AN APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY CASE STUDY: RECOGNIZING THE POSITIVE CORE OF
TEACHERS IN A LOW SES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL THAT MET STANDARD OF
EXCELLENCE

A Dissertation by

Jaclynn L. Glasgow

M.Ed., Wichita State University, 2003

M.Ed., Wichita State University, 1978

B.S., Emporia State University, 1974

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I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Educational Leadership.

_____
Raymond L. Calabrese, Committee Chair

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

_____
John Fast, Committee Member

_____
Dennis Kear, Committee Member

_____
Jean Patterson, Committee Member

_____
Randy Turk, Committee Member

Accepted for the College of Education

_____
Sharon Iorio, Dean

Accepted for the Graduate School

_____
Susan K. Kovar, Dean

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DEDICATION

To Steve for supporting my dream, Jenni, Tyler, and Grant for believing in me, my parents, Lyle and Jean Udall, for their affirmation of faith and daily encouragement, my friends and colleagues who stood by me throughout this journey of discovery. In loving memory of my father and mother-in-law, Homer and Jean Glasgow, who shared my values of education.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of my study was to discover the successful teaching practices of teachers in a Standard of Excellence elementary school. My study also identified the necessary ecological conditions for the teachers to sustain and extend their successful teaching practices. Due to limited research on the study of successful teaching practices of teachers as it relates to student achievement, this study sought to describe the successful teaching practices of teachers in a SOE elementary school, and it sought to understand the conditions to help sustain and extend their successful teaching practices.

The design of this study was a qualitative case study conducted through an appreciative inquiry theoretical perspective and capacity building theory. An appreciative inquiry theoretical perspective is an inquiry process that seeks to affirm and build on strengths and past successes of the participants to discover what gives life to their organization or its positive core. Capacity building theory encourages the conditions and opportunities for shared learning and collaboration.

Participants were asked to volunteer to participate in various data collection methods: semi-structured paired interviews, focus groups, and participant created documents. Data were unitized, sorted, and coded through an open and axial coding process (which is a process of breaking down the data and then synthesizing it in a meaningful way) (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), using text analysis software (Ryan & Bernard, 2000) so that the participants' perspectives were synthesized in a manner that allowed the research questions to be answered (Huberman, 1990). Content analysis simultaneously coded the content and constructs relevant categories (Merriam, 2001). CATPAC software was used as an initial foundation of reading text for the

interrelationships between words allowing themes to emerge (Woelfel, 1990). Data was compared by categories, themes, or dimensions of information (Creswell, 1998).

Participants were guided through two phases of the AI 4-D Cycle of discovery and dream. Detailed field notes were taken and information was collected from multiple perspectives. Five salient findings emerged from the data analysis: (1) Lincoln Elementary School is a cohesive group of educators who seek to help students reach their potential; (2) Lincoln Elementary School educators collaborate to strengthen and enhance instructional practices; (3) Lincoln Elementary School educators value and care about all school stakeholders; (4) Lincoln Elementary School educators created an inclusive community bound by strong interpersonal relationships; (5) Lincoln Elementary School educators want to create a learning environment that is student centered and family oriented where teachers use progressive practices in teaching students.

The findings from my research suggested that the appreciative inquiry process has the potential to change teachers' pedagogical practices and the conditions for the practices to sustain. Using an appreciative inquiry process in this research study empowered participants and sparked a new vision of optimism, hope, and a passion for teaching.

All the findings from this study have the potential to transform how educators meet the demands of school accountability and look to sustain high performance by describing the successful teaching practices and the ecological conditions needed to sustain and extend these practices.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The recent national educational reform effort, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), calls for states, school districts, and schools to be held at a high level of accountability for closing the achievement gap and improving student achievement in math and reading (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002). Accountability is one of the driving forces of NCLB to assure public stakeholders that local districts and schools are producing desired results for student achievement (Case, 2005; Council of Chief State School Officers, 2004). This measure of accountability shifts the responsibility from local districts to teachers to focus on state standards and assessments ensuring their students achieve in math and reading. Some believe that teachers who take the initiative to concentrate on improving pedagogy and their students' academic performance have the opportunity to move from testing standards to student learning and from accountability to responsibility (Reilly, 2005).

Public opinion polls support the need for increasing student achievement and linking student achievement to teacher responsibility (Cochran-Smith, 2003). The consistent pressure on schools to meet the high standards of accountability in math and reading is at the core of instruction for teachers in low-performing and high-performing schools (Doherty & Abernathy, 1998). There is a belief among some that linking sanctions and rewards to academic performance will cause high-performing and low-performing schools to achieve at higher levels (Elmore & Furhman, 2001). Most state accountability systems elicit a combination of monetary rewards and sanctions of improvement plans as incentives for student achievement (Kane & Staiger, 2002). States have the flexibility to tailor interventions for low-performing schools not meeting adequately yearly progress (AYP). AYP is a measure of annual targets for performance in

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reading and math as well as other goals for participation, attendance, and graduation (Kansas State Department of Education, 2006).

High-performing schools may have to consistently review current practices for increasing academic achievement and shift from quick fixes for improving test scores to incentives for sustaining positive long-term performance. Though studies identify effective practices in high-performing schools, a challenge exists for teachers in high-performing schools to effectively maintain and extend academic growth since NCLB focuses only on the achievement gap of low performing students (Harris, 2007). It may be important to examine teachers' beliefs of their experiences in a high-performing school in light of NCLB expectations.

Background to the Study

In this section, I review the accountability of NCLB for school systems, the Kansas accountability system, and the potential impact for schools that are identified as a high-performing or low-performing school.

The authorization of NCLB requires each state to develop a single statewide accountability system that measures student achievement in each school district and school to determine AYP, report the data publicly, and implement rewards or sanctions applicable for public schools and school districts (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2004; No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002). A state accountability system sets the standard for performance for low-performing and high-performing schools. It requires each school to have an improvement plan of strategies that describes how students will achieve in math and reading (Kansas State Department of Education, 2005).

The principles of the Kansas accountability system apply to all schools and school districts in the state. The accountability system includes several data elements required by NCLB

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and reports these data on an annual state report card. The report card notifies the public about the performance levels of each subgroup based on state assessments. The report card includes additional data, for example, graduation rates, qualifications of teachers, and the number of school agencies that make AYP. The accountability system issues rewards or sanctions based on school performance. The State of Kansas acknowledges high performing schools with public recognition of meeting AYP and Standard of Excellence (SOE). A formula provides criteria for schools and grade levels to meet SOE in Kansas by the percentage of students in each performance category. Sanctions for low performing schools may include working with a state assistance team, the reassignment of personnel, and a reduction in state funding (Kansas State Board of Education, 2004).

Once data and state criteria are analyzed after state assessments, schools are classified as an AYP or Non-AYP school. Students in 3rd through 8th grades are assessed in math and reading and one time in high school during an academic school year. Data are analyzed to determine AYP (Kansas State Board of Education, 2004). Schools qualify for SOE by the percentage of students who meet the performance standards in math and reading based on the annual state assessment data (Kansas State Department of Education, 2005). Consequently, schools that do not make AYP in the same content area for two consecutive years, are identified as a low-performing school and become a school on improvement (Kansas State Department of Education, 2005). A state approved improvement plan is developed and assistance is provided to correct deficiencies of low performing schools (Kansas State Board of Education, 2004).

The design of NCLB guides schools to develop methods and strategies for improving academic achievement in low-performing schools (Doherty & Abernathy, 1998; Rudo, 2001; Sunderman, 2001). Research indicates that current reform efforts of standards-based strategies,

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design and implementation of educational systems, pedagogical changes, and assessments are policy driven (Sunderman, 2001). NCLB (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002) assumes that state agencies can meet the federal requirements. The states are responsible to provide support and technical assistance to help low-performing schools (Sunderman & Orfield, 2007). Low-performing schools may face probation as a formal process of school improvement or the threat of sanctions if student performance does not improve after two consecutive years in the same performance area (Mintrop & MacLellan, 2002). Schools that have a plan of improvement may have a strong incentive to look for solutions that can be implemented quickly and provide an appearance of false progress that is limited for positive long-term improvements (Harris, 2007). Overall, initial data indicate that students in 4th and 8th grades are making significant gains in math and smaller gains in reading (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). In the 2005-2006 school year, 74.25% of public schools across the nation met AYP. Eighty-six percent of Kansas schools met AYP in math and reading, representing 264 school districts (Kansas State Department of Education, 2006). Despite the improvement in student achievement, 74 Kansas public schools and 16 school districts did not make AYP in 2005-2006 compared to the previous year (Kansas State Department of Education, 2006).

In 2005-06, Wellington Unified School District 353 (USD 353) did not make AYP. Though all tested students did make AYP in math and reading, the subgroup of "students with disabilities" did not make AYP with 23% reaching proficiency. All subgroups met the targeted goal for math. Challenges exist to increase student achievement in specific populations of students. A majority of the students at USD 353's Lincoln Elementary School (LES) are considered at-risk to achieve academically.

Lincoln Elementary School, where I conducted my study, is classified as a Title I school with 67% of the students identified as low-socioeconomic (SES) (Kansas State Board of Education, 2007b). Despite this challenge, 75% of the tested population of students met AYP in math and reading in 2005-06. Third grade students met SOE in math and reading and 5th grade students met SOE in reading on the 2005-2006 state assessments. The state draft report card for 2006-2007 reported 4th grade students met SOE in math and reading (Kansas State Board of Education, 2007b). Though LES is identified as one of the 86% of Kansas public schools meeting AYP, the pressure remains for students to continually meet high standards in order to be competitive in a global economy (Reilly, 2005). There is a belief by some that allowing schools to do things differently produces positive academic outcomes versus doing more of the same and producing the same results (Elmore & Furhman, 2001).

High-performing schools may feel pressure to continue meeting the quest of an accountability system (Erpenbach, Forte-Fast, & Potts, 2003). They appear to have found creative ways to use available resources to meet students' needs (Miles & Darling-Hammond, 1998; Sunderman, 2001). These schools have to ensure that all students reach proficiency and help low-SES students overcome social and economic disadvantages to progress at the same rate as other students (Harris, 2007). The 2006 At-Risk Council to the Kansas State Board of Education reports examples of effective strategies of high-performing schools (Kansas State Board of Education, 2006b). Schools that are able to narrow the achievement gap appear to have several common elements that correlate with higher student achievement. Some common factors of high-performing schools consist of higher expectations for all students, knowledgeable of cultural norms and learning styles, a collaborative working environment, and building upon students' strengths and talents (Kansas State Board of Education, 2006b).

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Teacher Beliefs

There is a growing response to the pressure of academic accountability with a plethora of strategies designed to initiate positive school change. What appears pertinent for school change is not solely creating change but sustaining high levels of academic performance. The involvement of teachers as part of the quotient for sustaining successful change is viewed as an innovative practice (Peterson, McCarthey, & Elmore, 1996). The potential of teachers who create a positive community of learners and form beliefs of student academic success seem to set a precedence that impacts students' experiences in school (Knapp et al., 1993; Love & Kruger, 2005; Peterson et al., 1996). Teachers from high-performing schools tend to form higher expectations for students to achieve (Posny, 2005). New ideas and knowledge that teachers construct and align with existing beliefs and experiences for influencing student learning are deserving to be explored (Archer, 1999). Accountability for student achievement is determined by the shared values and conceptions of its teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Elmore & Furhman, 2001).

Studies indicate that the expectation effect of teachers influence the academic achievement of students (Barth et al., 1999; Reichardt, 2002). Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) demonstrated that impressions elementary teachers held for their students achievement actually influenced how the students performed. Further studies advanced the understanding of how teacher expectations were communicated and how student performance was affected (Alexander, Entwisle, & Thompson, 1987; Cooper & Tom, 1984). The influence teachers hold for student academic growth may be more capable of school change in relation to the teachers' mental image of their students to be academically successful (Srivastva & Cooperrider, 1999). A mental image based on superficial cues of dress, home environment, and language, forms early in

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students' academic careers resulting in chronic underachievement (Alexander et al., 1987; Milne & Plourde, 2006). The dynamics that surround teachers' expectations directly support how well students learn and achieve (Boyce, 1990; Brown, 2002; Cooper & Tom, 1984).

Teachers who strive for excellence and have a sense of internal control tap into students' strengths and talents increasing their potential for learning (Al-Fadhli & Singh, 2006). Building on students' strengths and potential blends with an appreciative inquiry (AI) theoretical perspective, which seeks to discover and value the optimal practices of an organization and identifies experiences when people are at their best. AI offers a synergistic approach to discover the source of vitality in an organization and to describe its life giving forces through shared stories (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2003).

Appreciating the performance of optimal practices in an organization generates the ability of its stakeholders to see beyond its limitations (Barrett, 1995). The application of an AI theoretical perspective in my study seeks to discover the collective strengths of an organization. Members of an organization share the organization's responsibilities for its success resulting in shared leadership (Lambert, 1998). The theoretical perspective of capacity building theory (CBT) aligns with AI to describe what is occurring in a high-performing school. Capacity building enhances an organization's strengths in order to move it from being good to great, to always being the best, and infinitely being creative and innovative (Barrett & Fry, 2005). Capacity building optimally achieves the mission of quality education to extend the level of high performance (Linnell, 2003). CBT serves as another lens for capturing the positive core of teachers' beliefs and experiences of a SOE school. Building teacher capacity accelerates teachers' successes to a higher plane of exemplary practices. Teachers expressing a common

point of view and having opportunities to share their principles of good teaching practices

increase feelings of teacher empowerment (Peterson et al., 1996).

Problem Statement

Teachers are held accountable for students to achieve and to sustain a level of

accountability to meet the requirements of AYP. As teachers are challenged with the application

of appropriate instructional strategies to increase achievement as reported on state assessments,

the target goal for achievement in math and reading continues to rise. Demonstration of teachers

meeting the call to excellence for student achievement has been studied (Brown, 1999; Brown,

2002; Doherty & Abernathy, 1998; Foye, 2003; Lein, 1997; Scheurich, 1998). The academic

success of students is strongly influenced by teachers' expectations of themselves and others

(Cooper & Tom, 1984; Foye, 2003; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). Teachers possess the ability to

connect with students from all socioeconomic backgrounds and share beliefs that all students can

learn and achieve. Expectation effects appear to be associated with the socioeconomic status of

students and characteristics common to those students (Boyce, 1990). Observations of teaching

practices in high-performing schools that demonstrate strong positive attitudes and high

expectations for all students show improvement in academic achievement (Archer, 1999). High

expectations for all students, no matter their socioeconomic status, are a central element to the

studies on successful teaching practices and of high-performing schools (Al-Fadhli & Singh,

2006; Calabrese, Goodvin, & Niles, 2005; Reichardt, 2002).

The accountability of NCLB is dependent on high-performing schools to maintain a high

level of student performance mandating a rigorous framework to improve achievement in math

and reading. NCLB only establishes minimum requirements for statewide accountability systems

(Paige, 2002). Teachers from low-performing, low-capacity schools, tend to use the same

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instructional strategies repeatedly and not change their internal accountability or capacity for instruction. Whereas teachers from high-performing, high-capacity schools, seem to respond quickly and more imaginatively to the accountability requirements (Elmore & Furhman, 2001). They share a commitment and belief that all students can achieve (Miles & Darling-Hammond, 1998; Posny, 2005; Rowan, 1990). A vision of academic achievement extends beyond the expectation of proficiency exceeding to a higher level of performance. Successful teaching practices for student achievement create the ability for capacity of student success. My study will seek to discover the successful teaching practices of teachers in a SOE elementary school and to identify the necessary ecological conditions for the teachers to sustain and extend their successful teaching practices.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of my study was to discover the successful teaching practices of teachers in a SOE elementary school. My study also identified the necessary ecological conditions for the teachers to sustain and extend their successful teaching practices.

Significance of the Study

My study has potential to contribute to practice and the profession in several areas: (a) a focus on successful teaching practices in a SOE school, (b) the ecological conditions for teachers to sustain and extend their successful teaching practices, and (c) building the capacity of teachers in the application of successful practices. Successful teaching practices in high-performing schools can provide a model for school reform efforts with the increasing pressures of NCLB. Further research is warranted to provide current practices that are successful for all students. The identification of ecological conditions will guide this research so that the emerging conditions can be replicated by schools to enhance the implementation of successful teaching practices. The

research will also contribute to the body of knowledge surrounding capacity building of teachers that elaborate and extend their strengths to reach their full potential.

More educators are advocating for an asset-based approach of hope than a deficit approach of problem solving (Preskill & Catsambas, 2006). My study provides a model of successful teaching practices in a SOE school and contributes to the application of AI to educational settings. The AI process will build on the existing strengths and accomplishments of successful teaching practices that teachers at LES portray. The revelation of shared high points and successes will contribute to the capacity of teaching practices at LES. High-performing schools establishing a set of core beliefs for all students to be successful weaves a design of appreciation and value (Scheurich, 1998).

My study extends the current literature on successful teaching practices in a SOE elementary school and identifies the necessary ecological conditions for the teachers to sustain and extend their successful teaching practices. Additionally, my study contributes to the effectiveness for future capacity building of teacher involvement to develop policy and for schools desiring to sustain a level of greatness. Given the importance of accountability for NCLB, this study may increase an awareness to create more optimal teaching conditions for students to be successful.

My study contributes to the educational field by applying AI to discover the successful teaching practices of teachers in a SOE elementary school and identifies necessary ecological conditions for the teachers to sustain and extend their successful teaching practices. Providing an opportunity to create innovative ideas and images of successful teaching practices that are so compelling may lend to a quicker transformation of change (Bushe & Kassam, 2005). Given the

importance of accountability of NCLB, my study may increase the awareness of teachers' beliefs and experiences to build capacity for improving teaching performance.

Overview of Methodology

A qualitative case study design was used to describe successful teaching practices in a SOE elementary school and to identify the necessary ecological conditions for the teachers to sustain and extend their successful teaching practices by participating in an AI Learning Team process (Egan & Lancaster, 2005; Watkins & Mohr, 2001). An AI Learning Team consists of a small group who will be undertaking an AI 4-D Cycle. The four phases of an AI 4-D Cycle are discovery, dream, design, and destiny (Ludema, Whitney, Mohr, & Griffin, 2003a). The perceptions of teachers' experiences will be studied through the theoretical framework of capacity building (Postma, 1998; Stavros, Cooperrider, & Kelley, 2003) and an AI theoretical research perspective (Cooperrider et al., 2003).

Appreciative inquiry is a form of action research that uses an affirmative change approach that seeks to tap an organization's source of energy or positive core. For the purpose of my study, I guided participants through the first two phases of the AI 4-D Cycle. In the discovery phase, participants describe and highlight what gives "life" to the organization or the "best of what is" in various situations (Ludema, Whitney, Mohr, & Griffin, 2003b). In the dream phase, participants dream or imagine what could be and collectively envision an image of a better organization.

The process is similar to an AI Summit designed to work with large groups of 30-3,000; however, for the purpose of my study a smaller group of teachers and their principal who's focus will be on a specific topic, participated in an AI Learning Team (Ludema et al., 2003b). LES was

selected as the site for my study based on its AYP status on the Kansas state assessments from 2005-2007.

Units of Analysis

The unit of analysis in my study was teachers and their principal at LES who voluntarily chose to participate in the first two phases of an AI 4-D Cycle. The participants were involved in various data collection methods associated with an AI Learning Team—4-D Cycle: (a) semi-structured paired interviews, (b) focus groups, and (c) participant created documents. Chapter 3 will provide a more detailed explanation of the methodology. In the research questions, I define the participants in my study as instructional leaders—those who collaboratively shape the school's learning environment.

<div align="center">

Research Questions

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The following overarching question guided my study: How do instructional leaders envision a SOE school and implement that vision based on their positive core of experiences?

Data from the following research questions aided in identifying successful teaching practices in a SOE elementary school:

1. How do instructional leaders describe their successful pedagogical practices?

2. What are the dreams of instructional leaders in Lincoln Elementary School to sustain and extend their successful pedagogical practices?

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Objectives

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The study involved participants from Lincoln Elementary School, USD 353, in an AI 4-D Cycle that focused on achieving the following two objectives:

1. To recognize the successful teaching practices of teachers in a SOE elementary school.

2. To identify the necessary ecological conditions for the teachers to sustain and extend their successful teaching practices.

Limitations

The study had the following limitations:

1. The study was limited to the time constraint of being completed in one academic school year.

2. The study was limited by the researcher's employment as a district level administrator in the district for the study.

3. The study was limited by the time commitment teachers and principal must make to participate in the two phases of the AI 4-D Cycle.

Delimitations

The study had the following delimitations:

1. The study was delimited to teachers and the principal at Lincoln Elementary School in USD 353.

2. The study was delimited to the first two phases of the AI 4-D Cycle: discovery and dream.

Assumptions

My conceptual framework was centered in the following assumptions that guided this study:

1. Lincoln Elementary School teachers and their principal believe that all students can be academically successful.

2. Lincoln Elementary School teachers and their principal have a positive core of experience in helping students to academically achieve.

3. Lincoln Elementary School teachers and their principal desire to extend their capacity to build a SOE school.

<p align="center">Definition of Key Terms</p>

Capacity Building

Capacity building in education primarily targets individual teachers. Four dimensions provide a broader context of teacher capacity: knowledge, skills, dispositions, and self. All four dimensions are interactive and interdependent where as change in one dimension may create unexpected changes in another. Capacity building is an investment in ongoing professional development, policies, training, and support to sustain in a learning community (Fullan, 2000; O'Day, Goertz, & Floden, 1995).

Standard of Excellence

Schools that achieve AYP status exclusive of its subgroups and are accredited are considered for SOE. Individual grades or schools can meet the SOE criteria. A certain percentage of students must score an Exemplary performance level on the math and reading assessments. A limited percentage of students may score in the Academic Warning performance level. Percentages for each performance level vary by grade level and content area (Kansas Department of Education, 2006).

Student Achievement

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 emphasizes districts and schools to improve student achievement and close the achievement gap for economically disadvantaged students, limited English proficiency, students with disabilities, and different ethnic backgrounds in the areas of math and reading. Student achievement is the overall growth that is tested annually in math and reading for all students in 3rd through 8th grades and one time in high school. Annual

target percentages in math and reading are set by the state for students to achieve (Kansas State Department of Education, 2005).

