibility lay in this case.

In an attempt to understand why and how the teacher's criminal activity had gone unreported, the Windy Coast School District ordered its own independent inquiry. Over the course of the following year, a number of administrative and policy changes occurred. A new principal was assigned; the school was given a full-time counsellor; and, a number of other staff changes occurred (it is not known if these changes resulted from staff requests or by the decision of the School Board as a result of the Inquiry.) It is not known if any other actions were taken by the School Board to help resolve the crisis. Sources who could have verified the actions taken are no longer alive or were not accessible to participate in this study

The Sullivan Royal Commission and the Year 2000 Program

Between March 1987 and July 1988, the late Barry Sullivan, QC, headed a provincial Royal Commission on Education. The Commission's report, released in August 1988, entitled "The Royal Commission on Education: A Legacy for Learners" (Sullivan, 1988), contained 83 recommendations. A few months later, the British Columbia Ministry of Education (hereafter BCME) published the "Primary Program

Foundational Document" (1989b). Three months after this saw the release by BCME of "Policy Directions" (1989a) and the "A Mandate for the School System" (Brummet, 1989) which defined the Educated Citizen and the Goals of Education. Subsequent to this release, a draft document, "Year 2000: A Curriculum and Assessment Framework for the Future" (BCME, 1989c) was distributed throughout the provincial educational system. The BCME requested feedback about this document to be used in the development of the final version of the draft, which was eventually published as, "Year 2000: A Framework for Learning" (BCME, 1990b). The framework proposed significant program changes. Described by Anthony Brummet, then BC Minister for Education, the intent of the changes was "to help address some of the important problems that have been identified in regard to our educational system" (p. v). The problems were amongst those cited in the report of the Royal Commission. The three main directions found in the framework document and common to the report of the Royal Commission were: a need to recognize "the dramatic social and economic changes that have taken place in British Columbia over the past 20 years, changes that have placed new demands upon, and created new expectations for, our schools" (BCME, 1990b, p. 5); recognition of the need for public education to address the needs of all learners not just those who intend on progressing to post-secondary; and the need for a Mandate for the system in order to "clarify…matters of direction and process" (p. 6).

These six documents released by Commissioner Sullivan and the Ministry of Education in the period from 1989 to 1990 mandated significant changes to current practice. Not only were the directions and purposes as described in the Mandate and Policy Directions altered, goals, grade and curriculum organization and assessment practices were altered in the framework document.

The primary goal stated in the framework document was that of Intellectual Development to be achieved by public schools with the support of the family and community. The secondary goals were Human and Social Development and Career Development, both to be shared among schools, the family and community (BCME, 1990b, p. 4). The Common Curriculum introduced in this document was composed of four strands, Humanities, Sciences, Practical Arts, and Fine Arts. The strands were to be addressed continuously from Kindergarten to Grade 12. As well, the division of the 13 years of public schooling into Primary, Intermediate and Graduation Programs was

established. All three of these programs were to place greater focus on regular student assessment, program evaluation, native education, gender equity, and multiculturalism.

Student assessment and evaluation were given extensive attention in the Framework. With the central aim of improving student learning, assessment was to be evidence based and learner focused. Also introduced was the Provincial Learning Assessment Program, which prescribed that "three grade levels would write achievement tests and respond to attitude scales" (p. 15). Additionally, the document, "Year 2000: A Framework for Learning" (BCME, 1990b) raised concerns about norm-referenced assessment. This understanding of assessment was a significant departure from previously espoused practices and policies in that it de-emphasized letter grades, the comparison of student results, and a focus on an expected distribution of marks.

The Primary Program was extensively described in the "Primary Program Foundational Document" (BCME, 1989b) (published 1 year prior to the Framework document) and in the revised "Primary Program Foundation Document" (BCME, 1990a). The Intermediate Program description was given in the draft document, "The Intermediate Program: Foundations" (BCME, 1992). The Primary years were to be ungraded while the Intermediate Program was not. Integration of curriculum was a feature of the Primary Program and was left at the discretion of the teacher in the Intermediate Grades. In both no specific time allotments were given for subject areas and each contained a proposal that locally developed curriculum could comprise up to 20% of the school program. Assessment at the Primary level was to be anecdotal, evidence based (i.e., based on student work and performance samples), and a description of student performance in relation to signpost descriptors. While in the Intermediate Program, schools could determine whether to use letter grades or anecdotal descriptions or a combination of both.

In summary, the Year 2000 mandated significant change to traditional classroom practice. It ordered, through policy, a new mission statement, an updated definition of an educated citizen, and greater focus on the development of the intellectual skill set described above. Teachers were required to broaden the scope of their programs to include human, social, and career development and to assess and report on student learning in markedly different ways. Grimmett (1996) described that in fact, the Year 2000 redefined the role of teachers. Grimmett found that, "the changes involved a reinterpretation of curriculum and the teacher's role in the development of an educational

program" (para. 5). Grimmett argued that this reform, "moved away from viewing curriculum as "ground to be covered," or something to be "delivered," to a broader concept of curriculum…[that] included the expectation that teachers were to become curriculum developers rather than curriculum deliverers" (para. 5).

The intent of the Year 2000 was to address some of the perceived flaws of the previous system; previous practice was to be corrected. Grimmett (1996) described the Year 2000 as "a radical, systemic restructuring of its [BC's] educational programs" (para. 4). In the field, for some teachers, the prescribed changes constituted a significant departure from their beliefs and practice; for others, the new program validated many of their own core beliefs about schooling, learning and the role of schooling in society, and practice.

A later examination of what the participants in this study had to say about the Year 2000 Program, will reveal many and varied perspectives about the impacts of the program on their professional practices.

School Accreditation Report

In 1995, Oceanside Elementary School was scheduled to participate in the British Columbia Ministry of Education "Accreditation Program" (BCME, 1994), which was made mandatory at the elementary level in 1990 (Hodgkinson, 1995). The purposes of the program are as follows:

1. to ensure that schools demonstrate Provincial Education Standards with respect to the three goals of education: intellectual development; human and social development; and career development;
2. to ensure that schools demonstrate standards with respect to the five attributes of the Public School System: accessibility, relevance, equity, quality, and accountability;
3. to ensure that the schools consider shareholders' opinions and report to them at regular intervals their determined strengths and areas needing change;
4. to accommodate implementation of provincial objectives; and
5. to ensure that schools are learner focused and that schools plan to maximize student opportunity to acquire the qualities of "Educated Citizens". (External Accreditation Team, 1995, p. 4)

The Program operated in three phases: internal self-assessment, development of a School Growth Plan, and an external assessment that culminated in the "External Team Accreditation Report" (External Accreditation Team, 1995). A committee of staff and parents led the internal self-assessment process and guided the development of the School Growth Plan. Internal Teams, which were composed of teachers and in many cases, support staff members, addressed all 80 criteria set out by the BCME under the prescribed headings: Learning Experiences, Leadership and Administration, School Culture, Professional and Staff Development, and School and its Community. The Internal Teams created assessment statements related to each of the criteria that included evidence and also a satisfaction indicator determined by both parents and staff.

Based on the assessment statements, criteria were grouped in 1 of 4 categories. These were: (a) well developed strengths which are important to maintain, (b) strengths that require further development if they are to be sustained, (c) areas needing change which can be quickly and easily resolved, and (d) areas needing change which will require greater thought, energy, and time for resolution (Internal Assessment Report, 1995).

Once these lists were categorized, the school staff met with 20 parents over the course of two evenings to prioritize the lists and determine which goals to include in the draft "School Growth Plan;" each of the selected goals and success indicators had an action plan attached to it.

The External Team, whose members consisted of a parent, an elementary vice-principal, an elementary teacher, and an assistant superintendent, all from other school districts in the Province, conducted the External Assessment. The role of the External Team was to:

> validate the school's self-assessment report; to identify school strengths and areas for growth; to determine that the School's Growth Plan is designed to…sustain and extend school strengths, address areas needing change, and accommodate implementation of appropriate educational programs and curricula as provincially mandated and locally developed. (External Accreditation Team, 1995)

The External Accreditation Team visited Oceanside School in May 1995. The team's activities were many and included an analysis of the school's internal report, interviews with all staff members, informal interviews with students, meetings with the

Parent Advisory Council Executive, telephone interviews with a random sampling of parents, observations of students in various school settings, as well as students' work.

The report was presented to the entire staff and again to school district personnel on the fourth day of their visit. The Superintendent filed the report with the Ministry of Education in July of the same year. As a result of successfully completing accreditation, Oceanside, like other accredited schools in the province, received funds over 2 years to support them to "engage fully in the accreditation activity, and to help ensure that the school growth plan can be implemented in the years following accreditation" (Hodgkinson, 1995, p. 22).

The findings of the report are presented in Chapter 4 of this thesis as a means of validating other findings discovered in the stories of the participants.

The Year 2000 and the crisis were significant forces in play in the time period of this study. While the crisis began for Oceanside's staff, the community and the Windy Coast School District 3 years prior to this period, it continued to have an impact. This crisis was not just perpetuated by John Doe; the scope and duration of his activities continued as a result of the failure of others to recognize and respond appropriately and effectively to the concerns that were raised. Moreover, the emotional impact of John Doe's offences continued for youth, their families, the community, this School District, and others around the Province for years; perhaps it still does today. Additionally, the Year 2000 was a large-scale reform designed to correct the problems of the previous system. It mandated significant changes to school and classroom practice. Thus, from 1988 until 1994, Oceanside School community faced its own serious concerns along with the externally demanded change of the Year 2000. School accreditation is emphasized in this chapter because it provided the first comprehensive assessment of Oceanside following the events brought by the crisis and the reform initiative. It outlined a process of self-assessment for the school community and well as an examination from an external body. Accreditation could be seen as a measure of how well the school responded to the two major forces that had acted upon it.

Chapter 4.

My Personal Story and Its Themes

The focal period of this study saw the introduction of a significant, mandated educational reform while the school community of Oceanside Elementary was still recovering from a significant crisis. My aim, in re-storying the events of that time, was to gather the participants' perspectives of this time period. Additionally, as I have long reflected on the significance of this time period on my career, I also set out to understand my own role as principal then and my responses to the two major challenges faced by the school.

Through the next three chapters, relying on the words of the participants and my own interview, I now begin the process of re-telling the events at Oceanside Elementary. Developing the story was not without its challenges. One of these was that in order to allow you to judge the words of the participants as truly theirs, free from mine, I needed to reveal my biases before offering the central stories of the participants. Thus, I begin in this chapter with my own story as told to the Reporter. As it unfolds you may begin to find emergent themes expressed as biases, perceptions, and perspectives. I presented my story first, not with the intent of having it prevail over the stories of the other participants, but so that my personal biases will be clearly evident. Following the summary of my interview, I describe the themes that emerged.

My Story

I have introduced some of my story in Chapter 1, "Situating Myself in the Research" and "Personal Significance" where I introduced the school, my arrival to it, and its history. There, I also described how it felt to depart from the school and my subsequent quest to understand how the school came to be as it was. In this section I present my story as told to the Reporter. The researcher interview strategy helped me tell my story using the frame of the same set of foundational questions (see Table 1) that

I used to interview the other participants. More important, through the lens of this strategy I became much more aware of my biases.

The Reporter was chosen because she had neither knowledge of nor association with this school. Yet, because she was a skilled and perceptive educator, her interviewing approach demonstrated a high degree of sensitivity to the story. Concluding the questions, the Reporter discussed the biases she had noticed during our conversation.

> *I think your bias is very obvious; that is that the crisis and the opportunity but primarily the crisis…was hugely responsible for the magic, as you called it. That people were open and vulnerable and willing in ways that others maybe weren't and that is your biggest bias because you are coming from that belief system yourself.*

Another of the biases she identified was that the "Year 2000: A Framework for Learning*"* had an impact on the school's development. In my eyes, the Year 2000 Framework allowed the school staff greater latitude and flexibility in making changes to the school culture. These changes included student reporting, curriculum development, discipline, and school organization. I also made the claim that the Year 2000 encouraged a student-centred approach such that we could organize curriculum thematically to be more meaningful for students and more focused on student interests and needs. I felt that the Framework was flexible and open enough to allow us, as a group, to be creative. For the most part, staff embraced the changes and parents were supportive. I described it this way in my interview:

> *We really took advantage of that Year 2000 experience to begin to build together, so that laid it open 'curricularly'. I think, if it had been any other kind of reform, that was highly prescriptive, it could've turned the wrong way for us. But because it was…so open, and because…we wanted to create together,…it really assisted what we were doing.*

The Reporter suggested that I might have had more awareness of the Year 2000 Framework than the teachers because the staff had already engaged in school change activity, changes determined more by the school community than by the Year 2000 proposals.

Following my interview, I transcribed and scrutinized it for additional perceptions and perspectives that I might have held when I first began the research process. In the

words that follow, I account for these thoughts drawing from quotations from my interview.

Although I was aware of the crisis precipitated by John Doe's activities in Oceanside School when I began as principal, I held the assumption that the crisis was past. I justified that supposition by telling myself that it had been 2 years and 9 months since John Doe pled guilty to the charges and was incarcerated, that he had left the school 5 years prior, and that most all of the staff from the time of the incidents had also left the school. The flaws in my assumption became evident through several incidents that occurred in the first few months—incidents that helped me to realize that some staff, students, and families were still experiencing distress related to the crisis. I described the most explosive of these incidents:

> *I got a phone call saying come to the school immediately. One of the Grade 7 girls has accused her teacher of grabbing her breast and so I went down there and had this real sense of impending doom and it was a horrendous situation. The RCMP were there within 20 minutes of my phone call; they investigated. They talked to other students. They talked to the teacher and by the end of that evening they decided that…the allegation was unsubstantiated. But the kids refused to believe it and the parents refused to believe it and the teacher was absolutely devastated....and the parents, because there was no trust in the school because of the [John Doe] thing just perpetuated this whole thing and it went on for weeks….The kids…a bunch of them stormed out of the school the next day because they refused to believe that the RCMP had done a proper investigation. That went on for weeks and weeks and was absolutely devastating to everybody. So there was this sense for us that the disaster wasn't, the crisis wasn't over and that we had a lot more work to do.*

The accused teacher, Kay, is one of the study's participants. Later in this report, Kay describes his experience and how it resolved somewhat positively for him (see Chapter 5, section "Crisis"). In my own interview, this topic of conversation was concluded with me expressing a firm view that the crisis brought by John Doe contributed to the development of a rather unique school culture marked by openness and a commitment to change:

> *I don't know if without the crises, without the openness and the vulnerability, the…deep desire for something different. When you hit rock bottom, you want to climb out in a desperate way. And it's hard to find a staff that is there….Yet for me…there's so many crises that have…happened on almost every staff that I've been on. But there's been this real push to wrap it up and close it up…rather than open it up*

and….Maybe that's the key…maybe it's being able to open people's hearts in a deep, deep way that allows that to happen.

I also felt that some people and specific programs had contributed to making this a quality learning environment for students. Although everyone made a considerable difference to the development of the school, I identified a number of people whose contributions were significant. The school counsellor was one of these. I identified her as a person who, "*really wanted to ensure that the power base of the school was levelled…[she initiated] the Peer Mediators Program. [These students] used a problem solving model that she introduced*." The Primary Program Coordinator, Sunshine, also contributed through her support of various school initiatives. It was my perception that our Superintendent at the time, also made significant contributions. I recounted:

And the other really special person in all of it was a fellow [Jack Smith] who was our Superintendent....I'll always remember phoning him the minute I got to [Oceanside on the day of the inappropriate touching claim] saying I'm about to phone the RCMP because this student has made an allegation against a teacher. He [Jack Smith] was right there. But he was right there in a way that was not directive. He stood by me and he trusted enough in us…even at that point, and he trusted enough in me to say, "What's your gut telling you? How can I support you?" I said, "We need somebody from the outside to verify this. We need some space between the teacher and student in order to create some listening and some ability to verify for the students what the RCMP were saying. And, he did that. He held the student back out of school with some counselling offered, and he brought in the…RCMP psychologist [who] came in and he debriefed with the community and he debriefed with the staff and they had critical incident debriefers in there with us.

I also asserted that several of the school-developed or adopted programs were contributing factors. The program, Eight Steps to Problem Solving,[4] used by staff and Peer Counsellors was significant:

On the playground with the problem-solving model, you could just start the seven steps. All the kids at school were trained in it so once you started them, they just carried on and did it themselves or if they couldn't, they asked to see a peer counsellor. So, the teachers were not acting from a power base on the playground or in their classrooms as much as possible. I think we are always come from there to some degree, but

[4] This program was introduced to the school by the school counsellor. It was frequently and is in this thesis, referred to as the Problem Solving Program. Its source is unknown. For a description of Eight Steps to Problem Solving, see Chapter 5.

> *there was a consciousness about powering over that was…the gift....that was really a central theme for us.*

Three-Way Reporting,[5] described at length by the participants later in this thesis, was also noteworthy:

> *One of the things that happened, and I think because…we listened so deeply to one another was at report card time at some point in that time period…One of the teachers…said, "I don't like reporting this way....Why can't we do it in reverse? Why do we have to tell parents and have them react to our descriptions? Why aren't we sitting with them, talking first, recording that and developing a report card with them?" And the whole staff room went silent. And we then went on this…process of developing a Three-Way Reporting process.*

Three-Way Reporting brought the student, parent, and teacher together to co-write the report card and establish goals for the coming term. It was a collaborative process developed by Oceanside staff which allowed all parties to acknowledge the student's learning and set future directions.

Other programs that I described as contributing to the school's uniqueness and success were: Key Words,[6] another program developed by school staff, were terms that identified the school's core values (respect, responsibility, cooperation and positive action); *Earthkeepers: Four Keys for Helping Young People Live in Harmony with the Earth* (Van Matre, 1988) (hereafter referred to as *Earthkeepers*) and the program, *How to Become an Expert: Discover, Research, and Build a Project in Your Chosen Field* (Gibbons & Keating, 1990) (hereafter referred as the *Experts Program*).[7]

In my own personal interview I spoke about the sense of community in the school. "*Every teacher…knew every student in the school…it was about being connected to everybody*." To me, the adults in this community were committed and responsive to students. I said in my interview, "*this fabulous community spirit…and a fabulous sense of…connection and most importantly, a sense that we were doing what was right to serve kids, and doing what was needed to serve kids*." The staff was also responsive to parents: "*If we had parents coming in who wanted to bring something to*

[5] For a description of Three-Way Reporting developed by Oceanside staff, see Chapter 5.

[6] Key Words are described in greater detail in Chapter 5.

[7] Earthkeepers and the Experts Program were implemented by school staff and are described in greater detail in Chapter 5.

the school, we had the capacity to listen to them…" The community felt open to me such that, "*there was this openness to be very responsive to each other, to the students and to the community that was just wildly powerful for us*." The staff and other school community members felt appreciation for one another. I expressed that I felt appreciated and that, "*people became valued for the best of themselves*." In my view, this school community was marked by mutual trust and respect and was organized around vision and mission statements developed by parents and staff and reviewed regularly. A feature of this community was a collaborative culture. Often decisions were built through consensus and involved parents, students, interested community members, and staff.

References to leadership were also threaded throughout my interview. I emphasized the importance of distributed leadership: "*the whole issue of power and everybody having a role…there were incredibly talented, strong, clear, and intelligent people on the staff who if given the space to create what was good and what was right for the students, they could do that*." When speaking of the leadership provided to me by then Superintendent, Jack Smith, I commented that he was inspirational to me and extended trust, respect, and encouragement to collaborate and to articulate the source of our successes. In essence, upon reflection, I perceive that he was encouraging us to develop a meta-understanding of our work.

In relationship to my own leadership, what ultimately emerged was that, "*I knew that the buck stopped with me and that I had a strong leadership role to play in this but I didn't have the sense that I had to command things or that I was the one responsible to create it*." I also identified trust as central to my leadership. I believed that trust was built because people didn't see me coming from a power base, I wasn't about to impose ideas on them, and because I [emphasized] group consensus. This attitude "*allowed us to build a sense of trust and for me it was…a realization that…whatever else I did in that place, trust had to be the key to it all*." The personal learning I took from my experience at Oceanside was:

> *understanding leadership as the need for deep, deep listening…and for me, it was seeing every staff member as a huge gift and that my job was to find out who they are and be able to create a place where they could give it…they could extend their gift to the school…trusting that the people who are there…if they're responding to kids, give them their lead, give them support*.

I also learned that schools "*need to be fully…functioning communities….Human foibles are always going to make them places of mistakes, places of mishaps, places of*

problems…but the stronger the community is, the better able it is to address those and move past those things"

Here in this story, as described previously in "Situating Myself in the Research and Personal Significance," I described how painful it was to leave such a fulfilling position and how later, I sought to replicate these features in other schools with varying levels of success—none as successful as what I perceived to have been achieved at Oceanside.

As I reviewed my preliminary conversation with the Reporter, particular themes became evident. These were as follows:

Sense of community**:** This theme included aspects such as mutual trust and respect, strong interpersonal connections and responsiveness to one another, shared vision, sense of purpose, and values. A collaborative culture was also a feature in that the staff used consensus and deep listening models to ensure successful communication and decision-making. Appreciation, consistency of approach and a sense of shared responsibility were also aspects of this theme. Additionally there was a strong sense of commitment in the school community.

Leadership: This theme encompassed several aspects. These were first, the practice of distributed leadership that empowered staff members to be responsive to the needs of students, parents and each other. Also related is the idea that leaders must appreciate, encourage, support, inspire, and provide time for reflection and consensus. Thirdly, the idea that leadership involves considerable listening and trusting in those served by it.

Creating: This theme is related to the school community's ability to implement together programs such as Earthkeepers and Experts as well as to create programs and approaches such as Three-Way Reporting and Key Words.

Programs and approaches: It was my perception that programs and approaches, which empowered students and provided a communication model, such as, Eight Steps to Problem Solving*,* were important. The program which probably best embodies many of my conceptions is Three-Way Reporting, a collaborative process that supported even the youngest students in voicing their own progress and setting their own goals. Through that approach students were empowered, appreciated for their strengths, and encouraged to set goals.

Crisis played a role: The crisis precipitated by John Doe had a significant impact on the development of the school. The staff and, in fact,

the entire school community were committed to ensuring that this kind of crisis would never happen there again.

Year 2000 Framework: The staff, supported by the Year 2000 Framework and the openness of District and school leadership, was able to create and adapt programs that met the needs of its students. Parents were also supportive of these innovations.

People: I emphasized that while everyone played a role, the school counsellor's role was very significant. I also identified: the Superintendent, Jack Smith; the Primary Program Coordinator, Sunshine; one of the Intermediate Teachers, Biggy; and the parent who brought awareness of Earthkeepers to the school staff.

I was a member of this school community and as someone who still holds a deep appreciation for it years later, my perceptions and perspectives could easily have shaped the interviews and coloured the interpretative aspects of this research study that were to come. In this chapter, by describing, summarizing and thematicizing my own preliminary conversation with a person outside the research context, I have sought to make my preconceptions starkly evident to the readers of this account and to myself. This was essential in order for me to control and address my positions. It will remain to my readers to determine my degree of success. In Chapter 6, "Triangulating the Data," the themes that emerged from my own story are contrasted with those that emerged from the participants' stories.

Chapter 5.

In the Words of the Participants: Emergent Themes

The data presented in this chapter forms the centrepiece of this study. It was gathered primarily through semi-structured interviews, which were formatted with seven core open-ended questions (see Table 1). The participants' responses to these and other follow-up questions were central to this thesis.

The interviews began with an invitation to the participants: "From the beginning, tell me your story, your personal point of view of your experience at Oceanside School during the 6-year period from 1988 to 1994."

Following that, I asked the sub-question, "Tell me how you came to be at the school, your role and how and what that experience was for you?"

Subsequent questions prompted the participants to recall significant or memorable events, changes at the school and the features of these changes, roles that people played, and, finally, issues or challenges that arose.

One of the questions referred to the Year 2000 Framework. It was:

> During the period from 1988 to 1994 the provincial government received the report of the Sullivan Royal Commission on Education and moved to implement some of its recommendations in the program known as the Year 2000. If you think back to that time, do you have particular impressions of the Year 2000 Program and other related efforts at educational change as they affected Oceanside School?

While this question focused on the Year 2000 Framework, it was open-ended in that it also asked about other educational initiatives. Participants were then asked to assess this time period in response to the question: "In the period we've been discussing at 1988-1994 at Oceanside School do you consider the overall effect on the school of the various events as being negative, positive, or some combination of both?"

The core question that followed asked participants about their own significant learning experiences or personal changes gained from their work at the school at that time; additionally, they were asked to summarize their experiences and feelings about it all. The final question provided them an opportunity to discuss any topic not previously brought to light during the interview. All other interview questions were designed to clarify topics or subjects raised by the participants in response to the foundation questions.

In conducting the interviews with the research participants, it was important that I attend to my perceptions and beliefs and I considered it vital that my questions be open enough to allow the participants to articulate their own ideas. Equally important was that I follow leads taken by the interviewees, asking clarifying questions to track their threads of thought without sidestepping to my own.

A central aim of this study was to unfold the story of Oceanside through the interpretations of those who had been participants in the story. At the conclusion of each interview, I felt confident that the participant had been given the opportunity to tell their story. For some, more details surfaced post-interview and, with permission, I turned the recorder back on in order to capture these additions. One participant who was unable to meet with me responded via email.

The transcripts of the interviews were lengthy and, as the interviews were semi-structured, themes emerged at various points in the thread of our conversations. This meant that although many of the same themes were evident in all of the interviews, including my own, the points at which they surfaced varied. For example, although none of the questions asked the participants to describe staff relationships or the crisis associated with John Doe, almost every participant made reference to them. Descriptions of staff relationships and the crisis emerged at different points in the interview for different participants. As a result, the data was treated holistically rather than question-by-question.

In interpreting the data I did what in essence, is described by Yin (2009) as *playing* with the data. He cites Miles and Huberman (1994) in his description of how to play. They suggest constructing arrays, “making a matrix of categories and placing the evidence within such categories” (p. 129), creating data displays, and determining the frequencies of different aspects of the data. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) state that this approach “leads to interviewing and analyzing as intertwined phases of knowledge

construction, with an emphasis on the narrative" (p. 49). In the case of this research, as I conducted the interviews I became aware that particular themes were emerging. However, it was only after developing the interview transcriptions and verifying the content with each participant that I began the process of categorizing, building a matrix, and tabulating the frequencies of named factors that themes were articulated. As the research assistant and I interpreted and played with the data in search of themes, I had to use the same discipline of attending to my own biases. Guided by this approach, I used the impressions and words of the participants to build narratives and conceptual meanings for each theme. The themes that emerged and were applied to organize and give meaning to the data are described in this chapter. Each is introduced with a statement of general meaning and examples of the terms used by the participants, which the research assistant and I deemed to be related to the theme. Following this introduction, the theme is elaborated; my aim was to give them life through the words of the participants.

Fellowship in a Community of Shared Purpose and Values

Many participants made comments about having a sense of membership and participation in a community that had a commonality of purpose and values. This motif was reflected in their use of words and phrases describing fellowship, common goals, shared vision, beliefs and values. They also felt actively involved, combined with a sense of ownership; they noted the frequency of meetings to discuss vision, ideals, and beliefs, from which emerged common understandings.

Biggy, a teacher at the school, best captured this theme when asked about the most important learning experiences he took away from his work at Oceanside. He responded:

> *The sense of being a participant in a school that cared to and did do a wonderful job of education. That it just felt good to be able to say you're from Oceanside…it's what you aspire for in terms of a sense of fellowship when you're working with a group of people to accomplish a common goal. (Biggy, Teacher 1)*

His words evoke a sense of engagement, dedication, common purpose, and pride in place. Similarly, Ruth, a primary teacher, described fellowship and its importance to student learning.

> *Well, how vital community, a sense of community is to learning…how vital…being in a learning community is, a sense of community…a kind of mutuality; a mutuality where people felt responsible for each other. That really came from that time at Oceanside. (Ruth, Teacher 6)*

When I was asked in my own interview how the various changes affected the school, I explained that there was a "*fabulous sense of connection and most importantly, a sense that we were doing what was right to serve kids*."

Parents also experienced this fellowship. Karen, a parent participant, described it as an "*atmosphere that connected everybody*." Sunshine said that she came to a new understanding of parent engagement in the school community. She said that she learned:

> *how important parent involvement is. I don't think I really understood that quite so directly as I did after…experiencing what was going on in that school and experiencing it myself as a parent—not just as an educational colleague…how key that is for a child. (Sunshine, Primary Program Coordinator and Parent)*

Karen also said, "*We would come together and work together as a whole school…[with] teachers and students*" and added, "*the community coming in to help out the school in different areas…we wanted to be part of…whatever it was*."

Staff also saw parents as a vital part of this school community. Claire, the school's administrative assistant, said, "*Parents felt it was their school and were involved in every aspect of it.*" Katie, Teacher 2, observed, "*Parents were included in a positive way. They…felt like they were rebuilding Oceanside*." Katie also made reference to how parent engagement arose from the crisis when she said:

> *Parents were so much more involved after that. But, everything that we were doing as a school, involved parents. And, you know, that was a good thing for parents because they needed to be closer to the school then. To feel that their children were safe. (Katie, Teacher 2)*

Student involvement was also recognized. Immediately after the crisis, Katie was assigned to be the music teacher at Oceanside and identified the need for students to be engaged. She said, "*We did two musicals that year—anything we could do to get kids together and involved and working together for the school…it was like school spirit—trying to lift the spirit*." This continued to be a focus of the school staff. Sunshine recognized it as well. She said:

> *I was very impressed with the effort to help kids give to other kids…to somehow…to live outside of themselves and to not just think about what they wanted or what they needed. To think about what other people who might be less fortunate or in need…just to not be selfish. (Sunshine, Primary Program Coordinator and Parent)*

Mia (Teacher 3) acknowledged this sense of fellowship that existed throughout the school community when she said that there was a "*feeling that we were all in it together—parents, staff, and kids.*"

However, fellowship was more than just engagement and participation. As illustrated by their words that follow, many participants acknowledged how this community coalesced around a vision, shared purpose, values, and goals.

Claire, the Administrative Assistant, said, "*People…felt strongly about what's of value and how people deserve to be treated*." Kay (Teacher 7) commented more than once during our conversation about shared purpose, saying, "*We were committed to a philosophy* " and "*We were all in one direction*." A significant memory for Redhead (Teacher 4) was, "*us having those conversations about what our purpose was…what our beliefs were and what we wanted to be teaching.*" Carla, Teaching Assistant, had similar memories and described the importance of working together towards a vision: "*Being part of the process of working on things that we were…hopefully going to [create]…being part of the bigger picture and the goals and being part of working at things…to work towards our vision*." Mia (Teacher 3) also expressed the value she saw in those conversations when she said, "*We were going to work together on something and set goals well into the future. That felt good to me because I don't believe that change of any effective kind happens quickly*." Ruth commented on a sense of shared purpose and beliefs when she said:

> *I remember a lot of growth in terms of talking about the big ideas of what…it is we wanted to be doing in the classrooms….I remember us having those conversations about what our purpose was and…what our beliefs were and what we wanted to be teaching…then talking together about how we might be implementing that and how we might be working in that. And, I remember lots of conversation around…school community, around…a relational understanding of education…how important that sense of belonging and collaboration is in school…and, how the teachers…were working together to share that, to implement that together. (Ruth, Teacher 6)*

Katie (Teacher 2) emphasized the importance of school community members feeling ownership for the directions taken by the school and used the Key Words Program as an example. She said: "*developing Key Words is really, really important. We wrestled with that one. It was funny. Everybody had to have a sense of ownership over those Key Words.*" Ruth also spoke of how the Key Words, created through a collaborative process, became a statement of shared values for the school community:

> *So developing the Key Words…we built that collaboratively together with the whole…school community…I remember that those Key Words then became very strong. [We asked,] "So how do we live this out?"…they became the shared language…that became the central point of how we talked to kids or talked to each to each other....So everybody was kind of brought into that conversation around how do we live out these Key Words…? I mean there were certain expectations and standards, for sure, but it felt like that was commonly held. There was a commonly held understanding…and then…we worked together on how that was…lived out in the school. (Ruth, Teacher 6)*

Sunshine (Primary Program Coordinator and Parent) claimed that there was a commitment for members of this community to actively work to achieve the visions when she commented that there was a "*commitment to a certain vision and the commitment to the hard work that it took to implement that vision*." Similarly, Ruth (Teacher 6) commented that the school community was, "*always working from that place of what the vision is and, where are we going…where is it we want to go?…there was lots of sense of vision.*"

Captured here in the words of the staff members and parents is a sense of being part of a fellowship or participating in a community focused on and engaged in realizing a shared vision; their common purpose was to serve the needs of students, to share their vision, beliefs, values and common goals.

Focus on Student Learning

Participants stated that the school community's focus appeared to centre on student needs and the development of student capacities for life-long learning. Many participants commented that this focus included a consideration for the students' social and emotional needs as well. A number of conversations also made reference to the importance of how the staff modelled active learning, sharing their own learning projects with students. Some participants identified that personal strengths were given focus and

were celebrated. Also described was the sense that all staff shared the responsibility and care for all students; the school environment was described as one in which every teacher knew every student.

This theme emerged from many references to student learning and to comments about staff helping students acquire life-long learning skills.

