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ACCOUNTABILITY IS
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ACCOUNTABILITY IS MORE THAN MARKETS, MISSIONS, OR MECHANISMS:
THE CASE OF THREE MICHIGAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

By

Brenda Elyse Neuman-Sheldon

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Teacher Education

2000

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ABSTRACT

ACCOUNTABILITY IS MORE THAN MARKETS, MISSIONS, OR MECHANISMS: THE CASE OF THREE MICHIGAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

By

Brenda Elyse Neuman-Sheldon

This dissertation attempts to describe and explain the process of accountability in Michigan public schools through an exploration of how educators and agents of accountability understand and manage their roles and responsibilities within schools and larger educational organizations. This dissertation tells the stories of three Michigan schools -- two charter schools, and one traditional public school. Each school in this study presented different challenges and issues, and as a result, their accountability stories were quite different from one another.

Together the cases reveal three possible accountability environments -- compounding, congruent, competing. Compounding accountability environments are characterized by multiple agents, operating with similar expectations and employing different means of achieving the same ends. Congruent accountability environments feature multiple agents working towards a similar goal, implementing comparable accountability frameworks. In compounding accountability environments multiple agents operate in an effort to support different educational visions and attempt to implement contradictory accountability frameworks.

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The three cases of accountability described in this dissertation illuminate the complexity of public schools and public school reforms. The process of accountability at these schools appeared to be a function of multiple authorities and accountability systems operating simultaneously. Furthermore, these cases show that accountability systems within schools operate based upon the relationships between authorities, the attention paid to cultivating shared values, as well as the emphasis on regulation to enforce ideology.

This dissertation revealed that accountability is more than authority and mechanisms. In the schools participating in this study, accountability involved the relationships among authorities and the mechanisms that each authority endorsed. For the educators in this study, accountability was more than being subject to regulation; it involved a set of beliefs, processes, and relationships. Ultimately, this dissertation concludes that ideology, regulation, and human agency all contribute to what we commonly call accountability.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The day before my oral defense of this dissertation I opened a fortune cookie. The fortune read “Everyone agrees, you are the greatest”. I was so excited by this premonition that I folded up the little slip of paper and placed it in my brassiere. I wore it there for the rest of the day and through my defense the next morning. I figured that keeping that little piece of encouragement close to my heart couldn’t hurt. I guess that it didn’t. On May 10, 1999, I passed my oral defense. I could diminish the amount of work that I put into this volume of work by claiming it was the power of the cookie that led to my success, but that would be untrue. What is true however, is that I didn’t do this work alone. I would not be submitting this completed dissertation without the support and encouragement of my family, friends and mentors. Now, while all these people may not agree that I am the **greatest**, they often saw in me more than I saw in myself and for that I will always be grateful.

First, I must thank my husband, Steven Sheldon. Steve not only gave me more love and emotional support than any wife has the right to ask of her husband, but he was an eager, critical reader of my work. Though he had to suffer through my numerous fits of anxiety and self-doubt, Steve never lost faith in me and constantly encouraged me to push forward. I know that I would still be sitting waist deep in color coded interview transcripts with absolutely no text of my own if Steve had not gently reminded me how important it was to actually write.

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My parents, Jerry and Terry Neuman, have been a constant source of support for me throughout my graduate school years (not to mention my entire life). Their encouragement to apply to and attend their alma mater led me to East Lansing. My parents have seen me grow as a woman and an intellectual. It was one of the proudest days of my life to have them watch me defend my dissertation. I also need to point out that my parents, as the co-chairs of the “Neuman Fund for Continuing Education” were generous supporters of this research project.

In their own ways, my entire family has supported my work. Even though my mother’s first reaction when I told her that I was going to attend MSU was “I found my husband at Michigan State, maybe you will too,” she has always told me that my career should come first. Well, I did find a husband and a career, and I hope that she continues to be proud of the decisions that I make (I promise that I will write a book). My father, who is far too enamored with academia, was always eager to read my work and actually read the entire defense draft of this dissertation. I am sure that he will proudly point out some typos in this version as well. By the way, I don’t care if problem is not a verb. In my world “problematize” IS a word. I would also like to thank my brothers and sister for their support while I wrote this dissertation. Brian, Bradley, Bryce, and Brooke each actually listened to me tell them about the research I was conducting, and while they may not have understood or cared about the minute differences between different teachers’ understanding of accountability, they nodded and smiled through my explanations.

My husband’s family, Bev, Sam, and David Sheldon, have been extremely supportive. Bev and Sam, never wanting to see me stressed or unhappy, have made every effort to relax me. From massages, to their love and understanding, the Sheldons have

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been more than generous. I must also thank David who has shown interest in my dissertation work, and has supported Steve's love of the Lakers (seeing as I couldn't possibly root for the purple and gold).

My committee was instrumental in helping me to navigate the research and writing process. Through coursework, research, and teaching Cleo Cherryholmes, Bob Floden, David Plank, and Gary Sykes all mentored me in both the intellectual and practical aspects of this dissertation. I would especially like to thank Gary who served as my committee chair, and graduate advisor. His guidance and critical reading of my work were invaluable.

From the time that I began conceptualizing my dissertation research, I was a part of numerous writing groups. The people with whom I worked were a source of emotional support, intellectual guidance, and badly needed editing skill. Even though my early writing gave Phil Kelly a headache, as the policy king, he was one of my earliest role models at MSU. Devon Brenner, my first friend in graduate school, has seen my writing and thinking evolve tremendously. Without her, I might never have been able to write my dissertation proposal. Susan Wallace-Cowell and Heather Pleasants were both skilled "writing therapists." Together we learned the important connection between cooking, eating, and writing, as well as the value of friendship during the difficult dissertation process. When Susan and Heather abandoned me (i.e. got jobs and moved), Joan Hughes and Brian Yusko were kind enough to let me join their writing group. Joan and Brian helped me over the final hump of the dissertation, reading excessively long chapters. I will be eternally grateful to Joan for reminding me that "its" and "it's" are not the same word.

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This dissertation absolutely would not have been completed without Karla Bellingar, transcription queen, goddess of the universe. Her speed and skill made it possible for me to complete all of my interviews on-schedule. I would also like to acknowledge the kindness and patience of Lisa Roy. There are very few people I know that would allow a graduate student to borrow a transcription machine for over a year (not to mention the laptops). I also need to thank Jeannie Patrick, who was there across from the office whenever I needed her help or technical assistance.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank my friends, without whom I might never have survived graduate school. From my TE cohort group to the Power Penguins inner-tube water polo team, my friends have offered me love, support, crisis management, and even much-needed comic relief. Through my relationships with my friends, colleagues, mentors, and research participants I learned that while the dissertation is a solo project, it is not one completed alone.

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning, the substantive work of American public education, are shaped and determined educational accountability systems. Public schools serve many different constituencies, each with different visions of what schools should accomplish. Oftentimes these visions conflict with one another, resulting in tensions that are then manifested in the accountability systems to which we attempt to subject our schools (Kirp, 1982 p.173). As a result, the varying stake-holders in American public schooling each attempt to employ a variety of accountability mechanisms¹, elements of an accountability system, that are intended to ensure that each audience of interest achieves to some extent their own vision of what schooling should look like. Accountability systems are the means by which roles and obligations are established and the process by which we determine the course of public education. Accountability systems dictate expectations, responsibilities, and expected outcomes of schools (Theobald & Mills, 1995). Thus, role of educational actors (i.e. students, teachers, administrators, etc.) are shaped by the nature of the accountability system employed. How educators understand and manage their roles and responsibilities and how stake-holders create a set of obligations and expectations constitutes a relationship through which accountability processes operate.

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Critiques of Current Educational Accountability Systems

Public schools are traditionally held accountable by placing the operational control of schools at the local level, specifically with boards of education, that are elected by the communities which the schools serve and who create policies that are then carried out by local district employees (Wise, 1979 p.51). These democratically managed bureaucratic accountability systems that currently operate in American public schools have, in recent history, been criticized by a number of authors for their perceived ineffectiveness and unresponsiveness (for example Chubb & Moe, 1990; Gintis, 1995; Lieberman, 1993). Sheldon and Biddle (1998) argue that traditional accountability systems that stress rewards and punishments are “simple minded” (p. 166). They further argue that accountability systems that are focused on attempting to whip teachers and students into shape are destined to fail because they do not trust teachers and students to want to be involved in effective teaching and learning. Similarly, Paul DeWeese, (1994) chairman of TEACH² Michigan Education Fund claims that “by 1989 the public education system in Michigan had evolved into a self protective, rule-driven, bureaucratic monopoly that was failing an extraordinary number of students” (p. 30). He further characterizes the public school system as one of exclusive franchise regardless of performance, inflexible and unwieldy regulation, policy gridlock, and inequitable finance.

Democratic accountability systems focus heavily on the governmental management of educational organizations and make the following assumptions: a) the business of schooling is relatively certain and codifiable; b) technologies and goals are agreed upon; c) procedures for meeting goals are simple and easily implemented; d) there are established analysis strategies; e) there are few problems to be solved; and f)

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following procedures is known to produce desired outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 1989 p.63; Firestone & Bader, 1992 p.13, p.35). Thus, both organizational structure and performance indicators are not determined by those most directly involved in teaching and learning. This constitutes a system in which organization and control are hierarchically based impositions upon practitioners (Wise, 1979 p.52).

Chubb and Moe (1990) argue that the current arrangements supporting direct democratic control of American schools impose structures that are ill suited to effective education. Lieberman (1993) also argues that democratic accountability does not allow for public accountability. He proposes that, while democratic principles may establish the regulatory environment of American public schools, a pervasive government bureaucracy in the operation and maintenance of school accountability systems diminishes public capacity to obtain information or exercise their will. These circumstances exist because the system that provides the public with information about schooling is geared towards perpetuating the status quo and education providers account in self-interested fashion, supporting their objectives over that of the mass public (, p.92). Both Chubb and Moe as well as Lieberman conclude that new types of institutions, such as charter schools, must be created.

Charter School Theory

Charter school reform theory is based on themes of anti-bureaucracy and community control of education. Through expanded opportunities for parent and educator choice, charter schools attempt to restore the connection between parents and their children's schools, as well as to establish greater correspondence between parental values and the education that their children receive. The assumptions of school choice theory --

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schools must accommodate parent and student preferences, effective school reform necessitates the breakdown of current bureaucratic structures; choice systems will encourage competition and improvement in schools, there will be incentives for teacher innovations; and market forces are an efficient means of achieving goals -- define theoretical accountability for charter schools (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Fuller, Elmore, & Orfield, 1996). Because of their reliance on choice mechanisms, charter schools are intended to be accountable to the varied preferences of parents and students, and their success is determined by recruitment and retention of students. Charter schools, as a reform effort, seek autonomy from external regulation because they presume that effective schooling will result. In order to achieve the conditions necessary for charter schools to operate traditional accountability systems must be transformed in those schools.

If external regulation and democratic accountability are the hindrances to effective schooling, then they must be replaced with an alternative. Autonomy and the implementation of self-imposed accountability mechanisms are the proposed alternatives by charter school advocates. Charter schools should be held accountable in the following ways: a) the preferences of students, parents and community members are central in the establishment of standards for both educators and schools; b) parental or community satisfaction and student performance serve as incentives and sanctions for compliance with community standards; and c) parents are able to exercise their “exit” option in the event that a school does not meet their needs (Hirschman, 1970). Those who support charter schools propose a market accountability framework, placing parents in the role of

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Charter schools attempt to strike a bargain -- freedom from democratically organized bureaucracies and deregulation in exchange for higher standards and/or self-imposed accountability. This point has garnered a great deal of political support and attention. For example, in his 10-point plan for education, President Clinton outlined his goals for expanding school choice and charter schools. Point five argues that schools should be given more flexibility, authority, and support “in return for greater accountability to parents and the public for high standards” (Clinton, 1997). Stated more bluntly, Keith Halpern and Eliza Culbertson (1994) argue that the premise of charter schools is simple and is based on the idea that schools “must be freed from the bureaucratic restrictions of traditional schools”. In return for this freedom, charter schools must be held accountable for results and required to measure up to the standards they set for themselves. These broad statements and assumptions about the power of autonomy and deregulation to affect change have bolstered the charter school movement and encouraged stronger state charter school legislation. Ravitch and Viteritti (1996) write that charter schools are “accountable to a public authority. In fact, the charter, which defines academic expectations and other legal responsibilities, often serves as a more powerful instrument for accountability than anything that exists for most ordinary public schools” (p.7). Thus, at its core, the charter school addresses accountability issues.

In an attempt to reconfigure school accountability systems, charter schools are not demonstrating a trade or bargain, but layering more accountability mechanisms onto already burdened work environments (Neuman, 1998). Existing accountability systems,

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and the presence of democratically organized bureaucracies are conceptually embedded in American schooling and are not “removable” at will, even in charter schools (Dorn, 1998)³. Reform efforts, such as charter schools, instead of removing traditional educational accountability systems, add extra audiences, criteria, and agents of accountability systems. Michigan charter schools are a particularly interesting example of the multiple internal and external expectations placed on both schools and educators. The implementation of charter school legislation in Michigan provides an opportunity to explore how school accountability works. Michigan charter schools are, by design, subject to multiple accountability systems (i.e., from the State, communities, etc.). This can create multiple, potentially conflicting expectations for charter schools.

Accountability, while composed of many mechanisms and ideals, is based on relationships between people. Individuals construct and maintain the organizations we call schools. The manner in which an accountability system operates is equally dependent on the mechanisms that are in place and the relationships between those who are entrusted to employ those mechanisms. To understand the impact of educational reform efforts, it is important to examine the experiences, perceptions, and interactions of educators, because “each individual has his or her own social history and an individual perspective on the world” (Fontana & Frey, 1994 p.374). Educators’ social histories and perspectives are, in part, the foundation of their beliefs and actions within a social organization. Thus, with “perspectives on and interpretations of their own and other actors’ actions”, educational actors’ understandings of accountability are a valuable piece to be incorporated into our own conceptualizations and theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994 p.280). Educators’ understandings of accountability shaped the course of this research.

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This dissertation examines the roles, perspectives, and values that stake-holders in Michigan public education hold surrounding issues of accountability. This allowed for a rigorous examination of how street level bureaucrats construe their work, the development of a framework for examining “the system”, and the opportunity to explore the nature of the relationships that develop surrounding issues of public accountability.

The research was guided by the following three questions:

- How do educators most closely associated with two Michigan charter schools, and one traditional public school make sense of and use the accountability frameworks to which they are subject?
- How do those agents of accountability most closely associated with two Michigan charter schools and one traditional public school create and make sense of those accountability frameworks to which they subject educators?
- What are the differences in the perceived consequences (intended or unintended) of the implementation of accountability frameworks in the three schools in this study?

In an effort to address these research questions, this dissertation provides rich cases of accountability in three Michigan schools. These cases are an attempt to describe and explain educational accountability in Michigan that provides insight into both the nature of charter schools as a reform, and issues surrounding power and authority in all public schools.

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Chapter 1 Notes

¹ See Chapter 4 for further explanation.

² Towards Educational Accountability and Choice

³ Sherman Dorn writes that: “Schools, like other public bodies, have their own professional and organization dynamics that mediate, rather than automatically reflect, outside influences. Thus, when we speak of a political legacy of school policies [including accountability systems], that legacy is part of a larger negotiation over the role of public schools” (Dorn, 1998). Democratically organized accountability systems represent one type of political legacy (Dorn uses statistics as another example) that mediate school practices.

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CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW

Academics, educators, and policy-makers alike have all produced a complex mix of solutions for how accountability should be addressed in American schools. To muddy the waters even further, various constituencies define accountability differently. Some define accountability as a *product* (e.g. Gintis, 1995 p. 492) or *rewards or sanctions* (e.g. Olson, 1998). Still others define accountability as *standards* or even a *problem* (e.g. Abelman, Elmore, Even, Kenyon, & Marshall, 1998). Some authors even define accountability as a *process* (e.g. Levin, 1974 p. 375). Regardless of how it is defined, public outcry for “more accountability” as a solution to what is perceived to be a failure of the American public school system demands that we explore just what accountability means in American education.

A General Definition of Accountability

Accountability systems are based on a normative orientation that shapes the character of a set of mechanisms or technical features. A normative orientation is the expression of an either tacitly or explicitly agreed upon decision regarding to whom, for what, and how educational organizations and the actors within them are held accountable. The technical features of an accountability system are the mechanisms that reflect the normative orientation of those who hold educators and schools accountable.

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Accountability systems begin with two foundational elements, expectations and outcomes. At its most basic level, accountability can be reduced to a very simple equation. When outcomes meet or exceed expectations, accountability has been achieved: $O \geq E \rightarrow A$. Similarly, if outcomes fall short of expectations, then accountability has not been achieved: $O < E \nrightarrow A$. But accountability systems consist of more than outcomes and expectations.

Educational accountability systems are designed to ensure that schools serve their constituencies and produce an effective education based on social expectations. Towards this end, accountability systems include avenues for constituencies to nurture their goals by using rewards and sanctions. In other words, rewards, or sanctions are doled out based upon performance. If we factor in potential rewards (R) or sanctions (S) as a means for encouraging or discouraging behaviors, the equation now can be written as:

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{if } O \geq E \rightarrow A \therefore R \\ & \text{or} \\ & \text{if } O < E \nrightarrow A \therefore S \end{aligned}$$

In the event that rewards or sanctions do not produce desired outcomes, constituencies may desire a means by which they can appeal decisions made by those to whom they have entrusted their authority (Wagner, 1989). That is, action may be taken to amend the situation – redress, or correction mechanisms (CM). As a result, the accountability equation now becomes:

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{if } O \geq E \rightarrow A \therefore R \\ & \text{or} \\ & \text{if } O < E \nrightarrow A \therefore S; \text{ if after } S, O \geq E \rightarrow A \therefore R \\ & \text{or} \\ & \text{if } O < E \nrightarrow A \therefore S; \text{ if after } S, O < E \nrightarrow A \therefore CM \end{aligned}$$

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In the end, accountability may be viewed as a series of rewards, punishments, and correction mechanisms based upon expectations and outcomes designated by authorities.

In spite of the varied definitions of accountability that have become a part of the popular rhetoric, any one of the elements that comprise the system alone cannot define accountability. Accountability encompasses a broad range of outcomes, mechanisms, and relationships among individuals (Darling-Hammond, 1989 p. 60; Newmann, King, & Rigdon, 1997 p. 43). Thus, accountability systems attempt to define how schools should be organized, supported and governed.

Within schools, accountability systems are primarily based upon structures dictating to whom, for what, and how educational organizations and educators are responsible for educational goals and objectives. These systems, in addition to outlining goals and objectives for educators, also provide the public with an opportunity to determine whether or not school processes are ethical, reasonable, and applicable (Wagner, 1989 p. 124). As a result, educational accountability systems endeavor to satisfy multiple diverse goals for schools, including political, legal, bureaucratic, professional, and market goals (Darling-Hammond, 1989).

Competing Accountability Systems

Numerous accountability systems operate simultaneously in American public schools, and rarely is only one system represented in the decision-making patterns of schools (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1988 p. 8; Kirp, 1982). Numerous authors have chosen to name accountability systems in a variety of ways, including, but not limited to: technical, client, professional, moral, contractual, political, public, consumerist, personal, managerial, legal, and bureaucratic (see Becher, 1979; Burgess, 1992; Darling-Hammond,

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1989; Elmore & Associates, 1990; Kogan, 1986). While there may be multiple names for the accountability systems that influence American public schools, there are three accountability systems that have become the major influences on schools – democratic, professional, and market. These systems represent three possible normative orientations that can guide the development and implementation of accountability mechanisms. The following *general* definitions are provided for the purposes of this discussion¹:

Democratic Accountability: Schools are organized to support public goals through government agencies, elected bodies, and appointed officials. Rules and regulations are created externally, and implemented by teachers. The normative orientation is presumed to be guided by the wants and needs of the majority of American society.

Professional Accountability: Schools are organized to support professional autonomy and decision-making by teachers. Standards for entry into the profession and appropriate practice are determined within the professional body. The normative orientation is presumed to be guided by the expertise of the education profession.

Market Accountability: Schools are organized to support consumer choice in school services. Consumers are free to choose among a variety of schools designed to meet specific student or community needs. The normative orientation is presumed to be guided by self-defined communities and parents.

Democratic, professional, and market accountability systems do not exist in a vacuum, nor do they operate independently of one another. Darling-Hammond (1989) writes that accountability systems are appropriate under varying conditions, each with their own set of limitations. As a result she argues that no system operates independently. Since no one system can function effectively on its own, “hybrid forms are developed to provide checks and balances and to more carefully target vehicles for safeguarding the public

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interest toward the particular matter they can best address” (Darling-Hammond, 1989 p. 62). The result is a complex American public school system in which multiple goals are being targeted with a variety of mechanisms.

The Interaction of Multiple Accountability Systems

Those who are authorized to hold schools accountable (agents of accountability) define and delimit the legitimate purposes and products of any public schooling enterprise. Given that there are many visions for American public education and multiple proposed agents of accountability, a variety of accountability systems have been developed to support those visions. Accountability systems structure the balance of power in the politics of American public schools. In many ways, agents of accountability are each attempting to attain a dominant position in the arena of public schooling, thereby placing their interests ahead of other potential influences on schools. Thus, choices about accountability systems are choices about allocations of power (Kirp, 1982 p. 139).

Those agents of accountability to whom we delegate power and authority have an opportunity to prioritize their interests over other competing agents. Stinchcombe (1965) argues that organizations must be structured so that “those people in society who control resources essential to the organization’s success will be satisfied that their interests are represented in the goal-setting apparatus” (p. 161). Renee Kuchapski (1998), in her historical review of accountability movements argues that educational accountability along with views of the collective good changes over time. She writes, “accountability is an abstraction of political ideology. As each new genre of liberalism emerged, it changed what education was to be held accountable for, how it was to be held accountable, and to whom” (p. 542). Kuchapski’s analysis articulates that educational accountability not only

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reveals visions of the communal good, but whose influence most powerfully shapes the collective vision. If schools are structured to provide reassurances that public interests are represented, with the primary agents' interests coming first, then we can view reforms of accountability frameworks as "power plays" where agents act to serve their own visions of education over the ideals of others. The three major accountability frameworks (introduced in the previous section) compete with and influence one another to determine: a) the nature and extent of regulatory control; b) how varied educational outcomes will be; and c) the beneficiaries of services provided in American public schools.

As an ideal, accountability is simple and easy to understand ($O \geq E \rightarrow A$). It becomes a complex and controversial issue when we realize that there are multiple constituencies with varied expectations, each attempting to invoke different accountability mechanisms and achieve a variety of outcomes. Varied expectations, outcomes, incentives, sanctions, and means for correcting substandard performance all complicate what was once a simple series of "equations". We discover that outcomes exceeding expectations does not always produce accountability.

If various stakeholders (i.e., parents, districts, the state) each have different expectations of schools, then there is never a single E that can be universally entered into the equation $O \geq E \rightarrow A$. In schools we might have, for example, E_1 = academic achievement, E_2 = character development, or E_3 = effective fiscal management. Second, for each possible desired expectation, there are multiple outcomes that can be produced. In the case of academic achievement, we could argue that O_1 = test scores, O_2 = portfolios, or O_3 = teacher anecdotal assessments. For example if a parent expects a school to develop their child's character (E_2), then test scores (O_1), no matter how high,

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will not be satisfactory ($O_1 > E_2 \not\Rightarrow A$). Or, if academic achievement is the expectation (E_1), a school system might only consider test scores as an appropriate outcome, and rich portfolios (O_2) may not be satisfactory, even if they do measure academic achievement ($O_2 \geq E_1 \not\Rightarrow A$). There are a vast number of possible expectations and outcomes, contributing to an immense number of possible equations.

Current Accountability Research

Research on accountability commonly focuses on one or two issues -- who is in charge or what is the desired outcome. Two recent articles “Accountability and School Performance: Implications for Restructuring Schools” by Newmann, King, and Rigdon (1997), and “When Accountability Knocks, Will Anyone Answer?” by Abelman and Elmore, et al., (1998) are no exception. Both articles attempt to describe and explain how accountability should work in schools. Ableman, et al., and Newmann, et al. both explore the processes that are involved in enacting educational accountability.

Newmann, King and Rigdon (1997) examine accountability as an issue of who has authority in schools. Thus, the authors distinguish between internal and external accountability mechanisms as a means of explaining how organizational capacity can be developed in schools. They argue that external accountability (created outside of an individual school) is difficult to implement, can undermine organizational capacity, and can contribute to a diminished sense of educator “ownership” of, commitment to, and authority within a school. They claim that externally created accountability mechanisms do not guarantee technical knowledge, skill, wise resource allocation, or a sense of commitment. Newmann et al. identify externally derived accountability, such as

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On the other hand, according to Newmann et al., internal accountability is a source of cohesion that can build or be a result of organizational capacity to act. In other words, a school's commitment to monitor its own progress and offer its own rewards or sanctions can lead to a higher level of commitment and skill. Similarly, consensus surrounding a school mission can lead to building an internal system (Newmann et al., 1997). Thus, for Newmann, et al., the important facet of accountability processes is *who* is involved in its creation. The point of import is that educators, as authorities, be involved in the determination of their own norms and standards, indicators of performance, rewards and sanctions, and opportunities for redress. It could be argued that Newmann et al. are advocating an overarching system of professional accountability, by placing power in the hands of teachers.

In this argument, the authors have determined that the problem (for lack of a better term) with educational accountability is that we have not delegated enough responsibility and formal authority to teachers. Their view appears to advocate transforming the normative orientation of a traditionally democratic accountability system with little consideration for the impact on either accountability mechanisms or the process as a whole. The debate over internal versus external accountability only addresses one feature of an accountability system -- who is in charge. Newmann's argument proposes new authorities to determine appropriate outcomes and expectations. The delegation of authority to new constituencies is likely to change an accountability system through the

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The Ablemann and Elmore piece (1998) also emphasizes the importance of examining how schools construct conceptions of accountability. However, they take the idea of internal accountability one step further by including constructs such as how those associated with schools think about accountability issues, their responses to “the problem of accountability”, as well as responses to external accountability mechanisms.

Abelmann and Elmore (1998) posit the following assumptions: a) schools have conceptions of accountability which are embedded in the day-to-day operation of the organization; b) conceptions of accountability are built from human interactions surrounding the work of schooling; c) school participants are active agents in the dynamics of developing and altering conceptions of accountability; and d) external accountability mechanisms are only one of many factors influencing internal senses of accountability.

Ablemann and Elmore describe accountability as a set of relationships and interactions between responsibility (personal values, beliefs, individual discretion), expectations (collective, shared norms), and mechanisms (developed both internally and externally). They claim that “schools are more likely to have powerful internal accountability systems -- formal or informal -- if the values and norms embodied in these systems are aligned with individual conceptions of responsibility and collective expectations of the school” (Abelmann et al., 1998 p. 5). Further, the power of an external accountability system is a “function of the alignment between the norms and values represented in these systems, and the internal accountability mechanisms of

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Alignment is the issue of greatest interest here. The question of whether or not there is a high degree of consistency or a strong agreement between the expectations and values represented by accountability mechanisms will determine the effectiveness of an accountability system. Abelmann and Elmore argue that alignment can be achieved either through the careful selection of a group of educational actors with common values or through socializing educational actors to a common set of ideals (Abelmann et al., 1998 p. 5). In this sense what is of utmost concern is how educational actors’ values and beliefs about to whom they are responsible, for what they are responsible, how they are called to give an indication of performance, how they are rewarded or punished, and whether or not their practices and beliefs match their co-workers, communities, and external authorities. Unlike Newmann, et al., Ablemann and Elmore are not only concerned with *who* constructs the accountability system, but *how* that system is constructed, enacted, mediated, and even institutionalized.

Accountability Relationships

Abelmann, et al.’s (1998) emphasis on relationships and interactions between people brings the process of accountability, rather than the products, to the forefront. It is important to examine the process of accountability and to be concerned with how systems are constructed, but it is also important to investigate the nature of the accountability relationships that develop within that system. Both Newmann, et al. (1997), and Ablemann, et al. (1998) are arguing for the development of accountability environment

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that will effectively guide the academic mission of schools. Taking these two arguments together, it seems appropriate to cast issues of accountability as issues of relationships.

