

Educational Change: A Case Study of Nine School Leaders
in Prairie View School Division

by

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Abstract

It has been said that the only thing constant in life is change. Whether it is a change in the seasons, in a stage of life or in one's thinking, change is a part of the ebb and flow of living. Educational institutions are not immune from change, and indeed, should model the learning process and be the very places where practices and procedures are continuously being examined, revised, and enhanced. This qualitative study uses Michael Fullan's Six Secrets of Change (love your employees; connect peers with purpose; capacity building prevails; learning is the work; transparency rules; and systems learn) as a filter through which to view the process of educational change. Nine school principals stratified across Early Years to Senior Years schools were interviewed to reflect on their personal experiences with facilitating educational change within their work contexts. The data collected from the interviews was collated according to each of the six secrets to discover what commonalities might exist. Each of the six secrets was discussed by presenting the supporting data and some generalizations were drawn. Data from the interviews indicated that all six secrets were evidenced in varying degrees.

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List of Tables

Table 1: Fullan's Change Knowledge Theory	17
Table 2: Views on Educational Change	45

List of Figures

Figure 1: Fundamentals That Assist and Resist Change.....	40
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Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
List of Tables	iv
List of Figures	v
Table of Contents	vi
Chapter One: Background to the Study	1
Introduction	1
Purpose of Study	5
Significance of the Study	7
Limitations of the Study	9
Organization of the Study	10
Chapter Two: Review of the Literature	11
Introduction	11
History of Formal Education	13
History of the Challenges and Failures of Educational Reform	14
Review of Change Knowledge	17
Barriers to Educational Change	22
Role of Teacher as Change Agent	29
Change Leadership	32
Theories of Educational Change	42

Fullan's Six Secrets.....	51
Secret #1: Love your employees.....	54
Secret #2: Connect peers with purpose.....	57
Secret #3: Capacity building prevails.....	63
Secret # 4: Learning is the work.....	65
Secret # 5: Transparency rules.....	67
Secret # 6: Systems learn.....	69
Conclusion	72
Chapter Three: Methodology.....	73
Introduction	73
Methodology	74
Sources of Data.....	74
Description of Study Environment.....	75
Participant Selection.....	75
Study Participants.....	77
Researcher Positioning	79
Data Analysis.....	79
Research Rigour	82
Confidentiality and Ethics	82
Summary.....	83

Chapter Four: Results	84
Introduction	84
Findings	85
The relationship between change and vision.	85
Change defined.	86
Communicating vision.	89
Sharing vision with staff.	92
Contexts for change.	94
Fullan's six secrets.	95
Secret #1: Love your employees.	95
Building relationships.	95
Knowing your staff.	97
Communicating value through time.	98
Inviting Voice.	99
Caring in Action.	100
Secret #2: Connect peers with purpose.	101
Data.	102
Challenges.	107

Secret #3: Capacity building prevails.	109
Shared leadership.	110
Professional development.	111
Resistance to Change.	114
Benefit of a new environment.	116
Secret #4: Learning is the work.	117
Data.	117
Challenges.	120
Secret #5: Transparency rules.	124
Quantitative data.	124
Anecdotal Data.	126
Communication.	127
Financial transparency.	129
Secret #6: Systems learn.	130
Divisional efforts.	131
Systemic changes.	134
Summary.	135
Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusions.	137
Introduction.	137
Review of the Problem.	137

Discussion of the Findings.....	138
Time.	139
Communities of learners.	139
Data.	140
Leaders' beliefs and values.	140
Response to conflicts or challenges.	142
Role of communication.....	142
Sense of urgency.	143
Personal change.	143
Significance of a new environment.....	145
Relationships.....	145
Implications for Practice	146
Varied approaches for success.	146
Leader self-knowledge.....	147
Data.	147
Recommendations for Further Research.....	148
Unanticipated results.....	148
Teacher perspectives on the Six Secrets	149
Systemic capacity building	149
Professional learning communities.	150

Summary	151
References	153
Appendix A Study Overview and Consent Forms	158
Appendix B Interview Questions	165

Chapter One

Background to the Study

Introduction

It has been said that the only thing constant in life is change. Whether it is a change in the seasons, in a stage of life or in one's thinking, change is a part of the ebb and flow of living. However, change is not an animate object that has the power to act on its own; people create change and change generated by people often begins with the belief that something better exists. The notion of an improved way of doing things generates thoughts and ideas, questions and wonderings. Contemplation of change elicits diverse responses. For some, the idea of change invokes feelings of excitement, anticipation and freedom. Others respond with a sense of inadequacy or incompetence, fear or dread. Change of any sort is rarely a clear-cut proposition and can be tremendously difficult to achieve.

This study focuses specifically on educational change and what current research reveals about how educational reform is most effectively achieved, concentrating primarily on the role of the school administrator. However, the track record of educational reform is quite dismal. While changes have been made, a limited number of legislated reforms, issued mandates, or attempted changes have impacted student learning or altered classroom practice significantly (Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, & Manning, 2001). A quick fix for school improvement does not exist. The suggestions are often multifaceted and demanding, just like schools and the adults and children working in them. For change to be fully effective and sustainable, reform must occur across structural, cultural, technological and procedural domains (Schlechty, 2001). Recognizing the need for improvements or change and agreeing to them may be simple enough, but providing the supports and creating the conditions for change to be lasting is a far more difficult proposition.

Part of the challenge is that the change process is rarely a linear one with predictable outcomes. It requires individuals with deep professional resolve, unwavering commitment, and a clear sense of purpose. This study will explore current theories about facilitating educational change, focusing specifically on the theories of Michael Fullan and his “Six Secrets of Change”, and juxtaposing that knowledge with how current educational leaders believe they bring about reform in their own buildings.

Conjectures and theories about how educational change can successfully be implemented and why some change initiatives are so effective while others have a negligible or negative impact are as numerous and varied as the change efforts themselves. According to Fullan (2008), the true test of the value of a theory is whether it is grounded in action, as effective ones always are, and whether it adapts and evolves over time. His research and observations over time have led him to the conclusion that a good theory wins over a strategic plan every time. A promising theory is not context specific but helps to guide thinking in practical and insightful ways that results in understanding complex situations and in choosing means of action likely to achieve success (Fullan, 2008). A strategic plan can be prescriptive and limiting in that it presents as a series of steps to be blindly followed, rather than a grounded theory that encourages a fluid, responsive approach to change. Simply put, a good theory travels over time and across contexts.

Currently, there is a plethora of research and writing on educational reform, focusing on topics ranging from: 1) new approaches to teaching (Marzano, 2003), 2) new forms of assessment (Davies, Camerson, Politano and Gregory, 1992), 3) technological advancements, 4) curriculum reform (McTighe and Wiggins, 2005), 4) leadership styles (Leithwood, 2006), and 5) structure and organization (Stiggins and Dufour, 2009), just to name a few. There is also information on how successful – or unsuccessful – the reform efforts have been. It cannot be

stated strongly enough that effective school reform is an intensely complex and multifaceted process. One needs to consider all of the groups and issues connected to schools and education from curricula and their delivery, to the structure and organization of the buildings themselves, to the universities that prepare prospective educators, the students and parents, teachers and administrators, communities and businesses, politicians and governments. The list is endless and daunting, requiring players at every level to recognize the need for change. However, the seemingly overwhelming nature of the task must not lead people to throw up their hands in despair, closing their classroom or office doors and continuing business as usual in their bubbles of isolation.

Despite the multiple approaches to and varied analyses of educational change, Fullan (1993) observes that:

The insurmountable basic problem (*to effective school reform*) is the juxtaposition of a continuous change theme with a continuous conservative system. The way that teachers are trained, the way that schools are organized, the way that the educational hierarchy operates, and the way that education is treated by political decision-makers results in a system that is more likely to retain the status quo than to change. When change is attempted under such circumstances it results in defensiveness, superficiality or at best short-lived pockets of success. (p. 3, italics added)

In other words, schools by the very nature of their origin and structure at all levels are predisposed to stability and constancy. And while children, especially those in Early Years, do benefit from predictability and consistency (Manitoba Education and Youth, 2003), stagnation and rigidity can be the negative flip side of a largely conservative organization. As will be

mentioned many times throughout this study, to truly effect change, one must gain a perspective and an understanding of the educational system in its entirety. To view educational change from a simplistic or narrow standpoint is to ensure failure. Fullan's quote suggests another common weakness in many educational change efforts, that being the difficulty of sustaining reform efforts and ensuring that they occur on a wide enough scale to have significant impact. Wagner, Kegan, Lahey, Lemons, Garnier, Helsing, Howell, and Rasmussen (2006) refer to this disconnect between our school structure as a primarily conservative system and the need to change it as the impossible task of trying to "rebuild an airplane while you are flying it" (p. xv). While this analogy may not be an entirely accurate one as engineers and mechanics are generally given the task of rebuilding planes, not pilots; the feedback from pilots is crucial for improving the aircraft and communication between all parties lies at the heart of successful modifications. Fullan (1993) argues that educators must become "agents rather than victims of change" (p. ix), and that they must position themselves as the cause of educational reform rather than as the effect.

Educational change that is sustainable not only requires teachers willing to view how they go about business in their classrooms differently; it also requires a new kind of leader. Old models of top-down hierarchy do not create the kinds of change needed and it is unrealistic to expect one individual to be able to manage the scope and breadth of change required in education. Shared leadership is the model most widely accepted, where views from administrators, teachers, students, parents and community members are given voice. Change requires leaders "whose expertise is more invested in helping a group create the shared knowledge necessary for sustained improvement than in being the certain source of the answers and solutions" (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 209). In regards to leader expertise, Greenleaf (2003) in his writing on servant leadership comments that mastery of the "processes, techniques, and

knowledge sources” of an individual’s field of work results in one becoming an expert or a critic, not necessarily a leader. Greenleaf goes on to say that leadership trumps expertise and that successful leadership involves the uniting of flawed individuals to help them achieve something that they never could individually.

Purpose of Study

It is not with a single minded purpose that I engage in this study. My objectives are numerous. However, my primary goal is to better understand how I can more effectively fulfill my role as an educational leader by increasing my awareness of the complexities of the school administrator’s role, specifically in regards to facilitating change, and by deepening my awareness of my own capabilities and limitations in enabling that process. I hope to reach that level of understanding by determining firsthand how school leaders recognize the need for improvement within their organizations, what actions they undertake to achieve reform, the challenges they face in implementing change, their responses to challenges, and the learning that occurs for them as they navigate through and reflect on the process. In listening to the narratives of other administrators, I hope to extend my own understanding of my profession, the demands of my job, my qualities as a leader, and ultimately of who I am as a person. I suspect that deep within, my unexplored fears represent barriers to achieving effective change. By increasing awareness of my strengths, I will be able to build on them and maximize my ability to achieve desired goals. Wagner et al. (2006) refer to the need for educational leaders to refocus their outward and inward vision, through the intensely challenging and personal work of self-reflection and realization. Deeply held beliefs and assumptions influence perceptions of a school administrator’s role and the interplay between that role and the surrounding individuals and systems. Unquestioned beliefs can become restrictive beliefs that prevent forward motion.

Becoming aware of personal impediments to change is the first step towards achieving the goal of organizational change.

I will endeavor to remain aware of my biases as I seek out narratives that reflect the innovative and positive work of educational leaders in their continual quest for improvement. I believe that it is part of the school principal's role to initiate change, not just manage the status quo, and that effective principals are constantly pushing themselves to better personal practice first. As a current educational leader myself, I will be mindful that leaders of successful organizations possess "deep personal humility" and "intense professional intent" (Collins, 2001), as I navigate my way through this study and the learning process.

The purpose of this study is to look for evidence of common underlying principles in how educational leaders achieve change within their buildings and to observe how they implement their desire for and knowledge of change into action. The central focus of this thesis is to look for commonalities between the ways and means that educational leaders facilitate change within their schools, and the current research and knowledge on educational reform. In exploring the journey of educational change, the roles of teachers and school leaders will be examined as well as factors involved in the change process itself. In order to discuss educational change most comprehensively, varying notions of current effective educational leadership will also be briefly mentioned. For the purpose of this study, the terms educational leader, school leader, school administrator, and principal will be used interchangeably. Each term provides a slightly different nuance, with none completely capturing the breadth and range of the role that the individual in charge of a school assumes (Hoy & Miskel, 2001). As well, the concept of change will be referred to as reform, transformation, restructuring, improvement, reorganization, and/or modification, to provide variety in writing style and to best describe the different types of change

that occur. The use of the term case study is appropriate in that this study provides a snapshot of a small number of school principals in one school division at one point in time.

Although the work of several educational change theorists will be broadly considered, Fullan's theories of educational change, specifically what he calls the "Six Secrets of Change", are explored in greater depth. Insights into facilitating change will be gathered from interviews with educational leaders from Elementary, Middle, and Senior Year levels, and then will be compared with the founding principles of Michael Fullan's "Six Secrets of Change". The sample interview population will be stratified as Early Years, Middle Years, and Senior Years to determine if there are subtle differences in the way change is initiated across levels. Although evidence of all six secrets may be evident in any context, perhaps some secrets may be emphasized more than others depending on the level of the school in which they are used. It is also desirable to collect data from the entire range of schools within our public education system to provide as broad a view as possible and to help validate the information collected.

Given this context, the research questions for this study are:

1. How do principals conceive of change in schools?
2. How do principals perceive that they facilitate change within their schools?
3. Do principals' perspectives of educational change initiatives align with Fullan's Six Secrets (2008)?

Significance of the Study

This study is not more significant than any other study on educational change, but it does provide a glimpse at various change initiatives in the education field that are relevant for me as a colleague and employee in the same division as the individuals who will be interviewed. As mentioned earlier, the findings of this study will be significant for me and for others as we seek

to work within our schools and divisions to continuously facilitate change. Conversations with colleagues will be influenced by the study's results as I share my learning with others.

Hopefully, this study will help to address some of the questions and wonderings that we all have about the work we share.

Within my own school I observe areas where growth can occur and I want to know how change can most effectively be achieved. My interest in educational change began as a grade four classroom teacher with my frustration at not being able to meet the diverse needs of all my students in a manner that I desired. I intuitively turned to my colleagues as the individuals that I had the strongest professional relationship with and communicated with most frequently, sensing that they also shared my dissatisfaction, but fear of exposing my own inadequacies prevented me from doing so honestly. I wanted to improve my practice by more directly meeting my students' needs, but was unsure of exactly where to begin. As my role in educating children changed from classroom teacher to counselor to vice principal, my understanding of how we "do school" and the existing needs within schools broadened from a classroom and grade level, to a school and division perspective. Now, as a newly appointed principal, my undertaking will broaden even further.

Attending conferences and listening to speakers such as John Raulston Saul, Rick Stiggins, Richard DeLorenzo, Andy Hargreaves, and Michael Fullan inspired me to do more reading related to educational change and to engage in professional conversations with my colleagues. Reading about the theory and practice of educational change as well as listening to discussions with my colleagues gave me the courage to start making some small, but intentional changes amongst the school staff I most recently worked with. One of my first priorities was to create regular, scheduled times for teachers to talk – not about how to respond to boys coming in

late for recess, or who would lead our next assembly – but ones about what was happening in their classrooms, what were sources of success and what were sources of frustration related to student learning. Book studies were encouraged as teachers were exposed to notions of best practice that were supported by research. Staff meetings began to look different as greater participation was invited and solicited, and a professional development component was introduced.

Limitations of the Study

Some of the limitations of this study are as follows:

1. Time and finances will limit the number of school administrators that I will be able to interview.
2. Administrators who have facilitated change under their leadership, who are willing to be interviewed, and who received permission from their school division will participate in the study.
3. Administrators will be selected according to the criteria of wanting representation at various grade levels (ie: Early Years, Middle Years, and Senior Years).
4. Administrators will be selected from one division only and interviewed at one point in time.
5. Data is only collected through interviews.
6. The amount of literature that exists on educational change is extensive and there is much valid and significant information that will not be addressed in this study due the limits of time and space.

The nature of qualitative research and the questions themselves will limit the findings of this study. The questions are open-ended and the data collected will depend upon the interviewee's ability to be reflective and honest. Some questions may cause the interviewee to

consider an issue for the first time and therefore not provide a complete account of the events. However, upon consent of participation, interviewees will be clearly informed about the nature of the interview content so they can prepare in advance. As well, the interview responses will be member checked for accuracy. This study is based on an individual's ability to self-report and the interviewee will be asked to provide specific examples to clarify their report.

Organization of the Study

Chapter Two begins with a brief summary of the history of educational reform to date and reviews current literature surrounding educational change, the role of teachers and educational leaders. Impediments to achieving sustainable educational change will be noted and specific theories of educational change will be explored. Chapter Three describes the methodology used in this study. Study participants and their work contexts will be briefly described. Chapter Four highlights the findings of the study gathered in the context of the interview method based on case studies, and discusses the specifics of how each of Fullan's (2008) Six Secrets appears in the field. Chapter Five provides a broader discussion of the implications of the findings and recommendations for further study.

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

Introduction

The changes that have occurred in our world and society in the last 50 years are exponentially greater than the changes in the 100 years preceding that time period (Schlechty, 2001). Innovative technologies account for much of the change, and there is no sign of the current trend slowing. Today's students and teachers are surrounded by reams of multi-media information available on the spot and they live in an increasingly transient and diverse society. Schlechty observes that "when the rate of change outside an organization is greater than the rate of change inside, the continuing existence of that organization is threatened" (2001, p. 1). However, he remains hopeful that these threats can be transformed into opportunities under leadership that responds with powerful and dynamic changes to the way schools do business. Part of the paradigm shift that must accompany educational reform is a view of learning as more relational, fluid and unrestricted, and dependent on educators helping diverse groups of students construct meaning from their learning experiences (Brown & Moffett, 1999). Public schools and public school educators must discover how to assert themselves in this new environment or surrender not only their students' attention and interest to the competing educative forces emerging outside of the school context, but lose the students themselves to charter, private or home school options (Schlechty, 2001).

The demand for change in our public school system stems from a variety of sources for an array of reasons. Some concerns may spring from legitimate anxiety that students are not learning what they should, or as much as they ought to learn. Despite the assertion that public school systems are change resistant, the reality is that they are change inept (Schlechty 2001).

Schlechty contends that change oriented educational leaders should gain an understanding of change adept systems and transfer that learning to their school context. There are often so many changes initiated within schools that teachers and administrators feel overwhelmed and lack a clear sense of direction. Conversely, not all change is positive or progressive and some educational reform is “superficial, driven by political popularity and economic stringency rather than educational values” (Hargreaves et al., 2001, p. 121). Part of the dilemma in bringing about effective educational reform is to ascertain which change efforts are valid and how then, they can best be implemented. This chapter will not weigh the merits of one reform effort over another; rather, it will examine some of the current literature and theories surrounding the implementation and sustainment of educational reform, with particular attention to the role of school administrators. Educational reform will be broadly defined as those innovations that result ultimately in increased student learning and achievement. Student achievement cannot increase unless the capacity and skill level of teachers is increased, and teacher professional development will not improve without the direction of an astute leader with deep professional intent and knowledge. As a starting point, the history of educational reform efforts will be briefly mentioned. Barriers to successful change implementation will be discussed as they result in failed change efforts. Since teachers have such a direct and powerful influence on student achievement, the role of teachers in the change process will be briefly explored. Theories of successful change efforts, the elements of effective school reform, and the role of administrators in the change process will be explored in greater depth. The chapter will end with examining Fullan’s “Six Secrets of Change”, the mirror against which the results presented in chapter four will be held up to.

History of Formal Education

If history is one of our best teachers, then to gain an appreciation of the history of school reform, it is helpful to briefly review the efforts of educational change to date. Historically, education for the majority of children began as an informal process where skills and values were passed down from generation to generation by parents and/or relatives. Skills taught were directly related to an individual's future vocation. Children of the elite were taught by privately employed tutors or teachers. The structure of schools as we know them today was established in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. With the dawn of the industrial revolution and the move away from agriculture, a need for standardized and compulsory education was established to ensure a more consistently trained work force. In 1893 The Committee of Ten, a National Education Association (NEA) task force made up largely of scholars and chaired by president of Harvard University Charles W. Eliot, decided that schooling would take place over 12 years, and would reflect a factory model of organization (Hayes Jacobs, 2010). It was determined that children should be grouped into separate classes according to age, that they should be taught by individual teachers, and that content should be segregated into subject areas, scheduled by lessons in a relatively condensed time period, and assessed with seatwork tasks (pencil and paper) completed independently. The old factory-like, assembly line school model was based on a "one-size-fits-all" philosophy in which students passively received and regurgitated information delivered by experts (Brown & Moffett, 1999).

It is clear that little has changed in how, when and where we educate children over the past 100 years from curriculum to organization to physical structure, and that students and teachers remain "captives of space and prisoners of time" (National Commission on Time and Learning, 1994); yet the world that surrounds today's child is vastly different from that of

children living in the early 1900s. However, these same restrictive historical features of “school” are a source of security to many teachers, indeed synonymous with the profession of teaching, and provide familiarity to parents. The historical impact of a one teacher, one class system has kept teachers separated and closed within the four walls of his/her classroom and in effect prevented progress and change.

The habits that come from history and that are often perpetuated by policy have inscribed isolation and individualism into the imaginations of many teachers. According to Lortie (1975) isolation protects teachers from scrutiny, insulates them from invidious comparisons with their colleagues, seems to elevate them beyond help and the implications of weakness or incompetence that come with it, and underlies teachers’ rights to professional independence – to follow their own consciences and teach as they wish (Hargreaves et al. 2001, p. 165). Changing history’s legacy is not an easy proposition, and old structures cannot lead new learning (Hayes Jacobs, 2010). Brown and Moffett (1999) facetiously suggest that “we may have skipped a century” as we struggle to create a 21st century alternative to the 19th century model that dominates educational organizations today.

History of the Challenges and Failures of Educational Reform

In his writing on the history of educational change in the United States, Seymour Sarason (as cited in Lieberman, 2005) theorizes that World War II was a catalyst for much of the educational reform movement. The recruitment process to support the war effort revealed that a number of eligible individuals lacked basic literacy skills to appropriately benefit the military and therefore remedial classes were set up to increase recruits’ level of education. When the war was over, adults determined that future generations should experience a better standard of

education than their parents had (Lieberman, 2005, p. 19). To help schools meet increasing demands, the federal government in the United States provided financial assistance for public schools for the first time. Sarason also points out that a significant number of parents returned from service suspicious of authority and unwilling to be passive bystanders in their child's education. This resulted in increased parental involvement and influence in children's formal education. Scientific and technological advancements played a significant role in the war and an increased emphasis was placed on education in science and technology to ensure that challenging countries would not have an advantage. These changes were, in many ways, positive ones. However, the history of educational change is not typically so affirming.

Schlechty (2001) states that "it is not an exaggeration to say that the history of school reform is a history of complaint" (p. 4). The history of educational change is riddled with contradictions such as the tug-of-war between whole language learning versus phonics, conservative and liberal political perspectives, the demand for uniform standards in a time of increasing diversity and individualized instruction, ability grouping and inclusive classrooms (Brown & Moffett, 1999). Fullan (1993) comments that reflecting on and analyzing the history of educational change tests one's ability to work within dichotomies. He categorizes the last 50 years of educational reform in the following ways. The 1960s are described as the adoption era where externally mandated innovations such as student-centered instruction, team teaching, inquiry-oriented learning, and open area teaching to name a few were experimented with and practiced, and became the measure of success. The more innovations a school took on, the better. During the 1970s, the word "innovation" developed negative connotations, largely because many of the innovations of the 1960s were impulsive and not the result of thoughtful, pedagogically based and supported decision making. One only needs to look at the retroactive costs and efforts

invested in “closing up” open area schools, although the initial intent of encouraging greater teacher collaboration was valuable. People were experiencing failure in their attempts to practice the short-sighted innovations of the 1960s. The word “innovation” was replaced with “implementation”, preferred because implementation addressed the nature and extent of change as well as the factors and processes that influenced how and what changes were achieved in practice.

Guided by the failure of the previous two decades, throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, greater success was achieved, and research and practice document some success stories with lists of key factors and processes associated with these accomplishments (Fullan, 1992). During the 1980s, the image of principal shifted from gatekeeper to instructional leader, a title many principals have not yet achieved and one that generates some debate itself. At this point, some knowledge and insight into the change process was acquired. Over time, this body of understanding evolved into what Fullan (2009) describes as “change knowledge” and which he defines as an awareness and perceptiveness surrounding the process of change and the foundational principles for putting change into practice. Patterson and Rolheiser (2004) agree that specific learning about the change process increases the success and sustainability of a change initiative. Fullan boldly states that “the presence of change knowledge does not guarantee success, but its absence ensures failure. It is the missing or neglected and thus fatal element in most educational change efforts” (2009, p. 110). If, as Fullan states, knowledge of the change process is such a critical ingredient in successful educational reform, then further exploration of the topic is warranted.

Review of Change Knowledge

Table 1

Fullan's Change Knowledge Theory

Key drivers	Defining actions
1. Engaging people's moral purpose	Explaining the "why" of change, how it directly benefits students and connects with the work teachers already do
2. Building capacity	Developing new knowledge, competencies and ways of interacting professionally
3. Understanding the change process	Comprehending all aspects of the change process
a) Strategizing versus strategy	Strategizing is process oriented; strategy is product oriented
b) Pressure and support	Balancing between expectations and encouragement
c) Awareness of the "implementation dip"	Understanding that initially new methods will be less successful than old practices
d) Understanding fear of change	Giving up the known and embracing the unknown
e) Technical versus adaptive challenges	Looking for solutions beyond what we currently know
f) Persistence and resilience	Striving for flexibility, perseverance and creative problem solving
4. Developing cultures for learning	Connecting teachers with each other professionally
5. Developing cultures of evaluation	Analyzing student learning and effective teaching practices
6. Focusing on leadership for change	Sharing leadership and building leadership capacity
7. Fostering coherence making	Communicating a clear sense of purpose and an understanding of how things interconnect
8. Tri-level system transformation	Creating a common vision between school, division and governmental levels

Fullan's writings on change knowledge have progressed over many years and been transformed from four key points to eight, and have strongly influenced his "Six Secrets of Change" (love your employees, connect peers with purpose, capacity building prevails, learning is the work, transparency rules, and systems learn) which will be shared in greater depth at the end of the chapter. A brief review of Fullan's eight drivers of change knowledge is helpful as a foundation for understanding his "Six Secrets of Change" as described in Table 1.

Hargreaves et al. (2001) state that "although educational change can be initiated and imposed by heavy-handed edicts, only the deeper human capacity of individuals and schools can sustain reform efforts over time" (2001, p. 159), which fully supports Fullan's first key driver in change knowledge – engaging people's moral purpose. Fullan (2001) optimistically believes that as the human race evolves, moral purpose becomes stronger and has a "predestined tendency to surface. Effective leaders exploit this tendency and make moral purpose a natural ally" (p. 27). One could argue that evidence for this positive tendency is lacking in society at large with human rights violations demonstrated on a global scale. The use of the verb "exploit" in the same sentence as the concept of moral purpose in Fullan's quote is somewhat contradictory. Fullan (2001) observes that leaders who combine a deep understanding of the intricacies of change with respect to and comprehension of moral purpose are more likely to be successful and that "moral purpose keeps change honest. Change keeps moral purpose from stagnating" (Fullan, 1993, p. 18). When the "why" of change is explained to teachers and when they perceive the change to result in raising the bar and closing the student achievement gap, they develop a broader sense of understanding, their moral purpose is engaged and their desire to implement the change is captured. Research has shown that literacy achievement is directly connected with individual economic success and productivity, which benefits all of society (Barr & Parrett, 2008).