Kay (Teacher 7) described this broad, holistic approach to learning when he said, "*In reflecting back on Oceanside, it was really holistic. We looked after their physical, their mental, we looked after certainly educational but [also their] emotional [needs]. All those needs, we really tried to meet.*" Students learning about themselves as social-emotional beings occurred through the problem solving approach to discipline. Biggy (Teacher 1) explained, "*It was a very positive approach. It was hard to do because when you take responsibility for your own actions, you have to look at yourself and sometimes you just don't enjoy what you see*." Biggy also commented that, "It wasn't a punitive system but rather one of giving them the opportunity of finding out ways of dealing with their own behaviour." As a parent and a district administrator, Sunshine also observed this attribute of the school. She stated:

> *You know there is so much focus on social-emotional support and taking responsibility for your actions and trying to understand how your actions impact on the other person that time was being taken to deal with that….It's how do we live together and work together in a positive, respectful, collaborative way....Maybe one of the key strengths of that school is that it did deal with heart not just head and that the heart parts and the head parts were implemented through actions so that the feet and the hands which represent action…were driven by both the heart and the head not just the head....without the heart attention not much really goes in to the head anyway. So, we might as well start with the heart and then the head stuff will come along. (Sunshine, Primary Program Coordinator and Parent)*

Ruth best summarized the holistic approach to student learning taken at Oceanside when she said:

> *That became a very, very strong ethos in the school…was teaching the academics and teaching…the knowledge curriculum in that way, but equally as important, was teaching the sense of how to be a good and full human being and about emotional literacy and about…that sense of caring for who we are and who each other is. (Ruth, Teacher 6)*

Carla, Teaching Assistant, commented on the focus on life-long learning. She said, "*I just felt so grateful that I was part of a process of helping students become learners, life-long learners*…." Biggy, Teacher 1, also spoke about the attention given to life-long learning skills when he said, "*We had the kids…we empowered them to show them how they could set goals and meet objectives.*" Claire, Administrative Assistant, said, "*That's why it was so good was…they were involved. They understood about their own learning*." In reference to the *Experts Program* (Gibbons & Keating, 1990), Biggy (Teacher 1) mentioned the pride that students took in their learning, saying: "*It [Experts Program] provides a very comprehensive exploration of kids into a subject of their interest…very prideful in the end, a very prideful exploration on the part of kids because they became experts in their own fields.*"

Claire spoke of the focus on student strengths and used something she called "mind mapping" as an example. She said:

> *How people's different strengths and different styles of learning and how powerful that is. At first there was a big chart on the wall outside each classroom for the kids in that class and no matter what their struggles were academically or whatever, [let's say] socially they had a strength, a real strength and it was up there for all the world to see and for everybody to appreciate what your strengths were.*

Carla, Teaching Assistant, spoke similarly about the importance of focusing on student strengths. She described, "*being a part of that [Three-Way Reporting] seeing how…we built on it and all the students—how they were just amazing to watch; how they felt about recognizing different strengths in themselves*."

When asked about the overall effect of the school, Claire, who later worked at the secondary school where Oceanside students attended, said

> *Oh, it was positive. I feel passionately about that because I saw the effect on the kids....Our kids were special in that environment; they stood out in high school. Once you get to high school, you're pegged in a little group…if somebody doesn't fit…you just pretend they don't exist. Oceanside kids didn't do that. They were always there for each other…they all connected and they all stood up for each other....They had so many skills that the other kids didn't have already that they really shone. Not only…their willingness but, they were much more highly developed in the skills they needed to help their peers…it was pretty extraordinary.*

The principal of the secondary school also noted a difference in the Oceanside students. Elphy, one of the External Participants, observed about Oceanside students; "*kids doing better, less concerned with doing better scholastically and sort of more socially and mentally healthy and more self-confident kids".* Karen, parent to three Oceanside students who later moved to the secondary school, also recalled, "*I heard some comments that when they [Oceanside students] were in high school that they were the students that were working, always working in their class. Like, "Oh yeah, those are the Oceanside students—that's why they're all working together.*"

Another aspect of this theme was how the adults actively modelled learning and shared their personal interests. Redhead (Teacher 4) said, "*I can remember quite a few colleagues talking about the excitement of learning with the kids and…always engaged in the learning process themselves.*" As well, Sunshine (Primary Program Coordinator and Parent) observed:

> *I think the tone was… it was oriented to everyone learning, so staff learning to do new things and kids learning to do new things whether it was 'buddying' or it was…parent-student-teacher conferences or problem solving. So everybody was learning…new things but not just academic things but also social-emotional things.*

The sense of shared responsibility for student learning demonstrated by staff members also became apparent throughout this theme. Both Claire and I observed that almost every teacher knew every student. She said, "*Most every teacher in that school knew every student in the school…it was about being connected to everybody*." She added:

> *There wasn't anybody on that staff that [felt] like they should ignore something if it wasn't in their particular job description to be dealing with that…if it was a behaviour it's almost like bullying, if you watch it you're condoning it. And so, if you see something happen positively or negatively you have ownership of commenting on that in a positive way or dealing with it if it's a negative behaviour…I didn't realize at the time how special that was, how unique that was until we left*

The parent participant Karen's comment that "*it was a joy to see your child develop into the person that they're supposed to become,*" would have been received with pride by the Oceanside staff.

Commitment

This theme was apparent when participants noted the importance of working together: having clarity of purpose, self-motivation, and determination. They also referred to passion, time and dedication given to the work and the school.

The concept of commitment was found as a theme in many conversations about Oceanside Elementary School. Participants spoke about commitment to others on the staff. Claire said it this way:

> *Well, I guess when you look at it in hindsight; you ask yourself what is important to you? And, for me…I always wanted to…feel a part of the team. It's important to feel like you're doing something of value, you're contributing something to the world even if it's, as…menial as being a secretary. But, you feel like you have a hand in contributing to everybody's enabling everybody else to do their best…and a commitment and doing everything to the best of your ability*

Having commitment to achieving a common purpose was another aspect of this theme. Sunshine (Primary Program Coordinator and Parent) noted there was a, "*commitment to a certain vision and the commitment to the hard work that it took to implement that vision*." Later in our conversation she added, "*It also meant they [the staff] put in an awful lot more time than some of the schools that had more union attitudes…*" Claire also remarked on the amount of time and work the staff gave to various initiative and to the school as follows:

> *I remember, staff meetings, the focus on what we had to do next, you know, and the process to get it, develop it and people kind of rolling their eyes because it meant a lot more work. But, because…it was already underway; people could see it was working; it was valuable, so just rolling up their sleeves and being willing to keep on trucking…keep going.*

Other participants also identified hard work, self-motivation, and determination. For example, in her comments about Kay and Biggy, Mia (Teacher 3) said, "*I remember also one or both of them saying that they never worked so hard as they were working at that point in their careers*." Claire noted:

> *It was a special time when people were pushing themselves, striving to make things better, working as a really strong team, seeing results with kids….It's kind of like the high point…of being involved in something that really mattered and was really working. It wasn't easy but it was worth it.*

Scarlett (Teacher 5) spoke of her commitment to Three-Way Reporting:

> *When I think when everybody, we jumped in, I don't think we knew how hard it was going to be but because…I think the stages came in slowly enough so that people were adding more and adding more....But, I think the core of Three-Way Reporting was fully embraced by the staff for the entire 6 years.*

She continues by describing how the commitment diminished:

> *And then when Dedwyn [the succeeding Principal] came in we carried it but also…a couple of teachers came in, they weren't either interested, comfortable or [didn't] know anything about Three-Way Reporting so they didn't use it and they were given the okay not to use it and over the years, it dwindled away....So when you have new people who…aren't risk-takers, plus you don't have the leadership to either sell them the product…and tell them the importance of what is the philosophy of Oceanside, over the course of [a] good 3 years probably, it kind of went away.*

Scarlett states that, upon reflection, she wouldn't commit the time and energy to it again. She said, "*If I look back now, I would not do it again. Why? Because it was really hard. But at the time you take in something new*." This vignette from Scarlet's interview indicates that leadership was needed in order to ensure continuity of this program. Leadership was required to help new staff members engage in the initiative and to give awareness of the school's philosophy and to help them know how the initiative fit within it. Scarlett identifies that without this leadership, the commitment diminishes and the initiative is no longer sustainable.

Biggy (Teacher 1) identified this sense of determination and self-motivation when he said:

> *Staff were determined, as they were in most things they did, to resolve it and to deal with it and not to just bury it and pretend it hadn't happened. And they were open to the ideas of the moment to help it.*

Mary (Teaching Assistant) described this aspect of the theme as follows:

> *It was fun times…we worked hard but it was just such a pleasant place to be. And, I think all of us took on way more because it wasn't expected; we just found a role and we just worked; the team just worked.*

Others spoke of passion and dedication. Biggy (Teacher 1) said, "*We were all dedicated to making it a wonderful school*." Kay (Teacher 7) described his experience of being accused of abuse by a student and concluded:

> *I came out of it a stronger, more committed teacher and I think in part that that commitment led to the personality of the school and teaching too…thinking that I was committed and the people around me are committed and it just led on from there.*

Redhead (Teacher 4) reflected:

> *It was a wonderful place to be and a wonderful environment, as a fairly new teacher still, to develop skills, to work with others that had more experience, to work with colleagues that were passionate about teaching and about the place they worked.*

Kay (Teacher 7) described the passion and dedication on the part of the entire staff when he said:

> *It's so special though. I mean, people gave up, we gave up as teachers, you give up a whole lot of time anyways but everybody valued the directions we were going and they could see the success. That initial [meeting] on [Biggy's] deck that started it. It grew that year and in subsequent years…it just gets stronger and stronger and more committed and more committed.*

Culture and Morale

Many of the participants commented on the positive and welcoming culture of the school; they felt that the school community focused on building and maintaining positive relationships and a healthy culture. They described the culture as respectful and emotionally safe, saying that they felt supported by and trust in one another. The presence of humour and fun among the staff were also highlighted. A number of conversations also made reference to the ability of students and staff to resolve conflicts and respect individual differences. Staff morale was regarded as strong, and participants described the pride and positive energy the staff exhibited in their work.

Participants described the culture of the school as positive, welcoming and healthy. Mary, a Teaching Assistant, said, "*The whole time that I was at that school in these years, I felt part of…I felt welcomed by all of the staff, all of the parents, and all of the kids…It was an excellent experience for me*." Elphy, External Participant and

principal of the secondary school, commented that, "*when the new principal [referring to me] was in there, it was definitely a much more positive and a much more healthy environment*." And, Ruth (Teacher 6) said, "*There was a definite culture of…teachers helping teachers*."

Katie (Teacher 2) described the culture as one that allowed her to feel "*free to be the teacher I was supposed to be. And, this 'supposed to be' for me was who I was. So I was not just the teacher I was supposed to be; I was Katie teaching. So that was pretty special*." Claire (Administrative Assistant) identified the supportive and positive nature of the school culture when she said:

> *It is a culture of everybody on this staff can help everybody else. That's what you're here for—to make everybody else's job easier. It's if I support you, you support me…it feeds on positive. It's the way it should be.*

Participants felt the culture fostered the building and maintenance of positive relationships. Katie (Teacher 2) commented that in the time period focused on in this study, relationships were nurtured. She called this "the real stuff" of school; in her words, "*If you don't have that what do you have? The hardest stuff to work on is relationships. You have to really put energy and effort into building and keeping them healthy*."

Kay (Teacher 7) described how the school culture supported the emergence of positive relationships. He said, "*I think as a staff we grew too. We grew every year and closer together and in the end I was thinking of Oceanside as family. I mean these people are so…they know me so well and I know them so well*."

Biggy (Teacher 1) felt the culture supported students and observed, "*I can remember that the students appeared to me, just in their behaviour and in their sense of decorum, to be affected by the positive things we did and by the energy that we put in*." As well, Teaching Assistant, Carla emphasized that, "*even if children were having difficulty they came with the positive aspect of setting goals of [identifying] things they could do to help themselves and finding out people that were supporting them*."

Sunshine (Program Coordinator and Parent) also observed how the culture supported positive relationships. She said, "*The building of positive relationships part, that has to be at the centre of every school. And, I had not seen that operating before I visited that school or was involved with Oceanside*." Karen (Parent) mentioned how the culture fostered openness. She commented, "*There was no fear, no limits....Again, it's*

sort of like, what do you want? How can we make it happen? How can we work together to see it happen? Who are we going to invite?"

A number of participants remarked how much fun and humour there was at the school. Teaching Assistant, Mary said, "*It was just a really fun place to show up every-day*." Ruth (Teacher 6) thought the planning and teaching with her colleagues was fun. She said, "*When we started planning together…I just remember…it had a vibrancy and it was fun…it was fun learning for the kids that we had fun doing it*." And Biggy (Teacher 1) observed, "*They [the staff] really embraced newness. You know, I think it is fun; they find fun in developing new programs and emphasizing different aspects, sharing in the common goals. It was just five of my best years of education.*" Teacher 6, Ruth commented that the staff had fun together in other ways: "*I just remember…we had a lot of different activities which grew out of the school…you know, the social activities and things were celebrated.*" Although Ruth was new to teaching at that time, when asked about the feelings that best capture her time there, she responded, "*a strong sense of fun, strong sense of collaboration*."

Redhead (Teacher 4) acknowledged the humour shared amongst the staff when she said:

> *One thing I do look back on…is the humour....I have to say that humour was big there. In the staffroom, there was a lot of joking and laughter…that is a real key…that a staff can come and joke and have fun. I think that is also…huge…in building…community that it's not always serious or feel overwhelming, that you can go to the staffroom and just have a break from it…when things are stressful.*

Biggy (Teacher 1) described the school as a "*happy place…[with] just a very positive feeling. Like I just used to enjoy going to school every day and being greeted by the staff and students in a positive fashion.*"

The research participants described the school's culture as being respectful in that individual differences were respected. In this regard Katie (Teacher 2) said, "*I felt respect was vital and I thought that that was what everybody thought not just with children and parents but with teachers on staff. And, I felt you respected the staff and so I think the staff could give that back*." Mia (Teacher 3) commented that, "*what stands out for me is the growing sense of mutual respect…I would say that relationships were built."*

Trust, support and emotional safety were other school culture features referred to by the participants. Biggy (Teacher 1) commented on the supportive nature of the culture stating, "*You felt protected there*" and, "*Oceanside was just really open; the doors were open. It was a school that we'd share our successes and our failures—personal or otherwise*." Karen (Parent) also commented on the emotional safety of the school such that, "*you could go up there and…say pretty much anything that you needed to say*." Sunshine (Program Coordinator and Parent) also describing her experience as a parent said, "*It was safe, respectful, comfortable; it felt comfortable, it felt like a place you wanted to be because you could be who you were*." In reference to John Doe's offenses, Bella (External Participant) observed, "*the trust in the school had been lost and, I think, it was a huge, long road to rebuild that trust.*" She described the re-building when she said, "*I think it started to shift back to a place where people were honest and trusting and 'growthful' in a positive way....The school just blossomed into an amazing place for kids and staff and parents*."

Redhead (Teacher 4) described the school culture as one in which conflicts could be addressed.

> *I think there was such a commitment to conducting oneself with respect and caring and, even if there was a difference to resolve, but knowing that…at the end, there still needed to be a relationship and the team. And, I think that really helped to…kind of guide people through conflicts or differences.*

Biggy (Teacher 1) also made an observation about resolving conflicts and how doing so contributes to a more positive school culture:

> *Maybe momentarily there'd be an issue and the school had a way of resolving those kinds of things. Many schools establish a staff and barriers go up and people have a difference of opinion and they bury the animosities and they come out in weird ways. Oceanside, during that period of time, didn't have that.*

Staff morale was described as strong and participants commented that the staff worked with positive energy and pride in their work. Teacher 2, Katie said, "*We loved it there. We just loved our jobs; we loved it there*." Redhead (Teacher 4) stated that, "*It was wonderful and it was a wonderful place to be and…a wonderful environment.*" Biggy (Teacher 1) acknowledged, "*I think there was a pride in Oceanside and a pride in being*

a member of the teaching community and a pride in how well one did one's job. And, I think that was evident…every day in the school."

Biggy (Teacher 1) also expressed pride in his own accomplishments and those of his colleagues:

> *It was so much to do with the people I was working with. I always felt that myself as an individual, had a positive attitude and I…brought positivity and effectiveness and good programming to my classroom. That was a given for me. I thought of myself as a good teacher, even somewhat above average. But it's not that often you can feel that way about your whole school but that, the whole, your exploration outside the classroom, you're working together with outside people. It…didn't gel very many years that I taught; it wasn't like Oceanside. And the staff knew it. They knew it was something special. They knew it wouldn't last forever.*

Kay (Teacher 7) described his Oceanside experience as a highlight of his career:

> *It was just super in my mind. What a way to go out. I am glad I retired after that—such a high of ending your teaching career it's been really wonderful. And, now when I am reflecting back, I can think back on that and feel really, really good about it. And so yeah, good times good memories.*

Other participants recalled the community's pride taken in the school's reputation. Carla (Teaching Assistant) said:

> *I think that Oceanside School had, and I hope still has, a great reputation. People moved here, in the area, so they could go to Oceanside School. I think that was…I think it was just like a ripple effect and people heard about all the great things that were happening there and they were wanting to be there.*

Sunshine (Primary Program Coordinator and Parent) was one of those who asked to have her daughter transfer to Oceanside. In her words:

> *I probably was a picky parent as far as that goes…to the point where I did switch my child from the school she had been going to, to that school on purpose because I wanted her to experience what was going on educationally and socially and emotionally in that school. So, I made the intentional choice.*

Redhead (Teacher 4) too, remarked on the reputation of the school when she said the following:

> *Well, I think you had…a school that was…recognized as…somebody said, "Like a shining beacon'. And, I can remember talking to [the*

Superintendent] after he retired, saying to me that that was his favourite school. So there was something happening there and I think… it was the outcome of…many factors [and]…beliefs that were at work.

Scarlett (Teacher 5) stated, *"I think we were a pretty strong school. And the reason I say that is because a lot of people who, either teachers or parents, saying that we have something special there."* And, Biggy (Teacher 1) remarked that, *"I think the community recognized it. I know the educational system outside of our school recognized it because we were thought of as the little school that did."*

Teamwork and Cooperation

This theme emerged when participants described feelings of closeness, friendship, care for each other as people as well as professionals, a sense of working well together, a sense of being known, unity, harmony and cohesion. Some participants felt that the staff members were like family or that the staff functioned like a team.

This theme was also evident when reference was made to the school community where students, parents, and staff took responsibility for the well-being and operation of the school and felt they had a role and a responsibility. Some participants also commented on gender balance as being a positive feature of the school.

Biggy (Teacher 1) made reference to a sense of family, "*It sort of sounds corny, but it was more of a family experience than it was colleagues and I really felt close to the people and I know they really felt close to each other.*" An External Participant and the succeeding Principal, Dedwyn, said, "*It's that we're friends. I think maybe that's the best way of saying it. We're a bunch of friends all doing something together*."

Some participants described having a sense of caring about each other as people as well as professionals. Teaching Assistant, Mary commented that, "*It was professional but it just felt like we were with friends, working with friends, and lots of the parents as well.*" Ruth (Teacher 6) remarked that, "*There was that lovely kind of blending of personal and professional life. So…it felt like we were interested in each other as people.*" Sunshine (Program Coordinator and Parent) said that Oceanside taught her about the sense of team and the cooperation needed in a school. She said, "*I think I learned that from what happened at Oceanside School: that you have to be people together not just colleagues together.*"

Other participants made reference to how the school functioned with unity and harmony, like a cooperative team. Kay (Teacher 7) remarked, "*We're together, doing so much together, new things, innovative things. This is a family; this is a great situation*." And, Claire (Administrative Assistant) said:

> *That alone explains how strong the feeling of team was. If I saw two kids starting to fight on the playground, I would deal with it, I wouldn't walk away and let the supervisor do it or go get a teacher to deal with it.*

Carla (Teaching Assistant) recalled, "*the staff and how well we worked together and how we felt so united as a family and…the kids*". Later in her interview she stated, "*I remember it being a harmonious staff and that everybody…got along*."

Shared responsibility was another particular of this theme with participants describing how parents, staff, and students all played a role and engaged in the operation of the school. Katie (Teacher 2) recalled how parents became involved in setting new directions for the school and taking responsibility for its progress. She said:

> *I think the biggest change was when we were doing those things like envisioning, because they [parents] were included, the Key Words—they were included the first year you [Ann] were there; parents were included in a positive way…they felt they were rebuilding Oceanside.*

Karen (Parent) gave an example of how students played a role: "*The Peer Counselling [was]…an important part of the whole culture and the positive atmosphere there because, they, the students, were taking responsibility for what was going on*." Ruth (Teacher 6) recalled how I had spoken to the students about taking responsibility for the school: "*I remember the way…you would talk…to the kids when we had kids together in…you would speak to the kids…about…it being their school and their sense of responsibility within that*."

Kay (Teacher 7) also commented on the sense of shared responsibility in the school when he said:

> *We never thought, "I'm taking the load. Oh, it's too much for me." We all shared it totally. If I was doing one thing, Biggy would do another thing or G.S. would jump in doing something else. So you never felt like you were doing everything. You know, it was totally great.*

In terms of the role played by staff, Ruth (Teacher 6) remarked that, "*I think we all played a role…I think we all did play a role in that…it felt like it came from all of us*

because there was a sense of this is the kind of school that we all want to be participating in." Scarlett (Teacher 5) described it this way, "*Maybe it does have something to say about the school. When you…are supporting your school wholeheartedly, you do what you can to get the job done.*" Mary, Teaching Assistant, observed, "*because everybody had their own personal skills and personal interests, we didn't have to plan; we didn't have to designate things; everybody did what they were comfortable with and it worked*." Kay (Teacher 7) also described this sense of shared responsibility. He said:

> *I think all of us played a part. And you know, I really do I think everyone played different little parts and contributed to the whole. And, it wasn't…like somebody was isolating themselves in their classroom like some people do. Everybody came together toward a common goal.*

Another feature associated with team and cooperation was gender balance. Biggy (Teacher 1) said, "*There was a wonderful blend…there was a good assortment of male teachers and a great blend of male and female*." Katie (Teacher 2) commented that, "*the men on staff had roles that really were great because they balanced the women.*" Redhead (Teacher 4) also commented on the importance of gender balance saying, "*There was a male-female balance…I have been on an all-female staff as well....[Men bring] a different perspective.*" In regard to gender balance, Teaching Assistant, Mary said, "*It was a nice meld because there…was a good proportion of male and female.*" And Karen (Parent) remarked, "*That is the other thing that I liked about the school…we had the females for the primary children and the men for intermediate. And so, there was that balance, I think, for the boys in particular.*"

Leadership

Two aspects of leadership were raised in relationship to this theme. One described formal leadership provided by the principals, Superintendent, and Primary Program Coordinator; the other outlined the various leadership roles that were assumed by other members of the school community. This is often termed as *distributed* leadership. With regard to the former, participants described leaders who challenged them to take risks and supported them both personally and professionally. Additionally, participants described that as principal, I acted as an educational leader, brought new

ideas, encouraged change, showed enthusiasm, and built on the positive aspects of staff and students.

In reference to distributed leadership, participants said that at different times, all staff took a lead in some aspect of the school: introducing new ideas, inspiring change, and supporting others. As well, they stated that teachers encouraged students to take risks and also focused on the positive aspects of the students.

Leadership qualities were mentioned in reference to people who played a significant role in the development of the school. Participants commented on two principals, the succeeding principal, Dedwyn, and me as well as three others they perceived provided significant leadership. Their individual profiles are as follows:

Frances was the school counsellor and Grade 6/7 classroom teacher when John Doe was first charged with his crimes. Some students in her class had been his students 5 years prior. The morning after Frances learned that charges had been laid against John Doe, she asked her students to write what they knew about him. It became apparent that he had committed the same crimes against some of them. When she took on the role of school counsellor the following year, she introduced programs such as Problem Solving and Peer Counselling; the aims of these initiatives were to resolve conflicts, provide a communication structure for students and involve them in leadership roles. It is evident in the participants' recollections that Frances was greatly admired and many members of the school community were grateful for her valuable contributions and support.

Jack was the School District's Superintendent of Schools beginning in 1988, the year that begins the time period under study. A frequently referenced feature of Jack's leadership was integrity. In Claire's words, "*He wouldn't just talk a good line and pat us on the head but would really support us....Knowing what he stood for and how he operated—he was the perfect person to be involved at the time*." Although Jack is now deceased, many in the District remember him with great fondness.

Sunshine was the Primary Program Coordinator who came to the district in 1990 to support District implementation of the Primary Program. She became a parent at the school the second year of her term. She worked with teams of teachers and principals from the District's schools to understand and implement the initiatives contained in Primary Program documents. Hers was a collaborative approach and she frequently

highlighted the work of school teams by asking them to present their initiatives to others during the team gatherings.

The participants' thoughts about leadership revealed the kind of leadership these individuals provided. These are summarized in the section that follows.

Many times, participants remarked that it was important for leaders to support their staffs both personally and professionally. Biggy (Teacher 1) said, "*You brought strong leadership and some great ideas, a very caring nature. I know people felt protected…looked after by you when you had the opportunity to do that for them*." Commenting about me, Katie (Teacher 2) said, "*You would do things that personally made me feel appreciated…It was an emotional component…the fact that we were working on things that required the emotional component.*" Scarlett (Teacher 5) described how that she felt supported in many aspects of her work by the succeeding principal and me. She said:

> *The support of…the principals—I have to say that 98% of the time, if I'm needing something…either with material or help or support or stuff like that, I think it's there. When I say it's there, they will do their best to help you. And, that's been ongoing.*

Ruth (Teacher 6) was in her first year of teaching when she began to work at Oceanside. She regarded support from the staff and me as sign of our commitment.

> *And the other thing I remember… in those early months, and I remember how you came in and, and you came in several times. And, we set goals together and…you were really supportive of what I was able to do. And yet you would sit with me and make really reasonable goals of what I could focus on. And it was the consistency of that support; it was you being able to be there and I just felt your trust. I felt that you believed I was able to do this when I couldn't…when I wasn't believing that myself. And, I remember feeling…I really believed from you that, "Yeah you're going to this. This is going to be okay. You are going to be able to do this." And then, it was being able to set really reasonable and focused ways of working and that that was huge…I just remember that was huge for me.*

Sunshine (Primary Program Coordinator and Parent) also spoke of the support given to the staff. In her words:

> *They were given lots of support in how to do it and people were willing to help them do it or maybe do it with them or for them with kids. So, I think both sides were represented both expectation and the support and the training or learning experience to help with it.*

I described the support that Jack provided to me and to the staff:

> *[In the years that followed] he [Jack Smith] just kept listening and listening for what we needed and he developed this huge respect for this staff and…he kept pushing us as well, to articulate what we were doing and articulate our beliefs and our passions and to create something solid with them. And, that was such a gift from a Superintendent....nobody has been like him.*

Administrative Assistant, Claire, in describing Jack's support, said, "*Jack was so perfect for a situation like that because he would encourage and support that culture and do whatever he could to support people to enhance it.*"

In the participants' description of Frances, it is evident that support was also a feature of her leadership. Mary (Teaching Assistant) commented on the help that Frances gave to students. She said, "*she was a support person [for] the kids [who] were struggling…in their own worlds…with their own self-image or whatever that they really related with her and she was there a lot for them.*" Redhead (Teacher 4) described Frances' work: "*I just think Frances…was there to support the students but she was supporting the staff, too. I mean she was such a strong person and providing emotional support.*" Kay (Teacher 7) recalled Frances as vital player in the school's development saying:

> *"Frances—an integral part, just so there—holy crow. The things she brought…the way she was supporting me again—one of the key supports I forgot to mention…the whole Peer Counselling…too. I'd never heard of doing things like that but what a powerful thing for the school and students.*

Several participants commented on the importance of leaders to support risk-taking. Scarlett (Teacher 5) felt that as principal I supported the staff in risk-taking. She said:

> *You were the kind of person that would be challenging us to take risks in new programs or other things that might pop up. You weren't one to say, 'Hey we're comfortable here,' because you can go stale, you're too comfortable and nothing is happening and it's boring for you….You were there for 6 years and kept us supporting you; that's an act right there. Was it challenging for us as teachers? It could have been because, 'Oh, here she goes again bringing something new.' But you know, I think when you pose it to us, just mentioning it and then let us mull it through our head and then bring it up again. What do we think? Should we go for it…? It was almost like you [were] standing in the background and you led the*

group to come to that point and instead of you saying, "Hey we are going to do Three-Way Reporting," we came up with the idea.

I described the support that Jack provided both the staff and me. I referred to the day that a student made an allegation against her teacher:

Many would have run…into that situation and said, 'This is a rookie principal, completely untrained. This is a staff that's been traumatized I am going to direct this and command this situation.' And, he didn't. He trusted us enough…and respected us enough as people and as professionals, to work this through.

Sunshine (Primary Program Coordinator and Parent) also remarked on how Jack supported the staff by giving them the freedom to implement and set their own directions. In her words:

I actually think that the Superintendent…played a role as well because the school and the principal were given the freedom to actually do those things. So I'm not sure how hard fought that freedom might have been at this point I'm not sure if I remember that clearly…how difficult it may have been to persuade the Superintendent that some of those things should have been allowed. I had the feeling that there was general support…another superintendent might have said, 'No way you should be doing those things, you're a school and should be focusing on academics, period.'

Sunshine also spoke of the importance of supporting staff and students to take risks to innovate or to try something new:

I think the risk-taking was promoted for both staff and for students and risk-taking in terms of providing that emotional support and social support but also risk-taking in terms of what was done in classrooms or between classes. For example, the buddy system that there was between older and younger classes. Now…at that time maybe schools did 'buddying' for reading but I found that the buddy [at Oceanside] went far beyond that.

Kay (Teacher 7) made reference to Jack's support of the school's directions and innovations. He said:

I think his influence as Superintendent, letting us sort of….He must have said, "Okay. Let's do it. Go for it. Your staff wants to do it, it's educationally sound, let's try it and therefore we did. And, we tried lots of different things Earthkeepers, the Experts Program.

Sunshine (Primary Program Coordinator and Parent) remembered that as principal I took risks along with the rest of the staff.

> *I think the way the school was operating was quite different from what was going on in the rest of the district. And so…a real effort had to be made I think both with parents but also with the School District Board and the Superintendent…and even with others, to try to explain the things that were done and supported and why they were done because, for example, I think the support of the social-emotional support, probably wasn't well understood at that time.*

Other participants regarded leadership as a function of inspiring and encouraging others. Redhead (Teacher 4) said, "*I just see it as key when you have administration at the top modelling and supporting and inspiring."* Claire (Administrative Assistant) commented that, "*the administrator…had to be not only a good leader but also…have the skills to pull the best out of people*." And, Biggy (Teacher 1) said, "*The enthusiasm you showed toward things, it passed on to the staff.*" Kay (Teacher 7) described how new ideas were approached by the staff:

> *When you brought up the ideas that we should look at and maybe go for or Biggy would think of or I would look at something, it was there, we would discuss it and if it was a good idea or possibilities that this could probably enhance our education as a school, we went for it. I mean, we did incredible things.*

Bella (External Participant) remarked that I had an open approach that afforded encouragement to others. She said it as follows:

> *When I reflect on the role of the principal, I realize the attitude, management style and personality of the principal profoundly influences the health of the school. Specifically in the school we were discussing, your open, honest and very genuine manner with students, staff and parents, in my opinion, contributed to the school changing from an unhealthy environment to a rich, caring place of learning.*

Ruth (Teacher 6) described the motivation provided by Sunshine's leadership. She said:

> *Sunshine [was] very, very…important in…motivating people in the District…to the changes of the Year 2000"; "…a very valuable support person"; "With her there was "a lot of really great talk around professional growth…there was a lot of excitement around professional growth….It felt like teachers had a lot of agency....I felt that teachers…were really valued for what they were able to bring to that change process.*

Katie (Teacher 2) also spoke of the motivation and inspiration that Sunshine afforded others:

> *Well I remember…[Sunshine] being very, very…important in…motivating people in the District…to the changes of the Year 2000. And…the ideas that she had, and what she brought forward, which was of course from the whole Year 2000 initiative....They were where we were going anyway; we were already headed that way but this was another way of giving us permission, I think.*

Modelling was another leadership aspect that arose in the conversations. Participants stated that leaders need to model the changes they wish to see in others. Redhead (Teacher 4) said, "*I think the administration was just crucial…how you conducted yourself: you set a standard and a model. And, I think that is so key for the administrator to set that*." Redhead's comments underscore the importance of modelling for students: "*We always referred to staff as modelling those [Key Words] and…for somebody walking in…they would see, at all different levels, people using the Key Words.*"

Sunshine (Primary Program Coordinator and Parent) also spoke of the importance of modelling the values of the school in reference to the Key Words. She said:

> *Speaking of the Key Words idea, which of course was an important way to involve parents as well as the community as well as the staff and students, I think the leadership of that was key and the fact that the leadership of the school demonstrated that in their own interactions with people. And so, it wasn't just this is something for kids to do, you know.*

I spoke of Frances:

> *Frances' really wanted to ensure that the power base of the school was levelled. So, she trained Peer Mediators/Peer Counsellors, who used a problem-solving model that she introduced. She monitored with them, she modelled for them, she debriefed with them all the time. These kids got so good at what they were doing we were able to take them to a couple of conferences and have them present to adults.*

Claire (Administrative Assistant) also spoke of how Frances modelled for and inspired students through the Peer Counselling Program and helped parents through her counselling work.