Accountability policies are simultaneously cyclical, philosophical, political, cultural, and pragmatic (Macpherson, 1996 p. 317). As previously mentioned, it would be folly to suggest that either democratic, professional, or market accountability systems could be separated from one another, yet it is imperative that we understand the aims behind each. The philosophical nature of accountability (that which guides authorities in their creation of systems) is often undermined by the pragmatic need for something that works. In the search for a means by which we can hold those who work in schools accountable for their multiple responsibilities, we must look at the many different ways in which people choose to approach their own understanding of for what they are responsible. John Lello (1993) writes that:

It is already clear that there are different sorts of accountability: what is intrinsic to the work of the teacher is not always intrinsic to the work of the politician. The key question is whether these different sorts of accountability are in the same category. Is the financial accountability of a governing body comparable to the moral accountability of a teacher? Is the accountability of a parent in a school the same as the accountability of a local MP? The answer is that all of these people are dealing with the same subject but approaching it from different angles. Clearly they are all answerable in one way or another, but although they are not answerable in the same way they are all called to give an account, or to explain their actions. (p. 2)

If, in fact, all individuals interpret accountability systems differently and presume to be accountable for a varying set of responsibilities, then we must take note of how it is that they address their sense of responsibility.

When one attempts to understand what their responsibilities are and act on those understandings, they base their actions on their own interpretation of their

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responsibilities, rather than on an authority's definition of their responsibilities. Tyrrell Burgess (1992) argues that education can only work when people realize and act on their responsibilities:

The trouble is that people understand different things by accountability. This is not merely a problem of definition. If it were, we could simply use another word. It is rather that accountability can be of many different kinds: personal, professional, political, financial, managerial, legal, contractual . . ." (p. 5)

Burgess points out that while it may be simple to argue that people should just "do their jobs", grasping one's responsibilities and acting on them may be more complex than we might imagine. Dorn (1998) points out that in schools, fundamental issues of control are "directly connected to the purposes of accountability: Individuals in different roles would ask different questions of accountability mechanisms". How one understands accountability and interprets responsibilities may influence an accountability system.

How educators define and understand accountability and their various responsibilities will shape the manner in which they choose to act in schools. John Bazalgette (1992), notes that the core meaning of accountability is the word 'account', or 'to tell a story', "if we as a society wish to make teachers and schools more accountable for what goes on within the walls of their classrooms, halls and playgrounds, we need to work with them to develop a language which focuses the kind of story we need to hear" (p. 151). How individuals understand the process of accountability, the different mechanisms included in that process and their products will color their stories. In turn, how these stories are colored will influence the implementation of an accountability system.

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The nature of an accountability system is not only dependent upon the existence of mechanisms through which individuals report their “progress”. The creation of an environment where accountability processes and relationships work productively to produce their intended results is the subject of great political and academic debate. It raises questions, such as: Do we want to allocate power to elected officials, the courts, government agencies, professional bodies, or the consumer? Charter school reformers have a proposed answer to these questions. They argue that accountability processes and relationships will function productively when the powers of democratically organized bureaucracies are minimized, and authority is delegated to local schools and communities.

Early Charter School Research

Both the political and academic rhetoric surrounding charter schools emphasize the pragmatic, expected *outcomes* of schools, rather than the *nature* of the accountability process or relationships. Whitty, Power, and Halpin (1998) comment that

Accountability in charter schools is associated with the aim of identifying performance indicators for purposes of monitoring and evaluating schools. The authoritative nature of charter schools is predicated on the idea that self-management will lead to greater accountability and quality because they are created with the pretense of achieving prescribed educational objectives. (pp. 27-28)

This emphasis on outcomes *as* accountability has led to both critiques of and skepticism about the charter school movement. Charter school theory presumes that if authority and agency is turned over to parents, communities, and teachers that the outcomes produced will naturally be those desired by public at large. This may not be the case. Autonomy in

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There are as many opponents to charter school theory and market orientations, as there are proponents. Most who are skeptical of charter schools and market accountability mechanism argue against them on the grounds that they do not promote positive educative environments (see for example Fuller, Elmore, & Orfield, 1996; Henig, 1994). For example, Pat Petch (1992) argues that:

I find no evidence that it improves the quality of relationships, or even the quality of the product. Market accountability tends to be marked by confrontation rather than cooperation. Suppliers and consumers see themselves as separate groups and seldom cooperate to achieve a common end. (p. 91)

Most arguments against charter schools take a similar tack, commenting on what charters and choice cannot do to solve the problems of American education. The result has been a battle of rhetoric.

Charter school reform sparks discussion surrounding numerous issues of accountability, performance, and the process of schooling. Arguments both for and against charter schools touch all of these issues, as people highlight those areas that best support their own position. Whether or not market mechanisms and charter schools promote “good educations” or “more accountability” has been lost in the political and social rhetoric surrounding choice. The Carnegie Foundation (1992), in their Special Report on Choice, argues that choice has become so ideologically charged that thoughtful discourse has been suppressed. They further argue that “claims for school choice have been based more on speculation than experience” (p. xv), and there have been minimal attempts to report on both the problems and progress of choice reform efforts. The states

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that have adopted charter school legislation have yet to put forth any serious efforts to examine charter school results and a great deal more needs to be investigated about the educational environments of charter schools².

There are few studies to date that have yielded substantive results or conclusions regarding charter schools. The research that has surfaced has been less than positive and, more often than not, states that it is too early to determine whether or not charter schools can be deemed a successful or beneficial reform (see for example Arsen, Plank, & Sykes, 1999; Wells, Lopez, Scott, & Holmes, 1999). Far more studies of charter school reform need to be conducted. However, in the first five or so years of their presence on the national education scene, have provided a glimpse of charter schools' potential consequences and impact on accountability processes.

In some cases, researchers have found that charter schools are not successful due to faulty legislation or implementation of regulatory mechanisms. For example, Wohlstetter, et al. (1995) argue that early charter schools have not been able to achieve all that they have set out to do because state legislation has not provided them with enough autonomy to do so. In much the same vein, the Hudson Institute's Final Report on the Charter Schools in Action Project concludes that:

Charter schools are thinly administered and meant to be free to distinguish their approach to education from that of conventional schools. They must be accountable for results, but not overburdened by red tape. If the accountability system is too onerous, it may deflect the school's leadership from the pursuit of sound teaching and learning. If it is too prescriptive, forcing everything into the familiar categories of conventional schools, it may constrain the school's ability to do things differently. Yet if it is too superficial it may not yield the requisite information. If too laid back, it may not detect serious trouble in time to take appropriate action. And if it is too flexible allowing each school to define its own terms, it may provide

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These results do little to provide an answer to the question of “do charter schools work?” and are relatively innocuous, revealing little about how the process of accountability is changed in a charter school environment. In fact, the concluding remarks open up more questions than answers.

Other results are far more explicitly negative. Whitty et al. (1998) claim that “recent educational restructuring patterns do not lead to more community involvement, diversified providers, enhanced professionalism, better school effectiveness, or wider opportunities on any grand scale” (p. 127). Furthermore, Amy Stuart Wells in *Beyond the Rhetoric of Charter School Reform: A Study of Ten California School Districts* (1999) states that charter schools, generally, are unable to meet many of their claims, including being more accountable, and providing more autonomy and empowerment. Wells indicates that far more research is needed on charter school accountability, but she makes the following conclusions based on her California research:

1. The trade-off between autonomy and accountability does not pan out as expected because there is no clear or unified vision as to what charter schools are supposed to accomplish, what constituencies expect from these schools, and for what they should be held accountable.
2. It is unclear to whom charter schools should be most accountable (i.e., parents, state, authorizer). Authorities view their role in monitoring charter schools in a variety of ways that are embedded in a larger political context. These issues need to be considered when establishing an accountability framework.
3. Educators within charter school see themselves as being responsible to multiple constituencies, and it is unclear to them to whom and for what they should be most responsible.

Wells’ primary conclusions regarding charter school accountability revolve around the absence of clear expectations on the part of authorities and unspecified goals on the part

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of charter school petitioners. Wells notes that charter school reforms are predicated on the idea that autonomy is far more productive than bureaucracy, but she notes that not all bureaucracy is bad and not all autonomy is good. What charter schools are trying to accomplish and for what they should be held accountable are not clear. Issues of power, authority, and educator perceptions of their role all play a part in the development of accountability in charter schools. Wells touches on some of these more prominent issues, and begins to reveal how educator understandings of accountability and their relationships with others shape the nature of an accountability system, but she does not explore the nature of those perceptions and relationships. Charter schools provide an environment rich with both possibilities and perils for the future of education. How accountability systems and the nature of accountability relationships develop in this reform scenario remains to be seen.

Charter Schools in Michigan

Michigan has led the nation with groundbreaking charter school reform legislation, and the State government continues to strongly support charter schools³. However, the implementation of charter schools reform strategies in Michigan is not as clear cut as the market bargain might indicate. Charter schools in Michigan operate within a highly defined framework of accountability that involves a complex layering of mechanisms and authorities as well as numerous tensions and conflicts.

In Michigan, charter schools are classified as public schools, meaning that they receive public funds and are subject to the same laws and legislation as any other public school in the state. Thus, charter schools operate *within* the framework of Michigan public schools, residing at the intersection of multiple accountability systems, requiring

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educators to manage numerous expectations and mechanisms. Michigan charter schools are responsible to a myriad of authorities who reflect the multiple forms and definitions of accountability. These include, but are not limited to: chartering agents, private corporations, their own school boards, the legislature, the school community, children, parents, and any other authorities to which all Michigan public schools are responsible (Neuman, 1998). These varied authorities all present regulatory pressures on schools and educators. The accountability process, theorized to be made smoother through the elimination of many external agents, has not evolved that way. Without a “free market” in which to operate, Michigan charter schools must, by design, accommodate at least democratic and market accountability systems. The form and nature of Michigan charter schools invite the operationalization of varied accountability systems (including democratic, market, and professional) in the day-to-day business of education.

Accountability systems in this case do not appear to hybridize (Darling-Hammond, 1989), but layer. While Darling-Hammond suggests that accountability mechanisms may replace one another to form something of a patchwork quilt system, it seems as though accountability mechanisms are operating simultaneously, concurrently exerting influence. The result is not a hybrid, but a complex series of systems with multiple authorities which educators must manage. Since agents of accountability represent a spectrum of beliefs about to whom, for what, and how educators are responsible, Michigan charter schools are caught at the intersection of multiple policies and accountability systems and may represent a compromise, or partial realization of the bargain. Thus, it is unclear how the accountability process is playing out in Michigan charter schools. With multiple authorities developing numerous mechanisms to which

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educators are subject, it is difficult to predict how schools will respond. How will the relationship between educators and authorities develop? How will educators understand and manage their responsibilities? The following discussion introduces two examples of potential consequences of the existence of multiple accountability systems operating simultaneously Michigan charter schools, the balance between democratic and market accountability and the tension between public and private interests in charter schools.

Geske, Davis, and Hingle (1997) argue that “charter schools will have to maintain a careful balance between school autonomy and their requirement to comply with certain state-mandated minimum standards” (p. 21). Such is the case in Michigan. Charter schools in Michigan operate under a limited-time and revocable performance-based contract. In order to receive full funding and maintain their charters, these schools must be accredited by the State and meet state standards regarding issues such as school organization, curricula, and student outcomes. Thus, external state accountability (democratic system) in Michigan serves to provide parents and school community members as well as the State an opportunity to enforce their vision for schooling.

As an instrument of educational reform, charter schools are intended to meet the wants and needs of subcommunities within American society, rather than to serve as instruments of mass socialization and common democracy. This conceptualization permits charter schools to define their own normative orientation while at the same time being subject to externally defined technical features of accountability systems. Since state minimum standards (and externally defined technical features) attempt to accommodate a diverse group of American communities to a certain extent, their implementation in charter schools poses some theoretical difficulties. Accountability to

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the State, as defined in Michigan, forces charter schools not only to accommodate their own community but to become a function of the compromises between the history, culture, and social contingencies of the many other communities of American society. The challenge for charter schools will be to promote common values and provide social outcomes for a democratic society while still fostering consumer sovereignty of choice (Geske et al., 1997 p. 23).

Democratically initiated mechanisms are *one* standard and measure of accountability that charter schools must meet. These standards may influence educational decisions independently of market factors such as parental preferences. Nathan (1996) argues that using state standards to evaluate a charter school can provide results justifying a school's existence as well help build community support of the school (p. 154). While this may be true, Nathan does not acknowledge or explore the potential interaction of accountability systems in charter schools and the impact it can have on those associated with schools. For example Neuman (1998) found that even though some Michigan charter schools were initiated for different communities and educational purposes, state requirements and testing seemed to "equalize" curricular decisions. State requirements were important not as a proxy for achievement, but as a weapon to be used against a school (evidence of "non-performance"). In her study, Neuman found that charter schools' curricula were intentionally aligned with state tests even when in conflict with community educational ideals. Similarly, Wells (1999) found that charter schools often depend on bureaucracies (such as those in local districts) for support, thereby minimizing their rhetorical autonomy and reliance on market mechanisms.

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In addition to the layering of democratic and market accountability mechanisms, charter schools must also manage the interaction between public and private interests. Through the reallocation of power parents, charter schools theoretically have the ability to break free from the external democratic system as well as the implied authority of private corporations, such as testing agencies. David Cohen (1979) points out that under current conditions, testing agencies such as Educational Testing Services (ETS) drive curricular decision-making. He writes that:

The central problem of American education is a simple paradox: while formal governance arrangements vest nearly all authority and power in local and state education agencies that are either accountable to elected officials, power and authority have been gradually accumulating in the hands of people who are neither elected nor accountable to anyone who is. (p. 431)

Many charter school supporters would argue that market accountability systems will reduce the power of “politically irresponsible” groups (like testing agencies) by making parents and communities the authorities. With parents directly choosing schools, presumably based on community ideals, these “politically irresponsible” groups in theory would have less power to determine the form and nature of school practices.

However, charter schools cannot escape the influence of private interests in schools either. With the structure of a charter school dictating that it exists simultaneously as a local education agency and a local district, administrators become not only the “instructional leaders” but the “bureaucrats” as well. They must learn to deal with multiple roles and responsibilities. This transformation of the role of principal has opened the door for management companies and educational corporations to play an influential role in the daily operation of Michigan charter schools (Neuman, 1998). These

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companies and corporations exert influence on schools by nature of their purported professional expertise. It is unclear what effect the corporate provisions of financial services and instructional support will have on accountability processes in charter schools. This construction of new bureaucracies may complicate operation of accountability systems, as well as the development of accountability relationships.

Where Do We Go From Here?

At its core, charter school reform addresses issues of accountability. The reallocation of power and authority necessary for charter school legislation requires a different kind of accountability system and a reevaluation of the power of various authorities. The existence of multiple accountability systems in any one school is not something that is new to educators. Teachers, administrators, and the milieu of support staff that work in public schools can all attest to the fact that society, broadly speaking, repeatedly asks public education organizations to accomplish more and more, with increasingly measurable results. But if the questions are broad (To whom are educators accountable? For what are they accountable? How is it to be measured? How can we act?), and the answers multifarious (everyone, everything, etc.), how can we begin to examine the nature of accountability in American schools?

The relationship of multiple accountability systems in Michigan charter schools, explicitly stated in both theory and law, presents a unique opportunity to examine the manner in which educational actors (teachers and principals) understand and manage their role within schools. The consequences of reforming accountability mechanisms are numerous, and deserve some exploration. While all public schools operate under multiple forms of accountability, charter schools in Michigan present a salient, clear

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example of potentially competing and conflicting visions of school accountability in practice. As a result, they are an appropriate site in which to investigate the nature of accountability relationships, surrounding the process (represented by accountability frames), in an environment of educational reform.

The relationship between the intended results and enacted realities of accountability systems are mediated by how individuals understand accountability. As Ablemann and Elmore (1998) write:

We cannot know how an accountability system will work, nor can we know how to design such a system, unless we know how schools differ in the way they construct responsibility, expectations, and internal accountability . . . Our research also suggests that the attitudes, values and beliefs of individual teachers and administrators -- about what students can do, about what they can expect of each other, and about the relative influence of student, family, community, and school on student learning -- are key factors in determining the solutions that schools construct to the accountability problem. (pp. 43-44)

As pressures for results increase in American schools, the implications of accountability policies and mechanisms that are employed must be examined more thoroughly.

Educational accountability systems are expected to yield a certain level of assurance to those not operating within a school that some measure of their educational goals and objectives are being achieved. However, these structures and mechanisms do not operate outside the realm of human action. Individuals subject to accountability systems do not necessarily perceive them as they are intended, and thus, the reality of their practice may vary. An examination of the ways in which individuals in both traditional public and charter schools understand and manage accountability systems and in turn accountability mechanisms, provides insight into the development of alternatives to the traditional public system.

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Chapter 2 Notes

¹ See chapter 3 for a more in depth discussion.

² Two notable exceptions are, The National Charter School Study (<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/charter3rdyear>) and The Michigan Charter School Evaluation (<http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/charter/micharter.html> & <http://www.mde.state.mi.us/reports/psaeval9901/pscfullreport.pdf>). These reports may yield some substantive data.

³ Michigan, along with Arizona, California, Colorado, Delaware, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, and Texas, all have “stronger charter laws” which are characterized by: 1) entities other than local boards being permitted to authorize charters; 2) a great deal of financial and legal autonomy; and 3) waivers for many state and local rules. (Bierlein, 1995 p.16) In addition, Michigan charter school law does not place restrictions on the number of charters allowed in the state.

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CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

This study developed cases of three Michigan schools -- two charter schools, and one traditional public school -- through an examination of how educators and agents of accountability construct and make sense of accountability in their school or organizational settings. I chose to examine educational actors' understandings of accountability based on the premise that educators' "perspectives on and interpretations of their own and other actors' actions" are a valuable piece to be incorporated into our own conceptualizations and theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994 p. 280). Fontana (1994) has argued that "...each individual has his or her own social history and an individual perspective on the world..." (p. 374). These histories and perspectives are the foundation of our beliefs and actions within a social organization.

Conceptual Framework

I conducted a review of current research and theoretical work on both accountability and charter schools to build a conceptual framework for this study (for example Darling-Hammond, 1989; Newmann et al., 1997; Wagner, 1989; Wells, 1999). Additionally, as a member of a research team working in charter schools throughout Michigan, I drew on the data collected to develop the context, or a theory, about the accountability framework in which Michigan charter schools and their associated educational actors must operate.

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Accountability Frameworks

Accountability systems are composed of five mechanisms: an agent¹ or set of agents to whom individuals are held accountable, standards or norms for performance, information provided as indicators of performance, incentives or sanctions associated with the norms for performance, and opportunities for redress or corrections of practice. (Darling-Hammond, 1989 p. 60; Newmann et al., 1997; Wagner, 1989). Each mechanism of an accountability framework functions appropriately only in relation to the other features of the established structure. For example, standards mean little unless they are tied to: a) those who create them; b) a means of implementing them; c) incentives or sanctions associated with meeting the standards; d) a means of assessing their worth; and e) a means of correcting them. Accountability cannot be considered as an independent variable or mechanism². Rather, accountability is a set of mechanisms that operate together as a system. These mechanisms, processes, products, and relationships are what I call “accountability frameworks”. The three accountability frameworks briefly described in chapter two (democratic, professional, and market) provide illustrative examples of the variety of accountability mechanisms that can operate within schools, as well as the influence of a normative orientation on the features of an accountability framework.

Agents

An agent is an individual or constituent “that receives information on organizational performance, judges the extent to which standards have been met, and distributes rewards and sanctions” (Newmann et al., 1997 p. 43). Agents function as “authors” of an accountability framework, as well as overseers of school performance.

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As a result, agents of accountability facilitate and determine the form and nature of accountability mechanisms, as well as direct legitimate discussion surrounding issues of responsibility and liability in schools³. So, in many ways, agents are the embodiment of a particular normative orientation, and the features of accountability frameworks are the tools which serve the ideal vision of accountability in practice.

The delegation of authority to specified agents of accountability is a determination of who holds power and authority in American schools. For example, if parents are delegated authority and considered to be agents of accountability, then parents have the power to determine for what educators should be held responsible as well as how they should demonstrate their success in meeting parental goals. Agents of accountability are the means through which a normative orientation is enacted. Thus, agents are the symbolic power brokers in the balance between different stakeholders in American schooling.

Table 1: Proposed

Democratization
Schools are held accountable to the community through designated organizations or bodies which are either elected or appointed, in order to ensure the community that students are learning and that tax money is being spent wisely (Fireside Bader, 1992 p.211)

Standards and Norms

Standards and norms as well as appropriate used by agents, to achieve standards and norms. Sykes (1993) argues that meanings and values are standard itself" (p.5). shared evaluation of induce preferred behavior under precise judgment from desired behavior.

Table 1: Proposed Agents of Accountability

Democratic	Professional	Market
Schools are held accountable to the public through designated organizations or boards, which are either elected or appointed, in order to ensure the community that students are learning, and that tax money is being spent wisely (Firestone & Bader, 1992 p.211).	Educators are held accountable by other educators based on the premise that “professionals are keepers of important values ... and that only they have the knowledge to determine if those values are being adequately met.” (Firestone & Bader, 1992 pp. 211-212).	Schools are held accountable to the preferences of students, parents and community members, since schools compete for students, much like in the capitalist market. (Chubb & Moe, 1990).

Standards and Norms

Standards and norms for practice define operational guidelines for organizations as well as appropriate behaviors for the individuals working within. Standards are tools, used by agents, to accomplish set purposes and to assist in decision-making. However, standards and norms are more than just guides for action, they represent collective values. Sykes (1993) argues that standards are “justified with reference to some system of meanings and values . . . that supply the ultimate terms and grounds for evaluation of the standard itself” (p.5). Similarly, Margaret Marini (1984) defines norms as the collective, shared evaluation of what behavior ought to be, in conjunction with applied sanctions to induce preferred behaviors. A standard or norm means little unless it can be used to render precise judgments and decisions in conjunction with consequences for deviation from desired behaviors (Sykes & Plastrik, 1993 p. 4).

Table 2: Proposed

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Standards are deter by what is deemed communal good” are supposed to me all children’s needs prepare to enter An society as producti adults. Schools are designed to allow government the opportunity to imp economy, shape m and unify America (Kaestle, 1983).

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Table 2: Proposed Standards

Democratic	Professional	Market
Standards are determined by what is deemed “the communal good”. Schools are supposed to meet the all children’s needs as they prepare to enter American society as productive adults. Schools are designed to allow government the opportunity to improve the economy, shape morals, and unify American culture (Kaestle, 1983).	Standards are determined by conceptions of “best practice” based upon specialized educational knowledge available only to teachers. Ideals of “best practice” should ideally be determined, represented, and enacted by teachers themselves.(Darling-Hammond, 1989; Legatt, 1970 p. 161).	Standards of performance are determined by the preferences of students, parents and community members, sub-communities of American society. Thus, the purpose of schooling becomes to meet the needs and desires of self-defined groups and subgroups (Fuller et al., 1996)

Indicators

Indicators of performance are an important aspect of an accountability framework in that they provide information about the performance of individuals and organizations that can be used by agents as decision-making tools. Since agents are the primary decision-makers in any accountability framework, it is an integral part of their role is to gather and use information about organizational performance. Indicators become even more vital to accountability frames when proof of competence is heavily procedural and normative (Feldman & March, 1981). Indicators can be any range of documents or artifacts that track progress (Clune, 1993) or provide a barometer of quality (Linn, 1993). Madaus (1994) argues that all performance indicators are similar in that “we elicit a small sample of behavior from a larger domain of interest . . . to make inferences about a person’s probable performance relative to that domain” (p. 77). Assessments, exhibitions, exams, portfolios, tests, rubrics, evaluations, or any indicator may of another name are designed to provide common measures that serve the purpose of monitoring and

reporting performance

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Table 3: Proposed

Democratic
The public is provided with information about student achievement, educational costs, test scores, and conditions of educational employment. The school board, school building, state, and local policies and practices are many other items through the media, parental networks, word of mouth (Lieberman, 1997). Indicators are provided through inspections and mechanisms that ensure compliance with operating procedures (Darling-Hammond, p. 64).

Incentives/Sanctions

Incentives and sanctions are speaking, incentives for individuals or organizations. The set of incentives and sanctions for the individual actions" (Lieberman, 1997, p. 64).

reporting performance on those outcomes that agents identify as meaningful (Clune, 1993).

Table 3: Proposed Indicators of Performance

Democratic	Professional	Market
The public is provided with information about student achievement, educational costs, terms and conditions of educational employment, school board, school building, state, and federal policies and practices, and many other items found through the media, parental networks, and word of mouth (Lieberman, 1993). Indicators are primarily inspections and reporting mechanisms that determine compliance with “standard operating procedures” (Darling-Hammond, 1989 p.64).	Indicators focus on both rationales and explanations of teacher behavior in conjunction with student performance reports as well as personnel evaluations designed and implemented by teachers. Representations of student and teacher accomplishments and depictions of instructional forms are designed to be authentic and valid representations of student progress, and learning, as well as teacher and school goals. (Darling-Hammond, 1989).	Indicators fall into two categories: the information provided to help individuals make choices regarding what school children should attend and school performance, which are often the same. Student performance and parental/community satisfaction with the school determine whether or not the school is meeting community “visions” of education. The ultimate indicator of performance (to the public at large) is whether or not the school remains open and a viable educational source. (Nathan, 1996)

Incentives/Sanctions

Incentives and sanctions cover a broad range of policy options for agents. Broadly speaking, incentives and sanctions are rewards and punishments based on organizational or individual performance. Hoenack and Berg (1980) define incentives and sanctions as “the set of monetary or non-monetary penalties or rewards within the constraints facing the individual, which link the achievement of a person’s objectives with his or her actions” (p. 77). Incentives and sanctions are presumed to be motivators, “ensuring local responsiveness” (Picus, 1992 p. 167) to policies and standards. Incentives can take many

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forms, such as: remuneration, a sense of accomplishment, organizational arrangements designed to increase opportunities for rewarding experiences, more time for preparation, or increased professional development opportunities (Firestone, 1991). Sanctions most commonly take the form of financial penalties or the disapproval of colleagues (Firestone, 1991 p. 276; Hoenack & Berg, 1980 p. 77). In any case, incentives and sanctions relate to the resources made available to an individual with respect to their job performance, connecting their professional actions to their personal objectives (Hoenack & Berg, 1980).

Table 4: Proposed Incentives and Sanctions

Democratic	Professional	Market
In a tenure system, as is found in most public school districts, aside from the granting or withholding of tenure itself, there are few incentives or sanctions directly influencing teacher actions. As a result, incentives and sanctions are electoral in nature. When those in power are either elected or appointed, and thereby subject to re-election or removal from office then we must assume that the incentive of remaining in office and the sanction of removal are powerful enough to require compliance.	Incentives for performance within focus on intrinsic rewards supporting improved practice. Intrinsic incentives include skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, opportunity to interact with colleagues, feedback. Incentives are theoretically built through job enlargement and increased influence over decision-making procedures (Firestone & Bader, 1992 p.155).	Incentives and sanctions for school compliance with community preferences are determined by threat of student exit, thereby impacting the schools' fiscal viability. For educators, a wide variety of incentives and sanctions ranging from salary bonuses, to the threat of dismissal can be invoked. Retention of one's position is theorized to be a powerful incentive in the maintenance of community educational standards. (Carnegie Foundation, 1992)

Opportunities for Redress

If indicators of performance are symbols of competence (Feldman & March, 1981), and agents have determined that incompetence is unacceptable, then accountability

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frameworks need to include opportunities for agents to correct the situation. While incentives and sanctions are mechanisms put in place to encourage or discourage behaviors (through positive or negative reinforcement), redress mechanisms are intended to transform behaviors by changing the circumstances central to the actions of individuals. Hirschman (1970) in describing consumer behavior identified three possible actions on the part of dissatisfied customers: exit, voice, and loyalty. Exit, or leaving an organization, can be used as a redress mechanism in one of two ways. Either an employee can be fired in the case of poor performance, or unhappy customers can abandon an organization if they feel their needs are not being met. While exit requires the termination of an organizational membership, voice entails making “an attempt at changing the practices, policies, and outputs of the firm or organization to which one belongs” (Hirschman, 1970 p.30). Loyalty or a feeling of responsibility to and for an organization, at first glance does not seem to be a redress mechanism. However, loyalty can be considered the option not to correct practice in favor of the status quo. Such might be the case where an agent considers the transformation of practice to be more harmful to their goals and objectives than sub-standard performance of individuals or organizations.

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Table 5: Proposed Redress Mechanisms

Democratic	Professional	Market
Democratic accountability theoretically provides the public with direct electoral access to educational policy decisions. Through voting for school boards, and opportunities to have their voices heard at the national, state, and local levels, democratic accountability should give each individual fair and equal representation.	Opportunities for public redress are based upon allowing external review processes to operate simultaneously with teacher accountability to the profession (i.e. peer review). Examples include: school structures for shared governance between parents, teachers and administrators; parent involvement in decision-making about individual children; and accessible review and appeals process.	Opportunities for public redress or corrections of practice are exercised through the “exit” option. Parents and community members can “choose” which school their children will attend, thus they have the opportunity to change schools if a current one does not meet their wants and needs. (Hirschman, 1970) Educators can be replaced.