Teaching children to become literate and thereby increasing their future options, is one example of how teachers connect deeply with the moral purpose of their work in educating citizens of the future.

The second driver for successful change is a concept that is repeated many times throughout this paper – building capacity. Individual, collective and organizational capacity can harness the power of people working together to move the system forward (Fullan, 2009). The development of new knowledge, competencies and new ways of interacting professionally and purposefully with colleagues, help educators to create a new collective identity besides their identity as individual teachers which motivates people to work together for greater change. Patterson and Rolheiser (2004) believe that capacity is increased by establishing a safe and caring environment, encouraging professional discussions at every opportunity, and by leaders modeling collaborative work through staff meetings and professional development sessions.

Driver three focuses specifically on understanding the change process and breaks it into six steps. Fullan first discusses the differences between strategies and strategizing, and innovations and innovativeness. Strategizing and innovativeness are preferred because they both indicate a mindset, or approach to viewing challenges that is action or process oriented, rather than product oriented, which is implied with the terms strategy and innovation. Second, applying pressure with support helps shift the status quo. Human nature often dictates that “pressure without support leads to resistance and support without pressure leads to drift or wasted resources” (Fullan 1992, p. 25). The balance between pressure and support should be equal and is an integral part of creating a new cultural identity. Patterson and Rolheiser (2004) describe this duality as persistent expectations countered by ongoing support. This balance is captured in the description a colleague used to define the actions of her principal at school; pushing hard with

gentle hands. The third point, awareness of the “implementation dip”, helps to allay people’s fears and sense of incompetency when changes do not initially go as well as anticipated. Doing things a new way creates challenges when they are implemented on an individual basis, and are often even more complex when many people are involved. The expectation of an implementation dip often shortens the period of ineffectiveness because people are prepared for frustrations and the need to make adjustments. When trying a new way of doing things, the new method will often be less successful at first and often people give up too early and revert to their old practice without having given the change a fair chance.

Closely connected with driver two, are drivers four and five, developing cultures for learning and developing cultures of evaluation (Fullan, 2009). In essence, driver four, developing cultures for learning, draws energy from having teachers talking to teachers with current information and research to guide their discussions. Peers who have begun implementing new ideas and have experienced success can be powerful change agents within a school or district when time and space is intentionally created for collaboration. The enthusiasm from their new learning can be contagious and a wise leader provides them with opportunities to share their discovery with the rest of the staff, and opportunities for interested staff to visit their classrooms. The consequence of driver five is that it encourages disciplined inquiry where ideas and learning outcomes are evaluated in a culture of trust and honesty, not blame. More will be discussed later about the importance of building cultures of collaboration and creating Professional Learning Communities for change to successfully occur in conjunction with Fullan’s Secrets Two, Three and Four. Patterson and Rolheiser (2004) discuss the importance of working to reculture schools by setting clear goals, having teachers try new practices and share results with colleagues, and by encouraging risk taking and openness to possibilities. Cultures of learning and evaluation are

also created when teachers sharing high expectations and assuming responsibility for their colleagues' learning, collaboratively build on individual strengths to make the whole greater than the parts.

The connection between leadership and effective reform is the sixth driver of change. Again, this topic will be addressed in greater depth later in the paper. However, when discussing a leadership style that promotes sustainability, high profile, enigmatic leaders are not desirable. Too much focuses on the leaders themselves and not enough on the organization or the creation of future leaders. Charismatic leaders can accomplish great things in the short term, but rarely does their impact leave a lasting mark (Collins, 2001). Effective change leaders ensure that sustainability is a part of their change work, indeed “the main mark of a school principal at the end of his or her tenure is not just impact on the bottom line of student achievement, but rather how many leaders the principal leaves behind who can go even further” (Fullan, 2009, p. 115). Ensuring that capable leaders are groomed and ready to continue the work in moving a school or organization forward connects directly with driver two, building capacity. In analyzing the most effective leadership styles in the business world, Toyota was found to have no leadership effects when one leader took over for another; business continued seamlessly and the company continued to expand (Fullan 2008), a testimony to the benefit of intentionally building leadership capacity.

Driver seven – fostering coherence making – also speaks to the importance of leadership. Unless a leader can communicate a clear sense of purpose and an understanding of how things interconnect, fragmentation and overload for workers can result. In their discussion of the skills 21st century leaders need to acquire, Wagner et al. (2006) concur on the shift in thinking that needs to occur; “the need to understand the interrelationships among the various components of

the work, presents an enormous learning challenge for change leaders” (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 97). Just as with the human body, bones, muscles and organs are all interconnected and work together to achieve motion and life; a failure in one area of the system affects the entire mechanism. Once coherence is created, driver eight, the need for systems to adapt and build capacity laterally, can begin. For successful reform, not only do individuals need to change, but also the systems in which they function. Echoes of driver eight are found in Fullan’s sixth secret, systems learn.

Part of change knowledge involves an understanding of peoples’ fear of change; “the losses are specific and tangible (it is clear what is being left behind), but the gains are theoretical and distant” (Fullan 2009, p. 113). The benefits cannot be experienced until complete implementation occurs, which requires time and confidence in the implementation. Individuals’ beliefs do not change until they have personally experienced results from doing things differently – a change of doing needs to occur before a change of believing (Fullan, 1992).

Barriers to Educational Change

Brown and Moffett (1999) describe knowledge of the change process as a powerful “amulet” that will assist educators on their change journey and confront six myths that they believe impede educational progress. Hayes Jacobs (2010) agrees that there are impediments to successful educational change and takes a slightly different angle as she exposes what she views as three falsehoods. The first myth uncovered by Brown and Moffett (1999) is the belief that “this too shall pass”; if we wait long enough the initiative will go away, as has so often happened in the past and eventually be replaced by something else. Schools and educators are reluctant to adopt a change if they do not understand its pedagogical underpinnings, and more significantly, if the change does not align with their own belief system of students and learning. Shaking up

and altering belief systems is not a simple task. Brown and Moffett's (1999) first myth is somewhat related to first false belief that Hayes Jacobs (2010) suggests impedes progress; the belief that "the good old days are still good enough" (p. 15). Adults tend to be nostalgic about their own school experiences and feel most secure in their children having an educational experience that they can identify with and most closely mirrors their own. There is always comfort in the familiar, regardless of how ineffective the familiar may be. Both myth number one (Brown & Moffett, 1999) and falsehood number one (Hayes Jacobs, 2010) support maintaining the status quo and quietly doing nothing to implement change initiatives, rather clinging to past practice and pedagogy. The third false belief (Hayes Jacobs, 2010) that prevents educational reform fits well at this point as it is closely tied with the first falsehood Hayes Jacobs presents. False belief number three is "too much creativity is dangerous – and the arts are frills" (p. 17). While developing reasoning and logic skills is essential in education, so too is the nurturing of creativity and problem solving abilities. On this point, Pink (2006) contends that the future belongs to creative, inventive, emotionally astute big-picture thinkers rather than the analytical, linear thinkers esteemed in the past.

While caring deeply about children is critical to successfully educating them, it is not enough "just to care about the kids", which is myth number two (Brown & Moffett, 1999). Concern and dedication are good starting points but are not enough if what happens in classrooms is not creating gains in student achievement. Teachers are not free to do as they wish in their classrooms if their actions are not inviting student learning. Myths three and four are closely connected (Brown & Moffett, 1999). Many educators have the perception that everyone shares common values and beliefs about instruction (myth three) and assume that all educators speak the same language (myth four). Teachers may know the names of their teaching partners'

children and what they like to do on weekends, but without opportunities intentionally created for professional dialogue they cannot build a common language and reach agreement about values, norms and standards. Cranston (2011) comments that shared values are foundational for building relational trust amongst individuals. Brown and Moffett (1999) believe “The challenge of contemporary education is to regain a sense of shared purpose and to recognize, all over again, the power of the learning process in transforming lives” (p. 18). Hayes Jacobs’ (2010) second falsehood exposes the flip side of Brown and Moffett’s myth two and three thinking. Hayes Jacobs identifies the second faulty belief as “we’re better off if we all think alike – and not too much” (2010, p. 15). Brown and Moffett state that educators mistakenly assume that they all think alike and share a common language that reflects that thinking, while Hayes Jacobs points out the danger that if everyone does think alike, then they don’t think very much. Although Hayes Jacobs’ view may be primarily an American one and not accurately reflect our Canadian experience, she contends that there exists a societal love/hate relationship with being educated that subtly, though directly affects education systems and how they are valued. She fears a fundamental shift in American thought that embraces narrow thinking, dogma and resistance to new ideas. Regardless, both Brown and Moffett’s and Hayes Jacobs’ perspectives point to the necessity of establishing cultures of professional dialogue in schools.

Brown and Moffett (1999) reveal the fifth myth that bars educational reform as allowing untested or unchallenged “if only” thinking about conditions often beyond anyone’s control. Lamenting “if only” the kids had good homes, “if only” we didn’t have to deal with such diversity, “if only” parents would read to their children at home, etc., prevents forward motion. Schlechty (2001) believes that it is defeatist to use issues beyond the control of educators as excuses for failure and analogous to business organizations blaming their customers for a lack of

profit. While it may provide a degree of comfort to hold such a false belief, it is essentially untrue that what needs changing in schools is beyond the school's control. Fullan (1992) warns that "if only" statements externalize the blame and tend to immobilize people, removing their autonomy and both their responsibility to address the challenge and the necessary commitment to change. When educators believe that the problems in schools are beyond their control, feelings of powerlessness, hopelessness, and eventually despair can result (Schlechty, 2001). Hattie (2009) calls such a mindset "deficit thinking" where solutions are limited at best and problems too overwhelming to solve. Such an outlook does not provide the energy and mind set required for action. History is full of examples of men and women who have overcome seemingly insurmountable odds with success as their legacy.

The belief that the educator's lot in life is one of isolation and separation (Lortie, 1975) is the sixth destructive myth Brown and Moffett (1999) discuss. They state that the factory model of schools reinforces the notion that we must "go it alone" and that the effectiveness of a teacher working in isolation is greater "than the amassed synergy of shared decision making, planning, and problem solving" (Brown & Moffett, 1999, p. 44). A recurring theme in this paper is the need for collaboration to harness the collective power of individuals. Although the principal is responsible in a hierarchical sense with improving teachers' skill and knowledge levels, such an achievement is limited in any organization if it is dependent upon one person. By building capacity so that teachers assume responsibility for their own learning and that of their colleagues, the strength and breadth of the knowledge base results in a richness that enables progress through shared and multiple leadership.

Fullan (2001) laments that despite the fact that schools are places of teaching and learning, they are "terrible at learning from each other" (p. 92). The irony is not lost on

Hargreaves (1995), either, when he comments that although schools exist to educate children, knowledge about beliefs and methods of learning are seldom applied to the professional learning of teachers or the organization as a whole. There are countless theories and perspectives about why educational reform has such a dismal track record. In commenting on why most school restructuring or strategic planning initiatives are doomed for failure, Leithwood, Aitken and Jantzi (2006) concede that the initiatives are well-intentioned, but often the method of implementation actually exacerbates the problems they were targeted to solve. To achieve these well-meaning goals usually requires the kinds of information that schools and districts don't possess and the end result is the misuse of significant amounts of money, time, and energy, as well as a loss of public trust. The difference between a successful implementation and a failed one can sometimes just be a matter of time. Often new initiatives are abandoned in the middle, because the effort required to overcome the unexpected challenges seems too great and because people lack change knowledge and awareness of the implementation dip (Fullan, 2009). Another frustration is that too often restructuring or strategic plan proposals produce an unmanageable number of priorities and "so much turbulence is created in the organization's environment that well-targeted improvements become impossible to make; and initial increases in commitment to the organization's directions are followed by pessimism and disillusionment" (Leithwood, et al., 2006, p. 2) and eventually the school or division loses heart and finds it impossible to continue implementing the original plan.

Hayes Jacobs (2010) believes that educational reform is destined for ruin if we do not reconceptualize the four key structures that affect curriculum: the way we group learners, configure professionals, organize our space (physical and virtual) and manage time (short term and long term). These components are inextricably linked and systemic, and for effective reform

to occur all four components must be considered. For concrete and innovative examples (alternative bell schedules, condensed classes, etc.) of how schools are attempting to integrate the four structures Hayes Jacobs points out, one can refer to the recent publication by the Government of Alberta outlining high school flexibility enhancement (Fijal, 2010). Schlechty adds that we also need to shake up the way we distribute information and power within school organizations, and the way we analyze the rules, roles and relationships that determine school organizational behaviour, making educational reform both a way of restructuring and reculturing schools. Hayes Jacobs proposes that too many reform efforts fail because in addition to not implementing changes across the four key structure areas, the impetus for the change is too detached from the learning needs of the students. Schlechty (2001) concurs and states that restructuring and “recurriculuming” schools will not produce the promised results unless they are combined with improving the quality of the work provided to students; opportunities to learn that are engaging, rewarding, and compelling.

Wagner et al. (2006) believe that educational reform efforts in the last two decades have failed primarily because the true essence of the education dilemma has never been grasped and that the problem is less about a “rising tide of mediocrity than about a tidal wave of profound and rapid economic and social changes” (2006, p. 3). These changes are not well understood by many educators, parents, and community members and when the problem is not accurately defined, a solution cannot be clearly targeted. Wagner et al. (2006) propose that because of profound changes in our society, namely increased consumerism and a breakdown of the traditional family unit, today’s youth lack self-control and do not respect authority. However, we have already been cautioned not to fall prey to “beyond our control” thinking. When Schlechty (2001) reflects on where youth obtain their information today compared to traditional sources 50

years ago, he believes that adult authority is further eroded when schools ignore the fact that youth have essentially unrestricted access to information. In the past adults had greater control over what information children received and where they received it from. Conventional methods of classroom management and teaching rely on deference to authority and hard work, a consequence of student self-control. Many adolescents are disengaged with school and say they would be motivated to learn and work hard if they had more hands-on opportunities to learn and closer relationships with their teachers (Wagner et al., 2006). While students can be forced to attend school, they cannot be forced to be attentive while they are there. By not addressing the topic of student motivation and engagement in debates about education reform, Wagner et al. (2006) believe that a critical ingredient is being omitted.

Connected to student motivation and engagement is assessment. Kohn asserts that conventional methods of assessing educational success – usually standardized tests – aren't “merely uninformative about the educational issues that matter: they prevent us from understanding what is really going on and what to do about it” (1999, p. 21). Framing the issue of what is wrong in schools through the lens of low test scores, does not encourage focusing on the real problem of what is lacking in students' understanding. Kohn (1999) supports educational change which focuses on clear, manageable goals and demonstrates an awareness of structural changes that support student learning. Teachers must be engaged as active partners in the change process and provided with necessary training and support while being allowed to experience and experiment with the new instructional technique. Having teacher support and expertise is key to successful change efforts.

Role of Teacher as Change Agent

A critical component of successful educational change is the quality of the teacher implementing the change; the quality of a child's education cannot exceed the quality of the child's teacher (Fullan, 2009). As a society we have agreed that children have the right to learn, and our desire is for them to learn well. Quality teachers need to foster rich intellectual lives for themselves and need to see themselves as leaders in the change effort. Too often educational reforms have resulted in reduced professional judgment for teachers. At the same time, teachers' beliefs about "what works" in their classrooms sometimes blatantly ignore research that urges them to move away from such practices (Hattie, 2009). Teachers resist changes they suspect are driven by political agendas without the best interests of educating children at heart. Hargreaves et al. (2001) say that misguided reform can also harm at-risk or struggling students and devastate working conditions that enable teachers to do their jobs well. In this instance, opposition to change is positive.

Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, and Manning (2001) look at educational reform from grades seven and eight teachers' perspectives and gain understanding from spending hours talking and listening to teachers in classrooms and staffrooms, through formal interviews and casual conversations. They learn that just like their students, "teachers are not vessels to be filled, and learning is not osmotic. Changing beliefs and practices is extremely hard work" (p. 118) and results from deliberate, sustained effort. Kohn (1999) asserts that teachers must be a part of the change reform process and questions how students can be expected to be "problem solvers, thinkers and decision makers when we do not expect the same of their teachers" (p. 95).

Similarly to how students learn, teachers need to envision the change, or new learning, in practice as well as in theory. Many students benefit from viewing exemplars of expected learning

and having the opportunity to tailor fit what they know to their own learning style and context. So do teachers. Teachers need to be able to comprehend the motive for change, understand its purpose, and be certain that they can acquire the knowledge and skills required to implement it and that it will benefit their students (Fullan, 1992), as well as believe that the innovation will be supported over time. This understanding takes time to plan and reflect, opportunities to collaborate with peers, as well as support and encouragement from leaders. Just as with student learners, teachers need modeling, training, individual coaching, practice, feedback, and opportunities to observe to develop new skills (Hargreaves et al., 2001) before the new learning can become their default position. Most teachers tend to replicate the culture and methodology of their experience as a student. “Teaching is a culturally embedded act and very difficult to change” (MacNeill, Cavanagh, & Silcox, 2003, p. 5). When the supports are in place to create growth conditions for teachers, an increased sense of urgency, efficacy and energy will result. Conversely, when supports are not in place, teachers become frustrated and drained of energy. Too often, just as teachers are beginning to make sense of a change, school or district priorities are re-aligned and energy is diverted to yet another reform, resulting in the creation of the “this too shall pass” thinking alluded to earlier (Brown & Moffett, 1999) and the fragmentation that plagues school reform efforts.

What educational change demands from teachers is both intellectual and emotional, which compounds the complicated nature of educational change. As Hargreaves. et al. (2001) suggest, “Their work cannot and must not be reduced to skill and technique alone. Teaching should also be imbued with moral purpose and a social mission that ultimately develops the citizens of tomorrow” (p. 121). A classroom teacher is responsible for teaching both academic and social skills, both of which are more effectively achieved when the student/teacher

relationship is vibrant. As in all caring professions, how teachers conduct themselves emotionally matters; it determines whether students are engaged or disinterested, whether parents feel comfortable approaching them, and whether colleagues are invited to collaborate or encouraged to keep their distance. When describing their work, teachers often express a great deal of care and concern for their students as individuals and a desire to improve their practice so they can better meet the learning needs of their students. As Hayes Jacobs (2010) has observed in working with educators, most teachers want to become 21st century teachers; they just don't know what to do differently.

In the data that Hargreaves and his colleagues (2001) collected regarding teachers' perspectives on educational reforms, they found that teachers' emotional connections with their students were so strong that they influenced almost all teacher decisions, including how they responded to changes that affected their practice (2001). When a teacher struggles with making a technical or intellectual change, meaning a change in his/her core educational beliefs and practice, there is an emotional component involved as the teacher grapples with honest reflections about his/her current practice and how the changes will be manifested in their teaching and classroom work with students. Teachers often judge the merit of an educational change in terms of their own emotional goals and relationships with students, parents and colleagues (Hargreaves et al. 2001). Brown and Moffett (1999) state that heroic schools "view change as a highly personal process in which people assess with their minds and hearts whether the proposed change is aligned with their own values and beliefs; whether the cost of changing is worth the proposed rewards" (1999, p. 135). Century (2009) acknowledges that most people have difficulty accepting change and are more likely to adopt practices that closely align with what they already do. However, if the fit is too comfortable, the change is likely not one at all,

and if the fit is too remote, the possibility of it being accepted and tried is minimal. Century (2009) talks about the “sweet spot of change” (p. 3) where the initiative is not too challenging, yet sufficiently different to move current practice forward.

Change Leadership

The demand upon educational organizations to improve the learning outcomes of students has not only placed pressure on teachers as the primary providers of learning, but has resulted in increased scrutiny of school leadership as well. Leithwood, Aitken, and Jantzi (2006) justify devoting significant space in their book to describing successful school leadership because of the critical influence leadership has upon lasting, effective change. Fullan (1992) states that the principal is often cited as a key figure in facilitating or resisting change and that initiatives actively supported by the principal have a greater degree of success – actions do speak louder than words. Hargreaves et al. (2001) have no doubt that significant school-wide change cannot occur without effective school leadership. Leithwood et al. (2006) refer to a variety of qualitative and quantitative studies that provide persuasive evidence aligning the effects of leadership on student achievement and school environments. While little research exists on the effects of teacher leadership on student learning, Leithwood et al. (2006) emphasize the benefits of drawing on leadership from all sectors – administrators, teachers, parents, students and members of the community at large in making change successful. MacNeill, Cavanagh and Silcox (2003) state that true leadership is about change and that leadership without change is simply “management of the *status quo*” (p. 6). Leadership is an act that motivates others (MacNeill et al. 2003). While the intricacies of successful school leadership may be difficult to define, the results of effective leadership are more easily identified in terms of positive student

engagement and learning outcomes. Individual teachers can effect change within the confines of their classrooms, but school-wide change will only occur with supportive, purposeful leadership.

Often the pressure of educational reform falls in the hands of teachers, and “although everyone wants to change the teacher it is also time for change agents and change addicts in the command centers of educational reform to begin to change themselves” (Hargreaves et al., 2001, p. 135). Wagner et al. (2006) offer an alternative systems change structure and a list of proficiencies for leaders to reform education. Vander Ark (2006) states that greater transformation would occur if leaders were aware of the reciprocal changes that need to occur at organizational and individual, personal levels. Leaders must learn how to take action to transform organizations into what they need and want to be, and must also engage in the act of transforming themselves into the kinds of persons they need and want to be to better serve their learning communities. Vander Ark and his colleagues formed the Change Leadership Group to address why educational improvement efforts so often break down. They refer to the inward (individual) and outward (organizational) work of school reform as the “dual focus” (Wagner et al. 2006, p. xvii) that is mandatory for educational leaders. Thomas Greenleaf (2003) in his writings on servant leadership believed that the failure of educational reform lay in “too much intellectual wheel spinning, too much retreat into ‘research’, too little preparation for and willingness to undertake the hard, and sometimes corrupting, tasks of building better institutions in an imperfect world, too little disposition to see ‘the problem’ as residing *in here* and not *out there*” (Greenleaf 2003, p. 40). Greenleaf’s perspective on the role of research in guiding educational reform seems to contradict current theorists’ emphasis on using recent findings to inform discussions and choices. However, agreement exists on the need to accept personal responsibility for the lack of improvement and the need for hard work to effect change.

Educational leaders focused on leading change require humility and courage to uncover and confront personal obstacles to reform as well as outside resistance.

Leaders must also adopt a mindset of humility and confidence in addressing challenges. Fullan mentions frequently that we live in an increasingly complex and unpredictable world, one in which you cannot guarantee a successful future. He cautions that, “Leaders who operate from a position of certitude are bound to miss something, are likely to be wrong more than their share of times, and almost certainly will not learn from their experiences” (2008, p. 117). In promoting the benefits of renewal coaching, a framework for assisting people and organizations accomplish change, Reeves and Allison (2009) state that because renewal coaching prepares for disappointment and loss, or failure if you like, the likelihood of enduring and sustainable change is increased. Fullan proposes that the two greatest failures of leaders are “indecisiveness in times of urgent need for action and dead certainty that they are right in times of complexity” (2008, p. 6). Brown and Moffett (1999) reflect on how true mentors and figures of wisdom in mythology are inclined to ask questions rather than provide answers. Wagner et al. (2006) refer to leaders’ immunities to change, that is, ways they actually undermine their own success. Hence the emphasis on leaders working to sharpen their outward and inward vision, through the difficult yet powerful inner work of self-reflection and recognition where leaders identify ways they limit their progress and actually complicate the situation whether through action or evasion (Wagner et al. 2006). Our assumptions influence our perceptions of how the system and individuals around us function. These hidden beliefs can become limiting beliefs that act as barriers to moving forward. “The work of organizational change inevitably runs smack into the work of personal change no matter what direction one turns” (Wagner et al. 2006, p. 221). Becoming

aware of personal impediments to change is the first step towards leaders achieving the goal of organizational change.

Leaders must practice and model persistence and resilience. Challenges will come and the way forward will not always be clear. Reeves and Allison (2009) comment that “*learning* is just an acceptable word for *change*” (p. 141 italics original) and that change encompasses loss – loss of the known, of the comfort of familiar practices. Although most people anticipate the results of change and learning, few relish the hard work associated with completing it. At times, feelings of loss and vulnerability are misinterpreted as resistance to change (Brown and Moffett, 1999). Resilience is necessary to transform disappointments and loss to the energy and drive required to continue on. “Without loss, there is no need for resilience. Without resilience, renewal is impossible” (Reeves and Allison, p. 141). In discussing the power that comes from resiliency and the stress associated with change, Brown and Moffett (1999) emphasize the importance of educators taking time to care for themselves to avoid burnout. Effective leaders recognize their own limitations and know when and how to get out of the way to create opportunities for others to contribute. “When people learn from each other, everyone can gain without taking away from others” (Fullan, 2008 p. 128). Effective and sustained change will only occur when leaders have a mindset of anticipating and overcoming barriers over time. Leaders must cultivate an intuitive understanding of the need to balance focus and flexibility and learn to view obstacles as opportunities. Leaders need to embrace a mindset where change is viewed as an opportunity rather than a problem. Schlechty (2001) believes that educators must come to grips with the enormous social shifts and technological changes that confront them and must be prepared “to do things that have never been done, under conditions that have no precedents in our history” (p. 9). Brown and Moffett (1999) point out that “For schools to become responsive

communities of caring and of academic rigor for all students, business as usual is no longer an option” (1999, p. viii).

Leithwood et al. (2006) propose four broad areas of leadership excellence that benefit leaders supporting change in any context. The first essential skill is “setting directions” which includes naming and communicating a vision, creating group consensus of goals, and fostering a culture of high performance. The ability to assist staff in developing a shared perspective of the organization and its goals, and being able to communicate a clear sense of purpose and direction is pivotal. Change is much more successful when individuals feel a sense of ownership in the change process and have a clear picture of what they are moving towards. Fullan comments that when you have a clear goal in mind it can be accurately described with fewer words (2008, p. 125). Research states that “people are motivated by goals that they find personally compelling, as well as challenging, but achievable” (Leithwood et al., 2006, p. 61). Such goals help people make sense of their work and enable them to create a sense of identity within their work context (Leithwood et al., 2006, p. 61). Parallels exist between Fullan’s Secrets Three, Four and Five – capacity building prevails, learning is the work, and transparency rules – and Leithwood’s first essential skill, but Fullan encourages more teacher autonomy and a less top-down approach. Fullan (1993) actually cautions leaders against overplanning or overmanaging the creation of a vision. He recognizes that ownership is built through opportunities to problem solve, to wrestle through the process of developing a shared goal and purpose. Vision building must be open-ended, dynamic and fluid, addressing both the content and the process, able to be refined and redefined as the change evolves. Fullan supports a general sense of direction but fears that goals too specifically determined can actually limit the change process. Leithwood et al. (2006)

maintain their belief that shared goals must be clearly communicated and articulated at the outset of a change initiative, but that they should not be close mindedly unresponsive.