Summary

Chapter 1 provided the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, overview of the methodology, research questions, objectives, limitations, delimitations, assumptions, and definition of key terms. Chapter 2 provides a literature review, discussion of the conceptual framework, an explanation of the theoretical framework, the methodology and synthesis for the search of empirical literature. Chapter 3 includes the methodology, purpose of the study, my research questions and design, research participants, data collection methods and procedures, and the analysis of the data using an AI research design. Chapter 4 includes my study's findings. Chapter 5 presents implications for future research, implications of the results for practice and recommendations, relationships to relevant theory, significance of study, and a summary and conclusion.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

Chapter 2 is a review of the relevant literature related to my study: (a) conceptual framework, (b) epistemology, (c) descriptions of the theoretical framework, (d) competing perspective, (e) methodology for searching the selection of empirical research, and (f) synthesis of the reviewed literature as it relates to successful teaching practices in a SOE elementary school.

Conceptual Framework

My conceptual framework is comprised of my professional experience, epistemology, and theoretical perspectives. This section provides my framework for examining the beliefs and successful practices of teachers in a SOE elementary school and their desire to sustain a high level of student performance.

Professional Experiences

My professional experiences working with teachers to develop pedagogical practices helped me frame the conceptual framework for my study. My assumptions for the conceptual framework are based on three beliefs:

1. Teachers believe all students can learn and be academically successful.

2. There is a positive core of teacher pedagogical experiences in helping students to achieve academically.

3. There are teachers who desire to extend their capacity to build a SOE school.

It is my direct experience as a district administrator for 4 years, a special education teacher for 23 years, and a regular education teacher for 5 years that helped frame my conceptual framework. My professional experience and observations of successful teachers have affirmed

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my belief that there are teachers who provide students with an engaging successful education and incorporate practices that make a difference for their success. I believe these teachers are difference makers. They learn from their students as their students learn from them. They believe teaching is an art and a way to give back to the community (Love & Kruger, 2005; Mintrop & MacLellan, 2002).

My experiences reinforce my belief that teachers with positive interpersonal relationships, positive attitudes, and high expectations for all students, share a formula for success. My beliefs and values generated through my experiences as a teacher and district administrator have led me to discover why successful teachers are able to increase student achievement. Based on my professional experience, I found that successful teachers have a higher capacity to understand students' needs and interests and sustain a high level of academic performance.

My role as a district administrator allowed me the opportunity to discover the successful practices teachers demonstrate in a SOE elementary school and to understand the ecological conditions needed to sustain a high level of performance. One way to view what successful elementary teachers are doing is to identify the practices used to help students achieve academically. For the purpose of my study, I sought to understand teachers' beliefs and experiences through the theoretical frameworks of an AI theoretical perspective and CBT. This construct of identifying teachers' beliefs and experiences established the foundation for the conceptual framework for my study.

Epistemology

I ground my experience as a teacher and district administrator in a social constructionism epistemology. Social constructionism engages participants in stimulating conversations that

reflect, challenges traditional beliefs, and imagines future possibilities. Social constructionism supports the belief that teachers generate new knowledge and language through collaborative and participatory discussion (Gergen, 1999). Through a generative dialogue, teachers create the capacity to expand and reflect about their educational experiences and practices. Knowledge about teaching experiences and practices may evolve from conversations that are part of a creative interchange (Barrett & Fry, 2005; Gergen, 1999). A creative interchange among teachers may allow the generation of greater meaning resulting in deeper understanding and new ideas. Social constructionism is an invitation to reinterpretation of one's reality and an openness to the potential for new and richer meaning (Crotty, 1998). It also fosters appreciation and serves as the foundation to AI by drawing on the experiences of stakeholders through narratives of story telling and positive dialogue (Gergen, 1999). AI shifts the image of human mindsets by switching the focus of stakeholders' mental models (Watkins & Mohr, 2001).

Next, I will provide my theoretical framework used to inform my study. My theoretical framework consists of an AI theoretical research perspective and CBT. In the following sections, I present the theoretical perspective of AI, followed by CBT, and conclude with a description of the competing perspective of organizational change.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical perspectives selected for my proposed study include AI and CBT. AI is a theoretical research perspective that values and recognizes the best in people, their world, or their organization. It seeks to affirm and build on strengths and past successes to discover what gives life to an organization or its positive core. The positive core is every strength, achievement, and high point experience of an organization (Cooperrider, Sorensen, Whitney, & Yaeger, 2000; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). AI highlights the members' experiences in an organization,

generating a positive core that exemplifies the collaborative interaction to create vision and a design for the future. AI has transformational potential to initiate change grounded in dialogue and affirmation (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). Conversations that are entrenched in positive dialogue and high point experiences create the potential to initiate transformational change. AI increases the desire to create and discover new possibilities that can enrich our way of life and give it meaning. The potential for change suddenly emerges when stakeholders constructively discover the power of the positive core and let go of the negative issues (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999). Appreciative inquiry compliments CBT.

Capacity building theory encourages the conditions and opportunities for shared learning and collaboration. This perspective nurtures the design of a professional community where teachers participate in collaborative decision making and have a shared sense of purpose. Teachers begin to develop confidence in their capacity and in the capacity of their schools (Harris, 2001). AI is a participatory method that creates the capacity for a new vision of the future and embraces the strengths of the past and can be used overall as a capacity building approach. As in AI, capacity building espouses new ideas that generate the assembling of new combinations of strengths and frameworks of opportunity (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Positive planning and inquiry can be instrumental to enhance the capacity of an organization. Capacity building provides the conditions and opportunities for an organization to expand its strengths and successes to an exemplary level of performance (Barrett & Fry, 2005). It encourages collaborative decision making that impels the organization towards a common purpose (Lambert, 1998). An organization's capacity is enhanced when all the stakeholders are engaged in an inquiry of its positive core generating changes never thought possible (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003).

Appreciative inquiry. Appreciative inquiry is a theoretical research perspective and a methodology generated from the field of organizational development facilitating organizational change using an asset based approach (Cooperrider et al., 2003; Ludema et al., 2003b). AI transforms a problem solving method of organizational development to one of a strengths-based approach (Coghlan, Preskill, & Catsambas, 2003). The art of AI is valuing and discovering the life giving factors of an organization that creates an infectious energy for generative growth inspired by positive ideas (Barrett, 1995). AI provides an appreciative spirit of hope and potential. It builds relationships and creates an opportunity for people to be included and heard. AI is an invitation to shift from a deficit based problem solving approach to an affirmative approach for positive change (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003).

Appreciative inquiry has a generative foundation in Kurt Lewin's action research process (Cooperrider & Barrett, 2001). Lewin (1946) believed that for understanding and change to occur, stakeholders had to be involved in the process. Stakeholders had good intentions to face problems in group relations, but did not know how to transform their good intentions into organized action. In an effort to build better relations between the Jewish and Black communities, Lewin took participants through a multifaceted process of unfreezing, changing, and refreezing beliefs, attitudes, and values required to achieve change. The initial phase of unfreezing beliefs involved group discussions in which each participant experienced others' views and began to modify their own. Lewin viewed change as continual planning, action, and fact finding that led to the term action research (Burnes, 2004).

Action research is based on the premise of a collaborative and participatory process that analyzes, implements, and evaluates problems to be solved (Burnes, 2004; Egan & Lancaster, 2005). Evolving from problem-based action research, AI engages participants in a dialogue about

what is working well based on past successful experiences. It places emphasis on affirmative questions to stimulate transformational dialogue (Coghlan & Jacobs, 2005). AI is an attempt to explore a shared consensus constructed by the direction of an affirming inquiry (Thatchenkery, 1999). The heliotropic nature of AI is like sunflowers that turn towards the sun. An organization will turn and face a positive image of itself creating a new level of energy (Johnson & Leavitt, 2001). AI promotes an affirming line of inquiry that directs the images held by its participants.

Evolving from both the public and private sectors, AI has been applied as a change methodology since the early 1980's decade. AI has been viewed as a paradigm shift for organizational development and change that generates a positive view of strengths (Ludema et al., 2003b). The AI methodology has evolved to include hundreds of organizations from the business and management arenas to later include nonprofit and school sectors that promoted transformative change (Cooperrider et al., 2003; Lewis & Tiem, 2004).

Appreciative inquiry was applied in a broader context to include organizational venues promoting community innovation and commitment in Chicago by community members, high school students in Australia improving a sense of connectedness through community projects, and various religious leaders from the United Religions Initiative forging relationships based on different beliefs and traditions (Browne, 2001; Finegold, Holland, & Lingham, 2002; Morsillo & Fisher, 2007; Watkins & Mohr, 2001). A non-profit organization that serves 370 volunteer centers in 49 states in the United States took part in a large scale AI process related to strategic planning of community needs for their network of volunteer centers (Randolph, 2006).

Appreciative inquiry has been effective in public and private school systems. In an urban high school, teachers' attitudes and traits of effective teaching with at-risk students were identified using an AI approach (Calabrese et al., 2005). In several urban Catholic high schools,

AI was employed to identify the cultural aspects that contributed to the effectiveness of at-risk students' success in school (Ryan, Soven, Smither, Sullivan, & VanBuskirk, 1999).

Appreciative inquiry presents a purposeful positive process that creates vision and creativity for the future and provides optimistic opportunities in reply to the criticism and public debate about public education where expert opinions are freely given (Akdere, 2005; Filleul & Rowland, 2006). There appears to be a belief by state accountability systems that the pressure of achieving academic performance coupled with sanctions and rewards will force schools and individuals who work in them to achieve at a higher performance level (Elmore & Furhman, 2001). Under NCLB, states run the risk of state assistance or sanctions if the mandates are not met. Rigorous academic standards must be followed and assessed annually. States, districts, and schools are held responsible for the results from the assessments in order to demonstrate proficiency of the standards (Case, 2005).

Appreciative inquiry has the capacity to draw out the best practices that increase student achievement. AI expands and fosters the possibilities to envisioning "what might be" (Cooperrider et al., 2003). The application of AI as a theoretical perspective will identify the organization's positive core and tap into its highest potential. Initiating the first two phases of the AI 4-D cycle, participants will identify their successful teaching practices to sustain high academic performance. Through a participatory dialogue, participants will recall peak teaching experiences and practices while performing at their fullest capacity. Participants will also identify the ecological conditions that were present while experiencing their successful and highpoint teaching practices. When these occur, the discovery of new images emerges that compels participants to move toward their vision. The AI process has the potential to bring successful teaching practices that are occurring in a SOE school to the forefront. Because an AI

methodology actively engages participants in the change process, change is more likely to occur (Lewin, 1946). AI will serve as the theoretical research perspective in my study for constructing change in educational practices.

Capacity building theory. Capacity building theory is a process to improve an organization's potential to achieve their goals. This approach relates to all successful aspects of the organization. Capacity building empowers people to network with others, establish relationships, and make the commitment to work together (Chapagain, 2004). CBT essentially involves building relationships, trust, and community (Harris & Lambert, 2003). A climate for collaboration is generated by capacity building that invests in a shared sense of purpose promoting development and change.

Capacity building theory traces its origins to the 1950's and 1960's decades when developing countries were provided with public sector organizations to strengthening and improve performance (Smillie, 2001). From the 1960's to the 1990's decades, outside specialists from public sector organizations appeared to be the experts and had a tendency to judge people by what they did not know. Capacity building began to shift from several failed outside management attempts to include a participatory development and empowerment.

The United Nations General Assembly triennial policy review encapsulates capacity building as providing guidance for all operational activities. An evaluation of the comprehensive procedures of operational activities for the United Nations system provided lessons learned creating stronger capacity building activities (Department for Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, 1999). During the 1960's to the 1990's decades, capacity building evolved from organizational management and human resource development to a network of relationship

building that accentuates the strengths and potential of an organization, community, whole geographic areas, and various sectors (Linnell, 2003; Smillie, 2001).

Capacity building has continued its expansion in the community sector. Communities have rebuilt their neighborhoods by strengthening the social ties within the community. Faced with economic shifts of losing jobs and mobility, communities sought solutions by turning to their neighbors, local citizens associations, and institutions that lie at the core of their community (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Participating community members shared stories as a means to find the capacities of individuals, local associations and organizations, and local institutions to reconnect their communities (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Participants highlighted the economic assets to help build the local economy and map a vision for the future. Communities that identified their strengths and assets were rebuilding from the inside out versus the outside in. The ultimate goal of capacity building is to identify and develop the untapped resources to improve the quality of life of people in the communities (Kleiner, Raue, Silverstein, Bell, & Wells, 2004).

Educators are acquiring innovative ways to reconnect their schools with their community. The building of new alliances that recognize healthy schools and communities benefit one another. Educational excellence is supported by the capacity of strong schools that are integral to the future of the community (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Capacity building is nourished by an alliance between the school and community by their sharing essential values and commitment for educational excellence. Its application to schools has the potential for sustaining positive change and becoming communities of learning. Communities of learning that work together build trust, move the school forward, and have a leadership capacity to sustain improvement (Harris & Lambert, 2003).

Many reform efforts have focused on the education system to improve student achievement and meet more challenging standards (Goertz, Floden, & O'Day, 1995). In its current form, capacity building strategies are focused on teachers to enhance their knowledge and improve classroom practices. Building capacity in teachers has been found to have a strong link to student achievement and a productive investment for schools (Cooter, 2003).

Traditional models of professional development that focus on classroom pedagogy limit the dimensions of teacher capacity and overlook areas that directly impact a teacher's ability to teach (O'Day et al., 1995). I identified three themes in relevant research related to building teacher capacity: (a) teacher capacity is multidimensional and evolving, (b) individual capacity interacts and is interdependent with organizational capacity, and (c) organizational capacity with individual capacity can be stimulated and nurtured through the combination of ideas and perspectives from outside its boundaries (Goertz et al., 1995). This framework fosters a support system for building teacher capacity. It initiates and sustains a vision for reform by setting higher expectations of student learning. Reaching capacity captures the vision and focus for teachers' dreams and builds energy to attain their dreams (Postma, 1998).

The theoretical perspective of AI aligns with CBT. Both perspectives emphasize human potential as a means to achieve a shared vision (Concern Worldwide, 2004). The vision is based on the identification of positive present and past experiences and a well-developed plan of capacity building (Postma, 1998). It is central to my study to identify the capacity of teachers who encompass successful practices in a SOE elementary school. The power within AI discovers and expands the capacity for schools when members of a system are working together, discovering a common history, and collaboratively developing new plans and aspirations to make it happen (Barrett & Fry, 2005).

Competing Perspective

Thought was given to several competing perspective theories. One competing perspective is school improvement theory that seeks to look more closely at the internal conditions of successful schools (Hopkins, Ainscow, & West, 1994). School improvement theory is defined as an approach to educational change that improves student achievement and bolsters the school's capacity to cope with change. Change becomes more manageable by immersing in the problems to be solved and developing creative solutions (Hopkins, 2005; Hopkins et al., 1994). The message from school improvement theory focuses on several basic principles: (a) schools need clear and specific structuring, (b) evaluation and feedback enhances the learning of an organization, and (c) schools make decisions based on goals and values (Hopkins, 2005).

School improvement theory rests on assumptions that emerged from these basic principles: (a) schools are perceived as the center of systematic change that focuses on the internal conditions of the school, (b) the roles of all school members should be defined so that the mission of the school can be accomplished more effectively, and (c) change is only successful when teachers adopt change into their natural behaviors by their response to diagnosis and priority goal setting (Hopkins, 2005). The development of school improvement projects generalized teachers' philosophy on the school improvement principles and assumptions.

The Improving the Quality of Education for all Project (IQEA) believed that changing the school culture while focusing on teaching and learning impacted school improvement (Harris & Hopkins, 2000; Hopkins et al., 1994). Though school improvement theory envisions a capacity for cultural change through a participatory and collaborative means as in AI, the concentration on problem solving as part of action research establishes a framework for diagnosing, analyzing, and evaluating a change process (Egan & Lancaster, 2005).

My study will not use school improvement theory as a theoretical perspective because of its focus on change through a problem-solving action research method. I chose AI as the theoretical perspective for my study because it is an action research process that recognizes when organizations are performing optimally; recognition of optimal performance serves as a basis for future success (Cooperrider et al., 2003) It also reduces the negative stress and promotes an excitement to learn and expands the capacity of school change through a generative collaborative process that discovers the successes within and allows for an affirmative dialogue generating the "life-giving" forces of the organization (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). The participatory nature of participants rediscovering the best of their past for creating a foundation of the future extends AI beyond the perspective of school improvement theory.

Methodology for the Review of Empirical Research

The purpose of my search of the empirical literature intends to synthesize research associated with my study. The following questions guided the search strategy:

1. What empirical research has been conducted related to successful pedagogical teaching practices using an AI methodology?

2. What empirical research exists related to capacity building theory and successful pedagogical teaching practices?

3. What empirical research uses an AI methodology in educational settings?

Keywords for my search are organized in the following table of databases and will adhere to the following criteria: (a) only empirical research since 1990, (b) only empirical research that is published in peer-reviewed journals, and (c) only empirical research that includes elementary teachers as a unit of analysis.

The results of the search method are organized in Table 2.1. The keywords and its combinations were applied to the selected databases following the same pattern of searching. A SAGE Full-Text Collection, Wilson Web, and ERIC First Search were selected because of discipline-specific research databases of peer-reviewed journals. Full text links to education, sociology, and psychology with other relevant databases provided further relevant research. Info Trac Web offered access to peer reviewed full-text articles in journals divided into different databases. Google Scholar was chosen because it provided a broad search of scholarly literature across various disciplines and sources. ABI Inform was used to obtain full-text articles in scholarly journal sources. I searched Dissertation Abstracts to find empirical research on AI in educational settings. My search findings are presented in Table 2.1 followed by my synthesis of the empirical literature.

Table 2.1

Search Results for Empirical Literature

Search I – Key Words							
Key Words	**Education A SAGE Full-text Collection**	**InfoTrac**	**Google Scholar**	**ERIC First Search**	**Wilson Web**	**Dissertation Abstracts**	**ABI Inform**
Elementary Teachers	239	1123	9,280	1,934	182	717	0
Elementary Schools	776	1994	22,500	4,756	1,781	1,823	143
Successful Practices, Teachers	24	3	866	35	1	6	0
Pedagogy/Pedagogical Practices	85	7	5,980	1,704	16	2,409	300
Low SES Students	23	11	720	24	6	8	0
Appreciative Inquiry	18	20	1,410	192	7	54	53
Capacity Building	109	261	24,400	1,839	83	109	146
Kansas	358	2552	244,000	20,577	632	19,204	852

Table 2.1 (continued)

Search II- Key Word Combinations							
Key Words	**Education A SAGE Full-text Collection**	**InfoTrac**	**Google Scholar**	**ERIC First Search**	**Wilson Web**	**Dissertation Abstracts**	**ABI Inform**
Elementary Teachers Elementary Schools	88	68	2,180	80	52	13	0
Elementary Teachers Successful Practices, Teachers	2	0	28	0	0	1	0
Elementary Schools Successful Practices, Teachers	8	0	0	2	0	0	0
Elementary Schools Low SES Students	12	0	218	0	1	1	0
Elementary Teachers Pedagogy/pedagogical practices	6	4	342	42	4	3	2
Elementary Schools Pedagogy/Pedagogical Practices	11	7	543	25	4	0	3
Successful Practices, Elementary Teachers Low SES Students	0	0	5	0	0	0	0
Pedagogy/Pedagogical Practices, Elementary Teachers Low SES Students	3	0	4	0	0	1	0
Elementary Teachers Elementary Schools Successful Practices, Elementary Teachers Pedagogy/Pedagogical Practices Low SES Students	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Appreciative Inquiry Capacity Building	3	0	123	3	0	1	0
When combining the remaining Theoretical Perspectives and Research Keywords "no hits" were presented across databases	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

I now discuss the findings from my review of the empirical research. I next discuss distinctive points related to the studies and then follow with the research relevant to AI. I conclude with a summary of my literature review. As the result of review of the empirical research guided by search questions, I found the following:

1. Teachers who demonstrated successful pedagogy and pedagogical practices had a positive influence on students' academic success.

2. A strong sense of efficacy was found among effective elementary teachers who believed that high expectations should be held for all students.

3. Elementary teachers who were involved in collective decision making and distributed leadership showed dramatic improvement in student achievement.

4. A positive school climate and teachers' sensitivity to students' culture contributed to students' academic success.

5. Appreciative inquiry transformed change through affirmative dialogue and created optimism and hope for the future.

Successful Pedagogy and Pedagogical Practices and Student Success

Successful pedagogy and pedagogical practices were linked to student success: (a) teachers established personal connections and considered students' cultural background, (b) a clear purpose was part of teachers' instruction, instructional strategies met students' needs, and (c) students were directly involved with their instruction. Identifying, describing, and understanding successful pedagogical practices for educating students considered at risk can play an important role in the effort of school reform (Howard, 2001). Teachers who make personal connections with students and consider the students' culture and background as part of their

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instructional strategies seem to make a positive impact on student learning (Spivey, 2006; Williams, 1998).

In a comparison study of two elementary schools, the researcher found that teachers who actively involved students in their instructional curriculum and classroom procedures scored significantly higher on state assessments than teachers in another elementary school that applied more authoritarian practices to manage the classroom. Students understood the purpose of their instruction and its connection to future academic and professional success (Hayword, 1999). Teachers who developed personal connections with students and clarified the purpose for what was being taught were found more effective as a teacher (Spivey, 2006). Interpersonal interactions with students that encouraged hard work and acknowledged teacher efforts led to academic success. Teachers believed that what they do as a teacher defines their instruction. The decision students make about what they do defines the teacher (Love & Kruger, 2005). Knowing the attitudes, beliefs, and values that teacher's hold for students to be successful is essential for effective school change (Reuter, 1992).

Effective school change is more apt to occur when teachers implement new worthwhile practices, and the change for school improvement connects to prior experiences (Reuter, 1992). It is unlikely that teachers in high performing schools are significantly different from those in low performing schools, but there is something within a high performing school that affects the overall practice of its teachers. Teachers from 12 high-performing, high-technology, elementary schools who participated in a regional study indicated low SES students were more successful when state standards guided the instruction and curriculum aligned to the standards. Instruction was shaped by the teachers' beliefs on what strategies would be most affective for successful pedagogical practices. Teachers varied their instruction to include technology, hands on

activities, project based learning, and interdisciplinary projects. Differentiated instruction was a strategy reported to have an impact on student learning that could remediate basic skills, but also accelerate higher-order thinking skills (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2004).