Using the Conceptual Framework

My conceptual framework guided my protocol development and data analysis.

Using the dimensions of the accountability frameworks as analytical tools, I explored the manner in which both educators and agents understood the process of accountability. I chose to focus on exploring how educators and agents define and identify accountability mechanisms in schools in an attempt to describe the accountability frameworks in place in public schools. The analysis in this dissertation is primarily structural emphasizing discrete categories. There are limitations to the structural analysis I used in this study. As a temporal view into the accountability systems in place in schools, my representations of accountability may be distanced from the contexts that created them. One could also argue that accountability, as a process, is constantly evolving with dimensions and mechanisms constantly changing. Because this research is not

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longitudinal, the temporal dynamic is lost in this research. These limitations were a trade-off, but the context of a doctoral dissertation necessitates narrowing the research scope. In spite of these limitations, the conceptual framework provided a useful and productive tool for investigating accountability.

The Sample: Schools and Participants

The schools and participants in this study were not chosen at random or to be representative of all schools and educators but were chosen as a “theoretical sample”. It was my goal to “seek out groups, settings, and individuals where (and for whom) the processes being studied are most likely to occur” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994 202). Schools and participants were strategically chosen to vary dramatically, so that the contrast between them could reveal the differences between school accountability systems.

Schools

In order to address the guiding questions, I selected two charter schools (Dwight D. Eisenhower Public School Academy and the Community School) and one traditional public school (Mann Elementary) for this study⁴. Table 6 briefly describes each school included in the study. Each school is described in greater detail in its own case chapter.

Table 6: Brief School Profiles, 1997-98 School Year

	Mann Elementary (chapter 5)	Eisenhower PSA (chapter 6)	Community School (chapter 7)
Years in Operation	38	1	5
Grades Served	K-5	K-5	K-6
Enrollment	341	188	50
Pupil/Teacher Ratio	32.5	18.4	16.7
Minority Enrollment	72%	7%	68%
Free/Reduced Lunch	64.9%	8%	N/A

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I chose the three schools in this study based on the premise that educators within each school would be primarily accountable to a different authority. After conducting a review of the literature, I identified the range of schools in which I wanted to conduct my research. I then sought colleague recommendations and nominations for schools in which to conduct this research. I was able to identify and secure consent in the first three schools that were suggested by colleagues.

I chose the Community School, based on its existence as what I call a mission-oriented school. Mission oriented schools are not chartered as part of a corporation or larger educational entity, but founded by small groups of parents or teachers based on their own personal innovative vision for education. Mission oriented schools are usually small and could be likened to a “mom and pop shop”. I theorized that as a school founded by a small group of parents, the Community School educators would be primarily responsible to parents and community members. In many ways, the Community School represents the original ideal for Michigan charter schools.

I chose Eisenhower Public School Academy based on its association with a larger corporation, Essential Traditions Schools. Founded with the financial backing of a for-profit corporation, Eisenhower Public School Academy presented an opportunity to explore how a charter school provided with financial and educational resources and part of a larger system operates. I theorized that Eisenhower PSA educators would feel primarily accountable to the corporation that sustains the school. Eisenhower PSA represents the second iteration of charter school reforms. Rather than focusing on educational innovation, corporate associated schools focus on efficiency and schools as business enterprises.

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I selected Mann Elementary as a traditional public that would serve as a contrast to the charter school version of accountability. As part of a large urban school district, Mann Elementary represents the Michigan status quo for public schools. I theorized that Mann Elementary School educators would be primarily accountable to the State and District.

School-Based Participants

After selecting the three schools for this study, I called the principal or school leader at each site and secured their participation in the study. I then requested the principal's permission in soliciting the participation of three classroom teachers in the school. I distributed a letter to the entire faculty at Eisenhower PSA and the Community School and to teachers nominated by the principal at Mann Elementary (see Appendix A). Once I received indications of interest from teachers⁵, I met with the potential participants and discussed at greater length the design of the research project. If the teacher continued to express interest in the study, I then set up a time for our first interview. Prior to all first round interviews, I gave each school-based educator an informed consent that once again detailed the requirements of their participation (see Appendix B). Each teacher was offered nominal compensation for their participation.

I was looking for one teacher assigned to a lower elementary grade (first or second) and two assigned to upper elementary grades (third, fourth, fifth). I asked for participants in these configurations so that I could talk to teachers whose students take the MEAP, as well as those whose students do not. The principal and three teachers from each school consented to participate in a series of three interviews that provided data for this research. Table 7 briefly describes each participant.

Table 7: School-E

Name
Jerry Pleasants
Donna Cole
Brooke Hughes
David Norman
Beth Kay
Linda Carver
Terry Brenner
Melissa Fisher
Rebecca Glenn
Ruth Beal
Paz Homer
Joanne Kramer

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Table 7: School-Based Educator Participants

Name	School	Grade Level	Yrs in Current Assignment	Total Years in Education
Jerry Pleasants	Eisenhower PSA	Principal	1	over 30
Donna Cole	Eisenhower PSA	3	1	1
Brooke Hughes	Eisenhower PSA	1	1	3 (2 abroad, 1 sub)
David Norman	Eisenhower PSA	4	1	4 (2 yrs. sub)
Beth Kay	Community School	Principal	.5	9
Linda Carver	Community School	4/5/6	2	5
Terry Brenner	Community School	K/1	1	1
Melissa Fisher	Community School	1/2/3	1	3.5
Rebecca Glenn	Mann Elementary	Principal	3	30
Ruth Beal	Mann Elementary	1/2	2	7
Pat Homer	Mann Elementary	3	1	22 (all 4th/5th)
Joanne Kramer	Mann Elementary	4/5 SpEd	9	9

Data Sources

I collected data from three sources: a) interviews with school-based educators; b) interviews with accountability agents identified by teachers and principals; and c) documentary evidence collected from educators, schools, and agents.

Data Source One: Interviews with Principals and Teachers

The school based educators each participated in three separate interviews ranging in length from 50 minutes to two hours. In addition to these interviews, participants had the opportunity to respond to the interview transcripts, in what I call interviewee responses. All sessions were audiotaped and transcribed. I scheduled the bulk of the interviews with teachers and principals during the summer months when their schools were not in session. In scheduling the interviews this way, I was able to take advantage

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of the participants' open schedule. Without classroom duties, the participants had greater freedom to schedule our sessions⁶.

Opening Interviews

The first interview I conducted with each school-based participant was designed to elicit his or her "general understandings" of what accountability meant in their school setting. For this interview, I used the same protocol for all twelve participants. This protocol was designed around the accountability framework described in the previous section. I asked questions regarding agents of accountability, standards for practice, indicators of performance, incentives and sanctions, and opportunities for redress (see Appendix C).

The Second Interview

Based on the text, commentary, and questions from the first interview, I constructed individualized protocols for a second interview with each participant. These protocols contained three questions common to all participants, with the rest of the interview being composed of follow-ups, probes, and clarifications. The three questions common to all interviews asked participants to comment on the different kinds of responsibilities they have as educators, their personal definitions of accountability, and to whom they feel most responsible. These questions were designed to delve more deeply into individual understandings of accountability. The individualized portions of the protocols were created both as an extension of the first interview and to provide stimulated conversations about accountability. Thus, I used the participants' own words as a point of departure for further exploration into their understandings of educator roles

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and responsibilities in school. These semi-structured interviews attempted to elicit what Morse (1994) describes as “in-depth reflective description of the experience” on the topic of accountability (p. 225) (for two sample protocols, see Appendix D).

Final Interviews

In the third and final interview, I constructed a protocol common to all teachers and administrators. This protocol was designed to both question participants in areas that had not been satisfactorily addressed in the first two interviews and give the participant an opportunity to reflect on their first two interviews. I used slightly different protocols for principals and teachers, allowing for the fact that principals are both school based-educators and agents of accountability (see Appendix E).

The final interview was divided into two parts. The first half of the session was conducted like a formal interview. The second half, however, required that the respondent participate in two reflective activities. First, I asked each participant to list for me those persons or groups with whom they felt it was important to develop and maintain relationships in their capacity as an educator. As they wrote these lists on a sheet I provided (see Appendix F), I asked the participants to “think aloud” explaining why they were listing each of the people or groups, as well as characterizing the nature of their relationships. After the participant completed their list to their own satisfaction, I asked them to “rank” the list in order of importance to them, once again thinking aloud, and explaining their choices to me. In this way the school-based educators reflected on both those persons to whom they felt most responsible, as well as for whom they felt most responsible. After the participant and I discussed the list, I provided them with a large sheet of blank paper and colored markers. I then asked each participant to pictorially

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represent the relationship between the people and groups on the list and themselves. I encouraged the participants to think aloud as they drew, explaining their representations to me. In this way, I gave the participants an opportunity to reflect on and represent the nature of their “accountability relationships” and their role within a school environment (for examples of these accountability diagrams, see Appendix G).

Through the reflective activities, I accomplished three tasks: a) I elicited a “description of the social psychological process in the experience” of accountability (Morse, 1994 225); b) I provided participants with a new way to think and talk about accountability issues; and c) I triangulated the previous interview data, both with artifacts created by the participants as well as their words.

Interviewee Responses

Following each interview, but before the next interview was conducted, I had the interview tapes transcribed. I then inspected these transcripts, confirmed them with the audio-tapes, and interspersed commentary or questions. My commentary ranged from questions of clarification (i.e. What does this mean?) to probes (i.e. How did you learn about this?). After thoroughly reviewing the texts, I mailed each respondent a copy of their transcript. The interviewee was then able to review the text, answer questions as well as potentially comment on the written text. A few days after mailing the participants their first interview transcripts, I phoned them to schedule a second interview. At this point I asked each respondent if they had any questions or concerns. This process was repeated after each interview, giving the participants a total of three opportunities to reflect on their interviews. I also encouraged participants to bring their transcript copies to subsequent interviews so that they would be able to review the texts with me as we

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talked. If the participants chose to respond to their interview, I incorporated their commentary into the transcript text (see Appendix H).

The interviewee response process served multiple purposes. First, it gave me, as a researcher, an opportunity to re-familiarize myself with the interviewee before conducting subsequent interviews. Second, it allowed me the opportunity to create subsequent interview protocols based on areas that I felt needed further exploration and clarification. Third, it gave each interviewee an opportunity to review the subjects about which we had spoken before each interview.

Data Source Two: Interviews with Agents of Accountability

Using the data collected from interviews with school-based educators, I identified important sources of accountability as described by the study participants. Every attempt was made to interview the agents identified by participants. In two cases this was not possible. First, representatives from the Jaffe Partnership (the Community School Management Company) refused to participate in any interviews. Second, at the Community School, because of a highly transient population (who were unsure whether or not the school would even be open the next year), only those parents who were highly involved at the school could be contacted.

Additionally, the agents interviewed for each school vary based on to whom participants ascribed the most importance. In the event that participants mentioned potential agents as a minor or inconsequential influence on their work, then they were not interviewed. For example, while at both Eisenhower and the Community School, parents were identified as major agents, at Mann they were not. Hence, Eisenhower parents were contacted to participate in interviews, but not Mann parents.

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Table 8: Agent Participants

Name
Chris Duggan
Cindy Funke
Brian Miller
Scott Kelley
Heather Cowell
Beverly Thompson
Jackie Benjamin
Darcy Jacobs
Laura Silber
Jay Bradley
Karen Stevens
Donald Jones

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After identifying the major agents of accountability at each school, I conducted solicited the participation of a sample of twelve agents. I conducted one interview with each of these participants. These interviews were designed to see how agents understand their role in constructing and maintaining the accountability frameworks to which they subject school-based educators. I developed one protocol, which I modified slightly when interviewing parents (see Appendix I).

Table 8: Agent Participants

Name	Position	Agent to Whom ?
Chris Duggan	State Assistant Superintendent	Eisenhower PSA Community School
Cindy Funke	Director of Michigan Department of Education Charter Schools Office	Mann Elementary Eisenhower PSA
Brian Miller	Essential Traditions Schools President	Community School Eisenhower PSA
Scott Kelley	Director of Charter Schools at Big Mountain College	Eisenhower PSA
Heather Cowell	Parent	Eisenhower PSA
Beverly Thompson	Parent	Eisenhower PSA
Jackie Benjamin	School Founder/Director	Community School
Darcy Jacobs	Board Member/Parent	Community School
Laura Silber	Parent/Aide	Community School
Jay Bradley	Director of Northeast State University Chartering Office	Community School
Karen Stevens	City School District Deputy Superintendent for Instruction	Mann Elementary
Donald Jones	City School District Director of Elementary and Secondary Education	Mann Elementary

Data Source Three: Documentation

I collected documentary evidence both on my own volition, and guided by the interviews with teachers, principals, and agents of accountability. I examined the collected documents to determine what regulatory and accountability mechanisms were explicitly stated, which were implicitly understood, as well as the accountability “story”

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produced for public consumption. I used this documentary evidence to develop the “official story” about what “should be” important and happening in Michigan schools (see Appendix J).

Data Analysis

I used my conceptual framework not only as a basis from which to develop interview protocols, but as an analytic tool as well. I coded all of the interview transcripts based on the dimensions of accountability described in my conceptual framework. In coding the transcripts based on the accountability framework, I engaged in paradigmatic analysis which Polkinghorne (1995) describes as the analysis of narratives that “seeks to locate common themes or conceptual manifestations among the stories collected as data” (p.13). Over the course of interviews with teachers and principals, I allowed participants to define accountability in their school setting as they saw fit. As the participants described the accountability frameworks to which they believed they were subject, I revised and reevaluated my protocols and categories of analysis to include the dimensions and topics described by participants.

Throughout the course of data collection, I reviewed, interrogated, and analyzed the transcripts, texts, and documents as suggested by grounded theory. Strauss and Corbin (1994) argue that grounded theory methodology involves a continual interplay between analysis and data collection. Thus, theory can be generated from the data, existing theories can be elaborated and modified based on incoming data, or theory based on previous research can be carried into the current study (p. 273). I engaged in an “iterative process of data collection, interpretation and analysis” that included reflection, critique, and categorization of the data collected (Lightfoot & Davis, 1997 p.214). As I

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read and explored the data, I constantly re-evaluated the initial research questions, my protocols, and my guiding theories.

I created rich cases of accountability in each school as those involved constructed them. Using the categorized data elicited from the forty-eight transcripts, I engaged in narrative analysis which configures “data elements into a story that unites and gives meaning to the data as contributors to a goal or purpose [which] requires the researcher to discover a plot...” (Polkinghorne, 1995 p.15). I developed these emplotted case studies to illustrate the dynamics of accountability systems across schools.

This dissertation focuses on how individuals understand the nature of accountability and how those understandings interact with and influence one another in a school setting. The multiple perspectives described by participants provided me with an opportunity to delve into the complex nature of schools as organizations. This dissertation was not a study of accountability “in-practice” nor was it designed to test theories of accountability or the coherence of a particular accountability framework. The cases of accountability presented in chapters five, six, and seven demonstrate the varied manifestations of accountability in Michigan public schools contributing to a better understanding of how educators understand and manage their roles and responsibilities.

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Chapter 3 Notes

¹ Agents can be people or organizations. Any individual or institution that can in some way wield authority or power, whether real or perceived, could be considered an agent.

² As an attempt to represent school performance, accountability mechanisms aim to reduce behavior to a series of products. Sherman Dorn (1998) argues that accountability is fundamentally political rather than technical, and that focusing on accountability solely as a series of test results, masks the multiple purposes of establishing accountability frameworks (i.e., judging schools, judging teachers and educators, judging students, evaluating public policy, building organizations, and marketing). Dorn highlights how accountability mechanisms are, at their core, decontextualized elements unless they are connected to a larger socio-political framework. Shapiro (1988) argues that representations, such as test scores, can prevent insight into “the institutions, actions and episodes” that have constructed them (xii). Defining accountability as a static representation of school performance (tests, standards, etc.) separates the process of accountability from its products.

³ Foucault (1980) argues that “the function of an author is to characterize the existence, circulation, and operation of certain discourses within society” (124). Authors

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initiate discursive practices, produce the possibility of other text formations and rules, and establish the endless possibility of discourse (Foucault, 1980 p. 131).

⁴ In retrospect, including a private school as another contrast would have provided me with richer data. This would be an area to explore with further research.

⁵ Either the teacher phoned me, the principal passed on a message that a teacher was willing to participate, or I telephoned the teacher to follow up.

⁶ I may have had greater difficulty securing participant cooperation had I attempted to schedule interviews during the months schools were in session. Participants informed me that they were more willing to participate in the summer months specifically due to fewer time constraints.

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CHAPTER IV CONCEPTIONS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Over the course of this research, I had the opportunity to explore accountability from a number of angles and through a variety of lenses. Suffice it to say my notions of accountability when I began this project did not necessarily reflect my conclusions about accountability in schools. When I began this research, I expected that each school would present a case that could be described within the context of the dimensions of an accountability framework. I believed that these distinctive accountability frameworks would provide me with a relatively complete description of accountability in each school.

In each school, participants reported that they were responsible to varying agents, for different standards, required to show progress via different indicators, eligible for different incentives and sanctions, and subject to varying redress mechanisms. Teachers and principals participating in this study reported that in feeling accountable to multiple agents, they were subject to multiple accountability frameworks in their school setting.

My preliminary analyses seemed to support my initial understandings of accountability – accountability systems could be broken into discrete elements whose differences could illuminate conditions in American schools. However, as I delved deeper into the data, and attempted to make sense of how it was that educators understood and managed their roles and responsibilities, I found that my accountability frameworks were limited in their explanatory capacity. What was interesting was the unique manner

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in which accountability systems were created based upon the relationship of agents and frameworks. Agents', and by association their frameworks', relationships to one another created a unique accountability environment in each school. So, I developed a new set of ideas to help me describe how accountability operated in my sample of schools.

As this study employed two sets of ideas, so does this text. In conceptualizing my research questions and design at the beginning of this project, I relied upon a set of organizational distinctions that I developed early in my effort to explore educational accountability issues. These constructions, which are discussed in chapters two and three, were instrumental in launching my investigation of how educators and agents understand accountability. The structural distinctions, which I employed in the early stages of this research project, were by and large organizing devices. The features of accountability frameworks, developed through literature review, directed my protocol development and analysis strategy.

The second set of ideas, which will be briefly discussed in this chapter, I developed as my study progressed. These more substantive concepts were the next phase in the evolution of my own understanding of accountability. As I analyzed the data I had collected, I began to see more intricate and sophisticated patterns in my sample of schools. While I had initially believed that "filling in the boxes" of an accountability framework could capture the entire story of this dissertation, I saw that accountability in these three schools was more than a synthesis of accountability mechanisms. The ideas that I will introduce in this chapter are another attempt to describe and explain how accountability mechanisms and relationships operate in American schools.

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How Accountability Frameworks Can Interact

One of the first things that I discovered in analyzing this dissertation data was that the number of agents and frameworks operating within a school was not the most important factor in understanding a school's accountability environment. Instead, the relationships between agents and frameworks appeared to define the nature of accountability in each school. The distinctive accountability environments described by research participants seemed to result from the existence of and interactions between the multiple accountability frameworks operating in each school.

The schools in this study revealed three models of how accountability frameworks can interact in public schools, which I identify as "compounding", "congruent", and "competing". For example, multiple agents could work towards a similar goal, attempting to implement comparable accountability frameworks. Another possibility might be that multiple agents could operate in an effort to support different educational visions and attempt to implement contradictory accountability frameworks. In another situation, multiple agents could operate with similar expectations, but employ different means of achieving the same ends. The three school accountability cases will describe and explain these accountability environments in detail, but it is important to first understand their general character.

Compounding Frameworks

At Mann Elementary School, the agents of greatest consequence developed a highly structured and defined hierarchy of responsibility that dictated roles, responsibilities, and expectations for all stakeholders. In this case, all of the agents operating at the school had similar expectations and desired outcomes, but depending

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upon their sphere of influence employed different accountability mechanisms. These differing accountability mechanisms led to the imposition of multiple pressures upon school-based educators. Thus, at Mann, the multiple agents and frameworks were **compounding**, where responsibilities and expectations aggregated, multiplied, and intensified within each successive layer of the hierarchy. With teachers residing at the bottom of the hierarchy, they were subject to the accumulated demands of the entire structure. The compounding accountability frameworks at Mann Elementary were a function of the delegation of authority to multiple agents , who were nested within a single structure (a bureaucracy).

The issue at Mann was multiple levels of authority, simultaneously operating within a single system, where each successive layer promulgated its own mechanisms, not so that they were in conflict, but so that they aggregated. The result was a surfeit at the bottom of the hierarchy. Thus, there was no conflict, but there was an overload. This overload contributed to problems of commitment on the part of educators because they were distanced and separated from many of the decision-making processes at the school. Compounding accountability frameworks are a function of nested authority within a bureaucracy. It is unclear whether or not the compounding mechanisms at Mann were necessarily a function of the school being part of a democratic bureaucracy, or if they were contingent upon the organization of the school and district. Regardless, the case of accountability at Mann Elementary may well illustrate the status quo of Michigan public schools against which charter schools were created.

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Congruent Frameworks

At Eisenhower, all of the stakeholders appeared to have the same educational values and ideals. The multiple agents to whom participants reported they felt accountable all emphasized the same priorities and outcomes. At Eisenhower, the accountability frameworks were **congruent**, wherein all mechanisms and normative orientations were in agreement, corresponded to one another, and operated harmoniously. The congruent framework created and sustained a cohesive community of value at the school. The case of accountability at Eisenhower PSA depicts one version of the charter school dream, where accountability mechanisms are self-imposed by a congruous community. Congruent accountability frameworks, like those found at Eisenhower, differ from compounding accountability frameworks in that the multiple agents impose a single set of mechanisms upon school-based educators, rather than multiple redundant mechanisms. Congruent accountability frameworks have an organic unified feel compared to jurisdictionally nested compounding frameworks.

Competing Frameworks

At the Community School, multiple stakeholders each felt they had the primary responsibility to define accountability mechanisms. In this case, the multiple agents at the school had different expectations and desired outcomes for schools resulting in a diverse array of accountability mechanisms they attempted to employ. At the Community School the accountability frameworks were **competing**, where there was opposition, a power struggle, and rivalry between agents and accountability mechanisms. As a result, the accountability environment at the Community School was overburdened, often contradictory, and created a confused and ineffective environment. The case of

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accountability at the Community School demonstrated the charter school dream turning into a nightmare, where the impositions of multiple agents and frameworks collided to create an unstable and volatile accountability environment.

Accountability as More than A Framework

The narrative cases of accountability described in the following chapters represent and illustrate the complexity of accountability in schools. These cases did more than reveal three possible accountability environments. Together they highlighted the complex nature of accountability and the importance of relationships among agents. By the time this research was completed, I discovered that my framework could not clarify what accountability “meant” in schools, but opened the door to explore more fully how ideology, regulation, and human agency all contribute to what we commonly call accountability.

Each of the schools described in this dissertation demonstrated that the dimensions of accountability frameworks are not sufficient to explain how accountability works in schools. Each school in this study presented different challenges and issues, and as a result, their accountability stories were quite different from one another. While each school’s framework could be described and outlined, this could not fully capture the accountability dynamics in place at each school. I discovered that it was important to look beyond categories and distinctions to try to make sense out of accountability.

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CHAPTER V COMPOUNDING ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORKS: THE CASE OF MANN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Located on a quiet residential street, Mann Elementary is one of 34 public elementary schools in the urban City School District (City School District Annual Report)¹. Mann Elementary enrolled approximately 341 students. The school building housed 23 classrooms, a gymnasium and a media center. The building employed 12 grade-level classroom teachers, 3 special education teachers, and 14 additional support staff (Mann Annual Report). In the City School District as a whole, 60% of the students were white, and 24% African-American (School District Data Book). In comparison, approximately 75% of the Mann Elementary students were minority students, with over half of the entire student body identified as African-American. Sixty-four percent of Mann Elementary students received free or reduced lunch. Seventeen percent of Mann students received some kind of special education services, and 31% of the students were classified as Title I (Mann School Success Card).

Hierarchy of Agents

The City School District (CSD) served a fairly large and diverse population and attempted to meet the needs of a variety of constituencies. Donald Jones, the CSD Director of Elementary and Secondary Education explained that there are numerous groups that have a vested interest in CSD schools, and that educational accountability

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does not fall on the shoulders of one, but many: “It is not us, or them, but we. . . . We all need to be accountable” (Jones; 11/5/98). As Jones explained, in the CSD accountability was a matter of collective responsibility. The “we” to whom Jones referred included: teaching staff, students, parents, the board, school administration, and central administration. These individuals and groups, are in the language of policy are “stake-holders”. The individuals who Jones described as needing to be accountable operated within a hierarchy that dictated roles and responsibilities for CSD stake-holders allowing multiple agents to operate simultaneously in the City School District (see Figure 1). This simultaneous operation of hierarchical agents in the CSD effectually created compounding accountability frameworks to which educators were subject.

The City School District (CSD), much like any other large public school system, was organized around a bureaucratic hierarchy. The CSD was organized vertically, to dictate a pecking-order of authority, as well as horizontally to compartmentalize roles and responsibilities. The vertical hierarchy defined the flow of “administrative authority and responsibility” from the state to the district central administration down to the classroom teachers (CSD Policy Manual Document). Individuals who worked in the City School District were part of an established structure, where their roles and responsibilities were highly structured and defined. The horizontal aspect of the hierarchy, divided the oversight of district functions into departments, placing employees in charge for delimited tasks and areas of concern.

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Figure 1: Hierarchy

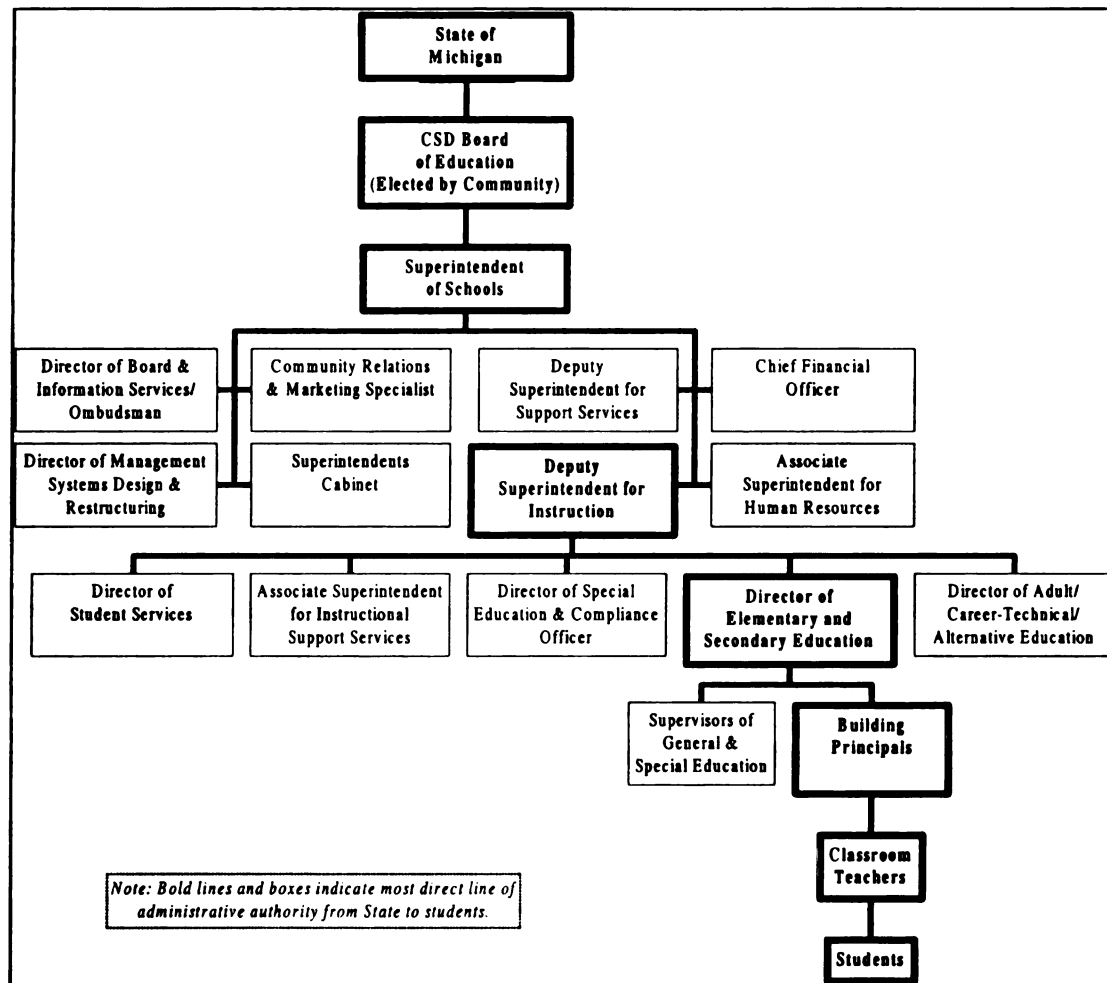


Figure 1: Hierarchy of Influence in The City School District

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Figure 1 depicts only a portion of the bureaucratic structures that were in place within the City School District. For each vertical “level” of the hierarchy, there was a horizontal level of compartmentalization. For example, the Superintendents Support Staff (those eight individuals residing beneath the Superintendent in the hierarchy), all had responsibilities that pertain to schools in some way. However, the Deputy Superintendent for Instruction was the person responsible for working with the other support staff and then supervising the Director of Elementary and Secondary Education. This pattern continued down through the rest of the hierarchy. For the purposes of this discussion, only those vertical and horizontal levels most closely associated with individual school buildings are included.