Once a clear and compelling focus has been determined, employees need to have the skills required to achieve those goals. This second essential skill in Leithwood et al.'s (2006) list of fundamental proficiencies, "developing people", aligns with Fullan's Secrets One, Three and Four: love your employees, capacity building prevails and learning is the work. Specifically, the ability of developing people includes "offering intellectual stimulation, providing individualized support, and providing an appropriate model" (Leithwood et al., 2006, p. 62). Hargreaves et al. (2001) cite three fundamental tasks for individuals in leadership and support roles, the first being to support teachers – and at times gently push them – to adopt changes that matter. Changes that matter need to directly support student achievement and learning and need to be determined through honest conversations that respect the perspectives of all stake holders. Support for teachers does not just mean assisting them with the implementation of a specific reform, but helping them develop a responsive mindset that is always open to and interested in discovering ways to continually improve their teaching practice. However, Hargreaves also cautions that, "If people are forever in a state of becoming, they never have the chance to simply be" (2001, p. 123). Wise leaders ensure that steps in the change process are celebrated along the way and communicated to all shareholders. This affirms what is being done and empowers individuals as well as sets the standard for future desired action.

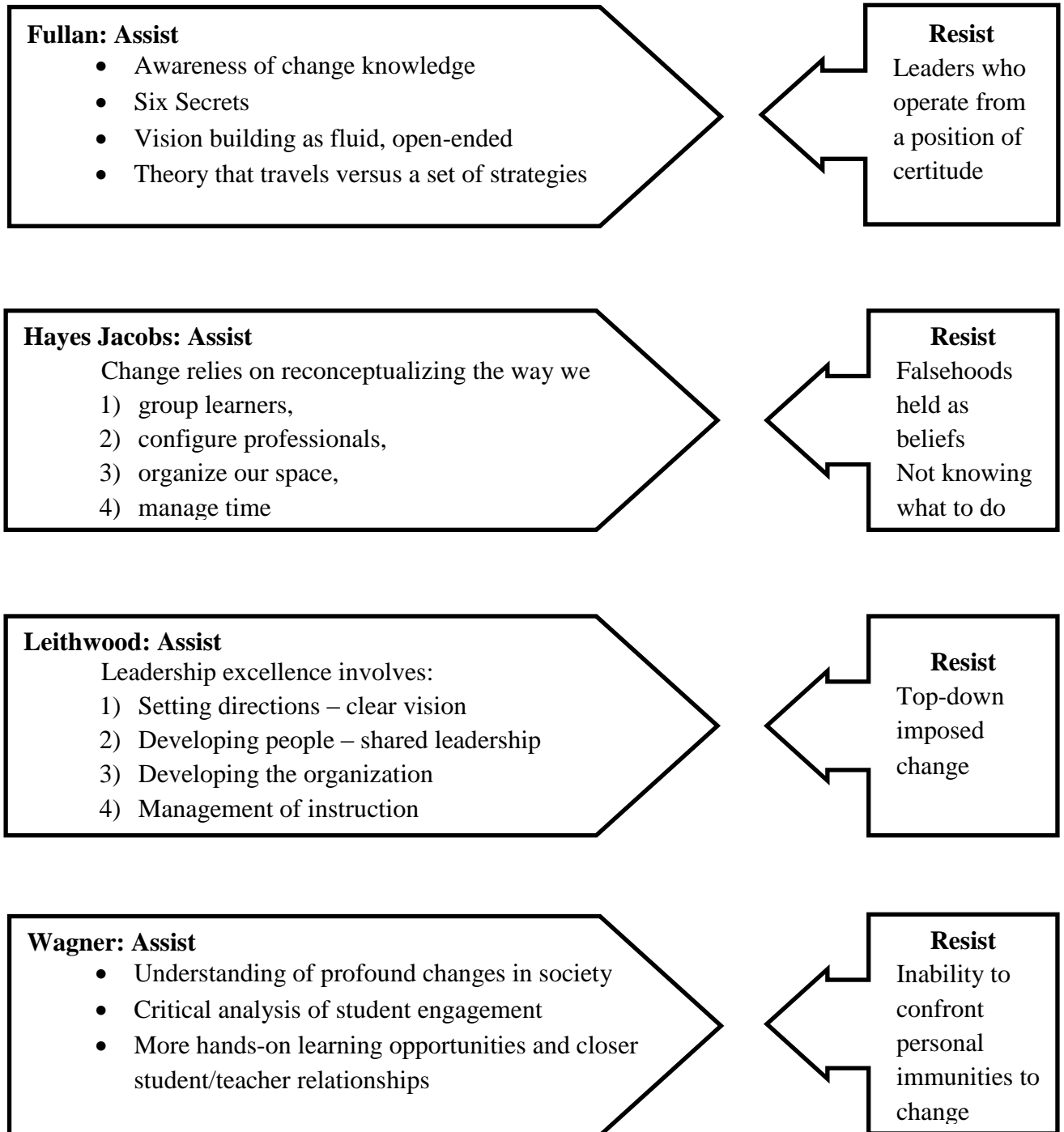
Echoes of Fullan's Secrets Two and Six, connect peers with purpose and systems learn, can be heard in Leithwood et al.'s (2006) third essential skill – "developing the organization". Specific to this outcome is the suggestion of creating Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) where mutual beliefs and values can be developed, ongoing collaboration for program

implementation and planning occurs, and shared leadership is encouraged. Not only are PLCs recommended for teachers, but for administrators as well, to support and sustain changes on a broader, more encompassing level, at a systems level building lateral capacity (Fullan, 2009). Professional Learning Communities designed for school leaders will create a space for reflection and learning within the realm of educational leadership and an appreciation of the struggles that teachers confront with PLCs. The principal or senior administrator's role as a collaborative leader is critical to transforming the school culture to one of change. However, the challenges of creating and sustaining effective PLCs for teachers are similar to the difficulties faced by school leaders. Sheltering time for regular meetings in an environment where time is at a premium requires diligence and commitment. To maintain the momentum of a PLC, frequent, even if brief, meetings are required. Another critical element of productive PLCs is trust (Cranston, 2011), a factor that cannot be obtained quickly or easily

Leithwood, Aitken and Jantzi (2006) briefly debate the distinctness of, yet interdependency of management and leadership in describing the fourth essential skill of leadership excellence – management of instruction. They maintain that the roles of manager and leader are not exclusive and “subscribe to the view that leadership is most frequently exercised through the performance of managerial activities” (Leithwood et al., 2006, p. 64). Fullan (1992) contends that there is a distinction between leadership and management, but that both are necessary. For example, a principal walking the halls of the school can cultivate relationships with students and gather information about building conditions. The detailed aspects of management of instruction involve observing and supervising instruction, providing instructional support, reviewing school progress regularly, and shielding staff from interruptions that distract from or interfere with achieving school priorities. Aspects of Secret One, love your employees,

are addressed in the fourth and final component of Leithwood et al.'s (2006) list, managing instruction. According to Hayes Jacobs (2010), a knowledge review process in the management of instruction is the "bedrock of learning" and implementing an ongoing cycle of challenging accepted knowledge and replacing it if necessary are "signs of cultural maturation" (Hayes Jacobs, p. 31). Lezotte and McKee (2002) refer to the knowledge review process as a cycle that must be on-going and self-renewing. It is a process of "action, evaluation and reflection" (p. 7) based on new effective practice findings and the success or failure of earlier efforts. It responds to situational changes and results in continuous modifications. Schlechty (2001) also promotes some method of control so that accountability can be assigned and improvement expected. See Figure 1 below for a brief summary of the essential elements that Fullan, Leithwood, Hayes Jacobs, and Wagner believe can support and prevent change.

Figure 1:

Fundamentals that Assist and Resist Change

Johnson's (1998) playful and light-hearted book, *Who Moved My Cheese?*, offers advice on how to deal with professional and personal change. Based on the premise that change in life is unavoidable yet healthy, he acknowledges that living in constant change can be highly stressful unless one has a way of coping with change that helps them understand it. In a constantly changing world, it is to one's advantage to learn how to adapt, regardless of whether the change is positive or negative. One of the characters in Johnson's book has a deep rooted fear of change and realizes that the reality of the situation is not as bad as the imagined fear built up in his mind. When the character considers that change is a natural part of life, whether wished for or not, he realizes that change can only surprise you if you are not expecting or looking for it.

By analyzing research on educational change and practices employed by effective schools, Claude Goldenberg (2004) determined four elements that helped to achieve educational reform. First, Goldenberg refers to the need for goals that are set and shared. This complements Leithwood et al.'s (2006) first area of leadership excellence, setting directions. For complex processes to improve, it is critical to begin with a clear notion of what one is trying to accomplish and to clearly communicate that goal with all parties endeavoring to make it a reality. Simply put, when goals are set, behavior is characteristically affected. Although it may seem obvious, "establishing agreed-upon and mutually understood goals can powerfully influence individuals' behavior and an entire school's operation" (p. 50). For example, students are more likely to attain high level learning when student achievement goals are explicitly articulated. However, the converse is also true and when goals are not clearly stated or shared by the majority of stakeholders, a school community is denied a potential catalyst for change. The second element of change that Goldenberg (2004) presents is identifying markers that measure success, which echoes Leithwood et al.'s (2006) fourth essential leadership skill, management of

instruction. Understandably, indicators and goals work hand-in-hand in that indicators help to clarify the aim and point out whether the target is being reached. The indicators also signify what will be assessed and ultimately, what is valued.

Goldenberg (2004) refers to the third successful change ingredient as “assistance by capable others”, similar to Leithwood et al.’s (2006) third essential skill, developing the organization. Once again, the power and necessity of collaboration is underscored. Simply put, this element is defined by all organizational members assuming responsibility to achieve shared goals and helping others to do the same (Goldenberg, 2004). When individuals have a voice in the change process, they have a sense of ownership and commitment to the goals being achieved. Goldenberg (2004) believes that effective leadership “must be long-term, substantive, and specifically focused on accomplishing generally understood and agreed-upon goals” (p. 52). As has already been mentioned, leadership is the element that has the greatest impact on educational reform (Goldenberg, 2004). Goldenberg’s fourth element of change is leadership that supports and pressures, a concept borrowed from Fullan, and one that closely mirrors Leithwood et al.’s second essential skill, developing people. Effective leaders know how to balance pressure with support and when to exercise one or the other. These two concepts seem contradictory, but express the often uncertain and nonlinear nature of change (Fullan, 1993). Finally, Goldenberg proposes that effective leadership ensures all four elements work together successfully.

Theories of Educational Change

As educational theorists reflect on reform efforts of the past years, they have attempted to categorize and define them to better understand why some have had elements of success, and others have never gotten off the ground. It is helpful to summarize the findings of a few individuals to gain a broader understanding of the viewpoints that exist, and to uncover

similarities and differences amongst them. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) discuss two opposing viewpoints of school reform that have evolved over the past number of years. One perspective is what they refer to as “intensification” where curriculum has become more prescriptive, textbooks are mandated, teaching methods are scripted and scrutinized by evaluation and monitoring, and standardized tests are given increasing time and importance. Fullan and Stiegelbauer call the other perspective “restructuring”. Restructuring involves empowering teachers and acknowledging their expertise through increased collaboration and creation of new roles for teacher leadership opportunities, it favours school-based management, and values the voices of all educational stakeholders. Clearly the restructuring approach to educational reform is more difficult, complex and time consuming, as well as the means that Fullan and Stiegelbauer believe will result in change that increases student learning and achievement.

Leithwood et al (2006) refer to educational changes over time moving from “first-order” changes to “second-order” changes. First-order changes, similar to Fullan’s intensification phase, refer to alterations that affect students directly, usually through curriculum and instructional methods. Second-order changes are modifications in the structure of the school or district that might affect policies, resource allocations, or cultures. Student assessment, parent/school relationships, beliefs and methods of staff professional development, as well as the adaptation of physical facilities to allow for new instructional methods are also examples of second-order changes. Delorenzo, Battino, Schreiber, and Gaddy Carrio (2009) describe second-order changes as reforms that do not follow a predictable path from the past, but question underlying assumptions, stimulate new ideas and transform the foundational design of the education system as we know it.

Leithwood et al.'s (2006) proposal of second-order changes is similar to Fullan's description of the restructuring phase. However, Fullan promotes greater teacher leadership and empowerment while Leithwood et al. (2006) focus less on people and more on structures and policies. Leithwood, Aitken and Jantzi (2006) contend that for any restructuring effort to be effective, it must encompass both first and second-order changes which must also be reformed to complement each other. They cite the example where teachers attempted to implement a more active form of learning in their classrooms, but their initiative was thwarted by the pressure for more teacher-directed forms of instruction still valued by the old teacher supervision model. Teachers working to implement integrated curricula yet being forced to complete subject based report cards is another example of the dilemma that teachers face when first and second order change priorities are not aligned.

Wagner et al. (2006) believe that leaders can more effectively initiate change when they understand the differences between technical and adaptive changes. Although meeting technical challenges is not necessarily simple, the knowledge required to solve a technical problem already exists. Wagner et al.'s (2006) technical change definition is similar to what Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) refer to as intensification reform and to what Leithwood et al. (2006) call first order change. Conversely, an adaptive challenge is "one for which the necessary knowledge to solve the problem does not yet exist. It requires creating the knowledge and the tools to solve the problem *in the act of working on it*" (Wagner et al. 2006, p. 10). With adaptive challenges, individuals wrestling with the difficulty are both the problem and the solution, and when they work together to resolve their predicament, they transform into something different as well (Fullan, 2009). Individuals entangled in a predicament are the best people to also determine the

way forward because they understand the problem most intimately and have the most to gain with resolving the issue. Table 2 summarizes the three viewpoints of educational change.

Table 2

Views on Educational Change

Theorist	Surface Change	Complex Change
Fullan	<i>Intensification</i> : prescriptive curriculum, mandated textbooks, standardized tests valued, teaching methods scrutinized and evaluated	<i>Restructuring</i> : teacher empowerment and expertise, shared leadership, including voices of all stakeholders
Leithwood	<i>First order</i> : curriculum and instructional methods	<i>Second order</i> : school structure, student assessment, parent/school relationships; beliefs and practices, professional development
Wagner	<i>Technical challenges</i> : knowledge required to solve the problem already exists	<i>Adaptive challenges</i> : only through working on the challenge is the necessary knowledge created to solve it

Goldspink (2005) suggests that the “rationalist” management and market paradigms that have historically influenced educational reform have served their purpose, and that an approach based on different assumptions is in order. He puts forward the ideology that future educational improvement must be based on a model that emphasizes the need for a “focus on people, relationships and learning rather than structures and centrally determined standards for conformance” (p. 2). Goldspink’s perspective on school reform supports the importance of “restructuring” over “intensification” (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991), “second-order changes”, not just “first-order changes” (Leithwood et al., 2006), and “adaptive changes” rather than “technical changes” (Wagner et al., 2006). The essence of Fullan’s Six Secrets centers on what Goldspink

proposes – a focus on the human resources within education and how they are connected, valued and utilized, as well as the power that is created through collaborative effort and learning.

According to Lezotte and McKee (2002), continuous and sustainable school reform is dependent upon understanding six foundational attributes (“being results oriented, focused on quality and quantity, data driven, research based, collaborative, and ongoing and self-renewing” p. 7) and five critical components. Most individuals connected with schools have a belief of what schools should do and be, and how schools should go about fulfilling that role. Lezotte and McKee describe the first essential component of school reform as being able to clearly articulate one’s belief or theory of the ideal school. They contend that a significant challenge facing those intent on school reform is the lack of a shared theory by the stakeholders. Brown and Moffett’s (1999) myths three and four support the idea that a common understanding does not exist between educators and the community at large. One way to begin to develop a shared theory or belief of effective school reform is through constant dialogue and feedback amongst stakeholders. The second essential component is the need to enhance teamwork and remind individuals that they are interdependent, a way to directly confront myth six (Brown and Moffett, 1999) that teachers are destined to isolation. “Each member of the school community, by his/her actions, serves to enhance or impede school reform” (Lezotte & McKee, 2002, p. 9). Effective teams and purposeful teamwork have the power to drive change.

The third component is time, the lack of it frequently cited as a barrier to achieving effective reform. Lezotte and McKee (2002) point out that schools always seem to find time for things they truly value, and that they must confront the value choices they are making that place a higher priority on other activities rather than the time needed to devote to a school reform process. Although true, this is a rather simplified approach to the resource of time in schools, as

there are many valuable and often conflicting forces that compete for time in a school system. As has been mentioned numerous times, change is a daunting and time consuming process, and one can see how schools may choose to focus on lower level activities that still have some educational validity such as a vibrant extracurricular program, other than the task of initiating school reform. As well, the use of time in schools is sometimes determined by those in higher authority. This speaks to the need of a systems approach to clearly establishing educational priorities and vision. The first three components of Lezotte and McKee's school improvement plan, a shared theory, teamwork and intentional use of time, connect loosely with what Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991), Wagner et al. (2006), and Leithwood et al. (2006) also propose in terms of connecting human resources within educational organizations and capitalizing on their collective strength.

The fourth component is technology, which Lezotte and McKee (2002) refer to as computer hardware and software. They boldly state that recent technology has made engaging in continuous school improvement a possibility that could not be considered earlier. While technology has increased the ease with which we collect data to advocate for school reform, one should be hesitant to pin too many hopes on the advent of the computer alone to facilitate educational change. Schlechty (2001) contends that technology is not a "thing", that it has always existed in education and he defines it as the means ("tools, processes, and skills" p. 33) for doing a job, whether it is storytelling or a pen. The fifth component that Lezotte and McKee propose is tools specific to the gathering, analysis and displaying of data related to student achievement. This is a considerably narrow definition of the tools required to ensure continuous school improvement and one is left wondering about the "tools" or skills required by teachers to improve their practice.

Both Fullan and Schlechty have spent considerable time studying and analyzing effective (and ineffective) business models to determine if any knowledge can be applied to educational settings. Some educators are uncomfortable with the many parallels that Fullan and Schlechty draw between successful business practices and effective school reform, citing that schools are not factories and children are not factory products. This is a rather ironic criticism as schools were initially organized on an industrialized, factory-like model and as we have discussed earlier, really have not moved as far from that model as they would like to believe. Schlechty (2001) qualifies his transference of business model learning to educational environments by stating that business leaders frame their work in a context of knowledge work, as do schools, rather than work based on a factory model, since many businesses have also found that the factory model of organization has significant limitations for progress. The business of schools is creating optimal conditions for student learning. Successful businesses must know their product well, and get, keep and satisfy customers by understanding the needs of their clientele. Schlechty (2001) suggests that so too, schools must know their product well – the work offered to students, curriculum and course content – as well as needs of their students and the surrounding community, their customers. Strong, competitive businesses are constantly looking for ways to improve their work and expand their client base. Schools would do well to reflect on the data regarding student engagement and graduation rates to determine areas of change. While reflecting on growing and declining business models can inform how educational organizations can facilitate change, the analogy is limited. Quality student learning is not always something that is easily measured and may take a longer period of time to track than an increase in sales revenues.

Century (2009) concludes that there is no answer for how to improve education. Rather, we need to “adapt our best knowledge to ever-changing contexts and conditions, and to work together as a field to systematically organize, process, and construct the learning that comes from those adaptations” (p. 4).

In his early work on educational change, Fullan (1993) developed eight foundational lessons as part of a new change paradigm where he encourages the habit of thinking about and experiencing the change process as an “overlapping series of dynamically complex phenomena” (1993, p. 21) that vacillates between over control and chaos. One must view change as a constant journey of discovery, not a destination. These eight foundational lessons are a precursor to Fullan’s six secrets of change. The first lesson is that “you can’t mandate what matters” (Fullan, 1993, p. 22). Change that is easily and quickly adopted is just as easily discarded, and likely does not involve the depth of thinking or degree of skill required to result in a significant change. Fullan also points out that you might not fully understand what matters at the beginning of the change process, and that determining what is important must be adapted and influenced by all shareholders as the reform process unfolds, a learning that influences lesson two: “change is a journey, not a blueprint” (Fullan, 1993, p. 24). The word journey conjures up ideas of discovery and uncertainty, two things that Fullan guarantees educators will find as they attempt to bring about reform. As mentioned earlier, Fullan’s stance on “visioning” as an integral part of the change process conflicts with how many other change theorists view the significance of determining goals. Fullan is comfortable with a more vague direction while other theorists maintain that for a change effort to be effective, individuals must clearly see where they are headed.

Lesson three is “problems are our friends” (Fullan, 1993, p. 25) because they force us to explore creative solutions and push ourselves beyond typically response patterns. In any new circumstance, problems are natural and Fullan views them as an indicator that something is actually being accomplished or attempted. Century (2009) goes as far to say that “reforms need to make us feel uncomfortable if we are going to bring about changes that will last” (2009, p. 3). Discomfort in her mind is a good sign, because it indicates that something truly different is being done; however, as mentioned earlier in discussing implementation dip that typically accompanies change, one must be prepared to continue through the discomfort until a new level of comfort and competence is achieved. Collectively envisioning and creating a solution to a challenging problem has the potential to engage, empower and unite all shareholders.

Fullan’s fourth lesson is one that may seem paradoxical at first: “vision and strategic planning come later” (Fullan, 1993, p. 28). While the change effort must begin with some notion of direction, a vision that is not entirely defined and laid out allows for its creation through a dynamic and fluid process where all members have input. This lesson is contested by many other change theorists who believe that you must have a clear vision in mind before you consider reform. A clear sense of direction and purpose are required to initiate a change effort, but its validity is lost if new information gained along the way is not considered and allowed to influence the original goal. The fifth lesson, “individualism and collectivism must have equal power” (Fullan, 1993, p. 33), is perhaps no less paradoxical than the previous lesson.

Independent thinking and reflection is essential for organizational learning to occur, and often the brightest ideas “come from diversity and those marginal to the group” (Fullan, 1993, p. 35). Real change is often the result of individuals working together towards a shared purpose. Lesson six is “neither centralization nor decentralization works” (Fullan, 1993, p. 37). Just as a balance

must exist between individual and group efforts towards change, so too, there must be a balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches. Fullan's seventh lesson is "connection with the wider environment is necessary" (Fullan, 1993, p. 38) which supports the eventual creation of Fullan's Secret Six, systems learn. Change workers must have an understanding of how their efforts connect with the greater purpose of the surrounding school, community or division. The last lesson is "every person is a change agent" (Fullan, 1993, p. 39). Leaders alone cannot bring about educational reform and teachers have the power to implement it directly. They must work together.

Fullan's Six Secrets

Clearly, much has been written and discussed about educational change in recent years and the authors and ideas mentioned in the previous pages represent only small portion of the writings that exist. Given the plethora of literature available, one may ask why this study focuses on Fullan. Fullan's writings first came to my attention when I read his work on understanding the change process and his eight points related to change knowledge. Parts of what I read resonated with my own experience and observations related to change, and other aspects created a new awareness for me. Through further explorations of Fullan's writings, by attending a conference at which he was the keynote speaker, and through professional development sessions offered by my school division I became aware of his Six Secrets theory. I was drawn to Fullan's work for a variety of reasons, one of them being that he wrote from a primarily Canadian context, but that he had an awareness of education systems around the world. His research and learning were not just limited to educational environments, but included observations from other organizations as well. Although I am cautious of applying a business model of leadership to schools, I believe that we can apply learnings from institutions outside of public education to enhance the work that we

do. In my work as an educator for the past 25 years, I have learned and observed that whether you are working with students or adults, the first step to a successful interaction is demonstrating care for the individual. Fullan's first secret, love your employees, aligned with my belief system and was in some ways a bold way for an educational researcher to state the foundational step in a theory meant to be taken seriously. The next three secrets supported my faith in the power of teachers working together professionally and in the influence of change from the bottom up. As Fullan himself states repeatedly, there is no sure path to follow for successful change to occur, and his Six Secrets are not without their limitations as well. Perhaps partly to avoid being too prescriptive, Fullan describes aspects of each of the Six Secrets generally, rather than specifically. Also, given Fullan's extensive work in the business sector, there is a strong business influence in his theory which does not always align with educational practices. Changing practices to increase productivity in a business context does not always involve working with people and can be therefore be much simpler and direct than changing practices in a school setting. Fullan does not mention how to address problems or resisters to the secrets, but writes with the assumption that all will follow.

In his search for effective change strategies, Fullan observed and analyzed organizational models from public and private sectors. Flourishing businesses were closely scrutinized to identify their silver bullet of success, which it turns out, does not exist. Fullan cautions that it is dangerous to adopt the "surface techniques" of successful companies and that a single practice or method will never provide the answer needed as change is complex and multi-faceted. In addressing lasting educational change, Fullan supports what he refers to as a "theory that travels" rather than a strategic plan. A strategic plan is often limited to the situation or circumstances in which it is applied, or the mindset used to implement it, while theories that travel well are those

that practically and insightfully guide the understanding of complex situations and point to actions likely to be effective under the circumstances. Fullan (2008) believes that good theories travel across sectors of public and private organizations, apply to geographically and culturally diverse situations and can be generalized across contexts.

Lezotte and McKee (2002) agree in stating that process able to redesign systems must be transportable, as well as feasible, sustainable, and adaptable. Century (2009), after reviewing over 600 articles on sustaining change, discovered that no common definition exists. She cautions people against investing in “making changes last”, and instead encourages investing in “continuous, lasting change” (p. 2). In order to be sustainable and effective, long term reforms themselves must be able to evolve and “translate as they spread” (Century, 2009, p. 2). Due to the ever changing world of technological advancements and sharing of information that is today’s reality, changes enacted now will not likely meet students’ needs in 10 to 15 years. The goal is not to adopt changes intended to last forever; what schools need is a approach to educational reform that possesses the capacity to continuously learn and adapt (Century, 2009).

Theories never assume absolute certainty and are open to surprises and new data of the future. The true test of the value of a theory is whether it is grounded in action, as effective ones always are, and whether it adapts and evolves over time. However, Fullan is quick to caution that no single theory can deliver with certainty given the complexities of our world today, including his “Six Secrets of Change” (2008, p. 5). This caution adds credibility to Fullan’s work, as anyone involved in educational change work understands the degree of complexity required.

Fullan’s beliefs regarding effective educational change have evolved over time to his current theory which he has distilled into what he calls the “Six Secrets of Change”. These secrets have culminated from his years of work to understand and bring about wide-scale change

through educational reform in England and Ontario, as well as initiating major change proposals around the world. Although Fullan's eight foundational lessons described earlier strongly influence the Six Secrets, they tend to be more specific, while his Six Secrets are more global. He refers to the foundational principles as "secrets". Some may question Fullan's use of the word "secret" as unprofessional or trite. However, he chooses the word not because "there is a conspiracy to hide them from public view; they are secrets because they are hard to grasp in their deep meaning and are extremely difficult to appreciate and act on in combination" (Fullan 2008, p. viii). Fullan's Six Secrets are deeply interconnected and overlap in areas where action targeting one secret can also benefit several secrets concurrently. The secrets work together "to serve as checks and balances in bringing out the best in a given secret while suppressing its riskier aspects" (p. 103). The six secrets cannot be modeled or taught by micromanaging them.

Fullan's Six Secrets are grounded by five assumptions: First, to be effective, the theory must be applied to the whole organization or system; second, each of the six secrets is synergistic, relying on the implementation of the other five; third, they are "heavily nuanced" or require much thought and reflection to understand and employ; fourth, implementing the six secrets motivates individuals to devote the energy and enthusiasm needed to get results; fifth, each of the six secrets requires sensitive balancing of demands along a continuum.

Secret #1: Love your employees.