Teachers' beliefs and practices of teaching diverse students have been found to impact students' potential of academic success. Effective teachers of low SES students were more cognizant of students' learning styles and adapted their delivery of instruction to students' ability (Cooper, 2003; Honaker, 2003; Spivey, 2006). Instructional decisions were based and on several strategies to optimize academic learning. Teaching reflected the pedagogical practices of the subject matter, an understanding of the students prior knowledge, and an ability to link school to life experiences (Cooper, 2003).

Teacher Efficacy and High Expectations for Students

Teacher efficacy is the perception that faculty can implement a plan consisting of goals and objectives that will positively impact student achievement. The higher the efficacy of teachers, the greater the effort teachers make to overcome challenges and succeed. Teacher efficacy has been shown to be essential to academic school performance despite external factors that impede student learning (Hoy, Tarter, & Hoy, 2006). Teachers are viewed as vital forces in the classroom by the beliefs and values they bring to teaching (Cooper, 2003). Teachers have the potential to make a difference in student learning when they view themselves as responsible. Effective teachers believed that the success of their students was their responsibility and they were accountable to their students (Love & Kruger, 2005). Elementary teachers who consistently demonstrated academic success with disadvantaged students based on the North Carolina Teacher Performance Appraisal Instrument were asked to complete a survey that measured their beliefs about teaching. Data revealed (a) teachers developed personal relationships with the

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students and addressed the students' personal needs before academic needs, (b) high expectations and mutual respect were felt in their classrooms, and (c) belief among teachers that they learned as much from their students as the students learned from them (Spivey, 2006). Beyond setting high expectations, teachers created opportunities for students to obtain knowledge for academic success. They strongly believed their students could achieve and sought to convince their students of their academic capability as well as working to contribute to the students' social and emotional growth. Teachers believed it was just as important to teach non-academic common sense in addition to academic instruction. Holistic instructional beliefs produced students who were honest and responsible in addition to their academic competency (Howard, 2001).

Effective teachers, who connect with students as individuals, create a community of learners much like an extended family that considers the students' cultural beliefs. Urban elementary teachers of low SES students participated in a survey measuring teachers' cultural beliefs and its correlation to higher student achievement as part of a school change effort. In contrast to prior studies reporting that teachers disseminate knowledge through rote drill and practice, elementary teachers in an urban setting endorsed beliefs that all students can succeed, the commitment of teaching is giving back to the community, students' ethnicity is important, and personal connections with students creates a communal learning environment. Teachers had a "do what it takes" attitude to teach students and a belief that not all students learn the same skills utilizing the same methods of teaching (Love & Kruger, 2005).

Further evidence of teacher efficacy and its relationship to students was evident among teachers who rejected student failure as an option and communicating high expectations for all students to learn (Honaker, 2003). These teachers also considered students' cultural differences and created more effective instructional practices for diverse learners. A sense of responsibility

and accountability for student learning resonated with a combination of competence and caring. Teachers have a responsibility to their students to achieve academically, but more importantly they have a responsibility to develop a moral person by modeling caring. The application of caring to teaching is an energizing response to students' needs and wants as a means to foster growth (Noddings, 1988). Personal strategies were developed to meet the needs of individual students before engaging them in academic instruction. Teachers implied that their personal experiences and philosophies guided their decision making for strategies to meet students' needs and make personal connections (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2004). Teachers' beliefs and practices were interconnected providing a more holistic profile of successful teaching practices that fostered a positive culture for change (Cooper, 2003; Spivey, 2006). When teachers share beliefs critical to student success, a shared sense of responsibility is a catalyst for collaboration and communication. The sharing of teacher beliefs and successful practices especially for low SES students is limited in the research (Spivey, 2006).

Teacher Involvement in Decision Making and Distributed Leadership

The involvement of teachers in shared decision making allows teachers to collectively focus on improving the learning of all students. A renewed energy and purpose exists when teachers are empowered as decision makers and collectively focus on the goals and vision of the school. Teacher capacity is fostered by ongoing professional development to construct standards for measuring school progress. The dynamics of distributed leadership is rooted in continual inquiry that suggests a change in school culture, builds capacity to improve teaching and learning, and encourages collective decision making to focus on student learning. A region-wide school renewal effort presented evidence that improving schools is accomplished cooperatively at the school level through a cycle of inquiry that focuses on student learning, best practices, high

standards, and equity (Copland, 2003). Inquiry is an ongoing process to build capacity among the school community. Capacity building in education encourages affirmative inquiry, joint decision making, and sharing the successes in contrast to the traditional approach of school reform. A key determinant to systemic reform is teacher capacity and its relationship to school capacity (Borko, Wolf, Simone, & Uchiyama, 2003; Goertz et al., 1995).

School capacity is the collective power of all teachers to increase student achievement. A schools' capacity includes knowledge, skills, view of self, and attitudes of individual teachers (Borko et al., 2003; Goertz et al., 1995). Collaboration is at the heart of building teacher capacity. Data suggest when teachers are more likely to see sustained educational achievement in their students when they had time to collaborate and focus on clear goals.. Building teacher capacity establishes a vision that encourages distributed leadership for collective decision making. It is a key factor in systemic reform (Borko et al., 2003)

Distributed leadership was the most important factor of elementary and middle schools' reform efforts (Borko et al., 2003). It empowered teachers to be innovative in curriculum development and classroom instruction to help students experience educational achievement (Goertz et al., 1995; Harris & Lambert, 2003). Teachers who internalized the belief of shared decision making, high expectations for themselves and students, a positive school climate, and collaboration on school restructuring practices showed dramatic improvement in student learning (Boyce, 1990; Brown, 2002).

Ongoing professional development is the cornerstone for understanding, school improvement, and reform (Borko et al., 2003). Teachers of high-capacity schools value professional development opportunities that focus on specific aspects of leadership in order to develop professional learning communities. Teacher leaders within their professional learning

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communities confronted the school improvement goals with a purpose and vision for positive student outcomes (Borko et al., 2003; Copland, 2003; Harris & Lambert, 2003). Teachers had an understanding of student achievement through a collective conversation for student outcomes (Borko et al., 2003).

Positive School Climate and Student Academic Success

Positive school climate is viewed as a caring and supportive environment that includes high academic expectations. Classrooms dedicated to caring encourage students to assist each other by providing opportunities for students to interact and collaborate with peers (Noddings, 1988). A positive school environment was central in terms of its positive effect on student academic success. A survey was developed to measure teachers' perceptions of four key components: leadership, professional community, school environment, and instruction. Teachers representing 49 high and 27 low performing high-needs elementary schools across 10 states indicated that the leadership and school environment components were of key importance for successful schools. School environment referred to school-level factors that correlated to school effectiveness: (a) a safe and orderly school climate, (b) academic achievement, (c) assessments and monitoring, and (d) positive parental involvement (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2004).

A positive school climate and teachers' sensitivity to students' culture were woven throughout the empirical research. Findings from 12 high-performing, high-technology elementary school teachers indicated that teachers who created a caring atmosphere consistent with a positive environment were conducive to learning. Teachers were also more effective when their classrooms had a classroom management system that provided a safe environment (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2004).

A high correlation to academic success for low SES students existed when effective teachers bridged cultural barriers and motivated student learning (Cooper, 2003; Howard, 2001; Spivey, 2006). Findings suggested the participants' beliefs and practices that fostered learning were significantly comparable to the literature findings. A strong interconnectedness existed between the beliefs and practices of White elementary teachers of Black children. Respect for race and culture of the community and a willingness to learn from the Black community was reported (Cooper, 2003; Howard, 2001). The commitment to community norms demonstrated by the participants coupled with high expectations for students have the potential to overpower the oppression of racial discrimination (Cooper, 2003).

Teachers in a Northwestern urban setting used students' race and culture as part of their teaching and connected world events to their lives. A sensitivity to language differences directly correlated to students' cultural identity and implications for academic success (Howard, 2001). Cultural awareness was essential to the learning environment. Teachers believed their personal experiences enhanced the ability to make personal connections with students (Love & Kruger, 2005; Spivey, 2006). Teachers' instructional strategies that embraced the cultural beliefs of their students made an impact for successful student achievement. The teachers were empowered to make decisions regarding student learning and used cultural differences to enrich students' educational experiences through personal connections (Honaker, 2003).

Appreciative Inquiry and Optimistic Change

Appreciative Inquiry is an emerging method of action research that is applied to organizational change. Research using AI to transform organizational change from a traditional problem solving model includes research from business, medical, non-profit, and non-government organizations (Akdere, 2005; Carter, Cummings, & Cooper, 2005; Peelle, 2006;

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Reed, Jones, & Irvine, 2005; Thatchenkery, 1999). AI seeks to discover and heighten the "life-giving-forces" or an organization's core values (Thatchenkery, 1999). AI is grounded in the best of what is, shares what might be, supports what should be, and collectively experiments with what can be (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). In the next section I will report on the empirical research that I found related to my study and AI and CBT.

Appreciative Inquiry was used in a large-scale study that included several major United States' cities and The Institute of Cultural Affairs, an international nonprofit organization engaged in community empowerment around the world for nearly a half century. The AI process was initiated to affirm the strengths as it transformed change through a network of appreciative conversations. The power of using affirmative language heightened awareness of their cities' core values creating a true sense of community (Thatchenkery, 1999).

Stakeholders in Minnesota used AI to (a) understand the community, (b) work with the community service providers and networks, and (c) capitalize the strengths of community members. After using AI, stakeholders better understood the cultural and social backgrounds of the community that lead to a model of systemic participatory methods to practice community development (Akdere, 2005).

The affirmative dialogue of AI brought community members together in a rural setting. Community stakeholders in Kansas sought to discover the strengths of a rural town. They shared their dreams and hopes for the future and created a sustained vision of identity (Fast, 2005). Opportunities for community stakeholders to sustain their vision for the future ensures participation and accountability that can contribute positively to leadership from within the community (Datta, 2007).

The efficacy of AI was supported in a North American manufacturing organization. The

organization divided participants into teams using AI or creative problem solving interventions.

The findings supported AI as more effective than problem solving interventions to enhance group effectiveness (Peelle, 2006). Voluntary organizations that help the elderly in the United Kingdom explored what was working and found that the participants believed they had made a difference by using AI with older people. Appreciative interviews captured the beliefs of the participants in a non threatening environment that encouraged the involvement of community stakeholders. The interviews provided a feeling of value and having a voice. The participatory dialogue of the community stakeholders yielded more opportunity for growth and development within the voluntary sectors (Reed et al., 2005).

A health care agency explored examples of best multi-agency practices on topics that included communication, information, decision making, respect, collaboration, and a shared collective vision. They explored practices, determined what was working, and designed best practices for the future. A research team used AI to interview participants. The participants shared guidelines for best practices for what was working well including shared decision making and a common vision. Parents were guided through an appreciative approach to network with other parents of children who have complex needs to discover commonalities and support. Agencies and parents worked together to ensure that support was given for the most appropriate person acting in the role of a long-term care provider (Carter et al., 2005).

It has been suggested that AI can create positive change in educational systems by changing its stories (Norum, 2001). Successful changes in schools are making an impact on school reform through the AI process, transforming from a traditional problem solving approach (Calabrese et al., 2005; Norum, 2001; Ryan et al., 1999). Community and school members from a Philadelphia Catholic high school sought to identify aspects of their school's culture that

contributed to its effectiveness using AI. AI developed renewed connections between the community and staff that energized their passion for teaching. A renewed sense of teaching helped to provide direction for their schools' goals (Ryan et al., 1999). A sense of community and school connectedness emerged during an AI process held in a New Jersey charter school. The participants included 76 teachers, staff, students, parents and board members. Data collected from the AI process related to needs of middle school students were instrumental in redesigning some major classroom curricular and social changes in how the middle school is run (Arcoleo, 2003).

Appreciative Inquiry presents a paradigm shift for studying educational issues by viewing the concerns with an affirmative inquiry that capitalizes the strength of the organization (Cooperrider et al., 2003). A promising approach that extends the potential of human systems toward a shared vision, AI draws on the innate capacity for cooperation and change (Barrett & Fry, 2005).

A general theme throughout the review of empirical research is a growing development for organizations to move from expert driven approaches to a participatory methodology. There is a shift to mutual conversations from individual to community levels devoted to affirmation and valuing past history, a positive vision, and a sense of pride in the unfurling future of the organization or community (Srikantia & Fry, n.d.). The quest for the investigation of empirical research produced empirical studies in the field of nursing, community settings, non-governmental organizations, and human resource development (Bryan, Klein, & Elias, 2007; Carter et al., 2005; Chapagain, 2004; Concern Worldwide, 2004; Morsillo & Fisher, 2007). An underlying theme throughout the empirical research was a need for commitment within the system so that change can occur and continue to occur. AI is viewed as one approach to extend

the capacity of an organization by its participatory method of strategic visioning, collective planning, and empowering others to be innovative for future development (Stavros et al., 2003).

Although there was evidence of empirical research in elementary schools that identified successful teaching practices with low SES students, I did not find empirical evidence related to AI and successful elementary teaching practices with low SES students or the ecological conditions for sustaining a high level of student performance. The empirical research that I found focused on studies related to successful teaching and pedagogical practices in elementary schools working with low SES students.

Summary

Chapter 2 described the conceptual framework followed by the epistemology of social constructionism. The descriptions of my theoretical frameworks of an AI theoretical research perspective, CBT, and the competing perspective of school improvement theory established the foundation for my study. An overview of the search methodology guided the selection of the empirical research followed by the synthesis of the research.

The search of the literature rendered limited studies that directly relate to successful teaching practices of teachers in a SOE school and the ecological conditions for the teachers to sustain and extend their successful teaching practices. AI offers a viable alternative for addressing the successful practices and capacity of teachers in the restructuring of schools. An AI theoretical research perspective and CBT will provide an affirmative direction of inquiry that looks at the positive and successful methods of teachers at a SOE elementary school. The review of the literature concluded with the empirical studies that examined the successful pedagogical practices of teachers in high-performing schools that influences systemic change. Chapter 3 includes the methodology, purpose of the study, my research questions and design, research

participants, data collection methods and procedures, and the analysis of the data using an AI

research design.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Chapter 3 provides the research methodology that includes the research design, methods, and data analysis. I organize this chapter with a description of the research design and methodology. I then restate the purpose of the study and research questions that will direct my study. I follow with a description of the context, unit of analysis, role of the researcher and facilitator of an AI Learning Team process. Next, I explain my data collection methods, data analysis techniques, and research quality. I conclude with a summary of my methodology.

Research Design and Methodology

I used a qualitative case study research design to describe successful teaching practices in a SOE elementary school and to identify the necessary ecological conditions for the teachers to sustain and extend their successful teaching practices by participating in an AI Learning Team process (Egan & Lancaster, 2005; Watkins & Mohr, 2001). The research in a qualitative case study focused on a unique context (Yin, 2003). The data I collected was filtered through a constructionist epistemology and the theoretical research perspectives of AI and CBT. My use of an emergent design allowed me to adapt my inquiry process as my understanding of the data deepens (Patton, 2002). An emergent design was aligned with the AI 4-D Cycle process.

My case study involved elementary teachers and their principal from LES USD 353, identified as a SOE school. Teachers and their principal were asked to voluntarily participate as an AI Learning Team in the first two phases of the 4-D Cycle: discovery and dream. The 4-D Cycle process is similar to an AI Summit. An AI Summit is designed to work with large groups of 30-3,000. An AI Learning Team is designed for much smaller, focused groups (Ludema et al., 2003b). In my study, I worked with a smaller group of teachers and their principal who were

considered the AI Learning Team. AI has been applied in multiple organizations for strategic planning, organization redesign, cultural transformation, and leadership development. It has facilitated the development of alliances and partnerships for relationship building, the implementation of educational reform, and community development efforts (Preskill & Catsambas, 2006; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003).

The intent of AI as a methodology is its potential for a change process that generates new images of how we shape our future (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003). The shift to affirmative language to advocate for an asset and strength based approach in education reduces the focus on deficiencies and problem-solution approaches (Daly & Chrispeels, 2005). In my study, teachers and their principal participated in an AI Learning Team process that took place over two days.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of my study was to discover the successful teaching practices of teachers in a SOE elementary school. My study also identified the necessary ecological conditions for the teachers to sustain and extend their successful teaching practices.

Research Questions

The following overarching question guided my study: How do instructional leaders envision a SOE school and implement that vision based on their positive core of experiences?

Data from the following research questions aided in identifying successful teaching practices in a SOE elementary school:

1. How do instructional leaders describe their successful pedagogical practices?

2. What are the dreams of instructional leaders in Lincoln Elementary School to sustain and extend their successful pedagogical practices?

Context

The research study was conducted at LES in USD 353, located approximately 30 miles south of Wichita and with a population of 8,600. Wellington is a rural community and serves as the county seat in Sumner County. Agriculture, once a primary source of jobs in Sumner County, now employs just 2.1% of the residents (United States Census 2000, 2000). The Burlington Northern Santa Fe and the manufacturing plants employ as many people as USD 353, Sumner Regional Medical Center and other health services combined (United States Census 2000, 2000). Even with diverse employment opportunities, the median family income is approximately $43,000 with 8.9% of the population below the poverty level (United States Census 2000, 2000).

Unified School District 353 is comprised of 315 faculty and staff (Kansas State Board of Education, 2006a). There are 155 certified employees: kindergarten through 12th grade teachers, reading specialists, special education teachers, administration, counselors, librarians, and nurses. In addition to the certified staff, USD 353 employs 165 non-certified employees who provide support to other departments: transportation, food service, custodial and grounds, maintenance, Title aides, clerical services, and paraeducators. LES is comprised of 25 licensed faculty and staff: kindergarten through 5th grade teachers, music teacher, physical education teacher, reading specialist, special education teachers, Title kindergarten teacher, administration, secretary, counselor, librarian, nurse, and classified staff to include paraeducators, Title aides, and library aide. Of the 25 licensed teachers 3 are newly employed.

High quality teacher performance is a priority at USD 353. The high performance of teachers at LES is evidenced by the number of nominations for outstanding teaching awards its faculty received. A teacher from LES was a semi-finalist for Kansas Teacher of the Year in 2005-2006 and another teacher received the Wal-Mart Teacher of the Year award two years in a

row. Since 1999, the district recognizes one teacher for the Excellence in Teaching Award and 18 teachers from LES have been nominated. In addition, the 2006-2007 district report card for USD 353 reveals 91% of the teachers in the district are fully licensed and 95% of the LES teachers are fully licensed (Kansas State Board of Education, 2007b). Twenty-three licensed teachers at LES are highly-qualified and two special education teachers are teaching under waivers.

During the 2006-2007 school year, 1,710 students were enrolled at Wellington USD 353 (Kansas State Board of Education, 2007b). The ethnicity for USD 353 students is 88% White, 7% Hispanic, 3% African-American, and 2% is Other. LES is one of four kindergartens through fifth grade elementary schools in USD 353. During the 2006-2007 school year, 206 students were enrolled at LES. The ethnicity of LES is 93% White, 3% African-American, 2% Hispanic, and 2% Other (Kansas State Board of Education, 2007b).

Forty-five percent of USD 353 students were identified economically disadvantaged compared to 39% reported by the state who qualify as economically disadvantaged. The 2006-2007 LES report card reported 67% of students qualify as economically disadvantaged for free and reduced lunches. Students who qualify for free and reduced lunches increased from 62% in 2005-2006 to 67% in 2006-2007 (Kansas State Board of Education, 2007b).

Unified School District 353 is making progress to ensure that all students achieve academic proficiency by 2014 (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002). USD 353 did not make AYP for 2005-2006, but students who were in the free and reduced subgroup did meet the AYP targets for math and reading. Students who qualify for the free and reduced subgroup are defined as students from economically disadvantaged families based on family income, parent education, and occupation (Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, 1965). Preliminary data

showed USD 353 did make AYP for 2006-2007 with the free and reduced subgroup exceeding the target scores in math and reading. Traditionally, students from low socio-economic families and from diverse backgrounds do not perform well in school (Cunningham & Sanzo, 2002). The free and reduced subgroup at LES exceeded the target scores for math and reading in both 2005-2006 and 2006-2007. The free and reduced subgroup met proficiency in reading with a 62% on the 2006 AYP Report and a 76% on the 2007 AYP report. In math the free and reduced subgroup scored 83% proficient on the 2006 AYP Report and 84% proficient on the 2007 AYP Report (Kansas State Board of Education, 2007a). LES achieved the classification Standard of Excellence (SOE) status based on state criteria in 2006 and 2007. On the 2005-2006 state assessments, third grade students at LES met SOE in math and reading. The 5th grade class met SOE in reading. On the preliminary data of the 2006-2007 state assessments, 4th grade students at LES met SOE in math and reading.

For the purpose of my study it was advantageous to identify the successful teaching practices of the teachers at LES and to identify the necessary ecological conditions for the teachers to sustain and extend their successful teaching practices.

<center>Unit of Analysis</center>

The unit of analysis in my study was the teachers and their principal at LES who voluntarily chose to participate in the first two phases of an AI 4-D Cycle. My study began with seven teachers and their principal. On the second day of my study, one teacher had to leave for a family emergency. The total faculty included 25 licensed teachers at LES that was comprised of 6 males and 19 females. All were White. There were 12 general education teachers, 3 special educators, 1 reading specialist, and 1 teacher instructs special education students within the regular classroom. The art teacher, music teacher, band instructor, physical education teacher,

librarian, Title reading teacher, and school psychologist were shared with other buildings. There was one administrator for LES. The median age of the teachers was 49 with an average of 21 years experience. The mean years of experience at LES was 18 years compared to the district mean of 14 years.

Sixteen teachers have Master's degrees and one has a Specialist endorsement. The eight teachers who have their Bachelor's degree had graduate credit beyond their Bachelor's degree. All teachers participated in professional development opportunities provided by the district and seek to advance their teaching skills in workshops of their choice.

The participants were a purposive sampling of seven teachers and their principal from LES using the following criteria:

1. Each instructional leader represented a different grade level.

2. Each instructional leader had been at LES for a minimum of three years.

3. The gender balance reflected the faculty composition of the school.

The instructional leaders (teachers and principal) at LES were invited to voluntarily participate in the discovery and dream phases of an AI 4-D Cycle. They were given the opportunity to share stories of successful practices based on their experiences working with students in LES.