> *[Frances] was so much a living embodiment of all that she was trying to bring to the kids....She helped so many parents....In fact, I just ran in to [a parent] on the beach…and [she said that Frances] single-handedly got her through, those kids getting through school…so many people depended on her....It was her…ability to bring…not just working one-on-*

one with kids but it was the group things that seem to be so powerful for them....They shared…their particular problems and strategies for coping and acknowledging that somebody had this problem and I have that problem. And, maybe we can look out for each other or help each other in this....those are life-long skills—really, really important skills—that we can use the rest of our lives whether it's work or family or friends or anything....Peer Counselling was a really powerful tool that she passed on to them. And, I watched it travel through the system.

Redhead (Teacher 4) identified that Jack also modelled and inspired the staff. In her words:

I just remember…his visits to the school. The way he conducted himself was very professional…[He] was always looking…for…ways [for the District] to be the best, to improve on things. And, I think he, again…set himself as a role model.

Another aspect of leadership discussed in the conversations with participants was distributed leadership. Redhead (Teacher 4) describes it here:

I think in terms of leadership…everybody took a turn at some point in being a leader. And, I think…everybody was respected for their contribution…what they did for the school and supported. So yeah, I think that was a strength that everybody…at times, took leadership, or at times…supported the person who was leading an idea.

Redhead continued with this theme:

I think…everybody took that leadership. It wasn't like this is your job and that's its…Everybody took turns in being leader. People went beyond their job descriptions but there wasn't a demand or an expectation that you should do it. It was always appreciated.

Kay (Teacher 7) also spoke of this as a feature of the school:

When you brought up the ideas that we should look at and maybe go for or Biggy would think of or I would look at something, it was there, we would discuss it and if it was a good idea or possibilities that this could probably enhance our education as a school, we went for it.

Ruth (Teacher 6) also spoke about distributed leadership. She said:

It felt like it came from all of us because there was a sense of this is the kind of school that we all want to be participating in…I remember us all feeling that we all had…a common sense of that; it was our school and that we were all in it together and that we…all had some sense of…building the kind of community we want to have. I think it took leadership for sure…to be in the conversations that we were having

> *together…to keep it alive in those conversations. And then, I think it emanated from that and then it became…part of the conversations that everyone was having in school.*

Ruth concluded that in her experience since her time at Oceanside, it is hard to find distributed leadership. She said, "*There was that feeling…that it wasn't one person in charge of everything…yet there was a strong sense of leadership…that was a special thing…it's hard to find*."

Dedwyn, External Participant, found distributed leadership to be a quality of the school when he began as principal in 1995. He said, "*I'll start off by saying the staff that was there when I got there, every single one of them took some kind of leadership role*.

Communication

The theme of communication arose through references to how communication, conversations, and planning were valued by all involved in shaping the culture and direction of the school. A number of participants made reference to the collaborative nature of school communication that involved students, parents, and staff. The theme was also echoed in the participants' comments about the consistency of expectations and actions amongst staff members; some parents tried to align their actions with those of the school. As well, participants said they could communicate openly and that appreciation was frequently expressed. As well, the participants described that there was responsiveness to new ideas and to the needs and wants of others.

This theme emerged through participants' references to the importance placed on school communication and planning sessions. Redhead (Teacher 4) commented:

> *I think…during that time at Oceanside…there was commitment to communication…I think there was much more of a looking at the importance of communication and coming together as a staff to communicate. And, I think that…supports…I think that's part of the foundation for an effective school.*

Scarlett (Teacher 3) described:

> *And I think the staff at that time, if they weren't involved, they asked to be involved because…I think that's the way they thought was to run the school is to ask us how we felt and help with the decision-making.*

Ruth (Teacher 6) described the value of the Primary grade teachers meeting together to plan. She said:

> *That co-planning and working together with the other Primary teachers really broke that sense of being on your own in your classroom and being responsible for everything on your own….I just loved that…I just remember…it had a vibrancy and it was fun and we came up with great events and great…activities.*

Redhead (Teacher 4) also remarked on the meetings held by the Intermediate teachers. In her words:

> *Thinking back to all my memories, I can remember being at one of the Intermediate Team Meetings, because back in those days they had those meetings, and just being in awe of the four colleagues. I think it was a field trip that they were planning and…the end was…to plan this event as a team and just the way they worked together it was…I just kind of sat there and went "Wow."*

Engaging students through conversations about their learning was also valued. Claire (Administrative Assistant) commented as follows:

> *I think how important it is for kids to feel part of the process and to be….Instead of just being them down here and us up here telling them what they had to do….Their involvement with self-evaluation and goal setting was REALLY [emphasis added] powerful.*

Many participants described the collaborative nature of communication at Oceanside. Staff, parents and others noted this feature. Karen (Parent) remarked that, "*There was just that momentum still of being able to come together and be able to do what we're doing.*" Ruth (Teacher 6) also mentioned collaboration saying, "*I remember it being a very collaborative time. I remember there being lots of conversation lots of talk.*" Carla (Teaching Assistant) described collaboration in very clear terms: "*Everyone had a voice and was really encouraged to be ourselves*." Dedwyn (succeeding Principal) noted the following when he became the principal of the school:

> *I think the parents and staff were used to getting on together and talking together and... being involved together. So, it wasn't like, "This is our school," from the staff point of view; it was our school from everybody's point of view.*

Later in our conversation he added:

> *When you went in the school you found parents everywhere—not intrusively but they were there. They were in the hallways, they were helping with things but sometime it was just as though it was a social club I was a place to meet…I really got the feeling that they had a kind of ownership of the school. They felt it was their school that they were listened to and we tried to match their wishes where they fit with our educational aims.*

Some participants remembered how remarkably open the communication was and how responsive people were to one another's needs and wishes. Claire (Administrative Assistant) associated the openness with the crisis precipitated by John Doe. In reference to the post crisis time she said:

> *It makes sense to start a new way of approaching problems and not holding it in, but talking about things and encouraging people to talk about what's acceptable, what isn't, you know, how we operate in the world and how it affects other people.*

Redhead (Teacher 4) made reference to the staff's reception to hearing new ideas and approaches. She stated, "*Yeah, and I think just that excitement about creating new—that openness.*" Looking at openness in a somewhat different way, Katie (Teacher 2) talked about opening up conversations to what was previously unspoken. Her comment which follows about the "*elephant in the room*" was made in reference to relatively minor conflicts and resentments between staff members that were previously unattended to. She remarked:

> *Then when you came to Oceanside, I remember the first thing you did was, you kind of pulled everybody together. You were honest; that was a good thing…it seemed like there was a lot of unspoken stuff happening underneath all the time and you brought a lot of that out, not all of it, but you brought a lot of it out. But, it was kind of like the elephant in the room and you just named the elephant.*

Scarlett (Teacher 5) also described the openness of the school. She said, "*I know…we had the open-door policy where…the parents coming in to…be involved in the classroom....The parents felt…a good portion…feel very comfortable coming into school.*"

Some participants associated the collaborative nature of the school culture with the staff's emerging consistency of approach and the sense of continuity from grade-to-grade. Biggy (Teacher 1) commented, "*It was important for us to have a continuity in the things we did and a sense of everybody understanding what was going on*." Kay (Teacher 7) also remarked on the continuity from grade-to-grade. In his words:

> *We just kept up and…consistent. That's another thing, too…our philosophy of discipline…it started in kindergarten and came right through Grade 7…these words* [*Key Words]…you could expect these. If I've got a Grade 5 student or a Grade 6 student, or a Grade 7 student…they already had all the words that I again tried to reinforce…And so they knew and so they had a nice, cohesive bonding through Oceanside. They had such great teachers that were committed…to a philosophy.*

Sunshine (Primary Program Coordinator and Parent) also spoke about how the Key Words provided continuity. She said:

> *The staff were expected to live by those Key Words and the leadership and to model the Key Words in their interactions with people. And, that consistency of approach is really hard to develop and to implement, to maintain and to grow…sometimes it's hard, but I think in the long run it's better for kids when there are common expectations across the school.*

Karen (Parent) also noted continuity and consistency. She offered this thought:

> *I think it was because we were involved as parents, teachers, and students; that whatever the student was experiencing, whatever goals were there and whatever philosophy or vision that was started in kindergarten with the school, I could count on going to Grade 7. So, I knew that whatever my child or children, I don't want to say experience, but sort of like, whatever the teacher was teaching, it was all about the whole child and being part of a community. And I knew whatever the teacher was teaching or how the teacher was looking at my child in kindergarten, I knew the philosophy would be the same in Grade 7 for that teacher in Grade 7. So, there were no surprises....I felt there was this continuity going from kindergarten to Grade 7.*

It was evident from the conversations that expressions of appreciation and celebration were a feature of communication. Mary (Teaching Assistant) said, "*We felt worthy and we felt valued and we felt important.*" Katie (Teacher 2) commented that, "*People were encouraged to appreciate each other*." She reflected that the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent also showed their appreciation when they visited the school. She said, "*You always felt that they appreciated what we were trying to do and interacted....It wasn't just that they were Superintendents; you felt like there*

was a relationship." Carla (Administrative Assistant) remarked that, "*I always felt that it didn't matter what you said…it was taken and…it was honoured just as much as anybody else was…You always felt that you were a valued part of the staff.*" Scarlett (Teacher 5) observed that, "*A lot of the staff members were there for a long number of years…because they enjoyed it and they felt worthy and heard. And, I think that's speaks tremendously for the school.*" Ruth (Teacher 6) spoke of celebrations: She said, "*Things were celebrated…things got celebrated…for example…at the end of the year, people who were leaving got really celebrated*." Karen (Parent) remarked that students were also celebrated: "*They all got awards for what they did well—the kids did…And so, the teachers really had to know their students and put a lot of thought into it.*"

Bella and Sunshine also observed that people felt valued and appreciated. Sunshine (Primary Program Coordinator and Parent) expressed it as follows:

> *You didn't have to be perfect…we weren't expected to be perfect as adults or as kids…it was okay to have a few warts and to let the warts show, and then work through them and try to get better and that was the expectation—just to try your best to grow and learn and from wherever…you were accepted.*

Bella (External Participant) said:

> *That just made such a shift in valuing the child and valuing the parent as opposed to this is just a place where you send your kids and we don't care about them. So, I think…that whole approach was probably good grounding for building a stronger base for a school that was in desperate need…it became a place where everybody felt valued.*

Building and Creating

This theme emerged when participants described innovating, activating new ideas, engaging in school growth and development, embracing change, and for some, growing both professionally and personally. Others described their sense of satisfaction at having the freedom to create and build on various aspects of the school. This theme also emerged in reference to facing challenges and acting upon opportunity.

The terms "building" and "creating" were often referred to in relation to programs that were adopted or created by the staff. These were identified as significant to student development and/or school culture. Specifically, the programs mentioned were the Eight

Steps to Problem Solving, Peer Counselling, Three-Way Reporting, Key Words, Experts (Gibbons & Keating, 1990), and Earthkeepers (Van Matre, 1988).

Prior to presenting how this theme emerged through the participants' conversations, each of these programs is described. An examination of historical and personal records of two participants, as well as my own, provided information about the programs that follows:

Three-Way Reporting

The Oceanside staff developed Three-Way Reporting, with many of them making reference to it in their interviews. This approach to reporting grew out of comments from a parent and one of the Primary teachers: they expressed dissatisfaction about anecdotal reporting at the Primary level. The parent said, "We need a process with three equal partners" and the teacher suggested that the order be reversed beginning with the parent, student, teacher conference and then send the written report home as a record of that meeting. The process that supported Three-Way Reporting was based on eight components: a beginning of the year goal-setting session with the parent, student, and the teacher; parent observation in the classroom to see their child at work and play; student self-evaluation; students observing successful students; a parent information night; conference planning and organization; conducting the student-parent-teacher conference; developing the written report; and evaluation of the process. The following are comments made by the teacher participants about Three-Way Reporting.

Biggy (Teacher 1) remarked, "*Three-Way Reporting was very well accepted by the staff. We empowered [the students] to show them how they could set objectives and meet objectives. And, that was a very powerful thing for kids to realize.*" Katie (Teacher 2) said, "*Just, as much work as it was, it was the only…thing that made sense to me with reporting*." Ruth (Teacher 6) described that, "*Three-Way Reporting—that was a huge thing; that was a huge innovation….It was one of the best ways that I can remember…of reporting…so I loved that and we developed that*." Mia (Teacher 3) expressly wanted to mention Three-Way Reporting during our conversation:

> *I specifically wanted to tell you about this because I tried to keep as many elements of Three-Way Reporting as I could—even when we had to write the reports first in contrast to the Three-Way Reporting where we would write them at the conference time where the child, parent and myself were all present. So that went out the door because…we were told to*

> *write them at other schools I was at. And, that was gone*. And then, I ended up in situations where not even all the teachers invited children to come to the conferences. And so, I just tried to keep it as close to it as I could.

Only Scarlett (Teacher 5) said that she wouldn't do it again because of the workload. In her words:

> *You know, if I look back now, I would not do it again. Why? Because it was really hard. But at the time, you know, you take in something new. I think the core of Three-Way Reporting was fully embraced by the staff for the entire 6 years.*

On the other hand, Claire (Administrative Assistant) who often typed the reports, explained how much she valued the process: "*Three-Way Reporting was pretty extraordinary…to hear feedback about how…[students] participated in their goal setting…it really hit home how powerful that was…to…commit in front of everybody what you were going to work on.*"

The two parent participants also spoke highly of Three-Way Reporting. Sunshine (Program Coordinator and Parent) said, "*It was…just amazing to have the Three-Way Reporting and…my daughter, being able to be responsible…for her own education and self-evaluating.*" In reference to one of her son's conferences, Karen (Parent) stated:

> *He thought he was good at math…he wanted to add that part [into] the Three-Way Reporting…And so, that made him feel good to be able to…be a part of that, and be able to say this is what I'm good at and being acknowledged for it by the teacher and…the parent in that process.*

Earthkeepers: Four Keys for Helping Young People Live in Harmony with the Earth

Another of the programs, frequently referred to during the interviews, was *Earthkeepers: Four Keys for Helping Young People Live in Harmony with the Earth* (Van Matre, 1988). This is an educational program whose central aim is to teach young people how to live in harmony with the earth and all its life forms. Rather than teaching students facts and figures about the natural world, it seeks to provide opportunities for students to develop positive and caring relationships with the natural world.

Biggy (Teacher 1) said, "*Earthkeepers…was a wonderful program....The whole ethic behind it—well worth it. It took advantage of the concepts that were very important as well as using the environment around us.*"

Sunshine (Primary Program Coordinator and Parent) referred to *Magic Spots*, one of the program's activities:

> *Another example of risk-taking…the support from the leadership of the school for the teacher of my child's class to allow them to have* Magic Spots*…I thought it was a fantastic activity and it involved having each child pick a spot close to the school. But, the school was kind of in a woody area and they would go out…and they would write in* their Magic Spots*…that was something that quite affected my child. She really, really appreciated that….I don't know that a lot of schools would think that was a worthwhile activity so that was impressive.*

Earthkeepers encourages students to take action that would contribute to the well-being of the planet. When asked about the significance of Earthkeepers, Kay (Teacher 7) stated, "*I think…the whole philosophy of…your footprint in the world and how you conducted yourself in the world…social responsibility and again working as a team*."

For Mia (Teacher 3), Earthkeepers was of key importance. She described that "*a piece of my envisioning was about environmental concerns and addressing those....And so for me, he [owner of the environmental education school that offered the Earthkeepers Program] was an important player in my growth*."

How to Become an Expert: Discover, Research, and Build a Project in Your Chosen Field

How to Become an Expert: Discover, Research, and Build a Project in Your Chosen Field (Gibbons & Keating, 1990), which also featured in some interviews, is a self-directed learning model that guides students through a process that includes identifying their interests, designing a related project, and making connections with mentors in their field of interest. At Oceanside, the projects phase would culminate with intermediate students putting their projects on display for parents and other students to view.

In reference to the *Experts Program*, Karen (Parent) said:

> *One of my favourite programs was the Experts Program and…that's what really…helped my daughter in doing what she's doing today…one area that she looked into was writing and being published… so, she really started looking at networking which was a part of the Experts Program, finding a mentor…We went to the* Writers Guild*…She brought her poetry…they were all really excited about her poetry…I explained to them that…she wanted to be published….they actually had a booklet that they…put out at the end of the year…And she's continued writing.*

Key Words

The Key Words program was a fourth significant initiative for the school. Specific terms were chosen by staff and later, parents, to describe the core values of the school community. These words originally emerged at the end of a 2-day summer session held in my first year at the school at Biggy's and Mary's beautiful home overlooking Howe Sound. During that workshop, staff members described our ideal school and classroom as well as other aspects of the school's vision. At the conclusion of the session, it struck me to ask the staff to identify the four most-used words in our two days together. With a glance at the charts posted on the deck rails, the staff identified our Key Words: respect, responsibility, cooperation and positive action: these became our Key Words. Throughout the year, student's learned the Key Words in both classroom and whole-school activities.

In reference to Key Words, Kay, Teacher 7, said "*No wonder we felt the power. They [Key Words] came from our staff…we thought these words were what we should focus on…right from kindergarten to Grade 7*." During the school year, we taught the Key Words to the students, shared them with parents, and referred to them in student report cards. Redhead (Teacher 4) spoke of how the staff focused on modelling the Key Words for the students:

> *The Key Words were modelled…they just weren't words on a wall…[The were] respect and cooperation and positive action and…responsibility and…we talked about how…to make those words meaningful for…the community…for the school. We always referred to staff as modelling those and…for somebody walking in…they would see, at all different levels, people using the Key Words.*

Throughout the year, we held special focus days for the Key Words, the purpose being to "activate" the words and provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate them. The Key Words were frequently reviewed for relevancy by staff and parents. Ruth

(Teacher 6) described the central importance of Key Words in building the culture of the school:

> *The Key Words…we built that collaboratively together with…the whole school community…it wasn't something that we just walked into and this is the way we do it at this school....I remember that those Key Words then became very strong…they became the shared language…so that became the central point of how we talked to the kids or talked to each other…everybody was…brought into that conversation around how do we live out these Key Words…It did not feel like an authoritarian environment to me in that somebody was telling someone else how to behave or what to do…there were certain expectations and standards…but it felt like…There was [a] commonly held understanding…we worked together on how that was…lived out in the school.*

Problem Solving Program

Another innovative program at Oceanside was the Eight Steps to Problem Solving program. It was a conflict resolution model introduced by Frances, the school counsellor, based on the following steps: a reminder to both parties of the ground rules (no put-downs, name calling, confidentiality, or blame), a chance for each party to describe the problem, and an exploration of possible solutions. Final steps included agreement by all involved to try one or all of the solutions and then to meet again in a specified period of time to assess the solution and consider any further action. The school's Peer Counsellors and staff instructed all students in this strategy, and since most disciplinary situations involved conflict, problem solving was the school's central approach to discipline.

Biggy (Teacher 1) described the Problem Solving Program as follows:

> *I remember that the discipline we had at the school was very well thought out because it placed the responsibility for change and addressing the problems on the child. And a it wasn't a punitive system but rather one of giving them the opportunity of finding out ways of dealing with their own behaviour…what we asked them to do is to address the whole demeanour and the whole social self…[The approach to discipline at the school] had to do with problem solving because most discipline in an elementary school has got to do with…conflict between the students…And the whole idea was to show the kids how to problem solve an issue and both arrive at a point of both winning…both accomplishing what they wanted to accomplish in a reasonable fashion.*

Karen (Parent) also expressed her high regard for this program. She described how the program framed problems for the students:

> *This isn't working, so you've got to…figure out something else to do…there wasn't that negativity of "You've been bad." It's sort of like, "This isn't working any more…and I think I've used a lot of that language too…I remember, if we've disrupted the harmony, we have to figure out how to bring the harmony back into the school.*

Katie (Teacher 2) commented on how this program involved all members of the school and the value she found in it:

> *Everybody was involved…with Problem Solving and all that went with that had good intentions and I think that's why it was so successful…It just seemed like, once they went through the process there didn't have to be a problem again because it was resolved and I guess that was the, the miracle of it all is it actually, honestly resolved the problem for the kids.*

Peer Counselling

The Peer Counselling Program was initiated and led by Frances, the school's counsellor. Working with students from Grades 3 to 7, she trained them to use the problem solving model. The Peer Counsellors each had a duty day on which they were available to other students and they met regularly with Frances to debrief their work and develop their skills. As Katie (Teacher 2) said:

> [*The Peer Counselling Program*] *was so, so important…there's so much emotion tied to that because [Frances] is the one who [started it]…that was her baby…Those are tools, those are life-long skills—really, really important skills—that we can use the rest of our lives whether it's work or family or friends or anything….Peer Counselling was a really powerful tool that she passed on to them.*

Claire (Administrative Assistant) recalled the long-term impact of the Peer Counselling Program on the students even as they moved on to the secondary school:

> *The staff at the high school really noticed that…those kids were…the first ones to be willing to be involved in Peer Counselling Program that Frances started at our school....So it really carried on beyond the walls of the school. It proved that it was real. It proved that it had a profound effect on them.*

Many of the participants mentioned the significance of the above programs in the success of the school and often referred to them in relation to the facets of the Building and Creating theme.

The participants' positive reception of new ideas, innovations and change all became aspects of this theme. Some participants commented that innovating and activating new ideas was rewarding and enjoyable. Biggy (Teacher 1) said, "*You know, I think it is fun; they find fun in developing new programs*." Ruth (Teacher 6) remarked on the satisfaction she took in creating. She had a "*strong sense of…shaping the environment that we wanted to work and live in together, strong sense of being able to do that*." Carla (Teacher Assistant) pinpointed, "*just even on the multiple intelligences, being part of that and seeing how you build, we built on it and, all the students—how they were just amazing to watch*." Redhead (Teacher 4), too, commented on the enjoyment she took in activating new ideas, saying, "*that attitude…opened up…that…wanting to take on new ideas…It's always looking for new ideas, new ways to grow, improve and enrich the school environment. And I really enjoyed that*." Redhead also remarked, "*I think there were so many high points of every year. You know, whether it was the Earthkeepers [Program] or Experts Program.*" The satisfaction taken in innovating and implementing new ideas was expressed by Biggy (Teacher 1) in the comment: "*Well, the overall nature of the school, of the staff was one of wanting to make things work and embracing new ideas. So, that was an overall feeling*." Kay (Teacher 7) also spoke of innovation. He said, "*We tried lots of different things…the Experts Program…What a wonderful program*!"

Kay (Teacher 7) also spoke of how the staff activated new ideas. In his words:

> *We took programs that were possibly established like the Experts Program and the Earthkeepers and developed them to accommodate our needs. We didn't just take them out of the textbook, you know, we took a good deal of time making them our own.*

Kay indicates here that he was willing to give the time necessary to incorporate programs into the Oceanside context.

Sunshine (Program Coordinator and Parent) commented that as a school leader, I played a role in supporting innovation describing me as, "*the principal, who had the insight and determination and 'stick-to-itiveness' and the patience it takes to try to implement those things, as well as the creativity*."

Dedwyn (the succeeding Principal) also found that staff embraced change when he came to the school. He commented:

> *It really wasn't about what—what haven't you done. It's about what can you do. And, I think that was a culture that went throughout the school. It's always, "What can we do? "Where can we go?" "What, what can happen now?"*

Participants also spoke about engaging in school growth and development. Biggy (Teacher 1) remarked that the changes in the school were gradual rather than taking a sharp turn in direction. He recalled, "*I think we were always building on programs. I don't think we had any significant changes; I think we were just building on what we had.*" Karen (Parent) described the energy behind the school's change when she said, "*There was just that momentum still of being able to come together and be able to do what we're doing*." Oftentimes when implementing new ideas, we used a model called the Creative Cycle[8]; it guided us to begin by examining beliefs, values, and goals then to collaborate and plan with others such as parents and students, before putting the idea into action. The Cycle included an evaluating and reflecting stage. Sunshine (Primary Program Coordinator and Parent) made reference to the use of the Creative Cycle.

> *I think also…the focus on working with the staff as a team and taking the time to do the thinking and the reflecting and doing that in staff meetings....Again, thinking of the [Creative] Cycle, the temptation is so often to jump into the blooming part of the cycle not the growing and developing part of the cycle.*

Sunshine also spoke of change in relation to Oceanside school. She said, "*The growth and the learning was just so woven into the fabric that it wasn't too challenging…it wasn't uncomfortable; it wasn't too risk-taking but enough to keep people growing*."

Claire (Administrative Assistant) also provided a description of how the staff approached school growth and change:

> *I remember, staff meetings, the focus on what we had to do next, you know, and the process to get it, develop it and people kind of rolling their eyes because it meant a lot more work. But, because…it was already underway; people could see it was working; it was valuable. So just rolling up their sleeves and being willing to keep on trucking…keep going.*

[8] See Appendix G for a description of the Creative Cycle.

Kay (Teacher 7) spoke about how he saw the staff respond to directed change, like that associated with the Year 2000. He said:

> *Well, the thing that I think about is that we took those things but we made it ours. We read through the binders and listened to the workshops or whatever, and then came back and said, "Okay, how can we mould that into what we are doing already?*

Ruth (Teacher 6) and others commented on the professional and growth that many described as being a part of that time. In her words:

> *I just remember a lot of really great talk around professional growth and…there was a lot of excitement around professional growth....So, I remember we had…a day where we had a panel…and we had parents come and…we had conversations between parents and staff around…implementing the Primary Program....Anyway, that kind of [thing]....So I remember some of those Pro D Days with Sunshine especially around writing and around assessments. I remember those days as being really strong Pro D Days when all the Primary teachers would get together. We had some days for that I remember. There was a sort of an excitement.*

Mia (Teacher 3) also commented on her professional growth during this time, recalling, "*I got to try lots of things there and I really feel I grew a lot as a teacher.*"

Redhead (Teacher 4) too, remembered how the school culture supported her professional growth when she made the following observation:

> *It was wonderful and it was a wonderful place to be and a wonderful environment, as a fairly new teacher still, to develop skills, to work with others that had more experience, to work with colleagues that were passionate about teaching about the place that they worked and yeah, I mean, it was amazing.*

This theme also emerged through participants' references to facing challenges and acting upon opportunity. Biggy (Teacher 1) said, "*I thought that the staff was open to change—especially good ideas. And they did them very well. They really embraced newness.*" Claire (Administrative Assistant) summarized her experiences at Oceanside as follows:

> *I think back on it now…it's almost…like it sounds 'hokey', but it almost like this Camelot. You know, it was a special time when people were pushing themselves, striving to make things better, working as a really strong team, seeing results with kids that's…It's kind of like the high point you*

know, of being involved in something that really mattered and was really working. It wasn't easy but it was worth it.

Year 2000

The Year 2000 Program is treated as a theme because for some it was very significant and memorable. It is also the focus of one of the main research questions.

The impact of the Year 2000 Framework was central to this study. Many participants identified it as a contributing factor to the success of the school. Primary Teachers seemed far more excited about the Year 2000, while the Intermediate Teachers were less so. Biggy (Teacher 1) commented on it as follows:

I don't remember much about that....I can remember them saying there were certain objectives…I couldn't even…tell you what were. But I can remember us being prideful enough in what we were doing to be able to say, "We've accomplished that" and "We're doing that," and "We are well on our way to that," or "We've done that."

Kay (Teacher 7) expressed a similar opinion:

[The Year 2000]…that binder… we took those things but we made it ours. We read through the binders and listened to the workshops or whatever, and then came back and said, "Okay, how can we mould that into what we are doing already?" because, we knew it was working. Why not continue on? But, we're not going to say that we're going to drop this or drop that because just because there is a binder that said we should.

Kay's words below echoed the greater concern that the Year 2000 Framework's elements be aligned with Oceanside's directions rather than the school just simply and automatically adopting all aspects of the program.

I don't know if there was a section in there about reporting or going anecdotal….Didn't it all go anecdotal? And then we did some too but found that the parents didn't really value that…as much as the grades. So we said, "Okay, we'll do that and we'll bring in our letter grades again, too. I think we did so we made our own report card.

These participants claimed that the program was implemented in such a way as to ensure there was a fit between the Year 2000 and the school's beliefs or practices.

The five participating Primary Teachers, who would have worked extensively with the new Framework, all responded differently to this question. Katie (Teacher 2) stated:

> *It was the biggest epiphany for Oceanside School....I just felt like we all were doing the big Uh huh! This is what it's about; this is what…makes sense…I always remember, what you did was gave us permission to do that….[It] was the right thing to do….It was fantastic and the energy that came out of that….I've never seen it again since…we were already headed that way but this was another way of giving us permission…in the classroom, in particular…it really let me be free to go with the kids where they were going and…it was an equalizer [for the students]…Everybody was just moving ahead in different ways, but everybody was moving ahead.*

Scarlett (Teacher 5) also expressed satisfaction with the Year 2000 as follows:

> *I would say the Year 2000, especially for the Primary group, we embraced that fully because that worked so well with the Three-Way Reporting…once you embrace something and you believe in it, it's hard to kind of drop it…You take what you think works well and you form your own philosophy, your way of doing it.*

Mia (Teacher 3) described her excitement for aspects of the Framework and her disappointment when it was withdrawn. She said:

> *The Year 2000 Program, I supported from the get-go. I felt really passionate about it and I still do you know. It's like…it seemed to fizzle in terms of support from the Ministry and from the government before we actually hit the Year 2000….I really treasured, for example, the idea that primary students would build on their learning as time went by…So I'm hugely in favour of the Year 2000 and bring it back please.*

Ruth (Teacher 6) articulates the value she placed on the Year 2000 when she said:

> *It was also the time of the implementation of the Year 2000….I think what stands out for me the most…is the philosophy in the Year 2000…grounded in teaching the whole child. And I think that came with that whole shift of the Year 2000.*

Similarly, Jane (Teacher 8) described the alignment between pre-existing school directions and the Year 2000 when she commented that with the, "*Year 2000, I felt we had been doing a large part of it already. Our school had a similar philosophy.*"

There was agreement among the Primary Teachers that there was considerable philosophical consistency between many of the recommendations of the Year 2000 Program and the school's own philosophy and approaches. Only Scarlett (Teacher 5), a Primary Teacher, felt the program presented considerable change to her existing practice. She described her introduction to the Year 2000 as follows:

> *You're looking at the child as a whole and I remember how hard it was because I'm from the era where basal readers, for a number of years, Right? Worksheets, time schedule, we're doing math now. No, no we're doing phonics now. No, no we're doing health now. No, no. And from there to go to the Year 2000…Oh my God, I don't know how to teach. You get inundated where I literally felt I was not a good teacher because the philosophy is so different. How you teach is so different, how you organize, how you plan is so different. And there has got to be a transition part where I became…boom it hits you. You can't help but go; this is the way we want to go.*

Sunshine (Primary Program Coordinator and Parent) felt that the anecdotal report cards, a directive included in the Primary Program, aligned with Oceanside's reporting practices. She said:

> *One of the big things was anecdotal report cards…that clearly would be an initiative that supported the parent-student-teacher conferences that Oceanside was implementing…it gave parents…more confidence that the kids were still learning.*

Bella (External Participant) also referred to the alignment between the Year 2000 and approaches taken at Oceanside:

> *I didn't necessarily think about this at the time but my instant thought around the Year 2000 was the approach of the whole child and how particularly the Primary Program was focusing on…teaching the whole child how to function academically, socially, emotionally, etc….I'm imagining that that was very timely for Oceanside School because…it would be much more what was needed to…enrich the environment in an honest way. And, I recall that that particular staff became leaders in the School District for their implementation of Year 2000…that whole approach was probably good grounding for building a stronger base for a school that was in desperate need.*

Again, there is a sense in these interpretations that the philosophy and recommendations of the Year 2000 and more specifically the Primary Program, were consistent with the philosophy of and many of the approaches taken in the school. The Program, to some degree, seemed to validate and enhance the school's directions. The teachers of the Primary Program used words like "exciting," "epiphany," "passion*"* and "embraced." Most all of the Primary Teachers believed that it enhanced what they were doing in their classrooms. The Intermediate Teachers did not describe the program with any such emotion and for them it appeared to be significant only because it validated what was already occurring in the school.

In summary then, the Year 2000 did have an effect on the school. The Primary Program, in particular, was well received by the teachers as it appeared to align with and enhance their practices. However, as an examination of the participants' thoughts about the crisis showed, the effect of the Year 2000 was not seen to be nearly as significant as that of the crisis.

Crisis

The final theme emerging from the participants' stories concerned the crisis that impacted the school in the 5 years prior to the time frame of this study. Many participants (see Table 6) made reference to the crisis incident precipitated by John Doe in that they saw the impact of that crisis not only on the students, parents, and staff as individuals, but on the school as a whole. While this theme wasn't mentioned by all of the Internal Participants, many of them did refer to it.

As documented in Chapter 3, "The Facts of the Case*,"* the crisis resulted from the criminal activities of a teacher, John Doe, who was once a member of Oceanside's staff.