The first of Fullan's six secrets is "Love your employees". Educational leaders and schools often purport that students come first. While this is a necessary goal, Fullan cautions that we must value teachers as much as we value students. Cranston's (2011) research on how principals perceive relationships and relational trust amongst staff members reveals that "when principals are connected to faculty, teachers feel valued and are more likely to commit to school-

wide improvement efforts” (p. 66). The research gathered by Hargreaves et al. (2001) also supports Secret One as they have found, “A common administrative and legislative delusion and conceit is that reform can be imposed, even forced, on teachers, without any regard for their values or inclusion of their voice” (p. 128). Fullan goes further by saying that all educational stakeholders are equally important. In the research that revealed the importance of Secret One, Fullan collected and analyzed data from the business sector as well as from educational institutions. What he found was that the most successful businesses have a “humanistic performance” component which results in less worker turnover and greater productivity. In other words, one of the reasons why certain companies experience greater success is because they value and foster relationships with and among people, treat their employees fairly, and create opportunities for personal and collective achievement. In his earlier writing, Fullan (2001) states that relationships are essential to effective change in people centered organizations such as schools. Effective leaders, therefore, have highly developed interpersonal skills and are intentional about establishing relationships with their staff members and facilitating positive relationships amongst staff. Strong collegial and professional relationships are one aspect of effecting cultural change in a building. Collegial relationships alone are not enough to effect change and in certain circumstances result in teachers “protecting each other from any form of professional critique” (Cranston, 2009, p. 12). Leaders can develop professional relationships with their staff by being visible and frequently visiting classrooms, commenting on what they have observed, and by encouraging staff to take risks and experiment.

Williams (2009) suggests that most approaches to school improvement have been ineffective because they fail to realize that “the single most important variable in the amount of progress that a student makes at school is the quality of the teacher” (p. 128). Williams goes on

to say that the best measure to increase student achievement is to invest in teachers, which supports Fullan's Secret One. When leaders invest in their employees, the employees' individual and collective commitment to their work also increases (Fullan 2008, p. 50). Twenty years ago, the notion of improving teachers' efficacy in the classroom was viewed as impractical, given the cost and time required (Fullan 1991). As a result, emphasis was placed on solutions not dependent on quality teaching. One of the results of this mindset was the creation of prescriptive textbooks that did not rely on teacher excellence. In retrospect, it is easy to judge this initiative as shortsighted in thinking that ineffective teachers can implement anything effectively.

One very practical way to invest in teachers is to provide them with the professional development (PD) they need to improve their skills. Much recent research is available on effective teacher professional development which emphasizes continuous PD, rather than one time blasts of information; presenting information relevant to teachers' current teaching situations including subject content and local circumstances; and active teacher involvement and participation in learning communities, a topic that will be discussed in greater detail in conjunction with Secret Two.

In that the effectiveness of an education system is limited by the effectiveness of the teachers implementing it, investing in teachers, or loving your employees as much as your "customers" makes a great deal of sense. Educational leaders intent on change, create conditions in which teachers can succeed by helping them "find meaning, increased skill development, and personal satisfaction in making contributions that simultaneously fulfill their own goals and the goals of the organization" (Fullan, 2008 p. 25). This creates a win-win situation for individuals and organizations.

In Fullan's work with the Ontario education system he was faced with five years of data indicating that student achievement in reading, writing and mathematics had flat-lined. The relationship between government members and the teachers' society was strained and hostile. To address the problem he helped institute a policy dedicated to increasing student achievement, as well as committed to respecting the teaching profession and supporting teacher professional development. Over the next three years there was continuous improvement in literacy and numeracy achievement, the number of new teachers leaving the profession declined dramatically, and the number of veteran teachers retiring as soon as their pension allowed decreased. Although Fullan concedes that there is still much work to be done, there is much evidence to indicate a healthier, more productive system at work – in part the result of Secret One in effect.

Secret #2: Connect peers with purpose.

Secret number two is entitled “connect peers with purpose” and addresses what Fullan calls the “too tight-too loose dilemma”, where organizations struggle to balance cohesion and focus with individual empowerment and initiative. This is similar to Weick's (1976) belief that educational organizations are loosely coupled systems where flexible and creative changes are accessible, able to respond to changes in the environment, as opposed to tightly coupled systems where a change in one area affects every other part of the organization. If an organization's goal is large-scale reform, goals and requirements need to be focused and tightened. However, if too much constraint is applied, workers rebel and become alienated. While people at the grass roots level need to be empowered, if you allocate too much power to local entities the result is diverse outcomes or none at all. Fullan states that, “the key to achieving a simultaneously tight-loose organization lies more in *purposeful peer interaction* than in top-down direction from the

hierarchy” (2008, p. 41). Secret two necessitates more leadership of a different kind rather than just less top-down leadership. It is clear that leadership is required to tackle the daunting task of school reform. However, top-down leadership tends to alienate, anger or discourage employees. Leaders of the 21st century need to lead through collaboration.

Earlier on, Fullan’s preference for a sound, yet portable theory rather than a strategy was mentioned. A culture of learning focuses on knowledge that is directly related to the work. Attending workshops and taking courses only have a lasting benefit when the content directly correlates with the learning in the work setting (Fullan, 2009). In talking and listening to teachers, Hargreaves et al. (2001) heard that teachers “found professional learning by coming together to share ideas, engage in problem solving, undertake joint planning, pool expertise and resources, and explore ways of integrating their work more effectively” (2001, p. 132). In the research conducted by Wagner et al. (2006), they discovered that student achievement levels were raised through recruiting and training outstanding teachers to work on instructional improvement within their own schools with small groups of teachers on a daily basis. Part of attaining Secrets One and Two requires making time for teachers to work together during the school day a priority. Brown and Moffett (1999) refer to time as the “great ogre” that robs teachers of opportunities share ideas, solve problems and collaborate. “Time and resources taken away from teachers outside the classroom affect the quality of what can be achieved within it” (Hargreaves et al. 2001, p. 172). The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learning increase when teachers are given time to prepare for their students.

However, simply having teachers working together in groups will not guarantee change. While teachers’ collaborative work may result in improved student outcomes and increased professionalism, there is also the risk of simply reinforcing poorly informed practice unless

collegiality is “linked to norms of continuous improvement and experimentation in which teachers are constantly seeking and assessing potentially better practices inside and outside their own school. Commitment to improving student engagement and learning must be a pervasive value and concern” (Fullan 1992, p. 109). Fullan cautions against “groupthink”, a term described by Irving Janis as “a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members’ striving for unanimity overrides their motivation to realistically appraise alternate courses of action”. In Brown and Moffett’s (1999) study, teachers expressed the need to be collaborative without sacrificing “the commitment to be true to oneself – to articulate, even when in the minority, one’s personal values and beliefs” (1999, p. 92). Fullan offers three conditions that balance the extremes of groupthink and complete individualism to achieve what he refers to as “positive purposeful peer interaction” (Fullan, 2008 p. 45).

First, there must be a clear sense of purpose and the underlying values of the organization and the individual must interconnect. The benefit of “identifying with an entity larger than oneself expands the self, with powerful consequences” (Fullan, 2008 p. 49). Second, knowledge and understanding of current successful practices must be freely and broadly shared. The central goal of any education reform effort must be creating a system based on the ongoing improvement of instruction. “Students’ achievement will not improve unless and until we create schools and districts where all educators are learning how to significantly improve their skills as teachers and as instructional leaders” (Wagner et al. 2006, p. 23). Lastly, a means to determine and either encourage or eliminate effective and ineffective practices or actions respectively, must be in place, guarding against groupthink and promoting the consideration of different ideas.

In researching findings of how effective companies operate, Fullan learned they choose and groom people who seek experiences that foster their own personal fulfillment and improvement and “use the group – peer interaction – to get smarter and to achieve unusually better results” (p. 45). Fullan goes on to say that “peers are more effective than random individuals at work and more effective than managerial groups at the top working by themselves to develop strategic plans” (p. 47). Secret two is about creating conditions where peers are purposefully engaged in purposeful interaction focused on worthwhile experiences and results. In other words, an individual’s success is directly related to the level of personal and professional connection they share with their peers. Reeves and Allison (2009) acknowledge that “Individual and organizational renewal depends not only on individual performance but on a complex network of relationships” (p. 43). They suggest that there is a direct correlation between the quality of an individual’s relationships with their colleagues and the effectiveness of their work. As well as demonstrating great value to their employees, educational leaders must also help employees realize the necessity of establishing strong relationships with their colleagues. Educational leaders must not only “love their employees”, but also help their employees to “love” each other.

One structure that allows colleagues to develop an appreciation, or “love”, for each other is a Professional Learning Community (PLC). PLCs have been a topic of much conversation and attention in recent years as a way to more effectively support professional teacher learning and create a depth beyond collaboration in peer interactions. DuFour (2004) identifies the following as core principles of PLCs: ensuring that students learn, creating a culture of collaboration, removing barriers to student success, and focusing on results. In practice, a PLC is a group of educators who desire to improve their professional practice through continuous, reflective and

analytical dialogue, dialogue that may disturb and agitate, but ultimately produce improved methodology and solid reasons supporting the change. However, teachers do not always possess the skills required to navigate the challenging and “surprisingly ambiguous” work of joint learning and the experience can result in teachers feeling personally attacked or even more isolated from each other (Dooner, Mandzuk & Clifton, 2007).

Unfortunately, some teachers have never developed the habit of reflectively analyzing their teaching practice, are too intimidated by openly and honestly discussing their methodology, or have never been given the freedom to intellectually wrestle with topics and issues that genuinely interest them and have slowly learned to suppress their wonderings and just go through the motions of teaching. In situations such as these, school administrators may have to more directly facilitate and manage the creation and continuation of PLCs until teachers feel more empowered to engage with and direct their own learning. Conversely, there are times when stressing collaboration can actually restrict the effectiveness of individual teachers and creativity is sacrificed for conformity (Mandzuk & Hasinoff, 2010).

Fullan argues that in order for change to be effective, it must be a systems change where teachers, schools and school divisions teach each other. Fullan (2006) calls this lateral capacity building that is necessary to prevent narrow mindedness, but cautions that “politicians and policy makers are likely to under-invest in the strategy [PLC] as it does not represent a quick fix” (p. 14). The benefits from PLCs will not be realized overnight, but require commitment and patience. Educational goals are not just discussed in September, but constantly revisited and refined throughout the school year, or years in terms of whether they are meeting students’ educational needs.

PLCs support many sound educational practices that increase student learning. They are frequently organized at the grassroots level and learning is self-directed, commonly based on a particular interest, need or concern experienced by educators in the classroom. Rather than having educational issues imposed by some outside entity, PLCs ideally facilitate the exploration of matters of personal importance to teachers and school leaders, and the discussion of issues that impact education most profoundly. PLCs have the potential to empower teachers as they discover that solutions to some of education's most demanding and confounding problems lie within the collective power they possess through dialogue and the synergy created in working towards a common goal. Hord (1997) has found that "teachers who felt supported in their own ongoing learning and classroom practice were more committed and effective than those who did not" (p. 12).

Philosopher Hannah Arendt (1958) believes that action in isolation is meaningless and that our actions become excellent in relationship with others, whether others inspire or demand greater quality, when she says, "for excellence, by definition, the presence of others is always required . . . no activity can become excellent if the world does not provide a proper space for its exercise" (p. 49). PLCs provide spaces where excellent teaching practices can be imagined. Wagner et al. (2006) and his colleagues refer to PLCs as "communities of practice" where groups of people are brought together in a focused, disciplined way to learn new skills and processes, and to address ongoing problems. Working together, people can accomplish more and they can do it better, or as Fullan states "There is a ceiling effect on how much we can learn if we keep to ourselves" (1993, p.17). In his book documenting change over a five year period in an elementary school in Los Angeles, Goldenberg (2004) comments that the professional

networks and school-level associations among educators at a school are key to successful school change.

Fullan, who also discusses the importance of networking, speaks specifically of “lateral capacity building” when he discusses situations where schools or school districts learn from each other in peer interactions centered on a common purpose. In situations where individuals or schools are brought together with the purpose of improving student achievement and professional practice, improvement of all is the focus, rather than comparing one school to another. This open, collegial interaction will not occur without considerable groundwork that builds individual school cultures of trust first, before linking people at a systems level. In connecting peers with purpose, whether at an individual or systems level, Fullan comments, “we have found that time and time again ‘bad’ competition (you fail, I win) is replaced by ‘good’ competition (how do we all get better, but I still want to improve as much as I can – friendly competition)” (p. 48). Educational leaders shoulder the responsibility for ensuring the success of connecting peers with purpose by providing direction within a flexible mindset, creating conditions for effective peer interactions, and intervening along the way when things are not working as well as they could (Fullan 2008).

Secret #3: Capacity building prevails.

Secret number three, “capacity building prevails”, is closely connected with Secret One, love your employees, and both goals are met when leaders intentionally and continuously invest in teachers’ professional development. Fullan’s (2008) definition of capacity building is demanding and multi-faceted, addressing competencies, resources, and motivation: “Individuals and groups are high in capacity if they possess and continue to develop knowledge and skills, if they attract and use resources (time, ideas, expertise, money) wisely, and if they are committed

to putting in the energy to get important things done *collectively* and *continuously*” (p. 57).

Capacity is not developed through criticism, bullying, negative consequences or what Fullan calls, judgmentalism which he defines as viewing something as unacceptable or ineffective and attaching a derogatory stigma to it. In his view, nonjudgmentalism is a secret agent of change because it allows for the fine degree of distinction between holding to “a strong moral position without succumbing to moral superiority” (p. 59). Educational leaders have a moral obligation to point out practices that they feel are not in the best interests of children, but must find a way to address their concern in a way that allows teachers to stand on their strengths and meet expectations. People are not free to move forward when they feel judged and defensive.

Fullan spends some time analyzing why there is often a gap between what people know they should be doing and what they actually do. Organizations that operate in an atmosphere of distrust, fear and rigidity do not encourage people to take risks. Although likely to fail now and then, “risk taking based on knowledge and insight is essential to problem solving” (p. 61). Change as the result of fear motivates people in wrong ways. It forces them to focus on the short term and on themselves, rather than the organization as a whole. Individuals become concerned with making themselves look good and blaming others rather than thinking of ways they can work more effectively together to address needs and meet goals. When spaces are created for peers to interact purposefully, their expectations create an atmosphere of positive pressure to accomplish goals important to the group. Individuals are at a greater risk of experiencing burnout from stagnating within their own profession than they are from having too much to do (Wagner et al. 2006).

Fullan suggests that a leader’s first step towards building capacity is hiring talented people and then providing supports for them to develop individually and collectively on the job.

He challenges leaders to create cultures within their organizations that attract great people and then work hard to keep them there. Data he collected from observing and interviewing thriving organizations indicates that success is not based on having the most brilliant employees, but on hiring individuals who have a desire and ability to learn, can communicate effectively, respect co-workers, possess job knowledge, and wish to contribute. Fullan refers to an article written in 1924 by an anonymous business leader, entitled “Why I Never Hire Brilliant Men” in which the author states, “victory comes to companies not through the employment of brilliant men, but through knowing how to get the most out of *ordinary* folks” (Fullan 2006, as cited in Taylor and LaBarre, 2006, p. 199). Fullan endorses hiring teachers who are not only individually talented, but “system talented”, meaning they know how to function in and contribute to structures of purposeful collaboration. As Fullan poetically states, “Individual stars do not make a sky; the system does” (p. 65).

Secret # 4: Learning is the work.

If you have hired talented people to do great work, then you must create the right working conditions for them to do so. Secret Four, learning is the work, is similar to the “too tight-too loose dilemma” of Secret Two. As Secret Two looked for a balance between individualism and collectivism, Secret Four involves a tug-of-war in finding a balance between consistency and innovation. The key to successfully implementing Secret Four, “lies in our integration of the precision needed for consistent performance (using what we already know) with the new learning required for continuous improvement” (p. 76), or as Wagner et al. (2006) describe it, we need to create systems “focused on the continuous improvement of teaching, learning, and instructional leadership” (p. 34). When critical aspects of work are identified and as much as possible is learned about the best process to address that key aspect, then staff can focus

on completing that task consistently using the known best method of doing so. Or as Reeves and Allison (2009) describe it, change comes as a result of “identifying high-leverage activities and a relentless focus on personal and organizational goals” (p. 34). However, the aim of teacher collaboration is not to identify silver bullets of best practice or all-purpose approaches for solving problems and actually limiting improvement, because “everything works somewhere, and nothing works everywhere” (Fullan, 2009, p. 130); instead, the aim is to analyze under what circumstances a specific strategy is effective.

Secret Four describes a vital, on-going process that requires a sustained effort towards continuous improvement that must become part of the culture of a building, rather than a onetime project. Consistency and innovation are achieved in the workplace through deep and regular job-embedded learning. Fullan believes that, “If people are not learning in the specific context in which the work is being done, they are inevitably learning superficially” (p. 89). As has already been mentioned, from their inception, schools have not been structured to encourage teacher collaboration and learning from each other. Peer observations and follow-up dialogues are not common practice. Traditionally, teachers have done their work in isolation from each other and lack the experience and common language needed to work together successfully. The goal of secret four is to have “*each and every teacher . . . learning how to improve every day*” (p. 86). As was mentioned earlier, the success of the students as learners cannot surpass the success of teachers as learners. As Barth (1991) has written, “Probably nothing within a school has more impact on children, in terms of skills development, self-confidence, or classroom behaviour, than the personal and professional growth of teachers” (p. 147) – and we could add administrators, too. In other words, the accomplishment of educational change depends upon the strength and capacity of all educators as learners.

Secret # 5: Transparency rules.

Much of Secret Four was spent addressing the need for establishing a culture of continuous improvement where the learning *is* the work. Secret Five considers the need to have constant transparency about results and practices, supported by relevant data, to determine whether continuous improvement is being made. Concerns about what is being taught and how it is being taught can place pressure on teachers, school leaders, districts and politicians to become more accountable. However, as Leithwood, Aitken, and Jantzi (2006) point out, “the consequences of tightening the accountability ‘screws’ often are a narrowing and trivializing of the school curriculum and the creation of work cultures that reduce rather than increase professional commitments and circumscribe the full use of existing teacher and administrator capacities” (p. 2). This is not the kind of transparency that Fullan is referring to.

In creating transparency, often emphasis is placed on quantitative data. However, both quantitative and qualitative data are of value. Often collecting and communicating qualitative data – hearing directly from the shareholders – can create more urgency for change than numbers alone (Wagner et al. 2006). While transparency has the potential to place significant pressure on organizations, in a culture focused on collaborative problem solving and continuous improvement, transparency creates positive pressure when it motivates an organization to strive even harder. Secret Five, transparency rules, does not mean assessing and reporting on every aspect of school life, especially facets that do not contribute to action. Too much information can overload individuals and create confusion, not provide direction. Badly designed measurement systems can actually prevent transforming knowledge into action. Kohn cautions that too often “teachers are held accountable for the wrong things (specifically, for producing higher standardized test scores) and in the wrong way” (1999, p. 95) He goes on to caution that the

word transparency, or accountability can be an excuse for greater control over classrooms by those furthest removed from them to the detriment of learning. Transparency does not mean that teachers and administrators focus solely on results and become data-driven maniacs. The collected data should serve as a guide to help direct choices, and should never replace individual and collective understanding and judgment needed to attain knowledge that results in action.

Although the notion of increased transparency may be threatening to some, when combined with the implementation of all of the Six Secrets, transparency actually helps to build trust amongst employees and all shareholders. Information is empowering and successful leaders share results, both positive and negative with their employees. In Fullan's work with the public education system in Ontario, he and his colleagues collected data from all four thousand schools in the province, dividing results according to four levels of socio-economic status. Schools were encouraged first to compare themselves with themselves by looking at recent progress, then match their results with their statistical neighbours, and finally to examine their results relative to an external standard. This exercise had the potential to cause schools to circle the wagons and turn inward to protect what was happening in their buildings, rather than risking others knowing the truth and being subjected to judgment or an attitude of superiority. The six secrets in practice have enabled more successful and less successful schools and districts to openly learn from each other.

Fullan and his colleagues have discovered that as principals and teachers get better at using transparent data, two outcomes emerge. First, they begin to value data, regardless of whether it indicates success or concerns, and learn to seek directive data, that is, data that points to action. Secondly, they become more literate in assessment and are able to discuss the data

more knowledgeably. Data enables people to compare themselves with themselves over time and to clearly understand the relationship between practice and results.

Fullan points out that, in an age of finger-tip access to information and an increased appetite for transparent accountability from the public, transparency rules, whether organizations like it or not. Shareholders want to know. Another reason why transparency rules is that, although data has the potential to be used destructively, organizations must create conditions where the power of data can be harnessed for both improvement and accountability. Cultures where it is normal to experience problems and then work collaboratively to solve them are desired. Fullan's studies have shown him that in all cases of successful change, transparent data play a significant role. Transparency rules because it helps create public confidence – something all organizations depend on for their long-term survival. Wagner et al. (2006) discuss the finesse required to balance transparency while projecting confidence. They observed that support for educational leaders and their districts grew when challenges and concerns were candidly shared with the public, yet acknowledged that “there does exist a powerful, persistent cross-cultural preference for the leader or teacher as reliable authority” (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 209). Savvy leaders are aware of social expectations, but have the courage to confront them when they believe they prevent forward action.

Secret # 6: Systems learn.

Fullan introduces Secret Six by reminding leaders that they can accomplish great things by mastering secrets one through five, but if they really want to show the way for future leaders, they must address Secret Six, systems learn, as a way of guaranteeing continuous learning and improvement. The first way to achieve Secret Six is by putting into practice the first five secrets. Fullan (2008, p. 110) argues that when leaders successfully implement secrets one through five,

“organizational members will feel valued and be valued (Secret One), be engaged in purposeful peer interaction that generates knowledge and commitment (Secret Two), build their individual and collective capacity (Secret Three), learn every day on the job (Secret Four), and experience the value of transparency in practice linked to making progress (Secret Five)”.

Fullan believes that one way organizational systems can learn is by changing their focus to develop many leaders working together, rather than focusing on one individual leader at a time. When organizations concentrate on cultivating leaders from within – veteran leaders grooming younger leaders – the potential for continuity and sustained positive momentum is increased. Hargreaves et al. (2001) maintain that sustainable change occurs only through “developing widespread leadership capacity rather than making change reliant on small numbers of exceptional leaders in a system” (2001, p. 160). Fullan calls this building “lateral capacity”. Sharing knowledge between and among schools is both a method of creating collaborative cultures and a product of collaborative cultures. Fullan refers to situations where school principals or superintendents are hired from outside of the district to come in and “clean house”. While initial changes may occur, they are rarely lasting because many of the secrets have been violated and the concept of building leadership capacity has been ignored.

Schlechty speaks of system change being essential when “programs and projects require procedural and technological changes that are so far out of the prevailing tradition that they cannot be supported by the existing structure and culture” (2001, p. 42). Here a broader change effort must be employed that encompasses all aspects of the system. Vander Ark (2006) suggests a necessary progression to achieve systems improvement beginning with preparing for change by addressing the “why change?” question. Other shareholders must be included in building capacity for changing the system. One of the challenges in identifying what needs improvement

in systems work is “because the system flows so effortlessly (before you begin to change it), it is hard to see the parts that are interacting and how they work together to hold the results in place” (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 106). The existing education system is designed to achieve the output it currently gets; however, teachers, parents, and students are no longer satisfied with the results. Goldspink (2005) believes that we can unleash the power of a fresh perspective for thinking about and managing systems when we “understand the micro-structural ‘rules’ that shape the macro behaviour of the system” (p. 31).

Wagner et al. (2006) approach systems change by analyzing what they refer to as the “4 C’s” – competency, conditions, culture and context. “Competency” refers to the “*repertoire of skills and knowledge that influences student learning*” (2006, p. 99 italics original). “Conditions” address how time, space and resources are arranged and controlled. Hayes Jacobs’ ideas on these three elements were briefly mentioned earlier in the paper. “Culture”, invisible at first, has a scope and breadth of magnitude encompassing “the shared values, beliefs, assumptions, expectations, and behaviours related to students and learning, teachers and teaching, instructional leadership, and the quality of relationships within and beyond the school” (Wagner et al. 2006, p. 102). “Context” covers the social, historical and economic circumstances affecting and determining student success within each school and school division. Leithwood et al. (2004) believe that before reform to improve student learning will work, schools and the divisions they operate in must have a shared sense of purpose and grasp what is necessary to implement the reform. Leaders must be able to communicate how the reform is relevant to their local context for teachers, students and parents to buy in.

Conclusion

The authors and theorists referenced in this chapter represent just a sampling of the writing that exists on educational change. Emphasis and approach may vary slightly, but what is consistent throughout is the perspective that educational reform is not a straightforward or simple task. At the heart of any change initiative is people and change is impossible without their energy, vision and willingness. Bringing people together and empowering them to think, challenge, and problem solve in real and tangible ways has the potential to be the tipping point that revolutionizes education as we know it today.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Introduction

As mentioned earlier, the central focus of this paper is to compare the ways and means that educational leaders facilitate change within their schools in relation to current research and knowledge on educational reform. To set the foundation, a brief history of change efforts in public education was presented along with barriers to educational reform. The roles of teachers and school leaders in achieving change, some of the factors involved in the change process itself, and various theories of educational change were examined as well as. Given the claim that the school administrator holds significant power in determining if a reform effort will be successful or not (Fullan, 1992; Hargreaves, 2001), varying notions of current effective educational leadership are also briefly explored. Research from a variety of educational change theorists was presented with Fullan's theories of educational change, specifically the Six Secrets of change, explored in greater depth. Using information gathered from interviews with several educational leaders, the founding principles of Michael Fullan's change theory were compared against what school leaders in the field have found to be effective in facilitating change within their own buildings and organizations.

Broad, overarching questions for this study are:

1. How do principals conceive of educational change?
2. How do principals perceive they facilitate change within their schools?
3. Do principals' perspectives of educational change initiatives align with Fullan's Six Secrets (2008)?

Methodology

This study's design follows a qualitative research model based on the inquiry process to gain further understanding regarding a central phenomenon, in this case, educational change from a school administrator's perspective. Much of the theoretical framework of this study is based on Fullan's examination and understanding of educational change and the components necessary to facilitate change. Given the exploratory nature of the research, the researcher employed a method of inquiry using one-on-one open-ended interviews to generate data by asking questions, recording and transcribing answers, analyzing transcripts and synthesizing results, looking for commonalities across the multiple perspectives. Open-ended interview questions, see Appendix B, allowed the participants to "best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings" (Creswell, 2005, p. 214). Interviews were recorded and an interview protocol (see Appendix A) was used to collect any additional data or observations during the interview. Educational change is a process that can occur subtly with many intangible factors. It is not, as Fullan repeatedly states, a series of steps or strategies that can be successfully transferred from one context to another. Rather, it is a theoretical approach that must adapt to the sensitivities within the environments and circumstances it is functioning. Change is not formulaic, but rather the result of collaborative efforts of individuals invested in the reform.

Sources of Data

As a vice principal within the Prairie View School Division (PVSD), a pseudonym, the researcher has an established reputation and level of trust with other PVSD school administrators and many natural opportunities to connect with them. Slavin (2007) comments that qualitative

research is best done under circumstances where the researcher “can develop rapport with the subjects, so that you (the researcher) will be able to obtain valid and meaningful data” (p. 126). Therefore, all research participants will be solicited from the PVSD. The researcher is not in a position of influence or privilege over any prospective participants. While there are many roles within PVSD that promote educational leadership, the researcher chose to limit the participants to principals who have held leadership positions for at least three years, from schools at varying levels, including elementary, middle and senior years. An attempt was made to gather participation equally across the grade levels with two to three administrators each from an Elementary, Middle and Senior Years school in an effort to broaden the data base and help authenticate the findings. Research participants were invited to discuss a change initiative that they directly implemented within the past three or more years.