As a public school district, the CSD was legally required to adhere to the policies and regulations that the State had established. Residing at the top of the hierarchy, the State of Michigan defined roles and responsibilities for all stake-holders in the CSD. To satisfy State regulations for the governance of the district, the geographic community that composed the CSD elected nine board members who were charged with the responsibility of creating policies and procedures for the operation of the CSD. The City School District Board selected a Superintendent, the head of the district’s central administration who was responsible for the total operation of the school district. Beneath the Superintendent, administrative authority flowed in succession down to the Deputy Superintendent for Instruction, then to the Director of Elementary and Secondary Education, then to the Principal, and finally to school building staff.

Each participant in the CSD hierarchy was responsible for reporting to their direct supervisor and to no one else. For example, principals were responsible for supervising

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Within each successive layer of the CSD hierarchy, employees' range of influence became narrower. The Board was responsible for broad policies and educational decision-making, principals were responsible for decision-making within their own buildings, and teachers were solely responsible for their own classrooms. While the scope of individual authority may have tapered as one moved down the hierarchy, individuals were still subject to the decisions made by those above. Those at the bottom appeared to have little authority, and were subject to multiple policies, procedures, and organizational dictates. Mann Elementary School was a product of the hierarchy that operated above it. The substantive work that occurred within the school building was indelibly influenced by the structure of which it was a part. In order to understand the work of teachers in the CSD, it was vital to explore the hierarchy in which they worked.

The State of Michigan

The State of Michigan had broad goals for the performance of public schools, namely creating excellence in the State public education system. The State goals for education were non-specific, almost purely ideological. Chris Duggan, a State Assistant Superintendent, commented that the State aimed to create excellence by encouraging standards-driven, assessment-evaluated educational environments as well as "market competition among education providing agencies" (Duggan; 12/22/98). While loosely

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defined, the goals that Duggan described, nonetheless defined the State's role and relationship to public schools.

Standards & Indicators

The State's broad ideological goals manifested themselves in three policy and regulatory arenas: (a) statewide, standards-based curriculum frameworks; (b) a mandatory statewide assessment, the Michigan Educational Assessment Plan (MEAP); and (c) inter-district choice. In recent years, all three of the State's policy foci have come to bear on Michigan public schools.

First, the State developed comprehensive curricular standards which the MEAP was supposed to evaluate. Divided into subject matter tests, the MEAP was designed to be a measure of school performance, providing criterion-referenced data regarding student cumulative knowledge. Second, inter-district choice, as a politically popular means of reforming Michigan schools, brought parental and community involvement in shaping their childrens' education to the forefront of school decision-making².

Although school choice and standards-based curricula may have been rhetorically important in the State educational policy arena, they both fell second to the MEAP as a priority. Duggan stated that "our primary goal is to serve the purpose of helping schools become better. And we measure that in terms of measured student achievement. We define evidence of success in terms of measured student achievement" (Duggan; 12/22/98). Standardized testing was the primary indicator of the State's influence on public schools. Duggan stated that MEAP scores were a good example of measured student achievement because "they are universal, and they are governmentally administered. They are the primary element of evidence that we have" (Duggan;

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12/22/98). At the State level, it seemed as though parental satisfaction as a standard, and school enrollment levels as an indicator fell short of providing evidence of school success. The MEAP as a government administered and controlled assessment of schools was considered more reliable than other standards and assessments.

Incentives, Sanctions, & Redress

A school's performance on the MEAP signaled to the State what incentives, sanctions, or redress mechanisms a school may have needed. Duggan noted that the State of Michigan did not offer many incentives to schools based on their performance (MEAP scores). Duggan claimed that the State did not have the financial or human resources to explore a vast range of options for either punishments or rewards:

The board, under the direction of the current superintendent has, I think, appropriately decided that an agency with limited resources is more effective focusing on technical assistance, to high-needs schools, than it is monitoring all schools, and trying to punish some of them into improved performance. (Duggan; 12/22/98)

High-needs schools were defined by MEAP scores. Schools were always working towards their students achieving a "satisfactory" score on the MEAP (in addition to everything else). If a designated percentage of students did not achieve a satisfactory score, then the school was designated as high-needs, warranting sanctions or redress.

As Duggan noted, the State can respond to chronic under-performance by either providing technical assistance or punishing schools (sanctions) in the hopes of improving performance. He described:

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Sanctioning would be to reduce resources [i.e., state aid]. An example of technical assistance would be to sit down and review school improvement plans, to review curriculum alignment, and to provide training and assistance to staff members as they work to align curriculum, adopt effective instructional strategies, learn to collect internal data and do self-monitoring, and to make appropriate instructional adjustments to move to quality. (Duggan; 12/22/98)

The consequences for individual schools (at the State level) in the cases of chronic under-performance were small. However the threat of losing funding could be a sanction to the district in which a school resides. Thus, State punishments for low MEAP scores may not have impacted the school buildings but targeted the district instead.

The Impact of the State

The State of Michigan defined its expectations and outcomes for schools broadly, incorporating elements of both democratic and market frameworks. While these multiple mechanisms could have presented multiple goals, expectations, and means of assessing success, it seems clear that the MEAP was the only mechanism of consequence for the State. At the State level, the MEAP became the standard for school practice, supplanting any other curricular frameworks that the State developed. Other standards and mechanisms could have indicated progress to the State (i.e., community satisfaction and enrollment levels), but the MEAP was the only tool used, and all state standards, incentives, sanctions, and redress mechanisms were based upon school MEAP scores. In many ways, the State served solely as a monitor of school performance, identifying the baselines for achievement as well as appropriate indicators of success. Because the MEAP was the sole indicator for the State, the importance of the MEAP was impressed upon school districts. With funding attached to school MEAP scores, districts as a whole were pressured to focus on the MEAP as both an indicator and a standard.

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City School District

The City School District operated with a structured chain of command beginning with the School Board and Superintendent. The Board hired the Superintendent who then worked to develop and implement the district's strategic goals. The district administration oversaw a large budget that covered the expenses of all CSD schools. Thus staffing levels and materials purchased were determined at the district level. The Board and Superintendent had the ultimate decision-making power in the district. They chose curricula, textbooks, and assessments, designed operating procedures, as well as meted out punishments and rewards.

Standards

The City School District had clearly defined standards and norms of operations for all of their schools. In order to accomplish state goals and requirements, the CSD developed a lengthy strategic plan composed of thirty-nine goals in seven focus areas. The following list contains a sample of the range of objectives included in the district plan:

- Implementing increased academic outcome expectations for students based on the district curriculum which has been aligned with state and national standards.
- Identifying schools not attaining their academic performance targets and providing assistance to improve academic achievement in those buildings.
- Reconstituting schools not meeting academic targets³.
- Developing mechanisms to elicit periodic feedback from parents.
- Continuing to implement the marketing/advertising campaign.
- Creating and supporting professional development opportunities to help teachers and administrators gain a better understanding of the core curriculum so they are more prepared to assist students in achieving the identified academic outcomes. (City School District 5-year Strategic Plan)

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The CSD strategic plan indicated several priorities for the district: (a) defining academic success for CSD students according to state standards; (b) targeting schools not meeting academic standards for both technical assistance and sanctions; and (c) attaining parent satisfaction. All the CSD objectives reflected State priorities for schools, indicating that the responsibility of meeting state goals and standards was important in the CSD.

The CSD had recently developed a district-wide core curriculum. This curriculum was intended to be uniformly implemented, and to meet or exceed state curriculum guidelines. In addition, the Board and Superintendent chose textbook packages for classroom teachers that they believed supported district and State curricular goals

In addition to curricular standards promoted by the State, the City School District also worked to support the State goal of introducing competition and market mechanisms into the district. The CSD was structured to allow intra-district choice. The State allowed students to attend any school within the ISD, and the CSD allowed their students to attend any school within the district. In addition to the school choices CSD students had within the ISD and district, the CSD community also had the option of choosing from among 8 charter schools in the metropolitan area. Moving toward a market framework increased the importance of meeting community goals, and may have made community members a more powerful influence on the district. Thus, in order to attract and retain their students, the CSD may have become more responsive to parents and community members.

Indicators

The State's emphasis on standardized test scores as a measure of school achievement was reflected in CSD accountability mechanisms. Karen Stevens, Deputy

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Superintendent for Instruction stated that “We continually monitor how schools are doing . . . based on various indicators of the school’s success -- test scores . . . those results are disaggregated by male, female, ethnic group” (Stevens; 1/27/99). In addition to the State MEAP assessment, the CSD administered the nationally normed Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT), and a Curriculum Monitoring System (CMS). The battery of standardized tests administered by the CSD were expected to be indicators of whether or not students were meeting the outcome expectations defined by the district. The MEAP provided school-level data on student cumulative knowledge, the MAT compared individual students on a national level, and the CMS assessed student knowledge of the district curriculum. Rebecca Glenn, Mann Elementary Principal, described:

We have an assessment program called CMS . . . [which] is supposed to give us some indications as to how well we did on implementing our curriculum. So they use that as one measure to see if we’ve been, the kids have been learning what we said, what we think are important. [CSD uses] the MEAP and the MAT as means of seeing if kids are learning things that we say are important. (Glenn; 7/13/98)

Standardized tests completed by CSD students, according to Glenn, were the sole measure of school success. Glenn’s perceptions were clearly reinforced in the CSD *School Success Cards*, published annually for each school building in the district. The *School Success Card* was developed based on district expectations, and states that it is a device for monitoring school success. The cards provided student achievement and demographic data “for use by schools in educational planning.” According to the card, all of the tests that CSD schools administer were intended to be used to develop each building’s school improvement plan which outline school goals for the upcoming year. The data contained within the *School Success Card* was limited almost solely to

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standardized test scores -- MEAP and MAT -- disaggregated by age, gender, and ethnicity (Mann Elementary School Success Card).

Since the CSD allowed parents a choice of schools in which to enroll their children, enrollment and whether or not community goals and objectives were being met was a secondary indicator of school success. Interviews with CSD district officials revealed little about how the district monitored whether school enrollment levels were affected by parental choice. While student count days provided CSD officials with numbers of students that are enrolled in any one school, no CSD official was aware of how students were “tracked” to determine if they are participating in the intra-district choice program, or if they had left the district for a charter school.

Incentives/Sanctions

The City School district offered few incentives to schools. The CSD operated on the assumption that high performance did not need to be rewarded by the district, but that technical assistance was required when schools did not perform well. Karen Stevens, Deputy Superintendent for Instruction stated that schools that were “behind” were identified through MEAP and MAT scores, as well as the CMS. Rebecca Glenn described what happened at Mann when students performed above, as well as below standard on the MEAP:

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Just recently, the last year, Mann was in the news regarding their MEAP result scores because they had consistently increased. This year we decreased our test scores. And now we've gotten a letter, stating because you did not meet the board goals as far as achievement⁴, that these things will be happening. For example, your school improvement plan will be reviewed by those that be. Your, you must have a person from evaluation services come engage in data analysis. Item analysis with your staff. You will be assigned a principal to assist you with the school, where the scores, where the scores didn't meet the board goals. I don't like that kind of approach. And I'm going to express that⁵. (Glenn; 7/13/98)

Overall, the CSD's method of rewarding or punishing schools was dependent upon test scores. Stevens noted that schools falling below a certain cut-point received extra help from a district Achievement Group which provided services and support from the district. The Achievement Group's main function, according to Stevens was to disaggregate test scores, assist with building-wide planning, focus on improvement plans and staff development needs, identify helpful models, and help the school pull all of the assistance together into a series of staff development activities.

Another sanction for under-performance in the CSD could have been the loss of students and associated funds in the case of parental dissatisfaction. However, it was unclear whether or not this was a true influence on the behaviors of school employees. Contrary to the market mechanisms in place with respect to parental choice, the CSD did not permit their schools to operate with chronic academic failure. In effect, the CSD did not permit the market to take its course, because it required that all schools met their standards regardless of parental satisfaction (enrollment). It was nearly impossible to discern whether parental choice in and of itself encouraged or discouraged CSD organizational behavior.

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In the event that schools did not improve their test scores, the district had the option to reconstitute⁶ the school. Karen Stevens, described what could have happened:

After two years of receiving assistance, if [the school] continues to decline, or not move up, make adequate progress, then we have the option, the district, to reconstitute the school. So we have a plan in place . . . if the buildings are not making adequate progress, then I recommend to the superintendent and board a change in the administration and/or a change in the staffing, and/or other kinds of changes that might be needed to make adequate progress. (Stevens; 1/27/98)

The CSD policy allowing for reconstitution of schools was new and relatively untested.

It remains to be seen just how many schools may actually be reconstituted if they continue to under-perform.

CSD Administrative Officials

As the broad policy-makers of the district, the Board and Superintendent had little contact with individual schools. The district's contact with schools was designated as a responsibility of other district staff and employees. The CSD central administration was divided into various departments, each with different responsibilities with respect to administering the goals of the district. As previously shown in Figure 1, there were multiple vertical and horizontal "pathways" through the district administration, however, for the purposes of this study, only those district officials designated as intermediaries between the Superintendent and students were interviewed. Within the District, authority ran from the board to the superintendent to the Deputy Superintendent of Instruction to the Director of Elementary and Secondary Education. This strict vertical hierarchy determined the roles and functions of district supervisors.

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Deputy Superintendent of Instruction. The Superintendent's support staff were responsible for carrying out the strategic goals of the district. Thus, the role of the Deputy Superintendent for Instruction was to,

ensure that the vision and expectations for our schools are clearly stated and known around the district. To ensure that parents and the community are confident in the academic performance and the safety of the schools. . . . To continuously look at what new ways we need to develop our schools and programs (Stevens; 1/27/99).

Karen Stevens, as Deputy Superintendent for Instruction, was responsible for supervising all of those district employees whose roles were related to teaching and learning in CSD school buildings. Stevens rarely interacted with school-level personnel, but instead supervised the CSD staff who supervised schools and school personnel (Director of Elementary and Secondary Education, Director of Student Services, Associate Superintendent for Instructional Support Services, Director of Adult/Career-Technical/Alternative Education, Director of Special Education and Compliance Officer). Karen's position was that of monitor and supervisor, transmitting directives and information from the Superintendent and ensuring that her subordinates were doing their jobs.

Director of Elementary and Secondary Education. The Director of Elementary and Secondary Education was the CSD central administrator with the closest working relationship to schools. Donald Jones, as the CSD Director of Elementary and Secondary Education, described his primary responsibility as "supervising principals to ensure that teaching and learning is going on in the schools" (Jones; 11/5/98). The district standards for principals reflected those expectations and desired outcomes that are embraced by both the State and City School District. In the CSD, principals are supposed to be instructional leaders who:

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- create and maintain a safe and orderly environment;
 - develop a clearly articulated mission for the school;
 - provide instructional leadership;
 - communicate a climate of high expectations;
 - ensure that students have the opportunity to learn;
 - plan and implement student testing procedures; and
 - secure parental support for the mission of the school.
- (CSD Policies and Procedures)

Jones claimed he had little responsibility for the performance of CSD schools as a whole, and relied solely on his supervision of principals to determine whether or not schools were operating according to CSD standards.

Principals were formally evaluated by Jones every three years based on: test scores, the atmosphere/climate of the school, the meeting of school improvement goals, productivity, the principals' relationship to the school improvement team and staff, the customer/client relationship, communication, and leadership/management skills (Jones; 11/5/98). While it was CSD policy to evaluate principal performance across multiple dimensions, Jones said that he assessed whether or not teaching and learning was happening (his main standard) primarily by examining and disaggregating test scores -- MEAP, MAT, CMS (Jones; 11/5/98). It is important to note, however, that even though Jones' main indicator of principal performance was test scores, the CSD departmental structure dictated that test scores were not submitted to his office directly.

Jones stated that school level data such as attendance reports and test scores were all submitted to different departments in the central office (Jones; 11/5/98). Rebecca Glenn, the Mann principal confirmed that the records she submitted to central administration rarely went to the Director of Elementary and Secondary Education: "they have to go to, they go to state and federal. They may go to student services, student

accounts. They may go to that office. They may go to transportation. It all depends on what the request is” (Glenn; 7/13/98). The CSD did not conceptualize the role of the Director of Elementary and Secondary Education broadly, but only as a supervisor of building administrators. Thus, Jones had to go outside of his office to determine whether or not principals were performing up to his standards.

Jones and the CSD offered few incentives or sanctions to principals. Successful principals were rewarded with verbal recognition or the opportunity to attend various professional development activities. For poorly performing principals, Jones supervised an improvement plan with the principal. These plans often directed principals to work more closely with administrative personnel (such as successful principals) who may have been helpful in correcting problems (Jones; 11/5/98). When a principal received a poor evaluation, or did not follow through on an improvement plan, the consequences could have been demotion, reassignment, or dismissal. While dismissal was a possibility, Jones claimed that he never heard of a principal being fired for poor performance and that principals were most likely to be demoted or reassigned to another school (Jones; 11/5/98).

Principals. School principals were an instrument of the district’s authority within individual buildings. Within the CSD hierarchy, principals had the following roles: (a) building administrator; (b) liaison between CSD central administration and the school; and (c) supervisor of classroom teachers. While principals did have a fair amount of flexibility in determining how they would like to administer their school buildings, they were bound by the policies, procedures, rules, and expectations of those who resided

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above them in the hierarchy. Rebecca Glenn, principal of Mann Elementary commented that:

We have a book, a thick book of policies, of rules and regulations that are adopted by the board of education. And those cover anything from attendance to reporting child abuse cases to procedures for trying new incentives in your building to attendance policies for staff members. So there are hundreds and hundreds of policies that we, that we have to adhere to. (Glenn; 7/13/98)

The CSD charged each principal with the responsibility of managing their own school building and accomplishing the goals of both the State and the District. Furthermore, as assessors of teacher performance, building principals were the primary agents of consequence for classroom teachers.

Impact of the District

The City School District, much like the State, placed a great emphasis on standardization of practice through testing. In addition to the MEAP, the CSD also required two other standardized tests, one to monitor for compliance with the district curricula, and one to compare CSD students nationally. While market mechanisms were in place to allow for parents' agency in the district, it was unclear how the CSD interpreted or used these indicators. One could argue that the CSD focused on MEAP and other standardized test scores because that was an area over which they had greater agency. It may have been simpler for the district to address issues of student performance than parental decision-making and preferences, leaving the MEAP as the preeminent standard for performance, with parental preferences secondary.

The strict vertical hierarchy that established the roles and responsibilities for CSD employees placed most central administrators in the position of monitoring schools for

compliance with district objectives. In the larger district structure, the central administration communicated goals, policies, and standards, and intervened when standards were not met. Overall, the CSD central administration placed a great deal of responsibility upon the principal as building administrator to implement the goals for the district.

Mann Elementary School

At Mann Elementary, Rebecca Glenn was responsible for leading a school that was responsive to the wants and needs of multiple constituencies. The constituencies to whom Rebecca felt responsible include the State, the District, parents, building staff, and the CSD geographic community. The individuals and groups to whom Rebecca felt a responsibility represent the sum total of all possible agents who could exert authority at Mann. However, each stake-holder to whom Rebecca felt a responsibility exerted varying degrees of influence over the operation of the school, regardless of how responsible she may have “felt” to that group.

For example, Rebecca reported that second to her students, she felt most responsible to parents because they chose to send their students to Mann. Rebecca’s feeling of responsibility to parents stemmed from their potential influence over schools through their “exit” option. Ruth Beal, a teacher at Mann, commented that:

Teaching has become more of a business in this City area . . . We are in the business of trying to keep students in this building versus letting them go to charter schools . . . City School District has now become a business to get students into their schools so they can get those dollars. (Beal; 7/10/98)

On some level, both Mann teachers and principals were aware of the consequences that would result from the loss of student populations, and there may have been administrative

pressure on teachers to meet parental needs⁷. However, it is questionable just how influential market mechanisms were at Mann. At Mann, the principal reported that few students had actually left for charter schools, and that few students were there by “choice”. So while schooling may have been a business on the district level, choice had little practical impact at Mann. All of the teachers interviewed commented that parental involvement at Mann (in any capacity) was limited. So while parents, and parental choice may have been important to the district, and rhetorically at the school, in actuality, they had minimal influence in the day-to-day-operations of Mann. Parents may be a theoretically important agent to the State and District, but at Mann they were an indirect influence to the extent that the State and District placed pressure on Rebecca who then may have placed pressure on the staff.

On the other hand, the State and District, to whom Rebecca claimed that she felt less responsible, shaped the nature of her work at Mann a great deal. A complex series of goals, expectations and requirements from these sources were all placed upon Rebecca’s shoulders. The State and District heavily monitored Mann for both compliance with regulations and student achievement. An example of how Board and District priorities permeated school-level policies can be noted in the Mann school goals. The Mann Elementary School Improvement Team developed three goals to address during the 1997-8 school year. All three pertained to the goal of having 2/3 of Mann students achieving a satisfactory score on the MEAP (Mann 1998 Annual Report). The State and District focus on the MEAP infiltrated the school level, influencing the goals and objectives of the school.

Unlike parents who had a questionable role in the decision-making patterns at Mann, the State and District both had long-standing mechanisms in place to ensure that Rebecca and Mann fulfilled their expectations. The hierarchy that sustained the City School District forced goals, priorities and accountability mechanisms to be directed to the school level. Thus, state and district-level priorities became school-level priorities. Each school was then responsible for the sum total of all the expectations that accumulated throughout the State and District bureaucracy. So, Rebecca, as a school principal, was responsible to multiple agents and sources of influence, each exerting a varying degree of influence on her leadership of the school.

Standards

Rebecca's standards for teachers fell into three basic categories: (a) promoting student achievement; (b) demonstrating the required competencies established by the District; and (c) following formal curricular guidelines handed down from the State and District.

Promoting Student Achievement Through Pacing

Rebecca's stated that her first objective as a principal was "promoting student achievement" (Glenn; 6/9/98). She claimed that she wanted to

assure that the students who graduate from Mann Elementary School are competent in the areas of reading, writing, social studies, thinking, problem solving, communication. How can we assure that they are prepared to go on to middle school and high school and college, equipped with the skills they need to be competent community contributors. (Glenn; 6/9/98)

Further, Rebecca noted that she believed that teachers must teach in a focused, fast-paced, and intentional, manner, to promote student achievement and engagement in the

classroom (Glenn; 6/9/99). Rebecca believed that teaching was basically a task driven activity. Teachers need to be aware of what was expected of them, and then accomplish the objectives placed before them in a timely, sequential fashion. This translated into Rebecca enforcing standards about teacher's instructional pacing.

Pat Homer, a third grade teacher, commented repeatedly that she was expected to "stay on schedule", prepare her students for the next grade, and to make sure that everything was going smoothly in her classroom. Rebecca's emphasis on promoting student achievement through appropriate pacing did not always resonate with the Mann teachers. Ruth Beal, a first grade teacher explained:

I think [Rebecca] has an unrealistic idea . . . Rebecca always says when she was teaching, it's all a matter of pacing to get a child to a certain place . . . and I think, I'm not as much in a rush. And that's probably because I'm in a different position. She's in a different position than I. She's got people looking [at her]. (Beal; 7/10/98)

As Ruth noted, Rebecca's standards regarding pacing stemmed from pressures from her supervisors. Rebecca's expectation that teachers should be instructing in an intentional and fast-paced manner, translated into following a precise schedule in preparing students for the next grade. Joanne Kramer, another teacher, explained about Rebecca's expectations:

I guess that the phrase would be, everybody's on the same page. The adults in the building are working for the same goals for the students. That everyone is working together and has some understanding of what the next person is doing. What the person at the grade levels below are doing, and um, those people understanding what the prior grade levels are doing, and how they can all work together to have the students reach the, end goals for the students when they're ready to leave the building. (Kramer; 6/17/98)

The teachers interviewed believed that Rebecca wanted them to view the school as an interrelated structure where each teacher was responsible for preparing their students to move on, either to the next curricular unit or grade in the school.

Teacher Competencies

According to the City School District's *Appraisal of a Professional: Evaluation Insert*, there were six areas in which teachers were expected to demonstrate competence - relationships with students, knowledge of subject matter, instructional planning and implementation, evaluation and measurement, classroom management, and professionalism (City School District Document). Included in the list of specific competencies teachers were expected to demonstrate were: using the district curriculum, using district-wide assessments, adhering to district policies and requirements, and participating in matters related to total school improvement (Teacher Appraisal Handbook). For the most part, CSD teachers were expected to "toe the district line" and implement those decisions made in the upper echelons of the hierarchy. The CSD's expectations of teachers provided a structure for teacher behavior at the school and gave Rebecca guidelines for her instructional supervision. In spite of their existence as a formal policy, none of the teachers mentioned the CSD teacher competencies as a great influence on their practice, aside from their place in the evaluation and tenure process.

Curriculum

Rebecca expected her staff to follow all of the State and District curricula and use the materials purchased by the district because, "all these materials that educators, nationally and statewide and locally, at the building level have agreed are all important,

we cannot afford to just present one third of that curriculum” (Glenn; 6/9/98). Much like the CSD teacher competencies, Rebecca used the District curriculum as a guideline for her instructional leadership. The District curriculum represented the subject matter that others believed was important to teach, and Rebecca aimed to ensure that it was all implemented at Mann.

The teachers at Mann reported that Rebecca wanted them to adhere closely to those curriculum guidelines and materials handed down from the State and District. Ruth Beal noted that even though she did not like the district materials or curriculum she used them:

Okay, we have all of these lovely books here we just received . . . Unfortunately, if you follow a pre-packaged program, then you are following a pre-packaged program and you are not thinking about individual needs and individual differences and actually things that actually might make sense when you’re doing this. But you are following their program because they spent all of these hundreds of thousands of dollars to purchase this program. So the district has interestingly always putting out these norms, these requirements. (Beal; 9/8/98)

All of the teachers interviewed noted that they followed the district curriculum closely, because that was what they were “expected” to do.

Indicators

State and district priorities were evident in the indicators of school and teacher performance which Rebecca used. Rebecca assessed teacher and school performance through multiple mechanisms. Teachers were expected to have students that perform well on standardized tests, and simultaneously be facilitators, actively engaging their students.

Standardized Testing

Rebecca noted that the battery of tests that Mann students took provided “data that helps drive instruction” (Glenn; 6/9/98). Rebecca believed that student test scores provided an accurate measure of school success, and are a valuable tool for instructional planning. She explained,

I truly believe that if you’re teaching intentionally, if you’re teaching in a fast-paced mode where kids are getting it, because it’s meaningful and retaining it, it’s going to reflect on your, on your MEAP and national tests. I have no qualms with the MEAP or MATs or SATs because it’s going to reflect what we’ve done. (Glenn; 6/9/98)

For Rebecca, the MEAP and other standardized tests were so much a part of school operations, that she did not distinguish between them as standards or assessments:

I have a responsibility to look at where the need, where the need is. To look at where the baseline data are in the areas of reading, math, science, social studies, writing, listening, thinking, art, music, PE. To look at the national, state, and local standards. The rubrics that go, objectives, the benchmarks. To look at the gap that exists between the base-line data and the standards. And to try to develop a plan of action in collaboration with all of the human resources and financial resources that we have, to close that gap. So that students are leaving us at a respectable level. (Glenn; 7/13/98)

It is unclear whether or not Rebecca believed that standardized tests and curricula had an inherent value beyond the goals of the State and District. Since Rebecca noted that MEAP scores “reflect what we’ve done,” it is possible that she believed that effective teaching and learning were reflected on the MEAP whether or not the test was explicitly addressed in the school. In this way, the MEAP may not have been an additional burden in Rebecca’s eyes, but a useful check on her teacher’s instruction (as the State intended).