Role of the Researcher

My role as researcher was to be a participant observer. I established good rapport, was a good listener and empathized with participants (Merriam, 2001). The qualitative research method of AI was introduced to facilitate participants in stories of their successful teaching practices through carefully crafted AI protocols and questions (Cooperrider et al., 2003). I introduced the AI process and facilitated AI activities in the discovery and dream phases of the 4-D Cycle.

My role as a researcher was to discover the successful teaching practices of teachers in a SOE elementary school, collect data that corresponded to how teachers described their successful pedagogical practices and their dreams to sustain these practices, and maintain an ethical study while deciphering the data. I recognized the limit of the study by my employment as a district administrator and the potential reactions and perceptions teachers may have had of me as a researcher in the study. Through my social constructionist epistemology, I attempted to understand the participants' conversations and reflections, minimizing any biases I may brought to the study (Creswell, 2003).

Prior permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was necessary to protect the rights of human participants (Creswell, 2003). This was a written agreement to protect the identity of the participants (Appendix A). Prior permission from USD 353's superintendent was acquired to conduct the study (Appendix B). An invitation of participation (Appendix D) and the agreement to participate (Appendix C) was presented to LES faculty prior to the study. I applied standards that spoke to responsible conduct throughout my study to ensure personal interests were not embellished while compromising the integrity of the research (The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994). I also maintained ethics and professionalism.

Methods

I used an AI qualitative case study design to discover successful teaching practices at LES and to identify the necessary ecological conditions for teachers to sustain and extend their successful teaching practices by participating in an AI Learning Team process (Egan & Lancaster, 2005; Watkins & Mohr, 2001). An AI Learning Team consists of a small group who participated in an AI 4-D Cycle. The four phases of an AI 4-D Cycle are discovery, dream, design, and destiny (Cooperrider et al., 2003). Affirmative topics were the starting point of the

AI process. The AI Learning Team was guided through the discovery and dream phases. The two phases led toward sustainable success and transformation through rich, meaningful dialogue that was consistent with participants' values and aspirations (Ludema et al., 2003b; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003).

In the discovery phase, participants asked intentional questions to each other through appreciative interviews by sharing stories and experiences of when they observed their school at its peak or optimal level of performance. Story telling promotes social relationships and cooperation (Ludema et al., 2003b). Participants sought to find the underlying factors that gave life to their school from the shared stories. The positive core emerged from the common life giving factors of success. Since organizations move towards the direction of what they study, the positive core provided new and fresh ideas of future potential and possibilities (Cooperrider et al., 2003; Ludema et al., 2003b). The positive core fostered additional capacity building (Barrett & Fry, 2005) and encouraged participants to use the new knowledge and enthusiasm about the possibilities from the discovery phase to imagine what the future could be in the dream phase (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003).

The dream phase extended what is currently possible to envisioning all that could be beyond the status quo (Ludema et al., 2003b). Participants were encouraged to raise their expectations, imagine the possibilities, and discuss what their organization could look like if there were no excuses and everything were aligned around the strengths and desires (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2003). The stories and elements of the positive core served as the essential resources for the shared images of hope for the future. The dream phase invited the participants to imagine bigger and bolder possibilities for an even better organization (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom,

2003). For many participants, this may be the first time their voices were heard to think "great" thoughts and create extraordinary ideas for the future (Ludema et al., 2003b).

Semi-structured Paired Interviews

In semi-structured paired interviews, the participants interviewed one another following AI protocols (Ludema et al., 2003b). The semi-structured paired interviews established a model of sharing and listening. In this model, participants reflected on their thinking and generated a deep relationship with other participants.

I constructed the interview pairs creating interview partners from different grade levels or roles. The paired interview partners used open-ended questions guided by an AI interview protocol. The use of an AI interview guide helped to maintain a consistency among the paired interviewees. Participants took notes of the other participants' stories during the semi-structured paired interviews (Ludema et al., 2003b).

Focus Groups

The AI methodology with an AI learning team brings the participants together in a setting that resembles a focus group. For the purpose of my study, I referred to these small group discussions as focus groups. Focus groups create a culture that is rich in storytelling and information sharing. They provide opportunities for collaboration and generate a profile of the organization's positive core (Whitney, Cooperrider, Trosten-Bloom, & Kaplin, 2005). Focus groups provide a non-threatening environment where participants were encouraged to share their views in the context of other participants' standpoints (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

Participants were divided into focus groups for activities of the discovery and dream phases. The activities involved small group discussions. The focus groups provided multiple perspectives on the successful pedagogical practices at LES and their plan to sustain optimal

success for the future. Protocols for Day 1: Discovery and Day 2: Dream was aligned to the AI

research process (Appendices E & F). Affirmative follow-up questions guided participants in

further exploring a positive core of experiences.

Participant Created Documents

The AI Learning Team process included multiple data-collecting activities. The

collection and review of these documents were acceptable forms of data in qualitative research

(Creswell, 2003). Documents can provide valuable information that is not always observed

(Patton, 2002). For this study, I collected the following documents from the AI Learning Team

process to attain an understanding: participant interview summary sheets, participant stories,

participant quotations, participants' positive core map, and participants' dream images.

Participants also took notes during the paired interviews and shared their notes. I transcribed and

analyzed these notes. Data from a review of the documents provide descriptive information,

framed new understandings, and contributed to the stability of the data (Merriam, 2001).

Data Analysis

In this section, I describe how data was analyzed through pattern matching, content

analysis, and the use of CATPAC the text-analysis software. Data analysis is a process to "make

sense" of data as the inquiry continues to unfold (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Semi-structured paired

interviews and focus groups were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data from

participant created documents was unitized and entered into a database. Data were unitized,

sorted, and coded through an open and axial coding process (which is a process of breaking

down the data and then synthesizing it in a meaningful way) (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), using text

analysis software (Ryan & Bernard, 2000) so that participants' perspectives were synthesized in

a manner that allowed the research questions to be answered (Huberman, 1990).

The process of unitizing, analyzing, and synthesizing data allowed me to discover and describe the successful pedagogical practices and the ecological practices for teachers to sustain and extend a high level of performance. Pattern matching showed several pieces of information from the same study that matched the theoretical perspectives (Yin, 2003). Content analysis simultaneously coded the content and constructs relevant categories (Merriam, 2001). CATPAC software was used as an initial foundation of reading text for the interrelationships between words allowing themes to emerge (Woelfel, 1990). Data was compared by categories, themes, or dimensions of information (Creswell, 1998).

Research Quality

For the intent of this study, I assessed the quality of the data collection process by concentrating on the creditability, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of my study. Member checking was frequently used throughout the two days to establish creditability by asking participants to critically interpret what was said and what may have been meant by what was said at the end of each group discussion.

Moreover, data were triangulated using the various methods of data collection: semi-structured paired interviews, focus groups, participant created documents, and through data collected from subunits within each of the units of analysis shared with participants to establish their credibility. I set aside the transferability of my study and will leave it to the reader to make an informed decision.

Additionally, I maintained a rich description of the data collection process including observations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The dependability of the study was strengthened through the protocols of the case study's data collection procedures to minimize any errors and bias (Yin, 2003). Moreover, the use of an emerging research design allowed me to describe changes that

occurred in the research context and how they affected the way I approached the study. I gained

confirmability of data by having participants review a draft of the findings. By having them

review the findings, I was able to validate the authenticity of my findings.

Summary

Chapter 3 explained the qualitative case study design that will be used for my study. A

qualitative case study research design was used with participants from LES USD 353 in this

study. Methods were used to describe successful teaching practices in a SOE elementary school

and to identify the necessary ecological conditions for the teachers to sustain and extend their

successful teaching practices. Data collection included semi-structured paired interviews, focus

groups, and participant created documents. Data were analyzed using text analysis software and

content analysis. A continuous comparative analysis was conducted to unitize, analyze, and

synthesize data that discovers and describes the successful pedagogical practices at a SOE

elementary school. I present my study's findings in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

Chapter 4 provides the findings from data collected during my study. I organize and

present this chapter by first reiterating the purpose of this study and theoretical perspectives used

to guide my study. I present the methodology, research questions, analysis of data, and the

summary of my findings. I continue with rich and deep descriptions of each of the two days of

the AI 4-D Cycle of the AI Learning Team process. I follow with a discussion of my findings. I

conclude with a summary of the chapter.

Purpose

The purpose of my study was to discover the successful teaching practices of teachers in

a SOE elementary school. My study also identified the necessary ecological conditions for the

teachers to sustain and extend their successful teaching practices.

Theoretical Perspectives

The theoretical perspectives selected for my study included AI and CBT. AI is a

theoretical research perspective that values and recognizes the best in people, their world, or their

organization. It seeks to affirm and build on strengths and past successes to discover what gives

life to an organization as found in its positive core. The positive core of an organization reflects

its strengths, achievements, and high point experiences (Cooperrider et al., 2000; Cooperrider &

Whitney, 2005). AI, by tapping into an organization's positive core, has transformational

potential to initiate change through broad participation that is grounded in dialogue and

affirmation (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987).

Appreciative inquiry compliments and aligns with CBT for reasons that CBT encourages

the conditions and opportunities for shared learning and collaboration. The CBT perspective

nurtures the design of a professional community where teachers participate in collaborative

decision-making and share a sense of purpose. Teachers begin to develop confidence in their capacity and in the capacity of their schools (Harris, 2001). AI is a participatory method that creates the capacity for a new vision of the future and embraces the strengths of the past, and can be used overall as a capacity building approach. As in AI, capacity building espouses new ideas that generate the assembling of new combinations of strengths and frameworks of opportunity (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Both perspectives emphasize human potential as a means to achieve a shared vision (Concern Worldwide, 2004).

Methodology

I used a qualitative case study research design to describe successful teaching practices in a SOE elementary school and to identify the necessary ecological conditions for the teachers to sustain and extend their successful teaching practices by participating in an AI Learning Team process (Egan & Lancaster, 2005; Watkins & Mohr, 2001). An AI Learning Team engaged in a two-day process that focused on the first two stages of the AI 4-D Cycle: discovery and dream. The AI Learning Team consisted of eight participants who were purposively selected (seven elementary teachers and their principal). One participant left early on the second day of the study due to a family emergency.

Research Questions

The following overarching question guided my study: How do instructional leaders envision a SOE school and implement that vision based on their highpoint positive core teaching experiences?

Data from the following research questions aided in identifying successful teaching practices in a SOE elementary school:

1. How do instructional leaders describe their successful pedagogical practices?

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2. What are the dreams of instructional leaders in Lincoln Elementary School to sustain and extend their successful pedagogical practices?

Data Analysis

The analysis of data was conducted using the text analysis software CATPAC. CATPAC was used to support the open and axial coding process as well as my content analysis. Content analysis and pattern matching were utilized using an open coding method to compare, conceptualize, and categorize data. Data were unitized, sorted, and categorized through an open and axial coding process. The research quality was ensured by concentrating on the creditability, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of my study. I presented the data and findings to participants for feedback. I also kept a journal during my study to record my thoughts and insight of the AI process. A description of my observations portrayed an illustration of the occurrences during the two phases of the AI 4-D Cycle.

Summary of Findings

Five salient findings emerged from the data analysis. I list and then discuss each finding after I present a rich narrative description of the Day 1—Discovery Phase and Day 2—Dream Phase of the AI 4-D Cycle. The five salient findings are:

Finding 1: Lincoln Elementary School is a cohesive group of educators who seek to help students reach their potential.

Finding 2: Lincoln Elementary School educators collaborate to strengthen and enhance instructional practices.

Finding 3: Lincoln Elementary School educators value and care about all school stakeholders.

Finding 4: Lincoln Elementary School educators created an inclusive community bound by strong interpersonal relationships.

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Finding 5: Lincoln Elementary School educators want to create a learning environment that is student centered and family oriented where teachers use progressive practices in teaching students.

Report of Findings

The following sections describe the findings from my study. The first section presents a rich description of Day 1—Discovery Phase and Day 2—Dream Phase of the AI 4-D Cycle. The sections that follow provide the results of each of the five salient findings. I used participant quotations to add depth and richness to my narrative. I used the following pseudonyms for participants: Jake, Cindy, Debbie, Abby, Molly, Darlene, Bill, and Nicole.

Jake is LES principal and has been principal for three years. He also serves as principal for another elementary school. Cindy is a special educator and has been teaching at LES for twenty years. Debbie is a Kindergarten teacher and special educator for students with disabilities and has been teaching for twenty-one years at LES. Abby is a first grade teacher and has been teaching for nine years at LES. Molly is a second grade teacher and has been teaching for twenty-six years at LES. Darlene is teaching for the first time as a fourth grade teacher in her first year; however, she has been teaching other grade levels for twenty-seven years at LES. Bill is a fourth grade teacher and has been teaching science and math for three years at LES. Nicole is a fifth grade teacher and has been teaching for twenty-one years at LES. All participants shared their experiences in the AI Learning Team process over the two day AI 4-D Cycle.

The purpose of the two day AI 4-D Cycle of the AI Learning Team process was to engage participants in the first two phases, discovery and dream, of the AI 4-D Cycle related to their instructional practices and the ecological conditions that they believed were important to sustain these practices. Participants were provided release time and substitute teachers to cover

classes while they were involved in the AI Learning Team process. The two-day AI Learning

Team process was conducted prior to the Christmas 2007 holidays to limit any conflict with the

preparation of state assessments.

<center>*AI Learning Team Process—Day 1*</center>

Discovery: The Beginning

The AI Learning Team process took place at the Challenger Learning Center of Kansas,

in Wellington, Kansas. The participants and I gathered in the conference room of the Learning

Center. The kitchen was next to the conference room and adjacent to other offices that were used

during Al Learning Team process. Refrigerated sodas, bottled water, and flavored coffee were

ready to drink. Fresh cinnamon rolls, cookies, cheese and crackers, and candy were arranged in

the kitchen and conference room for the participants to enjoy.

Participants arrived between 7:30 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. The day began with me welcoming

them and offering them refreshments. They cheerfully visited while waiting for everyone to

arrive. I placed pens, colored highlighters, yellow notepads, dividers, and three-ringed binders on

the table in the conference room. I provided participants with a three-ringed binder containing a

copy of the PowerPoint on the Introduction to AI, two articles about AI, AI quotes of wisdom,

agendas, and the protocols for AI Learning Process. Participants would use these materials

during the two-day AI Learning Process.

Jake and Bill were the first to arrive followed by Darlene, Cindy, and Debbie. Laughter

could be heard down the hall to the conference room as Debbie and Darlene entered the room.

The mood of the participants was light hearted with anticipation for the day. Nicole and Abby

arrived soon after the other participants. Participants were comfortable sitting in the padded

chairs. Abby checked in with her substitute teacher to make sure that everything was set for the

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day. Abby commented, "My kids did not want me to leave. I told them I did not want to leave them either. I miss not being with them."

I thanked them again for participating in the two day AI Learning Team process. I stated that the AI Learning Team process could change how they perceive themselves as teachers and colleagues. Their experiences during these two days would help them frame their positive images of LES. Darlene shared, "I have been looking forward to this. It is important to be able share our strengths."

I provided an overview of the day. Participants reviewed all AI Learning Team materials in their binders. I provided an explanation of the materials—AI stories, quotes, agendas, and protocols. I then explained how the AI materials would be used during the day. I also answered questions about the day's format. As we reviewed the agenda, I shared they could take breaks and get refreshments at their discretion. I noted that lunch would be provided at the restaurant next to our meeting location. I felt refreshments and lunch time allowed participants to continue their conversations related to the AI Learning Process activities in 4-D Cycle.

To prepare for the first activity, I presented a PowerPoint on AI. This activity framed the day's discussions and assisted in generating conversations. The participants affirmed the beliefs of AI by nodding their heads and commenting, "It is more exciting to focus on the good things. There are a lot of good things happening at Lincoln." The participants acknowledged that as building leaders they wanted to learn more about how AI focused on what was working in their building. They knew they were already doing good things for kids.

The AI PowerPoint presentation ended with a quote by David Cooperrider, "Positive image leads to positive action" (Cooperrider et al., 2003, p. 9). The participants requested more information about the relationship of positive image to positive action. They wanted to share the

information with their colleagues at LES. We engaged in a discussion about the types of questions that we asked and how these questions produce the results we get. AI is a process to produce different results by asking affirmative questions.

I provided guidelines for the semi-structured paired interviews for the participants. The guidelines encourages asking probing questions so each participant's story would be shared in detail. Once I explained the guidelines, participants selected their interview partner based on guideline protocols. Participants were asked to share their stories in the semi-structured paired interviews.

The semi-structured paired interviews were to take place within three separate rooms to allow for uninterrupted conversations. During the semi-structured paired interviews, participants were encouraged to share their stories, thoughts, feelings, and details of highpoint positive core teaching experiences. I suggested that participants take copious notes of key points and quotes their partner shares. I encouraged the use of probing questions to divulge their partner's story.

Specific questions on the interview guide asked participants to discover their highpoint positive core teaching experiences and the conditions surrounding these experiences. Each pair of partners responded differently. Cindy and Nicole decided to conduct their interview by asking a question, then answering the question. Darlene and Abby wanted to read all the questions before beginning to interview one another. Yet, other participants read all the questions for their partner and then the partner did the same. All participants, however, acknowledged how each question was answered by supporting comments or adding comments to what their partner stated. Once the semi-structured paired interviews were completed, participants reflected on the interview as they answered the Interview Summary. The summary highlighted rich descriptions

of the best quotes and stories from their interview. They reflected on the salient aspects they believed to be the root causes of success.

Discovering Strengths

Participants were divided into two groups. They selected an interview partner from a grade level that was at least two grades above or below their grade level. This was to encourage the sharing of stories with a partner not close in proximity to their grade level. They thoroughly explored their successes and visions of the future. Each participant played a role in their group as a discussion leader, timekeeper, recorder, or reporter. Chart paper was placed on the wall to record the group's findings that were shared from interview highlights.

Participants individually shared successes and desires for the future of LES. At this point, they felt comfortable with the AI Learning Team process. They expressed successes they wanted to preserve and their desires for the future. The themes from their successes and their desires for the future of LES were written by the group recorder to allow each participant to have a voice.

The participants in each group agreed on their lists of successes and desires: (a) teach what we do well; (b) utilize our strengths; (c) willing to try new things; (d) teach what teachers believe as important; (e) look at the positive; (f) we learn with the kids; (g) safe and caring environment; love of teaching; (h) strong community; (i) caring attitudes of students and staff; (j) staff communication; (k) and differentiated instruction. Their list of successes and desires related directly to both AI—valuing and recognizing the best in people, their world, or their organization and CBT—encouraging the conditions and opportunities for shared learning and collaboration.

Debbie believed best teaching occurs when she teaches what is important and looks at the positive. She stated:

Never assume that just because a child is a certain age they know everything that has previously been taught. It is important to cover the standards and spiral forwards and backwards. I remember a mother who came to me in first grade. The preschool had told her that her child was retarded and basically would not be able to learn anything. It ate at the core of me to say that at five years old this child will turn out to be nothing. I worked really hard with him. It was a struggle; trust me. He graduated and went to college. I ran into him not to long ago. He is successful, married, and has a child on the way. What more could we want out of life? He is happy. He is the same happy little guy when he was six years old.

Darlene affirmed Debbie's story by sharing what she teaches well and how she utilizes her strengths. She said:

The Reading Recovery training was the most intense training I have ever had. It made me question everything I did and made me analyze my teaching. It was rewarding to know I could get students to where they needed to be by Reading Recovery standards. That was a good experience for me.

Nicole was anxious to share her success of trying a new idea and differentiating her instruction with her love of teaching social studies. She stated:

The reason I like social studies so much is I use the book as a guideline. The kids become the people in our lesson that we are studying. Instead of using the words from the text, I will substitute another word. For example, instead of boat I might say bathtub. When I do this the kids want to listen to what I say next. They are able to focus on the words and associate bathtub to boat. It is so neat when they are sitting at their desks wanting to listen

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to what I say next. It makes me want to say more to get them involved in what we are

doing.

Participants acknowledged their successes with the stories shared. They valued what LES has

accomplished for students to be successful and staff to feel a part of a community. Their

document expressed the following desires: (a) more time for teaching and communicating with

staff; (b) take risks in our teaching and be willing to have coaching; (c) test for success where

rules are fair for everyone; (d) more teachable moments; (e) more family oriented; (f) all kids

feel safe and loved; (g) community based learning; (h) the increase of technology; (i) and more

adult resources and interaction.

Debbie spoke of her wish. She said, "I would like more time to teach and more time to

communicate with each other as a staff. We possibly need a longer school year." Jake agreed, "I

see communication as one of our strengths, but it would be nice to have more time to collaborate

like Bill said. I do wish for teachers to be more spontaneous and take risks." Bill said that having

staff communication and the support from the administration are resources he can depend on. He

shared, "If we have problems with science or our math curriculum then the administration will

help. Those resources are there."

As participants expressed their desires, Darlene expressed her wish for more adult

resources and interaction. She would like to keep small classes. She stated:

I believe we need extra help in the lower grades and have more adults during longer

blocks of time when doing a specific activity. We have been trying to schedule more

adults during an activity in 4th grade this year and it has been working better. Ideally it

would help for our rooms to be closer together.

Debbie expressed that staff do a good job with communication but would like to see more group communication with other grade levels. She shared:

I do think the professional learning communities are helping. It is a good thing for all of us to sit down. I believe when we do that the miscommunication is kept to a minimum but I do know it takes time to meet at 7:30 a.m. once a month.

Participants were willing to share their desires as they looked to enhance their successful teaching practices at LES. Through member checking, each participant had a voice to express what they wanted to preserve for the future.

Discovering the Positive Core

The AI Learning Team reconvened to discover the positive core of their highpoint teaching experiences. The desires and success documents from both groups were displayed on poster paper on the wall supporting their successful practices, values, conditions, and attributes of high point teaching experiences. I guided participants in the identification of stories and "root causes of success" that captured the successes shared from their semi-structured paired interview highlights.