Description of Study Environment

Interview locations included a variety of settings such as the participant’s school and the divisional board office. Participants were also given control over what time the interview occurred: during school hours, before or after school, or later during evening hours. There may have been a subconscious benefit to conducting the interview in the location where the change initiative occurred (Medina, 2008). One of the nine interviews occurred during regular school hours and the eight others were held before or after school and during an administrative day.

Participant Selection

In keeping with a qualitative study approach, purposeful sampling methods were primarily used to select study participants. Stratified sampling (Creswell, 2005) guided participant selection, as contributors were selected according to which grade level of school they worked in to ensure an equal, yet broad range of perspectives. If more than the required number

of participants at each educational level responded, selection followed a simple random sampling procedure where each individual had an equal probability of being selected within the designation of Elementary, Middle and Senior Year levels.

As mentioned earlier, one of the stratification requirements was that the participants were currently school principals who had at least three years of administrative experience and who had participated in a significant change effort in their school. The term “significant change effort” is open to interpretation. A minimum of three years of experience helps to provide an experience base necessary to fully address the research question. Understanding of the complex and multifaceted role of an educational leader evolves over an extended period of time. Interviews focused on change initiatives that occurred within the last three years to ensure accurate recall and a reasonable amount of time for the change to have taken effect and allow for a degree of sustainability to be implemented. More than nine principals volunteered to participate in the study, although there were not three volunteers within each of the three originally determined stratified areas (Early Years, Middle Years, and Senior Years). Due to a significant shift in administrative assignments in PVSD in the fall of 2011, only two out of the four Senior Years principals within the division were administrators who had previously been principals of Senior Years schools. Once two Senior Years principals and three Middle Years principals volunteered, the remaining seven volunteer names were randomly selected. Interviews took place over a time period of five weeks and varied in length from relatively brief to 97 minutes, with the average length being 54 minutes. Interviews were transcribed by the researcher and transcripts were member checked with few adjustments made.

Prior to initiating research, permission was requested from the superintendent of the Prairie View School Division. Upon divisional approval, invitations to participate in the research

were sent to each principal within the division. The participants completed letters of written and informed consent. A copy of the consent letter can be found in Appendix A. Once the consent forms were received, a copy of the questions (found in Appendix B) were emailed to the individuals, and contact by telephone and/or email was made to make arrangements (ie. time and place) around their preferences and schedules to conduct each interview.

Study Participants

Nine school principals from the Prairie View School Division participated in this study. Out of the nine, four were male and five were female. Individual years of experience in administration as a vice principal or a principal combined ranged from six to twenty-three years. All participants were in their third year or more as a principal. The schools they administered had students from Kindergarten to grade twelve as well as students from a widely varying demographic representation. The table on the following page provides the range of grade levels, student enrollment, population demographics, as well as the number of years each principal has been in administration.

Table 3

Interview Participant Information

Name	Years in Administration	Grades	Student Population	Student Demographic
James	16	10-12	1009	History of academic excellence, 44% English as an Additional Language
Sean	15	9-12	589	Low transiency, stable population, low English as an Additional Language, high Socio Economic Status
Theo	10	7-9	396	High transiency rate, significant English as an Additional Language, cultural and Socio Economic Status diversity
Erin	11	7-9	583	Great cultural and SES diversity, significant English as an Additional Language and Aboriginal population
Paula	23	5-9	408	Stable population, high Socio Economic Status, some cultural diversity
Liann	14	K-8	170	Low transiency, stable population, low English as an Additional Language, high Socio Economic Status
Sharon	11	K-6	132	High aboriginal and at-risk population, low Socio Economic Status
Julia	10	K-6	210	Stable population, middle - high Socio Economic Status, supportive community, very low English as an Additional Language
Darren	6	K-6	270	Little cultural diversity, low-middle Socio Economic Status

Researcher Positioning

Given that I interviewed my own peers, it was challenging, if not impossible, to remain neutral. Data interpretation occurred through my perspective. Remaining unbiased while conducting qualitative research is difficult, especially given the relational nature of qualitative data collection. Reflexivity in qualitative research refers to the researcher's ability to reflect on his/her own biases, values, and assumptions and actively write them into his/her research (Creswell, 2005). This research project is based on a number of assumptions and biases, some of them conscious and some of them subconscious. Based on past conversations with school leaders in PVSD, one of my assumptions is that educational leaders have some foundational knowledge of change theory and deliberately apply their knowledge or look for evidence on their learning when implementing change. Another related assumption is that most educational leaders are reflective of their practice and intentionally look for ways to continually improve their practice.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data collected in this study followed Creswell's (2005) "bottom-up" approach which is inductive in form, going from the "particular – the detailed data – to the general – codes and themes" (p. 231). The researcher's goal was to identify a larger, united picture from diverse and detailed data. Even as the data was being collected, the researcher organized and analyzed the data in relation to other information previously gathered and attempted to collate them according to Fullan's "Six Secrets" (love your employees, connect peers with purpose, capacity building prevails, learning is the work, transparency rules, and systems learn). Each participant was interviewed once, at a time and location of the individual's preference, for approximately one hour. Interviews consisted of twelve questions and were recorded with two digital audio recording devices in the event that one device failed, and were

transcribed by the researcher (the process of converting audio recordings into text data) within two weeks.

After the interview data was transcribed, copies of the transcriptions were e-mailed to each participant to check for accuracy of transcription. Any revisions, responses or further clarification were asked to be returned within two weeks. Following transcription and member checks (Creswell, 2005), the recordings were destroyed. Next, each transcript was read in its entirety approximately three to four times and analyzed for emerging general themes, topics, and patterns before the transcripts are broken into smaller, theme specific parts. Following the general exploration of the data, each transcription underwent “hand analysis” (Creswell, 2005). Hand analysis is preferred when the database is relatively small and the researcher wishes to have a hands-on, close connection with the data. Transcripts were first coded in the left hand column with the numbers one to six that corresponded with Fullan’s Six Secrets and with summary phrases or themes written in the right hand column. Key phrases and words were highlighted. The 148 summary phrases or themes collected were categorized and combined as much as possible and then aligned with the Six Secrets in a chart format with an additional category of “Other” added where a few topics such as the principals’ individual definitions and perspectives on what constitutes change were addressed separately. On subsequent readings of the transcripts, revisions to original themes and additional comments were added. Significant sections were highlighted and coded comments written in the margins. As I worked “upward” through the data analysis, layers of themes were identified. “Layering the analysis” (Creswell, 2005, p. 245) relies on the process of organizing basic, minor topics within layers of more major, sophisticated topics. Besides examining increasingly complex layers of themes and topics, I also looked for interconnecting themes. Once the actual writing of the data analysis began, each

transcript was skimmed six more times, each time with an eye for the specific topic currently being addressed. Identifiers were attached to transcripts at the point where the researcher wanted to further reference the topic with the number ranging from 30 to 65, depending on the topic and proliferation of references to it.

Each transcript contained references to all of Fullan's Six Secrets, based on the researcher's interpretation, but the secrets that were mentioned with the greatest degree of frequency and considerable interconnectedness were connect peers with purpose, build capacity, and learning is the work. Direct references to the other three secrets, love your employees, transparency rules, and systems learn were in some cases more difficult to isolate and identify, depending on the specific change initiative and the administrator. Although in reality there is considerable overlapping amongst all the secrets since often one action supports multiple secrets, for the purpose of analyzing the data more clearly attempts will be made to discuss each secret in turn. As well, upon reflection the first three secrets appear to have received the "lion's share" of data by the researcher.

Given Fullan's (2008) focus on a "theory that travels", the results of this study ideally should have external validity, that is "the degree to which the findings of a particular study have meaning for other settings and samples" (Slavin, 2007, p. 201). Fullan believes that the essence of his Six Secrets is not context specific, but can be applied in any situation in any type of organization. It is expected that interview findings will support Fullan's Six Secrets. However, one reason why low external validity may exist is that the research participants were purposefully selected and may not truly represent the average population of educational leaders in PVSD.

Research Rigour

To create a context of integrity for qualitative research findings, a researcher must somehow validate the data analysis (Creswell, 2005). Creswell suggests three methods to validate the accuracy of research findings: triangulation, member checking and external audit. This study is dependent on the accuracy of the transcripts and member checking occurred to ensure correctness in this regard. Member checking (Creswell) is the process by which all interview participants are provided with a hard copy of the interview transcript and asked to review it to determine the accuracy of the transcription. Specific attention was paid to whether the description was “complete and realistic” and whether the interpretations were “fair and representative” (Creswell). Any discrepancies were brought to the researcher’s attention and clarified. It was my desire to reflect the learning experiences of the research participants fairly and accurately and to create a context of trustworthiness where incongruities are reported. The external audit occurred as the researcher compared the interview findings with what the literature stated about how change is achieved, especially in contrast to Fullan’s Six Secrets.

Research questions were derived from the literature review and based on the essential tenets of Fullan’s six secrets of change. A copy of the interview questions can be found in Appendix A.

Confidentiality and Ethics

As per University of Manitoba ethics protocol (http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/governing_documents/research/373.htm), consent was granted from Prairie View School Division to interview interested participants prior to initiating the study. Initial contact with the superintendent of PVSD was made in person followed up by a formal letter of request. After signed permission to conduct the study was received from the

superintendent, invitational letters of participation were forwarded to all principals within the school division via email. Once participants were selected, signed letters of consent were sent to and collected from them. Identities of participants will remain confidential. Pseudonyms were assigned to each individual and used when referring to the data.

Copies of the ethics protocol, permission to conduct research, participatory invitation, and participant consent forms can be found in Appendix B. Once two to three administrators from each school level who meet the criteria (been in administration for at least three years and facilitated a change initiative) had responded, participation consent forms were mailed out through the divisional interdepartmental courier service. Once signed consent forms were received, I contacted the participants by phone and email to determine the interview date, time and place. Photocopies of the original consent form were given to each research candidate. Prior to each interview I reviewed the consent form to ensure participant understanding of the study parameters and their ability to withdraw from the study at any time. Researcher contact information including email address, work and home phone number was included in the consent form.

Summary

Chapter Three briefly reviewed aspects of qualitative research that were relevant to this study. This included: study methodology, including participant selection, data collection and analysis, researcher positioning and a review of ethics protocol.

Chapter Four

Results

Introduction

This study explores the current body of knowledge surrounding how educational reform is most effectively achieved, concentrating primarily on the role of the school administrator. The purpose of this study is to look for evidence of common underlying principles in how educational leaders implement their desire for, and knowledge of, change into action. As well, a central focus of this thesis is to determine commonalities between the ways and means that educational leaders facilitate change within their schools, and what current research and knowledge related to educational reform suggests. Current theories about facilitating educational change are explored, focusing specifically on Michael Fullan and his “Six Secrets of Change”, and juxtaposing that knowledge with how current educational leaders believe they bring about reform in their own buildings.

From the researcher’s perspective, all six of the secrets were addressed in each of the nine interviews conducted for this study. The secrets that were mentioned with the greatest degree of frequency and considerable interconnectedness were connect peers with purpose, build capacity, and learning is the work. Direct references to the other three secrets, love your employees, transparency rules, and systems learn were in some cases more difficult to identify, depending on the specific change initiative and the administrator. Due to the domino effect of actions in a school context, often one decision or difference supported multiple secrets so there was considerable overlapping amongst all the secrets. However, for the purpose of analyzing the data more clearly attempts will be made to discuss each secret in turn although when obvious cross-overs exist, they will be addressed.

Findings

The relationship between change and vision.

Given the numerous and varied definitions and perspectives on educational change shared in Chapter Two, it is fitting to share the definitions of educational change provided by the nine principals interviewed. When the principals defined educational change, they invariably referred to vision, beliefs and values as the forces that drove change, so it is helpful to explore what the interviewees revealed about how their goals or vision for their schools were shaped and communicated before discussing the data in relation to Fullan's Six Secrets.

Consistent with the literature review in Chapter Two, none of the participants described educational change with adjectives like "easy", "quick", or "simple". All of them spoke about the complexity and incredible effort required to achieve some degree of sustainable change, and all of them spoke to the exciting and personally rewarding work of leading and nurturing change in a school setting. Julia stated, "I personally like change; I like to charge ahead." Sean captured it this way: "Pushing people and ourselves to unknown territory is probably the most exciting thing." Interestingly, most of the administrators also referred to their impatience or sense of urgency related to change and the need to slow down to ensure others were at pace with them in the change process. The personal cost of enacting change was raised by a number of the participants, and several of them referred to the struggle to find balance within their roles and between their professional and personal lives. Sharon talks about her first job as a school principal when she reflected:

That was the steepest learning curve I've ever had in my life. It affected everything about who I am – morally, mentally and physically. It had a huge change effect on me.

All of the participants commented on the powerful relationship between school culture and successful educational change. Comments from the data about school culture will be embedded in discussions of each of the secrets as they arise, as will the key role communication plays in each step of the change process. Awareness of the need for continued reflection and change in their work as school leaders, both personally and professionally, was expressed by each of the research participants, as well as the acknowledgement that educational change is a continuous journey and one where success along the way needs to be celebrated given that the destination is never fully reached as there are always new goals to be achieved.

Change defined.

Each school leader was asked to begin the interview by responding to a question related to his/her concept of educational change before providing a personal example. In reflecting on the change process, the participants commented on their own personal change journey as administrators. Paula observed that she needed to change as well as her staff, because “whatever I think is not really the critical thing.” Theo immediately thought of the words “challenge” and “time” when prompted to comment on educational change. In his view, “The focus, energy, effort and length of time that it takes to create something that is sustainable is a huge process and a huge undertaking.” James concurred with Theo in his use of the word challenging and added,

It [educational change] can be painfully slow sometimes. It can be fraught with all kinds of hesitation sometimes and resistance sometimes and some unexpected bumps along the way, and there can be outright failure sometimes in educational change. However, it is absolutely necessary to keep the enterprise moving forward.

James went on to say that if schools believe they have a job that needs to remain steady, they are already falling behind because schools must keep up with a moving target.

Erin's thoughts on educational change reflected her concerns with aiming for the moving target of preparing 21st Century learners:

I think we're teaching them [students] a lot of stuff they're never going to need and when I try having those conversations with staff, of course it makes people uncomfortable. Why are we spending time teaching those things that they can look up in a Nano second out of their pocket? I think we've got a lot of work to do in preparing kids for a time that we have zero understanding of what it's even going to look like.

Darren viewed educational change as inevitable, yet extremely difficult and also worried when he observed classroom practices that had not changed since he was a student himself. Sharon agreed to some extent and commented, "Our kids are changing – we need to be changing." However, she cautioned that discretion needed to be exercised in determining what to throw away and what to keep when deciding what is important in redefining instruction and learning for kids. In her experience, educational change was about learning and growing together. It couldn't occur "without a lot of people factoring in and teaming and knowing what the vision and mission is." She added that there are subtle nuances to the educational change process that one is not always conscious of which is part of the reason why she believes that it is critical to have a clear sense of the change purpose. When Erin reflected on the change within her own school, it was her beliefs and values that shaped the change rather than a clear vision at the outset. She commented, "The change has been very gradual and it's been more of an evolution than a planned change and it's come from a belief system."

Sean viewed schools as adaptive organizations and himself as a change agent, and chose to become an administrator because of his interest in navigating organizations through the change process. In his experience, “every change initiative has started with a re-affirmation or a re-purposing of the school.” Sean found that the first step in re-crafting a mission or value statement involved building community which was facilitated by posing probing questions, carefully listening for common language, restating and validating what was heard, and then synthesizing the information gathered. He stated:

Education and change are synonymous. In order to achieve that harmony between those two there can only be one constant and the constant is the purpose and the values. Everything else can change around it. It should be simple and obvious what the values of the school are and what the purpose of the school is. Then all you need to do is look for alignment to what’s stated on the page to what’s happening, and then you just continue to hold that up in the decisions you make.

Sean recalled a “powerful” half day inservice that provided a clear sense of direction when the staff discussed who their students were as learners, what they were telling them, what they were capable of doing, and how they could tap into that. That learning experience for Sean corresponded with Secret Two, ‘connecting peers with purpose’ which will be discussed later.

Julia supported Sean when she stated: “The first part of any change is articulating and determining a shared vision for the group” which she believed should be clearly reflected in the School Plan. In talking about her first principalship, Sharon talked about remaining “focused, focused, focused” on her school’s main priority and not being distracted by other things. She spoke about how her vision grew as her confidence as a new leader grew, fueled by the successes

her school was experiencing. Paula viewed educational change as “more of a movement, or a forward thinking or a doing something to capitalize on current practice or research . . . the act of doing something different and intentional.” Liann similarly described educational change as a series of actions. In her words:

I think for me the key for educational change is the process we put in place to move us to that desired state, whatever that state might be. I’m not the kind of person who will implement programs or get on anything that seems like a bandwagon. Any decisions or change that I would be striving for would be change that is deeply steeped in research and sound pedagogy and that really moves us toward making a difference in the classroom every day. That’s where I am with educational change.

Liann could not think of a change initiative as an “isolated event” but as rather, “a profound change in me as a leader.” She recognized that as the school leader, she was an integral part of the change as she worked collaboratively to enhance staff capacity and instructional practice. In her previous work as a program coordinator, she had come to understand the importance of working with people systemically towards developing a common understanding before beginning implementation, and she applied that knowledge to her work as a school principal.

Communicating vision.

Some of the theorists discussed in Chapter 2 think of leadership as clearly identifying and communicating a vision in order for change initiatives to be successful (Leithwood et al, 2006). Sean found that, “Where I thought we might go and where we ended up became quite interesting.” He talked about “releasing people from the burden of having to be thorough and thoughtful; let’s run with something.” He noted:

Moving the culture of the school was another purpose of the dialogue, attempting to support the communication that would say “ready, fire, aim” as opposed to “ready, aim, fire.” In the school the communications and the dialogues were very “ready, aim, fire” orientated. I explicitly chose to do a “ready, fire, aim” because they were too stuck in the “ready, aim, fire” and it was paralyzing them as a group in terms of moving forward and creating the energy they deserved to have.

Sean was in a school where the staff were caught in a pattern of predictable and routine behaviour. If they needed to know exactly where they were going to end up before they began moving and changing, nothing would have happened so he encouraged them to free themselves to take risks. However, not all educational leaders would promote moving forward without having a clear goal in mind, and likely a number of staff members would feel uncomfortable and unsure of what to do without knowing what they were aiming for. Erin talked about telling her staff that they were aiming for a moving target: “We’ll shoot for this . . . we might get here.” What became clear through analyzing the data was that leaders possessed global educational visions such as the desire to help all children become contributing citizens to the world, but that specific visions evolved based on school need and context. What was most critical in the creation of a vision was that leaders’ personal beliefs and values were consolidated. As Sean commented, “Knowing that the vision is important is probably the key.” Liann began by saying, “There will be times when I will identify what the goal is and there will be times when I am quite content that we will shape it (collectively) ourselves.” She then revised her comment to say,

I don't define the goal; I do, though, have expectations. The expectation is clear that we will be engaging in this kind of practice with the goal of deepening our understanding and having shared beliefs.

Liann was comfortable with leading not knowing exactly what the end result would look like since "it's going to transform as we go" and because all actions were grounded in common and clearly articulated beliefs and values. She commented that her vision "is not carved in stone. Rather, we are moving towards this ideal. It's more like the North Star."

Darren described his vision of what an effective school is as "complex" and "evolving" while Liann stated:

I am very clear on what I value. I've got a pretty limited and simple set of values because I don't want things to be complicated. The clearer and simpler the better because then you can live them every day. If they are highly complex, then nobody sees what you're doing and it's not apparent to anybody what you believe and value. My feeling is, you should be able to ask any teacher what I believe and value, and they could tell you.

Liann's goal was to support staff in developing a common vision of what a shared culture might be, knowing in advance the time and energy required to do so. In preparation for pedagogical discussions, Liann would often ask staff to bring artifacts that represented their own beliefs and values to heighten their awareness and help them communicate with others. In her mind, "There is nothing more important than contributing every day toward your school culture and building that culture of collaboration and capacity." Liann clearly understood the impact that a school culture had on implementing change and devoted her time in her school to creating a culture

where constant evolution towards deepening understanding and practice of effective pedagogy was the norm.

Sharing vision with staff.

It was interesting to note the differences and commonalities between philosophies about how and when one's vision or belief statement should be shared with staff. Early on in his tenure as a Senior Years principal, Sean was challenged to make his vision transparent to staff. While he felt grounded in his values, he wasn't ready to proclaim his vision for Senior Years because he didn't feel versed enough and intuitively understood its complexity. He feared that, "If I prematurely declared in one area, I might diminish thinking in another area." Much later, Sean did share his vision once staff had an understanding of the "bigger picture" in which Sean's vision was embedded. Paula agreed with Sean's philosophy and avoided saying too early "this is what I am about" but gradually revealed more and more of her philosophical beliefs over time. According to Paula:

It wasn't that I wasn't ready before. I think it was that they weren't and if I was going to walk in first year and say this is what I'm about I would have closed down a whole bunch of things that I wanted to happen even though I couldn't have articulated it at that point.

Theo, on the other hand focused his first few months at a new school on communicating with all staff, including educational assistants, secretaries and custodians, his vision of what he believed was important, sharing favourite quotes, and just letting people get to know him.

Erin talked about her vision being clear in her own heart and mind, but wished that she had articulated it more publically to her staff at the beginning: "I think when you're trying to change both beliefs and attitudes you have to be super clear on what your own are and then

articulate them.” Her actions and the amount of time that she devoted to her work clearly communicated her belief that no child is dispensable; however, upon reflection she commented, “I think the words probably were important sometimes, but we just never got there.” Erin spoke to the power of language and communication when she remarked, “If you say it’s true, often sooner or later it is.”

James was aware that educational literature encouraged leaders to communicate their vision at every opportunity, but recognized the balance needed to avoid sounding like a “propaganda machine.” Over time he had discovered that he did not need to be an expert on every initiative his school was pursuing; rather, his role in his words was, “planting a seed sometimes, making sure that we support the things that we want to see or we steer people towards them. That’s the best I can do.” Sharon found that regularly reflecting on her school’s vision was critical “because if you don’t rethink it and you don’t come back to visit it again, you can lose your way.” Theo also commented on the need to refer back to the vision when questions arose, or the direction seemed unclear; “We would go back to the vision that we set, the sense of urgency, and the information that we were getting from our data.”

Paula set a “frame” for her school in which the parts operated together and she actively promoted shared leadership based on her belief that, “I can’t decide what we’re going to do exactly because that would be very limiting – I’m only one brain.” Paula defined her role in school administration as a “web-weaver or connector” and said the vision never belonged to her exclusively. After a number of years at her current school, Paula reflected on the framework she had established and commented, “Now the frame is solid, and it’s better because the people are the foundation.” Julia also valued the ideology of shared leadership but struggled with the reality of finding a balance between providing leadership and “letting go a little bit.”

Contexts for change.

Before delving into ways the data supported or refuted Fullan's Six Secrets, a brief discussion of the circumstances that the study participants believed initiated change efforts is necessary. According to Erin, increasing support for at-risk students began shifting the culture of her school; therefore, "it's really about giving the neediest what they need." Sharon's first job as a principal was in a school in crisis where she spent her first weeks constantly disciplining students until she said to herself, "This is crazy!" and joined a pilot project that completely changed the culture of the building and allowed for greater learning to occur. Julia and James both began their change initiatives based on their own professional learning. Julia had read the DuFours book on Professional Learning Communities and believed in the synergy of teachers talking to teachers. James had attended a conference on children and poverty where the message "the single most important thing that you can do to help the kids succeed in school is make sure they can read and make meaning of text" resonated deeply with him. Several administrators used school-based data to initiate a needed change. Theo described the impetus for the change vision in his school as an opportunity to collectively look at school data "to identify what the issues are and create that sense of urgency and that's what moves people forward." Darren also used school-based data as the catalyst to implement a literacy intervention. Paula and Sean both were leading good, solid schools that were "stuck" in a holding pattern and needed to look at their students and circumstances in new ways. Liann recognized a need to change the philosophy and practice in her school to align with existing research; however, any reform that Liann initiated was always grounded in creating a culture in which change is embedded.

Fullan's six secrets.

Secret #1: Love your employees.

Fullan's first secret is grounded in a humanistic perspective where school administrators seek and foster positive professional relationships with staff and place an equal value on staff well-being as they do on student well-being. In the context of the interview data, evidence of Secret One at work was largely described as fostering relationships, building trust, and providing time for staff to meet and learn. Strong, affirming relationships amongst staff are foundational for any school reform (Barth, 1991; Cranston, 2011) and are often described by both principals and teachers as learning to trust one another. Many of the principals commented specifically on the priority of fostering trust and promoting relationships when they received a new assignment. In the data analysis the following themes were identified and will be discussed in relation to Secret One: building relationships, knowing your staff, communicating value through time, inviting voice, and caring in action.

Building relationships.

When he moved to a new school, Sean's work at building relationships and finding out what his staff thought about the school and surrounding community began with "asking a lot of dumb questions and taking advantage of the fact that I'm new." For him, staff are at the start of any change initiative and he began by acknowledging the "state of mind" of the group he was working with. Asking questions to seek understanding about past practices allowed Sean to "honour what people are doing" in a way that didn't offend. He intentionally spent time engaging staff in conversations, with "lots and lots of listening and paraphrasing and validating and checking language" to eventually help create a common understanding amongst the staff. However, Sean cautioned other administrators by stating:

In an effort to be responsive and engender those good relationships you can find yourself as a leader doing a real dance for people in order to get them on board. That's not required and it can lead to burnout.

Reflecting on her time implementing a change at a challenging school, Sharon knew that she was starting to run out of energy and commented:

I believe in a true collaborative culture where everybody is looking after everybody. I believe that in truly successful school divisions, as in the research, people look after each other. You don't say, "Oh they're not like us," or anything like that. They are part of our family. It's part of our work and we need to be looking after our leaders in all schools. Superintendents need to be paying very close attention to that so people don't burn out.

The theme of leader burnout could be the focus of a completely separate study, but it was mentioned in passing by a number of the study participants as it was seen to be closely connected with educational leaders' efforts to achieve change. Collaborative cultures (Goldenberg, 2004) help to safeguard communities against stress and collapse. The necessity of collaborative cultures will continue to be discussed in relation to secrets two, three, four and six.

In visioning a new 21st Century learning environment and inviting staff to alter their practice to match, Sean had to "shoulder tap" staff to consider the opportunity because the newness of it intimidated them. Several staff agreed once they realized that he was "willing to walk it through with them." Sean was moved by the courage of his staff who were willing to step up "on behalf of their colleagues to see if they can make this thing work." When Theo first arrived at his school and embarked on a change initiative to address literacy needs among the student population he stated:

When I think about educational change, I think that the ground work of establishing relationships, developing trust, sharing your own personal vision and philosophical stance is crucial because they [the staff] need to know who you are and what you stand for.

Theo recognized that spending time with people, listening to their concerns and ideas, celebrating their successes and building a team mentality was necessary to “get them [staff] to the point where they’re ready to go to the wall when I ask for things and say that this is the direction that we’re going to go.” Paula discussed not making big changes when first starting a new job, but focusing on building trust and learning the school’s history to acknowledge the work that had already been done. When asked about how to get “buy-in” from staff, Liann stated: “If they trust you as a leader, and value you as a leader and know that you’re trying to create the best school that you can with them, they don’t need anything (more).”