Katie (Teacher 2) described it as follows:

> *The reason why I was hired…at Oceanside—the school was in a real, real mess. It's probably just totally destroyed by…the sexual abuse that happened....When I came on the scene, the staff had just heard about it…so it was like a bomb exploded in the school....When I say a bomb went off…I wasn't there exactly when the bomb went off, I was there after it went off so everything was like devastation and I don't mean you could see that, I mean I could feel it…but people didn't really talk about it until later because it was pretty hush-hush when I was there. Maybe they just didn't know how to talk about….Maybe they were told not to talk about it....I felt like it was picking up that dead spirit and trying to get it alive again.*

As a newly hired teacher at the time, Katie highlights the closed communication, feelings of devastation, and the dead spirit of the school.

Scarlett (Teacher 5) also described the closed communication in her words that follow:

> *The kids never said anything at all. They kept…hush amongst themselves up until the time he [John Doe] got caught…that's when it popped up at Oceanside…I remember making the comment, "Wow, it is amazing*

that…those kids would have been in Grade 2 at that time, how the kids managed to keep something quiet amongst themselves…not even letting parents know.

Claire (Administrative Assistant) described the upset felt by the staff when they discovered that the students thought the other staff members knew of the sexual abuse and of the communication that came from the School Board Office:

They [the students] all knew all about [John Doe] and the abuse he had done when he was at our school. And, because they all knew about it, they assumed we all knew about it and condoned it. That was the most powerful thing for me was…they thought: Adults know everything and if we all knew about it, they must have known about it and thought it was okay so…[Frances] had them write things down and when she was walking down the hallway…reading what they had written…she walked into the staff room….That's when the shit hit the fan, basically. And, we realized we had the same situation at our school…I've never been able to get over the fact…and I remember sitting in the gym, the School District administration came and sat at this table and told everyone they had no idea (which is total crap. It's not true) and lying to us. He was just shuffled around like a hot potato. People in power knew that he had a problem and the fact that those kids thought we felt it was okay….[tears]. It was my daughter's vintage of those kids going through the system and the harm it did you know, the lives it scarred.

In the months that followed, as the court case proceeded the impact of the crisis on the staff continued. Bella (External Participant) remarked:

And, through the next few months, the stress and distress that occurred in the Board Office…the Superintendent…the staff at the school—it was amazing, even though he [the paedophile] was no longer there. It just seemed that everybody was full of guilt, and stress, and worry about what did they miss and what did they overlook.

Bella also described the sense of “capped emotion”:

And, when I look back on that, it makes me realize how many people were affected by that, that weren't directly affected, but we all had our own little role in what happened or what we didn't do to stop it from happening. And some people were destroyed by it and others were just having their own private guilt and concerns and distresses around it and so I think by that time you were the administrator for school…there was so much capped emotion about the whole thing and that…it's almost like it was just percolating and bursting forth.

Bella also talked about the loss of trust in the school community:

My recollection is that there were still kids that were either directly or indirectly affected by what had happened in the past. And possibly even by how they might have felt betrayed that the teachers hadn't spoken up or done anything about it. So, I think that it could have created a certain degree of anger and distress and hostility amongst kids and possibly parents. So, the trust in the school had been lost…it was a huge long road to rebuild that trust. Even though people could intellectually say, "Well, how could somebody know what was going on?" There's still that sense that I send my kid to school and expect it to be a safe place and you're all responsible. And I think that's how everybody felt—whether we were at the Board Office or in the school at the time—there was…a sense that we didn't do enough and, and I'm sure some of the behaviour issues of the kids were related to that—you didn't protect us.

The stories that follow describe the period that immediately following the crisis when the School District brought in a new principal and some new teaching staff. This first story is from Biggy (Teacher 1) who was assigned to the school after the crisis.

But, it was right at the end of the John Doe's situation and [Principal X] was the principal at the time….And…I sensed that when I first went there, there was this….(I can say what I want to say?) [Principal X] had his ways of relating to people and…he sort of favoured certain things and had a bit of a…chauvinist sort of side—male side—and it didn't work all that well…Well, the leadership was wrong in the school….It was a style of leadership that just didn't work with the people who were there. And, there was resentment on the part of staff about the way they were being treated and the way they were being talked to and, I think it was recognized by the District. Oceanside had gone through a tough time because of the situation. And, [Principal X]…I think had been placed there to try and make it sort of heal but I don't think it was very well thought out; I don't think it was accomplished….Because the leader at that time was…as I say, had chauvinistic tendencies or male tendencies that didn't go down well with the female staff. I didn't think it did any way, for as soon as Principal X left there was a sigh of relief.

Other participants corroborated the views expressed by Biggy above. Scarlett (Teacher 5), hired to the school in 1983, taught with John Doe for a few months. She described the relationship between the Parents' Advisory Council and the school:

They dismantled the parents group….My understanding was that the parents group was so strong that they started to run school....Ok so he [Principal X]…was…building up…[the] parents group....I think that the parents [the dismantled group] were demanding things such as like Halloween parties then dances and making decisions that the teachers wanted to make.

Her description of what was occurring with the parents' group during this time indicated a lack of trust between parents and the school principal or the staff as a whole. It is an unusual occurrence; in my 30 years experience in this District, no other parents' group has been "dismantled".

It is of interest to note that the 1988 report of the Royal Commission, "Legacy for Learners", contains the following recommendation:

> That each of the 75 school districts of the province adopt policies and procedures which provide for a designated role for parents and other community members through membership on parent-community advisory committees at the district level and at each school within the district. (p. 52)

Following the Royal Commission, the BCME School Act (BCME, 1996, p. C19-C20) was revised to include provisions for Parent Advisory Councils, including their dissolution. It requires that the Parent Advisory Council in consultation with the principal, make by-laws governing its own dissolution. However, this provision was not in place in the time period referred to by Scarlett.

Katie (Teacher 2) recounts other unhealthy aspects to the school:

> *The principal [Principal X] that was there in a way, he had some good, good parts to him where he was open to doing…letting this happen in the school to pull the school together. He was young and had energy….Ironically, he also would…be abusive. Verbally in ways, that I didn't realize till later…it was more to make him feel good and feel important. So there were good things going on and then there were some really weird things going on at the same time....But, there was also a funny another part of the tone that was…there was a competitiveness - that kind of a tone—but it was not a healthy competitiveness; it was the more all-out....For me it didn't feel supportive there was always the potential for damage.*

The principal referred to above, was assigned to another school in the District after 2 years. At that point, I was assigned to the school, not only unaware of the unhealthy aspects of the staff culture but also operating under the assumption that only residual issues, such as parent trust, remained. I soon learned that the students were still struggling with the effects of past events. Kay (Teacher 7), who was assigned to the school that same year, described his experience with his Grade 7 class:

> *That year was a real difficult year because I think it was the same aftermath of the [John Doe] situation. And so, that Grade 7 class—*

especially the Grade 7 class, there was some real problems personality wise… They were there through a significant part of that [John Doe's activity in the school]…they were a challenge as a group teaching in the classroom but they were a challenge elsewhere too….That first year we did an outdoor ed. school thing and [Student A] was just powering and wanted total control…And, she wasn't getting it and so she would blow up and do all kinds of things…it was a difficult year.

On the day another crisis erupted, I awoke to a full realization that the first crisis was, in fact, still at play. In my interview, I described it as follows:

I was home sick…and I got a phone call saying come to the school immediately. One of the Grade 7 girls [Student A] has accused her teacher [Kay] of grabbing her breast…I went down there and had this real sense of impending doom and it was a horrendous situation. The RCMP were there within 20 minutes of my phone call, they investigated. They talked to other students. They talked to the teacher and, by the end of that evening, they decided that…the allegation was unsubstantiated. But the kids refused to believe it and the parents refused to believe it and the teacher was absolutely devastated…Some kids said they saw that; other kids held on to what she said…the parents, because there was no trust in the school because of [the previous crisis], it just perpetuated this whole thing…a bunch of them [the students] stormed out of the school the next day because they refused to believe that the RCMP had done a proper investigation. That went on for weeks and weeks.

Biggy (Teacher 1) also spoke about this time:

Kay…came out of it ok…It gave a tremendous amount of pain to…[him] because he told me that it reminded him of the way he was treated in high school…a lot of prejudicial things happened to him and it brought it all back to him. But, the school rose to the occasion. I think they did a wonderful job of handling it. The only thing I would say is maybe they jumped a little too quickly into the fray before finding out exactly what happened. But that was the regulations of the day; that anything that was brought to the attention of teachers had to be immediately divulged and dealt with....There was a feeling of panic almost. The kids were really upset some of them, those that had been associated with [John Doe] for sure because the kids responded….[Student B] really panicked. Like he went into a state of…he was extremely anxious. And, it became almost a melodrama…No, it got taken care of….I would have thought it would have had much more impact on the school than it turned out to have. I think it is because of your leadership and because of the nature of the school. It was able to handle something like that very well….The staff were determined, as they were in most things they did, to resolve it and to deal with it and not to just bury it or pretend it hadn't happen.

During our conversation, Kay (Teacher 7) courageously spoke of the incident:

> *But later that year, she [Student A] did the sexual touching accusation. And so, we worked through that…and that was a really incredibly difficult…but through incredibly difficult times you either go weaker or stronger and I think I became an even more dedicated, stronger, committed teacher after that….And I said, "This happens and this is a nasty thing to happen to you and you can go either way: quit teaching and say, "I'm not going to be doing this," or carry on. And that carrying on was in part…the staff influenced me….I mean incredible people: Scarlett, Carla, Biggy, you. I mean, the whole…I don't know if Mia was there…but, those four people….It was a shocking thing to go through, a horrible thing to go through but in the end, I came out of it a stronger, more committed teacher and I think in part that that commitment led to the personality of the school and teaching too…thinking that I was committed and the people around me are committed and it just led on from there.*

Other participants also described how this and/or the crisis precipitated by John Doe's activities influenced the school's commitment to change. Below, Katie (Teacher 2) refers to some changes that occurred after this incident.

> *It seemed like there was a lot of unspoken stuff happening underneath all the time and you brought a lot of that out, not all of it but…it was kind of like, with the elephant in the room and you just named the elephant…So, one of my first recollections was…we started the envisioning…and that was just like medicine. And I think most people really, I know I was into it hook line and sinker....When I think back now, parents were so much more involved after that. But, everything that we were doing as a school, involved parents…that was a good thing for parents because I think they needed to be closer to the school then, to feel that their children were safe; because of what happened before…Overtime, not immediately but over time [the relationship with parents and community changed] and I think the biggest change was when we were doing those things like envisioning, cause they were included, the Key Words…parents were included in a positive way....They felt they were rebuilding Oceanside…the spirit of Oceanside—they were part of that. And, that was important for them as well.*

It is evident that Bella (External Participant) too, identified more open communication:

> *I think once the opportunity came for people to work through the issues of what happened and…had quit hiding their concerns and were more able to just talk about it....I'm thinking even parents and kids…had felt silenced about the whole issue of what happened in school, I know people had felt violated—even though nothing had happened to them directly and it was almost like a cleansing. And then, once that was done, it was like a big sigh of relief and now let's get on and be the best we can be and that's what was happening. The school just blossomed into an amazing place for kids and staff and parents.*

Claire (Administrative Assistant) attributes some of the school's cultural change to the crises:

> *Dealing with adversity played a role…So there was two huge, huge events—adverse events that must have had some kind of effect on the culture of that school coming together, developing a new way of looking at things…that mutual support; it had to have something to do with it. You wouldn't want to recreate that kind of adversity to make a good situation result from it but it'd be nice to know that people learn from those situations that contribute to that better culture in the end.*

In the following vignette, Sunshine (Primary Program Coordinator and Parent) suggests the crisis may have caused the school staff to look beyond the more typical scope of schools and that as a result the staff may have been significantly motivated to build a strong and caring school culture.

> *It is in looking back I see that…many of the initiatives that were being taken to build the relationships between staff, between…the staff and students, between students, between the school and the community were obviously an attempt to deal with the outcomes of [the] experience and to rebuild the sense of community that was shattered by that breach of trust that took place…So, another example…of risk taking and…going above and beyond our normal routine of a school, sort of outside of the whole maybe attempt to react to the whole trauma that the school had experienced…It was a really positive focus on improvement and learning for a real purpose; not just learning for the sake that somebody else said we need to learn it…So, I would think it felt safe…which must have been important given what had happened previously in a place where…if you needed to cry, you could cry and even as a staff member you could do that….So, it was safe to be personal, to be human, to be real. No, it's not always this superficial, fake everything is ok…and adults are perfect and we don't have any problems, that you get in many other schools and institutional context where there is no real sharing….So, you know, safe, respectful, comfortable; it felt comfortable, it felt like a place you wanted to be because you could be who you were…So I think if I hadn't had that experience at Oceanside School with the focus on building relationships for whatever reason regardless. I know that it may have come out of the trauma that the school had experienced but it was still believed in because it was an important thing to do. So…the experience of Oceanside School kind of helped me understand that on a gut-level both as a parent and as an educator and to see how it could be lived....So, those two things—building the positive relationships and the modelling of that in every way, shape and, form [were significant].*

Dedwyn (succeeding Principal) put it this way:

> *That attitude most probably comes from that post…[John Doe] era of we really have to look at the beautiful things; we have to look at ourselves in*

a positive, growing way; we have to look at it as we are us and; we are strong kind of attitude that was in the school. And, we don't rely on others. We deal with things ourselves and we get it done. We don't let things slide either because that's what happened with…[John Doe] you know, things had been let slide.

Based on the perceptions of many participants working in the School District during the crisis or beginning their work shortly thereafter, it appears the crisis played a role in the school's development. These participants felt that it motivated the staff to create a different kind of school culture—one that might prevent the actions of a child sexual abuser, or one that would foster open communication and discourage students from keeping secrets over time; and finally, one that would make certain that students didn't see adults as unsafe, untrustworthy, and omnipotent.

In summary then, based on the participants' stories that arose from the semi-structured interviews, a number of themes emerged. These were as follows:

- Fellowship in a community of shared purpose
- Focus on student learning
- Commitment
- Culture and Morale
- Team work and cooperation
- Leadership
- Communication
- Building and Creating
- Year 2000
- Crisis

In Chapter 6, "Triangulating the Data," which follows the data gathered from the participants' interviews is cross-referenced with a number of other sources.

Chapter 6. Triangulating the Data

This chapter provides a number of points of triangulation for the stories of the participants. The findings that emerged from their interviews are compared with the survey results, outcomes found in the External Accreditation Report, and themes found in my own story:

Survey Results

The two surveys used in the study, "How Effective Is Your School?" (Appendix A) and "Do the Cultural Norms of Your School Promote School Improvement?" (Appendix B) are recommended as quick and easy assessment tools to gather staff perceptions to help identify a school's needs prior to developing a school improvement plan (Blankstein, 2004, p. 45; Hargreaves, 2005). For the purposes of this study, the surveys helped to triangulate data from the interviews of the Internal Participants. Initially, the surveys were going to be compared to each of the Internal Participant's interview in order to determine consistency of response. However, because some participants completed the surveys anonymously and as the participants were by-and-large positive in their responses about the school, the aggregated results of the surveys were compared to the aggregated result of the interviews. In comparison, the surveys appeared to be as equally as positive as the interviews.

Blankstein (2004) suggests that schools plot the results of the two surveys on a School Typology chart. When plotting Oceanside staff responses on the chart, it is typified as a Moving school—the highest of the five categories in the typology. This category is achieved if the scores for each survey are 7+ when counting and averaging the number of times the respondents score an item as either 4 or 5. Table 2 provides an example of the scoring by presenting the results for the survey, "Do the Cultural Norms of Your School Promote School Improvement," the 10 Internal Participants scored as follows:

Table 2. Scoring for the survey, "Do the Cultural Norms of Your School Promote School Improvement?"

Participant Number	Number of Scores of 4 and 5
1	10/10
2	10/10
3	10/10
4	9/10
5	10/10
6	10/10
7	10/10
8	10/10
9	10/10
10	9/10

In Oceanside's case, the average score of the 10 Internal Participants was 9 for the effectiveness survey and 10 for the cultural norms survey. According to these results, the cultural norms of the school (i.e., shared goals, responsibility for success, collegiality, continuous improvement, life-long learning, risk taking, support, mutual support, openness, and celebration and humour) promote school improvement. The factors associated with effectiveness (i.e., instructional leadership, shared vision and clear goals, shared values and beliefs, a learning environment, teaching and curriculum focus, high expectations for all, positive student behaviour, frequent monitoring of student progress, student involvement and responsibility, and climate for learning) also support improvement in the school.

This data confirmed the stories of the participants such that many survey items were scored as strengths by the participants and most were aligned with themes identified by the study's participants. Table 3 illustrates the alignment evident between the themes discovered in the participants' stories as well as those contained in the surveys.

Table 3. Emergent Themes Aligned with the Survey Items

Emerging Themes from Participant Interviews	Items from the Surveys that Align with the Themes
Fellowship in a Community of Shared Purpose and Values	• Shared vision and clear goals (unity of purpose, consistency of practice)[a] • Shared values and beliefs[a] • Shared Goals ("We know where we are going")[b]
Focus on Student Learning and Life-long Learning	• A learning environment (an orderly atmosphere)[a] • Teaching and curriculum focus (maximization of learning time, academic focus, focus on achievement)[a] • Frequent monitoring of student progress (ongoing monitoring, evaluating school performance)[a] • Student involvement and responsibility (high student self-esteem, positions of responsibility, control of work)[a] • Climate for learning (positive physical environment, recognition, incentives)[a] • Life-long learning ("Learning is for everyone")[b]
Commitment	• [c]
Culture and Morale	• Positive student behaviour (clear and fair discipline and feedback)[a] • Responsibility for success ("We must succeed")[b] • Continuous improvement[b] • Celebration and humour ("We feel good about ourselves")[b]
Teamwork and Cooperation	• Collegiality ("We're working on it together")[b] • Support ("There's always someone to help")[b] • Mutual support ("Everyone has something to offer")[b]
Leadership	• Instructional Leadership (firm, purposeful, participative approach, the leading professional)[a].
Communication	• High expectations (for all, communications of expectations, intellectual challenge for all)[a] · Openness ("We can discuss our differences")[b]
Building & Creating	• Risk-taking ("We learn by trying something new")[b]

[a] The items from "How Effective Is Your School?" survey; [b] the items from "Do the Cultural Norms of Your School Promote School Improvement?" survey; [c] no survey items made reference to this theme.

The data presented in Table 3 indicates that there is considerable alignment between the survey items and the study's emergent themes. Only the theme Commitment is not aligned with any of the survey items.

The External Accreditation Report

The External Accreditation Team's Report (May, 1995) and the participants' stories identified many of the same themes and programs. In Table 4, the study's emergent themes are aligned with comments made by the External Team about Oceanside in the School in the Report of 1995.

The report also pinpointed many of the same programs as those identified by the participants. They were: Three-Way Reporting, Peer Counselling, Key Words, *How to Become an Expert: Discover, Research, and Build a Project in Your Chosen Field* (Gibbons & Keating, 1990) and *Earthkeepers: Four Keys for Helping Young People Live in Harmony with the Earth* (Van Matre, 1988). Significantly, the report did not refute any of the themes that emerged from the participants' stories. The Team's recommendations focused on addressing issues of multiculturalism, accessibility to the school resource centre, improvements to be made in communication to new parents, "school organizational procedures [were to] be formalized so that placements are considered from philosophical, education and practical standpoints" (p. 21), "increased staff opportunities to share ideas and current research, assessment of professional development, long term planning for staff development," "explore methods of effectively communicating with the broader community; but keep in mind the limitations of a small community, and continue to communicate with parents about educational programs" (p. 21).

Also noteworthy was an unsolicited letter found in Oceanside's accreditation file, written by the parent member of the External Team. She described her impressions of the school using terms such as: "friendly," "open," "caring," "enthusiasm," "positive influence of parents…in partnership," "proud," and "appreciation".

Table 4. Alignment of Emerging Themes with Comments Contained in the External Accreditation Report

Theme	Comments from the External Accreditation Report
Fellowship in a Community of Shared Purpose and Values	• "Collegial planning and cooperative attention to detail." • "The team commends the administration and particularly the Principal, Dedwyn, for the exceptional way staff works together and with others (parents and resource people) to develop and promote the school's direction." • "Parent involvement is the 'Hallmark' of Oceanside Elementary School. Parent interviews by the Team confirmed the high level of satisfaction with the open-door policy of Oceanside Elementary School." • "The Team commends the staff and parents…for the desire to attain a high level of community involvement; proactive Parents Advisory Council; parental involvement as mentors in the *Experts Program*; initiative taken by the parents' group to write a weekly newsletter." • "The Team commends the staff…for its thoughtful reflection while developing the school's Mission Statement…the statement speaks of the respect, self-esteem and pride that is demonstrated by the students and staff. As well, the statement points a direction for the future with the expressed intent of preparing students to meet the challenges of a changing world." • "Cohesive and 'connected' staff." • "Oceanside Elementary School is the heart of the community where people come together for a common purpose—the education of children."
Focus on Student Learning and LIfe-long Learning	• "Sense of quality and the standards of excellence." • "Parents and Support Staff work in concert with the professional staff and school administration to provide a wide range of experiences that accommodate all learning rates and styles." • "[Oceanside] is a true place of learning." • "Hall and classroom displays reflect the social and emotional goals of the school program as well as the academic achievement of the learners. The conscientious use of the learning environment provides concrete evidence of the success of the curricular programs." • "Students demonstrate effective critical thinking, problem solving and decision making strategies." • "Students are acquiring knowledge, skills and attitudes for continuous life-long learning." • "Students value learning and believe they can learn." • "Students participate in appropriate physical and recreational activities; students demonstrate an awareness of and practice safety…appropriate social skills; respect and respond to environmental concerns; are able to set goals, plan, manage time and evaluate their progress…particularly through the Three-Way Reporting process."

Theme	Comments from the External Accreditation Report
	• "Different learning styles and rates are accommodated." • "Both individual and group learning strategies are utilized." • "The school provides effective personal counselling support for students." • "Students are provided with high quality academic programs in the core subject areas." • "Effective teaching strategies are used." • "Positive Action, one of the Key Words…is reflected in the attitude toward student learning and achievement." • "Happy, confident, respectful and responsible students." • "Willingness of staff to exercise their talents." • "Use of criterion referenced assessment and student personal goal setting."
Commitment	• "Commitment…displayed by all stakeholders." • "During its visit, the Team was impressed with the willingness of the staff to devote all of its energy to improving learning experiences for the children." • "The team found the staff to be a highly competent and dedicated group of professional educators with many areas of curricular expertise." • "Exceptionally caring, knowledgeable and talented staff."
Culture and Morale	• "Ethic of caring." • "The Team commends the staff and community for the warm and caring culture of the school." • "In an environment where respectful interactions with students are continuously modelled, students are encouraged to improve their individual achievement in an atmosphere of teamwork and cooperation." • "An actively involved parent/community group."
Teamwork and Cooperation	• "Active role para-professionals play in the educational program team." • "A warm and caring sense of family." • "Staff engages in cooperative planning and teaching." • "Supportive, caring team-based approach by staff."
Leadership	• "The Team commends the administration and particularly the Principal, Dedwyn, for leadership which is provided to ensure that the school's internal and external communications are effective…that planned and coherent change result from ongoing review and evaluation of educational services…that broadly based collaboration and consultation are part of the school's decision making process." • "The way the school provides opportunities for students to demonstrate leadership, e.g., Peer Counsellors, Computer Monitors, etc. and the way the school provides opportunities for parents to demonstrate leadership." • "The staff is a positive role model which seeks to inspire the student body through creative teaching practices and by a variety of extra-curricular activities."

Theme	Comments from the External Accreditation Report
Communication	• "The open-door policy should continue to encourage parents to get involved." • "Once again, the Oceanside Elementary School staff is demonstrating its responsiveness to the community it serves." • " Extensive collaboration in decision making." • "Effective home, school and community communication."
Building and Creating	• "The Team commends Oceanside Elementary School staff for being proactive and occasionally slightly ahead of the Ministry in recognizing current issues in education." • "The team agrees with the staff that in the area of Professional Attributes and Staff Development, the strengths are that…the staff engages in professional development and reflective practice, staff development is cooperatively planned."

In summary then, the External Accreditation Report (External Accreditation Team, 1995) validated the impressions of the school held by the study's participants. Many of the themes that emerged from the participants' stories were acknowledged in the report. It is also noteworthy that the External Report validated the findings of the Internal Self-Assessment Report. Although the Report supports the themes manifested in the participant data, the Team's recommendations revealed issues around school organization related to the Resource Centre and student placement in classes. Recommendations about multiculturalism, communication with new parents, and professional development were also included in the report but were not apparent in the emergent themes.

Two significant influences came into play in the Team's recommendations about school organization. First, the school doubled in size from the beginning to end of the 6-year period under study. Second, the largest employer in the area changed to foreign ownership which brought new families of different cultures to the community. The concern with multiculturalism and communication with new parents was evident to the staff in the year prior to my departure and I recall preliminary discussions about multiculturalism. The concern over student placement in classrooms became an issue due to the increased size of the school: there were now more options for classroom organization and student placement.

In retrospect, I see that I should have attended to this issue much earlier. I realized my error when Scarlett described decisions around classroom assignments as

unfair. Had I raised discussions about this issue with the staff, common understandings and accepted procedures might have been reached to address this concern. This issue suggests to me the emergence of a new theme: School Organization. Although no other participants mentioned it, an examination of the literature later revealed that a number of theorists such as Marzano (2003) have identified it. School organization is also referenced in the survey, "How Effective Is Your School?", in the item, "A learning environment (an orderly atmosphere, an attractive working environment)." It isn't possible to identify which of the specified features (i.e., orderly atmosphere or attractive working environment) the participants were citing when they scored this item. However, it is the only item from the two surveys which received scores of 3 (*sometimes*) by three of the Internal Participants; one of these indicated with an underline that she was citing attractiveness. Again, had these participants been willing to speak to the items in a group setting, the Focus Group would have been useful in determining the participants' thoughts and feelings in regard to this theme.

The concern regarding professional development was based on seeing a need for increased opportunities for staff to explore and share new ideas as well as current research, long term planning and assessment, and follow-up of professional development activities.

Certainly, themes, which emerged from the participants' stories, require no significant modifications as a result of being held up to the light of the Accreditation Report and the surveys. The theme, School Organization is deserving of further exploration.

My Story

In contrasting the themes emerging from the participants' stories with those found in my own, there is much similarity. Table 5 compares the themes identified in each.

Table 5. Emergent Themes Contrasted with Themes from My Story

Emergent Themes	Themes From My Story
Culture and Morale	√
Leadership	Leadership
Fellowship in a Community of Shared Purpose and Values	Sense of Community
Teamwork and Cooperation	√
Building and Creating	Creating
Communication	√
Focus on Student Learning	√
Commitment	√
Crisis	Crisis
Year 2000	Year 2000
√	People
√	Programs

Note. √ indicates that while the same theme was not found in my story, features of it were contained in other themes that arose from My Story.

The themes of Leadership, Community, Creating, Crisis, and the Year 2000 were found in both data sources. A closer examination of the meanings given to each of the themes reveals even greater similarity.

The emergent theme, Culture and Morale, contains reference to a culture that was positive and welcoming and that the building and maintaining of positive relationships and a healthy culture was a focus in the school community. Markers of Culture were respect, emotional safety, mutual trust, and conflict resolution. The staff described feelings of pride and positive energy. In my story the theme, Sense of Community, contained reference to trust and respect. I also made reference to having a strong sense of fulfillment.

The theme, Teamwork and Cooperation, was marked by feelings of closeness, friendship, care for each other as people as well as professionals, a sense of working well together, a sense of being known, unity, harmony and cohesion. Some participants described the staff as a family or team In my story the theme, Sense of Community, referred to working together in a collaborative culture and interpersonal connectedness.

The theme I identified in my story as Creating, was similar to that of the Building and Creating in the emergent themes. In my story I made reference to implementing existing programs and creating new ones and I identified many of the same programs as those identified by the participants: Three-Way Reporting, Key Words, Peer Counselling, Problem Solving, and Earthkeepers.

Communication, a theme emerging from the participant interviews, had aspects such as the value of conversations, communication, and planning together to shape the direction of the school. Collaboration was also described in reference to the school staff and some parents having a consistent approach. Appreciation, openness and responsiveness were also included in this theme. In my story, a number of these aspects were included in the theme, Sense of Community. They were: collaborative school culture, group consensus, responsiveness, openness, consistency of approach, and appreciation.

The emergent theme, Focus on Student Learning and Life-long Learning, was composed of features such as a focus on student needs, developing the students' capacities for life-long learning, consideration for the students' social and emotional needs, staff familiarity with all students, and staff modelling. While I did not identify this theme in my analysis of my own interview, in it I did make reference to a focus on addressing the student emotional needs, openness of the Year 2000 to allow us to be responsive to student need, modelling, and student-centredness.

Commitment emerged as a theme from the stories of the participants and contained reference to the importance of working together, having clarity of purpose, self-motivation, determination, passion and dedication to the work, commitment of time, and to the school. Again, while I did not identify this as a theme in my own story, I did refer to some of these aspects in my interview. These were commitment to the school, the importance of working together, arriving at consensus, passion, and common purpose and shared beliefs.

While the themes People and Programs that arose from my interview were not identified as emergent themes from the participants' stories, in the interviews there were many references to many of the same people and programs. For example, in the Leadership Theme reference was made to: Frances, the School Counsellor; Jack Smith, the Superintendent of School; Sunshine, the Primary Program Coordinator, and the parent who brought the program Earthkeepers to the attention of the staff. I made note

of the same people. As described above the theme, Building and Creating, contained reference to programs similar to those I identified in my interview.

In summary, while the same themes did not emerge from my story and the participants' stories, there was considerable similarity in the elements found within the themes. As a result, I surmised that the findings of the emergent themes are validated in my own story.

Another critical question when examining the data sources for convergence of perspective is: Did new themes emerge or were some themes absent from the contrasting source?

In comparing the survey data to the emergent themes, only Commitment was unsubstantiated. It is of interest that it emerged from this study in that a number of participants attributed the commitment found in the school to its two crises. In the case of Oceanside, many of the participants described a commitment to creating a different kind of school. This suggests that crises have the potential to offer positive outcome.

In comparing the data from the External Accreditation Report to the emergent themes, the theme, School Organization, emerged from the Report and was not apparent in this study. Again, this theme is worthy of further study.

With most of the data verified through the process of triangulation, in this case with the Report of the External Accreditation Team (May, 1995), the two surveys, and my story, I could begin the process of re-storying the events of the time period of this study based on the perspectives of all its participants and my own.

Chapter 7.

The Collective Story

The collective story of participants tells what mattered in this case: a sense of fellowship, commitment to a common purpose and a vision to develop. Relationships, communication, and leadership also mattered as did people and some programs. Reform initiatives such as the Year 2000 mattered but only in so far as their directions aligned with and enhanced those of the school. The crisis events generated their own force, especially when used as a platform to enable participants to collaborate in redefining the school. In other words, students, *and* the school organization itself, needed attention in order to heal.

If we want to know the relative strength of the themes, we might use the number of participants who mentioned them as being a measure of that strength. Table 6 shows those participants who referred to each theme during their interview.

Table 6. Number of Participants who Identified Each of the Emergent Themes

Theme	Number of Participants who Made Reference to the Theme
Culture and Morale	16/16
Leadership	16/16
Fellowship in a Community of Shared Purpose and Values	15/16
Teamwork and Cooperation	15/16
Building and Creating	15/16
Communication	13/16
Focus on student learning and Life-long Learning	12/16
Commitment	10/16
Crisis	10/16
Year 2000	9/16

Table 6 makes evident the relative strength of the emergent themes. However, the absence of a factor in a participants' account of the school does not mean it wasn't present for them, only that they didn't raise the idea in their interview. Had it been possible to hold a Focus Group with all or only the Internal Participants, perhaps the question of strength might have been more effectively addressed.

It was surprising to me that the accounts of what had transpired at the school were so similar. When compiled 20 years later, through all the intervening years and experiences the individual stories still have enough substance and similarity to be drawn together into a collective. I retell Oceanside's story in what follows.

There once was a school named Oceanside Elementary School. It was a small school operating within the Windy Coast School District and was nestled at the base of a large mountain, surrounded by forests on two sides and suburban neighbourhoods on the other two sides. The school served as a central gathering place for its community with which it enjoyed a positive relationship.

Suddenly, in one day, this relationship and much of what it held to be true about itself collapsed. The school community discovered that one of its own teachers, now working in a faraway district in the same province, was being investigated for multiple charges of sexual assault of his students. The school community was devastated; effects rippled and roared about as the charges became public, and investigations broadened to include Oceanside students taught by the now apprehended teacher: new charges were added. The school and the school district were scrutinized and criticized as it became known that questions had been asked, and the teacher's sexual assault activity had quietly moved with him through four school jurisdictions. When the teacher pled guilty to the charges and was incarcerated, the storm seemed to subside; mental health workers began to work with the offended students and their families. Some new staff members believed that while court proceedings were ongoing, the school staff was not provided an opportunity to talk about the crisis. In fact, long after, they did not talk about the crisis.