When all was said and done, Rebecca approached the MEAP pragmatically. She saw it as a task that she must complete because it was important to her supervisors and

the community she served. For example, Rebecca noted that, “I understand, I know for a fact that the Realtors publish MEAP scores now. In the paper. This house is selling for \$140,000. MEAP scores are this, that and the other. So Realtors are using MEAP scores to influence where people live” (Glenn; 8/17/98). MEAP scores influencing where people live was primarily a district-level concern since it spoke to enrollment levels, as well as public relations. It was also an indicator of how parents (as people buying houses) influenced CSD decision-making indirectly through their monitoring of MEAP scores. Rebecca’s understanding of the MEAP’s influence demonstrates how district-level concerns can (and did) fall on her shoulders in her role as principal.

Rebecca’s emphasis on standardized tests was also passed on to teachers. Joanne Kramer noted that she knew if her class was going well when “test scores came back” (6/17/98), and Pat Homer noted that one of her goals for her students was that, “I wanta feel like they’re ready to take any test and not feel pressured or left out” (Homer; 8/10/98). For the most part, the Mann teachers interviewed spoke of the MEAP and district exams as a standard to be met, rather than an assessment of a standard. As Ruth Beal noted:

In order to meet the standards that the MEAP is stressing or whatever kind of standardized tests have been put before us . . . if a document is followed that expresses this in a way that is understandable, then we can probably meet the criteria that are stated in these tests. (Beal; 7/10/98)

For the most part teachers claimed that the MEAP was a great influence on their practice, in spite of the fact that they may not have approved of the standardized test method of assessment. Ruth Beal commented that, in her opinion, far too much emphasis was

placed on preparing students to take the MEAP and minimal attention was placed on teaching and learning:

This MEAP thing is driving me nuts. And I'm not even involved in it as much as people in 4th and 5th grade are. But what I want is for kids to learn and to be excited about learning. And how long it takes them to get to that point, and if they can pass a standardized test is irrelevant to me . . . And they will be able actually to pass, to pass these standardized tests and do the things that people want to do, given the right environment to nurture what they need to learn and how they need to learn. Going about it as we're going about it with these great big MEAP training sessions and the MEAP coach and, is not the way to spend our time and the better course of our year. (Beal; 7/10/98)

The teachers argued that they were expected to prepare their students to do well on the MEAP and "we are expected to try to get them to rise every year on their scores" (Kramer; 8/6/98).

In many ways, the pressure to do well on tests came from the structures that supported standardized tests from the State. For example, Joanne stated that she defined a successful class as one where "students are on target. They're working cooperatively. They're interested in learning" (Kramer; 6/17/98). However, at the same time Joanne placed a high premium on test success. She explained:

We feel we have to do this because they're gonna be tested on it and our scores are gonna be looked at. And we know that this information is important for them to learn, they need to learn it anyway. But they also need to learn X Y and Z over here and how are we gonna get that filled in. And there are times when something has to give . . . You have to prioritize and obviously since they're being tested on the MEAP, that would be your first priority. (Kramer; 9/8/98)

The MEAP and other district tests were a priority for the Mann teachers because they were priorities for the State and District. The teacher emphasis on standardized assessments was in response to pressure from the State and District. Test scores were so

embedded in CSD school processes, that both the principal and teachers interviewed were unable to imagine what teaching and learning would look like without them.

Teacher Evaluations

Rebecca assessed the areas of teacher competence desired by the CSD through a formal CSD evaluation process. The minimal components of the teacher evaluation process in the City School District included a pre-evaluation conference, a pre-observation conference, two formal classroom observations, a post-observation conference, and a year-end performance evaluation (Teacher Appraisal Handbook). The City School District's *Teacher Appraisal Handbook* stated that the teacher evaluation process was intended to accomplish the following objectives: to reinforce teachers' understanding of the district performance expectations, to assist teachers in maintaining a repertoire of effective teaching strategies, give teachers an opportunity to reflect on their own performance, and to detect any performance deficiencies at the earliest point possible in a teachers career (City School District Document).

Rebecca did perform the mandatory evaluations required by the district, but for the most part, the teachers indicated that this was not a concern for them. The teachers noted that Rebecca was always popping into the classroom for a few moments at a time, looking around, seeing what was happening in the room. Rebecca explained that she was always looking for "time on task":

I wanta see kids learning . . . teachers on task, students on task. I'm looking for engagement. I'm looking for interaction. I am, I am not looking for piles of dittoes on the desk. The teacher behind the desk. I am looking for the teacher in the heart of things, serving as a facilitator more so than a person who just gives out knowledge. I'm looking for someone who knows how to interact with students and get them to think about why they are doing things" (Glenn; 7/13/98).

Rebecca's casual classroom observations appeared to have more of an impact upon Mann teachers' instruction than the formalized district procedures.

On an informal level, the teachers mentioned that Rebecca had an unspoken expectation that teachers would "overcommit" themselves to the school. Joanne Kramer said that she believed that Rebecca had an unreasonable expectation for the amount of time that teachers would spend at the school, and that she used it as a barometer for performance, "time and quality of teaching . . . it appears that the amount of time spent preparing and doing is a measure of quality [for Rebecca] . . . The quantity of time makes quality" (Kramer; 9/8/98). Rebecca's informal expectation of time spent at the school proved to be more burdensome than the formal evaluation procedure.

Incentives and Sanctions.

Rebecca noted that she did not want to employ the same kind of mechanisms as the district to reward or punish her staff:

Some choose the stick and some choose a carrot. Some choose to lead with an iron hand-like manner. And others choose to lead by empowering and being followers themselves . . . I prefer to use a carrot. I prefer to empower people. I prefer to brainstorm and discuss with people what can I do to support you. What can we do differently? I don't believe that raising the level of concern in negative ways is the best way to get people to follow rules and regulations they think are in the best interest of children. (Glenn; 8/13/98)

Interestingly, the teachers interviewed did not know, or were not aware of any incentives or sanctions for their performance in the classroom. Joanne said that if she did a good job, or received a positive evaluation "you get a pat on the back, basically" (Kramer; 6/17/98). Pat noted that "the only incentive for me is seeing the, seeing the progress and growth through the students" (Homer; 8/28/98). While Ruth noted that she needed no

incentives or sanctions, Pat and Joanne had some vague idea that if they performed poorly, Rebecca would be displeased and/or put them on a plan of some kind, but they both claimed that they did not know what happened if a teacher performed poorly at the school.

In actuality, Rebecca could offer virtually no incentives to her teachers, short of professional development opportunities and her approval. However, she did have the option of putting teachers on an “improvement plan” in the event that she was dissatisfied with their performance. According to District materials, upon receiving a negative evaluation, the teacher and administrator may develop a “Required Improvement Plan” which outlines areas in which the teacher needs to improve, the resources that will be made available to assist the teacher, and a timeline for improvement (Teacher Appraisal Handbook). Rebecca explained what might be included in a teacher’s improvement plan:

You would have to state clearly the area of need. You may have to have that person look at what the standard is. And you would have to jointly build a plan to get that person from point A to point B and that might mean visiting other classrooms where the standards are demonstrated. Attending workshops. Reading books. A number of observations with feedback. Using different kinds of observation forms. Video taping with permission. Audio-taping. Mentors. Etc. (Glenn; 7/13/98)

Neither Rebecca nor the teachers interviewed knew just how often teachers received negative evaluations and were put on improvement plans. For the most part, a teacher needing an improvement plan was the exception rather than the rule.

Joanne did note, however, that in addition to pats on the back and improvement plans, Rebecca provided some informal rewards and punishments to teachers based upon the amount of time that teachers spent at the school.

[If you spend more time, you are] given materials . . . and [Rebecca's] more readily available. Now, she is a very busy, busy person. But I think you get more time and it's not, you know, rushed . . . I don't think formally anything would [happen if I didn't overcommit myself]. You know, we have our contractual hours we have that we have to put in beyond the school day and that, you know, that's a given . . . but you can also be treated differently if you don't . . . Maybe not listened to as well, concerns not taken as seriously. You know, needs, asking for something, I don't think you'd be as high a priority as somebody who's committing themselves. (Kramer; 9/8/98)

It appears as though the formal sanctions developed by the district were of less consequence to teachers than Rebecca's informal means of encouraging or discouraging teacher behaviors. As a result, the "sanction" of an improvement plan, was an ineffective means of encouraging teachers to demonstrate the CSD designated teacher competencies. In contrast Rebecca's approval, disapproval, and favoring of teachers who met her informal expectations did seem to impact teacher behavior.

Redress.

For the most part, Rebecca had few options with regard to developing her own redress mechanisms. The combined impact of the tenure system and union allowed her little control over staffing her own building. Central hiring procedures, potential grievances, seniority structures, and policies regarding displaced district employees often forced Rebecca to "make do" with a staff she felt could not meet her own goals and objectives. Rebecca stated that she must resort to more informal redress mechanisms when she felt that a teacher was unable to fulfill their responsibilities in the school.

I think that, I think that principals and, and central staff members, if they feel that a person isn't cutting it, they are going to increase their level of concern to the extent that that person may choose another career path . . . For example, if a principal feels that a teacher isn't cutting it, and they've tried the school improvement plan, etc., then conferences could be held. In fact, I've engaged in these kinds of conferences where you encourage the teacher to find another kind of job. (Glenn; 6/9/98)

For Rebecca, increasing the level of concern meant "I will keep reminding that person of job expectations, until the changes are made or until the person decides to transfer out of the building. Or it could be that I would say to central office that this person does not need to be around any kids. What can we do differently, with that person?" (Glenn; 7/13/98). Rebecca had little or no power alone, but could bring about pressure or consequences on a teacher or have the CSD intervene.

Impact of the School/Principal

Rebecca repeatedly noted that one of her primary duties was to instill a common vision amongst the Mann staff: "An instructional leader, in my opinion, is one who has a vision and one who is able to get people to share that vision" (Glenn; 6/9/98). In a variety of ways Rebecca succeeded. Pat Homer, a Mann teacher, commented that Rebecca was virtually omnipresent, encouraging teachers to understand and work towards her goals and ideals:

There are lots of meetings, she holds lots of meetings. Through meetings. And sometimes I guess she gets really personal and just call you and talk to you about it . . . She's always, she's always around. Her presence, feel her presence. She's in the building, in classrooms, she's in the lunch program, she's here early in the morning and she's usually here late at night so she always gets her point across (Homer; 8/10/98).

All of the teachers interviewed, when asked about what was expected of them, responded with the same general roles and responsibilities of which Rebecca spoke. For example,

Joanne Kramer stated that “[Rebecca] expects us to follow the guidelines of the school, to be professional, to carry through academically what is supposed to be taught” (Kramer; 6/17/98). Similarly, Pat Homer stated that “[the principal holds me] accountable for teaching in my classroom or on the grade level, by the curriculum” (Homer; 8/10/98). It appears as though for the most part, the teachers at Mann saw themselves as implementors, responsible for executing Rebecca’s ideals within their own classroom.

For the teachers at Mann, it appeared as though what the principal said, goes. And what the principal said reflected the goals and priorities of the State and District. Despite all of the different standards outlined for teachers in the CSD, MEAP scores tended to be the de facto instrument for measuring teacher success. While the CSD or Rebecca may have had broad ideological goals regarding what teachers should be doing in classrooms, as well as what students should accomplish, it seemed to come down to a single number or a group of numbers representing students performance on standardized tests. The teachers interviewed perceived their role to mostly be one of supporting the structures and hierarchies that were in place. It is unclear as to whether or not the teachers accepted their roles as implementors because they have been coerced into that position, or if underneath it all they agree with the State and District missions, objectives, and accountability mechanisms. Regardless of the underlying reasons, at Mann elementary, teachers had few opportunities to develop their practice beyond meeting the expectations of the larger CSD and State structures.

Consequences of the Hierarchy

The large City School District bureaucracy distanced individuals who worked within the district from those who designed and organized the systems operating within

the school. The hierarchy that supported the operation of multiple CSD schools, and the work of hundreds of employees, shaped the manner in which they functioned. There appear to be three major consequences of the City School District operating as a large bureaucratic hierarchy: (a) educators and their work were compartmentalized; (b) teachers understood accountability as a matter of responsibility for executing others' goals; and (c) teachers had to manage multiple responsibilities simultaneously.

Compartmentalization

CSD employees were each responsible for a narrowly defined realm. Teachers were responsible for classrooms, principals for school buildings, administrators for various specific support services. Rarely were CSD employees jobs connected to one another, except in a supervisory capacity. This compartmentalization of the CSD resulted in a lack of communication between the various levels and departments in the bureaucracy. Ruth Beal, a teacher, noted that:

...the lack of continuity amongst all of the components of this, of the administration that makes very little sense to me . . . So it's all these people, thinking someone else is doing some wonderful job someplace and it's not really happening. . . . I imagine that's with any bureaucracy, the way it is . . . I think the bureaucracy in this district is a little too big. (Beal; 9/8/98)

Beal further commented that, "Everyone has their own ax to grind instead of all meshing together and working together as one unit. We're all doing our own little thing" (Beal; 9/8/98). As a result, all CSD stake-holders had nearly no authority to affect the decisions made outside of their own sphere of influence. CSD employees were responsible for and to their own "box" in the structure. Having little decision-making authority, and minimal communication with the upper levels of the hierarchy, teachers at Mann were relatively

isolated from the agents who dictated the goals and objectives for them to achieve. With the exception of participating in curriculum steering committees, teachers had little decision-making authority in the school beyond the choices that they made in their classroom. All three teachers interviewed claimed that they felt no connection to the City School District central administration. They did not see their work as related to the decisions made “downtown”. Pat Homer described CSD officials as “in another corner, all by themselves . . . And they’re just sitting there, making decisions, what to do next” (Homer; 8/28/98). The CSD central administration was distanced from the everyday business of teaching and learning, in effect isolating teachers from the larger structure they upheld.

Understanding of Accountability

The educators interviewed at Mann described their understanding of accountability as “knowing what needs to be done” (Glenn; 7/13/98), “being aware of what’s going on” (Beal; 7/10/98), “doing what’s expected of me” (Kramer; 8/6/98), and “my responsibility, my duty” (Homer; 7/7/98). The structure of the CSD hierarchy placed both principals and teachers in a position where their job and responsibilities all revolved around meeting others’ expectations. As Rebecca noted, all school employees were placed in their position to “try to get [district objectives] to happen, and you’re going to do what you need to do to attain goals.” (Glenn; 7/13/98). The State and District monitored schools for compliance with rules, regulations, and student achievement, and that structured the way that educators operated. One could argue that in spite of the rules and regulations that governed Mann Elementary, the teachers had some autonomy and did make their own decisions about how to best educate children. However, the teachers

noted that their autonomy was confined by the multiple roles and responsibilities that teachers had to play. Ruth Beal, commented that “there’s nothing anyone could do, there’s nothing that matters except for myself in terms of that I have to be accountable to my own way of thinking, what I need to do,” (Beal; 9/8/98). Beal also noted that her feeling of responsibility to herself was facilitated by the fact that she already met all of the State and District requirements. She said “As long as I can stay aware of, of what needs to be done. As long as I can be aware that in Michigan right now, everyone is talking about core curriculum [for example]” then she has the freedom to be responsible to herself (Beal; 7/10/98). The freedom to be accountable to oneself appears to come only after the responsibilities of the State and District are met.

Multiple Expectations

In addition to compartmentalizing responsibilities, the bureaucratic hierarchy of the CSD left building principals and teachers responsible for concurrent goals. The teachers interviewed all commented that they had too much to accomplish and not enough time to meet all of the expectations that were placed on them. Joanne Kramer noted that “more things are being added and it seems like there’s less time to do them. . . . It’s not, and it’s not so much that we don’t want to do these things. But it’s like give us the resources, give us the time, give us some help” (Kramer; 9/8/98). Joanne’s comment that “more things are being added” seems to refer to the multiple responsibilities that were directed down from the State and district into teachers’ classrooms to create a layered accountability framework where several agents simultaneously attempted to enforce their preferred accountability mechanisms (see Table 9).

Table 9: Mann Elementary Accountability Mechanisms

<i>COMPOUNDING AGENTS</i>	State	City School District	Principal
<i>Norms or Standards</i>	Core Curriculum	Core Curriculum	Core Curriculum
		CSD Curriculum, CSD Community Goals	CSD Curriculum, CSD Community Goals
<i>Indicators of Performance</i>	MEAP	MEAP	MEAP
		Enrollment Levels, MAT, CMS	Enrollment Levels, MAT, CMS
<i>Incentives & Sanctions</i>	Technical Assistance	Technical Assistance	Technical Assistance
		Loss of Students/Funds	Loss of Students/Funds
<i>Opportunities for Redress</i>	Withdraw State Aid	Withdraw State Aid	Withdraw State Aid
		Reconstitution	Reconstitution
			Raise Level of Concern

The hierarchical layering of responsibility at Mann Elementary school allowed the multiple accountability frameworks operating to compound. The compounding of agents and frameworks created heavier pressures on district employees the further down the hierarchy they resided. The result of the combined goals, expectations, and responsibilities of both the State and District was a heavily burdened accountability environment at Mann Elementary School.

Both Joanne and Pat stated that they spent most of their time in their classrooms, and that they had little time to spend doing anything other than their job. Pat explained:

You're just stuck in a classroom situation from the time you get there until the time you go, and you're expected to teach all these different areas. So what time, really. You really, really don't have a lot of time to communicate with other teachers about you know, what's going on in the school. There's not a lot of time for socializing, lunch-time is pretty busy, sometimes there are students that you have to deal with at lunch-time. . . . It's pretty isolated. (Homer; 7/7/98)

Pat's sense that she was isolated from the other teachers because she did not have the time to collaborate with her colleagues appeared to be a result of the fact that the CSD and Mann were structured to layer responsibility on classroom teachers. Subject to the will of multiple agents and their accountability mechanisms, CSD classroom teachers had to attempt to meet the needs of multiple constituencies through their teaching. Pat Homer described her responsibilities at Mann as staggering:

Okay, on certain days, you know, just feel like, you know, just have the weight of the whole world . . . Sometimes you have to listen to your colleagues, your co-workers, and listen to the kids. You have to listen and try and please parents. Have to do what's best for the kids. You have to listen to you know, administration or the principal. You know, some days, you know, you just can't, you're overwhelmed. (Homer; 8/28/98)

Teachers at Mann were subject to multiple expectations that exerted a very real influence over the manner in which they worked in the school. Mann teachers, as implementors of externally created policies, procedures, and goals, were tied up in the minutia of the rules and regulations that govern the State and District.

For the most part, CSD schools were instruments of the district, organized to support externally created goals and ideals, including curricula and assessments. For example, Karen Stevens noted that each CSD school's required School Improvement Plan is supposed to reflect district priorities:

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We try to ensure . . . that they are focused on the goals of the district, that the goals are in their plans. We have a district-wide school improvement plan, as well as a strategic plan. All those are interrelated. So the building's plan should be in support of the district-wide school improvement plan, which is guided by the board's strategic plan.”
(Stevens; 1/27/99)

The State and the CSD put into place a structured and defined accountability framework that dictated expectations for teachers. The mechanisms that were in place to ensure that teacher behavior was aligned with State and District standards consequently transformed the job of school-based educators from decision-makers, to implementors.

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Chapter 5 Notes

¹ The City School District enrolls close to 19,000 students, 9,283 of which are in elementary schools.

² Inter-District choice permits students to attend any school within their own or contiguous Intermediate School District.

³ Academic targets were defined by MEAP scores.

⁴ Mann MEAP Scores (District Goals): Math, 43.6% satisfactory (59.7%); Reading, 35.9% satisfactory (44.9%); Science, 5.0% satisfactory (28.8%); Writing, 55.0% satisfactory (53.9%) (Mann 1998 Annual Report; City School District 1998 Annual Report)

⁵ Glenn's perception of technical assistance as a kind of sanction was demonstrative of the compartmentalization and vertical hierarchy of the CSD. Individual school buildings were seen as the "principal's turf" (by design), and technical assistance at the building level, is akin to usurping the principal's authority.

⁶ Reconstitution of a school entails the district breaking up the faculty and staff employed at a school in order to allow a new core of educators to rebuild the school more effectively.

⁷ In the City School District, approximately 10% of the student population had transferred to another school by "choice" (Arsen, Plank, & Sykes 1999).

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CHAPTER VI
CONGRUENT ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORKS:
THE CASE OF DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER PUBLIC SCHOOL ACADEMY

Dwight D. Eisenhower Public School Academy was located in between a rural and urban portion of Western Michigan. Though geographically situated within 10 miles of a mid-sized city, and only two miles from the nearest freeway exit, Eisenhower was placed among rolling hills and pastoral land. Eisenhower was neither explicitly country or city in either location or population. The school drew students from both urban and rural districts, and was within a stone's throw of both types of communities. Eisenhower opened its doors to students in September 1997. The building in which the school was housed was newly constructed in 1997. The school campus had, in addition to classrooms, a media center, a gymnasium/cafeteria, teacher's lounge, parent room, and a playground¹. It's first year of operation, Eisenhower enrolled 210 students in grades kindergarten through five². Approximately 8% of the student body at Eisenhower were eligible for free or reduced lunch. Socio-economically, Eisenhower could have been characterized as homogeneous with the bulk of the school population coming from the white middle class.

Eisenhower Public School Academy was a member of the Essential Traditions Schools Network (ETS). In 1995, Martin Carlton, a Michigan entrepreneur, founded ETS as the Management Company for Lake Superior Academy, one of the first charter schools

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in the state. In accordance with Michigan charter laws³, Lake Superior Academy was not developed as a corporate entity, but instead contracted with ETS for financial, curricular, and other support services Carlton founded his corporation, not as a means of changing the American public school system, but because the opportunity for financial gain presented itself. Financially driven, Carlton and ETS officials claimed that there was no problem with making a profit whether it be education, or any other publicly used service (Miller, 12/13/98). Based on the success of Lake Superior Academy, ETS determined that there were multiple sites that could support the type of school they had to offer. At the time that this research was conducted, ETS managed 13 charter schools throughout Michigan, and all school faculty were corporate employees. The corporate mission included expanding the school network to having 65 schools open by the year 2002⁴ (Miller, 12/13/98). Although each school maintained an individual contract with their chartering agent, Eisenhower and all other ETS schools enacted similar curricula, drew from the same resources, and followed nearly identical operating procedures.

While following Michigan law to the letter regarding the implementation of charter school reform, ETS managed to successfully launch a market driven system of schooling. In many ways, the theoretical markets presumed to result from choice reforms were realized within this particular network of schools. Brian Miller, president of the corporation, defined the purpose of ETS schools as “meeting the needs of the customer” (12/13/98). In this case, customers were parents, and meeting their needs entailed high academic standards, exemplary teachers, a character building program, and opportunities for parent involvement in their schools. ETS produced a product, targeted a market, built a successful business franchise, earned customer satisfaction, and, through careful

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planning and market research, ensured that they hawked their wares in a sellers market. Through this careful business plan, ETS facilitated the development and operation of congruent accountability frameworks at Eisenhower Public School Academy.

The Product

ETS marketed its schools as being “traditional”, providing structure, a back-to-basics, step-by step curriculum, strong discipline and teacher directed instruction. ETS promotional materials, provided as marketing tools for parents, clearly stated the corporate philosophy:

- We believe that education and hard work have always been the keys to success and they will be even more important in the future.
- We believe that all children deserve the opportunity to study, learn, and mature in a secure, caring, academically challenging environment.
- We believe that thoughtful, responsible and informed parents will make the right choice for their children at each stage of their development.
- We believe that the choice of an elementary school is among the most important of all parental decisions . . . the choice is yours.

This philosophy translated into a program based on four principles: academic excellence, character building, parent involvement, and exemplary teachers (Recruitment Brochure).

Academic Excellence -- Standards and Testing

The academic component of ETS schools, and Eisenhower Academy, was clearly explained in all materials distributed by the corporation and school. ETS promotional materials claimed that each school offered a challenging curriculum and demanded high student effort, which would result in high student achievement. They promised more time-on-task through a longer school day, which would result in helping students master “the basics”. In the Eisenhower Annual Report, the curriculum was described as “sequentially planned learning experiences in language arts, social studies, math, science,

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spelling, and penmanship”. In addition, the Eisenhower Parent Handbook iterated the importance of phonics in language arts instruction. Recruitment materials also emphasized to parents that mastery of subject matter was far more important than building self-esteem through grade inflation.

In addition to the clear academic standards developed within ETS schools, State assessments -- the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) -- and nationally normed tests the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT) -- were an integral part of the ETS academic program. Student performance was a major indicator of teacher and administrator competency. As a result, student performance on the MAT comprised 20% of both the teacher and principal performance appraisal. In addition to assessing faculty performance, ETS used test results to facilitate parent-teacher communication about student progress, as well as evaluate/improve the curriculum and instructional program (Recruitment Brochure).

Character Building -- Morals and Discipline

Each ETS school had, as one component of its program, an explicit character building curriculum. This aspect of the program combined a “moral focus” with strict discipline. Jerry Pleasants said that the moral focus and discipline code were interrelated and inseparable in practical discussion (7/15/98). ETS promotional materials told parents, “We respect your efforts to teach moral character to your children at home. At our schools, we will support and reinforce your efforts through our moral character development programs. Our students are taught to value high moral character, individual responsibility and the dignity of work” (Recruitment Brochure). At Eisenhower, the Parent Handbook informed families that school faculty and staff would emphasize a

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different “virtue” each month. These virtues were decided upon by a school moral focus committee composed of both faculty and parents, and chaired by a parent. The emphasized morals and virtues were based upon the Greek Cardinal Virtues. According to Eisenhower school policy, the first virtue emphasized each year was respect (Parent Handbook).

Discipline, and a strict disciplinary system, were also a part of all ETS schools. Brochures promised that “the atmosphere in our academies is orderly and purposeful, safe and secure for all who teach and learn there” (Recruitment Brochure). At Parent Recruitment Nights, ETS officials represented their schools as being kinder, gentler environments than traditional public schools, and places where students did not feel afraid. The presentations drew on student commentary that the people at ETS schools were not “rough” and that kids were “nice to each other” (Parent Night, Field Notes; 1/27/99). At Eisenhower, in the event that a student engaged in minor or major acts of misconduct, a six level disciplinary procedure could be initiated. These levels ranged from teachers conferencing with students to expulsion (Parent Handbook). The principal met with students and parents at each grade level at least once a year to explain the discipline policy, and to make clear the code of conduct and consequences for student misbehavior (Jerry Pleasants; 6/18/98).

Parent Involvement

ETS materials maintained that, “Our schools are more than just schools. They are a close-knit partnership between a group of committed educators and involved parents seeking excellent educations for all children” (Recruitment Brochure). Parents at Eisenhower signed a contract at the beginning of each school year supporting the ideals

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and expectations of the school. At Eisenhower, parents had the opportunity to serve on seven different leadership committees: Business Partnership, Facilities/Grounds, Moral Focus, Library/Publishing Center, PTO, Technology, and the School Improvement Team (SIT). Parents chaired each committee, excluding the SIT. The SIT was chaired by the principal, and composed of representatives from the other committees and two “at-large” parents (Eisenhower Parent Handbook). In addition to these parent/faculty committees, teachers at Eisenhower had an open-door policy, as well as numerous tasks and chores available for parents to participate in should they choose to volunteer. Parents monitored student lunches, and were encouraged to meet with teachers on a regular basis.

Additionally, each ETS academy had a parent room designated explicitly for parents and family members. This room, which could be likened to a teachers lounge, was available for Eisenhower family use for any variety of activities. These rooms were “off limits” for teachers and the principal (only the parents had keys to the space). Parent rooms were designed to be a comfortable space for parents to meet with each other, work, or wait for either the principal or a teacher. Each parent room had at least a microwave oven, a refrigerator, and a telephone. (Scott Kelley; 11/3/98)

Exemplary Teachers

ETS, in its marketing materials, claimed that they hired “the most caring and nurturing teachers”. They further stated that the faculty of all ETS schools chose to become a part of the network because “they understand our academic goals and priorities; endorse our assessment procedures; and welcome our accountability standards” (Recruitment Brochure). In addition, the ETS web-site advertised Eisenhower as having a “dedicated staff [who were] excellent role models with exemplary personal values”. All

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teachers at ETS schools were certified by the state, as required by law. Jerry Pleasants, principal of Eisenhower stated that he expected his teachers to be good role models, and have good personal values first; good teaching skills, and the ability to discipline second (6/18/98).