Knowing your staff.

James discussed a professional development retreat that he and his leadership team planned for staff where they were careful to consider the alignment between the qualifications of the presenter and the learning style of the staff as well as the scope of people’s needs over an extended period of time. To engage his staff he ensured that activities involving relaxation, relationship building, and entertainment were a part of the learning process. He noted:

Their [teachers’] professional needs are part of that, but it’s really critically important that you plan all the other stuff, too; otherwise their tolerance for professional growth is relatively small. The minute something becomes an obligation, professionally or otherwise, it becomes a chore and it’s less likely to get the attention that it needs.

James also talked about creating situations where momentum and enthusiasm for an idea are generated from staff conversations and collective learning, and result in requests for additional resources. As he stated, “Then you make sure the leader with the answer says, ‘Yes,’ because you’ve sort of lead these people to the water and they’re about to take a drink.” Supporting a change initiative means not only providing the time needed for staff to meet and plan, but also the resources to carry the plan through to next stages of development and perhaps eventually, completion. He recognized that a large percentage of his staff completed their work with effort that was “well above and beyond what we expect of them in their day to day work.” James did not discuss how he communicated that appreciation with staff.

Erin found that time invested in getting to know staff as individuals outside of their roles within the school context was helpful when you can tap into personal interests or areas of expertise and thereby hook their energy and assistance with school-based initiatives. She referred to a situation where a staff member who was an avid gardener was not interested in helping with an outdoor classroom initiative. This individual was asked to share their expertise on what plants to select at just one meeting, she got excited about the project and then became a supporter. Erin also reflected that she may have been “hard” on some of her staff through her realization that, “You can’t expect everybody to care as much as you do or to work as hard as you do, but I did.” This suggests that leaders model expected behaviour from their staff and can sometimes be disappointed when the desired behaviour is not displayed in return.

Communicating value through time.

Time was a factor that all of the principals referred to over and over again in terms of its significance in effectively implementing change. Many of the principals spoke of creative ways they freed up time within the school day for staff to meet and learn from one another, and as a

way to communicate both value for professional growth and teachers' time. James was able to provide 60 minutes of meeting time a week because he recognized that "as you move forward you need to provide people with time so that they can come together and meet together. It can't be 'in addition to'. It has to be 'instead of' something." Darren and Julia timetabled 30 minutes a cycle for teachers to meet in teams to discuss school initiatives. While Darren recognized that 30 minutes was less than ideal, he wanted to clearly communicate that he was supporting staff in their change learning. Paula changed the timetable so that the school day began five minutes earlier which allowed for early dismissal once a month freeing all staff to meet for 90 minutes.

When Julia thought about her passion to have staff spend their time focused on instruction and achievement, she worried that she may have "lost a few people along the way". She questioned whether time spent planning events was of value compared to focusing on instruction, curriculum and achievement and now wondered:

Maybe I should have valued what they were doing even though I didn't think it was really related to instruction and learning and I thought parent volunteers or secretarial staff could have been doing it. In the process I may have lost some of the good things they were doing.

The data contained frequent references to the leaders' struggle to find balance in the change process, which Fullan (1992) referred to as the reciprocal relationship between pressure and support.

Inviting voice.

Sharon believed in honouring people by giving everyone a voice. Julia agreed that providing voice is necessary to demonstrate individual worth, but also to ensure that the change is lasting: "Incorporating their [staff] ideas is important, not just to value them but because

you're going to have more sustainable change.” To validate her teachers’ ideas, Julia ensured that her teachers played an active role in agenda setting when school Professional Learning Communities met. Liann communicated value to staff by providing opportunities for them to express their point of view in relation to shared expectations or by meeting with each one individually to discover what they truly thought and felt about a particular topic. Liann spoke further to *loving your employees* in regards to helping staff navigate personality differences between each other and encouraging them to be firm with what they believe. After watching and listening to staff in her new school, she became aware of the “pecking order” and designed specific strategies whereby she promoted the sharing of honest, open opinions and then invited the staff to give their opinions away or participate in activities where their job was to listen and repeat what they heard. Liann was gratified when the process she put in place allowed an opinionated individual with few filters to “engage, feel valued and heard and honoured, and live with the collective decision and then comment on how difficult that was for her professionally.”

Caring in action.

Over the years, Paula noticed a pattern when teachers were not replying to email or if there was an unusual negative vibe on staff. In her opinion, that usually meant someone was not doing well personally. She noted:

I’ve found that when there is a negative thing happening, that usually indicates there’s a personal situation. Maybe there’s something happening at home, or something’s weighing them down and they simply can’t function.

When Paula felt someone was struggling, she would check in with them and find out what they needed for support. Paula also “loved” her staff in being careful not to quash people’s enthusiasm and excitement for a learning task, even when she realized they were setting

unrealistic expectations for themselves. Rather, she would probe with a few questions to help them prioritize their work or at the end of the year, point out what they did accomplish, rather than what they didn't. Paula found the sometimes unpredictable nature of an educational leader's work frustrating when interruptions caused her to cancel meetings with staff members or cancel class observations; although teachers said that they understood, she worried that it might damage her relationship and credibility with them.

Liann spoke about an extremely difficult situation that put the school and the parent community at odds with each other. When parent meetings were held, she asked the entire school staff to attend, not just those directly affected by the change, by saying, "Your colleagues are under the gun and we need to show our solidarity and our commitment to learning at our school." As she reflected on the experience, she talked about the wounds that remained and the great cost paid by the school staff, despite the change's current success. In commenting on her personal anguish as the school leader, she said, "I found it so profoundly difficult for how I would provide leadership, how I would nurture, how I would console." She asked the divisional superintendent to come and speak to the staff to communicate support and appreciation for their efforts because she felt that it wasn't sufficient enough for her "to support them in their work and value what they had done and to communicate my trust and deep admiration for what they had done." Liann's words and actions speak deeply to caring for her staff as professionals and as people.

Secret #2: Connect peers with purpose.

In reviewing Fullan's original definition of Secret Two, concepts such as creating Professional Learning Communities, crafting and communicating a clear vision endorsed by all staff, and balancing the "too-tight, too-loose" dilemma between a unified, whole school focus and individual empowerment and initiative are some key areas of exploration. The data collected

that related to Secret Two is vast and multifaceted, with close connections to Secret Three and Secret Four. However, for the purpose of analyzing the data more clearly, attempts will be made to discuss each secret in isolation. The hinge point of Secret Two's success is the ability to purposefully connect peers with a common goal, which is often determined by the collective vision within a school, and the resulting cooperative action. One of the themes that surfaced from analyzing the data and that will be addressed was that sometimes critical incidents galvanize staff to unite. Without exception, all nine administrators formed some type of leadership and/or support team to assist them in planning, communicating, and implementing the change with the rest of the staff. The size of the team was often dependent on the size of the school, and in cases of small schools, the entire staff were an integral part of shaping the reform process. From the transcripts, it was clear that data can play a noteworthy role in Secret Two as the impetus that connects peers with purpose, in Secret Four as a means of determining whether the change efforts are producing the desired effects and what further work needs to be done, and in Secret Five by helping to convey transparency; therefore, data will be an important part in discussing each of those secrets specifically and we will begin by discussing its impact in *connecting peers with purpose*.

Data.

Darren noticed that his school's literacy data showed too many children not meeting expectations. He began by sharing relevant data with staff and then formed an in-school planning team with the support of a divisional consultant. Then he took the majority of his staff to a professional development session that was directly related to the intervention his school was about to embrace, so he had a core group of teachers who could help plan professional development for the remainder of the year and mentor others. This intentional choice on

Darren's part helped to build staff capacity (Secret Three). When Darren reflected on the change initiative to date, he knew that for some staff "that feeling of being on a team" alone had benefitted the teaching and learning in his school. One of Darren's goals was to encourage teachers to collaborate so that they could "be the best for the kids". He observed that, "Team building and public practice have been great out-croppings of our work together, and the benefit to the children's own learning." He reflected on the importance of having an in-school planning team and "taking the time to prepare and be concise and clear in your communication with staff." To help create a clear sense of purpose and encourage professional development in all his teaching staff, he focused all professional development on the literacy initiative which resulted in great team building and togetherness. He was encouraged by the work done to date to enhance literacy instruction and described his staff as "just one big PLC". Although Darren's entire staff likely did not emulate the principles of a Professional Learning Community to the degree that he would like, his goal was to encourage professional dialogue and align behaviour more closely to that of a true PLC.

James used data to help create a sense of purpose for his staff. He spoke to the importance of building a critical mass of people who believed that change was necessary and providing opportunities for them to become informed, have time to think and talk together, and feel empowered to do something differently that would impact change. He and his leadership team approached change with the philosophy that, "If the ideas come from the teachers themselves, that means they are in a place where they want to move forward on their own and they don't need to be led so much." He summed up the essence of Secret Two by stating: "If there's more of a personal connection then people will work for each other and work towards a cause together. Working effectively with staff follows the same principles as student

engagement.” While a personal connection between people is not a prerequisite for effective collaboration, and may at times be a detriment if it stifles honesty, it can also be beneficial. James realized the importance of having people work together and be able to support each other and was in a unique situation where an unusually high percentage of teachers were also former students at his school and wanted “to do right by the place.”

Erin and her colleagues helped to create a shift on staff where at-risk students were supported by everyone. Once again, data helped to show teachers that their interventions were increasing student achievement which provided them with an incentive to continue their work. Erin commented:

We’ve kept an awful lot of data about the successes of the kids and there’s some absolutely hard data that what we’re doing is working. People respond to that. They want everyone to do well. Data’s been really helpful because we can actually show that everyone is passing Grade 9 enough to go to high school and that wasn’t always the case.

When Erin noticed through attendance data that children were beginning to disengage with school, she would bring that child to the attention of her staff and ask who wanted to take him/her under wing. Someone always volunteered because inevitably, a staff member would have established a fledgling relationship with that child and observed his/her need for support. Erin’s efforts to shift the school culture from one where “problem kids” were the office staff’s responsibility to one where everyone shared ownership have been hugely rewarding, but tremendously challenging. Erin’s realization that a school “can only do so much” leaves her with a worry that the students that she and the staff have loved and supported for three years will not find a place to belong once their public schooling is over.

Theo took on a literacy initiative that had been started by his predecessor, but lacked momentum. He realized that there was little buy in from staff and that he “needed to find a way to make it come alive again.” Before he was willing to invest considerable time, money and energy into the literacy project he wanted to have a clearer understanding of what the end result might be and what pieces were preventing the initiative from being successful. Theo used data to create a sense of urgency with his staff and to make the issue real for people. He reflected on the process of sharing the data:

I’ll never forget that staff meeting where I put up the graphs that showed exactly how many of our kids really were three, four, five or six grades levels below where they should be in their reading levels. When the staff saw that, it was like the light bulb went on and we said, ‘Well, what are we doing about this? We need to do something.’

The literacy team was a core group of teachers that “championed” the ideas. Theo recognized the success of *building capacity* in having a team to share information and expectations with staff so that the initiative “didn’t all come from the principal; it was a team effort. It worked exceptionally well to have somebody who was talented other than the principal in motivating a group and identifying need.” Wise educational leaders quickly recognize the strength of team members or partners who share the same vision.

When Paula began in her new school, she inherited a keen, energetic, and professional staff, but she noticed that there was not a visible leadership base and all of their good work “was not threaded together”. In conjunction with the School Plan priorities, Paula developed five focus groups, or teams, based on Professional Learning Community principles and asked every teacher to join a group that interested them. Keeping the group formation open and equitable for

everyone helped to create staff buy in. Each focus group had co-chairs which created an instant leadership base of ten people. Paula found that most staff divisional Professional Growth Plans fit with a focus group and so one part of her role was creating links between staff members who were interested in learning and growing in similar areas. Value was communicated to each focus group by giving them time to meet and plan on professional development days. Paula and her vice principal went a step further in communicating trust (Secret One) and empowering their focus groups by allotting each team a portion of the school budget and a number of release days which they determined how to use. Focus groups identified the work that needed to be done and had direct input into creating School Plan priorities. Paula commented on the result of that choice: “Interesting things happen because the team feels so involved and then they are working really hard because they want these initiatives to work – they have ownership.” Paula set up an electronic template whereby staff could contribute to and edit the School Plan collectively to the point where she joked that, “the plan is writing itself.” By directly involving each focus team with formulating the School Plan, evidence of the *transparency* inherent in Secret Five, *transparency rules*, the teachers in Paula’s school do not view the plan as something that someone else writes and tells them to fulfill. They understand it because they have collectively designed it. The pride and sense of accomplishment were evident in Paula’s voice as she compared the shared leadership in her building to building an airplane: “And then it’s flying . . . and you just watch it!”

Liann arrived at a K-8 school after being a vice principal in a Grades 5-8 school and noticed a disconnect between the Middle Years practices she observed and provincially endorsed Middle Years pedagogy and philosophy. Her first focus was to create opportunities for professional learning around exploring current practices where she strategically engaged staff in

dialogue about their beliefs and values in Middle Years. Her role was, “To listen deeply and probe individuals.” Through dialogue they came to identify “what really mattered” to create a common understanding which the Middle Years teachers shared with the rest of their colleagues at a staff meeting. Liann’s beliefs about connecting peers with purpose can be summarized in her comment, “I think when you invite staff to engage professionally, to share their viewpoint and to contribute to constructing something; most of them are going to be on board.” Other staff, she notes, are “highly committed to a larger purpose and they don’t need anything” to prompt their involvement and support. Many times Liann had her staff collectively determine foundational understandings about various aspects of school life such as report writing or tri-conferences, and then used that shared understanding to drive future decision making and practice.

Challenges.

Being in a new school, Sharon’s first priority was to identify what the “key issues” were in a context of multiple demands. She and her staff began by feeding their students breakfast which also helped the school address significant attendance issues. Not only did teachers donate money out of their own pockets, they volunteered their time for fundraising events, and their family and extended family members became involved. The pilot project that Sharon and her school participated in had four guiding principles and an implementation team training model. The implementation team was made up of a cross section of the entire school staff based on Sharon’s belief that just having a teacher team is an “old fashioned model.” Once the implementation team met several times to discuss the parameters of being a part of the pilot project, they presented their information to staff with the hope of getting 80% support.

Seven months after Sharon arrived at her new school a crisis caused the entire school staff to pull together and look after each other. Sharon recalls, “We just became like glue.” That

crisis also helped to identify issues that the school needed to address and that certain individuals were initially resisting. She clearly remembers the first professional development day where the issues were shared, how a staff member who held a lot of informal power responded, and how that response shifted the staff momentum. The staff member said:

If this is an issue, why in heaven's name would we wait? That's what we always do in education, wait. We need to do things when it's really important and it's going to make a difference for our kids.

As a result, Sharon and her staff created a School Plan based on four guiding principles that were displayed in the school on a large bulletin board in kid friendly language. School Plan goals were posted as learning targets in classrooms and were communicated in newsletters to the parents.

Secret Five, *transparency rules*, supported connecting peers with purpose in Sharon's school in this case. She stated:

Everybody who was working was all on the same page. I think that was the biggest thing in the change process. Everybody knew what we were working on. You could ask anybody in the school and they could tell you what we were working on and why we were working on it and how and why everybody was important to contribute together.

Once again, a clear vision drives action, even if the vision changes and is refocused along the way.

Another example of how challenges can *connect peers with purpose* was evidenced when a negative incident in Erin's school ended with a positive result that helped to unite her staff. A small group of staff were highly involved in designing and creating an outdoor classroom honouring the First Nations culture. When it was vandalized shortly after its completion, staff

who were not involved with the project were offended that someone would dare to damage “our” work and supported the restoration as a united front. In Liann’s school a highly emotional conflict between the school and community resulted in her staff growing close and becoming protective of each other. As Liann observed, any school initiative thereafter was highly successful because “we knew how to work together!” The needs in Liann’s new school were considerably different from her previous school and when she reflected on the work that needed to be done, it was impossible to accomplish it successfully without uniting her staff behind a common goal. She stated:

We don’t have time to be at odds with one another. We have got to figure out who we are and we’ve got to work together because the needs are beyond any one of us. The need to create that collaborative culture is really, really vital and I am pushing hard at that.

Creating a collaborative culture is part of building the capacity required to enact change.

Secret #3: Capacity building prevails.

Secret Three, *capacity building prevails*, includes data about investing in teachers’ professional development, addressing the “knowing-doing gap”, implementing effective hiring practices, and creating a positive school climate where risk-taking and failure are seen as forward moving actions. The interview themes that will be specifically discussed in this section are shared leadership, professional development, resistance to change, and benefits of a new environment. Liann’s comments on her goal of contributing every day to a culture of collaboration and capacity have already been mentioned and are a good starting point for the exploration of Secret Three, *building capacity*. Liann’s beliefs about the power of collaboration were beautifully expressed in this comment as she reflected on her school:

The answers are here, and we have the expertise. We can do anything we need to do. My goal and role is to harness that capacity; understand it, celebrate it and move it in a collective way.

When Liann considered educational change in the context of *building capacity*, she thought about the kinds of things she could “make clear, model, motivate and inspire others to wonder and ask questions about their instructional practice with perhaps a different perspective in mind.” Her default position was to always push people to ask themselves to take what they knew and believed, to consider what they might do differently, and to create a “sense of wonder and possibility” in the minds of her staff. As Fullan (2008) suggests, capacity cannot be built in an environment of criticism, bullying or judgmentalism. Liann referred specifically to her efforts to elicit “the expression of ideas in the context of non-judgment” as part of a “delicate balance of honouring different viewpoints.” Part of creating a judgment-free environment was validating the good things that teachers already did before pushing them to consider other things. Liann concentrated on *building capacity* through focused, strategic staff conversations with the goal of:

Moving us in our practice and deepening our understanding about what it is we were doing, who we were as a school staff, what it is we believed in and valued, and how we showed that in our actions every day.

In practical terms, Liann set staff meeting agendas so that school plan priorities were continually revisited and discussed, and conversations were recorded and documented.

Shared leadership.

Paula practiced shared leadership in her building and stated, “I can never just say that I’m in charge of the whole thing because you are a dynamic group that is working on the whole thing together.” Paula and her vice principal met with their leadership team monthly to get the pulse of

the school and incorporate teacher voice by working together on staff meeting agendas. They also forwarded divisional email to relevant focus teams for the team to determine the school response and possible action. One important part of maintaining capacity was remembering to enculturate new staff members. Paula bemoaned situations where a highly functioning team appeared to be at the peak of productivity when a member would transfer or go on leave. However, she added that such a situation offered the possibility of promoting even more change when new team members came on board with new ideas, and provided the opportunity for a school to revisit its purpose and values as they answered questions from new staff about current practices. Sharon talked about the limited experiences that many young teachers had with creating a safe, caring, and respectful classroom environment, and with making decisions around discipline that honour children and where they come from. In an ideal world, Sharon would institute a Respect Implementation Team in every school to mentor new teachers and would organize divisionally mandated professional development for new teachers that spanned the first years in their careers. From her experience, simply saying, “Here, read a book,” did not constitute a successful change initiator on its own.

Professional development.

James’ experience with his school staff was that change originated with giving staff knowledge, often in the form of a book. “Getting people reading” books carefully selected by a group was the first step, followed by “time to meet and discuss what was going on, what they were learning and how they felt this could apply to the school.” *Building capacity* in a large school involves inviting representatives from different program areas to be sure that all concerns and perspectives are included. The literacy team at James’ school ended up being about 30% of the teaching staff which became “a critical mass of people that became informed about what we

could do about adolescent reading.” The team was given release time to meet for half a day periodically throughout the year and then came up with the recommendation that the entire staff spend a concentrated amount of time together learning strategies to improve reading for students at the Senior Years level.

To facilitate the literacy change, James assigned the role of literacy coach to a staff member who he felt was “right” for the job, an individual who was competent, informed and “willing to take a risk themselves and fly without a net a lot of the time.” Darren also mentioned the role risk-taking plays in the change process. His staff received professional development related to the change initiative, and had been given 30 minutes a cycle expressly reserved to talk about their progress with the initiative, when the divisional consultant suggested modeling the desired practice with each of their classes. Darren noticed a shift in people being more open after the divisional consultant took the risk of modeling new practices in front of his staff. Gradually, his own staff began taking risks in their teaching practices.

In contemplating the tightrope walked to enable change, James commented that “if any of the elements are missing, it could be a crash and burn scenario.” Therefore, half of all staff meeting times was reserved for professional development. Professional growth conversations with staff focused on School Plan initiatives and explanations of what they were doing to develop practice in the designated areas; “It’s just not an option.” While individual learning interests were honoured and supported, every staff member was expected to have part of their learning goal connected with the school goals.

Theo, who was previously a mathematics and science teacher, prepared for his school’s literacy initiative by reading and familiarizing himself with current research to ensure that he was seen as “somebody who actually knew what he was talking about”. To help build capacity

amongst his staff, the literacy team planned many professional development sessions where they presented their knowledge to colleagues to make sure that everyone had a shared understanding and the skillset required to move forward. The literacy initiative demonstrated to Theo that reform was “really about empowering the teachers to be able to make the changes and adaptations they needed in order to see that they needed to do some things differently.”

In her first administrative role, Sharon talked about “learning alongside with my staff” and her need “to be humbled” by her lack of knowledge about First Nations culture and education. To help her and her staff develop a First Nations’ perspective, she enlisted the help of an independent Advisory Council, and arranged for professional development to be provided by both provincial and divisional Aboriginal education consultants. Since Sharon’s school was a bit of an anomaly within the division, she sought help from school leaders in other divisions who were faced with similar challenges. High levels of crime and poverty, a high percentage of Aboriginal students, and issues like Grade 2 students smoking marijuana were some of the issues that Sharon and her staff dealt with. Sharon’s staff completed school visitations to meet with teachers and to learn about strategies and ideas that could be used in their own context. One of the benefits of being a pilot project school was that professional learning was provided for staff and students by highly skilled trainers. In Sharon’s challenging situation, *building capacity* was not just restricted to her staff, but to the whole community surrounding her school. In reaching out for additional support several of her teachers approached the minister of the local church. When he heard what they hoped to do he said, “You know, you look like Jesus; just reckless and foolish.”

Resistance to Change.

With respect to the literacy initiative at his school, James reflected on the receptivity or malleability of various staff members. More established teachers were accustomed to a culture where “you close the door and do your thing and you’re very self-conscious about how that happens.” James and his team were slowly working at “breaking some of those barriers (to change) down” and aiming towards “justifying what needs to be done based on best practice and research.” Darren made many observations in his school that give him reason to be concerned about the “knowing-doing gap” (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000). Staff indicated an interest in learning about changing their literacy practices and that “they’d really love to do it, and they are doing it” but he still observed old teaching practices when he visited classrooms. His goal was to encourage public practice so that teachers would “open the door to one another” because “that is how you really improve teaching”, not just in regards to literacy, but the spin off benefits would be in all subject areas. He was disappointed with the fact that the common planning time was not used as efficiently as he would have like it to be and sometimes when he stopped by, teachers were off task. Darren used the “bus” analogy when he referred to his staff and as a leader wanted to develop a clearer sense of how to get resistant people to board the bus. He wondered, “How do you gather them in? What else can I do to help support those staff so in turn they’re going to support all the learners in the room?” Theo also discussed the challenges of “getting everybody on the bus” and stated:

Some teachers regardless of how much you talk about it and how much you share the excitement of seeing our kids improve by using different strategies, still have a tendency to fall back on what their experience is telling them is the best way because that’s the way they’ve always done it.

When Erin embarked on her goal to “make this a school for everybody”, a school that was a part of the whole community, some of the staff as well as her support staff didn’t understand or agree with her philosophy of inclusion. They preferred the old system where challenging students were sent to the office with some of them “banished” from the school, never to return. Erin expected teachers to accompany students to the office, sit in and work through problems together. A number of staff near the end of their careers decided to retire. As well, her support staff was “nudged and nudged” to the point where the disconnect between their philosophy about working with students and what was expected of them became too great. They left, and Erin was “able to hire people who were like us in their way of thinking.” Fortunately, many of the staff that remained embraced the opportunity to create a more holistic environment for their students, with particular attention to the at-risk children, and other staff within the division were drawn to her school because of its focus. Efforts to increase the staff capacity through professional development such as spending a full day learning about cultural sensitivity or inviting an engaging presenter “who speaks to the heart” and then using the language learned have kept people engaged with the process and engaged with the successes. Original change efforts attracted the focus and energy of a small staff group, but it was a group that was able to influence the rest of the school to buy in. To avoid staff division, Erin and her vice principal always publicly assigned “credit to the whole school community” and quietly found ways to recognize those who really put in the “sweat equity.” Erin reflected that she should have “tried to build capacity sooner so that not so much fell on my vice principal and me” and wondered if they had done enough to shift the school culture in a way that the change would be sustained after they have left.

Benefit of a new environment.

Many of the administrators remarked on the benefit of moving to a new building as an administrator as a way in which they increased their own capacity. When you move to a new school you do not have the shared, perspective of the staff that you are joining. Liann's move compelled her to examine her own beliefs and values as she observed the culture of her new school and looked for alignment between the two. Liann believed that moving administrators is a deeply enriching experience and stated:

We all are going to transform because we're all different people and that's why we move administrators so that we transform communities so that every community gets the benefit of the gifts and talents that individual brings. That is to me why we move people, and also for their own professional learning. I can't think of a richer experience than coming to a new school. There isn't one – I honestly don't think there is.

Paula found that moving to a new school provided her with “the opportunity to do more of what you believe in.” In her experience, over time people come to see you as you have been defined in that school, and while you might be proficient at certain things, “you don't really get out of that box at that school because that's who you are.” Paula has also observed that if principals remain in one school for too long, they can become complacent and fall into a pattern of behaviour which does not encourage open-mindedness or alternative ways of thinking. She states:

This becoming secure in what you do or I'll say this, becoming stuck, which is also a problem because when you become secure in something, then you do it all the time and that's wrong, too, because then you just do it because you think you know it's going to work, but then you'll lose people because you

need to be open enough to think, “Maybe that won’t work,” so you’ll be looking at some alternatives.

Theo described the advantage of “coming in new and fresh” with an obvious starting place. Sean talked about bringing “a new set of wondering and a new set of eyes” to his school. He found the challenge of “building anew” as something that energized him and created opportunities for him to energize others. Being in a new work environment can create an invigorating balance between freeing and forcing school leaders to re-invent themselves.

Secret #4: Learning is the work.

Once you have attempted to hire the best people to staff your school, you have helped them to identify a common purpose, you have invested in their professional growth, and established caring, trusting relationships with them, sleeves need to be rolled up and the work begun. Secret Four attempts to strike the balance between consistency and innovation, and collectivism and individualism by focusing on research supported high yield strategies and continuous improvement. Secret Four works hand in glove with Secrets Two and Three in that open, collaborative work environments where staff share a common purpose, and work specific, job embedded professional development are conditions within which continuous improvement can occur. The role of data in conjunction with Secret Four was a common theme in the transcripts in terms of determining what learning needed to occur and whether in fact it was occurring. Discussion of Secret Four also focusses on the challenges that surface when people are invited or directed to change their usual practices.

Data.