District leadership of Windy Coast School District did what it thought it needed to do to "restart" the school. New teachers and a new principal were assigned to the school. Only a handful of staff members, who had been there at the time of the criminal activity, remained. The new principal was young, energetic and in the words of one teacher, "tried to pull the school together." By all accounts of those involved, however,

the approach to re-staff and "pull together" was not successful. In fact, it had its own set of problems; however, these issues belong to another story. At the end of this period, the Board of School Trustees replaced the Superintendent and reassigned the school principal.

In 1988, a new principal was appointed. Although she had some leadership experience in the district, she was largely untrained and inexperienced. She was very happy and optimistic to be warmly greeted by the staff.

In the summer prior to the new principal beginning work at the school, the new Superintendent of Schools took all the District's principals away for a summer retreat. The activities included a professional development session on how to engage teachers in creating a shared vision for their school. The new principal took this activity to heart, and as a result, she invited Oceanside's staff to participate in a 2-day summer retreat at Biggy and Mary's ocean side home. All the staff attended and did so without pay. By the end of the session, the teachers and support staff had devised their own vision statement and formulated their Key Words: respect, responsibility, positive action, and cooperation, words which clearly articulated their shared values. These Key Words were later shared with parents and taught to students.

The new term began with the year proceeding smoothly. However, both the new Grade 7 teacher and the new principal felt that the Grade 7 students, who had been in the school but not in the class of the offending teacher, John Doe, presented many behavioural challenges. In the spring of that year, crisis again seemed to engulf Oceanside. A Grade 7 student alleged that her teacher had sexually assaulted her. No charges were brought when the allegation was deemed unsubstantiated. The response of Grade 7 students and some parents awoke the staff members and the new principal to the fact that the school had not restored the trust lost in the crisis. For those most centrally involved, the new crisis served to deepen their commitment to making this a better school.

In the years that followed, staff engaged the students in programs and approaches designed to increase their empowerment and their voice in the school. The programs included Problem Solving, Peer Counselling, and Experts with the school counsellor playing a particularly strong role in the first of these programs; she also introduced the school to a vision setting process in which they later engaged with parents and community members. The staff members were responsive to the ideas

raised at these sessions and acted on selected elements of the vision. Focus on the students' social and emotional needs was a part of that vision. The metaphor of the school as a garden—the children as flowers and the teachers and parents as gardeners—was frequently referred to in these sessions. One outcome of the vision setting was an environmentally oriented thematic study that involved taking the entire school on a boat trip to learn about the community's watershed. Later, the school implemented the Earthkeepers Program (Van Matre, 1988). Oceanside adopted a holistic approach to learning and at the end of each year, celebrated all students for their accomplishments; all aspects of development (intellectual, academic, physical, emotional and artistic and aesthetic) were acknowledged.

Both staff and parents observed the school's change and growth. Staff noted that different members were taking leadership roles and sharing responsibilities, as were parents. For example, a parent came to the school on a weekly basis to write the school's newsletter. The principal noted that the Parent Advisory Council meetings were well attended and that the parents expressed support for the initiatives introduced by the staff. The Parent Advisory Chairperson attended the monthly staff meetings. There was an increasingly consistent school-wide approach and program continuity between grades. Some parents described how, where applicable, they were using similar language and approaches at home. Consensus was building that the sense of fellowship, teamwork, and positive relationships were growing. The staff structure was seen to be gender-balanced with five female primary teachers and three male intermediate teachers. Humour was a daily feature of breaks in the staffroom and staff members described that they enjoyed coming to work each day. The teachers described satisfaction with their principal and appreciated her encouragement and support. They felt that she really supported them to take risks in trying new approaches, and she modelled the values and directions of the school.

About this same time the Ministry of Education introduced a major reform, commonly referred to as the Year 2000. A District Primary Program Coordinator was hired to facilitate the adoption of the program in all the schools in the District with the primary teachers being the first to receive its directives. Oceanside's Primary teachers valued the new Coordinator and embraced the changes since the Program included a number of elements they were already using in their practice. These teachers were also

excited with the numerous opportunities to plan and work together to enact the new directives.

One of these initiatives was a focus on students as life-long learners. An element new to them was the anecdotal report card format. The teachers tried it but because they regularly gathered feedback from parents and parents felt free to express their thoughts, it quickly became evident that the parents weren't happy with the new approach. During a recess staff room conversation, the teachers talked about the parents' discontent with the report card and the suggestion of reordering the reporting process. As a result, they set to work developing Three-Way Reporting. With this approach, the parent(s), the student, and teacher met first to talk about what the student was able to accomplish in all areas of their development and to set goals for the coming term; the written anecdotal report summarizing this conversation came second. Parents appreciated the new format and made suggestions for change. The intermediate teachers liked it so much that they too adopted it and created their own written report card format. The teachers were very proud of their new creation and some staff members even made presentations on it at a provincial conference. Most of the teachers felt that the benefits of Three-Way Reporting were well worth the hard work. They felt pressured to find the time to hold a 45-minute conference for each of the children, so the parents came forward and offered afternoon activities for the students that would then free the teachers' time for conferences.

Oceanside became known around the district as a progressive, successful, and innovative school. As one of the teachers remarked:

> *The positive things we did and…the energy that we put in I think it was recognized. I think the community recognized it. I know the educational system outside of our school recognized it because we were thought of as the little school that did. And we came through some adversity in the beginning and rose to, what I think, was some really high levels of education and programming. We were sort of teased a little bit. We were unique. It was a unique situation. It was a unique blend of leadership and staffing and…age. I think the staff was right at the right age of their lives and their education to really benefit from each other. And the kids benefited because we were the better for it.*

I wish I could tell you the fable ended happily ever after. It didn't. But, that is another story. Instead, I will relate what happened next, the year after the principal left the school:

That summer, the principal was reassigned to another school. In September it was announced that it was Oceanside's turn to participate in the BCME Accreditation Program. The new principal and the staff, with the involvement of parents, went to work to self-assess and develop the required Internal Report. In May of that year, the External Team visited the school to check on the Internal Report, review the School Growth Plan, and write their own report. The External Team summarized their report by saying:

> *[Oceanside] Elementary School is a school with an abundance of strength…[Oceanside] Elementary School is the heart of the community where people come together for a common purpose—the education of children.*

Here finally, was validation for this school community that had faced adversity and created a new vision for their school. Now, through hard work and dedication, they appeared to have achieved significant aspects of that vision.

The findings of the study, in the form of the emergent themes have revealed what in the case of this school might have composed the magical mix to which the strength of the school was previously attributed. Accompanying the participants' understanding of the school's strength as magical mix was a sense that this school was one-of-a-kind. The participants made many comments describing the school's uniqueness. They were as follows:

> *And the staff knew it. They knew it was something special. They knew it wouldn't last forever. (Biggy, Teacher 1)*

> *I think we were a pretty strong school. And the reason I say that is because a lot of people, who either teachers or parents, saying that we have something special there. (Scarlett, Teacher 5)*

> *So there was something happening there and I think… it was the outcome of…many factors [and]…beliefs that were at work. (Redhead, Teacher 4)*

> *I don't know if it is the same in all schools, I don't know. I don't think it is. (Carla, Teaching Assistant)*

> *It felt like there was this....what I want to say is there was a vision of the future being there and…this is what my child will get to experience…I thought this is…just going to keep going…this is how schools are changing; this is how education is changing…I thought the ball was going to keep rolling and going… (Karen, Parent)*

The school just blossomed into an amazing place for kids and staff and parents. (Bella, External Participant)

I would go so far as to say I think it was the best, yes, of the feeder schools. (Elphy, External Participant)

There was that feeling…that it wasn't one person in charge of everything…yet there was a strong sense of leadership…that was a special thing…it's hard to find. (Ruth, Teacher 5)

I think back on it now…it's almost…like it sounds 'hokey', but it almost like this Camelot. You know, it was a special time when people were pushing themselves, striving to make things better, working as a really strong team, seeing results with kids that's…It's kind of like the high point you know, of being involved in something that really mattered and was really working. It wasn't easy but it was worth it. (Claire, Administrative Assistant)

In these words Claire captures what many of the participants expressed: In the face of challenges, people gave the best of themselves to achieve a common purpose and to realize a vision that truly mattered. As a result the participants experienced or observed that sense of being in a place that was to Claire as wonderful as "Camelot".

Educational research and theory may help to interpret what was at play at Oceanside; it may illuminate more fully, the themes that emerged in the story of Oceanside. In the chapter that follows, "Connecting to Research: Seeing the Implications of the Case," a number of related studies and theories are examined to help in the interpretation of the events and circumstances experienced Oceanside during this time period.

Chapter 8.

Connecting To Research: Seeing the Implications of the Case

This chapter relates current literature to the study's findings in order to discover the significance of the emergent themes and to understand more fully what mattered at Oceanside. As described previously in the chapter, "Methods and Ethical Considerations," grounded theorists advise that at this point in a grounded theory study, literature is used to build a rationale or describe a context. With the data interpreted and the emergent themes revealed, it is important to now turn to related literature to seek comparison and build a rationale. As stated previously, only after the theoretical concepts, or propositions in the form of emergent themes, have been drawn from the data are related theories examined for comparative purposes and their relation to the developed or emergent theory (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Since extensive theory and research exists on school organization development, fields of change, leadership and implementation, I relied on studies that appeared to offer insights, about the events of this case.

At this juncture, an important question arises: what knowledge claims can be made from a study of one case. As with Daly's (2008) analysis of a single case study using grounded theory, the case can be used to examine macro level theories and understandings. Daly claims: "As pointed out by O'Donoghue (2006), such ideographically[9] derived theory based on data collected from relatively small populations and confined settings can be used for the critical examination of macro theory and

[9] Ideographic, is a term arising from German Idealism of the 19th century, meaning "analysis of singular and concrete" (Wernick, 2004, para. 14). In sociological debates it was placed in a dichotomy opposite the term, nomothetic. A nomothetic approach "seeks to provide more general law-like statements about social life" (Marshall, 1998, para.1), much like the laws that govern natural science. Alternatively, an ideographic approach "refers to those methods which highlight the unique elements of the individual phenomenon—the historically particular—as in much of history and biography" (para.1).

established understandings" (p. 16). In this chapter I examine theories that are relevant to the questions posed in this study. In order to delimit this review, I returned to the questions embedded in Sunshine's statement many years ago: What's going on at Oceanside? How can the circumstances of this school help to inform other school staffs? I also returned to my central research questions:

> *How did an elementary school, both as an organization and as a group of individuals, meet the serious challenges brought by crisis and educational reform, function effectively and be seen as a successful educational environment both by its own staff, by parents and even by an External Review Team? How did I, as school principal, and my responses play a role in addressing these major challenges faced by the school post-crisis?*

These questions help to provide criteria by which the literature presented in this chapter were chosen. The criteria were: (a) literature that explores the school-level factors by which a school best develops, and (b) how organizations and their leaders best respond to crisis and reform. I sought to examine how the literature helps to inform the case of Oceanside as well as the inverse: What does this case say about the theories and concepts contained in the literature.

What does an ideographical examination of Oceanside in this post-crisis period tell us? The findings are this: There were the following school-level factors at play in the success of this school: a strong sense of fellowship in a community that shared a commitment to purpose and a vision to achieve; a focus on student learning and life-long learning; a commitment to one's work; a positive school culture of strong morale and positive personal and professional relationships marked by pride, respect, trust, cooperation, and humour; a strong sense of team; collaborative, open and responsive communication; shared responsibility and leadership built on the professional skill of its people. Furthermore, the school developed and adopted programs vital to its success, with school reform playing key a role in so far as its direction aligned and enhanced those determined by the Oceanside staff and parents. Leadership factors impacted the implementation of reform and on the development of the school. The crisis had a positive effect when it was used as a platform from which participants could collaboratively redefine and recreate the school based on their tacit and explicit knowledge. Finally, in order to heal, the school community was compelled to attend not only to healing the students but also to healing the entire school organization.

The following is an exploration of relevant research that best informs these findings. This research is focused on school-level factors, leadership factors, and the roles played by reform and crisis.

School-level Factors

In his meta-analysis of the school effectiveness literature Marzano (2003) categorized school success factors into the levels of "school," "teacher" and "student". The school-levels factors were the following: "a guaranteed and viable curriculum; challenging goals and effective feedback; parent and community involvement; safe and orderly environment; and collegiality and professionalism" (p. 10). Marzano ranked these according to their order of impact on student achievement as they are listed here.

In the case of Oceanside, participants referred to curriculum especially as it related to Earthkeepers, and Experts, collaborative planning and the Year 2000. However, participants did not describe the curriculum in Marzano's terms which were guaranteed and viable in the sense of being essential, sequenced and given the required time (Marzano, 2003). Generally though, Oceanside's referred to the other school factors identified in this meta-analysis. Had Marzano visited the site, he would have found evidence of the school-level factors that support school success. Table 7 associates the school-level factors with the school-level factors and themes identified by Oceanside's participants.

In asking if there were important school factors identified at Oceanside and not included in Marzano's analysis, it is evident that the Building and Creating theme is absent. Although aspects of this theme may be aligned with Marzano's factor, "challenging goals for students and effective feedback" in that some of the programs implemented at Oceanside, such as Three Way Reporting, achieved this goal, it is not sufficient to say the two are aligned. Building and Creating describes a sense of satisfaction in building on existing programs, creating new ones, and shaping the future of the school. This feature, absent from Marzano's framework, was significant for Oceanside participants and I believe for them featured in the strength of their morale and commitment. It also suggests that perhaps the Year 2000 reform initiative and other related changes had a greater impact at Oceanside than first perceived. Especially for the Primary teachers, the Building and Creating theme emerges from those changes

suggested by the Year 2000. Recall how the participants used terms like "fun," "providing opportunity to shape the school culture and future," "highpoints," and "embracing new ideas." Recall too Grimmett's (1996) assertion about the Year 2000: "The changes involved a reinterpretation of…the teacher's role in the development of an educational program…[that] included the expectation that teachers were to become curriculum developers rather than curriculum deliverers" (para. 5). It appears that this change, at least at Oceanside, was to a large degree embraced by the staff—they appeared energized by the opportunity to become developers. I believe that this in turn, helped to build staff commitment and pride of place and in our work. Recall too, Mia's plea to bring back the Year 2000.

Table 7. Aligning School-level Factors with Those Identified by Oceanside Participants

School-level Factors[a]	Oceanside's Factors	Oceanside's Themes
Challenging goals for students and effective feedback.	Three-Way Reporting included a collaborative goal setting process and feedback system for students, focus on student learning	• Focus on Student Learning and Life-long Learning
Parent and community involvement.	Open door policy, open and responsive communication, sense of community	• Fellowship in a Community of Shared Purpose and Values • Culture and Morale • Communication
Safe and orderly environment.	Key words, Peer Counselling, Problem Solving, consistency of approach	• Culture and Morale • Leadership • Communication
Collegiality and professionalism (including organizational climate (p. 60).	Shared vision, sense of team, positive relationships, appreciation and celebration, respect and acceptance, trust and safety, humour and fun, shared responsibility, distributed leadership, collaborative culture, innovation	• Fellowship in a Community of Shared Purpose and Values • Commitment • Culture and Morale • Teamwork and Cooperation

[a] Marzano, 2003.

Marzano (2003) does not treat school factors in the context of organizational climate. He asserts that his chosen school-level factors "…more accurately highlight aspects of previous treatments of climate that have strong statistical relationships with student achievement" (p. 61).

Others are not so quick to underplay the impact of school climate or culture. Daly (2008) includes an extensive discussion of school culture in his grounded theory analysis of 31 post-primary Irish schools. He makes a valuable distinction between *monocultural* and *polycultural* conceptualizations. Daly defines a monocultural conception as one where the "school culture [is] understood as a unique and cohesive cultural entity characterized by a commonly shared vision and set of values" (Daly, p. 5). Polycultural refers to the concept that schools are in fact composed of "networks of implicit understanding, communication and affinities" (p. 13). Daly identifies ideologically based niches as opposed to whole school perspectives suggesting that, "we need not wait for schools to 'operate as dynamic, organic wholes rather than as fragmented institutions" (p. 17). Daly then suggests that school change will occur in polycultural ways across a school. In his closing criticism of the monocultural view, similar to that which might be said to characterize Oceanside, Daly uses the words of Mulcahy (2000) to reveal his concern with whole school perspectives:

> It is often taken for granted that each school community shares a common set of core values, which are derived from the school's particular vision and purpose….The question remains however whether such values have been explored and articulated by the school community and whether the concept of reaching agreement on core values is a feasible proposition. (p. 86)

What is relevant to the Oceanside case is whether an organizational polyculture or a monoculture was at play. According to the participants, the school community articulated the school's purpose, vision, and values and leadership was distributed. It can also be said that ideologically based polycultures were at play in Oceanside. For example, while some individuals bonded around environmental education, primary teachers collaborated around the provincial Primary Program, part of the overall Year 2000 initiative. Initially, the Primary teachers collaborated on the development of Three-Way Reporting with the intermediate staff subsequently entering into that discussion.

The polycultural conceptualization was also featured in Angelides (2010) case study of two schools in Cypress. She identified small collaborative networks operating within the schools and asserted that these networks did indeed contribute to school improvement: they focused attention on the needs of more vulnerable students, more effective and distributed school leadership, positive changes in the school culture, and a

greater sense of shared responsibility for school improvement. These networks also contributed to knowledge building in the two schools.

Angelides' (2010) and Daly's (2008) discussions of polyculture or networks of collaboration raise significant perspectives about school development. First, is the importance of collaboration and dialogue either in whole school or in small ideological networks or communities of practice focused on student need, in particular, vulnerable students, and positive changes in school culture. Collaborative communication at Oceanside featured in most of the interviews and was described as occurring in communities of practice, like the Primary or Intermediate Teams, or on a whole school basis and in networks operating at the District level. Biggy (Teacher 1) and Kay (Teacher 7) respectively, both spoke of the value of the Intermediate Team Meetings:

> *We did a lot of meetings…because it was important for us to have a continuity in the things we did it and a sense of everybody understanding what was going on.*

> *I've never been so impressed with…the value of our team meetings…they were so meaningful and we'd really get things done and it wasn't just meeting for meetings sake…I think the Primary Team Meeting was the same.*

Ruth (Teacher 6) spoke about the support she received from the Primary Team Meetings:

> *I remember the primary team felt really strong together…that co-planning and working together with the other primary teachers really broke that sense of being on your own in your classroom and being responsible for everything on your own…I just loved that.*

Carla (Teaching Assistant) and Kay (Teacher 7) respectively, spoke of whole school collaborations on various implementations:

> *The things that were the most memorable for me were the processes of the staff working together with the envisioning [vision setting activity] and the Three-Way Reporting was amazing.*

> *I mean, people gave up, we gave up, as teachers you give a whole lot of time anyways but everybody valued the directions we were going and they could see the success.*

Scarlett (Teacher 5) spoke of how collaboration became a part of the school culture:

> *I think the staff at that time, if they weren't involved, they asked to be involved because that's the way they thought [a school] was to run…to ask us how we felt and help with the decision-making.*

Ruth (Teacher 6) described the District-level discussions about the Year 2000 held by Sunshine the Primary Program Coordinator:

> *Those are the days of Sunshine, too. I remember there was a lot of really great talk around professional growth…there was a lot of excitement…it felt like teachers had a lot of agency; that's how it felt…they were really valued for what they were able to bring to that change process.*

Second, in these two studies, the leadership was not seen as belonging solely to those in formal leadership roles; it was distributed and contributed to knowledge building in the school. Oceanside's participants also noted the importance of shared responsibility and distributed leadership and the contribution of new ideas and perspectives by many individuals acting as leaders. Many of the study's participants commented on the significant contributions of Counsellor, Frances. They also spoke of the roles that everyone played: "*We all stood out*" (Biggy, Teacher 1); "*We all played a role*" (Ruth, Teacher 6); and "*I think all of us played a part*" (Kay, Teacher 7). In relation to the distribution of leadership throughout the school, I commented that

> *I didn't have the sense that I had to command things or that I was the one responsible to create it. That there were incredibly talented, strong, clear, and intelligent people on staff who if given the space to create what was good and right for the students, they would do that. (Researcher Interview)*

Dedwyn (succeeding Principal) too, spoke about the distributed leadership he discovered at the school when he became principal in 1995:

> *The staff that were there when I got there, every single one of them took some kind of leadership role.*

In this sense, at Oceanside, leadership was situational or contextualized rather than formalized or canonical.

Third, school visions and shared beliefs can never be assumed but require repeated revisiting. Declarations of vision, purpose and shared beliefs aren't intended only for display in a school's entrance. As occurred at Oceanside, they are dialogically developed working documents arising from the community of practice to which they

belong. At Oceanside, the vision began to take shape in the summer of 1988, before our first year together. It developed through the vision-setting activities of which many participants spoke. Katie (Teacher 2) described it as "*medicine*"; Karen (Parent) recalled, "*the whole vision in the school*"; and Carla (Teaching Assistant) remarked, "*just being part of the staff and being part of the bigger picture and the goals and being part of working at things to work towards our vision*." Here in Carla's words is evidence that the vision statement was acted upon and reviewed.

In another study of how school culture characteristics can impact school change, Tondeur, Devos, Van Houtteb, Braaka, and Valckea (2009) surveyed 527 Belgian teachers in order to discover some of the differences in schools' adoption of a technological change. They found that both structural and cultural factors accounted for the differences. It is the cultural factors that most concern the Oceanside study. These authors, relying on Schein and Hargreaves, defined culture as, "learned assumptions shared by group members (Schein, 1985) and assumed ways of doing things among communities of teachers who have had to deal with similar demands and constraints over many years (Hargreaves 1995)" (p. 226). The relevant cultural features identified in their study were: the staff's attitude towards innovation; *goal orientedness* or the development and depth to which the school's vision is shared; and the degree to which school leadership engages in supportive behaviour. Tondeur et al.'s analyses indicated that the degree of success in any school implementation was related to the school's profile of cultural and structural features and, not surprising, that structural and cultural features influenced each other. They concluded that schools which develop an innovative culture and formulate strategic directions implement more successfully. As was evident in the participants' interviews, the features of goal orientedness, shared vision, and supportive school leadership also marked Oceanside's culture.

In summary, according to the school development literature examined here, school culture does matter. The features that matter are a shared and articulated set of directions (i.e., vision, values, and goals), positive and professional relationships, collaborative and broad communication, a focus on the core purpose (i.e., learning), and distributed leadership and shared responsibilities. Reviewing the ideology that arose from the case of Oceanside, similar school-level and cultural factors are evident (i.e., a community with a strong sense of fellowship that shared a commitment to a common purpose and a vision to grow and build towards; a focus on student learning and life-long

learning; commitment; a positive school culture with strong morale and positive personal and professional relationships marked by pride, respect, trust, humour; a strong sense of team and cooperation; collaborative, open and responsive communication; shared responsibility; and leadership built on the professional skill of its people).

Leadership

Many authors refer to the key role of leaders in the context of school development and culture. Tondeur et al. summarized it as follows:

> Kennewell, Parkinson, and Tanner (2000) argue that school principals are the most influential actor in defining a school culture and the organization of their schools. Also, Grace (1995) refers to school principals as the key players that foster reflective and critical thinking about the school culture and school organization and about whether these can or ought to be changed. The literature about school improvement stresses the importance of leadership in developing a commitment to change (Fullan, 2001). (2009, p. 232)

The Oceanside case study focused primarily on the role that leadership played in a school that was being transformed through its recovery from crisis; it was a school that sought to do better while addressing the changes brought by a major mandated school reform initiative. The role of leadership in (a) school development and (b) implementation of reform initiatives is the focus of what follows.

Leadership in Developing Schools

In his seminal work, *Leading in a Culture of Change*, Fullan (2006) refers to school development as "reculturing" (p. 44) and advises school leaders to understand that:

> *Leading…means creating a culture (not just a structure) of change. It does not mean adopting innovations, one after the other; it does mean producing the capacity to seek, critically assess, and selectively incorporate new ideas and practices—all the time, inside the organization as well as outside.*

Kouzes and Posner (2007) state that "exemplary" leaders are people who "mobilize others to want to get extraordinary things done in organizations" (xi). They assert that leaders should:

1. Model the behaviour they seek in others, believing that people will first follow the leader and then the plan.
2. Create a shared vision that is inspiring to others.
3. "Have a willingness to challenge the status quo, to listen and to search "for opportunities to innovate, grow, and improve" (p. 19).
4. Strengthen the capacity of others to act through team and relationship building.
5. "Encourage the hearts" (p. 21) of others through acts of caring and acknowledgement.

The over-arching theme here is that of community-building (Sergiovanni, 1993). Organizational learning theory emphasizes the importance of creating strong, vibrant, supportive, and purposeful communities. Failure to sustain organizational or school development is frequently attributed to a lack of community (Fullan, 2005; Sergiovanni, 1993). Margaret Wheatley summarizes this notion well:

> There is only one predication about the future that I feel confident to make. During this period of random and unpredictable change, any organization that distances itself from its employees and refuses to cultivate meaningful relationships with them is destined to fail. Those organizations who will succeed are those that evoke our greatest human capacities—our need to be in good relationships, and our desire to contribute to something beyond ourselves. (2002, para. 29)

Fellowship in a community of shared purpose and values; common focus on purpose (on learning and life-long learning); culture and morale, teamwork and cooperation; leadership; building and creating; and collaborative, open and responsive communication are all themes associated with community-building. All are to be found in the Oceanside interviews. The participants and I spoke of these aspects of building community and the leadership roles played by Jack Smith (Superintendent), Sunshine (Primary Program Coordinator) and me (Principal). Examples of what the participants and I said follow:

> Biggy spoke about my efforts to form a strong educational team:
>
> *I think there was a conscious effort to staff the school in a certain fashion that would make it conducive to becoming an outstanding school and you did it. You got the staff together that was a nice blend of male and female. It was a wonderful blend of people that really cared to be educators. (Biggy, Teacher 1)*

Others described the importance for a leader to model the attitudes and behaviours they wish the staff to demonstrate:

> *You had to be not only a good leader but also…have skills to pull the very best out of people and [set] an example. You never asked anybody to work harder that you did and that's big....I just see it as key when you have administration at the top modelling and supporting and inspiring. (Claire, Administrative Assistant)*

> *I think the administration was just crucial…how you conducted yourself: you set a standard and a model. And, I think that is so key for the administrator to set that. (Redhead, Teacher 4)*

> *Speaking of the Key Words idea, which of course was an important way to involve parents as well the community as well as the staff and students, I think the leadership of that was key and the fact that the leadership of the school demonstrated that in their own interactions with people. And so, it wasn't just this is something for kids to do, you know. (Sunshine, Primary Program Coordinator and Parent)*

Scarlett spoke of how I encouraged the staff to challenge the status quo:

> *You were the kind of person that would be challenging us to take risks in new programs or other things that might pop up. You weren't one to say, "Hey we're comfortable here," because you can go stale, you're too comfortable and nothing is happening and its boring for you…You were there for 6 years and kept us supporting you. (Scarlett, Teacher 5)*

For Mia this wasn't always a comfortable process and at times she felt pressured:

> *The administrator [Ann] was remarkably supportive really…and I would also say that I asked myself afterwards, if for somebody as intense as myself, it was the best thing to often be in that kind of atmosphere where somebody else is also trying to pull me along. (Mia, Teacher 3)*

Several participants spoke of leaders who focused on strengthening the capacity of others through acts of team and relationship building. For example, Katie and Sunshine said:

> *When you came to Oceanside, I remember the first thing you did was, you kind of pulled everyone together. (Katie, Teacher 2)*

> *They were given a lot of support in how to do it and people were willing to help them do it or maybe do it with them or for them…with kids. So, I think both sides were represented both expectation and the support and the training or learning experience to help with it. (Sunshine, Primary Program Coordinator and Parent)*

A number of participants spoke of the work leaders did to build relationships and to encouraging the hearts of others through acts of caring an acknowledging.

> *You brought strong leadership and some great ideas, a very caring nature. I know people felt protected…looked after by you when you had the opportunity to do that for them. (Biggy, Teacher 1)*

> *You would do things that personally made me feel appreciated…It was an emotional component" (Katie, Teacher 2)*

> *And the other thing I remember…is your commitment to me in those early years. (Ruth, Teacher 6)*

In reference to Jack Smith, participants described:

> *He was so supportive and respectful. (Claire, Administrative Assistant)*

> *A Superintendent who would come to the school and make sure that he met with every staff member…the staff really appreciated that. He had a good sense of humour which helped. (Dedwyn, Succeeding Principal)*

Another aspect of leadership in community-building, creating a shared vision, was raised by most all of the participants in relation to Frances' and my work in relation to vision-setting and envisioning activities.

In my own interview, I spoke of the role of leaders in building community in schools. I said:

> *Schools need to be communities; they need to be fully…functioning communities....Human foibles are always going to make them places of mistakes, places of mishaps, places of problems. But the stronger the community, the better able it is to address those and move past those things. (Researcher Interview)*

I expressed an understanding of the need to rebuild the culture of the school by rebuilding trust. Additionally, in my description of my first meeting with the staff on a summer day before school began, I remarked on the need for developing a shared vision and values and articulating our purpose and beliefs:

> *I have memories of staff meetings where, unlike any staff meeting I ever had before, where we would talk about just about anything and always begin with our beliefs and always hear the belief statements about it around the table and everybody brought something special. (Researcher Interview)*

I expressed an understanding of the need to build trust, mutual respect, and relationships. When asked how my experience at Oceanside changed me, I responded:

> *Understanding leadership as the need for deep listening…and for me it was seeing every staff member as a huge gift and that my job was to find out who they are and be able to create a place where they could give it…they could extend their gift to the staff. And, I never for a minute had a sense that I knew it all or that I knew better than they did. There was for me a real trust that they knew those kids in their classroom better than anybody and when things went sideways with a parent…or a student, we could problem solve that. (Researcher Interview)*

Reflecting on the participants' comments about the need for leaders to model what they seek in others, I conclude that modelling is central to the work of all adults in the school community and that though not articulated, I must have had some understanding of this important aspect of leadership. I recall reminding the staff that Key Words and Problem Solving were there to guide the staff as much as they were there to guide the decisions and behaviour of the students.

My conception of leadership supports that of the literature as described above whereby leaders engage in reculturing, modelling, creating shared vision, challenging the status quo, seek to strengthen capacity of others, and encourage the dedication and commitment, or in the words of Kouzes & Posner (2007), "the hearts of others" (p. 21). The words of the participants about the leadership they experienced from Superintendent, the Primary Program Coordinator, Dedwyn, and me substantiates the aspects of leadership described in the literature related to school development.

The work of other theorists is next reviewed and compared with the leadership provided at Oceanside. Bolman and Deal (2008) have developed a framework for understanding organizational change; they explain how school leaders can care for and comprehensively address the needs of its organization and its people. Based on a Four-Frames Model, they examine multiple organizational situations, some often associated with crises, to determine if leaders applied thinking from the appropriate frame or frames. Table 8 builds on their Overview of the Four-Frame Model (p. 18) and describes each frame, its metaphor, the associated image of leadership, and the leadership challenges presented. Also categorized are some of the themes identified by Oceanside participants.

Table 8. Bolman and Deal's Four-Frames Model Aligned with Categories and Factors Applicable to Oceanside School

	Structural	*Human Resource*	*Political*	*Symbolic*
Metaphor	Factory or Machine	Family	Jungle	Carnival, temple, theatre
Central Concepts	Rules, roles, goals, policies, technology, environment	Needs, skills, relationships	Power, conflict, competition, organizational politics	Culture, meaning, metaphor, ritual, ceremony, stories, heroes
Image of Leadership	Social architecture	Empowerment	Advocacy and political savvy	Inspiration
Leadership Challenge	Attune structure to task, technology, environment	Align organizational and human needs	Develop agenda and power base	Create faith, beauty, meaning
Oceanside's Factors	Building and Creating (innovation, challenges and opportunities, adopting and creating new programs). Focus on learning and life-long learning (learning as a core purpose, focus on social and emotional needs)	Teamwork and Cooperation, (sense of family and team, shared responsibility, gender balance). Culture and Morale (pride and satisfaction, positive relationships, respect and acceptance, trust and safety, humour and fun).	Open and responsive communication, collaborative culture.	Fellowship in a Community of Shared Purpose and Values (sense of community; and shared vision, beliefs, values and goals); commitment.

Note. Adapted from Bolman & Deal, 2008.

The Four Frames Model directs leaders to attend to both the structural and cultural aspects of their organizations. This framework is valuable in comprehending what occurred at Oceanside. It allows the emergent themes to be understood in terms of human needs for predicable structure, positive relationships, arenas in which to address conflict, express loss, and celebrate successes.

It could be surmised that at Oceanside, the Symbolic and Human Resources Frames were attended to more extensively than the Political or Structural Frames. Certainly, my conceptions of leadership focus more on the Symbolic and Human Resource Frames than to the other two in that I focus on developing culture, modeling, building relationships, shared vision, mission, and values, challenging the status quo, seeking to strengthen the capacity of others, and encouraging dedication and

commitment. In applying the model to the school, Bolman and Deal (2008) might focus on the Katie's words, "*You brought a lot of that out, not all of it, but you brought a lot of it out*" (Teacher 2). They might also have advised me that where individuals are competing for resources, I should have applied the logic of the Human Resource Frame. Additionally, in situations of conflict and to address Scarlett's concern about class placement and school organization, Political Frame thinking would have been helpful. However, at the time, I was not aware of her discontent and these issues.