The participants agreed on several exemplar stories and their top root causes of success. They then developed a document for stories and root causes of success. Jake shared a story about Bill. He said, "Bill uses a lattice method for math that the kids really buy into. The kids are successful and have a good feeling of success. It [method] is a different method of teaching than the traditional method but it works for our kids. You have to take risks for that." The participants saw the value in the support received from one another especially during state assessments. Though they shared there are more pressures from assessments there were feelings of how assessments have brought them together as a group. Debbie stated, "Testing has gotten us all

together as a group. I think that has been the benefit of testing. We are beginning to see the risks are far outweighing the assessments." Jake added:

The thing that bothers me is the state puts so much emphasis on what we are doing wrong. The whole purpose of this study is what we are doing right. That is why other states are looking at what we are doing correctly and recruiting our teachers.

Participants also shared stories of providing a caring community around others. Jake shared his system of support is walking down the hall to the functional classroom. He stated: That is the classroom to go to and be involved with kids like that [with disabilities]. That is a good place to go. When I am having a bad day or tired of paper work, I am headed down the hall to see smiles and have fun.

Debbie recalled how some of her students helped others with tolerance and diversity. She said:

That is what life is all about. I think some of our students with Downs Syndrome have life by the tail. They do not worry about anything. If they do not like something they just sit down. I do think it is an excellent way to teach tolerance and diversity.

Jake added, "Our kids take care of them."

These stories generated a conversation that culminated into a list of root causes of success: (a) staff unity; (b) positive student focus; (c) passionate and committed professionals; (d) clear and focused goals; (e) utilize strengths and resources with staff and students; and (f) safe and caring environment with respect for all. The participants' stories and root causes of success exemplified LES at its best in terms of successful teaching practices. Each participant contributed and documented what they valued as an exemplar story and their top root causes of success.

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Mapping the Positive Core

Once the exemplar stories and root causes of success were identified, the participants worked as one group designing an illustration or metaphor that summarized who they were as a school. The metaphors were to bring strength and empowerment to LES. Each participant brainstormed possible ideas to encompass their root causes of success. Ideas considered were flags, Olympic rings, people joining hands, a garden, a flag showing hands joined, and a tree with the roots drawn. Songs were associated with some of the metaphors as ideas developed.

Cindy chose the garden as a metaphor because the staff provides the water, fertilizer, love, and organization of the plants (students) to grow together. She believed for LES to be successful there had to be knowledge of how to plant and maintain the garden. The garden was meant to be shared with the community and families at LES in order to have the most productive garden possible. Debbie thought of the Olympic rings as her metaphor because each ring represented one of the root causes of success and how they were interconnected. Molly chose a flag with a picture of hands joined together as her metaphor. The hands symbolized staff relationships and the collaboration among all staff members.

A generative discussion occurred from other participants related to creating a design for school sweatshirts and other possible ideas using a flag as a metaphor. Abby expanded the idea of flags to a tree with the roots as each root cause of success. The root causes of success fed the tree or LES to grow and expand its strength.

This list of ideas evolved into the final metaphor of "Building Blocks of Success". Bill selected the idea of blocks formed as a pyramid with individual blocks that spelled unity, focus, committed, strength, and success built around the word Lincoln. Participants began to brainstorm how the metaphor could be used with the staff. Jake expressed the idea of using it for a bulletin

board and a theme to start the new school year. Other participants described ideas about how to use the pyramid such as displaying it on the website, newsletters, and as a Lincoln flag. Bill began to design on paper how the pyramid should be organized with the word Lincoln embedded between all the blocks. He planned to complete the design on his computer. Participants used member checking to review and read all the written documents on the wall to validate their thoughts and beliefs about LES's positive core and root causes of success.

<center>*AI Learning Team Process—Day 2*</center>

A Positive Image

The second day of the AI Learning Team process was dedicated to the dream phase. Participants arrived at 8:00 a.m. at the Challenger Learning Center of Kansas. The participants and I gathered in the conference room of the Learning Center. Participants helped themselves to something to eat and drink and appeared more relaxed about the second day. All participant documents were displayed on the wall from Day 1. They took ownership of their documents and were pleased to see them on display.

Bill had created the metaphor "Building Blocks of Success" on the computer so each participant would have a copy of the visual illustration. He also created another visual that showed the blocks individually separated from one another representing each staff person at LES. If each staff person worked in isolation, the blocks that spelled out the root causes of success became disjointed and success would not occur. This visual brought a different perspective to the importance of collaboration and unity that the participants stated were in their root causes of success. Debbie said, "This is who we are." Jake added, "This can be our theme for next year. Each teacher can have a block that addresses their strength . . . we can put the

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blocks on a bulletin board." Participants were excited to share the illustration of the metaphor with the staff in planning for the next school year.

Participants reviewed the written documents displayed on the wall. The documents listed their positive core of their highpoint teaching experiences, root causes of success and exemplar stories, and ideas brainstormed for mapping the positive core. Participants began to share how it was important to discuss what they valued about LES. Molly stated, "Focusing on the positives helps us not to become overwhelmed." Abby supported Molly's remark, "We use a lot of encouragement and that does a lot of good for everyone." Participants continued to make encouraging comments. Darlene stated, "You must keep your humor even when challenges occur."

Debbie expressed that success was an expectation of the staff at LES and added, "There is solidarity of the staff." Abby stated, "We are able to collaborate and work together even when our principal is out of the building. We encourage one another." Jake supported this statement, "All of you depend on each other when I [principal] am not in the building." Debbie agreed, "We are a team and we want to communicate more between the grade levels." Everyone agreed that positive communication was a value.

Participants, at this time, understood and believed in the value of the AI Learning Process. They requested more information about the relationship of positive image to positive action. I presented the AI PowerPoint from Day 1 with additional slides about the positive image-positive action relationship. I gave copies of these additional slides to participants to put into their notebooks. Abby spoke of the importance of research about the Pygmalion Effect that was discussed in the slides that supported the impact positive images have to positive actions. She said, "This would be good to share with our staff. Here is the research or proof that shows

how expectations affect our kids no matter what problems they might have." The other participants agreed. They also recognized the importance of this study and its relationship to teacher's images of their students. Cindy added that "teacher expectations are important and have an influence their students." The discussion of the positive image-positive action relationship set the framework for the next activity of envisioning their dreams for the future of LES. The participants affirmed one another's beliefs about the positive image-positive action relationship in order to confirm their thoughts as an AI Learning Team.

Creative Dreaming

One participant left early due to a family emergency. The remaining participants wanted to work as one group instead of the original two groups from Day 1. They gathered into one group. I guided them to construct the highlights from two semi-structured paired interview questions that asked what the ideal would look like for LES to extend successful teaching practices and three wishes that would heighten the capacity to enhance successful teaching practices. The root causes of success and wishes from the discovery phase were used to help the participants visualize their dream. Participants were instructed to visualize themselves in the year 2015—how they desired LES to be so that successful teaching practices could be maximized. They were encouraged to visualize how their school would look and how the students would be learning. Creative dreaming allowed the participants to think differently and build their capacity for what was possible; to realize the only limits were the limits they placed on themselves or LES to continue its success and impact students.

As participants began to dream, I facilitated their linking positive image to positive action by having them visualize their dream as if it already existed. Jake saw the vision for Lincoln Elementary School as already existing and the dream becoming a reality. He said, "We are

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already doing many of these things [strengths]. As a staff we need to extend them." Participants'

personal and collective visualizations of the dream became the genesis of the collective dream.

The participants agreed on the elements of their collective dream and created a creative dream

document. Their dream document related directly both to AI—valuing and recognizing the best

in people, their world, or their organization and CBT—encouraging the conditions and

opportunities for shared learning and collaboration. The key elements of their creative dream

were: (a) collaboration and teamwork; (b) positive school climate; (c) school practices that are

teacher driven; (d) progressive thinking; (e) more planning time to collaborate with co-teacher;

(f) flexibility with classroom setup; (g) smaller classes; (h) 100% buy-in of staff; (i) family

oriented; (j) and more support staff. Participants shared and discussed how they visualized their

dream and how to make the dream a reality. Once the elements were affirmed by all the

participants, they prepared to shape their dream statement.

Shaping the Dream

The next activity allowed participants to shape their dream statement using the key

factors constructed from the collective dream. Working as a whole group, they were instructed to

capture their dream in an inspiring dream statement. The dream statement was their optimal

image of the ideal LES shaped by the elements from the collective dreaming activity.

Participants voiced their beliefs that the dream statement should be founded on family and focus

on students. Debbie believed they should incorporate the root causes of success displayed on the

written documents in the dream statement. She said, "Looking at our written document with the

root causes of success helps to keep our focus." The other participants shared her belief. They

continued this activity by coaching one another to check that their statements were desired, bold

and provocative, affirmative, grounded, and unconditionally positive.

Participants continued with their collective dreaming activity by shaping the dream. They contributed in compiling and creating the dream statement by ensuring the entire root causes of success were in the dream statement. Their first dream statement read:

In 2015, Lincoln Elementary School is a student oriented progressive school with total collaboration of staff, parents, and students. We are moving forward in practices and technology to prepare our students with life long skills. Our dream is built on teamwork among teachers, students, and parents.

Participants reviewed and analyzed the statement to make sure it accurately portrayed what they wanted. The participants then engaged in a stimulating dialogue—revising and rewording their dream statement. Once they reached consensus, they developed a dream statement document:

In 2015, Lincoln Elementary School is built around a passionate educational, family-oriented environment that promotes positive student focus through powerful teacher-driven collaborative practices and values that address progressive learning towards life long skills.

Participants were excited and began to smile about their dream statement and what it meant to them. They supported what they had written and validated the statement described LES. Debbie stated, "This should replace our school mission statement." They began to anticipate how the dream statement would be used and what it would mean for them as a school.

Presenting the Dream

Participants wanted to share their dream with the staff at LES. They discussed how they would share their dream. I guided them through an AI brainstorming process related to implementing their dream so their dream will come to life and sustain. They worked through

presenting the dream activity and developing the dream document. Their document stated the following components from the participant's conversations. Jake stated, "At the beginning of the year, we can present our mission statement to the staff. The dream is our new mission statement**."** Debbie continued:

> I think we need to develop team building activities first before presenting the mission statement. Team building will help staff work with someone other than their co-worker in a safe environment. It would be beneficial to brainstorm about the dream statement and let the staff develop new ideas. The brainstorming will help staff develop ideas to achieve the outcome of the dream. . . . We will ask the staff to brainstorm on what is good about LES and then discover their positives or root causes of success.

Abby stated, "We need to ask what they want for the future of LES and what they wish to achieve." Jake stated that the staff brainstorming activity would be a positive experience.

Their brainstorming conversation continued with Bill stating, "The focus needs to be on the students." Debbie added, "Yes, we do not want to spend too much time on teambuilding. We want to validate their thoughts and ideas though." Jake said," In a group setting we are going to validate thoughts and ideas that impact students. Molly stated, "We need to set our ground rules." Debbie added, "That would be a team process [to set ground rules]."If we did this at the first of the year, we could say our theme for this year is 'Building Blocks of Success' and they can brainstorm from that." Debbie added:

> We need to add some time for individual reflection. We could take the dream statement and take out some of the key adjectives and allow them to fill in what they think the adjective is. This will allow the quiet ones to have a voice. Then we could do group collaboration like we are doing.

Participants continued to think of how they wanted to present the dream to the LES staff. Through this creative collaboration activity, they presented ideas on how to meet with the staff during the school day. Debbie believed the root causes of success would direct the staff to think positively about LES. She believed having the root causes of success written down would help to keep the staff's vision. Jake thought scheduling an in-service day to conduct the Discover and Dream activities would work well. This would allow them to present AI activities from the discovery and dream phases to be a catalyst to empower the staff. Jake stated, "When teachers are empowered they are involved in the AI process." Jake believed in empowering the participants of the AI Learning Team to lead the AI discussion. The participants expressed appreciation of the support provided by Jake.

Enriching the Dream

Participants planned the presentation of their dream. I guided them in the construction of a list of images they believed held the most promise for the future of LES. They reviewed the list of images to provide member checking before developing an images document. Their document stated that they felt strongly about having total student ownership and positive follow through of incentives initiated for students. Jake stated, "Bill and I are willing to have our heads shaved as an incentive for students to do well on their state assessments. We have student-teacher trust and buy-in." Molly added, "You have to have fun." Debbie believed when doing fun activities for the students we are confirming to them that it is important when it comes to the state assessments or their achievement. Debbie stated, "We are taking ownership too."

Another image the participants believed held the most promise was having compassion for teaching, staff, and students. Debbie confirmed by stating, "Our legacy has to be the compassion. That is what drives us all." Jake added, "And for each other."

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Participants expressed their appreciation for being involved in an AI Learning Team process to discover their root causes of success and to collectively form their dream for the future of LES. This experience of discovering successful teaching practices and the conditions to sustain and extend these practices provided them with indispensable resources to reinforce their knowledge of the AI Learning Team process. They were excited to share their experience and the discovery of their positive core with LES colleagues.

Participants already held leadership roles and were comfortable sharing highpoint positive core teaching experiences in the AI Learning Team process. They expressed that by creating their dream statement and presenting the dream empowered them to propel to the next level of fostering highpoint positive core teaching experiences with their peers and extending the capacity of LES.

I now discuss the five salient findings that emerged from the data analysis.

Finding 1: Lincoln Elementary School is a cohesive group of educators who seek to help students reach their potential.

Finding 2: Lincoln Elementary School educators collaborate to strengthen and enhance instructional practices.

Finding 3: Lincoln Elementary School educators value and care about all school stakeholders.

Finding 4: Lincoln Elementary School educators created an inclusive community bound by strong interpersonal relationships.

Finding 5: Lincoln Elementary School educators want to create a learning environment that is student centered and family oriented where teachers use progressive practices in teaching students.

Lincoln Elementary School is a Cohesive Group of Educators Who Seek to Help Students Reach Their Potential

Lincoln Elementary School is a cohesive group of educators who seek to help students reach their potential. There was evidence that the participants' highpoint positive core teaching experiences evolved from expecting the best of their students. Data collected from the discovery and dream phases recalling highpoint positive core teaching experiences and the conditions surrounding these experiences revealed that the AI Learning Team process created a heightened awareness of the participants' desire for students to be successful and reach their potential. See Tables 4.1 and 4.2 below for participants' quotations as they relate to the first finding. Through discussions of sharing best teaching experiences, participants identified exemplary teaching practices when students reached high points of success. They spoke of the importance of students being successful with a positive school experience. Participants believed creating an exciting learning environment impacted student achievement. Jake believed students were more successful when they enjoyed their experiences. Nicole shared:

> I have been teaching reading to 5th graders for eight years. It is exciting to see when my struggling readers make the connections and all of a sudden something clicks and everything is falling into place. They pick up a book without pictures and begin to understand. It is just fantastic. I love what I do. I want the kids to love their experience in my classroom, but just love learning. It never stops. It is something that continues and goes on forever and forever.

Nicole felt it was important to remember the times of making a difference for students. Cindy commented:

I feel most proud when one of my kids has not been able to read and all of a sudden they

begin to read. The whole world opens up to them. It is that feeling that is so powerful and

grabs at your heart. It makes you think, this is why I do this. This is what it is all about. It

is when they get that piece of the education process that really excites me. That really

makes me feel that I am doing really good things and making a difference.

Many comments were made of affirmation that high teaching moments occurred when

students were successful. Participants observed their students beginning to understand topics that

were once difficult for them. Nicole stated, "When they understand it is just fantastic. It makes

me so proud when they remember and are excited about what they are doing." Bill supported this

belief. He said, "I am most proud of my teaching when my students teach others and show

success in what they have done."

Participants also spoke of expectations for themselves and their students. They

unanimously wanted their students to reach their potential and to be successful. Through the AI

Learning Team process, they discovered who they were as educators and how successful

teaching practices occur. Many times comments were made regarding the degree that highpoint

positive core teaching experiences occurred. Cindy said:

Successful teaching practices start with the educator. You have to love what you are

doing and love kids. You have to be willing to stretch yourself and step into places that

may not be as comfortable.

Molly agreed and added, "The most important thing is to believe in kids. They can do awesome

things; every one of them." Debbie was more specific on what she expected of herself as a

teacher. She said:

It is important to make sure that what you are doing is the best teaching practice and look at what you are doing. Look at what is right and wrong and how it can be changed.

The semi-structure paired interviews were helpful in generating conversations about highpoint positive core teaching experiences, when teachers were at their best for students to reach their potential. Abby stated, "We are always looking to do things better for our students so they can achieve success. We reward them for success. We show them how important it is to want to succeed."

Molly shared, "It is important to take what you do well and make it better. LES staff has the same vision of making the best student possible." Cindy expanded by wanting everyone involved with the education process to be on fire and alive to get kids to achieve as much as they can. She said, "We need to push them to their limits to where they are productive and happy." Cindy reiterated this vision, "Lincoln has a 'what can we do for the kids' attitude."

Participants' culminating conversations and interactions discovered high teaching experiences and students' academic success occurred when students were actively engaged in learning. Debbie reflected that teaching is at its best when students were individually active and learning at the same time. She said, "I feel my gears are all grinding." Abby joined in saying, "A high teaching experience is seeing my students interact and know they are comfortable in my room." Cindy recalled a time she was teaching about the winter season and hibernation. She used sheets of packing bubbles for her students to walk on so they could feel what it was like to walk on an uneven icy surface that was slick. She took the students who were not mobile and rolled them on the bubble sheets. Cindy summarized:

I am most proud when the kids are engaged during the times that I am teaching as many

modalities as I can. I see the kids getting it. We have to be extremely adaptable. The

classroom environment inspires a great teaching moment when everyone is engaged.

 Participants highlighted other experiences when their students were engaged that led to a rich

teaching experience. Debbie said:

There is a saying that only plants grow silently. I have always believed that was true.

Students who are moving around [the classroom] can learn as much as those sitting and

working quietly at their desk. I believe we can learn in different ways and I try to

encourage finding those ways.

Participants were consistent in their stories of highpoint positive core teaching

experiences that emerged from the affirmative dialogue of the discovery and dream phases. In

essence, they readily agreed that their love for teaching was student focused. They were

consistent in sharing the responsibility of supporting all students to do their best to reach their

potential. The vision shaped by the AI Learning Team process encompassed a positive student

focus to address progressive learning.

Finding 1 Summary

Participants report that LES is a cohesive group of educators who seek to help students

reach their potential. The AI Learning Team process allowed the participants to discover, as a

cohesive group, that their highpoint positive core teaching experiences encouraged and provided

opportunities for students to reach their potential. This was a central theme to what they were

most proud of in their teaching.

Participants also spoke of the importance of students being actively engaged in their

learning. They addressed setting positive expectations for themselves and their students. They

believed there has to be a passion for teaching to pave a positive school experience for students to achieve. Tables 4.1 and Table 4.2 offer quotations by participants as they related to the first finding of my study.

Table 4.1

Day 1—Discovery Phase

Finding 1	Finding 2	Finding 3	Finding 4	Finding 5
My best teaching experience is when things don't always go as planned. I am challenged to make the day better [for students]. Kids affect me, not experiences. You don't realize your power until former students ask you to "remember when"?	A highpoint [teaching experience] for me is being able to work with the staff. We are a very cohesive group. We are not working towards Standard of Excellence. We are working to make the best student possible.	A highpoint teaching experience is seeing my students interact and comfortable in my room. I am trying to build a relationship with my students all the time, whether it is in the hallway, eating lunch with the kids, or just being a friend.	It doesn't have to be quiet to learn. I have various things going on in my room. We look at the whole student body. I believe in kids and they can do awesome things.	I value creating my classroom atmosphere [so that] my students want to be there. I try to think about my kids being there. Would they be having fun? Would they be learning? Would they want to be there?

Table 4.1 (continued)

Finding 1	Finding 2	Finding 3	Finding 4	Finding 5
It is pretty amazing the power we have. Know what triggers kids to get them excited . . . I want to make it fun for students and for me.	I don't let a lesson that didn't work keep me from trying new things. I tell my students that I am learning right along with you.	I believe in kids and they can do awesome things. I never have allowed myself to teach a typical child . . . It makes it more positive to come to school because you are not only coming to work with kids but also with friends.	I never have allowed myself to teach a typical child. [I do not] put them in a category and think of what they are going to be able to do.	A high teaching experience is seeing my students interact and knowing they are comfortable in my room.
(34 additional salient quotes)	(25 additional salient quotes)	(33 additional salient quotes)	(15 additional salient quotes)	(29 additional salient quotes)

Table 4.2

Day 2—Dream Phase

Finding 1	Finding 2	Finding 3	Finding 4	Finding 5
Focus is family centered and family oriented. Teachers who want to teach. Kids are promoted by ability and not age. Promotes positive student focus through powerful teacher-driven collaborative practices and values.	Have 100% staff buy in. Less interruptions and unlimited resources. We have focused goals. School practices are teacher driven. Positive student focus . . . teacher-driven collaborative practices and values.	The culture of LES will mainly be the same [family]. LES focus will be family centered . . . Promotes positive student focus through powerful teacher-driven collaborative practices and values.	Progressive thinking. We can't have negatives. It will give everyone a voice. We confirm what we believe is important. It is total ownership by action.	Incentives will be initiated for students with positive follow through. We have teacher -student trust. We confirm what we believe is important. It is total ownership by action. Compassion drives us all.
(7 additional salient quotes)	(10 additional salient quotes)	(10 additional salient quotes)	(2 additional salient quotes)	(2 additional salient quotes)

Lincoln Elementary School Educators Collaborate to Strengthen and Enhance Instructional

Practices

Lincoln Elementary School educators collaborate to strengthen and enhance their instructional practices. A reoccurring theme that participants addressed was the continual improvement of instructional practices when working with one another. See Tables 4.1 and 4.2 for participants' quotations as they relate to the second finding. High teaching experiences and practices occurred for participants when working with all stakeholders of LES. Best practice involved the sharing of ideas and teachers having the flexibility to make instructional decisions. Jake spoke of the importance of letting teachers make decisions and not dictate on what was going to happen. He stated:

> I am going to let teachers try whatever they need to in order to be successful and have that flexibility. The teachers are fully responsible for any successes we have. I am a resource to let them have space and try ideas to the best they can.

Nicole affirmed Jake's statement by saying:

> I like how we are open to new ideas. I always say if you can pick up one new thing whenever you go somewhere, then time isn't wasted. We have the support from our administration to go and learn new ideas and to strengthen what we already do.