The conversations that Theo, his Literacy Team and staff initiated around what needed to happen first led them to the creation of a common assessment tool resulting in a functional,

informative data base that allowed them to track students and determine what types of interventions were required. The Literacy Team started sharing what the research said in terms of best practices and provided whole staff professional development on various interventions and strategies to ensure a common understanding and a common sense of purpose. Theo stated, “we went deeper” as the staff discussed how literacy strategies affected the way subjects like math and science were taught as well. If teachers knew that a number of struggling readers were going to be in their classes, they would collaborate with the resource teachers to plan for specific adaptations to meet student needs. To accommodate for new strategies such as literacy blocks and intensive interventions, Theo had to re-design the timetable. He recalled:

That was a bit of a challenge and that comes at a cost of teacher’s scheduling as well. There was lots of discussion around setting priorities, and if this is a priority, then we have to make it work.

In repeated staff discussions around the learning goal, sacrifices were made in the realization that change has a cost and “that other things have to give.”

While data is not the “be all and end all”, it helped Theo frame conversations around solid instructional practices and point out that if certain practices were not moving students forward, other strategies needed to be tried with the goal of moving “kids along the continuum of learning”. Data also helped Theo’s school move from being “good enough” to better. They had a sense that they were a good school, but could not definitively answer the question, “How do we know?” Theo noted:

Without that [analyzing data and changing practice] it’s just too easy to be “good enough”. We’re doing a good job and we pat ourselves on the back and say, “Well done, great year, let’s go on.” One of those personal discoveries for

me was that good enough isn't good enough. We need to be great and for us to be great we need to know how we're doing now, which will help us understand how we can do better. So having an opportunity to actually see some data that will help us to identify what the issues are and help to create that sense of urgency is what moves people forward. That's that piece that I think is often missing in this profession because we rely so much on professional judgment and those kinds of gut instincts that are mostly good and positive. When you're trying to move people and change people, I go back to that whole sense of needing to find out how we were actually doing.

For me that was probably the biggest personal discovery that I had.

Secret Five, *transparency rules*, factors into the honesty required to hold up the mirror that data presents and look deeply into its reflection. Theo and his staff were willing to confront some difficult questions and make themselves vulnerable as a staff. Part of building in accountability, or *transparency* (Secret Five) was insisting that every meeting have an agenda and minutes, regardless of how simple they were. Given the weight that Sean attached to creating a mission or value statement as a precursor to any change, it is not surprising that he constantly looked for alignment between "the written page" and the actions within the building. He asked, "Are we in fact walking the talk?" Trouble-shooting and problem solving were always solution based for Sean, keeping what was possible in mind with the intent of "bumping it up a notch."

Liann explained that an important part of the journey of learning was doing the work in the following way:

It's important to stop every once in a while at a wayside stop and go, "Wow, where are we and how are we doing, and look how far we've come and look –

we decided to go this way, but we can still get there.” You need to stop and take stock about where we are and what actions we said we were going to take and indeed have we taken them and have they moved us in a direction that we were hoping we would go.

As was mentioned in Chapter Two, if people are under constant pressure to transform, they cannot ever relax and celebrate what they have achieved (Hargreaves et al. 2001). Taking stock and celebrating accomplishments allows staff to reenergize. Data helped Theo to create a sense of pride and accomplishment in his school and a clear reason to collectively celebrate when staff saw students’ literacy levels increase.

Challenges.

In regards to the work of continuous improvement, all interviewees commented on the seemingly inherent difficulty for people to change their practice as well as the conflict that change can generate. Liann commented that teachers “deeply entrenched” in ways familiar to them may try to “sabotage” change initiatives. Often such behaviour results from people who do not want to appear ineffective and are too defended (Neufeld & Mate, 2004) to risk honestly examining their current practices. Liann always attempted to shift challenging conversations from “emotional to intellectual” so that the issues could be discussed clearly and rationally. Darren observed that “people will tell you that they agree, but if they are stuck in their paradigm . . . it’s sometimes hard to get them past that.” James spoke to the inevitable challenges of working with people “who are used to being in charge, who have their own ideas.” Some staff follow the “this too shall pass” (Brown & Moffett, 1999) way of thinking and hold their breath, hoping the change will pass them by. James did not describe these individuals as active resisters, but “they’re passively resisting and they really don’t engage . . . they really don’t change their

practice.” In James’ school, staff were responsible to justify the 60 minutes a week they were given to meet and plan. He stated:

They are held accountable for the work that they do and the time that they spend doing that. It’s stringent enough that people are accountable for the work, but it’s loose enough so that they have the flexibility to do what they need to do. Again, part of the art is making sure they know they are accountable, but staying off their backs so they can get it done and not feel like you’re looking over their shoulders. You want a comfort level.

One example of that flexibility is a small group of teachers who met regularly, observed each other teach using literacy strategies, and then followed up with a debriefing discussion of their observations. James’ previous comments have components of Secret Two in regards to the “too tight-too loose dilemma” (Fullan, 2008) and Secret Five in terms of the transparency staff groups are expected to model in their work. James worked from the premise of referencing all actions back to research and professional learning and to “take it out of the realm of opinion and into research facts.” Sharon agreed when she stated “the research continually supports the work.”

Sean stated that it required courage to openly address conflict and referred to conflict with metaphors such as “stepping in a mud pile”, “opening a can of worms”, and the “elephant in the room”. Confronting and inviting disagreement also required a culture where openness and transparency, Secret Five, were valued. Conflict required much conversation, individually “behind the scenes”, as well as collectively to navigate beyond. Sean boldly said to his staff, “I know that we’re not doing anything and we’re not making a difference and we’re not going to change unless we have open disagreement.” Over time, as trust grew, his staff was able to air questions and doubts in a public forum. However, in keeping the vision strong and maintaining

staff cohesion, Sean considered how “you support the outliers”, or those who do not support collective beliefs, so that they don’t “chip away” at the vision. Although none of the research participants discussed the power of staff dissent in detail, it was certainly hinted at.

Paula realized that in the overwhelming arena of educational change, “You have to pick what you’re going to move on or what you are not,” and even when you see great things happening, “you can’t relax; you must continue looking at next steps.” In Paula’s school, what appeared to be a conflict of interests between focus groups actually ended up providing a forum for an intense but meaningful conversation that she could not have orchestrated. In her view, “hurdles” in the change process are necessary and “just help you get better.” Julia no longer described staff who questioned or didn’t immediately embrace new ideas as resistors of change. She saw the value in incorporating their wonderings not only to foster trust and communicate value but to create more sustainable change in the long run. Erin considered that perhaps she didn’t always “address some of the push-back in the way that we could have,” or that perhaps what appeared to be opposition just required further dialogue to clarify issues. When Liann reflected on ineffective change efforts, she stated:

If I was thinking about something that we initiated that actually didn’t work, I don’t even look at it that way. I would simply look at that as that’s another opportunity to re-visit. You just go, wait a sec, that was ineffective, but you don’t stop it. If it’s really part of what you believe and value you just go, well – that didn’t work out the way I thought. How else might I approach it? So to me it always ends up in success because that’s the way you’re going drive it.

She framed any change as being successful because she and her staff would continue to adapt and modify until a desirable result was achieved.

Despite the excitement of seeing kids improve by using different teaching strategies, some of Theo's staff had a "tendency to fall back on what their experience is telling them is the best way because that's the way they've always done it." In those cases, communication took the form of a "fierce conversation" where Theo would sit down with a staff member and clearly state:

This is an expectation for us. This is the norm of our behaviour and it's not okay to just hand out worksheets without consciously being aware of the students in your class who just can't read it and not making adaptations based on their need.

Learning can be as much of a struggle for the adults within a school as it can be for the students, and any educator knows that sometimes learners need to experience a little discomfort. Liann also believed in communicating clear expectations and told her staff as they were preparing for tri-conferences and reflecting on both school and divisional objectives that she expected "strategic evidence of learning." When Julia introduced the idea of Professional Learning Communities to her staff, she began by giving them related articles to read and facilitating dialogue about "why we were doing it; the intent, the purpose." Her most recent dilemma was how directive to be in terms of pushing her staff to analyze student achievement data or common assessments: "That's the next step and I have to admit, I'm a little scared to do it in terms of how hard I should push."

In some cases staff attempted to deflect poor achievement results on the students or circumstances beyond their control, demonstrating what Hattie (2009) refers to as "deficit thinking" and what Schlechty (2001) warns can result in feelings of hopelessness, preventing any forward motion. Darren had to foster a staff mindset of moving forward rather than blaming and

when Julia's staff started making comments such as, "well, that group was always a bad group," she pointed them back to the data and encouraged them to look at it objectively, focusing on issues within their control and with the question, "What are we going to do about it?"

Secret #5: Transparency rules.

Much of Secret Five focuses on communication and the role of data, both qualitative and quantitative, in creating the transparency required to determine whether continuous improvement is being made. In the next few pages, references from the data to both quantitative and qualitative feedback will be examined. And as was evidenced by the interviewees' accounts, the black and white facts and figures they shared with staff were persuasive. However, knowing what data is useful and how to amass it are challenging first steps all on their own. Many of the school leaders spoke to collecting entry level or baseline data against which to measure their intervention to determine success and further action. Using the control find function in Microsoft Word, all transcripts contained the word *data*, ranging in frequency of use from once to thirty-three times. Another critical aspect of ensuring transparency is engaging in effective communication. Although none of the interview questions were directed at determining financial transparency within a school, the topic was mentioned by a few of the participants and will be discussed briefly in concluding the discussion of Secret Five.

Quantitative data.

Collecting data was a significant part of the pilot project in which Sharon's school participated. Although the data was "hugely powerful", managing it was so overwhelming that Sharon remembers thinking at points in time, "I want to bail!" In compliance with the terms set by the pilot project, Sharon's school collected data from students, staff, parents, community members as well as an Advisory Committee, a committee composed of individuals from several

different agencies. Besides school-based data, data was collected by an outside agency which in turn, shared the data with the school. Due to the participant conditions of the pilot project, transparency was not optional for her school; it was mandated. Everything was measured and everything was shared with members of the Advisory Committee. In regards to data collection, Julia's observation was, "you can't measure everything. You've got to think about something that reflects the change you want to have, and that can be the hardest part." Paula commented, "Data, whether we like it or not, drives or tells us something about the success of what we're doing." Over time Paula and her school focus teams became better at gathering data, data that made sense and increased staff efficiency.

James' school used test score results as well as anecdotal evidence from teachers and other sources to inform their improvement efforts. Erin used provincial data, school-based data, as well as student specific data to help inform and energize the change at her school. Despite the sometimes arduous task of culling data, she noted, "Teachers love data," and observed first-hand how it motivated her staff. In the following excerpt, Theo clearly recalls sharing student achievement data and corresponding student names with staff to convey that these were not just numbers they were discussing.

And then we attached names to it and said, look, we're not just talking about numbers, these are the kids that are sitting in your grade nine math class. They can't read the text book, can't decode the words for that story problem, so forget the math – that's a no-brainer. They can't even get to what the question is asking. Or same thing in a science class. So sharing that initiative was about creating that sense of urgency and to do that we had to have the data.

Adding names brought a level of transparency to the data that helped to make the issue real for staff and create a sense of urgency. Theo talked about the excitement demonstrated by teachers when data was shared that showed interventions were effective. He also recognized a shift in his own thinking around data and how learning to work with data so directly stretched him in his personal growth as a leader. Theo had never really felt the need to rely on data and trusted his “intuition and gut instincts” about school proceedings, but he talked about the excitement that resulted from “actually seeing the results of what you are doing” in a way that was quantifiable. In conjunction with Secret Two, *connect peers with purpose*, James talked about the importance of giving teachers time to look at the data and determine appropriate actions in response to it. As the following comment suggests, it was one of the first steps in the change process:

It’s really important that you build some sort of group of people that believe that change is necessary and build a critical mass. People start to look at the data and start to come up with the conclusion that we could do something here.

Anecdotal Data.

Qualitative results from the change initiatives also surfaced in the data analysis. As was shared in the examination of Secret Two, the sense of connectedness amongst staff in many of the schools increased as they became united towards a common purpose. Darren viewed the ability of his staff to work as a team as important as the data in helping them reach their reform goals. In some schools, teachers were beginning to make their private practice more public as was evidenced in James’ school where teachers were inviting others into their classrooms followed by a debriefing session. Julia was starting to see positive results when a teacher volunteered to bring a student assessment to her Professional Learning Community to discuss

and determine next steps. Darren was invited by someone he considered to be a traditional teacher to observe her teaching a lesson using a new high yield strategy teaching model. Both of these examples demonstrated how the teachers trusted their administrators (Secret One) and were beginning to invite transparency to their teaching practice. Transparency for Liann and Sean was defined as constantly looking for alignment between the norms and values that staff had agreed upon and their actions.

Erin talked about how previously disenfranchised parents now attended parent-teacher conferences, partnered with the school around the children, and contacted the school for financial assistance or help with issues in the community. It was gratifying for Erin to note that student achievement increased, but also that “I haven’t had a parent refer to us as a racist school in years, whereas it happened all the time before.” Sharon warmly reminisced how the letter carrier who had been delivering mail to the school for 20 years commented on how the school had a different, more positive feel to it. Shortly after her arrival at her new school, a new secretary who had been assigned to Sharon’s school confided:

I was going to quit because the noise in here and the behaviour was so out of hand. And when you guys started changing things, there was a sense of calm and the school became a learning place.

Interestingly enough, the same secretary turned up to support the teaching staff at an evening parent meeting later that year.

Communication.

A significant component of transparency is communication and references to communication were a common and frequent thread connecting all nine transcripts as well. Besides formal and informal conversations with individuals and groups, change initiatives were

communicated through community newsletters, Parent Advisory Committee meetings, and Open House type celebrations. Paula summed up the importance of both eliciting and providing communication with her following observation:

If I'm not open to receiving communication or communicating well out there, then the plan won't be valid and it is not going to work. It really all has to come down to communication, all the way down; communication with the teachers amongst each other, with their class, with the administration, with the parents.

Darren had members of his in school planning team help him communicate student achievement data as well as the school's plan to respond to the data with the school's Parent Advisory Council (PAC). Paula's school PAC was aware of the organization and work of the focus teams and was able to view the School Plan in its draft form and provide input. Liann talked about taking advantage of every opportunity to communicate and reinforce, "This is what we believe as a school. This is why our practices look like this. They reflect our school culture." Sharon remembered that "everything that we did was always at the forefront." Communication with students, parents, staff, and community members as well as with her Advisory Committee was constant. Much of the change in Erin's school directly impacted relationships with those who were marginalized in the surrounding community. In reflecting on how the school's actions spoke more loudly than their words, Erin commented, "In some sense we haven't had to communicate with the community; they've communicated with one another."

Theo spoke to transparency as a leader in ensuring that people knew early on who he was and what he stood for. This was achieved through frequent conversations with individuals and groups as well as email. Liann's beliefs about communicating her values were quoted earlier in the chapter, but they are worth mentioning again in the context of transparency because she

feared that if one's values were too complex then "it's not apparent to anybody what you believe" and transparency is compromised. Julia communicated regularly to her staff that the purpose of their Professional Learning Community release time was to look at the connection between student achievement data and teacher instruction, and plan accordingly. Julia intentionally tried in her own communication to "model an appreciation" for when staff were honest about their shortcomings or uncertain about what next steps to take. She wanted to foster transparent, honest interactions between staff around student achievement so that the issues could be more openly identified and addressed. To encourage transparency at her school, Liann asked staff to assume responsibility for publically sharing their learning with other staff members so that "it wasn't coming from me."

Financial transparency.

Often the term *transparency* is synonymous with finances. Sharon's school organized a Community Day where families, community members who supported the school, and people from the Advisory Committee were invited to observe first-hand how the money they were donating was impacting the students. The student choir performed, student portfolios were shared, and a whole school PowerPoint celebrating achievements was produced. In regards to financial transparency, Erin talked about writing grants and accessing outside sources of funding so that staff would not be upset about how and where money was being spent. She stated:

We made sure that people knew that the resources being put into those things were not coming out of resources that they would lose. Nobody saw the pond dry up and that was important. Communication was important.

As was mentioned earlier, Paula helped to create a sense of financial transparency in her school by providing each focus team with a portion of school funds that they controlled based on their collective decisions about staff learning needs.

Secret #6: Systems learn.

Secret Six is based on the successful implementation of the first five secrets as well as the strength of the connection between the leaders within the organization itself. It focuses on building collective leader capacity and collaborative cultures. When the leaders within a school division have a shared sense of purpose and participate in professional development that builds their capacity, they are more likely to achieve widespread reform. Leaders who feel that they do not have a voice within their organization or who sense that they have to “go it alone” feel disempowered and may eventually give up (Brown & Moffett, 1999). Perhaps Secret Six is a more complex understanding of the simple truth, that there is strength in numbers. How the leaders within an organization interact is a direct result of the culture of the organization and its values. The PVSD leadership council meets regularly over the course of a year as a large group as well as in smaller groups for professional development, problem solving, visioning and goal setting. How much each leader asks for assistance from those around them can be a reflection of their personal leadership style, the stage of their career, or the nature of the issues confronting them. As the data evidenced, there are pockets of collaboration and peers connected by purpose within PVSD and those efforts have come from the bottom up rather than enforced by the senior administrators. In retrospect, the interview questions did not elicit data best suited to addressing Secret Six. No questions were specifically asked of the leader’s own professional development within PVSD, although some interviewees mentioned it in passing, and no question specifically addressed how the leaders received support from other leaders within the division, although it

did surface in two of the interviews. However, the data that was connected, perhaps more loosely with Secret Six, will be presented and divided between the topics of divisional efforts and systemic changes.

Divisional efforts.

In an effort to facilitate the cross-pollination of ideas, the Senior Administrative Team (SAT) invited school leaders to share their innovations with other schools. Sean and his vice principal were asked to present their change initiative at a leadership conference and Sean wondered what impact that may have. He questioned:

The courage to act is the key there. Can we stand up in front of a group and throw out a provocative statement that challenges people to separate themselves out and step up and do things differently. I'm talking about the process that I did with staff. It's time to step up people, and walk the talk.

Who's willing?

Sean commented that if SAT was serious about supporting change initiatives one aspect of that backing must come in the form of divisionally budgeted money. As a way to build capacity amongst the leaders in PVSD, Erin and her vice principal also shared the driving force behind their change initiative and the journey they embarked on to achieve it.

As Theo and his Literacy Committee worked on developing a manageable, informative data base, the vision shifted from a school-based focus to a divisional one as they realized that it made more sense to track kids longitudinally, instead of just over the three year period that they remained in their present school. His team recognized the power of being able to record and communicate student achievement data for children across the division right from their first years in school until graduation. They wanted others to benefit from their efforts and learning:

Once we started with the data base we decided quite early that if we're going to create this tool, it should be something that others could use instead of just being a (school's name) thing. Then that took us in to some conversations with senior admin.

Theo and a teacher who was instrumental in creating the data base shared their idea with the superintendent and eventually the Information and Technology department at PVSD generated an online assessment tracking tool that schools across the division use. Theo and his teacher leader also had many opportunities to present the process with other administrators in the division.

When Sharon and her staff joined the pilot project initiative, she felt a huge degree of support from her superintendent who participated in the professional development of the staff and "learned alongside us." Sharon was also involved in a Professional Learning Community of fellow administrators who met every six weeks to share how they were learning and leading in their respective schools. Despite her colleagues' support, Sharon had to go outside of PVSD to find a supportive school leader who confronted issues on a daily basis as challenging as the ones that she was experiencing. Sharon's belief about successful school divisions was mentioned earlier. She believed that effective school systems learn not only how to improve student achievement, but also make it a priority to ensure that people are taken care of and that a culture where everyone assumes responsibility for their colleagues is fostered. Over the past 11 years the pilot project has spread to 13 other schools within the division, with Sharon being instrumental in its implementation. She also provided inservicing to schools around the province to assist other school divisions in benefitting from her learning experience and from a model that profoundly affects school culture.

Erin benefitted from the support provided by administrators of schools in her neighbourhood. A number of years ago they began studying assessment practices as a group of school leaders. Over time, professional relationships developed into friendships where regular conversations about the demands of work created opportunities for people to share their beliefs and values about children and education. The results of those conversations made a difference for their students. In one case, Erin sent her grade seven teachers to a nearby feeder school to spend half a day getting to know their incoming grade six students, who were a challenging group. Another example was when the administrators at the Senior Years school next door heard that Middle Years students were scared to go to high school. Erin recalled her conversation with the Senior Years administrators:

They could have very easily gotten defensive but what they did instead was say, “Okay we’re going to hire a staff member that works with catch-up in the first semester with kids who don’t have all their credits yet, and then second semester will come over and build relationships with the kids that you think are at risk, and we’ll just keep looping these kids so we’ll make sure they make it across the field.”

Erin was humbled and inspired by another school’s generosity and willingness to work so closely with her to collectively care for the students in their community. She reflected:

Like who does that? Who takes a piece of their staffing and gives it to their next door neighbours. Unbelievable! We’ve only done that one year and it’s been phenomenal. We absolutely got some kids across the field that wouldn’t have gone otherwise.

Systemic changes.

Erin recalled that her first principalship coincided with a divisional change in the way discipline was approached and with the provincial promotion of inclusion. Instead of viewing discipline as synonymous with suspensions, discipline was beginning to be seen as an opportunity to teach students skills that were weak or non-existent and schools were encouraged to increasingly become places where everyone belonged. She was able to capitalize on the momentum of a systemic shift and the divisional focus added weight to her ability to implement similar school goals.

Although Secret Six really speaks to building and enhancing leadership capacity, an example of the importance of teachers feeling connected to the system, or division was also given. Both Liann and Paula recognized the importance of having members of their school staff be closely connected with divisional priorities, not only to communicate the divisional perspective and provide leadership, but so the staff as a whole feel like they are connected to colleagues beyond their school. Liann noted:

So what I tried to do was ensure that as a staff we are fully involved in whatever initiative or initiatives are undertaken divisionally. I think it's really important to be connected to the bigger picture and to be moving in similar directions. In this way staff feels that we are part of a bigger system, even if they don't deeply understand or maybe see why we are moving in that direction, but they feel part of the process.

Systemic changes have the greatest scope of influence, and they can be positive or negative. Julia worked in another province where a change initiative was government imposed. Goals, rationale and expected teaching practices were clearly communicated and additional

staffing support, professional development and school resources were provided to ensure the initiative's achievement. Julia reflected on the success of such a system wide reform effort communicating a single minded focus. Knowing that every school in the division was working on the same goal and knowing that teachers and principals could call colleagues from any school to discuss related questions or ideas resulted in a greatly successful change initiative. Liann experienced a system imposed change that was not as positive and commented, "When there is profound and significant systemic change, it impacts all of us." Through her experience in implementing the change at her school, she was able to provide support to other principals in the division who were experiencing similar challenges in their schools and in that way took on a leadership role beyond her school to build capacity.

Summary

Despite diverse change initiatives and school contexts, common themes surfaced from all nine interviews and evidence of all six of Fullan's secrets could be found, to varying degrees. Acknowledging that, personal leadership style differences were also clearly expressed. Many of the principals could refer to reaching specific goals or milestones during the change process, but none of them referred to the change within their buildings as a *fait accompli*. Some changes were achieved over time through a series of gradual steps. Other changes were achieved more quickly on the surface level, becoming deeper and more sustainable over time. Some of the participants referred to surprising secondary results or additional changes prompted by the original initiative. All reflected on the challenging nature of change and the work required to bring any change initiative to reality.

While differences existed about how and when leaders should communicate their vision or beliefs and values to staff, all embraced the notion that any effective vision must be grounded

in beliefs and values, and that an awareness of what you believe and value is more important than knowing exactly what the change initiative will look like at the end. Many spoke to the vision “evolving” as the change process unfolded with the first steps guided by one’s internal compass comprised of personal beliefs and values. Some administrators pared any change idea down to the underpinning beliefs and values first. When the conditions are right, change can be an organic process that results in circumstances beyond what school leaders could even plan for. Based on the data, the change process was a reciprocal one between leaders and their buildings. All of the nine school leaders interviewed spoke about how they had changed as leaders or how they had become more aware of their idiosyncrasies as individuals as they helped their schools navigate through the demanding, yet rewarding process of change.

Chapter Five

Discussion and Conclusions

Introduction

To revisit the opening words of Chapter One of this thesis, change is guaranteed in life, regardless of how one may be disposed towards it. Some individuals embrace change; others actively resist it. This study has attempted to find evidence of how school leaders transform their desire for, and knowledge, of change into action, using Fullan's Six Secrets of Change as the theoretical framework. The purpose of this final chapter is to provide a brief summary of the study and its findings, to draw conclusions from the interview data in relation to Fullan's Six Secrets of Change, to determine what lessons can be identified from the analysis, and to provide recommendations for practice and further research. A personal goal of mine in engaging in this study was to enhance my own capacity as an educational leader by hearing first-hand the complexities of school administrators' roles in facilitating reform within their contexts, and to learn about the resulting decisions and courses of action. I anticipated that there would likely not be just one, clear path to effective change, and while there were many common themes raised by the nine study participants, there were also some major differences.

Review of the Problem

This study explored current research and knowledge on how educational reform is most effectively achieved, concentrating on the role of the school administrator. The central focus of this thesis was to look for commonalities between the ways and means that educational leaders facilitate change within their schools, and what current research and knowledge related to educational reform suggests, focusing specifically on Michael Fullan's "Six Secrets of Change" as a theoretical framework.

The research questions for this study were:

1. How do principals conceive of change in schools?
2. How do principals perceive that they facilitate change within their schools?
3. Do principals' perspectives of educational change initiatives align with Fullan's Six Secrets (2008)?

Nine school principals from the Prairie View School Division participated in this study. Out of the nine, four were male and five were female. Individual years of experience in administration as a vice principal or a principal combined ranged from six to twenty-three years. All participants were in their third year or more as a principal. The schools they represented had students from Kindergarten to grade twelve as well as students from a widely varying demographic. Interviews took place over a time period of five weeks and varied in length from relatively brief to 97 minutes, with the average length being 54 minutes. Interviews were transcribed by the researcher and transcripts were member checked.

Discussion of the Findings

There were many layers to the data, with each reading revealing a further subtlety of the nuances involved in leading a school and creating change. Some of the findings confirmed what I had already suspected to be true about change within a school context; others provided me with new understandings, and still others generated further questions. As has been already mentioned in Chapter Four, every one of the nine participants referred to the complex nature of change, particularly in relation to being a sustainable and integrated part of the school culture. Each interviewee spoke to the degree of effort and work involved, and ultimately the time required. Some reflected on the personal cost of their work as school principals as they invested in the adults and children with whom they worked.

Time.

Without exception, each of the principals spoke about the importance of ensuring that time was made available during the work day for teachers to meet, learn and engage in purposeful dialogue. Doing so created an environment that encouraged collaborative learning and also communicated to teachers the value of what they were doing and the expectation that professional dialogue would occur. Providing time for teacher learning also communicated an understanding that changing practice and developing new skills is a time consuming process. In my own experience with learning, regardless of the topic or context, I know that time is required for new knowledge to go deep enough to have a lasting impact. My own learning is enhanced if it occurs in the company of others, where wonderings and possibilities can be freely considered, challenged or validated.

Communities of learners.