Fullan's (2005) work also supports the themes that emerged from the participants' stories. Fullan calls for leaders at all levels of the system to become "system thinkers". He felt that they should develop a *"*learning orientation*"* (p. 67) that would support building the school's capacity by acquiring new skills and knowledge. As well, he claimed that schools must develop processes that allow participants in the system to better "learn how to learn together" (p. 69). In essence, the system must develop an understanding of itself—a meta-organizational understanding. Leaders need to engage their school communities in conversations that allow them to access new knowledge, generate coherence, create a collective focus, build organizational knowledge, and develop as an organization. By and large, Oceanside's staff enjoyed collaboratively building and growing, innovating and implementing new ideas, increasing their knowledge base, having a collective focus, and developing coherence. It was my observation that in the 6-year period under study that we grew in our capacity to work together and developed some meta-organizational understanding of what we needed in order to learn together. As Katie (Teacher 2) commented:

> *[Peer counselling and anger management] were not just words that I was preaching to children. Those were words that I incorporated into my own life as much as I could. And so, once again it wasn't just about teaching, it was about being what we were teaching.*

Together and with experience we built our capacity for teamwork reinforced by the skills and attitudes we were teaching and encouraging in our students. With this growing capacity came some meta-organizational skills. Recall how Superintendent, Jack Smith and Primary Program Coordinator, Sunshine encouraged me to work with the staff to understand and articulate how the positive outcomes at Oceanside were occurring. Implied in our very description of the school as a magical mix at times making reference to it as somewhat mythical, unique, and likely unreproducable, is a lack of meta-understanding. In essence, this research question would not have been asked

were it not for the absence of a deeper understanding of ourselves in these circumstances and certainly my own meta-cognition about my role as school leader.

Other leadership literature, as it relates to school development, also stresses the need for system-wide learning, development, and cohesion (Fullan, 2001, 2005; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Senge, 1990). By way of example, imagine the effect, as do Fullan (2006) and Hargreaves & Fink (2006), of all principals in a district having, as their common purpose, the improvement of all the district's schools.

> The challenge of educational leadership, therefore, is to commit to the public good as well as care for the private good of one's own students and their parents. It is to care for the students and teachers in neighbouring schools whom your leadership choices affect, not just your own. (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 151)

To echo other system-thinkers, principals must understand and act upon the following two basic tenets: (a) the environment and culture of the system and its parts will always mutually influence; and (b) actions taken in any part of the system will reverberate throughout in some small or large way. Understanding Oceanside's place in the larger community and as part of a school district was also a factor in its positive outcomes. Participants referred to leadership inside and outside the school as they described the importance of district leadership. In recalling memories of the Superintendent of the time and describing that he extended to them personal and professional support, support for risk-taking, encouragement, and inspiration, they noted that he modelled what he wanted to see in them. He offered respect and acceptance, trust and safety, appreciation and celebration, and the nurturing of positive relationships. Participants praised his high level of integrity. His presence in the school and associations with it mattered to its development. External Participant, Sunshine, the District's Primary Program Coordinator, was also recognized for her support, inspiration, and encouragement. The school staff attributed the participation of these and other significant people, to the achievement, ultimately, of a better school. The parents as well as interested community members were encouraged to play a vital role in determining school direction and attaining the school goals. In these ways, systems thinking was important to Oceanside's success.

It is noteworthy that I do not recall feeling strongly concerned about how Oceanside's choices affected other schools in the District. I was aware that they were affected because some students were leaving their schools to attend at Oceanside. And,

as Biggy (Teacher 2) remarked, we were known as the "*little school that did*" causing me now to wonder how other schools felt knowing that we were considered in this way. This is a significant piece of learning that I take from this research into my practice.

In summary, the themes identified by the participants in this study, as well as my own, correlate with those identified in the literature about the role and importance of leadership in school development.

Leadership in Implementation of Reform Initiatives

If school culture is the context in which school development and organization change occurs, implementation is the process that creates the change. Some school change initiatives are internally motivated while others are mandated and externally determined like many school reform movements. Here leadership plays a critical and often more challenging role. When engaged in reform, leaders need to know where to focus their energies; they need to engage the actions and beliefs most likely to result in success. To account for the differences in how schools receive and enact large-scale reform, a number of actor related and contextual factors have been identified.

Teachers Play a Critical Role

In stressing teachers' roles in reform implementation, McLaughlin (2006) emphasizes that teachers like "street-level bureaucrats" are on the front line and are as important to successful implementation as the policy developers. Thus, the motivations, knowledge, and skills of actors at all implementation levels are crucial.

Principals, then, must understand the centrality of the teachers' role in sense-making and enactment of educational reform. When leaders understand and support the reform, they can contribute to the development of valuable new perspectives; they may also serve to increase the integrity and sustainability of the reform and the learning capacity of the system (Honig, 2006; Malen, 2006; McLaughlin, 2006). Teachers' ability to take on this role is dependent on their capacity for engagement in these processes and on the supports they receive (Datnow, 2006; Honig, 2006; McLaughlin, 2006). Largely, these supports will come through the leadership provided them. With implementation, it is important to determine the capacity of teachers and the supports they need. Such determination is usually made in light of teachers' professional knowledge or cognitive frames (Spillane, Reiser, & Gomez, 2006). School leaders need

to understand that as well as their own ability. Teachers' capacity to engage also depends on factors unique to the individual and on the social capital of the school (Smylie & Evans, 2006). Social capital is a term used by Smylie and Evans to describe the quality of the social relationships among its members. The terms, *capacity to reform* and s*ocial capital* are concepts deserving of greater attention, as discussed below.

Determining Individual Capacity to Engage in Reform

The most frequently identified actor-related factors associated with implementation are pre-existing knowledge, beliefs, experiences (Coburn & Stein, 2006), interests, resources and power (Malen, 2006). An additional consideration is the impact of these factors on the teachers' ability to make sense of and apply new knowledge (Spillane et al., 2006). Also identified have been teachers' cognitive capacity (McLaughlin, 2006) and processes (Hill, 2006) in understanding and addressing a reform. Primarily, these factors are described in terms of their relation to a teacher's professional work: "Implementation involves a process of sense-making that implicates an implementer's knowledge base, prior understanding, and their beliefs about the best course of action" (McLaughlin, 2006, p. 215).

Smylie and Evans (2006) assert that research of the mid-1970s and 1980s concentrated on the role of the individual, with particular emphasis on "the will and capacity of individual actors" (p. 187). Review of this literature reveals a focus on attitudes and motivation related to the reform. More recent work in this area (Fullan, 2006; Leithwood, 2003) identifies factors personal to the teacher, such as job satisfaction, stress and burnout, morale, engagement in or disengagement from the school and profession, as well as pedagogical content knowledge, and individual sense of professional efficiency (Fullan, 2006, p. 66).

School leaders need to understand that numerous factors affect teacher capacity to engage in reform implementation. Some of these factors, such as stress, burnout, and morale that relate to their emotional and social well-being, will have a bearing on the implementation and the organizational culture within which they work. If the organization is rich in social capital, further explained below, then the individuals in it may be less prone to stress, burn out, and low morale and consequently more engaged and willing to invest in the reform.

Social Capital Is Important to Social Cognition

Smylie and Evans (2006) have determined that teachers' ability to engage and make the necessary implementation decisions, in other words, their capacity for reform, depends on the quality of the school's social capital. These authors identify the components of social capital as: "(1) social trust; (2) effective channels of communication; and (3) norms, expectations, and sanctions" (pp. 189-190). Said differently, the "relationships most conducive to effective decision-making embody "mutual agreement on goals, open communication among individuals, mutual trust and support among group members, [and] full utilization of members' skills" (p. 209) and knowledge. Examining implementation from the perspective of social capital involves asking how relationships influence individual and group learning, as well as an organization's capacity to engage in reform. Principals then, need to understand the critical importance of social capital in reform and the importance of their role in developing it.

The case study of Centennial School (Miller, George, & Fogt, 2005) provides a practical application of these principles. Questioning why this school was able to successfully implement and sustain research-based educational practices, the authors explained that one of the factors that led to its success was the use of a systems approach—examining many aspects of their school. Another factor was what they termed a:

> teaming approach, whereby groups of stakeholders focus on improving implementation. This structure not only allows those closest to the problem to solve it but also recognizes that regardless of the prescriptive nature of certain innovations, implementation usually differs across school environments and reflects the unique variations found among schools (Grimes & Tilley, 1996). (p. 560)

The authors recall the work of Senge et al. (1999) when they identify another of the benefits of teaming: It "establishes a collective sense of organizational purpose" (p. 560).

Concepts of sense-making, teacher capacity for reform, and social capital help to give meaning to the case of Oceanside. A number of the participants described the value of collaborating about aspects of the Year 2000 initiative or other selected programs and implementing the aspects of the program that aligned with school directions. This kind of selective implementation can threaten the integrity of the reform but in this case, especially with the Primary teachers, I can recall considerable

discussion and acceptance of the beliefs that underpinned the Year 2000. The teachers focused much of their collaborative action, an aspect of sense-making, on the flexible elements of the program, such as thematic teaching, and assessment and reporting practices—out of which arose Three-Way Reporting. Discussions were expanded to include parents and other school community members with a view to fostering their understanding, eliciting their support, and gathering feedback.

The teachers' capacity for reform appeared to be significant in that they were highly engaged, motivated to change, and morale was strong. Most of the teachers were experienced and brought their previous knowledge and beliefs to bear on the reform initiatives. The less experienced teachers, Mia and Ruth, expressed self-doubt and feelings of being pushed to make changes; yet, generally, they felt supported in their efforts. Teacher capacity is also determined by the teachers' sense of social and emotional well-being. Many participants in this study noted that they felt supported by their fellow teachers and staff, the principals, and by some parents and as result of this support felt more able to engage in the changes that were being implemented. In other words, the school's social capital supported the staff to fully engage in the reform and other related initiatives. Not only did they engage but many described a strong sense of pleasure and fun in doing so.

In terms of the school's social capacity, as school leader at the time, I ask if I consciously worked to foster relationships, build effective channels of communication, and establish norms, expectations and sanctions as advised by the literature (Smylie & Evans, 2006). On reflection, my knowledge in this area was far more tacit than explicit. Later, in reading the literature on social capital, I recognized that Oceanside Elementary could be described as having considerable social capital as well as the teamwork and cooperation required to support implementation. In examining the themes identified by the participants in this study, I realized that elements associated with social capital like trust, effective communication, mutual agreement on goals and utilization of members' knowledge, and distributed leadership were indeed present. Perhaps the level of social capital accounted for the reason that, in the eyes of one external participant, Oceanside's "*staff became leaders in the School District for their implementation of Year 2000*" (Bella, External Participant).

Other Contextual Factors Are also at Play

Literature on asset building is useful in clarifying the contextual factors related to human capacity and may be instructive in terms of how to build social capital and teachers' capacity for reform. This literature focuses on developing and protecting the assets that impact the resiliency of children and youth. However, recent work (Malloy & Allen, 2007; Patterson, Collins, & Abbott, 2004) addresses the concept of "nurturing the nurturers" (Malloy & Allen, 2007, p. 1) and posits that, "when an individual is confronted with adversity, he or she tends to draw upon protective factors to mitigate that adversity and enable the individual to move forward. The contextually sourced, protective factors identified in this literature are "providing care and support, setting and communicating high expectations, and providing opportunities for meaningful participation" (Patterson et al., 2004, p. 3). Teachers, perhaps threatened by a proposed reform, feel encouraged to support it when they too are nurtured and can function within supportive contexts. School leaders can play a significant role in building the external factors associated with successful reform. The authors suggest that this can be accomplished by facilitating community-building, actively communicating care and support, encouraging high expectations and finally, providing opportunity for meaningful engagement in reform initiatives. Equally important is the provision by school leaders for frequent feedback and encouragement for teachers to experiment (Malloy & Allen, 2007). Echoed here are themes similar to those found in the school development and school leadership literature such as Kouzes and Posner (2007), Fullan (2001, 2005) Sergiovanni (1993), Smylie and Evans (2006) and others.

Located as they are within the educational system, contextual and external factors will play on the leader's capacity to lead effectively and provide the support and nurturing that teacher's need. School leaders, like teachers, may feel powerless in the face of exogenously imposed change agendas or against external forces that oppose the reform. Other aspects of the system must be able to support the leader's ability to perform these important functions. Fullan (2005) describes the middle position that leaders fill and their need for support.

> Each level above you helps or hinders (it is rarely neutral)....It is possible for a school to become highly collaborative despite the district that it is in, but it is not possible to *stay* highly collaborative in these circumstances. (p. 65)

Schools do best when they function in the context of an effective and sustainable District (Hargreaves, 2005; Fullan, 2005). Research supports the notion that what happens in the District impacts the school. Marzano's and Waters (2009) meta-analysis of research on district leadership indicates that it has "a measurable effect on student achievement" (p. 12).

However, school leaders are in the central role of *pushing back* where possible. Their work is to ensure that teachers have the necessary inputs (i.e., support and resources). Further, since they may be called upon to distribute these differentially when teachers' needs for inputs vary, leaders benefit from flexible, supportive policies and system. Principals also need to ensure that teachers have a say in implementation and opportunities for sense-making, both activities required for successful implementation of and alignment with the goals of the classroom, the school, the district and other governing bodies (Fullan, 2001; Marzano & Waters, 2009).

At Oceanside, most of the participants in this study stated they felt supported and nurtured. One participant said that although she felt supported "98% of the time" in accessing the material or support she needed, she didn't feel supported in another context. She stated that others were favoured in decisions around class placement and that she discerned a lack of fairness on my part. Although other participants and I assumed that everyone in the school community had access to a venue for problem solving and conflict resolution, it is evident that participant Scarlett did not regard this arena as safe enough. Underscored in this circumstance is the importance of having a structure or venue that creates sufficient safety and trust for all members to express their concerns and air differences. A more effective venue for addressing problems and conflicts would have enhanced the social capital of Oceanside. Discussions, which help staff distinguish between equal (i.e., everybody gets the same) vs. equity (i.e., everybody gets what they need), might also have been useful.

Many participants in this study also identified opportunities to collaborate, to have a say in school directions, and that they felt supported to take risks (i.e., experiment).

Crisis Response

In examining current crisis literature in order to glean insights on this case, I focused on what is termed in the literature as post-crisis response or the recovery stage

(Gilpin & Murphy, 2008; Millar & Heath, 2004; Ulmer, Sellnow, & Seeger, 2007) since this is the stage Oceanside was experiencing during the time period under consideration.

Crisis in Educational Settings

When examining most school crisis literature what was immediately evident is the lack of emphasis on the post-crisis stage. Much of the literature focuses on the need for preplanning. Where reference was made to long-term follow-up, student needs were addressed, but little reference was made to organizational healing. For example, best practices in crises response established by the U.S. Department of Education include prevention, communication planning, coordination with outside agencies, establishment of a school crisis team, and other aspects of crisis prevention and immediate response (Razi & Dechillo, 2005). For the most part, the schools involved in their study, despite matching these best practices, did not address long-term follow-up.

In a national study conducted in the United States by Adamson and Peacock (2007) that surveyed public school counsellors about their schools' crisis plans and response methods, all 214 schools surveyed reported having crisis response plans. The most common response strategy was individual and group debriefing with students and staff. Debriefing is "designed to mitigate the psychological impact of a traumatic event and accelerate recovery from acute symptoms of distress that may arise in the immediate wake of a crisis or traumatic event" (Everly, Boyle, & Lating, 1999; Lating, & Mitchell, 2000). The focus here is clearly on individuals.

Similarly, Jimerson, Brock, and Pletcher (2005) reviewed commonly used models of crises preparedness and intervention and suggested a crises response model that would provide a shared foundation for school psychologists worldwide. In what they called "Recovery/Reconstruction Months or Years After" (p. 279), they described appropriate responses including anniversary reaction support, anniversary preparedness, caregiver training, individual screening, ritual participation, and memorial implementation. The authors also described the NOVA (National Association for Victim Assistance) Model of crisis response which attends to victims and focuses on holidays, ceremonies, and remembrance activities. Here again is a significant emphasis on the recovery of individuals.

Cornell and Sheras (1998) made the important distinction between individual recovery and school recovery from crisis. Individual crisis are those experienced by persons involved in a crisis and school crisis address the impact of a crisis on an organization. They concluded that one will surely impact the other and both need attention in all phases of crises response. Their description echoed what occurred at Oceanside where unresolved student issues precipitated another crisis for the school and suggested that the unattended aspects of the school crisis undoubtedly continued to affect individual students. The authors also concluded that school-level response is more complex than responding to individuals; they postulated that those providing assistance might also feel victimized. However, they did not give suggestions for addressing crises on a school-level.

Recently, Pepper, London, Dishman, and Lewis (2010) conducted case studies of schools in crises. This work, *Leading Schools During Crisis: What School Administrators Must Know,* has implications for the case of Oceanside. Their framework was aimed at supporting school leaders in crises prevention, immediate response, and recovery. Because they found few studies that explored crises in school settings, these authors sought to synthesize and apply crises literature to the school context. Included in each case study was an accounting of the work done to support recovery as well as to ensure organizational learning. The definition of crises offered in their theory is as follows:

> A school crisis is an event or series of events that threaten a school's core values or foundational practices…[It] is obvious in its manifestation, but born from complex and often unclear or uncontainable circumstances…[and] necessitates urgent decision making. (p. 6)

This definition of school crises was very useful in the context of Oceanside as it identifies the threat to core values and *foundational practices* related to school culture, two issues critically important to Oceanside's recovery.

Pepper et al. (2010) advanced the importance of a strong school culture in increasing resistance to crises and providing greater resilience when a crisis strikes. For example, in the case of Manhattan's PS 234 (an elementary school that on September 11, 2001, sat within 400 yards of what is now known as Ground Zero), the authors identified several factors which enabled the school staff to cope with the tragedy: a collaborative and respectful culture, a strong sense of community, a school focused on

addressing the social and emotional needs of their students, strong and trusted leadership, an emphasis on communication, and a shared vision. In addressing the long-term effects of the crisis, the principal of the school focused on maintaining or rebuilding these same attributes.

Pepper et al. name the final stage of crises “recovery and learning”. They describe it as follows:

> This phase should not be viewed as simply a time of recuperation and picking up the pieces but, more importantly, a time for learning and re-evaluation. The recovery and learning process—if successful—should help the school community derive some positive meaning from the crisis, decreasing the likelihood of the crisis repeating. It is also during these periods filled with anger, confusion, anxiety, and uncertainty that great opportunities exist for healing and growth. (p. 14)

Barriers to this stage are identified thus:

> rigidity of core beliefs and assumptions, little collaboration or participation within the school or with its community…a lack of a unified vision or culture,…egg-crate structure of schooling, lack of time, and shifting organizational expectations [that] may prevent the teamwork....(p. 14)

In other words, a school weak in culture will have a more difficult time weathering and recovering from crises. It may also be more prone to crises, or in fact, the school culture may precipitate crises. This was evident in the case of Greenacre High School where “the dysfunctional culture…allowed unethical grade fabrication to persist despite repeated and systemic attempts to change the school’s culture” (p. 241). The authors also suggested that building a school culture during a crisis is difficult.

While Pepper et al. made a strong link between positive school culture and crises recovery while emphasizing that crises can be a “stimulus for a fresh start,” they stopped short, however, of suggesting that the approaches necessary to build a positive and resilient school culture are required for the organizational healing of schools. Given that these authors define crises as events that threaten a school’s foundational practices and core values, I expected them to conclude that these aspects of culture must be addressed if a school in crisis is to recover.

School crisis literature addressing District level issues focused more on the post-crisis stage. In discussions with educators in post-Katrina New Orleans, Carr-Chellman et al. (2008) explored issues related to crisis and the concurrent presence of a large-

scale reform movement. The authors described the reform and the Katrina crisis as "turbulent triggers" and listed the lessons learned. There were:

- Make the most of the hope—it may be precious fuel for change.
- Attend to feelings of loss and drift.
- Watch for ways in which the system re-forms in familiar but value-laden ways; ask whom the new system serves well and whom it may serve ill.
- Know what the problems and culture of the past are so that you can recognize when the old problems return—as they inevitably will.
- Fill people's needs for structure, organization, leadership, and familiarity in ways that do not stunt the process of change.
- Whenever possible, empower people to own the system and maintain responsibility for it to help deal with larger cultural and systemic issues.

> In the end, we believe that learning these lessons may be essential to those facing change after chaotic events, be they hurricanes, tsunamis, or political upheavals. (p. 36)

In summary, the school crisis literature that helps give meaning to the Oceanside events is that which emphasizes the following:

- The need to attend to the healing of individuals and the school as an organizational entity—each will impact the other;
- Recovery is more than a return to business as usual or simple recuperation—it is a process of healing, growing, and learning;
- Grief reframed as hope is powerful fuel in crises recovery;
- As crises threaten school culture, recovery must focus on the rebuilding of that culture;
- A strong and resilient school culture is better able to weather and recover from crises; the essential cultural factors are a collaborative and respectful culture, a strong sense of community, a school focused on addressing the social and emotional needs of the students, strong and trusted leadership, an emphasis on communication, and shared vision.

The presence of another crisis at Oceanside centred on accusations by a student towards her teacher, led us to learn what the school crisis literature now tells us which is that for the school as an organization and perhaps for the families of John Doe's victims, healing had not occurred. It was most evident that trust had not been re-established. The happenstance of a new, enthusiastic principal, me, who followed up on a workshop on the importance of developing shared vision and the tacit knowledge of all staff members began the school on a journey to rebuild its culture. As Kay (Teacher 7) said, "*That initial*

[summer session] on Biggy's deck, that started it. It grew that year and in subsequent years…it just gets stronger and stronger and [we are] more committed and more committed." Continued focus on vision, shared values, purpose and determination to build and create toward those ideals were among the tools used for rebuilding. In this sense, crisis played an important role in the development of the school's culture. As described by the participants, the crisis created a motivation for the staff to create something better for the students and the school community and to prevent such a crisis in the future. As well, the second crisis involving the student accusation against Kay drew the staff closer together. Recall Kay's words:

> I came out of it a stronger, more committed teacher and I think in part that that commitment led to the personality of the school and teaching too…thinking that I was committed and the people around me are committed and it just led on from there*. (Kay, Teacher 7)*

Because we listened to the signals of that other crisis, there was an opportunity for learning and rebuilding towards the future we collectively desired. Organizational crisis literature, reviewed below, supports this view of learning from crisis, rebuilding culture, and attending to organizational healing that occurred at Oceanside.

Organizational Crisis Literature

Organizational crisis literature has a more expansive, longer history than that of school crises; most post-crisis response plans are more elaborate and recommend a longer focus on the recovery stage than most school crises literature.

Growth in this field is also evident. Traditional crisis literature advises that crisis plans should guide the organization and its leaders to re-establish the *status quo* and thereby return to normal (Coombs, 1999). More recent research and theories advise a change in the nature of crisis response plans.

Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer (2003) believed that the post-crisis role of organizational leaders is to restore legitimacy, support the healing process, and ensure the organization learns from the experience. In their case study of the Jack in the Box Restaurant Corporation's E. coli outbreak among its customers, the authors describe the importance of a crises plan to help divert company collapse and restore legitimacy. Reviewing the Red Cross' planned response to the Indonesian tsunami, the authors identified the importance of accountability and support for the healing process (p. 127).

Their study of the Schwan's Sales Enterprises crisis, where salmonella-contaminated ice-cream infected 224,000 consumers, emphasized the importance of post-crisis organizational learning. Their crisis management plan and its owner's moral leadership guided the company's response; the owner asked of his employees, "If you were a Schwan's customer, what would you expect the company to do?" (Ulmer et al., 2007, p. 96). The company responded by developing costly safety procedures which involved building a new re-pasteurization plant and a dedicated fleet of transport trucks.

Gilpin and Murphy (2008) posited that because the predominant post-crisis goal was that of a return to normal, most post-crisis activity is largely evaluative instead of being focused on learning, growth, and change. They made an important distinction between the goal of evaluation and one suggested by complexity theory; that theory proposes that once the organizational system is disordered, it cannot return to the same pre-crises state of affairs. This conception directs the organization to seek a new normal. The authors cite Bechler (2004) who observed that, "reframing the popular view of crisis so that it is also perceived as a necessary and important corrective…may also enable the organization to effectively respond to other problematic behaviours that have been embedded and protected within the organization" (p. 150). This is important since it suggests positive outcomes from crisis rather than a simple return to normalcy. They concluded their thesis with a pragmatic view that cautions organizational leaders to determine when it is time to create stability and control and when it is time for "uncertainty, adaptiveness, and improvisation" (p. 177) in order to foster needed change. Oceanside's staff, in particular the counsellor Frances, was determined to create a school in which such a crisis could never again occur. I recall conversations with Frances in which she identified that the students abused by John Doe did not report his activity because they perceived that adults hold the power and are not to be questioned. I remarked on Frances in my interview:

> *She really wanted to ensure that the power base of the school was levelled. The change, Peer Counsellors…used a problem solving model that she introduced…she monitored…she modelled…she debriefed with them all the time…the teachers were not acting from a power base on the playground or in their classrooms—as much as possible…there was a consciousness about powering over; that was…the gift [of the crisis]. (Researcher Interview)*

Sadly, Frances' voice is missing from this report; her thoughts and reflections would have added valuable perspective. However, as Biggy (Teacher 1) described, "*The*

staff were determined, as they were in most things they did, to resolve it and to deal with it and not to just bury it or pretend it didn't happen. And, we were open to the ideas of the moment to help it."

Again, it was the horror of the crisis and our tacit knowledge that informed us that we could not return to the culture of the past or to a normalcy that had existed previously. We were determined to create a new and better culture as advised by Organizational Crisis literature.

The Role of Leaders in Crisis

One of the purposes in conducting this study was to gain an understanding of my leadership role in the circumstances associated with crisis at Oceanside. A review of this literature has revealed some important aspects of leadership in crisis that apply to this time period at Oceanside.

As stated in the previous section, traditional literature has focused on the use of crisis plans to address response and recovery. More recent research and theories advise a change in the nature of crisis response plans to guide leaders to address issues of legitimacy, healing, and organizational learning.

Another development in this field of research and theory is the encouragement for leaders to have an appropriate framework of understanding from which to operate (Mittroff & Pauchant, 1992; Ulmer et al., 2007). Simola (2003) applied the frameworks of ethic of care and ethic of justice to the crises cases of Gerber Products Company and MacDonald's San Ysidro shooting. Simola cites the work of Mittroff and Pauchant (1992) who argue that crises management is "fundamentally ethical" (p. 1). Developing crises plans as a sequenced set of prescriptive steps fails to support an organization seeking to grow past its crises. Simola's (2003) examination of the incident of glass discovered in the Gerber Baby Food jar, found that the company successfully applied justice ethics along with scientific backing to their situation. "By using an ethic of justice…Gerber was able to diminish the fears of a concerned public, contain the media frenzy, maintain the support and goodwill of a diverse array of stakeholders, and continue to serve its customers…." (p. 256). Similarly, Simola (2003) examined MacDonald 's application of an ethic of care when 40 of its customers were shot, 21 fatally, in its Ysidro, CA restaurant. The company's Executive Vice President told his management team to

attend to the needs of the survivors and the families of the victims, without concern for the legal implications of the case.

As described above, traditional crises response plans and conceptions about recovery previously involved a return-to-business-as-usual model. Simola's (2003) study offers frameworks for a different approach: an ethic of care or an ethic of justice appropriately applied will direct the attention of leaders to care about all impacted parties and individuals and to seek organizational learning.

If the crisis at Oceanside had occurred in the present decade and had been guided by current crises research findings and theories, how would the outcomes have been different? Current literature would have advised that organizational, student and staff healing be attended to and likely, suggested an ethic of care be applied. Educational philosopher, Nell Noddings (2007) supported Kant's distinction between spontaneous acts of caring that arise from feelings of love (natural caring) and those we do out of duty, or as Nodding prefers, faithfulness (ethical caring). She suggests that "ethical caring's greatest contribution is to guide action long enough for natural caring to be restored and for people once again to interact with mutual and spontaneous regard" (p. 222). Her statement was particularly applicable to Oceanside's circumstances. This is not to suggest that school and District staff didn't care about the healing of students or each other; I believe they did. However, they didn't have a framework for applying this care systemically. Perhaps if they had, the ongoing upset demonstrated through student behaviour, as well as staff and parent healing, would have been given greater or different attention. The framework would have taken the burden of care that was placed solely on the counsellor and distributed it throughout the system thus, ensuring the wider community would be involved in determining necessary action. With its reference to gardens and students as entities to be nurtured, the vision created by the school community focused on an ethic of care. Many adults in the Oceanside school community participants took responsibility for that nurturing. Parent engagement and volunteerism at the school was indicative of such nurturing. For example, parents, wanting to support Three-Way Reporting, gave workshops to the students in reporting week to release teachers to conduct conferences and parents volunteered as mentors to support students in the *Experts Program*.

Current literature would have advised the school leader to work to re-establish legitimacy in the eyes of its families and the broader educational community. Priority

needed to be given to re-building trust, positive relationships, and to focusing on core purposes. Again, it is not that attention to trust and relationships was absent from Oceanside's circumstance; I believe that attention was given to these aspects. However, as evident in many of the participants' stories, trust was largely absent in the early years of the time period under study. Certainly, in Oceanside's collective story, trust, positive relationships, mutual respect and other features of a well-regarded school, were given intentional focus and successfully addressed. Bella described this process at Oceanside as follows:

> *I think once the opportunity came for people to work through the issues of what happened and where, had quit hiding their concerns and were more able to just talk about it, I think it stared to shift back to a place where people were honest and trusting and growthful in a positive way. (Bella, External Participant)*

Finally, the district and school leadership would have been guided by complexity theory to understand that a return-to-business-as-usual result was not possible. They would have been encouraged to apply what they had learned from the crisis and support the school community to create a new vision for its school. They would know the importance of supporting the school to re-focus on a central purpose and to rebuild and attend to all of its complexities. The literature validates the work done to create a vision at Oceanside. Although in this instance, vision setting was not applied in order to learn from the crisis. In the hearts and minds of many participants there was a deep desire to ensure that school culture would never again contribute to such a crisis.

When I was Oceanside's Principal, I knew that what I was doing was, for the most part, working. I should have asked then: Why is it working? I should have sought a meta-understanding of my practice. Now, many years later, I am met with the questions: What have I learned about my leadership and how it differed from that of others assigned to the school after the crisis? What allowed me to support the healing and development of the school? What aspects of my leadership contributed to the ability of the school to meet the challenges of crisis and reform initiatives?

Looking back I see that I began by asking the staff in our first summer session together: What is important to you in your school? What is the ideal school—staff—classroom—teacher? What values have emerged from our discussions? What emerges as a vision for the school?

My priority was to ensure that everyone had a voice in what we did and everyone was heard. I sought first to establish trust among the staff and so extended trust and respect to each of them. It was evident that Frances had insights into the crisis and to her, it was clear as to how we should proceed. I gave her my support to ensure that she could move forward to build on the Peer Counselling and Problem Solving programs. After the second crisis in which the student made the accusation against Kay, I could see even more clearly the need to support Frances, the student volunteers and these programs.

It was also evident that whenever we met together, all staff members brought insight and valuable perspectives some common to all, some not. They continuously demonstrated a deep caring and concern for the students and their families. I could see that it was important to support the staff to see the value of their ideas and to implement them whenever possible. When we engaged in the envisioning process, all of the staff and later the parents articulated our personal visions before formulating our school vision. I knew the importance of supporting the personal visions as much as the school vision.

As issues or questions arose, I began by directing our conversations back to the beliefs, values and ideals that we had articulated in the summer and later in the envisioning process. Once we examined the issue from that perspective, the options or answers seemed clear. Consensus was most often effortless. I learned to return to these foundational pieces frequently as they were important signposts as we moved forward.

I realize now that my history as a trained as Special Education teacher fostered a belief, then as now, that if students aren't learning, teachers have the responsibility to find an approach that supports students to be successful. This belief was shared by most all of the staff and was reinforced when the Year 2000 Program was introduced. It soon became an important direction at the school and I did whatever I could to support this approach.

The staff and parent community grew closer together over time and there was increasing openness and positive response to each other's ideas and suggestions. I recall when the parent introduced me to Earthkeepers and asked to meet with the staff. I was excited by the premises of the program and felt confident that the staff would also embrace them. Similarly when I learned of the Creative Cycle as a framework for implementation, I was excited to share it with the staff and a number of them soon

introduced it to their students. When Mia questioned the way we were reporting student progress to parents, the staff listened and Three-Way Reporting was born. When a parent volunteered to write the weekly newsletter and take a more parent-centred approach (with humour) in consultation with the staff, there was no resistance to the idea. As well, when someone suggested that the PAC Chairperson attend the Staff Meetings, the idea was embraced with no resistance. That is how the culture grew and programs that supported our goals were adopted. When someone brought an idea forward and when it was aligned with the vision or goals of the school, others gave their support. I never sensed jealously or resentment; only mutual support and shared responsibility.