Participants shared that they felt support from each other for being open to new ideas and working together to strengthen their instructional practices. Affirmations were readily exchanged among the participants. Nicole stated, "Keeping ourselves open to different ideas and practices will help the kids we teach. We look at the whole student body." Darlene concurred, "As a whole, we look at how to solve something and make it better. We work as a team even when negative things happen." Abby added, "We look to the positive . . . to make things better."

Through the sharing of highpoint positive core teaching experiences and practices, participants felt a commitment to help one another succeed to strengthen and enhance educational practices. Debbie added, "We are put together as a faculty and staff family. We are made stronger by our peers. When we are strong then we try to help where we see the need." Participants valued working with each other and viewed this as a reoccurring strength that emerged from semi-structured paired interviews and conversing with each other.

During the dream phase, participants wanted to maintain their vision built on teamwork among all stakeholders of LES to improve educational practices. They envisioned total collaboration around their dream statement. Debbie stated, "I would like to see us increase group communication. I see people in my area; however, I don't always know what is happening at the end of the hall."

Participants believed they worked as a team; however, they wanted to extend what they currently were doing to have more time for teaching and communicating with each other. Abby shared, "An important factor is how the staff works together and communicates." Bill viewed working with others and being able to pull ideas and ask questions from other teachers influenced his highpoint positive core teaching experiences. He shared, "Important factors making our students successful are working with others and having good relationships." There was apparent evidence that participants believed working collaboratively helped with the consistency of teaching and the use of their curriculum to strengthen educational practices. The spiraling of teaching the standards emerged by the ability of the participants to collaborate and work together.

The culmination of the conversations with the participants of the AI Learning Team process brought a deeper level of reflection of how they work as a collective and cohesive group.

This conversation extended from collaborating as teachers but collaborating across instructional areas. Cindy appreciated how special education and general education teachers communicate and work together, but was concerned about some of the behaviors some students displayed. Cindy stated, "We are not really addressing the kids with anger issues very well." She believed the students could ideally be helped through the teaming of special education and regular education classes. Debbie supported Cindy by sharing:

I remember as a little girl going to school and seeing the special education kids looking in the windows and not really knowing their names. I was always curious about them and why they had to go far away. It gives me reason to celebrate on how far we have come. Inclusion was the right thing to do.

The partnership of special education teachers and regular education teachers was a positive thread that wove between the conversations. Participants accepted the responsibility of all students.

Finding 2 Summary

Participants report that LES educators collaborate to strengthen and enhance their instructional practices. Their central themes were the important issues of working together and the sharing of ideas as a result of highpoint positive core teaching experiences.

Participants recognized the AI Learning Team process created positive emotions when they spoke of working as a team to improve teaching practices for students. They demonstrated unity in how they transfer their teaching strengths to those who need further support. Additionally, participants depend on each other as a resource.

Lincoln Elementary School Educators Value and Care about all School Stakeholders

Participants recognized that LES educators value and care about all school stakeholders. See Tables 4.1 and 4.2 for participants' quotations as they relate to the third finding. This finding emerged in their root causes of success and was viewed as a source of strength for the participants. They shared desires for all students to be valued and cared for by everyone at LES. They identified their positive core centered on a caring and valuing environment at LES. They also addressed their caring and valuing relationships at LES. Their highpoint positive core teaching experiences generated values they believed were essential to maintain for students and peers in LES's environment.

Participants appreciated and understood the value of creating an environment where students felt safe and supportive. A belief emerged from the affirmative conversations that highpoint positive core teaching experiences occur when students were interacting because they were comfortable about who they were. Abby stated:

My teaching values want to create a classroom atmosphere where my students want to be also. I try to think about if my own kids were there. Would they be having fun? Would they be learning? Would they want to be there?

Participants believed that LES staff demonstrates a collaborative culture of caring and valuing all who are involved with their school. They consistently spoke of the valuing and caring for all students by all staff in a save and non-threatening environment. Jake stated:

We create [an inviting] environment, where we want kids to be . . . some of our students would sooner be at school than at home. It [LES] is a safe fun environment and people are going to listen to the students. That is what adds to our success.

Debbie shared that students know if you are a caring person. She said:

Students have the ability to look into your eyes and see the very core of your soul. They

want you to see the best in them. I have a genuine concern and genuine caring that is very

effective. I love to color outside the lines. I am willing to step out and try anything.

Participants acknowledged that student concerns are foremost a precursor to students

achieving success. They believed that they were a caring staff and they were there for students.

Nicole shared, "We need to get the kids happy and working in society and believing in people."

She felt if she took the time to listen and to see what was going on in her students' lives it might

help them handle situations at school. Cindy stated, "We have instilled in the kids that every

person in the building cares about them. They want each student to do their best."

The AI Learning Team process advocated a deeper appreciation of each other.

Participants acknowledged a deeper understanding of their relationships. The affirmative

conversations of highpoint positive core teaching experiences helped them realize the

cohesiveness and values that they held contributed to the root causes of success. Debbie shared:

On a whole, all the teachers really like each other and they enjoy each other. We are

friends and that makes us more comfortable to state our opinions . . . ideas. It

[relationships] makes it more positive to come to school because you are not only coming

to work with kids but also with friends.

Darlene supported Debbie by stating, "There is a loving family community at Lincoln. Kids and

teachers want to come to school." Darlene added, "You have to know you are making a

difference." Bill was specific about saying, "We have a principal who cares for the students as

well as the teachers." The participants took pride in being family oriented for staff and students

and supporting one another as friends. Participants embraced their friendships inside and outside

of school and recognized the level of respect the AI Learning Team process revealed from highpoint positive core teaching experiences.

Finding 3 Summary

Participants recognized that LES educators value and care about all school stakeholders. They validated their highpoint positive core teaching experiences and the conditions surrounding the experiences centered on caring and valuing students and staff at LES.

Participants were appreciative for sharing what they valued during the AI Learning Team process. They affirmed that LES supported all stakeholders with a safe and caring environment. Recognizing what they valued gave them direction to validate everyone's opinions that impact students.

Lincoln Elementary School Educators Created an Inclusive Community Bound by Strong Interpersonal Relationships

Participants recognized that LES educators created an inclusive community bound by strong interpersonal relationships. Participants valued their colleagues and students. See Tables 4.1 and 4.2 for participants' quotations as they relate to the fourth finding. Participants affirmed the themes that were evident in the positive core of belonging as staff unity and a commitment to students. They shared that when students walk down the hall in the morning every teacher speaks to them. It did not matter what grade of the student or his/her academic abilities, that student was everyone's student.

There was a strong belief that the staff at LES had formed a community around every student and staff. Bill shared that he tried to establish relationships with his students. Darlene understood what Bill was saying because she missed the relationships she had established with students when she was teaching reading. She said**:**

I missed the classroom environment when I was a Title I teacher because everything was taught one on one. I missed the classroom dynamics where you had a mixture of ability levels and flexibility to be a little more spontaneous.

High teaching experiences were recognized when working with students' diverse learning skills and the dynamics created in the classroom. The sense of community had formed a bond connecting students to teachers and teachers to students.

Participants embraced their students for accepting others' differences and forming relationships with other students in a different grade level. Cindy recalled that people from the middle school and high school told her they could tell which students were LES students. She said, "They can tell without asking because the Lincoln kids are more tolerant and have more experience with diversity. They will grow up to be more tolerant which I think is extremely important." Jake shared that every school should have a functional classroom because it helped everyone to be more accepting of differences.

Through the discussions of participants, they realized that highpoint positive core teaching experiences were created through taking risks and having fun. The bond formed among participants as a staff confirmed their feelings of being able to "step out of the box" and enjoy what they were doing. They appreciated LES's strong inclusive community that supported their interpersonal relationships. They were encouraged to take risks to strengthen instructional practices and relationships with students. Cindy said, "I think we are successful at Lincoln because most of us are willing to do that [take risks] and we are a community around every kid." Nicole added, "Trying new ideas can open doors and allow kids to make relationships by connecting to what they are learning."

Participants believed LES to be a supportive community due to students being encouraged to take risks. Students felt comfortable taking risks because of the support provided by the teachers and staff at LES. Molly stated, "It is alright not to know how to do something the first time. Trust is a big thing." The AI Learning Team process provided insight that there are different ways of teaching to meet the needs of different types of learners. This is acceptable and encouraged. Jake supported the staff to take risks and be innovative. He said:

I love to see new ideas whether they are successful or fail. I love people to be innovative and try. It is normal to experience some failures, learn from them, and make them into successes.

Participants appreciated receiving support from their principal and each other to take risks. They believed that activities or lessons did not have to go as planned. Molly stated, "High teaching occurs when I am challenged to make the day better. Kids affect me, not experiences. You go with the flow." Darlene added, "A highlight for me is learning something new all the time and being flexible." Participants affirmed through member checking in their discussions that LES staff was willing to support and provide assistance as needed. They had established a community of connectedness for staff and students.

It was this connectedness of community discovered through the AI Learning Team process that created a comfort level of having fun while teaching or learning. Participants recognized that highpoint positive core teaching experiences included humor and making learning fun for the students. Darlene stated that she had a good day when she laughed so hard about something funny that everyone had tears rolling down their faces. Abby said, "If you have laughter in the classroom, then it is an enjoyable classroom. I want to make it fun for my students

and for me." Participants believed that the relationships established between staff and students created a network of support that allowed teachers to make learning fun and exciting.

Finding 4 Summary

Participants recognized that LES educators created an inclusive community bound by strong interpersonal relationships. They discovered highpoint positive core teaching experiences evolve around the bonds teachers develop with students and with their peers.

Participants were positive about the flexibility allowed them to extend their teaching practices by taking risks and being innovative. The AI Learning Team process identified the aspects needed to allow highpoint positive core teaching experiences to occur and the conditions surrounding these experiences in a supportive environment. Participants validated the support they received from peers as well as the support for students.

Lincoln Elementary School Educators Want to Create a Learning Environment that is Student Centered and Family Oriented where Teachers use Progressive Practices in Teaching Students

Participants recognized that LES educators want to create a learning environment that is student centered and family oriented where students are taught progressive practices. The dream crafted by the participants held their beliefs of extending current high teaching experiences centered around a family oriented environment that focused on students. See Tables 4.1 and 4.2 for participants' quotations as they relate to the fifth finding. The finding produced the participants' dreams for the future of LES. Their statements reflect the direction they wished for students and staff to extend the successful teaching practices and highpoint positive core teaching experiences.

Nicole mirrored participants' statements during the two-day AI Learning Team process, "The big focus is to be more family centered and family oriented. I would like to use round

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tables before school and during lunch to provide a family atmosphere." The participants embraced the aspect of being a family and shared feelings of appreciation that being a family unit formed an environment for students to excel. Cindy recalled a science project. She said:

I was helping Bill with science. . . . I was supposed to explain the science project and what was needed to be done. . . . We built a bridge for one of our projects. The kids who were involved with that lesson never forgot it. I still see those kids. One of them works at Dillard's in Wichita. Every time I see her, she talks to me about how much fun that lesson was. That was the reason she liked to come to school. You do not realize the power you have until the kids ask you "remember when?" They remember. It is amazing how much power we have.

Participants viewed "families" as a support system for students and for themselves as peers. Nicole shared, "It is important to recognize what topics gain students' interest and inspires them to desire to learn. The value is to know what excites them about learning." The sense of family also generated participants' responses of nurturing students. Darlene shared that "students should have snacks and milk during the day. They need more nourishment and not to be hungry so they can have an optimal learning environment."

Participants felt the AI Learning Team process strengthened their capacity for shared learning, collaboration, and sense of family. They affirmed a deeper commitment to students through total collaboration with staff, parents, and students. Debbie spoke first. She stated:

I think what we are doing and the process [AI Learning Team process] are exciting . . . instead of focusing on the weaknesses. There are certain things we cannot control. We cannot control where a student comes from or what is happening in the student's life outside of school. What we can do is to take the positive things that happen in the

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classrooms. You can walk up and down the hall before and after school and see teachers working one-on-one to help students . . . to help them be a better student.

Molly agreed. She stated, "It is the little things we do—our teaching practices." Molly saw value in keeping the culture of LES and including more time for collaboration with students, staff, and parents to meet students' needs. The participants expressed they had a shared sense of purpose for shared decision making as part of a learning community and developing their confidence in their capacity as teachers. Darlene emphatically stated, "There is not one of us better than the other. We are only as strong as the weakest link among us." Participants valued the family community bond that connected them as peers. They believed this bond enhanced their capacity for creating a student focused learning environment. Bill confirmed the focus should be on students. Cindy stated, "The kids are everybody's kids. Everybody is responsible for every student in our building." Participants shared the belief that the learning environment needed to promote positive student focus through powerful teacher-driven collaborative practices and values was necessary for learning to occur.

Finding 5 Summary

Participants recognized that LES educators want to create a learning environment that is student centered and family oriented where students are taught progressive practices. The participants stated they would like to be more family oriented and provide a support system that nurtured students. They also shared that the family oriented environment made them feel valued and supported.

Participants overall desire was to develop their capacity as a community that impacted student learning. The relationships the participants secured shared the feelings of support for implementing teacher-driven instructional practices.

Chapter 4 Summary

Chapter 4 provided the findings from collected data during this study. The five salient findings were: (1) Lincoln Elementary School is a cohesive group of educators who seek to help students reach their potential; (2) Lincoln Elementary School educators collaborate to strengthen and enhance instructional practices; (3) Lincoln Elementary School educators value and care about all school stakeholders; (4) Lincoln Elementary School educators created an inclusive community bound by strong interpersonal relationships; (5) Lincoln Elementary School educators want to create a learning environment that is student centered and family oriented where teachers use progressive practices in teaching students. Chapter 5 presents implications for future research, implications of the results for practice and recommendations, relationships to relevant theory, significance of study, and a summary and conclusion.

CHAPTER 5

My study was designed to discover the successful teaching practices of teachers in a SOE elementary school. My study also identified the necessary ecological conditions for the teachers to sustain and extend their successful teaching practices. I organize this chapter by first restating the purpose of the study, a summary of the literature review, and methodology, research questions, and a summary of the findings. I then proceed to discuss each of my findings. After I discuss each finding, I present the implications for future research. I then discuss the implications for praxis and recommendations, relationship of the findings to relevant theory, significance of the study, and a summary and conclusions.

Purpose

The purpose of my study was to discover the successful teaching practices of teachers in a SOE elementary school. My study also identified the necessary ecological conditions for the teachers to sustain and extend their successful teaching practices.

Summary of Literature Review

My professional experience of working with teachers to develop pedagogical practices helped me frame the conceptual framework for my study. Based on my professional experience, I found that successful teachers have a higher capacity to understand students' needs and interests and sustain a high level of academic performance. Instilled in my experience was an epistemology of social constructionism. Social constructionism supports the belief that teachers generate new knowledge and language through collaborative and participatory discussion (Gergen, 1999). My epistemology serves as the foundation of an AI theoretical perspective and CBT.

An appreciative inquiry theoretical perspective is designed to help teachers recognize their strengths, achievements, and optimal experiences or the positive core that gives life to the organization (Cooperrider et al., 2003). AI has the potential to transform change grounded in affirmative dialogue (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). It is the affirmative language and questions that increases the desire to create and explore new possibilities extending the teachers' capacity (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999).

Capacity building theory yields the conditions and opportunities for teachers to expand their accomplishments and successes to an optimal level of performance (Barrett & Fry, 2005). The encouragement of collaborative and shared decision making propels teachers towards a shared purpose (Lambert, 1998). Achieving capacity captures the vision and focus for teachers' dreams and generates energy to attain their dreams (Postma, 1998).

Information directly related to successful teaching practices of low SES teachers in a SOE school and the ecological conditions for the teachers to sustain and extend their successful teaching practices was limited. The revelation of successful pedagogical practices of low SES teachers in a high-performing school has the potential to influence systemic change. Research provided information on how successful teaching practices impacted student achievement and how specific beliefs, values, and purpose transformed student learning. AI offers a viable alternative for addressing the successful practices of low SES teachers and the capacity of teachers in the restructuring of schools.

A search of the empirical research examined how elementary teachers who demonstrated successful pedagogical practices had a positive affect on students' academic achievement. Research found elementary teachers' beliefs and instructional decisions impacted student learning and established connections with their students. AI afforded me the opportunity to

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describe and identify the root causes of successful teaching practices and the conditions to sustain and extend these practices with low SES students in a SOE elementary school. An AI theoretical perspective also provided a specific direction of inquiry that extends and preserves the root causes of success valuing all stakeholders within LES.

Methodology

A qualitative case study research design was used to describe successful teaching practices in LES, a low SES SOE elementary school that met standard of excellence for two years, and to identify the necessary ecological conditions for the teachers to sustain and extend their successful teaching practices by participating in an AI Learning Team process (Egan & Lancaster, 2005; Watkins & Mohr, 2001). The AI Learning Team process is a form of an AI Summit and is designed for much smaller, focused groups (Ludema et al., 2003b). The unit of analysis was the teachers and their principal at LES who voluntarily chose to participate in the first two phases of an AI 4-D Cycle. The AI Learning Team consisted of eight purposively selected participants (seven elementary teachers and their principal). I based my purposive sampling on the following criteria: (a) each instructional leader represented a different grade level; (b) each instructional leader had been at LES for a minimum of three years; and (c) the gender balance reflected the faculty composition of the school. An AI Learning Team engaged in a two-day process that focused on the first two phases of the AI 4-D Cycle: discovery and dream. The design and destiny phases were not included in this process. I served as a participant/observer in both phases and collected data facilitating the activities for the discovery and dream phases.

Research Questions

This study answered the following two research questions:

1. How do instructional leaders describe their successful pedagogical practices?

2. What are the dreams of instructional leaders in Lincoln Elementary School to sustain and extend their successful pedagogical practices?

Summary of Findings

Five salient findings emerged from the data analysis. The five salient findings are:

Finding 1: Lincoln Elementary School is a cohesive group of educators who seek to help students reach their potential.

Finding 2: Lincoln Elementary School educators collaborate to strengthen and enhance instructional practices.

Finding 3: Lincoln Elementary School educators value and care about all school stakeholders.

Finding 4: Lincoln Elementary School educators created an inclusive community bound by strong interpersonal relationships.

Finding 5: Lincoln Elementary School educators want to create a learning environment that is student centered and family oriented where teachers use progressive practices in teaching students.

Discussion of Findings

Finding 1: Lincoln Elementary School is a Cohesive Group of Educators Who Seek to Help Students Reach Their Potential

The cohesive nature of the relationships among the educators at Lincoln Elementary School was an important factor for student academic success. It is important for teachers to be excited about the success of their students. Love and Kruger (2005) indicate that recognizing and celebrating students' efforts prepares them for success. The desire of wanting students to be successful and reach their potential may relate to successful teaching practices in a SOE school.

Participants believed that students are more successful when teaching experiences and practices bring a love of learning to their students. They were committed to creating an exciting learning environment for students to aspire a love of learning. Honaker (2003) indicates teachers are autonomous in formulating a positive learning environment that nurtures student achievement. An affirmation of learning in a positive environment offered feelings that participants are making a difference and influencing student achievement. Participants maintained the belief that their success as teachers is reflected by student success and for students to apply their knowledge at higher cognitive levels. Teachers who hold themselves responsible for their students' success created a culture of success at their school (Ragland, Clubine, Constable, & Smith, 2002).

Participants believed that successful teaching practices occur when LES teachers maintain high expectations for themselves and their students. They viewed themselves accountable for student success and felt a sense of satisfaction and pride when students were academically successful. They knew they were making a difference. Maintaining student academic success prompted the participants to evaluate their current teaching practices so their students would continue to excel. Darling-Hammond (1996) indicates that students can succeed in extraordinary ways when teaching strategies and practices focus on students' needs instead of state and federal requirements. Participants identified exemplary teaching practices occurred when students demonstrated academic success. They also indicated that they wanted to enhance their teaching practices and keep improving the teaching practices they were currently using. They viewed their teaching success as dependent on their students' academic success.

Participants viewed the need for teachers to be involved in the education process and willing to extend their educational knowledge in order for their students to reach new levels in

education. It is important for teachers to expand their knowledge into areas they are not as comfortable in to develop successful teaching practices. Teachers who learned new instructional practices for a child-centered classroom became more energized and took pride in their success (Scheurich, 1998). Learning new instructional strategies helped teachers see that what they were doing was best for students. Participants felt that successful instructional practices began with the educator. They placed an importance for students to want to succeed.

Participants believed successful teaching practices and student academic success occur when students are actively engaged in their learning. They perceived learning and successful teaching practices materialize when students are directly involved with their learning and believe they can succeed. Borman and Rachuba (2001) report that meaningful and productive activities that involve and engage students promote academic success. Being adaptable to students' needs was seen essential to the participants. Participants shared that academic success was encouraged through teaching practices utilizing diverse instruction and adapting teaching practices. Rich teaching experiences and practices were described by the participants through the students' active engagement in their learning. Economically disadvantaged students who participated and shared information about their learning with their teachers were more successful in school (Spivey, 2006). Participants believed by being student focused and creating opportunities for achievement through student engagement their students would reach potential.

Finding 2: Lincoln Elementary School Educators Collaborate to Strengthen and Enhance

Instructional Practices

The collaborative nature of the relationships among the educators at LES was an important factor to strengthen and enhance instructional practices. Participants believed their instructional practices improved when collaborating about best practice and making instructional

decisions. It was important for participants to have the capacity to share ideas and practices in order to improve as teachers. Teacher capacity building has been established to be a prolific investment for schools and surpasses the effects of teacher experience and class size (Cooter, 2003). Capacity building enhances the conditions for participants to collaborate. Participants are strongly encouraged by their principal to collaborate and create new ideas to implement in their classroom. They felt that collaboration allowed them to have the flexibility of making teacher-driven decisions.

Collaboration is founded in an AI theoretical perspective and CBT. AI engages participants in an affirmative dialogue aimed at generating ideas and vision (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). CBT allows the conditions and possibilities for shared decision making and collaboration (Barrett & Fry, 2005). Through collaboration, participants believe high teaching experiences and practices occur when working with all stakeholders. Teachers operate with high levels of bonding capital and apply bridging capital to students and their parents. A level of bonding capital exists among the participants and their principal to collaborate and share essential ideas about their school. Bonding capital extended to a level of bridging capital that formed partnerships between the school stakeholders and the students and parents (Calabrese, 2006). Bonding capital allowed the participants to feel supported by their principal to take risks to strengthen instructional practices. The principal believed that student success was related to empowering teachers through collaboration to improve instructional practices.