The term “critical mass” was referred to and used in the context of gathering momentum. No change initiative successfully occurred without it. Fullan’s Secret Two, *connecting peers with purpose*, Secret Three, *capacity building prevails*, and Secret Four, *learning is the work*, were convincingly supported by the data collected in this study. To facilitate connecting peers, building capacity, and going about the work of learning, the study participants unanimously commented on the need to gather a team around them to provide a broader leadership base, to explore ideas further, and to champion change initiatives within the building. In keeping with the research that states the most effective professional development occurs within a teacher’s work context (Fullan, 2009), many of the principals in this study provided professional development opportunities that directly related to the change initiative for teaching teams or the entire staff. Common sense dictates that as individuals we are limited in what we can accomplish. To repeat

a quote from Chapter Two, “There is a ceiling effect on how much we can learn if we keep to ourselves” (Fullan, 1993, p.17). Each principal embraced the idea that they could do more, and they could do it better when they worked with others, personally and collectively. When leaders formed professional learning communities with other leaders, the breadth and scope of change or renewal was heightened and their sense of isolation decreased.

Data.

The study’s findings also confirmed that data is a significant factor in creating change. A number of the principals themselves were surprised at how pivotal data was in convincing staff of the need to alter their teaching practices. Data management skills were not ones that all of the administrators initially possessed, but as they recognized how powerful a graph or set of figures could be, they also realized the need for personal capacity development in that area. While qualitative data was collected and recorded less vigorously, the anecdotes and reflections shared carried no less weight in the participants’ minds. The data gathered in this study has heightened my awareness of my need to become more data savvy, not only in terms of *how* to collect it, but more importantly *what* to collect and *why*.

Leaders’ beliefs and values.

One aspect of the findings that resonated deeply with me was the need for an educational leader to be keenly aware of his/her beliefs and values as the starting point for any vision or change initiative. The study participants repeatedly referred to the necessity of knowing what one’s beliefs and values are. That knowledge caused me to reflect on what my own beliefs and values are as well as my ability to articulate them, and more importantly, live them on a daily basis. It was clear to the nine study participants that vision may transform over time, but vision is directed by one’s beliefs and values which remain much more constant. One principal reflected

on the power of simplicity in having beliefs and values that are clear and unpretentious so they can more easily be acted on and communicated to others. Two principals referred to their beliefs and values as the “North Star” that guides them. While it is essential that a leader’s beliefs, values and vision are clear in his/her own mind, the participants varied on how those beliefs, values and vision should be communicated with staff. The minority felt that espousing one’s beliefs too prematurely may inadvertently limit or shut down the contributions of others. Others felt it was imperative to communicate beliefs, values and vision with all shareholders at every opportunity to help unite staff with a common sense of purpose. A few wondered if their change initiatives might have been enacted more quickly had they communicated their expectations and beliefs earlier on. Regardless of whether the leaders felt it was best to clearly convey their beliefs and values, or to hold their hand close, they acted on their values and their choices thereby reflected their beliefs. While choosing to pronounce beliefs and values at the outset or not is in part a reflection of the individual’s personality, its appropriateness is also determined by the school culture and the nature of the anticipated change.

In terms of my own thinking on the issue of articulating my beliefs, I am more comfortable with allowing my actions to communicate my beliefs first and then providing the rationale that supports my actions. I would be hesitant in determining the vision too soon without having the collective perspectives of the staff and the community at large. However, once a vision had been mutually determined, the data indicated the importance of making it transparent to all shareholders, as well as constant revisiting and reflecting to ground resulting actions. The vision becomes the spot light that illuminates the course of action to follow.

Response to conflicts or challenges.

There were also some valuable lessons to be learned from the interviewees' perspectives on how challenges or conflict affected change initiatives. All viewed conflict as a natural, even healthy, aspect of change that had the potential to make the initiative even stronger. Actively inviting other perspectives created opportunities for questions to be raised about the initiative that potentially could identify gaps or possible problems. The wider the scope and diversity of input on any project, the more likely it was to be successful and comprehensive in its implementation. Honest reflection, however, could only be provided in an atmosphere of trust, which goes back to the importance of Fullan's first secret, *love your employees*. The adverse side of wide spread involvement, of course, was the time it took and as has been mentioned on numerous occasions throughout this paper, time is a scarce commodity in a school environment and many educational leaders are eager to begin the work.

Role of communication.

One of the "common sense" truths conveyed in the data was the need for constant and effective communication. Communication was required in the shaping and grounding of the vision and change initiative. Communication does not just refer to talking; listening and observing are critical components of communication for educational leaders. An effective leader does not just listen to words and conversations, but observes the actions of individuals to gain a deeper understanding of the school culture and context. In my developing role as a school principal, I am becoming increasingly comfortable with saying less and watching more, and listening not only for what is said, but what is not said. In terms of verbal communication, a leader must be patient and articulate and be prepared to restate and repeat to ensure that messages are conveyed clearly. School leaders need to be prepared for misunderstandings as

well, and when they happen, they should not take offense and respond personally, but rather simply reiterate the intent of the original message. Misinterpretations can be avoided to a degree when educational leaders are conscientious observers of how their communication is received and touch base regularly with individual staff members to get a pulse of the staff as a whole. Communication, whether through conversations or the sharing of data, is invaluable in helping all staff to understand and support the vision and realize the needs of the school as a whole. Communication that allows teachers to openly dialogue with each other about individual practices will help create a more comprehensive and more accurate sense of identity as a school.

Sense of urgency.

Many of the interviewees reflected on their impatience or sense of urgency as leaders. While they realized that caution needed to be exercised in this area to be sure that staff viewed the change as one belonging to all of them, not just the leader, many of them also referred to the need to begin acting with the knowledge available at a given point in time, rather than waiting until the issue was necessarily understood in its entirety. Because educational leaders have the privileged position of more easily seeing the “big picture” as the individuals who are connected with every aspect of the school, it is possible for them to get impatient when others do not share or hold the same view.

Personal change.

One of the learnings from this study was an awareness of the critical lens with which educational leaders examine their *own* actions and behaviours and the need for them to be closely connected with a support system. No principal is an island and when they act from a position of isolation, results will be ineffective at best and will alienate staff at worst. Each of the interviewees communicated a desire for their efforts to best serve their learning communities.

Reflections on the journey towards change were always embedded with personal reflections of themselves as leaders, with either revelations about their characters or the need for change within. When the principals found themselves in uncharted water, they retreated to what they knew to be true, to their underlying beliefs and values to guide them. As one of the participants stated:

You hope that your navigation tools are going to be accurate enough that they keep you afloat and moving in that direction. But there are times when your navigation tools don't work, either. That is not a good place to be because you're fixed, you don't know where to go. So for me as a leader, I've lived that. I've lived not knowing where the star was and the tools that always worked for me, that were so reliable, did not work anymore. So I had to re-create within myself what I was going to do to find that North Star again so I could continue in my work to move.

Many of the school leaders became so intertwined with their work that it affected them physically and emotionally. They took on the concerns of their communities and the worries of keeping children safe. They agonized over whether or not their choices and actions were truly what were best for children and their staff. They struggled with the balance of knowing how much to push and when, or when to simply let time do the work. Communicating true value for shared leadership meant trusting and giving up control of other areas. While the term "micro-manage" never surfaced directly, it was hinted at when the interviewees discussed learning to let go of directly controlling every aspect of their school.

Significance of a new environment.

A significant number of the interviewees commented on the great professional development and injection of energy that occurred when they moved from one school to another. Not only could they begin their new role with all of their accumulated expertise, but they could use the inspiration of a new environment and new staff members to stretch themselves and continue to grow. Being in a new work environment created an invigorating balance between freeing and forcing school leaders to re-invent themselves. To facilitate their own leadership capacity, the principals I interviewed in this study tended to their own professional growth through professional reading, attending conferences, and forming variations of informal and formal professional learning communities.

Although not a topic of focus in this study, the ability to identify and comprehend the culture within one's school can be pivotal in achieving effective change. A school culture can be nebulous at first glance, but it is powerful force that wise leaders learn to understand and harness before the process of transformation begins.

Relationships.

Despite all of the research findings on educational reform that have been shared to this point, all of them can be drilled down to the Eldorado of relationships. When one peels back the multiple and complex layers surrounding change initiatives, at the heart will be personal and professional relationships. No change initiative can occur unless people feel valued, empowered, and connected within a culture of trust (Cranston, 2011; Reeves and Allison, 2009; Wagner, et al., 2006). Effective change agents must possess a high degree of interpersonal intelligence. Building staff capacity essentially begins with building relationships and relationships are key to any successful and sustainable change.

Implications for Practice

As the diverse themes that I have discussed illustrate, the implications for the practice of educational leaders are numerous. However, relevance and personal application are determined to a large part by an individual's areas of strength and need. A few of the possible implications for practice are explored in the next section.

Varied approaches for success.

While much of this study focuses on Fullan's research, he has asserted all along that there is not a "one size fits all" blueprint for effective change that can be implanted and applied in any context. Fullan (2008) supports a "theory that travels" which is a mindset that acknowledges the complexities of a school context and that thoughtfully explores actions most likely to be effective given the circumstances. When Paula reflected on what determined the success of a change effort, she understood that many factors played a role and summarized Fullan's theory from her own truth and experience:

You can't just take the initiative to another school. The growing from the grassroots up is a process that can't be replaced. It is the dialogue along the way that is precious and you can't just transfer the end outcome to another building.

Educational leaders need to be cognizant that what worked in one school with one staff may be completely ineffective in another context. The struggle to define the change, the resulting dialogue, and the new knowledge attained through the change process are invaluable and provide a sense of ownership and profound understanding for the staff as a whole, thereby increasing the potential for success. To do this involves a willingness to take risks rather than relying on "tried

and true” methods of the past, and intentional efforts to acknowledge and seek understanding of the pre-existing school culture.

Leader self-knowledge.

For leaders to lead effectively, they must know who they are as individuals. Part of that knowledge is obtained by a willingness to acknowledge and address their shortcomings as people and as principals, and to be willing to continually transform in their own role as a leader. Often identifying barriers to change requires confronting personal insecurities which limit a person’s effectiveness (Wagner et al., 2006). Knowing who you are also encompasses an awareness of your beliefs and values. As was stated repeatedly in Chapter Four, any reform effort must be grounded in beliefs and values. That way, if uncertainty or confusion arises, you can always go back to what you believe to be true and measure decisions against it. As a number of the study participants mentioned, moving to a new school also provided them with the opportunity to view themselves differently and heightened their awareness of themselves as leaders. A new work context encouraged risk-taking and a whole new environment in which to view oneself. Another facet of leader knowledge is humility. One aspect of humility is to realize that working in isolation almost guarantees failure. While principals strongly influence school culture and may view themselves as change agents, they must build the capacity of the staff and create a group of individuals who can assist in driving the change.

Data.

Due to the prevalence of comments that pointed to data as a pivotal force in shaping change, educational leaders must embrace its place in the change process. Many of the study participants reflected on their need to build personal capacity in learning skills required to collect

and manage data effectively. This study would suggest that sustainable, effective change cannot occur without being informed by school-based data.

Recommendations for Further Research

The word “research” encourages one to search again and although the data in this study answered numerous questions, it is a springboard for further research as well. Each of the six secrets in turn could be the topic of a separate exploration, in order to understand them more thoroughly. The changing role of data in educational reform would also be an interesting subject of further discovery as well as how school leaders’ related skills have adjusted to accommodate that necessity. While Fullan’s Six Secrets did address many aspects of effective change, there were themes gleaned from the interview data that did not neatly fit into one of the Six Secret categories and require further exploration.

Unanticipated results.

A number of the participants mentioned unanticipated secondary, or “spin-off”, results of the original change initiative. As was mentioned earlier, it is difficult to identify what exactly needs improvement in systems work “because the system flows so effortlessly (before you begin to change it), it is hard to see the parts that are interacting and how they work together to hold the results in place” (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 106). This may be why an alteration in one area reveals changes that need to be made in others. It would be interesting to discover how frequently unexpected offshoots resulted from initial reform efforts, how often the offshoots usurped the original change initiative, or perhaps how the offshoot enhanced implementation of the initial idea.

Teacher perspectives on the Six Secrets

This study focused on principals' perspectives in achieving change. Inviting teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of the Six Secrets and whether their school principal models them would address another dimension of the question of how Fullan's Six Secrets promote a school culture that endorses change. A comparative study of teachers' and principals' perceptions on the importance of the Six Secrets in facilitating change would help to validate Fullan's theory.

Systemic capacity building

As was mentioned in the discussion of Secret Six in Chapter Four, this study did not clearly address the concept of *systems learn*. While exciting changes and initiatives exist in isolated buildings, what is done on a systems level to ensure that communication occurs between schools and that great ideas are shared? How are educational leaders linked in professionally collaborative ways, rather than viewing each other as competitors for the next job advancement? And how do leaders effectively develop their own capacity? Ideally, this systems communication and capacity building would involve senior administrative leadership with the assumption that they can access the "big picture" divisionally, know what is happening within all the schools, and would like to play a direct role in influencing future decision making at school-based levels.

One significant aspect in the data that surfaced repeatedly was the leader's personal change process. All of the research participants were analytical individuals to varying degrees and it was during times of reflection that personal assumptions were challenged and revised. While Secret Six focuses on connecting leaders within large organizations, it does not recognize and celebrate the personal transformation that occurs within individuals in leadership positions as

they build their capacity individually. A further study investigating personal leader change as it proceeds or parallels school change is needed.

Professional learning communities.

Professional learning communities promote building staff capacity and connecting peers with purpose, but more research in this area needs to be done as there are cautions raised about potential adverse effects. Professional learning communities are a relatively recent phenomenon in education and there may not be the longitudinal studies that are required for understanding their long-term effects. As was discussed in Chapter Two, just bringing teachers together to talk does not guarantee that their conversations will be professional in nature. If teachers do not believe that the topic of discussion is a relevant or concerning issue for them, they are less likely to engage and more likely to participate on a superficial level at best. There is also a danger of group think (Fullan, 2008) occurring where the focus is on agreement rather than an honest discussion and critique of current practice. In some cases, professional learning communities can actually stifle creativity and individuality (Mandzuk & Hasinoff, 2010) when supporting the majority is preferred over expression of unique and original ideas that challenge the status quo. As well, some teachers lack the skills required to navigate potentially divisive conversations about classroom beliefs and practices and remain silent on a topic to avoid offending colleagues (Dooner, Mandzuk & Clifton, 2007).

A number of the study participants voiced frustration that unless they were present, the release time that they provided for teachers to meet and engage in professional dialogue was not always used as conscientiously as they had hoped. That may be a reflection of the fact that teachers did not feel as invested in the initiative or lacked a degree of ownership. This observation supports Hargreaves' (as cited in Carney, 2003, p. 13) notion of "contrived

collegiality” where group work is compulsory and somewhat artificial, structured and mandated by school administration. Conversely, when the principals reflected on reform efforts in which the staff was more engaged, the teachers more often than not provided leadership and ideas for next steps. While the potential of harnessing the collective energy and wisdom of teachers exists within the construct of professional learning communities, they will be most successful when driven by student needs identified, or at the very least, accepted by the teachers.

Summary

As was stated in the introduction to this study, change is not an animate object that has the power to act on its own; people create change and change generated by people often begins with the belief that something better exists. The notion of an improved way of doing things generates thoughts and ideas, questions and wonderings. Fullan’s Six Secrets provide a useful theoretical framework for reflecting on educational change; however, they are based on the assumption that an educational leader possesses the wide array of skills necessary to enact the Six Secrets, and they do not describe a clear method for promoting leadership self-reflection and capacity building.

The nuances of effective educational change are more complex than any one study can capture, but this study provides a starting point for educational leaders interested in moving their schools beyond being good places for children and adults to learn, to great environments for them to develop and flourish. Educational change is as complex and as multifaceted as the individuals housed within a school building. It is dependent on effective leadership capable of harnessing the individual and collective capacity of people to move forward. As one of the research participants articulately stated:

The answers are here, and we have the expertise. We can do anything we need to do.

My goal and role is to harness that capacity; understand it, celebrate it and move it in a collective way.

Schools contain all of the raw materials needed to accomplish great things and people's visions and dreams are the catalysts required to ignite them.

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Appendix A

Study Overview and Consent Forms



UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

Faculty of Education

Researcher: Ruthanne Dyck, rdyck@pembinatrails.ca; (W) 1-204-888-1678 ext. 2510

Sponsoring Institute: **University of Manitoba**

Thesis Advisor: **Dr. David Mandzuk**, assocdeanug_educ@umanitoba.ca ; (W) 1-204-474-8741

Ethics Protocol Submission Form

- 1. Summary of Project:** The central focus of this thesis is to compare the ways and means that school principals facilitate change within their schools in relation to current research and knowledge on educational reform. This study's design follows the assumptions of a qualitative research model based on the inquiry process to gain further understanding regarding a central phenomenon, in this case, educational change from a school administrator's perspective. Given the exploratory nature of the research, the researcher will employ a method of inquiry using one-on-one open-ended interviews to generate data by presenting questions, analyzing transcripts and synthesizing results, looking for commonalities across the multiple perspectives. Interviews will be recorded and an interview protocol will be used to collect any additional data or observations during the interview.

Interviews consisting of 12 questions and lasting approximately 60-75 minutes will occur in whatever setting the participants feel most comfortable in and in whatever setting affords them the greatest convenience and confidentiality. Participants will also be given control over what time the interview occurs: during school hours, before or after school, or later during evening hours. Consideration will be given to a location and period of time where interruptions and extraneous noise will not interfere and confidentiality will be ensured. Regardless, the participants will determine according to their preference where and when the interview will take place.

In keeping with a qualitative study model, purposeful sampling methods will be primarily used to select study participants. Theory or concept sampling will drive the selection process as only those individuals connected with implementing educational change will be invited to participate in the study. Stratified sampling will then guide participant selection, as contributors will be selected according to which grade level of school they manage to ensure an equal, yet broad range of perspectives. If more than the two to three required participants at each educational level respond, then selection will follow a simple random sampling procedure where each individual has an equal probability of being selected within the designation of elementary, middle and senior year levels. Initial contact with the superintendent of Pembina Trails School Division (PTSD) will be made in person or through a phone call, followed up by a formal letter of request on Faculty of Education letterhead. After signed permission to conduct the study has been received from the superintendent, invitational letters of participation (on Faculty of Education letterhead) will be forwarded to all principals within the school division via email.

2. **Research Instruments:** Interviews will be recorded with two digital audio recording devices in the event that one device fails (digital recorder and video camera set for audio only) and will be transcribed by the researcher (the process of converting audio recordings into text data) within less than two weeks.
3. **Participants:** Prior to initiating research, permission will be requested from the superintendent of the Pembina Trails School Division. Upon divisional approval, invitations to participate in the research will be sent to each principal within the division. It is hoped that nine participants will be obtained, however, the study will continue even if fewer subjects volunteer. If more than the two to three required participants at each educational level respond, then selection will follow a simple random sampling procedure where each individual has an equal probability of being selected within the designation of elementary, middle and senior year levels. Each participant will be interviewed once, at a time and location of the individual's preference provided that confidentiality is ensured, for approximately 60-75 minutes.
4. **Informed Consent:** Once participants are selected, signed letters of consent will be collected from them. All letters of communication will be on Faculty of Education letterhead. When two to three administrators from each school level who meet the criteria (have been in administration for at least three years and facilitated a change initiative) have responded, participation consent forms will be mailed out through the divisional interdepartmental courier service. Once the consent forms are received, a copy of the questions will be emailed to the individuals, and contact by telephone and/or email will be made to make arrangements (ie. time and place) around their preferences and schedules to conduct each interview. A location that ensures confidentiality is necessary.

Photocopies of the original consent form will be given to each research candidate. Prior to each interview the consent form will be reviewed to ensure participant understanding of the study parameters and their ability to withdraw from the study at any time or to choose to not answer any or all questions at any time. Researcher contact information including email address, work and home phone number will be included in the consent form.

5. **Deception:** This study does not involve any deception of study participants.
6. **Feedback/Debriefing:** After the interview data is transcribed, copies of the transcriptions will be e-mailed to each participant to check for accuracy of transcription. Any revisions, responses or further clarification will be asked to be returned within two weeks. Following transcription and member checks, the recordings will be destroyed. Upon completion of the thesis, transcripts will be shredded. Participants interested in receiving a final copy of the study findings will receive a copy via email.
7. **Risks/Benefits:** There are no risks associated with this study other than the possible resurfacing of any negative emotions or experiences that may have been associated with the change initiative. A possible benefit may be an individual's clearer understanding of the change process and their role in it through the reflective conversation of the interview. Personally identifying information will be removed if used directly in the thesis.
8. **Anonymity and Confidentiality:** Data will be obtained through interviews regarding changes that school principals have initiated. Interview recordings will be downloaded onto the researcher's computer which is password protected. Once transcripts and member checks are completed, interview recordings will be destroyed and hard copies of the transcripts will be kept in a secure location in the researcher's home. Identities of participants will remain confidential. A pseudonym will be assigned to the school division in which the participants work and to each individual and used when referring to the data. Personally identifying information will be removed if used directly in the thesis. Transcripts will be shredded upon completion of the study. Personally identifying information will be removed from any information or quotes used in the thesis.
9. **Compensation:** No compensation will be provided for study participants. A bottle of water will be offered to each participant at the outset of the interview.
10. **Dissemination:** All Master's Theses are placed online and can be accessed by any member of the general public. This is stated in the consent form so participants are aware.

Participants requesting information on study findings will receive a copy of the final two chapters by email.



UNIVERSITY
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Research Project Title: **Educational Change: A Case Study of Nine School Leaders**

Researcher: **Ruthanne Dyck, Masters of Education student at University of Manitoba and Principal in Pembina Trails School Division, rdyck@pembinatrails.ca (W) 1-204-888-1678 ext. 2510**

Sponsoring Institute: **University of Manitoba**

Thesis Advisor: **Dr. David Mandzuk, assocdeanug_educ@umanitoba.ca ; (W) 1-204-474-8741**

Graham Bruce
Pembina Trails School Division
181 Henlow Bay
Winnipeg, MB
R3Y 1M7

Date: September 26, 2011

Dear Mr. Bruce,

My name is Ruthanne Dyck and I am a Masters student from the Department of Educational Administration, Foundations and Psychology at the University of Manitoba. I am writing to request permission conduct research with principals in the Pembina Trails School Division. I would like to invite principals from PTSD to participate in a research project that will study the ways and means that school principals facilitate educational change within their buildings. Below is a Research Project Consent Form

that provides information to study participants about the purpose of the study, the methods of data collection, and the means used to ensure confidentiality.

Each interview consists of 12 questions and is anticipated to last 60-75 minutes. Interviews will be recorded on a digital recording device and a video camera set to audio. Consent forms will be signed by the participants, who are free to withdraw from the project at any time or may choose to decline responding to any or all questions at any time. Confidentiality of all participants will be protected and recordings will be destroyed following transcription of information. Upon completion of the thesis, transcripts will be shredded. Personally identifying information will be deleted if content is used directly in the thesis. The interviews should begin in October and be completed by the end of November. You are welcome to receive a copy of the study findings, if you wish. If you have any further questions, please contact me at rdyck@pembinatrails.ca or at 888-1678 extension 2510.

I look forward to a positive learning experience with principals from our division. Thank-you.

Sincerely,

Ruthanne Dyck

INVITATION/PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Research Project Title: **Educational Change: A Case Study of Nine School Leaders**

Researcher: **Ruthanne Dyck, Masters of Education student at University of Manitoba and Principal in Pembina Trails School Division, rdyck@pembinatrails.ca; (W) 1-204-888-1678 ext. 2510**

Sponsoring Institute: **University of Manitoba**

Thesis Advisor: **Dr. David Mandzuk, assocdeanug_educ@umanitoba.ca; (W) 1-204-474-8741**

September 26, 2011

Dear Participant,

My name is Ruthanne Dyck and I am a Masters student from the Department of Educational Administration, Foundations and Psychology at the University of Manitoba. I have been granted consent from the Superintendent of Pembina Trails School Division to invite principals from PTSD to participate in a research project that will study the ways and means that school principals facilitate educational

change within their buildings. Below is a Research Project Consent Form that provides information to study participants about the purpose of the study, the methods of data collection, and the means used to ensure confidentiality.

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The central focus of this thesis is to compare the ways and means that school principals facilitate change within their schools in relation to current research and knowledge on educational reform. Should you agree to contribute to this study, you will be invited to participate in one 12 question interview which is anticipated to last 60-75 minutes. The interview will be scheduled to take place at a place and time of your choosing in an environment that will ensure confidentiality. All participants will be asked to reflect on a change they initiated or helped to initiate within their schools. A digital voice recorder and a video camera set to audio will be used to record the interview. Interviews will be transcribed within two weeks and emailed to you to check for verification, at which time you may delete or alter any comments from the study if you wish. Reviewing the transcript should take approximately 30-60 minutes. If you prefer a hard copy of your transcript, it will be sent to you via interdepartmental mail. You will be requested to provide any feedback within a two week time frame. If you would like to receive a copy of the study findings, an electronic or hard copy will be sent to you after the study's completion.

Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym to guarantee anonymity and any direct quotations used in the findings will be assigned a pseudonym as well to protect the confidentiality of others. Personally identifying information will be removed. Recordings of the interview will be stored on the researcher's computer which is password protected and interview transcripts will be stored in a secure location in the researcher's home. Once transcripts are member checked for accuracy the recordings will be destroyed and upon completion of the thesis, transcripts will be shredded.

While there are no anticipated risks associated with participation in this study, a potential benefit may be a clearer understanding of the change process and your role in it through the reflective conversation of the interview. You will not be compensated for participation in the study.

If at any point you should choose to withdraw from the study you may do so without penalty by contacting the researcher via email (rdyck@pembinatrails.ca) or phone (W: 1-204-888-1678 ext. 2510) and all data collected including audio tapes will be destroyed. You may also choose to not answer any or all questions in the interview at any time. (A copy of the interview questions is attached to the end of this consent form.)

Please be aware that all Master's Theses are placed online and can be accessed by any member of the general public.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board(s) and a representative(s) of the University of Manitoba Research Quality Management / Assurance office may also require access to your research records for safety and quality assurance purposes.

This research has been approved by the [insert full name of appropriate REB]. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant's Name (please print)

Participant's Signature

Date _____

Researcher's Signature

Date _____

I would like to receive a copy of the results of this study. Please mail or email a copy to the address below.

Mailing or Email Address

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Introduction: Thanks for taking the time to share some of your thoughts and reflections on a change initiative that you facilitated in your school. Before we begin, please state your name and the name of your school, including whether it is an Early Years, Middle Years or Senior Years school and how many years that you have been a principal.

Starting Out:

1. When you think about educational change, what things come to mind?
2. Describe the change initiative you would like to reflect on including the conditions or circumstances that prompted the change.
3. What were the first steps you undertook in beginning the change process?

Gathering Momentum:

4. Discuss how you shared the initiative with your staff and how you achieved their “buy in” as the process unfolded.
5. Reflect on what your staff required to successfully implement the change and how you assisted their preparation for the task.
6. Talk about the role of communication amongst all stakeholders (you, students, staff, parents, community members, senior admin) in achieving change.

Reflecting on Results:

7. Describe how you determined the effectiveness or success of the change initiative.
8. Reflect on whether the results of your change initiative affected a population beyond that of your school.

9. Discuss whether your sense of vision remained the same throughout the change process or if it transformed over time.

Looking Back:

10. Talk about what went well and about what didn't go well throughout the change process.
11. Given the benefit of hindsight, is there anything that you would have done differently to facilitate the change or anything that you observed worked exceptionally well?
12. Were there any personal discoveries for you during the work of implementing the change?