The support and trust I received from Jack Smith and later, Sunshine was central to my ability to lead the school. Similarly, the support that all staff received from the parents was crucial. It was as a result of the growing connections that my belief grew in the importance of creating a community focused on a shared purpose as the cornerstone of our work. I believe that it was community-building and the community that resulted that allowed me to help this school organization and its families to heal. And, as the ideas of school community members were acted on, the school culture grew and strengthened. I believe that it was this approach that allowed me to better support healing and school development. I didn't try to impose a direction or goals; I worked to bring all perspectives together in a process of consensus. Upon reflection, the staff and other members of the school community embodied Noddings (2007) ethic of care; theirs was ethical caring. The magic mix here was that of dedicated, caring, hard-working, and talented staff members who believed in and were committed to our share directions.

Emergent Themes and Their Relationship to Theory

In the previous discussion, Oceanside's story, in the time frame of this study, was related to current literature about school development, leadership, crisis, and the implementation of reform initiatives. These might be termed as middle level theory, highly useful in the context of schools. Threaded throughout this literature are references to several common themes and related theories. When crosschecked and synthesized with the factors identified by Oceanside's participants, it became apparent that much of the literature supports similar actions and approaches.

In is important to note that school-level factors identified as necessary for school development are similar to those named as important for school reform and resilience against crises. Some theorists (Pepper et al., 2010) link strong school culture to its ability to weather and recover from crisis. The search for literature of crisis, reform, and school development that informs the findings of this study suggest that the strength of a school's culture will help it to recover, learn, and grow past crisis; it is a strong culture that allows a school to engage effectively in reform, and ensure ongoing school development.

To summarize, the following factors and considerations were found to be important in the case of Oceanside and in the literature reviewed in this chapter. The following provides a listing of the emergent themes and the literature that supports each theme.

1. **Fellowship in a Community of Shared Purpose and Values** (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Carr-Chellman et al., 2008; Daly, 2008; Fullan, 2005; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Malloy & Allen, 2007; Marzano, 2003; Miller et al., 2005; Mittroff & Pauchant, 1992; Noddings, 2007; Patterson et al., 2004; Pepper et al., 2010; Sergiovanni, 1993; Simola, 2003; Smylie & Evans, 2006; Wheatley, 2002). Community-building, shared vision, purpose, and values was evident in all four categories of reviewed literature: school development, leadership, reform, and crisis.
2. **Shared vision as well as Building and Creating** (acquiring organizational learning) (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Carr-Chellman et al., 2008; Daly, 2008; Datnow, 2006; Fullan, 2006; Honig, 2006; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Leithwood, 2003; Marzano, 2003; McLaughlin, 2006; Pepper et al., 2010; Smylie & Evans, 2006; Tondeur et al., 2009). The concept of organizational learning was present in all four categories of literature. In reform and school development literature it was referred to as sense-making and knowledge building (Angelides, 2010; Fullan, 2001; Honig, 2006; Malen, 2006; Marzano & Waters, 2009; McLaughlin, 2006; Spillane, 2006) while in the crises literature it was described as learning from crises (Carr-Chellman et al., 2008; Gilpin & Murphy, 2008; Pepper et al., 2010; Seeger et al., 2003; Simola, 2003). Also found in these bodies of literature was emphasis on the organizations' knowledge of how to learn (Fullan, 2005; Hill, 2006; Honig, 2006; Malen, 2006;McLaughlin, 2006; Pepper et al., 2010; Smylie & Evans, 2006). However, this aspect of organizational learning was not referenced in the interviews of Oceanside's participants.
3. **Culture and Morale as well as Teamwork and Cooperation** (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Carr-Chellman et al., 2008; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Marzano, 2003; Miller et al., 2005; Pepper et al., 2010; Smylie

& Evans, 2006; Wheatley, 2002). Again, this theme was evident in all four categories of literature.

4. **Collaborative, open, and responsive communication** (Angelides, 2010; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Fullan, 2001, 2005; Marzano, 2003; Pepper et al., 2010; Smylie & Evans, 2006). The four categories of the reviewed literature support this theme.
5. **Leadership and Distributed leadership built on the professional skills of its people** (Angelides, 2010; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Carr-Chellman, et al., 2008; Daly, 2008; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Marzano, 2003; Pepper et al., 2010; Smylie & Evans, 2006; Tondeur et al., 2009). The four categories of the reviewed literature support this theme.
6. **Systems thinking** (Carr-Chellman et al., 2008; Fullan, 2001, 2005, 2006; Gilpin & Murphy, 2008; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Senge,1990; McLaughlin, 2006). Evident in the examined literature was considerable reference to the need for leaders to engage in systems thinking, systems theory or the related theories of chaos and complexity. In the school reform and school development literature, emphasis was placed on understanding the school as an organization as a part of a larger system and the need to attend to all of its parts and to its context (Fullan, 2001, 2005, 2006; Hargreaves, 2005; Hill, 2006; McLaughlin, 2006).
7. **Individual and organizational healing and learning** (Carr-Chellman et al., 2008; Cornell & Sheras, 1998; Pepper et al., 2010; Seeger et al., 2003). This crisis literature emphasized the need for leaders to see the organization as being made up of individuals and as situated within larger systems. Also emphasized was the need to address individual and organizational healing and as well as to address external forces that might support or impinge on that healing (Carr-Chellman et al., 2008). Additionally, some crisis literature suggests that chaos theory is applicable (Seeger et al., 2003) while others suggest that complexity theory is more applicable (Gilpin & Murphy, 2008). The scholars who directed attention to chaos theory and complexity thinking emphasized that as crisis threatens, disordering the school's or organization's culture and very foundation, the school is called to redefine and recreate itself. They posited that an organization is unable to return to normal because it has been fundamentally disordered; a new normal must be created. All of the perspectives arising from these theories or means of thinking contributed meaning to the events at Oceanside where: (a) it was important that the needs of individuals and the school be attended to; (b) external forces such as the support of the superintendent contributed significantly to the school; and (c) as the crises had impacted the foundation and culture of the school, these needed to be redefined and recreated so that a new normal emerged.

At this juncture I feel confident to state that the literature examined in this chapter correlates well with the findings of the study. Each asserts that there are a number of

factors associated with this school's success: a strong sense of fellowship in a community that shared a commitment to its purpose, shared vision, and to each other. This community was built on a foundation of rich school culture with strong morale and positive personal and professional relationships marked by pride, respect, trust, cooperation, and humour, shared responsibility, and sense of team. Communication within this community was collaborative, open and responsive; leadership was built on the professional skill of its people and leadership factors helped to guide the school in its development and through its challenges such as the implementation of reform and crisis. It saw as its central purpose, student learning and encompassed all dimensions of learning (i.e., intellectual, physical, artistic, emotional, and social learning) as well as life-long learning in that purpose. The staff members were free to develop and adopt programs vital to the school's success, with school reform playing a key role in so far as its direction aligned and enhanced those determined by the Oceanside staff and parents. This particular reform also offered staff the opportunity to adopt, build and create curriculum of their choice based on the interests of the students and staff and the needs of the students. This was a school with a cultural foundation strong enough to weather a significant crises and to allow those crises to have a positive effect; it was used as a platform from which participants could collaboratively redefine and recreate the school based on their tacit and explicit knowledge.

There were points at which the reviewed literature and the study's findings did not converge. School organization did not emerge as a theme in this study while it was seen as important in some of the literature and was noted in the External Team's Accreditation Report (2005). Marzano (2003) stated that a safe and orderly environment is important to a strong organizational culture. Bolman and Deal (2008) identified the Structural Theme as 1 of the 4 frames critical to successful organizational change. Upon reflection, I did not give particular focus to the structural frame and it may be the cause for the criticism I received from one of the participants about not ensuring fair methods for organizing classes. This theme was also noted in the External Team Accreditation Report (2005) in their recommendation that school organization procedures be formalized.

Another point at which the study's findings and the literature did not converge is in relation to meta-organizational understanding as identified by Fullan (2005). As previously described, I did not lead the school to develop this kind of understanding

despite the encouragement I received from the Superintendent and the Primary Program Coordinator to reflect and determine the contributing factors. The school community's ability to better learn how to learn together and acquisition of an understanding of the underpinnings of its positive outcomes would have contributed significantly to the school culture; such a focus would have made replication much more possible.

It would be a disservice to Oceanside and its participants to close this study with this summary. Readers might be left with the impression that schools interested in replicating these results can use it like a shopping list. Or, they might infer that school staff members simply need to do what was done at Oceanside in order to achieve the same result. The examined literature shows that there is considerable consensus concerning the characteristics that contribute to a successful school: one that is able to set and meet its goals as well as to address the challenges presented by external forces such as crisis and educational reform. Certainly, at this stage of the study, I feel confident in concluding that there was much more at play at Oceanside than a magical mix. In fact, a set of themes and contributing roles and programs, validated in the literature, accounted for the school's rich culture and ability to respond in post-crisis and face the challenges presented by a large-scale educational reform.

Perusing my bookshelf of school leadership literature, I am met with various models and frameworks designed to guide leaders in building good and effective schools. In my initial reading of many of these, I assumed that by applying the suggested model or framework, my school too, would achieve the same results. Perhaps it was because I believed that I could force Oceanside's descriptors on my subsequent schools and so replicate its success that I never could. However, describing something may not give the full picture even when multiple perspectives have contributed to the description. In addition, while the central question may be answered—there was a mix of factors at play—it is not one that satisfies. Something more helps to complete the story of Oceanside. A deeper look revealed a subtext at play which is discussed in the chapter that follows. I conclude with a summary of findings and a proposition.

Chapter 9.

The Subtext

With an answer to the original research question now in hand telling me that it was more than a magical mix that allowed this school community to achieve its goals and address its challenges, large and small, I found myself with another set of questions. I now felt confident that the participants stories, had allowed me to determine the elements but still I didn't have the road map to describe how we arrived at this successful end. How did we get here? What processes allowed this journey to be accomplished? What allowed this community to grow? What created this rich culture? What tacit knowledge was at play then that I omitted in other settings? Are the strengths and successes of Oceanside replicable? Was there in fact a magical mix or a rare and unique happenstance that allowed for this journey? I sought to find the subtext at play and so looked to the newest shelf in my bookcase where sits the literature from a post-graduate course, Seminar in Educational Theory, that explored social theory in relation to education. There I found what I hoped to be the macro-level theories that would answer this new set of questions.

Social Imaginary and *Lifeworld*

Charles Taylor (2004) defined social imaginary as the heart of societies and their organizations: he described social imaginaries as "the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations" (p. 23). Social imaginaries retain historical perceptions about history, the present moment and future, and they "are ways of understanding the social that become social entities themselves, mediating collective life" (Gaonkar, 2002, p. 4). An imaginary is based on both fact and on what is normative; it is based on both theory and practice. Taylor (2004) states: "Implicit in an understanding of the norms is the ability to recognize the ideal cases" (p. 24). The ideal

is determined by the moral order in the social imaginary: the moral order in turn gives meaning and determines legitimacy and practice.

The process by which moral order, or theory of any kind, penetrates and takes hold of a social imaginary is captured through the distinction between theory, social imaginary, and *habitus*. Theory is an "organized body of ideas as to the truth of something" (Cayne & Lechner, 1988, p. 1025) that is held by a few about many. Social imaginary relates to how a group of people understand their "whole situation, within which particular features of [their] world become evident" (Gaonkar, 2002, p. 10). It is an embedded, yet to some degree, an articulated view "expressed and carried in images, stories, legends, and modes of address that constitute a symbolic matrix…[that] while nourished by the embodied habitus, is given expression on the symbolic level" (Taylor, 2001, p. 189). Habitus functions more like a background in that it is neither fully articulated nor held in symbolic form. Scahill (1993) explains Bourdieu's concept of habitus as follows:

> For Bourdieu, habitus refers to socially acquired, embodied systems of dispositions and/or predispositions. (Richard Nice, a principal translator, points out that the semantic cluster of "dispositions" is wider in French than in English, equivalent to predisposition, tendency, propensity, or inclination.) Hence it refers not to character, morality, or socialization per se, but to "deep structural" classificatory and assessment propensities, socially acquired, and manifested in outlooks, opinions, and embodied phenomena such as deportment, posture, ways of walking, sitting, spitting, blowing the nose, and so forth. Habitus underlies such second nature human characteristics and their infinite possible variations in different historical and cultural settings. While habitus derives from cultural conditioning, Bourdieu does not equate habitus with its manifestations; nor does he think of habitus as a fixed essence operating like a computer program determining mental or behavioral outcomes.

Thus habitus is an internalized understanding of our world or as stated by Bourdieu and Wacquant, "habitus is a socialized subjectivity" (1992, p. 126). It is the unarticulated, total experience from which we respond to our world.

Social imaginary is different; unlike habitus, it holds a moral order and is considered. Thus, social imaginary exists between theory and habitus, occupying "a fluid middle ground between embodied practices and explicit doctrines. The relation between the three is dynamic. The line of influence is not causative but rather circular" (Gaonkar, 2002, p. 11). For example, a notion held by theorists may begin to permeate the social imaginary as it moves from the understanding of a few theorists to a public

understanding held by many. Similarly, a disposition arising from habitus, such as how we consider people of other racial origins, may be given media attention and so rise to society's collective consciousness and emerge over time in the social imaginary.

The development of a social imaginary, then, occurs through a sense-making process that draws not only on our understanding of our immediate background but also from theory and notions of ideals (Taylor, 2004). This is a slow, complex process. It is what Taylor called "the long march…a process whereby new practices, or modifications of old ones" are developed or launched and "in the course of their slow development and ramification, a set of practices gradually change their meaning for people, and hence…constitute a new social imaginary" (Taylor, 2004, p. 30). This sense-making process allows a group to develop a "repertory of collective actions" (p. 25), which overtime becomes implicit to its functioning. Taylor describes it using Kant's terms whereby a theory becomes *schematized* when applied to reality and emerges as common practice. In this way, the social imaginary is held both implicitly and explicitly.

The degree to which there is common understanding, collective practice, and moral order determines the legitimacy attributed to a community. In this way, legitimacy is not absolute but rather is explicated in degrees. We describe a group as having strength, that is, "These people have a strong sense of community." or weakness, as in "This town has a poor sense of community." The strength of the community is determined by the degree to which its features (i.e., understandings, practices, and moral order) are articulated, shared, and acted upon. In other words, a society's or community's articulation of its features draws the social imaginary out of, and away from, theory and habitus.

It may be argued that Taylor intended the concept of social imaginary be applied to cultures and large-scale communities such as nations and cultures; and that it is misapplied to smaller entities such as local communities and community-based organizations, like schools. However, in *Considering the Relationships among Social Conflict, Social Imaginaries, Resilience, and Community-based Organization Leadership,* Stephenson (2011) does apply the concept of social imaginary at the community level. He asserts that change in the social imaginary begins with individuals and grows outward to the community.

> Values and norms inhere first in individuals and must change there, and those new conceptions must be shared and adopted by others thereafter

> if they are to constitute a new way of knowing in a community. That is, individual perspectives must change and those new views must be diffused across relevant geographic populations before a change in imaginaries may occur. (p. 3)

Additionally, Stephenson stated, "I read Taylor as suggesting that communities (and not simply the aggregation of western society writ large) can possess imaginaries and I think that is empirically true" (personal communication, September, 12, 2011).

It may also be argued that as a social imaginary is somewhat unarticulated and, as such, may not be subject to intentional change. Stephenson (2011), as does Taylor (2004), argues that in fact social imaginaries are socially constructed. Stephenson states:

> New imaginaries do not just happen; they are socially constructed. Changing them requires emotional and cognitive work built on interactive processes of individual and social awareness and reflection. That dynamic set of processes may entail violence and sacrifice of the sort experienced by the Selma marchers, as those responding to voices for change lashed out in favor of existing imaginaries. Social change is hard won because it demands both emotional and intellectual work of populations and at a deep level. It demands a shift in values, and therefore in how individuals and populations make sense of their lives. (p. 2)

Stephenson (2011) cites Paton and Johnston who suggest that disasters can be used as catalysts for social change reconstruction. He suggests that disasters allow:

> communities to catalyze the adaptive work necessary to secure long-lived change in their capacities to respond to future such occurrences. [This] parallels Taylor's philosophic inquiry, but focuses on social response to the aftermath of disaster-induced change rather than on the dynamic construction of potential for change. (p. 2)

Taking Stephenson's lead, I too, assert that the theory of social imaginary is applicable and supports an understanding of what happened at Oceanside, and that crises, like disasters, provide opportunity for significant change. We can anticipate that the school's social imaginary shattered with the announcement of charges laid against a past teacher. When one asks what, in the life of this school, shattered with the announcement of the teacher's arrest, the appropriate counter is, "What didn't shatter?" Crisis brought into question aspects of the school's habitus, it destroyed the social imaginary, challenging much about what its members once believed to be true about

their school, their practices, how they fit together, and their expectations of each other and their organization. Gone was the trust of the community, its students, and parents. Gone was the trust in each other as the staff questioned who knew what and who failed to act. Under question was the moral and ethical code of the school and of everyone in it: any symbols it had held, any norms and expectations, were now rendered meaningless.

A second crisis wounded the school body further when a student accused her teacher of sexual touching. The staff became aware that the original crisis was not entirely over and that significant aspects of it were in need of address. Armed only with a belief in and commitment to the idea of changing this school for the better, the staff set out to make sense out of what "is" and then articulate what they wanted it to be. With no real road map but a growing belief in each other, the school embarked on sense-making or "sense giving" as Taylor (2004) named it.

He said it this way:

> The background that makes sense of any given act is thus deep and wide. It doesn't include everything in our world, but the relevant sense-giving features can't be circumscribed; because of this, we can say that sense giving draws on our whole world, that is our sense of our whole predicament in time and space, among others and in history. (p. 26)

Over time, walking down the *long road*, the school was recreated and along with it, its social imaginary. Members' background knowledge, beliefs, values, history, repertory of action—their whole world, was brought to bear on the situation. The members' perceptions of the school's history and its articulated views of the future and its ideals—its vision, shared values and goals—began to take form and perhaps for some, re-formed. (Accounting for its history was critical to moving past this crisis. Recall my almost "fatal" error when, as my principalship there began, I neglected to account for the school's history.) The values and ideals in turn contributed to a new social order. According to Taylor (2004) this gave meaning and began to establish legitimacy and practice. Theory also played a role but only insofar as it made sense in the narrative developed by its members about its *organizational self*. The school community developed a set of collective actions through programs like Three-Way Reporting, Earthkeepers, Experts, Problem Solving, and Peer Counselling as well as collaborative practices with the community. One of the parent participants, Karen, thought these activities would go on and on in Oceanside and surrounding schools. She expressed

disappointment when some aspects dwindled away at Oceanside or were never practiced at the Secondary School. The relationship between practice and understanding is reciprocal said Taylor: “If the understanding makes the practice possible, it is also true that it is the practice that largely carries the understanding” (p. 25); each builds on the others and contributes to the social imaginary. Certainly, in the case of Oceanside the collaborative nature of the communication built towards understanding and led to action. As aspects of the social imaginary and features of the school such as visions, goals, stated values and common practices, were articulated they became explicit; thus, the school’s legitimacy gained strength. Perceptions about its strength spread in the school community and school district.

The theory of social imaginary supports the understanding and rewriting of Oceanside’s collective story. The building of its imaginary wasn’t determined by a prescribed set of discrete steps, but rather as a result of the sense-making that began with its staff and extended to include other members of the school community. Theory and habitus were drawn upon and reconstruction of how it should be, the moral order slowly took shape. The very acts of growing and learning became a part of its imaginary. Most of the study’s participants regarded Building and Creating as a theme that contributed to the school’s success; they appreciated the opportunity and freedom to engage in it. Legitimacy was granted to them as curriculum developers through the educational reform being enacted at the time, the Year 2000. Interestingly, participants believed that they were building and creating programs and school culture. In fact, what they were building was a new social imaginary.

In his *system-lifeworld* model, Jurgen Habermas also emphasized the need for society and the systems within it to be articulated. His model defines systems as self-regulating entities “that have mutual exchange relations with each other and the rest of society” (Eriksen, 2004, p. 86). Lifeworld is the world in which understanding is developed through communicative integration. These worlds are seen as mutually dependent.

Lifeworld exists within a background of tradition and culture. Actors within the lifeworld impact upon the world and are impacted by it. As Eriksen (2004) described it, “agents are on the one hand initiators with a personal responsibility for their actions; on the other hand, they are themselves a product of obscurely transmitted traditions and other external, impersonal forces” (p. 88). Lifeworld is acted out in terms of language

and communication. According to Eriksen's interpretation, Habermas' language serves as a means of socialization and a way to create common understanding and coordinated action. These ends relate to the linguistic reproduction processes of culture, social integration, and socialization. Habermas believed that linguistic reproduction ensures cohesion between tradition and new knowledge, socialization of individuals, legitimization of institutions and relationships, maintenance of cultural obligations, generation of a sense of belonging, and a sense of accord (Eriksen, 2007). Speech acts between community members constitute communicative action whereby common understanding and coordinated action are achieved. Habermas emphasized, like Taylor, the need for an articulated society:

> Society will inevitably disintegrate if we do not make room for actions oriented to reaching *understanding*, which can take care of the symbolic reproduction of society. Therefore, we must…operate a lifeworld which is communicatively integrated, and which establishes the necessary symbolic foundation on which the system is built. (Eriksen, 2007, p. 86)

Symbols carry meaning and language enables the understanding necessary for the cohesion and reproduction of society. In this way, society is communicatively integrated. Lifeworld then is the meaning-making and the symbolic world in which communicative action occurs and society can be articulated.

The system world gives society order and direction: operating through systems of action it provides a particular kind of legitimacy. "Actions within comprehensive areas, [such as education], are relieved from the demands of justification" (Eriksen, 2008, p. 86). According to the model, good reasons are not needed to justify our actions as they are thought to be prescribed by legitimate and self-regulating systems. Within the system world, the outcomes of the actions matter, rather than the intentions behind the actions. Thus, as long as organizations like schools are perceived to be delivering outcomes, the system world grants it legitimacy without justification and the function of self-regulation.

Habermas maintained that a balance between the two worlds is essential: a system view without lifeworld is to live without meaning; a lifeworld without the system world is disordered and directionless.

Oceanside's lifeworld was shattered (i.e., disordered and directionless) by the crisis; it lost its meaning. This is evident in the participants' descriptions of the school in

the time immediately following the crisis: "*there was so much capped emotion*"; "*it was just percolating and bursting forth*"; "*I was there after it [the bomb] went off so everything was like devastation and I don't mean you could see that, I mean I could feel it*"; and "*picking up that dead spirit and trying to get it alive again*."

The crisis signalled a loss of and legitimacy for Oceanside—its system world was fractured. The school's legitimacy, granted by the School District and the community it served, suffered severe damage; consequently, the school's community lost trust in both the school and the District. The school's continuance relied on restoration of this legitimacy; and now, it was required to give justification for its processes and structures.

Several references were made to the loss of trust (and legitimacy) that followed the crisis. One participant said it this way:

> *My recollection is that there were still kids that were either directly or indirectly affected by what had happened in the past. And possibly even by how they might have felt betrayed that the teachers hadn't spoken up or done anything about it. So, I think that it could have created a certain degree of anger and distress and hostility amongst kids and possibly parents. So, the trust in the school had been lost…it was a huge long road to rebuild that trust. Even though people could intellectually say, "Well how could somebody know what was going on?" There's still that sense that I send my kid to school and expect it to be a safe place and you're all responsible. And I thinks that's how everybody felt—whether we were at the Board Office or in the school at the time—there was…a sense that we didn't do enough and, and I'm sure some of the behaviour issues of the kids were related to that—you didn't protect us. (Bella, External Participant)*

Habermas' model prescribes communicative action as the means to restoring legitimacy and meaning and re-balancing lifeworld and system world.

Communicative Action and Phronesis

> To act communicatively means to act in order to obtain agreement, or to act on the basis of an already obtained mutual agreement with other actors with respect to what is the purpose of the action. This presupposes that agents arrive at a common definition of the situation, which again presupposes that they mutually accept the claims which are implicit in the relevant utterances (viz. to truth, rightness and truthfulness). (Eriksen, 2004, p. 51)

According to Habermas then, communicative action rests on a form of rationality based on a "subject-subject relation between communicating and interacting individuals" (Eriksen, 2004, p. 4) and on speech acts (language) used in "an understanding-oriented way" (Eriksen, 2004, p. 52). The theory of communicative rationality encapsulates a process that significantly contributes to the articulation of lifeworld and to social imaginary. As described by Eriksen (2004):

> This aspect of rationality is necessary in order to maintain society as a social fabric regulated by norms, institutions and conventions, a place where new insights and knowledge can be developed and transferred, and where individuals can be socialized into fully developed personalities. (p. 4)

Here Habermas describes how communicative rationality can serve as both a reproductive and generative force in social imaginary and an articulated lifeworld; it would capture how things are and how things ought to be.

Communicative action serves an action-coordinating function oriented to common understanding. To Habermas this was "human rationality 'proper', that is, the ability to let one's actions be guided by a common understanding of reality, a consensus established through linguistic dialogue" (Eriksen, 2004, p. 4).

Another critical feature of communicative action is that it must be based on trust and agreement between its participants. Eriksen (2004) described it as follows:

> Because on a deeper level there has to be a normatively based trust and agreement between the parties with respect to the premises for the communication itself (viz. that one should not lie and cheat). This is necessary if we want to use language in a form of interaction oriented to success without perverting the communication itself. (p. 45)

Oceanside's participants expressed the importance of open, responsive and collaborative communication and it was also described in the examined literature. Did the communication among school members constitute communicative action? Was it understanding-oriented communication and did it seek to establish agreement or action based on previous agreement? Was there a common definition of the situation, an acceptance of truth, rightness, and truthfulness? Did it contribute the school's lifeworld by establishing norms, institutions, conventions; generating knowledge; and socializing its members?

A beginning point for the staff was a vision setting process focused on determining ideals and finding member-member commonalities (understanding oriented). They reached agreement on a shared vision and defined values in the form of Key Words. In later years, at the encouragement of the school counsellor, the staff and some parents and community members engaged in the envisioning process. The starting point of the process was describing concerns about the present state of affairs in the school; this was followed by creating visions to address these concerns. This dialogue supported its participants in developing common definitions of the situation (truth) and common directions as to how to correct it. Discussions were open (truthfulness) and focused on what was right. Certainly it can be claimed that this discourse contributed to the re-building of the lifeworld of the school as norms, practices (conventions) were established and new knowledge was generated.

Later, the school's communicative action was extended to include the broader school community. As identified by Strike, communicative action can, and did, in this case, enable the staff to achieve the goal of community development:

> If one goal of a school is to promote the capacity to lead an examined life, then the ability of members of the school community to articulate views of good living and to participate in their discussion and evaluation must be valued. (2007, p. 84)

By trustfully engaging in communicative action, the staff and community established their commitment to common goals, thereby determining the collective actions of the school community. In turn, these actions influenced the professional actions of its members. Over time, as understanding and meaning expanded (lifeworld), legitimacy re-established (system world), and the social imaginary became increasingly articulated, the school came to know the true sense of crisis recovery and growth.

The Aristotelian concept of *phronesis* supports moral and ethical practice; in essence, it is the wisdom that guides our actions. Phronesis, or practical wisdom, guides us to take the correct action and conveys a general sense of knowing the proper behaviour in all situations. Composed of intuitive thought and technical knowledge, it supports a deep understanding of one's practice. Phronesis allows us to practice the moral virtues, and together, the two enable us to determine the right ends through the right course of action. Dunne (2005) describes the features of phronesis as follows:

> Features that have to do with its role as an action-orienting form of knowledge, its irreducibly experiential nature, its non-confinement to generalised propositional knowledge, it entanglement (beyond mere knowledge) with character, its need to embrace the particulars of relevant action-situations within its grasp of universals, and its ability to engage in the kind of deliberative process that can yield concrete, context-sensitive judgments. (p. 376)

Communicative action reinforced by phronesis allowed Oceanside's community to orient its action to the truthful and the good and begin to articulate and apply practical knowledge and relevant judgments to its actions. This is not to say that its practices formed a blueprint for success or even a list of technical prescriptions. Rather, the practices which emerged through communication brought to bear the members practical wisdom (i.e., "a combination of intellectual and ethical virtues," Dunne, 2005) on its particular set of problems. Dunne described it as follows:

> This is a space of possibility in so far as it can elicit initiatives that have an event-like quality, finding their intelligibility not in a predictable chain of causality but rather in the plot of a story that can be narrated only retrospectively. This possibility opens up only because it is also a space densely marked, though not fully saturated, by the effects of many other previous actions, that is to say, by a tradition and the particular language and concepts through which it is expressed. (p. 380)

Practical wisdom, then, brings experience, history, conceptual understandings, and ethics to bear on a problem. More important, when this wisdom is applied, the ability of the individual or group to engage in phronesis also grows:

> …part of the repertoire of individual practitioners and groups of practitioners is a capacity not only for reflections but also, not infrequently, for articulation; any adequate conception of 'judgment' should include this capacity. Moreover, it is mainly through the critical mass of this capacity, widely distributed among practitioners, that the practice itself is kept in good order, an order that requires rather than merely tolerates some more or less steady, though never predictable advance in its overall horizon. (Dunne, 2005, p. 383)

Here, Dunne refers to a horizon, which exists between implicit and explicit knowledge. He asserts the importance of making the horizon ever more explicit through "discussion and argumentation, as judgments and their grounds are exposed to demands for discursive justification" (p. 383). While justification for many actions can be assumed, there remains a need to examine the implicit knowledge behind an action and

thus, keep the horizon between the two ever moving. As this process of reflection and examination occurs, the group's ability to engage in it also builds.

Note Dunne's reference to ensuring the capacity of a critical mass of practitioners—capacity that is widely distributed. His statement is reminiscent of the study's reviewed literature that calls for distributed leadership and the participants' reference to shared responsibility. Some of the study's participants responded that everyone had played a role; when describing the school's communication, one participant said, "*Everybody had a voice and everybody's voice was heard*." These participants were referencing the practices of phronesis and communicative action; practices which formed the basis of recovery and change for the school. They allowed for an enlivened social imaginary, a rebalancing of lifeworld and system world, and a righting of the school's relationship with the community. By engaging the community in communicative action guided by phronesis, the staff signalled their desire for solidarity with it community at-large. By including parents and other community members, trust and legitimacy were re-established. As proposed by Strike (2007):

> Trust is essential, because when trust disappears, solidarity is difficult to maintain. Here, trust means something specific. When we trust other members of a community, it is not just that we believe they have such virtues as honesty or integrity. What we have confidence in is that they, like ourselves are motivated by the goals of the community and by loyalty to its members. We trust them because we believe that they share our concerns. They want what we want. They, like us, will subordinate personal goals to shared collective ones when they conflict. (p. 18)

Strike's (2007) words speak directly to the trust and the legitimacy that was destroyed by the violations embedded in the crisis. Re-established trust and restored legitimacy anchored feelings of hope, optimism, and commitment to an endeavour (education), a community (Oceanside) and to a future. The spirit and culture of the school began to flourish and new symbols brought shared meaning to the school and its broader community. "Symbols…provide direction and anchor hope and faith. They help find meaning in chaos, give clarity, [and] predictability in mystery" (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p.253). Symbols arise from stories, myths, ritual, and ceremony. A significant number of symbols emerged, such as Key Words, the school logo built on a triangular shape with a student symbol at the apex and parent and teacher providing support at the base. The school community became increasingly skilled at engaging in communicative action, and

the school became known for its rich culture and strong sense of community. Indeed, all of these developments signified a time of hope and faith in the school community.

Relationship to Practice

The story of Oceanside demonstrates the importance of school culture and that significant cultural markers do exist; they contribute not only to school development and success at meeting its goals, but also to resilience and response in a crisis. These are as follows:

- **Fellowship in a Community of Shared Purpose and Values.** School leaders must seek to create deeply committed, caring and focused school communities committed to a common purpose and values.
- The freedom to **build and create** towards a common vision. School leaders must attend to organizational learning through sense-making, knowledge building, and by developing the organization's ability to learn. Building and creating curricular experiences as well as determining directions for the school is central to community members' sense of engagement, satisfaction, and commitment to the school community and its purposes.
- **A focus on student and life-long learning as the central purpose of schools.** This means attending to all learners' needs, social-emotional needs included; student learning must be acknowledged in all areas, not just the academic arena. Skills and attitudes necessary for life-long learning are also important. Meta-cognition (knowing how to learn and understanding oneself as a learner) is another important feature of this theme.
- **A positive culture and strong morale form the context necessary for student and organizational learning**. Positive personal and professional relationships matter and are formed through respect, appreciation, acceptance, trust, safety, humour and fun. Being recipients of an ethic of care supports staff and student learning. Learning is a largely a social endeavour. As such, team-work and cooperation are essential features of the organization of schools. Leaders must seek to build a sense of team—even family—where responsibility is shared.
- **Communication among all members of a school community is essential.** Collaborative processes will move the school towards its goals and enable it to realize its purposes. No single individual can achieve what many people focused on a common vision can achieve. Leaders must strive to create a culture marked by open and responsive communication. A meta-organizational understanding is important. A school must *articulate* itself: its culture must be defined including its legitimate processes and practices that allow for its success, and support its future directions.
- **Distributed leadership allows all members to step into leadership roles.** It honours the talents and professional skills of its people. Leaders don't own leadership; they are formally positioned to give and to share leadership.