Participants indicated the need to work as a team when challenges occur. Collaboration allowed the team to address the challenges, focus on the positives, and provide solutions. Participants viewed that being open to new ideas would benefit their students. Miles and Darling-Hammond (1998) indicate that students perform better in school when they are known to

their teachers and teachers have sufficient time together to engage in shared decision making and developing new practices. Participants recognized they were committed to help one another succeed and valued working with each other. They viewed each other as a resource and each person brought strengths to the team.

Participants believed in the importance of solidarity as a faculty and staff family. This was a reoccurring theme in the discovery and dream phases. They aspired to maintain their vision for working as a team and to strengthen their communication. The value of strong relationships emerged through teaming and collaboration. Participants viewed strong relationships that were formed through collaboration as 'a strength.' School reform requiring new curriculums justify the need for substantial teacher learning through collaboration (Miles & Darling-Hammond, 1998). Participants realized working collaboratively improved instructional practices by being more consistent in the teaching of the curriculum.

Participants expressed the desire to make time for teaching and communicating. They saw this as a necessary component for successful teaching practices and student success. They wished to extend collaborating across instructional areas. They believed that more teaming between instructional areas could help challenging issues. This belief led to an accepted responsibility for all students to achieve and be successful.

Finding 3: Lincoln Elementary School Educators Value and Care About All School Stakeholders

Valuing and caring for all school stakeholders at LES was an important factor among the participants. The capacity of LES to sustain and extend successful teaching practices was related to the relationships established for students and all stakeholders. Noddings (1988) reports that teachers need to support, encourage, and foresee worthwhile activities and students have a right to explore mutually designed projects. High teaching experiences and practices generated values

of what to preserve for all students. The participants' values maintained a vision to create a safe and caring environment for students to have a positive learning experience. Participants recognized that a collaborative culture of caring and valuing existed for everyone at LES.

Participants also recognized that a nurturing and caring culture at LES provided resiliency to help students to achieve success. They believed that students are cared about and there is an expectation for them to do their best. Caring teachers encourage students to practice caring by showing support to each other (Noddings, 1988). Participants see themselves as part of a caring staff that is student focused. They wish for their students to believe in people and exhibit an attitude of caring for others.

Participants' discovery of valuing and caring about all stakeholders led to a deeper appreciation of each other as colleagues. They recognized a deeper understanding about their relationships and the cohesiveness discovered through high teaching experiences and practices. They benefit from the friendships established in and out of the caring environment of LES. The development of a caring environment supported a family community that is making a difference for students and staff. Research indicates that schools that create an extended classroom family contribute to student academic success (Scheurich, 1998). Participants viewed themselves as being family oriented; embracing all students and staff identified through high teaching experiences and practices. Sentiments of caring and valuing affirmed participants' direction to validate everyone's opinions that impact students.

Finding 4: Lincoln Elementary School Educators Created an Inclusive Community Bound by Strong Interpersonal Relationships

The creation of an inclusive community bound by strong interpersonal relationships among the LES educators was an important factor. Participants affirmed the importance of their

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commitment to staff unity and students. They recognized LES has formed a community built on positive relationships bridging a bond between teachers and students. AI capitalizes the human potential of an inclusive community to achieve a shared vision (Concern Worldwide, 2004). Participants shared that students at LES feel welcomed and are greeted as they walk down the hall. Greeting each student at LES has formed a bond of student ownership by the LES staff. The AI process provides a sense of appreciation of the good in others and a desire to become a better person (Finegold et al., 2002). Participants perceive teachers having high teaching experiences and practices by working within a sense of community.

Participants stated that LES students are more tolerant and accepting of differences. They observed that general education students accept students with disabilities. They also developed relationships with each other in different grade levels. Participants felt their students have more experience with diversity and form positive relationships across ability levels. An AI process is an appropriate model to use to transform dialogue among LES stakeholders to appreciate diversity (Akdere, 2005).

Participants indicated that their relationships among each other had given them confidence to take risks with new instructional practices and to increase their joy of teaching. They shared a belief that trying new ideas creates opportunities for students to establish relationships and make connections to what is taught. Participants identified a comfort level to have fun while teaching. The discovery of practices and patterns yield what is desired (Peelle, 2006). Participants also described a desire to make learning fun and exciting supported by positive staff relationships.

Participants encouraged LES students to take risks while learning with different teaching approaches. Students at LES are encouraged to take risks for learning by providing them with

different ways of learning. They reframe academic failure as learning opportunities to transform into successes. Creating new ideas and ways to think about academic failure generates a "new lens" for old practices (Bushe & Kassam, 2005). Creating this new lens requires trust. Participants shared a belief that trust is essential for students to take learning risks at LES. Students at LES understand that learning occurs when they do not master a skill the first time, yet they keep trying.

High teaching and practices occurred when participants were challenged and the day did not go as planned. Learning at LES does not have to follow a specific plan. It can take new shape and form each day as students design their instruction. Participants shared through member checking that LES staff was willing to provide support and assistance as needed to all stakeholders. They indicated a bond of connectedness exists for LES stakeholders that emphasize bonding capital within an inclusive community. A bond of networking supports each LES stakeholder through affirmative relationships.

Participants viewed themselves connected within the LES community. There was a comfort level for successful teaching practices to occur using humor and making learning enjoyable. The use of laughter and making the classroom enjoyable was important to the participants. It allowed participants to make learning fun and exciting for them and their students.

Finding 5: Lincoln Elementary School Educators Want to Create a Learning Environment That is Student Centered and Family Oriented Where Teachers Use Progressive Practices in Teaching Students

The creation to use progressive practices by creating a learning environment that is student centered and family oriented was an important factor. The participants defined

progressive practices as powerful teacher-driven collaborative practices that affect student learning. They wished to continue improving their successful teaching practices and experiences centered around a family oriented environment that focuses on students to reach their potential for optimal success. They saw value in recognizing what topics excited students to learn. Borman and Rachuba (2001) report that low SES students who achieve academic success develop stronger and supportive relationships with their teachers. Supportive relationships as in a family, created an environment for students to excel. The focus on family was a central theme throughout the discovery and dream phases. Participants embraced the aspect of being a family and appreciated the learning environment formed for students to achieve success. They realized the importance of a family learning environment on students and their academic success. Relationships formed by families implies a perspective of caring that is central to education (Noddings, 1988; Scheurich, 1998). A family support system nurtures students and can inspire them to gain interest for a desire to learn.

Participants believed their capacity for shared learning and collaboration was strengthened and created a deeper commitment to all LES stakeholders. They identified a collaborative learning environment to focus on the positive instructional and behavioral classroom outcomes. A study of high performing schools used collaboration to provide support to students. Collaboration also offered ideas and practices to teachers (Ragland et al., 2002). A deeper level of commitment to students was formed through collaboration. Participants expressed the belief that collaboration impacted student learning. A shared sense of purpose strengthened their capacity as teachers for shared decision making in a learning community. In high-capacity schools where a unified staff shares decision-making, collaboration is a value. The teachers in these schools form learning communities. Their vision of school reform becomes a

priority (Borko et al., 2003). Participants believed that the ideas and practices that emerged from collaboration will continue to shape the learning environment at LES. Participants also indicated they valued the community family bond enhancing their capacity for a student focused learning environment. The success for all students was dependent on the entire LES stakeholders. Accountability and responsibility were principles held by the participants for all students. They believed that the success of all students at LES began with them.

Participants shared aspirations of creating a learning environment to promote positive student progress through powerful teacher-driven collaborative practices and values. It was important for participants to create a progressive learning environment so that if staff changes did occur, the culture and flow of LES does not change. They wanted their students to be successful. The capacity of a school is the "collective power of the full staff to improve student achievement schoolwide" (Borko et al., 2003, p. 174). Participants emphasized the value of a progressive learning environment for students to be successful in conjunction with a supportive family oriented environment. The support of the family community will provide teachers the capacity to sustain and extend successful teaching practices.

<div align="center">Implications for Future Research</div>

My study presents several opportunities for further research. Based on my study, a future iteration might be the application of all four phases of the AI 4-D Cycle. Moreover, an evaluative aspect could be added by investigating the longitudinal impact of the AI Learning team process over an extended period. This will provide researchers with an opportunity to examine the impact of successful teaching practices and the ecological conditions for the teachers to sustain and extend their successful teaching practices.

Researchers may consider exploring the successful teaching practices of teachers in a low SES rural middle school and low SES rural high school that has not met SOE since my study was conducted in a low SES SOE elementary school in a rural community using an AI process. Describing the successful teaching practices of teachers in a low SES middle school and a low SES high school could help to provide additional insight of teacher capacity and its implication for school improvement for meeting SOE. Current school reform models of low SES middle and high schools that do not meet SOE may consider applying an AI theoretical perspective to construct new meaning by sharing their stories for a new image to emerge (Whitney, 1998).

Researchers may explore the possibility of successful teaching practices with other low SES SOE elementary schools using social capital filtered through an AI theoretical perspective. Exploring the attributes of social capital through an AI theoretical perspective with other low SES SOE elementary schools has the potential to strengthen the capacity of the schools and increase their potential (Calabrese, 2006).

Researchers may pursue the possibility of having first and second year teachers discover successful teaching practices and the ecological conditions surrounding these practices as part of a teacher mentoring program. It would be interesting to explore if the AI process will impact the retention of teachers new to the educational field.

<div align="center">Implications for Praxis and Recommendations</div>

Implications from my study offer the following recommendations for praxis that may help educators understand the potential of successful teaching practices and the ecological conditions to sustain and extend these practices to influence school change. Interpersonal interactions with students that encourage hard work and acknowledge teacher efforts lead to student success. Research indicates that knowing the attitudes, beliefs, and values that teachers

hold for students to be successful is essential for effective school change (Reuter, 1992). In this

vein, I present a series of recommendations to inform praxis: (a) low SES teachers and

administrators explore and create a positive family learning community to include the successful

pedagogical practices of elementary teachers, (b) low SES teachers and administrators create

opportunities to share optimal stories and discuss successful pedagogical practices, and (c) low

SES teachers and administrators to become knowledgeable in the practice of the AI process to

transform change instead of a problem solving model.

Family Community

Low SES teachers and administrators may explore and create a positive family learning

community to include the successful pedagogical practices of elementary teachers. When

personal connections with students and staff occur a communal learning environment is created

as was discovered in my study. Teachers in a family learning community have a responsibility to

their students to achieve academically, but they also have a responsibility to develop student

potential by fostering a positive culture for change. When low SES teachers share beliefs

essential to student success, a shared sense of responsibility is a catalyst for collaboration and

communication (Spivey, 2006). Schools that create a positive family learning community to

include successful pedagogical practices of teachers have the potential for optimal student

success.

Optimal Stories

Low SES teachers and administrators may create opportunities to share optimal stories

and discuss successful pedagogical practices. I believe when teachers and administrators share

positive stories of successful practices a new energy is unleashed that extends teachers' abilities

for educating all students and can play an important role in the school reform effort. Affirmative

language is an asset and holds significant implications for change (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). They can discover and identify the capacity they have as educators to further impact the educational reform movement. Strategies supportive of optimal teaching experiences and practices would also render more optimism and passion for teaching.

Knowledge of Appreciative Inquiry

Low SES teachers and administrators may become knowledgeable in the practice of the AI process to change. The AI process deserves further study by educators to recognize when schools are performing optimally; recognizing optimal performance is the foundation for future success. AI reduces the negative stress and promotes an excitement to learn and expands the capacity of school change through a generative collaborative process that discovers the successes within and allows for an affirmative dialogue generating the "life-giving" forces of the organization (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). When the affirmative dialogue of the AI process generates stories and dialogue centered on successful teaching practices as in this study, low SES teachers and administrators have the likelihood to energize their passion for teaching. The participatory dialogue of teachers and administrators could yield more opportunities for growth and development providing a sense of community. The four phases of the AI 4-D Cycle can provide one approach to extend the capacity of an organization by its participatory method of strategic visioning, collective planning, and empowering others to be innovative for future development (Stavros et al., 2003).

<center>Relationship of Findings to Relevant Theory</center>

I present five rationales why the AI process centered on successful teaching practices of teachers should be adopted as a practice for teachers and administrators. First, concentrating on successful teaching practices of low SES teachers through the AI process can help participants

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recognize their desire for students to reach their potential. AI can energize participants by the assurance that they have been successful and can create more successful moments (Hammond, 1998). AI begins with the premise of what is working and focusing on the strengths of self and others in the teaching profession. AI fosters the capacity of best practices that enhance student achievement (Cooperrider et al., 2003). Through the AI process, participants identified their successes emerged from students being academically successful and held themselves responsible for creating a positive learning environment that engaged all students.

Second, the AI process can facilitate low SES teachers and administrators in recognizing the value of collaborating to strengthen and enhance instructional practices. As a method of change, AI motivates collaborative action that engages and serves the whole organization (Randolph, 2006). AI builds relationships and creates opportunity for participants to be included and heard. AI is based on the premise of a collaborative and participatory process that engages participants in a dialogue about what is working well based on past successful experiences. Guiding teachers and administrators to participate in the AI process can strengthen collaborative relationships that in turn enhance instructional practices.

Third, the AI process, with a focus on successful teaching practices, can guide low SES teachers and administrators in valuing and caring for all school stakeholders. The AI process builds capacity for successful teaching practices to occur in a positive caring environment. In a study of at-risk students at an urban high school, AI was used to discover an attitude of caring (Calabrese et al., 2005). Using an AI approach recognizes a deeper understanding of participants' relationships and discovers cohesiveness through high teaching experiences and practices. AI has the means to focus on the positive and productive facets of the situation (Reed et al., 2005). AI

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has the capacity to generate a collaborative caring culture for participants to share affirmative stories that value the positive core of the stakeholders in their school or organization.

Fourth, the AI process can facilitate an inclusive community bound by strong interpersonal relationships. AI generates optimism and appreciation in the human capacity to attain its potential (Barrett, 1995). Through the AI process, the participants identified their instructional practices were strengthened by affirmation of one another that was increased in the bridging of their relationships. In my study, the AI process facilitated participants in recognizing they gained confidence to take instructional risks resulting in successful teaching practices. The occurrence of successful teaching practices was credited to the commitment to staff unity and students.

Fifth, the AI process can create a student centered and family oriented learning environment for successful teaching practices to occur. AI can enlighten a family oriented learning environment as a participatory method that creates the capacity for a new vision of the future and embraces the strengths of the past. AI is an engaging participatory method for creating positive change in a collaborative approach (Yballe & O'Connor, 2000). The AI process enhances an organization's capacity for all the participants to be engaged in an inquiry of its successful teaching practices within a family oriented environment that is student focused. AI provides an appreciative spirit of hope and potential where participants shift to an affirmative approach for positive change.

The findings from my study led to an AI model that can be replicated in other organizations. Based on a metaphor of a 3-legged stool, one of the legs holding the stool is a building and staff that is family-oriented. LES has formed a family unit around each stakeholder. Each student and adult are valued and cared about. The second leg of the stool is the use of

progressive practices. There is a belief that students are successful based on innovative practices and taking risks using a "whatever it takes attitude" to help all learners. An inclusive community completes the stool. LES is a community of all learners. Total ownership of all students, parents, and staff completes the foundation to make every student reach their potential.

I presented five findings why the potential of AI and CBT expands the capacity for teachers to discover their common strengths and collaboratively develop new plans and aspirations to make it happen. In my study, teachers valued and recognized the best in themselves through AI and encouraged the conditions and opportunities for shared learning and collaboration through CBT.

A common purpose emerged that focuses on a positive framework for educational praxis and research. First, the AI process recognized LES as a cohesive group of educators who seek to help students reach their potential. AI explores for the best of what is present within people and organizations (Norum, 2001). Through the AI process, participants maintained their success as a teacher was dependent on their students reaching their potential. The AI process created opportunities for the participants to identify how they value students' positive experiences and focus on students' strengths and past successes. AI can guide teachers and administers to explore successful teaching practices that highlight students' successes and best practices for achievement.

Using an AI process, participants (a) identified that they desired a positive learning environment for their students, (b) held themselves accountable for students' academic success, (c) nurtured the conditions and opportunities to expand the strengths and successes of students, (d) elaborated and expanded their knowledge to academically advance students, (e) and engaged students in the learning process.

Second, the AI process discovered that LES educators collaborated to strengthen and enhance instructional practices. Participants recognized they build school capacity and captured a vision for successful teaching practices to occur through collaboration. Bringing stakeholders together deepens the commitment established for positive change to occur (Randolph, 2006). Collaboration was viewed by the participants as a means of strengthening and enhancing practices by empowering others and building relationships. The AI process generated a belief that collaboration was a positive approach for finding solutions to challenges. Participants believed it was important to work as a team.

Through the AI process, participants identified they were solidified as a faculty and staff family. The commitment they made to each stakeholder helped them look to their strengths for making things better. AI seeks to affirm and build on strengths and best practices of what gives life to an organization or its positive core (Cooperrider et al., 2003). The positive core is comprised of an organization's strengths and achievements. Participants perceived their strengths through others' successes.

Third, the AI process revealed that participants valued and cared about all school stakeholders. They identified their positive core by focusing on a caring and valuing environment for all stakeholders. The AI process energized their passion for teaching. A caring environment is consistent with a positive environment that is more conducive for successful teaching practices to occur (Scheurich, 1998; Spivey, 2006). AI has the capacity to generate a positive caring environment through the power of affirmative and positive dialogue.

Through the AI process, participants' discovered that staff unity, positive student focus, passionate and committed professionals that supported a valuing and caring environment were some of their causes of success: When a systemic foundation exists of mutual affirmation and

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admiration, the mutually desired goals will be easier to achieve (Postma, 1998). Participants believed that their teaching experience is a positive because of the relationships established with all the stakeholders. AI provided an affirmative language that heightened the awareness of the positive core creating a sense of a family community.

Fourth, the AI process recognized the bond of interpersonal relationships created an inclusive community that celebrated differences of others. The AI process identified a commitment to students by LES, embracing each one in a community blanket. AI builds capacity for diversity and tolerance strengthened by the relationships established in an inclusive community. An AI process advances a sense of community connectedness (Morsillo & Fisher, 2007). Through the AI process in my study, participants understood their community and the strengths of the community members. They gave examples indicating how relationships in an inclusive community were necessary to create successful teaching practices. AI guided the participants to recognize high teaching experiences through the classroom dynamics and staff relationships.

Using an AI process, participants identified that LES students and staff were more willing to take risks in instructional practices. They also identified their students learn because of a supportive community. AI encourages new practices and design for best practices for the future through shared decision making. Members of an organization in Bangladesh shared the metaphor "family." Being family is when they felt the most satisfied and most dedicated to their work (Postma, 1998).

Fifth, the AI process espoused the desire to create a family oriented environment that is student focused for teachers to use progressive instructional practices. The AI process created the capacity for the participants to envision a dream for LES to be student centered and family

oriented. Through capacity building, an organization empowers stakeholders to network with others creating trust and a climate for relationship development (Chapagain, 2004). The AI process facilitated the participants in recognizing feelings of appreciation identified in a family unit that encourages students to excel. AI and capacity building strengthens the connections made within a family community that creates trust and moves LES forward.

Through AI and CBT, human potential is enhanced and embraces a family oriented environment that is student focused for progressive instructional practices to occur. The AI process facilitated participants to identify past and present positive teaching experiences that discovered the successful teaching practices of teachers. Using an AI approach also guided participants to identify and enhance their capacity when working together to sustain and extend successful teaching practices. Evidence exists that teacher capacity building has positive impact on student achievement (Cooter, 2003).

The findings from my study led to the identification of cohesiveness that is aligned with AI and CBT. The AI process highlighted the participants' experiences of valued relationships that created an opportunity for participants to be included and heard. AI can improve a sense of connectedness (Morsillo & Fisher, 2007). CBT highlighted how they were empowered to network with others, establish relationships, and make the commitment to work together (Chapagain, 2004). The protocols designed and applied in this study engaged participants in affirmative dialogue to successfully capture successful teaching practices. Through an AI process, a sense of cohesiveness helped participants recognize successful teaching practices occur through a positive family learning community. AI provided a cohesiveness that was present throughout the study and was supported by both AI and CBT theoretical perspectives. Based on the AI process, a cohesive foundational structure provides the ecological conditions for

participants to describe successful teaching experiences and practices by working within a sense of community.

<div align="center">Significance of the Study</div>

My study extended current literature of successful teaching practices in a SOE school with low SES students and the ecological conditions necessary to sustain and extend successful teaching practices. This study described successful teaching practices of teachers through the lens of both an AI and CBT theoretical perspectives. My study illustrated a model for other schools to discover successful teaching practices of teachers and the ecological conditions to sustain and extend their successful teaching practices. This model may be adapted to other educational settings using the AI process. Successful teaching practices were associated with a desire of being a family community, developing the best student possible, and using progressive instructional practices. This study found that using the AI process, participants discovered their root causes of success: (a) staff unity; (b) positive student focus; (c) passionate and committed professionals; (d) clear and focused goals; (e) utilize strengths and resources with staff and students; and (f) safe and caring environment. These root causes of success provided a powerful force to form a future direction for LES that was full of optimism and hope.

The AI process generated the participants' desire to improve student learning founded on high point teaching experiences using teacher-driven instructional practices. This study provides information for the Quality Performance Accreditation process and building decisions that impact student learning. In addition, the notion of building capacity of teachers to make collective decisions about successful teaching practices may justify the need to review teacher preparation programs and the ecological conditions necessary for successful teaching practices to occur.

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This study is important because it empowers teachers as change agents using the AI process. Through the AI process, teachers make shared and collaborative decisions that generates a positive focus as successful teaching practices are explored. Through affirmative dialogue and perspective, the AI process influenced the discovery of teachers' high teaching experiences and the successful teaching practices in a learning community.

This study was important to the extent that participants could envision the future of what can be possible. The discovery of successful teaching practices founded on the root causes of success sparked a new vision of optimism, hope, and a passion for teaching. Through discovering and dreaming successful teaching practices the participants envisioned a passionate family oriented environment using progressive instructional practices for all students to excel.