A Marketable Product

The product created by ETS for implementation at a site such as Eisenhower capitalized on qualities that were highly marketable. Emphasizing tangible components of a school such as test scores, and parent rooms, as well as objectives with visible outcomes, such as discipline codes and moral foci, provided ETS with a package that it could sell. Given that ETS's primary goal was to make a profit with their school package, it came as no surprise when Miller stated that he relied on market accountability mechanisms:

Let us be accountable to the parent, not to the state regulation . . . everything that we do as a corporation, is designed to help our schools meet the needs of the parents, and that all starts [with] our understanding of 'what do parents want in the educational program within a school?' . . . That's created us, we've done all the research, and spent the time to understand what that is. We've created a curriculum, we've created objectives, we've created an educational process tied into meeting the needs of the parents. So those things we've created, we ask the principals to execute and the schools to execute because we know that if it's executed correctly, it meets the needs of the parents, so we can be accountable in a successful way, and they won't go somewhere else. (12/13/98)

Thus, the ETS program was predicated on the idea that they had a "recipe for success" that merely needed to be implemented effectively in order to satisfy parental wants. Accountability was therefore modeled after capitalist competition where ETS's role was to develop an attractive product.

The ETS program concept relied on the assumption that parents would want to “buy” this educational program for their children. The goal of ETS was not to replace the existing educational system, or develop a universal appeal, but to sustain a strong alternative system. Miller stated: “Some parents don’t want what we’re offering, so our goal is not to go out there and say, okay, 100% of parents want our program, but we think there’s a huge amount of those parents . . . that would be very attracted to our program and would come to our program” (Interview; 12/13/98). The fact that ETS did not expect their schools to have a universal appeal suggests that their schools offered a program targeted to a specific parent market. Thus, it was not the mission of the school that was preeminent, but the market that would support the mission:

As long as our enrollment continues to increase and parents seem to be excited about our schools, and the parents that are in our schools seem to be satisfied, then we’re obviously committed to the model that we have in place, because it’s working. If parents at all of our schools started to complain about, how this model is no longer working, then we need to revisit what is it that we do, and better understand, and go back to the original thing of accountability is what do parents want. And maybe we need to tweak our system. (Brian Miller; 12/13/98)

As Miller noted, the ETS program was designed to meet the needs of a percentage of parents who would be attracted to their program. So, contrary to popular rhetoric about charter schools, Eisenhower was not created surrounding a defined, innovative mission that would attract a small niche of parents. Instead, a niche community was targeted with a carefully crafted mission, a supply created to meet the demand.

Finding and Targeting a Market Niche

Any good business needs to find a solid customer base. It makes particularly good business sense to find and target a particular niche that has previously been under-served.

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In Western Michigan, there was a relatively large population of “traditional Christian families”, many of whom were dissatisfied with the morals of the public school system (Multiple Interviews). For a myriad of reasons, these families could not all send their children to private Christian institutions. ETS schools were seen as an alternative educational environment for these families. The ETS corporation proceeded to actively market to, and recruit from, this group. The result was the creation of a homogenous community of value, a sense of belonging among school community members, and ultimately a culture of trust in, and compliance with the ETS mission and objectives.

In many ways, Eisenhower was a unique environment, even within the ETS network. While all of the ETS schools have fairly synchronous communities, Eisenhower’s was particularly cohesive surrounding the issues of morals and values. Jerry Pleasants noted: “We’ve got the parents sending children here for [values] . . . I believe in it, the teachers believe in it, the students want it” (7/15/98). Parents at Eisenhower commented that they felt as though they belonged at the school and that the environment closely mirrored their own personal value systems. Pleasants commented that student and parent values matched those of the school and corporation because they wanted “the moral focus so you’ve got more of a unitary school as far as their beliefs” (6/18/98). The consistency of values between the mission of the school and the faculty and the parent community that Jerry described, was a source of pride for all those associated with the school.

The faculty involved in this study mirrored Jerry’s description of Eisenhower parents in that they all noted that they had no difficulties adjusting to the school environment, because they agreed with the moral focus, the discipline, and the academic

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standards. David Norman, a teacher, stated that he would not have taken the position at Eisenhower if he had not been comfortable with, and supported the school mission: “I believe you need to, and that’s why I took the job, feel comfortable with who’s going to be your ‘boss.’ Who’s going to be working with you, that you feel your philosophy goes along pretty well with what they’ve told you as they’ve shared” (9/19/98). Pleasants echoed these sentiments: “I have not had to change and modify my personal philosophy in any way to fulfill this position. So it’s a fit for what I believe” (8/20/98). The synonymy of philosophy and belief systems between the parents, faculty and corporation provided a stabilizing force to the school. With a common ground on which to stand, members of the Eisenhower community rarely saw conflict or felt the need to socialize anyone to fit the model. Beverly Thompson, a parent commented that she hadn’t noticed a lot of conflict or controversy at the school because everyone believed in school policies, or they wouldn’t have been part of the school community (11/11/98). Another parent, Heather Cowell, commented that she felt as though she fit in with the school, in part because there were many other parents who she would have characterized as “like me” (11/11/98). The sense of belonging that was expressed by parents and faculty invites the impression that this school community developed almost organically, or by happenstance. Upon further inspection, however, it seems clear that Eisenhower was constructed to attract a particular community of both parents and faculty.

Heather Cowell commented that it was almost a happy coincidence that she felt so at ease with the school community, and that it wasn’t until after school had started and she became involved with the school and teachers that she got a feel for the community. While Heather stated that she didn’t know too much about the school community before

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she enrolled her children, she also noted that before school started she attended informational meetings where teachers from other ETS schools made presentations:

What was amusing to me is that I knew the teachers . . . I knew of their backgrounds, I knew family members and that kind of thing. And they of course got up and introduced themselves and who they were, and where they went to college . . . but, it was really interesting to me because of where they came from, and I knew them, and it was like, this is cool. You know I like this, and I know a lot of people said last year this is just like being at a Christian school without being in a Christian school, and of course that was important, that is important to me, I'm glad that I feel that way. (11/11/98)

These informational nights, sponsored by ETS to recruit parents to new academies, were opportunities for parents to get a feel for the school. The teachers that spoke at these meetings were hand-picked by ETS, and usually from Lake Superior Academy. Donna Cole, a teacher at Eisenhower, similarly described the impact of the ETS informational nights:

The teachers that were there stood up and gave background, you know, this is where I went to school, this is my degree, this is how many years I've been teaching, and so on . . . some of the parents heard oh, well that teacher went to a Christian college. Therefore they must have . . . they must have Christian values, and I'm gonna have my kid go to that school with that teacher. (Cole; 7/11/98)

Donna's comments that parents liked the teachers backgrounds, and liked that the teacher's who spoke attended Christian colleges demonstrates the power of holding up a certain type of teacher as the model for a school system. It appears as though ETS used teachers as a kind of recruitment tool. In a clever marketing technique, ETS held up a group of teachers as representative of their school communities. While those associated with Eisenhower may argue that there was nothing contrived about their community, it is hard to agree.

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Jerry Pleasants mentioned that his goal was to hire teachers with good moral values, suggesting that religiousness carried with it a certain moral fortitude. Jerry also said that all of the teachers fit with the moral focus of the school “because that’s the background we come from.” (Pleasants; 7/15/98). The sense of “that’s just who we are”, indicating that a Christian background was distinctive, pervaded the Eisenhower community. Donna Cole, a teacher, noted that students brought up with Christian values had a “different” lifestyle (7/11/98). The Christian lifestyle, whatever that perception meant, was particularly important to this community, both in creating a uniform culture and in maintaining a standard of values, educational or otherwise. Jerry, when commenting on the composition of the school faculty said that: “We ended up with quite a few teachers who come from a religious background which isn’t a requirement for the job but it obviously helps” (Pleasants; 7/15/98). The moral focus at Eisenhower, the symbolic importance of a religious background described by members of the school community, as well as the impression that a Christian lifestyle is somehow different from that supported in the traditional public school system, all contributed to a homogenous community.

All three teachers interviewed for this study attended Christian Colleges, and came from religious backgrounds. Two of the teachers interviewed for this study were recruited to work at Eisenhower through their various ties to Lake Superior Academy. David Norman and Brooke Hughes both tutored, and substituted at the school, and were referred to Eisenhower when positions became available. These two teachers became involved with the ETS network through relationships with Church members, and parents at Lake Superior (Multiple Interviews). Both David and Brooke commented that they

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While Brooke and David's recruitment to Eisenhower could be argued to be the result of selection within a specific group (i.e. Christians), the story of how Donna Cole came to be at Eisenhower is a particularly acute example of the meticulous care taken by Jerry and ETS to hire a particular type of teacher:

[Jerry] talked to [the people at Faith College], and said give me a list of your top people, and Jerry got back to ETS and said contact these people, send them out an application. So they sent one to me, and I thought oh, I've never heard anything about a charter school, and then pretty soon somebody called me and asked me if I wanted to have an interview with them, and I thought, that's kind of weird, I've never even sent the application in, but it was weird because . . . the place that I used to work at during college . . . one of the parents that used to work there was a parent of a child at the first school that ETS had, and she was just volunteering and just calling people . . . So I went there and I interviewed with Jerry. I think it was either the third or fourth interview that I had had. And we were talking for, we talked for about an hour and a half, and at an hour and fifteen he said so what do you think about working here? (Donna Cole; 7/11/98)

The fact that applications were sent to students at Faith College, a Christian institution, seems to imply that in some way simply attending the college serves as qualification for a teaching position at Eisenhower. This inference was strengthened when noting that Donna was asked to interview without ever actually applying for a position. At one point, Donna said that Jerry hired the teachers who were best qualified for the job, regardless of age or teaching experience. Thus, a Christian education, or religious background, may not have been necessary requirements for employment at Eisenhower, but they (at least in some cases) appeared to be sufficient, or at least highly desirable, qualifications, in and of themselves.

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Regardless of the logic or the assumption, for all practical purposes, a religious background, and a Christian education, translated into morality and integrity in this community. Heather Cowell commented on the significance of attending a Christian college:

You're gonna choose your college for what you want to get out of it . . . I think that a person, and this is a personal belief . . . [I went to a Christian college] I wanted to go there because I wanted the spiritual emphasis in my academics. I wanted a place where I could still worship and learn at the same time and come out with a good education. And I know a lot of our teachers have done the same thing. And as a Christian that's very important to me. Because it lends back to your whole belief system and who you are as a person and what you want to be. (11/11/98)

While not all teachers educated at Christian colleges are Christians, and a Christian teacher education program does not necessarily include a religious component, it seems clear that a Christian education was particularly symbolic to the Eisenhower community. For example, Donna, when speaking of the moral tone of the school, noted that when trying to build a school focused on morals and character, it is important to have teachers who have a sense of "right and wrong". She further commented that Christians, and teachers educated at Christian colleges, while not the only ones qualified, may be the best qualified to fill that role (Cole; 7/11/98). Donna also noted that all of the teachers at Eisenhower "happen to be Christians" (7/11/98). The distinctiveness of a Christian lifestyle perceived by members of the Eisenhower community was played up by both faculty and parents at Eisenhower. The features of the school that coincided with the Christian lifestyle were the features that were emphasized as selling points of the school.

The backgrounds of both parents and teachers at Eisenhower were held up as both moral and separate from those who were associated with traditional public schools.

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There was a distinct impression from both parents and faculty that simply being a good Christian implies a higher moral fiber and greater sense of integrity. In spite of the faculty and parent commentary, when teachers are recruited from Christian Colleges, and are then used for recruiting parents and other teachers to the school, it is difficult to believe that this school community “just happened”. ETS and Eisenhower clearly targeted a Christian community, and presented themselves as being a viable alternative to a private Christian education.

Both parents and teachers commented on the similarity of Eisenhower to a private Christian education. Beverly Thompson stated that “it is very much like a parochial school,” (Interview; 11/11/98) and Donna Cole said, “I would say that it’s somewhat similar to a Christian school,” (Interview; 7/11/98). However, when asked directly about the Christian feel of the curriculum, Eisenhower faculty and ETS staff were careful to note that the moral focus component of the schools should not be equated with a Christian education, even though it was often perceived as such:

So some people have put their kids from a Christian school into our school but we make it clear that this is not a Christian school. We’re teaching morals but we are not teaching, you know, that this is Christianity. We might teach about religion from a, like an, from a descriptive standpoint, but never prescriptive . . . you let them know from the start that, you know, this will seem kind of like a Christian school because it teaches values, we have good discipline, we have good academics, but we are not going to be prescriptive with religion and we’re not going to do those kinds of things, you know, that are against the law really. (Brooke Hughes; 7/27/98)

Even though from a legal standpoint Eisenhower maintained a strictly secular educational program, there was an effort to integrate some elements of Christian values into the school. For example, holidays were celebrated in accordance with Christian belief systems. Donna said: “We didn’t dress up for Halloween because the PTO had a huge fit

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with that one. Because Halloween is basically like celebrating Satan or something like that.” (Cole, Interview; 8/4/98). Heather Cowell further contrasted Eisenhower’s approach to celebrating holidays with other public schools noting that the students learned that pilgrims were thankful to G-d, and that is the meaning of Thanksgiving (Cowell; 11/11/98).

The Eisenhower community conveyed that the school was not merely accepting of Christian values, but actively supported them as well. Through the actions of the PTO, teachers, and principal, the Eisenhower community integrated a fair amount of Christian spiritualism into the school. The nature of the school program and the moral focus walked the fine line between the separation of church and state. For parents and faculty, this was seen as a very positive element of the school. Heather spoke of reasons why she approved of the school:

..and Christmas, no we can’t do the birth of Baby Jesus, but they sang ‘Away in a Manger’ at our Christmas program, and [the principal] got up and he said a prayer, and all those kind of things, this isn’t like . . . a regular public school, this is a step above, and this is much more where I want my kids at. Just everything about it, the levels of integrity and morality, and the sense that they’re getting from their teachers, and knowing that they can say ‘I asked Jesus into my heart when I was five’ and not have everybody go oohh and you can’t say that word in school . . . and knowing that all that was okay without being, oh, public school you can’t do that. (Cowell; 11/11/98)

The faculty at Eisenhower maintained a program that was just barely within the bounds of what constitutes a legally secular environment. However, it was unclear what would happen if a parent or other community member was to complain about the direction of the moral focus. Teaching students about the religious foundations of holidays, singing songs about the birth of Jesus Christ, and principals saying blessings might or might not

be judged to be secular if challenged. And at Eisenhower, they weren't. The community coalesced because they all subscribed to the same value system, and there was no one to challenge the nature of the school community.

In targeting one segment of the Christian population, Eisenhower built a school community, but Eisenhower's support of the local Christian community extended beyond the school walls. Eisenhower actively avoided recruiting students from nearby Christian schools. Brooke Hughes explained her understanding of this policy:

Just kind of, I think out of courtesy for them but I think also, especially with Christians, they have a tendency to bond together. And I think if you made that people group mad at you, by being belligerent and disrespectful toward that people group, then you would get none. All the churches would go, you know what? They're being really stinky about this and I think none of us should go and they could say from the pulpit, from everywhere, don't put your kid in this charter school because they're trying to run us out of business. And none of them would come. So I think from a business standpoint, they're gonna still come to our school because they can't afford a Christian school type of thing, and they can keep getting people from that, but then also they're not gonna make them mad, so they're gonna make everybody still not come or put their kid in a public school (Brooke Hughes, Interview; 7/27/98)

The idea that local churches and pastors may have a significant influence over enrollment at Eisenhower furthered the impression that the Christian community was particularly important to the survival of the school. Brooke's comment implied a kind of similarity between Eisenhower and private Christian schools. Eisenhower was perceived as a public school alternative to a private religious education. By not directly targeting Christian schools, but approaching those who might want a Christian education, Eisenhower drew from a specific niche.

The moral tone of the school and the nature of the school community were very important to the survival of Eisenhower. Heather Cowell mentioned that as the school grew in size the nature of the community changed:

It's not going to be as much of a family as it was last year . . . I hope it doesn't change the integrity and morality of the school . . . I don't worry about the education level changing, I think that's gonna stay the same, because the expectations are there, but the . . . I hope the morality doesn't change. (Interview; 11/11/98)

Heather further mentioned that if the tenor of morality that she saw at the school were to change enough, she would remove her children. Thus, the creation of a self-perpetuating community, where those with similar values gravitate towards each other served Eisenhower well. It was in ETS's and Eisenhower's best interest not to market to those parents who might change the moral tone of the school, lest they lose their cohesion and homogeneity. As Miller commented, accountability meant giving parents what they wanted, and this community appeared to be doing just that.

The perception at Eisenhower that the environment was "just like" a Christian school was a powerful theme in both the faculty and parent communities. While maintaining a legal separation of church and state, ETS allowed the Eisenhower community to assume that this school had all the qualities of a private Christian education without the tuition. This was a remarkably successful marketing technique. By holding up teachers educated at Christian colleges as models of the integrity and morality of the school, and actively seeking out members of the Christian community who were not currently attending private schools, ETS tapped into a previously unserved market. Through their association with Eisenhower, the community rallied and gelled into a powerful organizational force. By not disabusing parents and faculty of the notion that

this was indeed a more moral environment because of the predominantly Christian community, ETS created a more cohesive school community within a larger community of value. Furthermore, they did so while not revealing the deliberate targeting of this market. Parents and faculty reported that they “just fit in” and never implied that they were targeted, although it would seem as though it was the case. Thus, a deliberately structured business plan was perceived as a grass-roots community construction. This community was not built around a school, the school was built into the community, and it made great business sense.

Eisenhower: A Successful Franchise

When developing and marketing a new franchise, the parent corporation must find a means of assessing the success of its satellites. According to Miller, there were four major indicators that a school was performing well within the ETS network: a) growing enrollments, b) parent satisfaction, c) student academic achievement, and d) successful financial management. Parent satisfaction was determined through an independently administered survey. In that survey, there was a “litmus test question” asking parents if they would recommend the school to their friends. Student achievement was monitored through standardized tests (MEAP and MAT). Lastly, school budgets were assessed by asking: “are you staying within your agreed upon budget, so that the company can eventually make a profit?”⁵ (Brian Miller 12/13/98). While ETS may have had some objective indicators of success, a reliance upon market mechanisms required that the most important factor be parental satisfaction with the school. In order for ETS objectives to be met successfully, the program had to be implemented according to ETS standards, and the school community had to be comfortable with the manner in which they played out.

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So, Miller not only had to ask if the goals and objectives of ETS were being met at Eisenhower, but whether or not parents and faculty were happy with those goals.

Parents appeared to be very pleased with Eisenhower academy, and the ETS organization, on all fronts. Scott Kelley, the Director of Charter Schools at Big Mountain College⁶, commented on ETS: "They're the best schools I've ever seen anywhere. And they start by promising people certain things, a strong academic curriculum, a moral focus emphasis, parental involvement, time on task, good teachers that really care about the kids, rewards programs tied to their values orientation, and it's worked." (11/3/98). The results of the 1998 Spring Parent Survey at Eisenhower confirmed Kelly's observation about the schools. The survey results indicated that nearly 100% of the parents who responded would recommend Eisenhower to their friends who have school aged children⁷. The faculty at Eisenhower also appeared to be equally satisfied with the school and program. All three teachers interviewed expressed their contentment with both Eisenhower and ETS. Furthermore, the only teachers to have left the Eisenhower faculty did so when their spouses took jobs in other cities (Jerry Pleasants, 7/15/98). The high level of parent and faculty satisfaction at Eisenhower would seem to be a given, seeing as the school program was designed especially for both the parents and teachers at the school.

The program that ETS marketed and Eisenhower implemented hinged on parent and faculty support of the ideals and mechanisms that ETS set in motion. While the ETS program was fairly uniform across schools, it is to be expected that each site would have it's own character. The norms surrounding academics, parent involvement, character development, and instruction at Eisenhower all appeared to have developed effortlessly.

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Academics

The Eisenhower academic program was not an issue for faculty or parent discussion, nor was their much flexibility in its implementation. It was chosen to respect traditional instructional techniques, as well as facilitate high test scores. Both parents and faculty were expected to embrace a strictly defined academic program, and to work together to achieve corporate educational objectives.

High test scores, particularly on the state standardized test (MEAP), drove many of the instructional objectives at Eisenhower. According to the Eisenhower Annual Report for 1997-8, student MEAP scores were comparable with statewide results. In all but two categories, Eisenhower scored just slightly above the statewide average. In response to these scores, the faculty planned to conduct an item analysis of student test scores so that they could “determine any needed curriculum changes, or areas needing added emphasis to improve student performance”. In contrast however, the same Annual Report stated that Eisenhower students achieved an average growth of 1.7 (grade equivalency) on the MAT during one school year.

The Eisenhower response to both kinds of test results was quite telling of the importance of the MEAP in Michigan, as well as the way scores were perceived. The Annual Report stated: “We believe that these MAT-7 test results validate the excellent instruction received by our students”. The annual report justified Eisenhower’s MEAP scores saying that due to educating students from many educational backgrounds in it’s first year of operation, they can’t be expected to achieve the same results as if they had educated these children throughout their entire elementary schooling: “A more accurate assessment of our educational program can be made after we have had students at our

school for 2-3 years and their resultant exposure to our emphasis on mastery of the basic skills” (Annual Report). On one hand, the MAT validated the Eisenhower academic program, but the faculty still expressed a need to tweak the program so that students could achieve high MEAP scores as well. Eisenhower students were expected to perform better than average in standardized testing, and the ETS academic package was constantly being re-evaluated in order to achieve those goals above all else.

All of the ETS schools had similar, highly defined curricula, the majority of which were textbook packages. At Eisenhower, the faculty used Saxon Math, Open Court Reading, and E.D. Hirsch’s core curriculum to supplement the Intermediate School District’s core curriculum in social studies and science. Teachers and parents had little or no input into the choice of curricula, and they had few opportunities to change the nature of the prescribed educational program. Jerry Pleasants said, “Well, once you get into the building, obviously you set the curriculum, the parents are not there. When they agree to send their children here, they agree with that curriculum or they’re not gonna send them” (Interview; 8/20/98). So, it was made quite clear to parents that they would have little input into the academic course of the school, and that they needed to trust the teachers and corporation implicitly.

Parents indicated that they had little difficulty trusting the academic program at Eisenhower, and the vast majority of parents were satisfied with the school curriculum and their child’s academic progress. Heather Cowell said that she didn’t worry too much about the education level at the school, and that she trusted in the high academic standards of the ETS program (11/11/98). This confidence in the educational program as being sound was echoed by other parents. Beverly Thompson felt that as a parent she

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should “leave the educational issues up to the professionals . . . I know what I expect but then, is everything that I expect, is that correct? And I expect that if I do bring up an issue, and it’s not a valid issue, then a professional says to me, that’s not a valid issue” (Thompson; 11/11/98). Parents didn’t have much choice other than to trust the “professionals”. If a parent was concerned with the soundness of the educational program at Eisenhower, it appeared as though they would have been given no choice other than to accept it or to leave.

From the corporation’s perspective, ETS didn’t micromanage their schools. Brian Miller stated that research on parental wants and proven educational practices drove their educational objectives. He also stated that “teachers know how you score touchdowns in this organization. That is, follow the curriculum, and follow the objectives, and educate the kids successfully so they do well in understanding and learning that curriculum, so they can be successful in the test scores, and satisfying parents...” (12/13/98). Thus, every teacher in every ETS school was given a stringent set of content standards and objectives. Some might perceive the highly prescriptive content standards and curricula of the ETS program to be micro-management defined, but Miller did not see that as the case. In this organization, supervisors were expected to keep their nose out of practitioners actual work environment, but that didn’t mean that the parameters of performance should not have been clearly defined:

We’re big believers that if you hire quality people and define the programs that they’re supposed to execute, and allow them to execute and customize, their program to the needs of their parents and their students, you have a recipe for success . . . we define the banks of the river, and we give the principal, and the school staff the latitude within the river to customize to the needs of their individual communities and their constituent base. (Brian Miller, 12/13/98)

Thus, parents were not the only ones that had to “buy in” to the corporate philosophy and educational program. The faculty at Eisenhower needed to embrace the curricula they were expected to teach, and work within very narrow river banks. Some of the instructional materials that teachers were given were so prescriptive, they scripted out hour long lessons, telling teachers exactly what to say, what to write on the board, and how to answer student questions.

At Eisenhower, satisfaction with the academic program grew from parental trust in, and faculty compliance with a pre-determined instructional program. For faculty, the acceptance of a position at Eisenhower was a symbol of compliance, and for parents, enrollment was an act of trust. It is important to remember that for the Eisenhower parent and faculty communities trust and compliance were conscious and thoughtful choices. The maintenance of the Eisenhower community was predicated on the fact that participants have sought out the environment already in place and agreed to its boundaries. Both parents and faculty, in their choices to become part of the Eisenhower community pledged their allegiance to a group of objectives over which they had little control, except to leave the community if they were no longer satisfied.

Teachers

Brian Miller described an exemplary teacher as one who is committed to children and student learning, has a high skill level and knowledge of subject matter, focuses on what’s best for children, and makes up for lack of experience with dedication, commitment, and hard work (Interview; 12/13/98). The majority of the teachers at Eisenhower were young, with fewer than three years of classroom teaching experience. This was not seen as a problem by either parents or the corporation who cited the morality

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Eisenhower teachers were often described as substitute parents, who needed to be trusted with children. Heather Cowell noted that she wanted her childrens' teachers to practice those values she respected, and trusted them to be role models and practice what they preached about morals and values. She said that she wanted to see teachers that "shout out they've got moral integrity . . . I wanta see that before I'm willing to say that this person can be the teacher of my child . . . because I am entrusting them [with my children]" (11/11/98). Parents, and the principal, describe the teachers as having integrity and being good role models. This appeared to be the most important aspect upon which teachers were judged by the school community.

There were a number of incentives and sanctions related to teacher performance at Eisenhower. All of the teachers contracts were "at-will", and their contracts stipulated a bonus based on performance. The bonuses were determined by objective factors such as student test scores, and principal classroom observations. There was no "morality clause" in the contracts. In spite of personal values not being explicitly outlined in any legal documents, a teacher's status as a role model may have been the most important factor in keeping her job. Jerry, when commenting on the type of teacher he wanted to see in a Eisenhower classroom, declared that he wanted teachers to have "good strong personal values so they're good role models. I don't wanta sit here in my office and ever be concerned about a teacher as a role model in the classroom. Because if I was concerned, had any doubts, that teacher would be gone. I could not have them in the building"

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(Pleasants; 6/18/98). While an Eisenhower teacher's paycheck may not have been determined by values, it seems that job security was.

The importance of subjective criteria such as values and morals, in determining the success of a teacher was indicative of the emphasis placed on effective implementation of an educational program over professional discretion. At Eisenhower, a teacher's success was predicated on her agreement with the educational objectives and goals set forth by ETS. Provided that she followed the program, her only failings could be of a personal nature. There was little for teachers to debate regarding their pedagogy or the content of the curriculum, since it had been explicitly laid out. Teachers, upon their hire, and signing a contract agreed to meet the specified objectives of the corporation, and that was non-negotiable. But, it is important to note that the Eisenhower teachers were not coerced into complying with ETS objectives, but were recruited to the school because they believed in the mission and ideals represented by the ETS educational program.

Parent Involvement

Parent Involvement was perhaps the most salient example of trust on behalf of the parent community at Eisenhower. At Eisenhower, there seemed to be two varieties of parent involvement. First and foremost, the act of choosing to send one's child to the school was perceived as the most important kind of involvement an Eisenhower parent could have in their child's education. A second variety of parent involvement at Eisenhower was the act of volunteering and being a physical presence at the school. Both of these kinds of parent involvement were indicative of parental belief in the ETS program, and Eisenhower's implementation of that program.

In addition to the formal governance committees in place, parents volunteered at Eisenhower in a variety of capacities including: reading to students in the library, tutoring, monitoring lunch, meeting with teachers after school, assisting teachers with activities during the school day, running errands for teachers, and coaching after school sports. Heather said:

We sign an agreement that we will be involved, so they ask us to sign that,” but, at the same time “if you want to be involved, all you have to do is look, and be willing to do whatever. I don’t really think, for me . . . It’s just kind of my personality, you know, what can I do for you today?
(11/11/98)

Almost all of the parents at Eisenhower stated that they had an adequate opportunity to be involved in their child’s education (Parent Survey Results).