- Leaders should consider the larger system within which the school operates, understand the reciprocal impact of the system's elements and the whole system; they should also understand the impact of the school's context, including its historical context. Accordingly, they understand the need to address individual and organizational healing and learning as well as to address external forces that might provide support for or impinge on that healing and learning;
- Leaders who understand that as crises and large change events such as reform, threaten and disorder the school's culture and very foundation, in response, the school is called to redefine and recreate itself.

These markers are common to the literature examined in this study and to literature related to successful schools. However, it is more often the case that, to our peril, we have underplayed the importance of some essential understandings.

The demands of the system have school leaders acting more from the system world and less often from the lifeworld. The building blocks of a rich and meaningful school culture (common vision, values, shared goals, and collaborative processes) are often set aside. Leaders must understand the critical importance of school culture, its building blocks, and the impact of their absence on school development, reform, and crisis recovery.

In an attempt to develop culture and build towards these elements, school leaders are tempted to tackle them as they might a shopping list. And, while it is important for school leaders to focus on developing these characteristics, the process by which they are achieved matters equally. Leaders need to be armed with the knowledge that this is a long walk, a complex process that cannot be prescribed. It does not follow a set of discrete, sequential steps, nor is it arrived at only once; rather the process will circle back on itself whenever threats or crises of any proportion arise.

Communicative action will support the development of a strong school culture and its important elements. In fact, I believe it is the only thing that will. When attributed the important place it deserves in schools, communicative action will allow collective wisdom, knowledge, and ethical understandings to have an affirmative effect on the school's development, problems, crises, or other system demands. To the extent a school relies on communicative action, the school's capacity for such action will grow.

Crisis and reform bring their own set of demands. Each by definition, draws into question past practice and other foundational aspects such as core values, visions, shared purpose, and relationships. The choice facing leaders and other participants is to

hunker down and protect what was or to see the crisis or reform as an opportunity to examine the very foundation of the school. To accomplish this, leaders can rely on the practical wisdom (phronesis) of its members to examine the situation, then to draw on relevant theory and their own experience to make the changes required for rebuilding and recreating (communicative action). I make a single proposition based on the findings of this study. School culture matters. A rich and meaningful culture built through communicative action, establishes fertile ground for development and reform. Additionally, it will enable the school organization to meet crisis and to learn and grow beyond it— to rebuild the social imaginary and seek a new normal.

Limitations

This is one school's story. Yet, the perceptions of the participants are validated in current literature. It is an epistemological claim of case study that even from a single-case study, theory can be generalized (Yin, 2009). As stated earlier, it is the goal of case study to mine the participants' stories for meaning and then, to relate that meaning to existing theories or discover the need for a new theory. Much of what was mined in the case of Oceanside relates to school development, reform, leadership, and crisis theory as well as to frameworks of understanding (e.g., ethic of care framework and the Four-Frames Model). This is useful information for school communities and their leaders as they seek to undertake school development, reform, or address crisis. The school organization theme arising from the External Team Accreditation Report, although not in the participants' stories, would have benefited from greater examination through a focus group.

The epistemological claims of grounded theory also allow the use of findings to be applied beyond the case or phenomenon itself (Lapan & Quartaroli, 2009). Yet, the time examined in Oceanside's history is long past. This study runs the risk of being seen to romanticize the past, to oversimplify the complexity of today's school, or to call for a return to the "good old days". The context has changed and much of what occurred then may not be possible within today's educational climate. In many jurisdictions the drive for teacher autonomy and increased unionism has caused some educators to resist whole school directions, in some cases to disregard the contextual factors, such as culture that supports school change. Some may be resistant to organizational learning and sense-

making activity. This study's findings, as they relate to school development and change, should be examined within the context of the present day educational climate.

Future Research

This study revealed a particular set of factors at play in the ability of Oceanside School to address the challenges it faced in the time period of this study. Processes such as phronesis and communicative action, not a prescriptive list of activities, helped to develop these factors; this study also showed how frameworks of understanding like systems thinking, complexity thinking, the four frames for organizational change, and ethic of care helped to create an understanding of the events, both in terms of the associated crisis and the somewhat concurrent reform. Additionally, the crisis necessitated focus on the lifeworld of the school and re-creation of the school's social imaginary. Future research studies in the following areas may support the work of educational leaders in school development, crisis recovery, and leadership:

- The centrality or degree of importance of the emerging themes to the school's ability to respond to crisis and reform was not determined in this study and might be useful in helping school leaders determine priorities.
- The field of school crisis and in particular, the stage of crisis recovery deserves more comprehensive study. Application of frameworks such as ethic of care and ethic of justice may be important in developing appropriate responses to all stages of crises.
- Schools, as organizational entities, resemble individuals in that they require opportunities to heal after a crisis. Closer examination of schools, post crisis, may assist in identifying perspectives and actions that will support organizational healing.
- Members of school communities must understand that crisis and reform are change events that will occur in schools. Each creates its own demands, stress (or *eustress*), and challenges. Crisis is certainly an undesired change event and often reform is received in much the same way. In fact, while one would never precipitate a crisis in order to obtain its positive effects, there can be positive outcomes. Both crisis and large-scale reform have the potential to re-energize and renew a school if its members are willing to engage in the processes necessary for self-examination and re-building. A framework for understanding all change events as stimuli for deep organizational learning will be of benefit.

Summary

What I once regarded as a magical mix of exceptional people brought together by happenstance, I now understand differently. This is not to deny the magic or the exceptionality of these people; it was a magical time, in a place filled with exceptional individuals. Particular factors and processes were at play, becoming apparent only when mined for years later, through the stories of the participants. I might have seen it then had we examined our circumstances reflexively. We conversed about the school, our choice of directions, and the best means of meeting our desired outcomes; we talked about the students' needs, the programs and best approaches, and how they were working; and we asked if we were doing things right and if we were doing the right things (Flood & Romm, 1996). What we neglected to talk about was why our actions were successful. In essence, we failed to apply phronesis and act reflexively to build our meta-organizational understanding; we did not put it to use sufficiently to gain the self-understanding and self-regulation vital to replication of the successes. Instead, we were content to view it somewhat nostalgically as a magical time. Dunne asserts that in order for practice to move "beyond the merely haphazard, knowledge needs to made the object of theory" (1999, p. 715). In so doing, important patterns emerge, allowing practice to advance and potentially be applied to new situations. Dunne calls for empirical work backed by *thickly descriptive studies* described as follows:

> Let it suffice to say that these studies will embrace a variety of narrative modes and be strongly hermeneutical in character....They will tell stories about particular projects or episodes in the history of an organization…they will do so with the kind of interpretive skill that can bring out the nuances of plot and character, the dense meshing of insights and oversight, of convergence or contrary motivations and interests, of anticipated or unanticipated responses from the internal environments (or irruptions from the external one), all conspiring to bring relative success or failure. (p. 717)

In this study, I have attempted to provide thick description and the interpretation necessary to answer the question of why this school was successful. Because it is limited to an in-depth study of one school and a long ago circumstance, my study might be classified as an "account condemned to a narcissism of the particular" (Dunne, 1999, p. 717). Alternatively, readers of this work might find significance in the depicted setting; it may illuminate other cases having "greatest potential effect for those most deeply in

the throes of the very particularity of another setting" (p. 717). For me, this study has provided an understanding of what made that magical mix. In the words of T.S. Eliot:

> We shall not cease from exploration
> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started
> And know the place for the first time.
>
> "Little Gidding"

References

Angelides, P. (2010). The efficacy of small internal networks for improving schools. *School Leadership & Management, 30*(5), 451-467. doi:10.1080/13632434.2010.513169

Berg, B. L. (2003). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Blankstein, A. M. (2004). *Failure is not an option: Six principles that guide student achievement in high-performing schools.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre & Wacquant. L. (1992). *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

British Columbia Ministry of Education. (1989a). *Policy directions.* Victoria, British Columbia, Canada: Queen's Printer.

British Columbia Ministry of Education. (1989b). *Primary program foundational document.* Victoria, British Columbia, Canada: Queen's Printer.

British Columbia Ministry of Education. (1989c). *Year 2000: A curriculum and assessment framework for the future.* Victoria, British Columbia, Canada: Queen's Printer.

British Columbia Ministry of Education. (1990a). *Primary program foundation document.* Victoria, British Columbia, Canada: Queen's Printer.

British Columbia Ministry of Education. (1990b). *Year 2000: A framework for learning.* Victoria, British Columbia, Canada: Queen's Printer.

British Columbia Ministry of Education. (1992). *The intermediate program: Foundations*. Victoria, British Columbia, Canada: Queen's Printer.

British Columbia Ministry of Education. (1994). *Building partnerships: Accreditation resource guide for external teams.* Victoria, British Columbia, Canada: Queen's Printer.

British Columbia Ministry of Education. (1996). *Manual of school law.* Victoria, British Columbia, Canada: Queen's Printer.

Brummet, A. J. (1989). *A mandate for the school system.* Victoria, British Columbia, Canada: Queen's Printer.

Carr-Chellman, A., Beabout, B., Alkandari, K. A., Almeida, L. C., Gursoy, H. T., Ma, Z., Pastore, R. S. (2008). Change in chaos: Seven lessons learned from Katrina. *Educational Horizons, 87*(1), 26-39. Retrieved from ERIC. (EJ815369)

Cayne, B. S., & Lechner, D. E. *The new lexicon Webster's dictionary of the English language.* (1988). New York, NY: Lexicon Publishing.

Charmaz, K. (2000). Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 509-535). London, England: Sage Publications.

Charmez, K. (2003). Qualitative interview and grounded theory analysis. In J. A. Holstein & J.F. Gubrium (Ed.), *Inside Interviewing: New lenses, new concerns* (pp. 311-330). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Coburn, C. E., & Stein, M. K. (2006). Communities of practice theory and the role of teacher professional community in policy implementation. In M. I. Honig (Ed.), *New directions in education policy implementation* (pp. 25-46). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Coombs, T. W. (1999). *Ongoing crisis communication: Planning, managing, and responding.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Cornell, D. G., & Sheras, P. L. (1998). Common errors in school crisis response: Learning from our mistakes. *Psychology in the Schools, 35*(3), 297-307. Retrieved from http://youthviolence.edschool.virginia.edu/violence-in-schools/pdf/common-errors.pdf

Criminal Code, R.S.C. 1985, c.46, s.753 (b). Retrieved from http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-46/page-420.html?term=753+b#s-753

Daly, T. (2008). School culture and values-related change: Towards a critically pragmatic conceptualisation. *Irish Educational Studies, 27*(1), 5-27. DOI:10.1080/03323310701837822

Datnow, A. (2006). Connections in the policy chain: The "co-construction" of implementation in comprehensive school reform. In M.I. Honig (Ed.), *New directions in education policy implementation* (pp. 105-124). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Deal, T., & Bolman, L. G. (2008). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Dunne, J. (1999). Professional judgment and the predicaments of practice. *European Journal of Marketing,* 33(7/8), 707-719.

Dunne, J. (2005). An intricate fabric: Understanding the rationality of practice. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society, 13*(3), 367-389.

Eliot, T. S. (1948). *Four quartets*. London, England: Faber & Faber.

Eriksen, E. O. (2004). *Understanding Habermas*. New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Everly, G. S., Boyle, S. H., & Lating, J. M. (1999). The effectiveness of psychological debriefing with vicarious trauma: A meta-analysis. *Stress Medicine, 15,* 229-233.

External Accreditation Team. (1995). *External Team Accreditation Report*. Unpublished manuscript.

Flood, R. L. (1996). Contours of diversity management and triple loop learning. *Kybernetes, 25*(7), 154-163.

Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Fullan, M. (2005). *Leadership and sustainability: System thinkers in action.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Fullan, M. (2006). *Turnaround leadership.* San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Gaonkar, D. P. (2002). Toward new imaginaries: An introduction. *Public Culture, 14*(1), 1-19.

Gibbons, M., & Keating, B. (1990). *How to become an expert: Discover, research, and build a project in your chosen field.* Tucson, AZ: Zephyr Press.

Gilpin, D. R. & Murphy, P. J. (2008). *Crisis management in a complex world*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Grimmett, P. P. (1996). The struggles of teacher research in a context of education reform: Implications for instructional supervision. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision, 12*(1), 37-65.

Hargreaves, A. (2005, February 17). *Sustainable leadership*. Paper presented at a meeting of the Coast Metro School Districts*,* Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Hargreaves, A., & Fink, D. (2006). *Sustainable leadership* (1st ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Hill, H. (2006). Language matters: How characteristics of language complicate policy implementation. In M. I. Honig (Ed.), *New directions in education policy implementation* (pp. 25-46). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Hodgkinson, D. (1995). Accountability in education in British Columbia. *Canadian Journal of Education, 20*(1), 18-26.

Honig, M. I. (2006a). Building policy from practice: Implementation as organizational learning. In M. I. Honig (Ed.), *New directions in education policy implementation* (pp. 124-148). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Howe, K. R. (1992). Getting over the quantitative-qualitative debate. *American Journal of Education, 100*(2), 236-256. Retrieved from http://nepc.colorado.edu/files/Howe_GettingOvertheQuantitativeQualitativeDebate.pdf

Jimerson, S. R., Brock, S. E., & Pletcher, S. W. (2005). An integrated model of school crisis preparedness and intervention. A shared foundation to facilitate international crisis intervention. *School Psychology International, 26*(3), 275-296. doi:10.1177/0143034305055974

Koutetes, B. (1994). *"I, Robert Olav Noyes, …"* (Master's thesis, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada). Retrieved from http://summit.sfu.ca/system/files/iritems1/5090/b14879153.pdf

Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2007). *The leadership challenge* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. Retrieved from http://www.loc.gov/catdir/toc/ecip077/2006103359.html

Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Lapan, S. D, & Quartaroli, M. T. (Eds.). (2009). *Research essentials: An introduction to designs and practices.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass Wiley.

Leedy, P. D., & Ormrod, J. E. (2005). *Practical research: Planning and design* (8th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Leithwood, K. (2003). *Teacher working conditions that matter. Evidence for change* Retrieved Mar. 17, 2009, from http://www.etfo.ca/Resources/ForTeachers/Documents/Teacher%20Working%20Conditions%20That%20Matter%20-%20Evidence%20for%20Change.pdf

MacSpeech Scribe [Computer software]. (2010). Burlington, MA: Nuance Communications.

Malen, B. (2006). Revisiting policy implementation as a political phenomenon: The case of reconstitution of policies. In M. I. Honig (Ed.), *New directions in education policy implementation* (pp. 83-104). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Malloy, W. W., & Allan, T. (2007). Teacher retention in a teacher resiliency-building rural school. *Rural Educator 28*(2), 19-27.

Marshall, G. (1998). *Ideographic versus nomothetic approaches.* Retrieved from http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O88-ideogrphcvrssnmthtcpprchs.html

Marzano, R. J. (2003). *What works in schools*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Marzano, R. J., & Waters, T. (2009). *District leadership that works: Striking the right balance.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

McLaughlin, M. (2006). Implementation research: Lessons learned, lingering questions and new opportunities. In M. I. Honig (Ed.), *New directions in education policy implementation* (pp. 209-228). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Millar, D. P., & Heath, R. L. (2004). *Responding to crisis: A rhetorical approach to crisis communication*. Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates.

Miller, D. N., George, M. P., & Fogt, J. B. (2005). Establishing and sustaining research-based practices at centennial school: A descriptive case study of systemic change. *Psychology in the Schools, 42*(5), 553-567. doi:10.1002/pits.20091

Mittroff, I., & Pauchant, T. (1992). *Transforming the crisis prone organization*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Noddings, N. (2007). *Critical lessons: What our schools should teach*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Leech, N. L., & Collins, K. M. T. (2008). Interviewing the interpretive researcher: A method for addressing the crises of representation, legitimations, and praxis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 7*(4), 1-17. Retrieved from http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/IJQM/article/download/1701/3818

Patterson, J. H., Collins, G. A., & Abbott, G. (2004). A study of teacher resilience in urban schools. *Journal of Instructional Psychology, 31*(1), 3-12.

Pepper, M. J., London, T. D., Dishman, M. L., & Lewis, J. L. (2010). *Leading schools during crisis: What school administrators must know*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.

Piantanida, M., & Garman, N. B. (2009). *The qualitative dissertation.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Razi, A., & DeChillo, N. (2005). High schools respond to crises: Lessons learned. *Journal of School Violence, 4*(2), 115-131. doi:10.1300/J202v04n02_07

Scahill, John H. (1993). Meaning-Construction and Habitus. *Philosophy of Education Society 1993 Yearbook.* Retrieved from http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/eps/PES-Yearbook/93_docs/SCAHILL.HTM

Seeger, M. W., Sellnow, T. L., & Ulmer, R. R. (2003). *Communication and organizational crisis*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

Senge, P. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization.* New York, NY: Doubleday.

Senge, P., Kliener, A., Roberts, C., Ross, R., Roth, G., & Smith, B. (1999). *The dance of change: The challenges of sustaining momentum in learning organizations*. New York, NY: Doubleday.

Sergiovanni, T. J. (1993). *Building community in schools*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Simola, S. (2003). Ethics of justice and care in corporate crisis management. *Journal of Business Ethics, 46*(4), 351-361. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/25075112

Skype (version 5.3) [Computer software]. (2003). Luxembourg, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg: Skype Ltd.

Smylie, M. A., & Evans, A. A. (2006). Social capital and the problem of implementation. In M. I. Honig (Ed.), *New directions in education policy implementation* (pp. 187-208). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Spillane, J. (2006). School districts matter: Local educational authorities and state instructional policy. *Educational Policy, 10*(1), 63-87.

Spillane, J. P., Reiser, B., J., & Gomez, L. G. (2006). Policy implementation and cognition: The role of human, social, and distributed cognition in framing policy implementation. In M. I. Honig (Ed.), *New directions in education policy implementation: Confronting complexity* (pp. 47-64). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Stoll, L., & Fink, D. (1996). *Changing our schools: Linking school effectiveness and school improvement*. Buckingham, England: Open University Press.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Strike, K. A. (2007). *Ethical leadership in schools: Creating community in an environment of accountability.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Stephenson, M. (2011). Considering the relationships among social conflict, social imaginaries, resilience, and community-based organization leadership. *Ecology and Society, 16(1).* Retrieved from http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol16/iss1/art34/ES-2010-3953.pdf

Sullivan, B. M. (1988). *The Royal Commission on Education: A legacy for learners.* Victoria, British Columbia, Canada: Queen's Printer.

Taylor, C. (2001). Two theories of modernity. *The International Scope Review*, 3(5), 1-9.

Taylor, C. (2004). *Modern social imaginaries*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Tondeur, J., Devos, G., van Houtte, M., van Braak, J., & Valcke, M. (2009). Understanding structural and cultural school characteristics in relation to educational change: The case of ICT integration. *Educational Studies, 35*(2), 223-235. doi:10.1080/03055690902804349

Ulmer, R. R., Sellnow, T. L., & Seeger, M. W. (2007). *Effective crisis communication: Moving from crisis to opportunity*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

van Dam, C. (2001). *Identifying child molesters: Preventing child sexual abuse by recognizing the patterns of the offenders.* New York, NY: Haworth Maltreatment and Trauma Press.

Van Matre, S. (1988). *Earthkeepers: Four keys for helping young people live in harmony with the earth.* Warrenville, IL: Institute for Earth Education.

Wernick, A. (2004). Comte, Auguste. *Encyclopedia of Social Theory.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications. Retrieved from http://www.sage-ereference.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/view/socialtheory/n56.xml

Wheatley, M. (2002). *When change is out of our control.* Retrieved from http://www.margaretwheatley.com/articles/whenchangeisoutofcontrol.html

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Appendices

Appendix A. Do the Cultural Norms of Your School Promote School Improvement?

	Never	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
1. Shared goals ("We know where we are going")	1	2	3	4	5
2. Responsibility for success ("We must succeed")	1	2	3	4	5
3. Collegiality ("We're working on it together")	1	2	3	4	5
4. Continuous improvement ("We can get better")	1	2	3	4	5
5. Lifelong learning ("Learning is for everyone")	1	2	3	4	5
6. Risk taking ("We learn by trying something new")	1	2	3	4	5
7. Support ("There's always someone there to help")	1	2	3	4	5
8. Mutual support ("Everyone has something to offer")	1	2	3	4	5
9. Openness ("We can discuss our differences")	1	2	3	4	5
10. Celebration and humor ("We feel good about ourselves")	1	2	3	4	5

Note. From Stoll and Fink (1996).

Appendix B. How Effective Is Your School?

	Never	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
1. Instructional leadership (firm and purposeful, a participative approach, the leading professional)	1	2	3	4	5
2. Shared vision and clear goals (unity of purpose, consistency of practice)	1	2	3	4	5
3. Shared values and beliefs	1	2	3	4	5
4. A learning environment (an orderly atmosphere, an attractive working environment)	1	2	3	4	5
5. Teaching and curriculum focus (maximization of learning time, academic emphasis, focus on achievement)	1	2	3	4	5
6. High expectations (for all, communications of expectations, intellectual challenge for all)	1	2	3	4	5
7. Positive student behaviour (clear and fair discipline and feedback)	1	2	3	4	5
8. Frequent monitoring of student progress (ongoing monitoring, evaluating school performance)	1	2	3	4	5
9. Student involvement and responsibility (high student self-esteem, positions of responsibility, control of work)	1	2	3	4	5
10. Climate for learning (positive physical environment, recognition, incentives)	1	2	3	4	5

Note. Halton Board of Education (1998).

Appendix C. Letter of Introduction

Mar. 15, 2010

Dear (Participant),

It is a pleasure to be in contact with you once again. I am now a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership Program at Simon Fraser University. In fulfilment of the requirements for completion of my program, I am conducting a research study and invite your participation.

The focus of the study is to tell the story of _____ Elementary[10] identified in the study as Oceanside Elementary, in the time between 1988 and 1994. Through interviews I am gathering and collating the stories of those who participated in or had association with the school at the time under consideration.

The study is described in the Study Information letter attached. If, after reading this document, you are willing to participate, please reply to this email. I will then contact you to answer any of your questions and arrange an interview at a time and place convenient to you. In addition, I will mail to you, two copies of the Informed Consent Form and a two-page Survey that can be completed and returned to me at the time of the interview. Please sign both copies of the Informed Consent Form and have your signature witnessed by another adult. I will retain one copy and you will retain a copy for your records. Please be advised that you may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. To do so, please indicate this to me by email stating, “I no longer with to participate in this study.”

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

Ann Skelcher

[10] The name of the school is removed for the purposes or this report in order to ensure participant and organization anonymity.

Appendix D. Study Information Document

Title of Research Project:	Reorientation to a Desired Future: The Case Study of "Oceanside"[11] School
Student Researcher:	Ann Skelcher Simon Fraser University, Faculty of Education, Ed.D. Program (Leadership), 604-885-3943
Place the study will be conducted:	Sunshine Coast, BC, Canada

Who are the participants?

All of the 19 participants were associated with the school during all or part of the time period that is the focus of the study. They will be: 11 teachers and support staff members who were employed at Oceanside School; 4 parents of students enrolled at the school; 4 others including the principal of the high-school that received Oceanside students after they progressed to the secondary level, the Principal of Oceanside after the time under study, the District Coordinator of the Year 2000 Program Implementation, and the principal of another elementary school in the School District.

What will the participants be required to do?

Participants will respond to a two-page survey about school culture and effectiveness and participate in an individual interview. If necessary to the purposes of the study, it may be appropriate to arrange a Focus Group session to allow participants to exchange and share their views. The broad purpose of the interview will be to permit participants to describe their perspectives of their experiences at the school during the time-period under consideration and to elaborate on the parts of the experience that most affected them. If, after reviewing a participant's interview, I have other questions or clarification is needed, the interviewee will be contacted by phone for further conversation. If the results of the interviews indicate that a Focus Group will be appropriate, participants who have indicated a willingness to contribute to such a session will be separately contacted in order to arrange for that session. Participants will be asked to sign an agreement to keep confidential all information shared in the Focus Group.

[11] This name is a pseudonym for the school.

How are the participants recruited?

Potential interviewees will be invited to participate via email correspondence. Those who reply positively will be provided with the Study Information letter and a Consent Form. They will be informed that their participation is voluntary and that refusal to participate will not affect their employment in any way.

Purpose of Study

The purpose is to tell the story of this school's development as an organization during the period of interest to this study and to gather and collate the stories of those who were participants in the experience. Through the participants' stories of their experiences with a school between 1988 and 1994, I hope to elucidate the factors and processes associated with an organization's concurrent experience of full crisis-recovery and successful implementation of reform.

Risks to the participants, third parties or society

The risks to participants are minimal, however, the experiences that some participants discuss may be personally sensitive and as such might be emotionally upsetting for some. If this occurs, arrangements will be made for participants to receive support from a qualified counsellor in the community. The school, school district, community and the teacher paedophile have been assigned pseudonyms. Participants will be assigned a pseudonym of their choosing.

Time Commitment

The maximum time requirement for participants will be about 1.5 hours including the interview, and Survey completion. If a Focus Group is implemented as an extension to the research, this time requirement would be extended to 3-4 hours.

Personal Benefits of Participation

Participants, particularly those who were members of the school staff, may benefit from the opportunity to recall and share the stories of their participation in the school during this important period in the organization's history.

Participants Who Change Their Mind about Participating

Participants may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. To do so, they indicate this to the researcher by email stating, "I no longer wish to participate in this study".

Conflict of Interest

As I no longer have a supervisory role with any of the participants, there is no concern for conflict of interest.

Confidentiality

To ensure the confidentiality of individuals' data, each participant will be given a pseudonym and be identified by a participant identification code known only to the principal investigator. At no time will any of the participants' names be released to the current school staff or administration or to the School District, or in any published documents. If a name is stated by a participant in an interview or during the Focus Group, the name will be deleted in the transcript. If a Focus Group is conducted, the person engaged to record the session on audio or video recording or take written notes, will sign a Confidentiality Agreement (Appendix F).

Security of Data

Taped interviews will be stored as MP3 format recordings on a password protected memory stick and transcribed using computer software (e.g., *Mac Speech*, *Nivivo*, etc.). Transcriptions and recordings will be identified by code and stored in a locked location in my home. These will be stored in a location separate from the Consent Forms and participant Code and pseudonym list. Surveys will be identified by participant pseudonym. If a Focus Group is video recorded, the recording and any transcriptions that result will be stored with the memory stick. All data will be destroyed 2 years after the conclusion of the study. The anticipated date of completion is May 2013. Paper records will be shredded, memory stick and video recording will be erased and the memory stick destroyed. Publication of any part of the interview will be done only with the specific consent of the participants who will be given an opportunity to review the manuscript of any proposed publication in advance.

Participant Feedback

After the study is completed, participants will be provided with a copy of the thesis.

Contact Information

If participants have any questions about the study at any time, they may contact either Dr. Heesoon Bai, Director of Graduate Programs, Faculty of Education, Dr. Milton McClaren, Emeritus Professor of Education, Faculty of Education, SFU at 250-764-8781 or via email to mmcclaren@sfu.ca or Ann Skelcher at 604-885-3943 or email askelcher@sd46.bc.ca.

Statement Regarding Concerns about Participation

Participants will be provided with the following statement:
You are assured that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at Simon Fraser University. It has also been given consent by School District No. 46 (Sunshine Coast) Board of School Trustees. However, the final decision about participation is yours. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, you may contact the Office of Research Ethics, Dr. Hal Weinberg at 778-782-6593 or hal_weinberg@sfu.ca.

Appendix E. Informed Consent by Participants

Title of the Research Project: Reorientation to a Desired Future:
A Case Study of Oceanside School

Researcher: Ann Skelcher

This research is being conducted with the permission of the Research Ethics Board, Simon Fraser University. The chief concern of the Department is for the health, safety, and psychological well-being of research participants.

Informed Consent: Having been asked to participate in the research study named above, I certify that I have read the procedure specified in the Study Information document that describes the study. I understand the procedures to be used including those for confidentiality and security of data. I understand the personal risks and benefits to me in taking part, the time commitment, and procedure to use if I want to withdraw from the study. Contact information has been provided to me in the event that I have questions, comments or concerns resulting from my participation in the study.

I agree to participate in the survey, the interview and if requested, the Focus Group and to answer related follow-up questions that may be required.

Name of Participant: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Name of Witness: _____

Signature of Witness: _____

Date: _____

Pseudonym: _____

Appendix F. Participant Confidentiality Agreement

I, _____, research assistant, agree to keep all the information shared during my discussions with the researcher confidential by not discussing or sharing the information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the researcher or other participants.

Participant

_____	_____	_____
(print name)	(signature)	(date)

Researcher

_____	_____	_____
(print name)	(signature)	(date)

If you have any questions or concerns about this study please contact the Office of Research Ethics, Dr. Hal Weinberg at 778-782-6593 or hal_weinberg@sfu.ca.

I, _____, the Research Assistant responsible for recording the Focus Group, agree to:

1. keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the researcher.

2. keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession.

3. return all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) to the researcher when I have completed the research tasks.

Research Assistant/Recorder

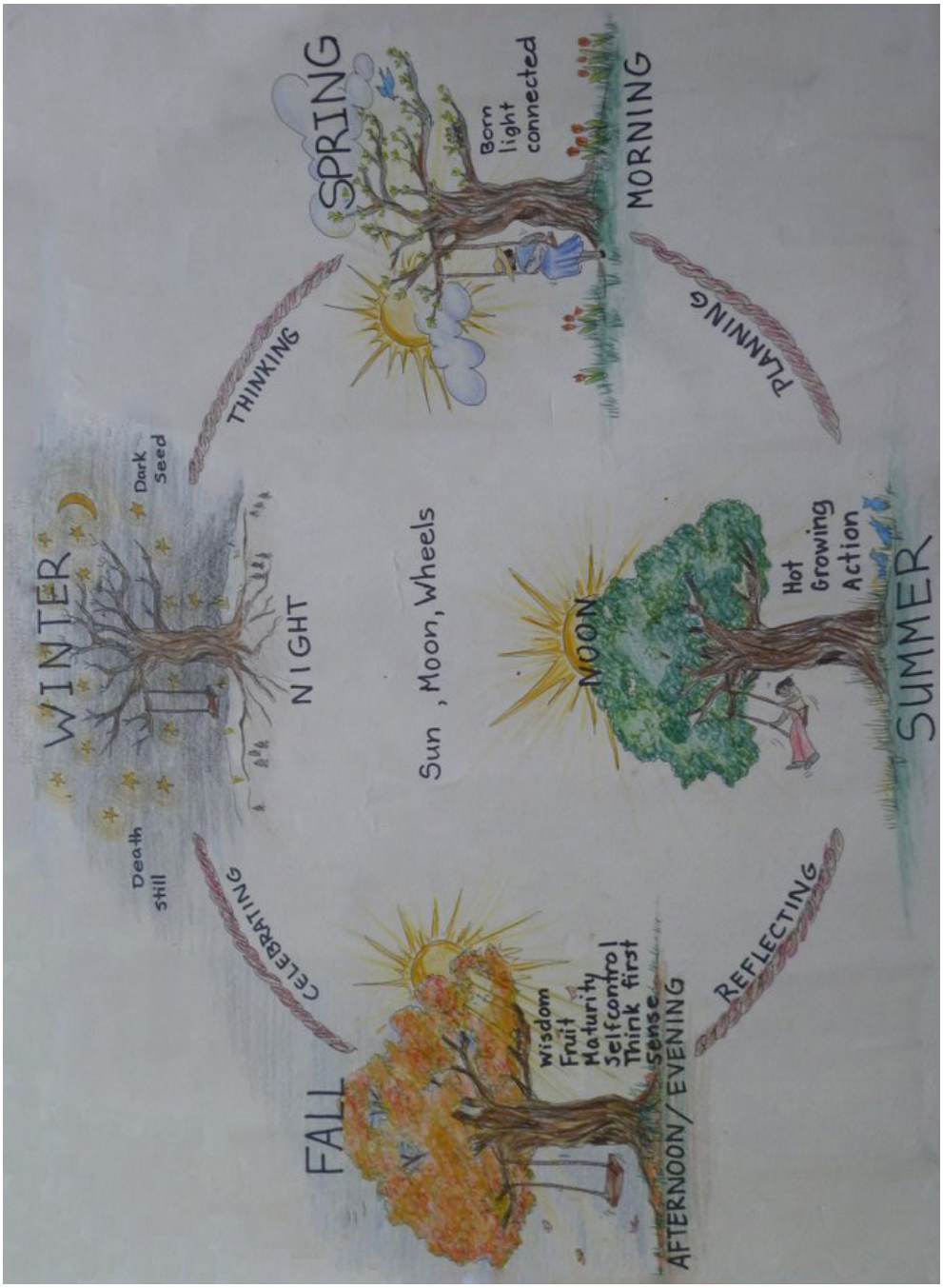
_____	_____	_____
(print name)	(signature)	(date)

Researcher

_____	_____	_____
(print name)	(signature)	(date)

If you have any questions or concerns about this study please contact the Office of Research Ethics, Dr. Hal Weinberg at 778-782-6593 or hal_weinberg@sfu.ca.

Appendix G. The Creative Cycle[12]



Note. Drawing by Janet Crosby (Teacher) and Susan Elliot (Parent); used with permission.

[12] This implementation framework used by students and staff, provides guidance through the stages of idea identification, goal-setting, planning, connecting, taking action, reflecting, and revising. Introduced to Oceanside by the leaders of Educo Adventure School (100 Mile House, BC).