Summary and Conclusions

Using a qualitative case study research design, this study described successful teaching practices in a SOE elementary school and identified the necessary ecological conditions for the teachers to sustain and extend their successful teaching practices by participating in an AI Learning Team process. A purposive sampling of eight participants was selected to participate in a two-day process that focused on the two phases of the AI 4-D Cycle.

Based on the collected data and analysis used in this study, five salient findings were identified: (1) Lincoln Elementary School is a cohesive group of educators who seek to help students reach their potential; (2) Lincoln Elementary School educators collaborate to strengthen and enhance instructional practices; (3) Lincoln Elementary School educators value and care about all school stakeholders; (4) Lincoln Elementary School educators created an inclusive community bound by strong interpersonal relationships; (5) Lincoln Elementary School

educators want to create a learning environment that is student centered and family oriented where teachers use progressive practices in teaching students.

My research brings to the forefront that successful teaching practices occurring in a SOE school can shift from criticism of school reform and accountability to envision a positive image when using an AI process. Educators who are willing to meet the demands of school accountability and sustain high performance may desire to discover what teachers describe as successful teaching experiences and the ecological conditions to sustain and extend these practices.

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APPENDICES

Wichita State University Institutional Review Application

Wichita State University Institutional Review Board (IRB)
for the Protection of Human Subjects

Application for Approval of Research Involving Human Subjects

Double click gray boxes to enter information. Please check spelling, punctuation, and grammar before submitting.

Name of Principal Investigator(s): **Raymond Calabrese, Professor for Educational Leadership, Wichita State University, Wichita, KS 67260-0142**
(For a student project, Principal Investigator **must** be a WSU faculty member; student is listed as Co-Investigator.)
Departmental/Program Affiliation of PI: **Educational Leadership** Campus Box: **142** Phone: **978-5329**
E-mail   ray_calabrese@cox.net
Name(s) of Co-Investigator(s): _____**Jackie L. Glasgow**_____

Co-Investigator(s) is/are: ____ Faculty Member __**X**__Graduate Student _____ Undergraduate Student

Other, please specify _____

Type of Project: ___ Class Project ___ Capstone Project __**X**_ Thesis or Dissertation ___ Funded Research   ___ Unfunded Research   ___ Secondary Data Collection/Analysis ___ Program Evaluation

Title of Project/Proposal: An Appreciative Inquiry Case Study: Recognizing the Positive Core of Teachers in a Low SES Elementary School that Met Standard of Excellence

Expected Completion Date: **March 30, 2008   Funding Agency (if applicable)**: **Not Applicable**
Please attach additional sheets, if necessary, with numbers of responses corresponding to those listed below.

1.   Describe the research in non-technical language.

This dissertation proposes to describe the successful teaching practices of teachers in a high performing, low socio-economic elementary school through the teachers' and their principal's personal reflections on their successful practices. The state of Kansas acknowledges high performing as meeting AYP or Standard of Excellence (SOE). Lincoln Elementary School

is a SOE school. This study will seek to understand what contributes to the successful practices and to identify the necessary ecological conditions for the teachers to sustain and extend their successful teaching practices. Research will be conducted during an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) Learning Team process which will occur during November and December of 2007 at Lincoln Elementary School in Wellington, Kansas. A qualitative case study research design will be conducted to discover the perceptions of teachers' experiences studied through the theoretical framework of capacity building and an AI theoretical research perspective. Seven teachers and their principal defined as instructional leaders in the research questions. They will participate in a two day transformation process of the 4-D Cycle: Discovery and Dream. The 4-D Cycle will engage the teachers and principal in affirmative questions that focus on what gives life to Lincoln Elementary School and what might their vision be for the future.

The research will answer two questions:

1. How do instructional leaders describe their successful pedagogical practices?
2. What are the dreams of instructional leaders in Lincoln Elementary School to sustain and extend their successful pedagogical practices?

2.   Describe the benefits of the research to the human subjects, if any, and of the benefits to human or scientific knowledge.

        Findings from this study have the potential to provide a model of successful teaching practices in a SOE school and contribute to the application of AI to educational settings. Successful teaching practices in high-performing schools can provide a model for school reform efforts with the increasing pressures of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). More educators are advocating for an asset-based approach of hope than a deficit approach of problem solving. The significance of this study will provide an expanded appreciation of the successful teaching practices of teachers in a SOE elementary school and build the capacity of teachers in the application of successful practices.

3.   Describe the subjects, how the subjects are to be selected, how many are to be used, and indicate explicitly whether any are minors (under age 18 per Kansas law) or otherwise members of "vulnerable" populations, including, but not limited to, pregnant women, prisoners, psychiatric patients, etc.

        Participants will include a purposive sample of eight adult faculty members from Lincoln Elementary School who meet the following criteria: (a) one teacher per K-5 grade levels, (b) the principal (c) teachers and principal have been at Lincoln Elementary School for a minimum of three years, and (d) the gender balance will reflect the faculty composition of the school. All participants will voluntarily participate in this study.

A. There are no minors or members of vulnerable populations that will be asked to participate.
B. During the AI Learning Team process, semi-structured paired interviews will be conducted with the participants.
C. During the AI Learning Team process, two focus groups comprised of the eight

participants will be conducted.

    D. The participants' created documents will be collected from the AI Learning Team process to be analyzed.

4.   Describe each procedure step-by-step, including the frequency, duration, and location of each procedure.

Permission for data collection at Lincoln Elementary School will be arranged and approved by the superintendent in advance. The semi-structured paired interviews and the focus groups will occur periodically during the discovery and dream phases of the AI 4-D Cycle. Release time for two days of data collection will be provided by USD 353 for the teacher/principal participants. The participant created documents may include but not limited to interview notes, digital recordings, and conceptual maps. The confidentiality of all participants will be protected. Consent forms for the participants in the study will be provided and collected prior to any interview or focus group.

5.   Describe any risks or discomforts (physical, psychological, or social) and how they will be minimized.

There are no known risks or discomforts anticipated for any of the participants.

6.   Would subjects undergo these or similar procedures (medical, psychological, educational, etc.) if they were not taking part in this research? ___ Yes __X_ No

7.   Describe how the subject's personal privacy is to be protected and confidentiality of information guaranteed (e.g. disposition of questionnaires, interview notes, recorded audio or videotapes, etc.).

Protocols for the data collection will be followed precisely. Data collected from the study can only be identified by the researcher. Participation is strictly voluntary and participants may withdraw at any time without fear of repercussions. Participants will be assured of complete confidentiality and all data will be protected for confidentiality. Any data collected from participants in this study will be aggregated and only available to the researcher. The names of participants will not appear in my dissertation or any report, publication, or presentation resulting from this study. Findings from this research may be presented at national conferences or be published in a scholarly journal. If this is the case, the name of the district/schools or participants will not be associated with the data, thus assuring confidentiality.

8.   Describe the informed consent process and attach a copy of all consent and/or assent documents. These documents **must** be retained for three years beyond completion of the study. Any waiver of written informed consent must be justified.

All participants who volunteer for the study will sign a consent form prior to the study. Data that is obtained from the study will be confidential and no participant will be personally identified in the research. The researcher will be the only person who has access to the data produced from the study.

A. Attach all supporting material, including, but not limited to, questionnaire or survey forms and letters of approval from cooperating institutions.

The Principal Investigator agrees to abide by the federal regulations for the protection of human subjects and to retain consent forms for a minimum of three (3) years beyond the completion of the study. If the data collection or testing of subjects is to be performed by student assistants, the Principal Investigator will assume full responsibility for supervising the students to ensure that human subjects are adequately protected.

_____   _____

Signature of Principal Investigator   Date

_____   _____

Signature of Co-Investigator (for student project)   Date

APPENDIX B

Wellington USD 353 Superintendent Letter of Consent

Box 648
221 South Washington

USD 353
Wellington, KS 67152

620-326-4300
(Fax) 620-326-4304

Mrs. Jackie Glasgow
Assistant Superintendent
USD 353 Wellington
221S. Washington
Wellington, Kansas 67152

October 15, 2007

Dear Mrs. Glasgow,

I grant your permission to conduct a study as a part of your requirements in the Wichita State University Educational Leadership Doctoral Program. I understand your proposed study is entitled "An Appreciative Inquiry Case Study: Recognizing the Positive Core of a Standard of Excellence, Low SES Grade School." I acknowledge your study involves the collection of data from faculty members at Lincoln Elementary and will be conducted during the 2007-2008 school year.

If there are any further questions or any associated issues I can assist with, please contact me.

I extend to you my congratulations regarding this dedicated work and offer my encouragement for a successful conclusion to your project.

Sincerely,

Rick Weiss
Superintendent
USD 353, Wellington
221 S. Washington
Wellington, Kansas 67152

Educating and Empowering All Students with Lifelong Learning Skills

Letter of Consent for Teacher and Principal Participants

Dear Lincoln Elementary Teachers and Lincoln Elementary Principal:

Purpose: I am a doctoral student at Wichita State University who is conducting research that specifically focuses on discovering the successful teaching practices of teachers in a Standard of Excellence (SOE), low socio-economic elementary school through the teachers' and principal's personal reflections on their successful practices. This study will seek to understand what contributes to the successful practices and to identify the necessary ecological conditions for the teachers to sustain and extend their successful teaching practices. Research will be conducted during an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) Learning Team process that includes the first two phases of the AI 4-D Cycle. The research will occur during November and December of 2007 at Lincoln Elementary School in Wellington, Kansas.

Participant Selection & Explanation of Procedures: You have been invited to voluntarily share your experiences of successful teaching practices and to show interest in participating in the study. Once information is shared about the study, you will be asked to sign written consent for voluntary participation. The teachers and principal will participate in a two day AI Learning Team process. Participants will be guided through two phases of the AI 4-D Cycle: discovery and dream. Participation will occur over two contractual school days. The AI Learning Team activities will include semi-structured paired interviews, focus groups, and participant created documents. Data collected from each of the methods will remain confidential. The two day AI Learning Team process will be held at a site in USD 353, Wellington, KS. These dates will be arranged in advance through the district superintendent and building principal. The typical length of each phase (dream and discovery) in the 4-D Cycle will be approximately one contractual school day.

No minors or members of vulnerable populations will be asked to participate in this study. There are no known risks or discomforts anticipated for any of the participants

Benefits: Findings from this study have the potential to provide a model of successful teaching practices in a SOE school and contribute to the application of AI to educational settings. Successful teaching practices in high-performing schools can provide a model for school reform efforts with the increasing pressures of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). More educators are advocating for an asset-based approach of hope than a deficit approach of problem solving. The significance of this study will provide an expanded appreciation of the successful teaching

practices of teachers in a SOE elementary school and build the capacity of teachers in the application of successful practices.

Refusal/Withdrawal/Confidentiality:

Participation in this study is voluntary. You are under no obligation to participate. Should you decide not to participate in the study, your decision will not affect your future relations with Lincoln Elementary School, Wellington USD 353, or Wichita State University. Your privacy will be protected and confidentiality of information guaranteed. Any data collected from you in this study will be aggregated and only I (the researcher) can obtain the data. Your name will not appear in my dissertation, publication, report, or presentation that may result from this study. Findings from this research may be presented at a national conference, or published in a scholarly journal. If this is the case, your name or that of Lincoln Elementary School, Wellington USD 353, will not be associated with the data, thus assuring confidentiality. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and voluntarily agree to participate in the study. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or fear of reprisal.

Contact: If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at home at 620-326-8557 or at school at 620-326-4300. Should you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the Office of Research Administration at Wichita State University, Wichita, KS 67260-0007, telephone (316) 978-3285. A copy of this form is provided for your records. Thank you for your assistance in my study.

Sincerely,

Jackie L. Glasgow

I agree to participate in this study.

_____ _____
Signature of Participant   Date

APPENDIX D

Participant Invitation for Study

Good afternoon! I would like to thank-you for providing me an opportunity to share the purpose of my research and present an opportunity for you to volunteer as a participant in this study. The purpose of my study will be to discover the successful teaching practices that teachers experience at an elementary school that has met Standard of Excellence and to identify the essential conditions teachers believe necessary to sustain and extend their successful teaching practices. Successful pedagogy and teaching practices are linked to student success. Identifying, describing, and understanding successful pedagogical practices for educating students considered at risk can play an important role in the effort of school reform. Research is limited on studies that directly relate to successful teaching practices of teachers in a high-performing school and the conditions for the teachers to sustain and extend their successful teaching practices. More educators are advocating for a strength-based approach of hope than a deficit approach of problem solving.

I would like to invite you to participate in my study of the successful teaching practices and the conditions necessary for teachers to sustain and extend their successful teaching practices. I will be using an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) 4-D Cycle process. AI is based on the belief that every organization has something that works well and these strengths can be the beginning for creating positive change. You will be provided release time to participate in a two day Appreciative Learning Team process to be scheduled in November or December. Each person will be guided through two phases of the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) process: (a) discovery and (b) dream. There will be several data collecting methods used during the AI Learning Team process: (a) paired-interviews, (b) focus groups, and (c) participant created documents.

I have explained my study and the benefits of identifying the successful teaching practices in an elementary school that has met Standard of Excellence. At this time, those who are interested and willing to participate in this study are invited to sign consent forms for the study. Anyone not wanting to participate may leave without fear of recrimination or penalty.

APPENDIX E

Protocol for Day 1: Discovery

All activities planned for the Discovery Phase will take place in the timeframe of a school day.

A. Welcome and overview of the study

B. Role of the Researcher
    a. Facilitate and manage the first phase of the 4-D Cycle
    b. Establish the structure and timeframe
    c. Explain the guidelines for the activities
    d. Create a safe constructive environment

C. Ground Rules
    a. Participants have a voice in a safe environment
    b. Create "relationship-enhancing" conversations
    c. Everyone participates
    d. Listen, inquire, and be curious
    e. All ideas are valid
    f. Everything is written and recorded
    g. Seek further possibilities and action

D. The Power of the Positive Question: An Introduction to the first phase of the AI 4-D Cycle

E. Learning from Stories of Successful Teaching Practices: Appreciative Paired Interviews.

    a. Guidelines for Paired Interviews:

        1. Select an interview partner from a different grade level or role other than yours.
        2. Interview your partner using the interview guide. Each person will have forty-five minutes to interview his or her partner.
        3. All interviews will be recorded.
        4. Encourage your partner to share his or her story; draw out the story by being genuinely curious about their experiences, thoughts, and feelings. Remember to have a fun conversation.
        5. Take good notes and listen for great quotes and stories. Listen as if you had to recall and retell the story yourself. You will have an opportunity to share the results. Information shared will help to shape the future of Lincoln Elementary School. Complete questions on the interview summary sheet immediately following each interview.

F. Possible Probing Questions:

a. Can you provide more details?
b. Why was that significant to you?
c. How did that influence you?
d. What was your involvement?
e. How did others support you?

G. Permission to Record

Everything that is stated in the paired interview will be kept strictly confidential. Names or any identifying information will not be used in any reports, charts, or other publicly accessible media that may come from this research.

With your consent, I will record this paired interview for research purposes. If there are no questions about the process or the purpose of the focus group we will begin. (Pause briefly)

Turn on tape recorder near each pair and state "With permission of __*names*__ I am recording this focus group at Lincoln Elementary School on __*date .*"__

H. Interview Guide for Appreciative Paired Interviews

1. During your entire time as a teacher or principal at Lincoln Elementary School, I am sure you have had many ups and downs, good days and bad days. Instead of reflecting on what is not working, I would like you to reflect on a high teaching experience, a time when you were most proud of yourself and at your best teaching students. Please tell your story that illustrates this high teaching experience. What happened and what was going on?

2. Please describe a best teaching practice in your professional experience when you felt most alive, exceptionally proud of yourself, and students were highly engaged. What occurred and what did you feel?

3. Describe what the students were participating in.

4. Without being humble, what were your best qualities, skills, and values that made it a great experience?

5. Describe the classroom environment and surroundings that inspired this experience.

6. What do you consider to be the most important factors or conditions that help Lincoln Elementary School be successful to meet Standard of Excellence (SOE)?

7. What other teaching practices excite you as a teacher or principal as the case may

be?

8. If anything imaginable were possible with no barriers or constraints, what would the ideal look like for Lincoln Elementary School so as to gain and extend successful teaching practices?

9. What three wishes would you make to heighten the capacity to gain and enhance the successful teaching practices at Lincoln Elementary School?

10. Is there anything else you would like to share about successful teaching practices?

I. Interview Summary

Name of interviewer:

Name of interviewed participant:

1. What was the most notable or best quote that came out of this interview?

2. What was the most exemplary story that came out for you during the interview?

3. What was learned from the interview?

4. List 1-3 themes or "root causes of success" that stood out the most for you during the interview; the thoughts that "grabbed" you when things are at their best.

5. What are the core strengths you want to see preserved?

6. What is the vision for the future of Lincoln Elementary School?

J. Discovering the Strengths of Lincoln Elementary School

a. **Purpose:** To appreciate each other as colleagues and to learn about the experiences, successes, strengths, hopes, and vision each person brings to the AI Learning Team.

b. **Guidelines:**

   i. Participants will be divided equally into two groups. Each will select a role to be a discussion leader, timekeeper, recorder, and reporter.
   ii. Each participant will introduce their interview partner by sharing highlights from the interviews. Highlights recorded on the Interview Summary Sheet will be shared.
   iii. Patterns and themes will be noted as others tell their stories.
   iv. The recorder will make two lists: (a) themes from the high point experiences and successes and (b) wishes for the future vision of Lincoln

Elementary School.

    v. Each group will report their findings.

K. Discovering the Positive Core of Lincoln Elementary School

    a. Purpose: To share the most powerful stories and discover the driving factors that energizes Lincoln Elementary School to be at its best as a SOE school.

    b. Guidelines:

        i. The eight participants reconvene with their original group. Each will select a role to be a discussion leader, timekeeper, recorder, and reporter.

        ii. From the stories and highlights previously shared identify all the root causes of success that energizes Lincoln Elementary School when it is at its best. Listen to all the successful practices, values, conditions, resources, processes, programs, relationships, and other factors that generate success.

        iii. Create on chart paper two columns with the headings "Stories" and "Root Causes of Success" to capture the successes shared from the highlights and stories.

        iv. Prepare a three to five minute presentation to include:

            1. One exemplar story that powerfully illustrates Lincoln Elementary School at its best in terms of successful teaching practices.

            2. Your group's top five to ten "root causes of success".

L. Mapping the Positive Core

    a. The positive core of strengths and successes will be created by the participants as an illustration to be displayed in the school.

(adapted from Cooperrider et al., 2003; Ludema et al., 2003b)

APPENDIX F

Protocol for Day 2: Dream

All activities planned for the Dream Phase will take place in the timeframe of a school day.

A. Welcome and overview of the study

B. Role of the Researcher
    a. Facilitate and manage the second phase of the 4-D Cycle
    b. Establish the structure and timeframe
    c. Explain the guidelines for the activities
    d. Create a safe constructive environment

C. Ground Rules
    a. Participants have a voice in a safe environment
    b. Create "relationship-enhancing" conversations
    c. Everyone participates
    d. Listen, inquire, and be curious
    e. All ideas are valid
    f. Everything is written and recorded
    g. Seek further possibilities and action

D. The Positive Image-Positive Action Relationship

E. Envisioning the Future: Creative Dreaming

    a. Purpose: To imagine the future for Lincoln Elementary School that you desire to work toward.

    b. Guidelines:

        i. Participants will select a role to be a discussion leader, timekeeper, recorder, and reporter in their groups from the day before.
        ii. At your tables, share the highlights from interview questions 8 and 9. As a group, put yourselves in the year 2015. What is the world calling you to be as an elementary school? As you look around, you see that your elementary school is functioning as you dreamed. What is happening? How is your school different? How are the students learning? What do your classes look like?
        iii. Visualize the dream you really want from the themes and root causes of success in the discovery phase. Visualize Lincoln Elementary School the way you really want it in order to maximize the successful teaching practices. Imagine it as if it exists today! What is it like? As you create your image of the future, consider possible reference to some of the following areas:

1. Lincoln Elementary School's mission and purpose
2. The culture and school climate of Lincoln Elementary School
3. The schools' practices and structures creating a culture of excellence
4. Decision-making and planning processes
5. Collaboration and teamwork
6. Ways of attracting and retaining high quality teachers
7. Uses of technology and sharing of information
8. Excellence in staff development and training
9. Image and reputation
10. Change readiness and methods for increasing change capacity
11. Communication practices
12. Most exciting and promising strategies being pursued
13. Positive impact and results
14. Other desirable elements

 iv. Take enough time talking as a group to imagine fully Lincoln Elementary School of the future. This is an exercise in creative dreaming of the kind of school you desire.

 v. List on chart paper the key factors or elements of your collective dream.

G. Shaping the Dream Statement

 a. Purpose: To capture the collective dream into words for Lincoln Elementary School.

 b. Guidelines:

  i. Participants will select a role to be a discussion leader, timekeeper, recorder, and reporter in their groups.

  ii. Capture your group's collective dream in a 2015 dream statement written on chart paper:

> *"In 2015 Lincoln Elementary School is…………"*
> *(your optimal image of the ideal as if it is happening right now)*

Statements need to be:
- **Desired.** Does it reflect what your really want? If you have it, would you want it?
- **Bold, provocative.** Is it a stretch that will appeal to others?
- **Affirmative.** Is it stated as if it is happening now?
- **Grounded.** Are there examples that illustrate your dream as a real possibility?
- **Unconditionally positive.** Will it bring out the best in people, Lincoln Elementary School, and the stakeholders it touches?

H. Presenting the Dream

  a. Purpose: To bring the dream to life by enacting it before all the participants.

  b. Guidelines: As a group, choose a creative way to present your collective vision or dream of what Lincoln Elementary School would look like for the successful teaching practices to be continued or enhanced. You may choose to present a skit, song, a drawing, news cover story, poem, or a narrative. After everyone has prepared their dream you will have five minutes to present to the group of participants.

I. Enriching the Dream for Lincoln Elementary School

  a. Following the presentations, each group will make a list on chart paper of the images they believe holds the most promise for the future and what the images mean to organize for the future of Lincoln Elementary School.

(adapted from Cooperrider et al., 2003; Ludema et al., 2003b)