Eisenhower faculty commented that parent involvement was the key to building support for the school. As a result, Jerry not only demanded a significant amount of involvement (which he got), but wanted to increase the amount of time required of parents: “I definitely want to increase the time that some parents need to spend, I want them to spend more time being involved” (Pleasants, Interview; 7/15/98). Jerry let parents know up front that the key to the school was parental involvement.

Parents were involved almost solely as support mechanisms of teachers and Eisenhower staff. The role of a parent, as a physical presence at the school, was to uphold and facilitate the corporate objectives through assistance to school faculty and staff. Jerry said that it varied, dependent upon the teacher, how much time parents may spend in classrooms. For example, Donna Cole compiled a list of chores, (i.e., making copies, three-hole punching papers) at the beginning of the year, and distributed these to parents: “[I]asked if, you know, what they’d be willing to do and what days and I’ll call

them and say if you have a chance, would you wanta come in" (Interview; 8/4/98).

While parents may have been an important facet of the Eisenhower instructional program, they did not appear to be substantively involved in instructional decisions. Rather, they paved the way for teachers to implement the program more effectively.

When parents chose to send their children to Eisenhower, they were tacitly stating that they trusted in and agreed with the ETS program, goals, and objectives. The choice that parents made was perceived as an agreement as well as a sign of commitment.

Beverly claimed that Eisenhower had a good parent community precisely because it was a choice that parents made:

It takes a sacrifice to send your child to [Eisenhower]. . . you just don't drop them off, and that's it. You're expected to more, to participate more . . . and you know you're always going to have parents that do a lot, you're always gonna have parents that do a little, and anywhere in between there, but I think you have more parents that do more when there's some kind of a sacrifice involved. (Thompson, Interview; 11/11/98)

This perception of choice being both a sacrifice and the ultimate form of involvement also created a kind of pressure for parents to maintain involvement in the school. Heather commented:

I think that you want to have your kids at this school, you took them out of another school, did you have to do anything at that school? Probably not, if you didn't want to. Are you putting your kids into this school just because you didn't want them there at their other school, or because you really feel like this is a good place for them, this is where they can learn, you can help them learn? And how involved are you willing to get to see that happen? (Cowell, Interview; 11/11/98)

Choice, as a form of involvement was a powerful demonstration of commitment. ETS recruitment materials constantly impressed upon prospective parents that educational choices are important, and that parents hold power in their choices. While the act of choosing Eisenhower may have been an exercise of power, it was also a waiver. Once

parents joined the community, their power within that community was superseded by a commitment to the program. In other words, once they exercised their power of choice, they chose a school in which they had little or no power.

Character Development

Community trust and compliance were also evident in parental and teacher satisfaction with the character development program at Eisenhower. The biggest selling point of the ETS schools, especially Eisenhower, seemed to be the “character building component”. The moral focus, combined with strong discipline was cited as a close second to high academic standards for the most important reason parents enrolled their children at Eisenhower (Parent Survey Results: Second Semester 1997-8). While high academic standards were reported as most important, and parent involvement was also noted as an important factor for parents choosing the school, they appeared to be secondary (in appeal) to the character building aspect of the ETS program for both faculty and parents. Heather Cowell said that what appealed to her was the moral focus combined with the expectation of academic excellence. She liked the emphasis on the basics and the push towards becoming a “well rounded person”. Beverly Thompson, another parent, commented that the moral focus was important to her because it entailed a higher behavioral expectation on behalf of the students and a more traditional learning atmosphere (11/11/98).

Ninety-Seven percent of Eisenhower parents stated that they were satisfied with the moral focus emphasized at Eisenhower (Parent Survey 1997-8). Parents further noted that they felt the values being taught at Eisenhower were better in comparison to other local schools. This fact did not go unnoticed by the Eisenhower faculty. All of those

Eisenhower faculty and ETS officials interviewed for this study mentioned that parents thought that morals and values were very important. One teacher, Donna Cole, noted:

One of the things that [a parent] wrote on [the beginning of the year questionnaire] was about keeping his son decent or by teaching him moral characteristics, character development type of things. Keeping him as a good child rather than, you know, back talking to teachers or to other students, things like that. And so that's one of the reasons why he sent his son to that school, that's what he, and that's what he really wanted a lot of structure from it. (8/4/98)

Additionally, Ed Barnes, a third grade parent commented that: "The moral focus at the school helps [my son] live the principles that we have taught him" (Commentary on Donna Cole's Survey Results: First Semester 1997-8). Thus, parental desires for a strong value system in the school shaped the nature of the moral focus curriculum, as well as provided teachers with expectations for the values that would be taught.

Since teachers were expected to infuse specified values into their instruction, as well as explicitly address a moral focus curriculum, one would have expected that the character development program at Eisenhower would attract teachers in the same way that it would attract parents. Brooke Hughes and Donna Cole commented on how the moral focus was a particularly attractive piece of the Eisenhower program. Both noted that once students were instilled with trust, honesty, and respect, teaching was a much easier endeavor (Cole; 7/11/98, Hughes; 9/15/98). Brooke also mentioned that the moral focus allowed her to be more absolute in her discipline and setting a good example for her students than she might have been able to in another school: "You know, like some of the schools just don't, you know, it's like you can't tell the kids that is the wrong thing. You know, because then somebody will be on your back for it, you know. It's like well, it is wrong, what you're doing. Why can't I tell them it's a wrong thing to be doing?"

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(Hughes, Interview; 6/21/98) Both parents and faculty appeared to feel as though once a strong moral community had been established, all of the other academic factors would fall into place.

With respect to discipline, faculty stated that the moral focus of the school aided in the maintenance of order in the school. Jerry said that the environment at Eisenhower was, “a lot less stressful . . . When I come in here on Monday, I may not see a student the whole week sent down by a teacher. I get very, very few” (Pleasants, Interview; 6/18/98). Nearly all of the parents at Eisenhower reported that overall the discipline at the school was appropriate (Parent Survey Results). Pleasants claimed that there were very few discipline problems at Eisenhower because the discipline policy and consequences were made so clear to both parents and students.

The explicit instruction of a values curriculum, and a strictly enforced discipline code, all necessitated congruity of values between faculty and parents. Parents had to trust that the values taught were the same as those that they fostered at home, and teachers had to comply with the values that parents brought to the school. Once again decisions to either enroll or accept positions at the school were implicit agreements of trust and compliance.

Community satisfaction regarding the role of parents and teachers, the academic program, and character development all were expressed through unspoken agreements of trust and compliance. These agreements, by both faculty and parents were engendered through the community to which they belonged. ETS's targeting and marketing to a specific community, facilitated a pre-existing commitment to the ideals set forth in their program. Most importantly, parents and faculty at Eisenhower were willing to forgo any

substantive decision making power as part of their agreement to be part of the school. The trust and compliance which were so much a part of community-school relationships seemed nearly offhand, since the program was created with this community's values in mind.

Buying in a Sellers Market

The trust and compliance of both parents and faculty, as well as the cohesive community provided Eisenhower and ETS with a relatively stable environment. Furthermore, as long as the demand for the ETS program exceeded the supply, Eisenhower continued to demand both trust and compliance from its community members. Charter school discourse and policies strongly emphasize the power of parents to take "their money" to whatever school they feel best educates their child. Drawing heavily on private school rhetoric, as well as capitalist marketplace metaphors, charter school proponents claim that parental choice and exit options lead to greater responsiveness and accountability to parents. Scott Kelly noted that schools aren't "gonna get any money if they can't attract kids. So when parents make demands or ask for things, I'm finding that people are very responsive" (11/3/98). At Eisenhower, parents were well aware of their exit options, and of the power that they held to choose, or not choose the school. Heather Cowell commented on the responsiveness of both the school and corporation:

I think that as a group [parents] have a great deal of impact . . . the whole charter school system was sold to us because it was an alternative which is a competition for regular public schools. And I can very easily take my \$2,200 a year per child, or whatever it is, and put it back in the public schools, as I can give it to [ETS], if they're not meeting my expectations . . . they realize that this is a competitive business, it's turning into a competitive business, schools, schooling is, and if they want to succeed, they can't make any money unless their classrooms are at 24, and if they suddenly have all displeased parents, they're gonna pull their kids out which means they're gonna lose that money which means they're not gonna be successful, and so, them running it as a business is the best thing they can do, and by listening to their clients, is only gonna do them better. (Interview 11/11/98)

Heather's feeling that she was taken very seriously as a parent, and as a community member associated with the school was echoed by other parents. Beverly Thompson commented that she would have no problem removing her child from the school if it did not meet to her satisfaction. In fact she had done so before. Her child attended another nearby charter school before she enrolled him at Eisenhower. After three years at the other charter school, Beverly chose to remove her son from the school because she did not feel that the learning environment was effective enough. Beverly also commented that charter schools seemed to be "more responsive" to her as a parent.

In spite of this perceived responsiveness, the ETS schools also required a certain level of commitment to the program and the ideals. Beverly commented that, "people that go there know the policies, and otherwise, don't have your kid there" (Thompson; 11/11/98). There was a tenuous balance between charter school rhetoric and the kind of deliberate community targeting exemplified at Eisenhower. On the one hand, because the school was dependent upon the market, there was a need to be responsive to parental wants and desires, but on the other hand, such a well-defined program required a certain amount of "buy-in" from both parents and faculty in order to operate. Jerry Pleasants said:

“I meet with every parent before they enroll their children so I tell them what we’re gonna do. And if it’s something they want, then enroll. If not, then don’t enroll” (Interview; 6/18/98). Eisenhower (and by association, ETS) built a “sellers market” in which parents had few options once they chose the school.

This kind of commitment to the school principles extended beyond parents. According to Scott Kelley, “the board has this shared common vision, they don’t come in with agendas. They’re asked, they’re interviewed before they even get on the board, do you buy into this philosophy?” (Interview; 11/3/98). And Brian Miller noted that “our program is all about do you buy in to what we do? You need to execute our program effectively in the school” (Interview; 12/13/98). In spite of this required “buy in”, Miller felt that faculty had an important say in the creation of the program: “it’s not like I’m sitting back in my office and creating all these objectives and saying go out and do it. They’re heavily involved . . . Principals have a very clear understanding of what we are trying to do, and what their objectives for their schools are, and so they drive that, and live that every single day” (Interview; 12/13/98). Even though Miller said that principals were heavily involved in the development of objectives and ETS policies, it was still the corporate philosophy to which they must ultimately subscribe. In an ETS school, community “empowerment” was derived from a commitment to the program. If school faculty and parents were committed to the corporate principles, then there was a kind of flexibility available within those defined parameters.

The parents and faculty members at ETS schools were deliberately targeted to build communities that would subscribe to corporate ideals. Thus, in this case, responsiveness was based on the creation of a system that research said parents would

want and choose. Responsiveness preceded the choice. ETS took careful steps to ensure that the choice mechanisms inherent in the operation of charter schools would not operate as a sanction, or an opportunity for redress, but as a reward. All of the research pointed to the fact that parents would choose these schools and be pleased with the philosophy, so there was no need to be flexible in the corporate operations. As Brian Miller noted, ETS schools were not intended to meet the needs of every American parent (and by association, every educator), but to satisfy a specific population. Thus, as long as there were parents who wanted to send their children to an ETS school, and faculty to hire, there was a greater concern with “buy-in” than responsiveness.

The likelihood that Eisenhower or ETS would change for any parent was slim. Jerry commented that he had not felt any pressure from parents to change any aspect of the school, nor had he had any threats from parents that they would pull their children from the school. He further noted that if a parent or teacher said that they would leave the school if changes in the program did not ensue, he would wish them well at their new school: “And we’ve had very few parents leave the school and move their children elsewhere . . . so that gives them an option. If they keep their children here, they must agree with the direction of the school” (Pleasants, Interview; 8/20/98). The corporation couldn’t give in to divisive parent demands, lest they lose the unique product they offer. As long as there was a waiting list of parents eager to send their children to the school, the corporation had no incentive to change at all. And these parents seemed aware of and even content with this fact: “I’m not afraid to go to anybody if I really feel like something’s wrong. Beyond that, there’s nothing I can do. If they’re gonna stick to their guns and say no, this is the way we’re gonna do it, then I have to make that choice. Is this

really what I want for my kids, or not, or do I find something better?” (Heather Cowell; 11/11/98). While Heather mentioned that she feels empowered by her choice to send her children to Eisenhower, that choice is her only power.

At its core, Eisenhower, and all ETS schools were take-it-or-leave-it operations. The nature of the school was reliant on the fact that parents would buy what was being sold, and that they would not try and change the nature of the product. Heather Cowell claimed that she would leave the school if everything fell apart, but she “would certainly fight it all the way. If there were things that were going on, and I saw the school falling apart, I wouldn’t just ditch and run quick, I’m committed to Eisenhower” (Interview; 11/11/98). As a parent, Heather was committed to the ideals that the corporation established for each of its schools, and had no desire to change the manner in which the school or its staff operated. What she would have fought for are the same principles upon which ETS founded its schools. There was no reason to believe, however, that she would ever fight the program. In fact, the program was created for parents like her. The community of Eisenhower academy was not likely to fight to change it, but instead, fight to protect it. Eisenhower was more than a take-it-or-leave-it organization. Once parents made their choice, they had to keep-it-or-leave-it.

Congruent Accountability Frameworks

The ETS program generally, and Eisenhower specifically adhered closely to the traditional political definitions and understandings of accountability -- an emphasis on measurable results through test scores, and incentives and sanctions attached to those outcomes. Furthermore, it appeared as though all of the agents at Eisenhower prioritized the same outcomes, thereby implementing congruent accountability frameworks. While

the various agents operating at Eisenhower may have created slightly different accountability mechanisms, they never conflicted and worked towards nearly identical ends. The congruency of the agents operating at Eisenhower ensured that the accountability mechanisms in place at the school aligned with one another (see Table 10).

Table 10: Eisenhower Public School Academy Accountability Mechanisms

<i>CONGRUENT AGENTS</i>	<i><u>State & Chartering Agent</u></i>	<i><u>ETS & Parents</u></i>
<i>Norms or Standards</i>	ISD Core Curriculum	ETS Academic Objectives, Hirsch’s Core Curriculum, Textbook Packages (Saxon Math, Open Court Reading), Christian Morals and Values ⁸ , Discipline Code
<i>Indicators of Performance</i>	MEAP	MAT, Enrollment Levels, School Profitability, Parent Satisfaction Surveys, Faculty Performance Appraisals
<i>Incentives & Sanctions</i>	N/A	Merit Pay Bonuses, Corporate Profit (Stock Options)
<i>Opportunities for Redress</i>	N/A	“At-Will Contracts” allow for dismissal of all faculty; Parents may choose to leave the school; or parents may communicate with faculty.

Eisenhower PSA’s congruent accountability frameworks were both created and sustained by the coherent community built by ETS.

Eisenhower’s targeting of a specific population of teachers, as well as it’s explicit norms for instructional performance impacted faculty understandings of accountability. Eisenhower developed into a self-selecting and self-perpetuating organization. At Eisenhower, the values held by the community appealed to like-minded individuals who then became a part of the organization, supporting and maintaining the system already in place. The community then attracted more like-minded individuals to sustain the

organization. This process could potentially need little outside support from ETS. While ETS had perhaps nurtured an ideal during the inception of the school community, gradually, ownership shifted towards the members of the community. The development and maintenance of the Eisenhower community, from which congruent accountability frameworks emerged, reveals that there is much more to understanding accountability than outcomes or mechanisms.

Eisenhower was carefully constructed to satisfy the wants and needs of a particular community. This has resulted in a) a high level of commitment and compliance on the part of the parents and faculty; and b) this commitment was perceived as second nature to those who are a part of the school community. At Eisenhower, accountability was perceived not as a burden, but as a function of one's value system. In other words, in spite of a wide variety of accountability mechanisms being implemented in the school, the faculty did not perceive themselves as being subject to regulations that they wouldn't already be following.

Faculty at Eisenhower perceived accountability both as an issue of being monitored, and a sense of responsibility. On the one hand, teachers reported that they are closely watched and regulated, which resulted in their compliance with ETS expectations, but they simultaneously stated that they just "felt" a sense of responsibility which drove their compliance with the explicit objectives. In many ways accountability meant both trust and compliance for these faculty. They complied with authority, because they trusted in the ideals.

Jerry claimed that as a principal, he did not operate from a "top-down approach" but that he got a lot of input from his staff in making decisions (Interview; 8/20/98). It is

not clear however, just what kinds of input the teachers had in the school. In contrast to Jerry's claim, the teachers reported that they felt as though they were subject to a "top-down" structure, but they did not necessarily characterize this as problematic. Brooke Hughes stated that she followed the principal's directives "because I accepted the job, and he's my authority" (Interview; 7/27/98). Brooke's understanding of her job as a compliance with an authority was similarly described by David and Donna. Donna, argued that accountability and responsibility were a matter of being "checked-on", and David described ETS as something Orwellian, like "Big Brother" (Interview; 6/21/98).

In contrast to the monitoring for compliance expressed by the faculty, teachers also indicated they were accountable because "that's who we are". Donna said that "it's natural within me to be responsible," (Interview; 9/26/98), and Brooke described her wanting to be responsible because she felt a "kind of religious obligation . . . if I didn't do my best, and I wasn't doing my best in the classroom . . . G-d would know" (Interview; 6/21/98). Jerry said that even though he was responsible to students and parents that ultimately he must answer to himself and G-d (Interview; 7/15/98). This kind of internal monitoring that the faculty described as a motivating factor to comply with ETS expectations could be attributed to their membership in a cohesive community that preceded the school.

Chapter 6 Notes

¹ In it's second year of operation, Eisenhower installed two trailer classrooms on the edge of the parking lot adjacent to the main building in order to accommodate growing enrollments.

² When the school opened in September, Eisenhower reported an enrollment of 185 students. During the second semester of the 1997-8 school year, 25 additional students enrolled at Eisenhower bringing the final total to 210. In the 1998-9 school year, the school added a sixth grade, and several teachers to other grades, increasing the school enrollment.

³ According to Michigan charter law, schools must hold a charter, and no public school can earn a profit.

⁴ Twelve schools are scheduled to open in fall 1999. Ten of these will be in Michigan, and two will be in North Carolina.

⁵ Budgets, and related financial issues will not be addressed in this section.

⁶ Big Mountain College granted Eisenhower it's charter.

⁷ 76.58% of the parents responded that they "strongly agreed" with the statement: "I would recommend this school to my friends who have school aged children". 22.78% of the parents "agreed" with the statement, and .63% (one parent) responded neutrally to the question.

⁸ Legally, the State and Chartering agent cannot endorse religious standards in public schools. However, the continued importance of religion at Eisenhower implies either a tacit acceptance, or ignorance of the role of Christian values at the school. In either case, the Christian morals and values that are so important to ETS and Eisenhower parents are not incongruous with the standards set forth by the State and Chartering agent.

CHAPTER VII

COMPETING ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORKS: THE CASE OF THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

In August 1998, after three years operating as a Michigan public school academy, the board of the Community School voted to close the doors to students and teachers. After a year of political, financial, and social turmoil, the board decided that it was no longer feasible for the school to continue providing educational services. This move ceased educational operations at the school, and there appears to be little hope that the school will re-open, at least in any recognizable form.

The Community School was housed in two modular buildings¹, connected by a wooden walkway. These buildings were situated in the middle of a vacant lot next to a church on the outskirts of a mid-sized city, near both low-income housing as well as wealthy suburbs. During its final year of operation, the Community School served a primarily poor African-American population, the majority of who lived in subsidized housing near the school². Over the course of its existence, the Community School underwent numerous changes in size, demographics, and leadership, all of which contributed to conflict and confusion in the school. The history of the Community School reveals some of the most crucial issues that face charter schools and public schools generally. The soap opera style drama that gripped the Community School during the 1997-8 school year demonstrated that issues of agency as well as ownership

can overshadow all other issues of accountability in a school. The conflicts between multiple agents of accountability, each struggling for dominance, produced competing accountability frameworks that ultimately wrecked havoc on the school's educational environment.

History of the Community School, Part I: Many Agents, Common Expectations

The Community School was founded as a private, non-profit elementary school with a mission to "provide an education for young children -- based on their individual developmental needs and learning styles and real life experiences -- where the constructive, interactive process of learning will encourage growth, cooperation, and the joy of learning" (Recruitment Brochure). The Community School was started by a group of parents who wanted their children to be able to continue their schooling in the same kind of child-centered environment as the High/Scope pre-school in which they were already enrolled. These parents imagined a multi-age, child-centered, constructivist educational environment where teachers were supposed to facilitate learner activities rather than instruct. So, with guidance from the pre-school coordinator, the founding parents developed a private early elementary program (K-3). Twenty-two K-3 children were enrolled in the one-room Community School during its first year of operation. Faculty consisted of one teacher and an assistant.

Applying for Charter Status and Becoming a Public School

During the Community School's first year of operation, 1993, Michigan charter school legislation was passed, and the school board decided to apply for charter status. This decision appears to have stemmed from both ideological and financial need. As a

public school, the Community School would be able to make their program available to all students, and better reflect the local community. Jackie Benjamin, a founding parent noted that since much of the Community School program was based on “real world” learning, it was important that students not be cloistered by the walls of a “private institution” (Interview; 11/14/98). Becoming a charter school would also potentially solve many of the financial difficulties that were growing in the school. Tuition was set at \$4000 per pupil, which the board had difficulty collecting from parents. As a public school academy, the Community School could continue to provide the program, but not have to ask parents for money: “it was more advantageous to first be able to bring it out into the public at no expense” (Carver; 8/11/98). At the end of the 1993-4 school year, a committee of parents from the Community School applied for a charter.

It was a two-year struggle for the Community School to be granted a charter. The first year, Northeast State University (NSU) rejected their charter application. According to Jackie, the Community School charter was denied simply because NSU wanted to authorize only one school in their geographic area, and they decided to work with a more well established school. NSU encouraged the parents to apply again the following year. Under the false impression that the Community School needed to be an operational school before being granted a charter, the board leased space, hired a new teacher, and got ready for the following school year. During that interim year, tuition still proved to be problematic, and the majority of parents did not return their children to the school. The school opened in the fall of 1994 with only three students. The school remained open for that year, and the founding parents re-applied for a charter. In April 1995, the Community School was granted charter status by NSU.

Once NSU granted the Community School their charter, they became a public entity. Thus, a new board was appointed, and new facilities were secured. However, five weeks before school was scheduled to open, the local zoning committee denied the board's petition to open a school in that location. The board invoked their back-up plan, leasing some property, and setting up modular classrooms. Jackie Benjamin recalled:

We had to get sewers dug, we had to get electrical, everything done, but we opened the doors in time. But because we'd only had five weeks to let people know where we were, we opened with 15 children. We had a lot of people interested but because it was getting so close and they'd drive by and it was still an open field. (11/14/98)

With only fifteen students and one teacher, the Community School offered a K-6 educational program. The High/Scope philosophy only provides guidance for K-3 instruction, so the responsibility for developing a grade 4-6 program fell to the Community School board and teachers.

As a public school, the Community School became subject to new kinds of State laws and regulations. The Community School's charter legally granted them autonomy from any kind of local school district, but the school did become the authority of a new agent. While public schools are traditionally responsible to State agents of accountability, in the case of Michigan charter schools, agency has been delegated to authorizers. In the case of the Community School, it is important to understand the role of both the state and authorizer.

Role of the State

Cindy Funke, director of the Michigan Public School Academy Program (also known as the Michigan Department of Education Charter School Office) stated that the Michigan Department of Education had no formal role in either monitoring or evaluating

charter schools. The Charter School Office disseminated information regarding policies, regulations, and consequences for failure, but was not responsible for developing any kinds of regulatory mechanisms³. Funke said: “I don’t really consider our job oversight with schools. I consider it one of working with, like we do with any other school district. Because what happens is, these schools are actually to be monitored, and oversight is the authorizer’s responsibility, under law, in statute” (3/24/99). Furthermore, with the exception of state curriculum standards and testing, Funke claimed that she did not deal with school missions, objectives, expectations or outcomes:

I don’t tell them how to arrange their classrooms, I don’t tell them what curriculum they need have . . . I don’t tell them that one delivery system is better than another delivery system, I don’t encourage them to have a team teaching model rather than one that might be using computer generated curriculum and hands on . . .”(3/24/98)

The State, by virtue of charter school law, delegated oversight authority to the authorizer (also known as a chartering agent), in this case Northeast State University. Once the Department of Education granted a school charter status, the authorizer assumed the function of monitoring and evaluating the school.

Role of the Authorizer

Jay Bradley, director of the Northeast State University Charter Office, said that NSU’s role as an authorizer was to be able to certify that each charter complied with the charter contract and all applicable law: “We don’t want to micromanage schools. We believe they’re independent. What we do is monitor the board, to see that is fulfilling its obligations, and that they’re doing what they said they’d do in the charter contract” (Bradley; 12/8/98). Bradley repeatedly emphasized that NSU’s role was not to get too involved with the inner workings of the “autonomous” charter schools. What NSU did

do was to monitor each charter school for compliance with State mandated regulations. These regulations fell into the categories of governance (deals with boards, board minutes, open meetings act, freedom of information act, contracts, etc.); finance (annual budgets, quarterly financial statements, independent CPA audits); and educational programming (normed tests, MEAP test, charter contract goals).

While NSU did employ a substantial administrative staff, and field reps (liaisons to schools), Bradley claimed that much of the responsibility for monitoring for compliance and evaluation fell to the local school board:

[the] board is responsible for hiring and firing its employees. So we view the principal of each school as an employee of the board, and that's the board's job to assess and to evaluate their people. We view, in a simplified sense, we view our role, our legal contract is between the university board and the public charter school board, and our job is to make sure that the charter school board is fulfilling it's obligations. And if they're not, then we inform them of that, and expect them to take appropriate action. (Bradley; 12/8/98)

The NSU charter contract designated the school board as the official authorities in a school, removing authority for most oversight from the authorizer. Only in the event that a school blatantly breached their contract did NSU take some kind of action.

Passing the Buck

While some authorizers may have chosen to take a more active role in the operations of the schools they chartered, NSU has chose to delegate a great deal of authority to the local school board. By not taking an active role in any school operations unless schools cannot meet their contractual obligations, both the state and NSU effectively relinquished their role as agents of accountability. The State and Authorizer's abdication of formal responsibility granted the Community School Board a great deal of

local autonomy. But as a public school, that autonomy was still constrained by some state regulations, and the charter contract.

Agent #1: A Working School Board

Darcy Jacobs, a board member, explained that there were dual roles for Community School board members. These roles fell into the categories of financial management and protecting the academic integrity of the school. The board was responsible for “the policies of the school, the procedural things that would guide the teachers, the discipline policies have to be set and reviewed, purchasing policies” (12/10/98). In addition to these typical school board activities, the Community School Board was originally conceived of as a “working board” where members were involved in school activities on a day-to-day basis. Linda Carver, a teacher explained:

That means that they don't just make the decisions at the board meeting but they also are available to help the school move forward in terms of, you know, showing up at all the parent teacher type functions, being visibly supportive of the school at anything. You know any extra thing. Ice cream social, whatever. You know, stopping by the school, asking, you know, if there's any, just being supportive physically and emotionally. I guess supportive, you know, what can you bring to the table? You know, you're a computer expert for a company, you know, can you help set up the computers? It isn't gonna cost us any money if you set up the computers. In your past life, you were a curriculum director. We need you to help build our curriculum. And so, you know we're not, we can't afford to go out and pay these people. You know, you have a finance background. What can you bring to the plate? What can you work in? Kind of like a kibbutz⁴. (8/11/98)

The board's active role in the school made members not only policy makers, but active participants in school operations. As supplemental personnel, board members were vital to the survival of the school.

Jackie Benjamin, a member of the founding board, described the Community School as having not only a different educational model, but a different organizational model than most educational organizations:

...it's described by a lot of, you know, business gurus as chaordic, or at the edge of chaos. Where the most creativity takes place. Out of complexity and chaos come patterns that emerge. Sort of a self-organizing system which is really what we were . . . We're really a self-organizing system. We're our own organism that's kind of, you know, moving and growing and changing, as it needs to. (11/14/98)

Benjamin commented that at times their operational mode was chaotic, and that sometimes not particularly efficient, but that the needed work was always done. The original parents, teachers, and board developed twelve guiding principles for the Community School that outlined what kinds of relationships they wanted to develop with each other and the community. They included: Creative, Connective/Integrative, Community-Based/Rich, Communicative, Exploratory, Adaptive, Experiential, Respectful/Fair, Diverse/Tolerant, Emergent/Organic, Collaborative, and Supportive (Community School Document, 1996). These principles were supposed to guide both the educational and business practices of the school, yet it was not articulated how these principles were to come into play in the day-to-day operation of the school.

The Community School board was the officially delegated agent of accountability for the school. As an agent, the board was responsible for the creation of the Community School's accountability framework. Theoretically, by virtue of the charter contract, boards should have been the sole agents of accountability in a charter school, exerting local control. During the Community School's first years of operation, this was the case.

Each member of the Community School board was hand picked by Jackie Benjamin, one of the school's founding parents. Many board members were friends or acquaintances of Jackie's, and were in almost total agreement as to the direction and mission of the Community School. Jackie commented: "it was a shared vision. We all went there, we all believed in it. It was so cool because everyone was like the right person to be on the board" (Benjamin; 11/14/98). This small community of value, with a shared educational mission created the Community School by consensus, and developed an educational organization that met their own visions for education. With both the State and NSU conceding authority to the board, board members were free to make choices and decisions uncontested or examined.

Agents #2 & #3: The Community School Leadership and Administration

The administration of the Community School was intended to be a collaborative effort between teachers, the board, and volunteers. Jackie Benjamin⁵, took a leadership role acting as a point person, coordinating everyone's activities: "they'd work collaboratively . . . and they would always inform me, involve me and we'd talk about it every week at our staff meetings" (Interview; 11/14/98). There was supposed to be no formal hierarchy in place. A staff member explained:

...the less hierarchy and the less layers of people there are, how do I say this? The better performance you're gonna get out of your people because they're not, they can work to their most creativity . . . It's not a dictatorial situation. So everybody's a leader really. And everybody brings to the table. It's a very collaborative, it's supposed to be a very collaborative setting. (Carver; 6/23/98)

This collaborative approach to leadership was intended to embody the “twelve principles” developed by the school founders. In most cases, decisions were made by committee (either formal or informal), and responsibilities were assumed, rather than delegated.

Once the Community School gained charter status, Jackie assumed the role of school director. In that capacity, she took responsibility for school reporting requirements, paying bills, taking care of payroll, and other administrative duties. In addition to managerial functions, Jackie also became a de-facto community liaison, as well as instructional leader. In her time directing the school, Jackie was involved in nearly all areas of school operations including communicating with parents and advising teachers.

In addition to the director, the Community School also designated a lead teacher. In 1995, the first year that the school was chartered as a public entity, the board had hired two teachers, one of who was to be the “lead”. That lead teacher quit before the beginning of the school year, leaving one very inexperienced teacher to bear the weight of a brand-new program. Linda Carver, who was a board member at the time, as well as a personal friend of Jackie Benjamin, volunteered to assist the teacher as an independent consultant to the school. In her capacity as an aide/paraprofessional, Linda was paid an hourly wage. At the end of the school year, the one very inexperienced teacher left the school. Her position was offered to Linda, who resigned from the board so that she could accept. In her first year as a Community School full-time teacher, Linda was designated “lead teacher”, in charge of supervising two new, first-year teachers.

Carver claimed that she was given the job of lead teacher because “I was the only one there with the most experience”⁶ (8/11/98). The role of the lead teacher was not

clearly defined, but evolved, according to Carver. Based on her own experiences, Linda assumed responsibility for both organizational management and instructional leadership. Carver made herself available as a resource person, who could answer other teacher's questions, provide guidance, and "try to help them understand the philosophy of the school" (Interview; 8/11/98). Linda recalled that she was responsible for nearly all school operations:

...everything from procedures to paperwork to my class of students. Making report cards . . . I set up field trips, conferencing, any, anything extracurricular that had to do with school. I was kind of the school head but not identified as such. I was the lead teacher but under that came a million jobs because we didn't have an administrator . . . So I was jack of all trades. Making sure that, you know, I mean, that everything clicked.
(6/23/98)

As part of her role at the school, Linda reported that she became a financial contact person for school business transactions. With respect to expenses such as van rental (for field trips) and school lunches, Linda put her name on many bills, expecting to be paid back for her outlay of funds. Although the board did not approve many of these specific outlays, they paid the bills that Linda incurred, whether they fit into the budget or not.

Together, Jackie and Linda guided the Community School towards their own vision of community and experiential learning. As the people with the most intimate knowledge of the day-to-day affairs of the Community School, Jackie and Linda assumed a great deal of responsibility for the school's operation, placing themselves in a relatively powerful position. They effectively became the final authorities on all school decision-making. While official authority for determining school policies and procedures was delegated to the Community School board, in effect, Jackie and Linda were the sole agents of any consequence at the school. Since the board was made up of Jackie's

friends, and Linda was a former board member, they were all aligned with the same educational values and objectives for the Community School. The Board basically rubber-stamped whatever Jackie or Linda proposed.

Agent #4: Parental/Community Support

The Community School needed a great deal of parental support, and the staff relied heavily on the promise of volunteer assistance in the day-to-day operation of the school. Those parents who sent their children to the Community School early on seemed to be willing to put in the effort and energy that was required. Parents and other community members would often take responsibility for office tasks, cleaning, and the field trips that were a major part of the educational program: “People volunteered to fill out all the mess of paperwork, people volunteered to help the teacher drive on field studies, come in and, you know, bring speakers into the classroom, arrange for the kids to go and visit their workplaces” (Benjamin; 11/14/98). Parents provided supplemental personnel, as well as material resources. Laura Silber, a parent, recalled:

that first year we ran out of all money to provide even toilet paper, and yet we never ran out of toilet paper at the end of that year because a different parent would always just bring it in . . . There was at least one parent that would come in and clean the school, a couple parents. I did that, and another one did it. (12/24/98)

Parents and other school volunteers could be as involved as they wanted, and be integrated into the everyday operations of the school. For instance, Laura Silber, who had a B.A. in mathematics, began “helping out in math”, as well as starting an after-school care program during the second semester her daughter was enrolled at the Community School. These activities later evolved into paid positions.

Parents also reported their pleasure with the school and its mission. Darcy Jacobs, a parent who later became a board member enrolled her son in the program because she was attracted to the philosophy of the school:

The philosophies that are the cornerstone of the [Community School] are something I believe very strongly in, and I was very intrigued by the idea of being able to do those kinds of things in school, and be able to have a lot more parental involvement. I've already been through the typical public school system, and a lot of my unhappiness with that had to do with those issues of parents involved and the teachers . . . and how the system was put together. And so it just kind of brought together a lot of things that I was thinking about, and I also loved the philosophy, it was the right place for him. (12/10/98)

Laura Silber, another parent at the Community School, decided to send her daughter to the Community School because the program matched the way she wanted her daughter to learn: "they explored things, they went on field trips, they did these things out in the environment. . . she needed that kind of school that would take her out and not just be in the classroom the whole time" (12/24/98). It appeared as though much of the parent involvement at the Community School resulted from parents support of and pleasure with the school and its mission.

During the Community School's first years, school participants reported that there was over 90% parent participation, and reportedly high parent satisfaction. In its first years as a public school, the Community School experienced a great deal of programmatic success. Jackie Benjamin remembered:

The feedback we were getting from people was these kids know how to ask questions, they know how to problem solve. They're self motivated . . . And they're well behaved, too, and they're interested in what they're doing . . . So we knew that, you know, the kids were really learning and that things, and parents were just really pleased. (11/14/98)

This positive community feedback indicated to the board, Jackie and Linda that their expected outcomes were being achieved.

Many of the parents that enrolled their children in the Community School had either been founding parents, or their children had attended the High/Scope pre-school. These parents chose the Community school because it was an ideological match -- they bought into the school mission. Parental support of the Community School mission gave Jackie and Linda the green light to organize the school as they saw fit. With authority and tacit approval granted by the board and parents, Jackie and Linda were free to develop norms and standards for the school, as well as the appropriate means of measuring them.

Common Expectations

The High/Scope philosophy shaped the nature of teaching and learning at the Community School. According to the *Training Resource Materials: The High/Scope Elementary Approach* (Carmody, Hohman, & Johnston, 1997), the High/Scope educational program had six interrelated components: active learning, classroom arrangement, daily schedule, content, teacher child interactions, and assessment. As a philosophy rather than a curriculum, the High/Scope components provided only general guidelines for educational practice. Training materials included the following descriptions of a High/Scope School:

- Teachers should capitalize on their students' intentions, interests, and goals. The teachers' primary role is to assist students' natural inquiry processes.
- The daily schedule should balance time between different learner grouping configurations. Students are expected to share the responsibility for planning their activities with their teachers.

- The content of different learning activities should be based on key experiences (developmentally sequenced learning processes in language and literacy, mathematics, science, movement, and music).
- Teachers are expected to engage in instructional dialogue, rather than lecture, and share control of the classroom with their students.
- Assessment should be conducted through teacher anecdotal notes, and student portfolios, both guided by key experiences checklists. (adapted from Carmody et al., 1997)

High/Scope materials contained few directives, and allowed for a great deal of variation from school to school, based on student and community needs. In accordance with the High/Scope philosophy, the Community School classroom required hands-on learning. Emphasized were critical thinking and problem solving, as well as a strong experiential learning component. The Community School enacted this philosophy by making field trips a regular student activity, integrated in the day-to-day curricula. Lectures, textbooks, and other purchased educational materials were rarely used, and students were responsible for determining much of what they learned. Additionally, the Community School was designed to have small classrooms and low student to teacher ratios -- a maximum of fifteen to one.

Curriculum and Assessment

Since High/Scope provided an educational philosophy, but no accompanying curricula, the Community School teachers were given the Intermediate School District Core Curriculum which satisfies State curricular guidelines, as a basis for their instruction. Linda Carver described:

We needed a backbone, a curriculum, A, to please the state, B, to please the parents, and C, to help guide new teachers with and old teachers with some of the expectations for a well-rounded education in terms of academics. So this was a, a good thing to go with because it's very well respected. (Carver; 8/11/98)

Even though the State was virtually uninvolved with the school, by virtue of the Community School's public status, the educational program was designed to meet minimum state requirements.

While the mission and the philosophy of the Community School did not mesh well with standardized testing and the concept of state curriculum ideals, as a public entity, the school was required to abide by state curricula policies. The policies and procedures surrounding curriculum and assessment, delineated by the state and authorizer, were modified as much as possible by the Community School. Given the state and authorizer's laissez faire approach to monitoring the Community School program, faculty were able to pick and choose how they adhered to state policy. For example, while the ISD core curriculum did provide the teachers with some instructional structure, Carver noted: "We ask the children what they're interested in and try to meet those state guidelines through the level, through the areas of their interests" (6/23/98).

While the Community School's charter contract spelled out their own individual school goals and objectives, each school that NSU authorizes is required to administer a nationally normed standardized test to each grade, each year, as well as the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (standardized test). However, with so few students enrolled and contributing test data, NSU, the State, and Community School educators could dismiss Community School test reports as "insufficient data" and not true measures of student progress. As a result, standardized tests were rarely used as any kind of valid assessment measure at the Community School. Instead, faculty at the Community School made use of a variety of "authentic" assessment tools, including the High/Scope

assessment framework, portfolios, parent reports, teacher anecdotal observations, and the children teaching one another as a demonstration of knowledge.

Teacher Roles and Responsibilities

It is difficult to discern by what kinds of guidelines teachers were expected to abide. The closest item that can be interpreted as “written expectations” for school staff was a list of core competencies that teachers were expected to possess, embedded within the list of tasks that were required to run the school on a daily basis. This list of expectations included the following items:

- planning, delivering, and assessing curriculum units, including gathering and creating learning materials
- facilitating children’s discovery by asking students questions and helping them find answers, as well as setting up and supervising field studies
- including children in classroom planning and responsibilities
- providing a rich, varied, healthy, safe environment for students
- keeping students on task
- setting examples and be a role model
- keeping adequate student records and evaluations, including, anecdotal observations,
- formal assessments, cumulative records, and guiding students in keeping portfolios
- communicating with staff members and requesting help when needed
- communicating with parents (adapted from a Community School Planning Document)

Beyond this list of competencies, Jackie or Linda provided little or no guidance to teachers regarding their role in the classroom. Linda Carver says that: “it’s a pretty rugged program for an inexperienced person because there’s a lot of... there’s not a lot of clear structure . . . it can feel very chaotic” (6/23/98). Teachers agreed and stated that they were provided with very little guidance as to what was expected of them in the school.

Without any training, or handbooks, the teachers remembered that generally speaking, Jackie and Linda were the authorities regarding what was expected of them in the classroom. Terry Brenner, a teacher, described Jackie's influence on her practice:

Jackie at the time was the director or school leader, she talked a lot about the High/Scope method and the curriculum and so I knew that she expected me to follow, to follow that. You know, she talked a lot about the philosophy of the school. So I know that she expected me to look through my High/Scope stuff when I was doing my lesson plans. She really expected a commitment to that philosophy. (6/30/98)

While Jackie communicated her philosophical expectations to the teachers, Linda provided more pragmatic guidance. Melissa Fisher, another teacher, said that Linda showed her materials and said, "this is what we use" (6/3/98). Melissa also said that, "I had to ask Linda if she wanted, or what the curriculum was. If there were any guidelines" (7/11/98). The teachers who were employed at the Community School relied on both Jackie and Linda to direct their activities. In effect Jackie and Linda were the only agents of consequence to the teachers.

Jackie and Linda expected a great deal from the teachers who worked at the Community school. Jackie described the teaching load as "a lot of work for the teachers" (11/14/98). According to Linda Carver, a Community School teacher is supposed to be a facilitator of learning, making accessible to the students all materials that are possible for them to study what they're interested in (6/23/98). Community School classrooms were supposed to be self-serving with all instructional materials set up and labeled in centers, so that students could walk into a classroom, go anywhere, and engage in an activity. Since much of the curriculum was based on student selected material, teachers needed to start much of their lesson planning from scratch. Teachers were also expected to take

their students on field trips, and be involved in long-term community activities. For example, Linda's students volunteered at the local Veteran's home and worked at an inner-city soup kitchen. Community School teachers, therefore, were responsible both for within classroom and community learning experiences.

In addition to the demands of the classroom, teachers were also responsible for many school management and operation duties. At the beginning of each school year, Jackie Benjamin made a list of tasks that were necessary for the day-to-day operation of the school which were assigned to teachers. Jackie described how the tasks were assigned:

[The teachers and staff] would get together at the beginning of the year and go through that list and say, oh, this is something that I'm really good at or I'd like to contribute and kinda divvy up the task list so there were the core competencies that each teacher was to be taken care of, like assessing the students and, you know, dealing with the parents, issues with students . . . at the beginning of each year, we would say, okay, here's who we are this here, here's how many of us there are. Here are the things we know it takes to operate a school successfully. Who's gonna, we've gotta divvy these things up. (11/14/98)

The wide range of child safety and business operation responsibilities placed on the Community School teaching staff required that teachers be proficient not only in the classroom, but in the front office and broom closet as well. The tasks that the Community School teaching staff took on ranged from those that one might expect, such as recess duty and supervision of students, to those activities usually reserved for maintenance staff (shoveling snow, trimming grass, cleaning bathrooms, and building repair) or administrative personnel (paying bills, State of Michigan Reporting, advertising and marketing).

The large responsibility that was placed on Community School teachers, was viewed by Linda as empowering, providing her with multiple ways of impacting the school. She commented that she, as part of a collaborative leadership structure, had the authority to “take charge,” when necessary, and that “it was just a real neat team effort” (Carver; 8/11/98). However, the multiple responsibilities, and lack of formal structure also contributed to confusion amongst the staff. A teacher remembered:

it was made clear to me that nobody was going to be quote telling me what to do and I would be trusted as an individual to be, that I was a mature individual. I knew how to be accountable. I had a job to do and I would do it. And I would be trusted to, to pitch in where I saw something was needed and expected to follow through . . . [But] because I'm a first year teacher, I didn't really know a lot of things. I had no one to go to to find out what I, legally what I was responsible for, legally what I was accountable to and so there was just a lot of confusion in the beginning. (Brenner; 5/28/98)

With little guidance, other than verbal directions from Jackie or Linda, teachers at the school were often left to their own devices to determine what their roles and responsibilities were.

In many ways, the multiple roles that Jackie and Linda expected teachers to play demonstrated a conflict between autonomy and accountability. Teachers had many opportunities to shape the school, and take responsibility for the direction of the educational program, but at the same time, they were unsure of exactly what was expected of them. Jackie and Linda, as agents, communicated some expectations to teachers, and attempted to encourage team building through jointly created job opportunities, but the teachers at the school never quite understood their roles at the school.

History, Part I: Summary

The early years of the Community School could be characterized by consensus. The school was truly surrounded by a community of value. The board, administrators, and parents were all working towards the same educational vision, communicating similar expectations, as well as desired outcomes. With Jackie and Linda as the uncontested agents, there were unified standards for practice, indicators of achievement, and virtually no need for incentives, sanctions, or redress. Teachers, although perhaps unclear about what was expected of them, made no attempts to change the mission or vision for the school. The Community School, as a small cohesive institution succeeded in creating an “accountable environment,” with one accountability framework delineating participants roles and responsibilities.

Trouble’s Brewing . . .

After a year operating as a charter, the Community School began to experience upheaval, which ultimately led to a crisis of accountability. There were four categories of problems that each contributed to the Community School’s troubles: faculty turnover, changing demographics, leadership difficulties, and financial problems.

Faculty Turnover

Throughout its existence, the Community School experienced a great deal of teacher turnover. The Community School teaching staff was perpetually young, new, and inexperienced. Over the five-year operational life of the school, each year the school opened with almost entirely new staffs. Linda Carver was the only semi-constant presence at the school, working as an aide for one year, and then being hired as a teacher

for the school's final two years in operation. Each of the teachers who left the school did so within one year, including two teachers who left mid-year.

Jackie Benjamin described most of the teachers that worked in the school, as being overwhelmed and needing more support than what was provided at the Community School:

And we even warned them up front . . . There's a lot of newness here going on and a lot of things happening that are gonna be, you know, disconcerting. So you have to be comfortable in an environment where that's gonna happen because we're all learning together here. And in all cases that didn't last are the ones who had all kinds of support [before]. . . . They were used to having a lot more support that we didn't have.
(11/14/98)

Benjamin claimed that the largest difficulty with hiring teaching staff was not necessarily finding teachers who idealistically meshed with the school philosophy, but finding teachers who had experience working from that philosophy.

Linda agreed with Jackie about fishing from shallow pool of teaching applicants, but also added that, "We couldn't pay enough, and it was too pioneering. By the time people get the experience that was required to work here, they tend to be at a level socially where they don't want to get their hands too dirty" (8/11/98). Cindy Funke noted that most charter schools have difficulty finding experienced certified teachers, because charter schools don't have the budgets to attract the most qualified individuals (3/24/99). Since the Community School, by design provided little structure or formal organization, inexperienced teachers were unable to meet Jackie and Linda's demands and expectations for performance. It is also important to note, that with little educational experience themselves, Jackie and Linda might have been unable to provide suitable support for teachers. The constant flux in teaching faculty at the Community School provided little

stability, and few opportunities for teachers to be enculturated into the mission and vision that Jackie and Linda had for the school.

Changing Demographics

Over the three-year period that the Community School operated as a public school academy, student enrollment grew to 50, housed in three separate classrooms. While Community School participants welcomed the initial school population growth, later they saw it as problematic. As the school's population grew, faculty and the Community School board discovered that many parents chose the school for its location, rather than the program. This became a problem, as parents soon complained about what they saw as failings in the program. Linda Carver commented:

The parents that lack an education, lack an understanding of learning, it's real tough for them. They're used to the ABCs, you know, homework every night. You know, memorize, regurgitate. It's real hard for them and a lot of that has to do with the socio-economic bracket that they're in. The lower socio-economic area that they're in, the more secure they are in the traditional, you know, pat on the back (6/23/98)

In order to educate parents about the program, and what the teachers were trying to accomplish, Community School faculty held meetings and open houses, which had very low attendance rates. Carver claimed that parents removed their children from the school rather than trying to influence the program: "They, they either take the time to stop and look at what the program is about or they just don't want, they just want something that they're comfortable with and they pull the kid and put them in something more traditional" (6/23/98). This contributed to a highly transient student population.

Additionally, while volunteerism had been a vital part of the Community School, parent involvement in the school decreased. Many parents who had composed the

original core of the involved community left, and the new parents were far less active in the daily operations of the school. Linda noted:

the role of parents, hopefully, was to be far more active than they were. We had hoped for an active parent group, fund-raisers, you know, parent nights, study sessions. We didn't get parent, we'd only get just a very small portion of parents that at all took any responsibility. (Carver; 8/11/98)

This change too was attributed to the "new" parents entering the school. Jackie noted that: "volunteering at anything is not a priority for certain types of people who are, you know, have to worry about keeping a roof over people's heads, food on the table. They may be already working several jobs or whatever" (11/14/98). Laura Silber, a parent, noted that the parent community seemed to change every month due to high student turnover:

...at the very beginning, I thought the parent community was other parents like me that had gifted kids. I thought that was a very larger percentage of the parents. But very quickly, those parents, a lot of those parents left, and then you had a different set of parents that just was the every day, average group of parents, pretty much from high to low, and then by the next year, we had parents who were extremely poor. And we're just trying to give their kids something else besides public school. Very poor, and probably never went to college themselves, and so you had these various changes from every six months or so too to deal with. Where people are coming from totally different perspectives. (Silber; 12/24/98)

The socio-economic status of the changing parent community was blamed for much of the drop-off in parent involvement noted by the Community School faculty and staff. In spite of the great need for volunteers at the Community School, there was little formal organization to coordinate parent activities or involvement.

Laura Silber noted that it was difficult to set up a parent organization because few parents involved in the school had organizational experience, and were unsure about how to run a parent group. She commented that:

We had a group of parents that don't even know what parent organization are... So perhaps it wasn't the best thing to have at that school. It's kind of, there's, I think it might be a cultural difference or something. But meetings and organizations are not the way some people do things.
(12/24/98)

Since a formal parent group never really coalesced, according to Silber, the bulk of parent involvement at the school resulted from individual parents taking responsibility for those projects or activities that they wanted to see happen at the school.

The haphazard volunteer efforts of parents during the Community School's final year failed to bring the parent community into the school:

Every parent that was in charge of this got overworked and left the school. Frustrated about the school. And then the next person would come and they would do the same thing, and the next person would come, and they would do the same thing. And it was all because we didn't have a parent that could be in charge and delegate to other people. So the person in charge ended up doing 85% of whatever was being done, and that's overwhelming to anybody. And we didn't have anybody that had been experienced as being a leader of a parent's organization. Nor did we have anybody that was telling us how to do it. So, I think that those of us that wanted to try, even though we didn't have the skills, tried, but eventually, we got tired, and once we got tired, and no one else was even showing up, well, what's the use? And so, we kinda got frustrated, and I think that's what happened." (Silber; 12/24/98)

Whether it was lack of organization, or changing demographics, the result was the same.

Volunteers were becoming scarcer, just as the school population was growing, and the school was strapped for personnel.

The dilemma of changing demographics also raises the issue of whether or not the core group that brought the Community School out as a charter were actually prepared to open the school to the public. As the school grew, the unified vision and mission held by the parent community began to fragment. New parents sent their children to the school out of convenience rather than any philosophical belief about education. Parents'

conflicting expectations needed to be addressed in order to maintain the student population. When parents began to make demands on the school program, Jackie and Linda had to assess just how willing they were to allow dissenting parents to have some influence and negotiate between the multiple expectations. The Community School needed students to survive, and it was becoming apparent that the program they were offering was not sustaining a stable population.

Leadership Difficulties

During its second year of operation as a charter, the Community School began to experience personnel difficulties. While a number of individuals clashed with Jackie during the life of the school, including people that she hired, it wasn't until NSU began asserting some authority as a chartering agent that Jackie began to describe the school as having problems. For example, NSU hired a representative/liaison who was supposed to be providing assistance to the school. According to Benjamin, this NSU representative was not knowledgeable about the Community School program or elementary education. The conflict came when, according to Jackie, the representative:

...started telling us what to do on a day to day basis. And this, of course, didn't fit in with the style that we'd been operating which was very collaborative for a long time . . . she basically held our charter up and said, well, if you don't do it, I'm gonna have your charter removed. And we said, you know, I guess you can bully us all you want, so we did it.
(11/14/98)

According to Jackie, she repeatedly complained to NSU, and by the end of the year, the representative was removed from her position for overstepping her bounds.

It is unclear whether the personnel conflicts described by Jackie were more the result of individuals overstepping their bounds, or stepping on Jackie's toes. To many,

Jackie was considered dictatorial, and “a person who had a very good vision but not particularly good management skills” (Kay; 6/29/98). Jackie had a reputation of clashing with everyone who came into contact with the school (Kay; 6/29/98). While the board members, and NSU foresaw many of the difficulties with Jackie’s multiple roles in the school, she was resistant to stepping down from any of her positions. Jackie’s felt that that she had earned her role, and would, and often commented that “I was here in the trenches with Linda trying to make one school work” (11/14/98). Darcy Jacobs described Jackie and Linda as “can do” people and admired their tenacity and perseverance. She said that “they still wanted to hold it so close . . . but, it’s not private school, it’s a public school, and that’s where you have to be able to let go of it a little bit . . . You have to have processes in place, and you can have buy-in . . . it’s not just one persons’” (12/10/98). NSU continued to pressure Jackie to leave, both in her capacity as board member and de-facto school leader, and simultaneously requested that the Community School hire a principal, even though that was not part of the original philosophy or organizational structure of the school.

Financial Problems

The parents who founded the Community School had envisioned a small, slow growing school. This proved financially unfeasible. Even before becoming a charter, debts were growing from lack of tuition payment. After becoming a charter, the per-pupil allocation for such a small number of students couldn’t cover expenses. Darcy Jacobs, a board member, commented:

The hard part about a charter school is that there's only so much money, you have a smaller group than you do in a huge public school system. And you don't have money for buildings, so it becomes very difficult in some ways to stretch that dollar. You get very creative, but there are economies of scale, and you need to get to a certain number of students before it really makes financial sense, common sense. (12/10/98)

According to Jacobs, as the debt grew, the board became more and more frustrated with the operation and management of the school, leading to "major blow-ups" (12/10/98). In addition, Jacobs claimed that school staff spent money without a great deal of consideration for the budget. Linda Carver stated: "I didn't do anything with the budget except spend the money. I mean, I bought, I ordered materials, I ordered materials, met with book publishers" (Carver; 6/23/98). Purchases made by Carver and other teachers increased the financial strain of the school.

Like the difficulty with teacher turnover, financial solvency is another problem common to new charter schools. Jay Bradley noted that "a lot of people starting charter schools . . . don't necessarily have the financial background that it takes to run the business side of the school" (12/8/98). The Community School was no exception. In the first year, the Community School went over budget, and operated with a \$30,000 deficit. The next year, the school again went over budget, and the deficit grew to approximately \$80,000. As part of a deficit reduction plan, Jackie Benjamin offered to loan the school \$90,000 and became the school's "line of credit". Benjamin and the board were under the impression that this plan was approved by the state. However, later that year NSU was audited the State Attorney General's office, and Benjamin's role in financing the Community school was found to be inappropriate. NSU responded by putting the

Community School on probation and told Jackie that she could no longer be on the board as well as loan the school money.

According to State law, schools are required to be solvent and can be sanctioned for operating with a deficit (Funke; 3/24/99). Up until the point at which the Community Schools finances became public, NSU had delegated authority closer and closer to the school. Neither the state or authorizer had created any kind of effectual regulatory environment, permitting Jackie and Linda to run the school however they wished. Under pressure from the state, NSU needed to take action, and assert some agency. Jackie and Linda's sole authority was challenged for the first time in the history of the Community School.

A Solution?

The Community School's shaky finances were the final blow, and NSU was ready to revoke the Community School charter. Under multiple pressures, Jackie resigned from the board. Jackie felt that both NSU and the Community School board had wronged her, and that they had taken something away from her. She said: "I was willing to take the responsibility for the deficit, for running the school, for whatever happened, I was willing to be accountable, if that's the word you wanta use . . . For whatever flack was going on, for whatever... even if it wasn't our fault" (11/14/98). After Benjamin's resignation from the board, NSU asked the Community School to contract with a management company to help the school eliminate its deficit. According to Cindy Funke, management companies may loan schools money, and Jay Bradley noted that many schools are turning to management companies to bring in capital. With Linda the only returning faculty

member, and no official leadership structure in place, the board agreed to allow Jackie to remain involved in an administrative capacity, until a management company was found.

Jackie and the board hired two new teachers for the 1997-8 school year -- Melissa Fisher and Terry Brenner. In spite of the fact that Jackie claimed that her largest difficulty was finding applicants with experience in working from the Community School philosophy, she noted that "we were just in such a hurry to hire somebody because of timing" (11/14/98). Finding few applicants from which to choose, Jackie revised her criteria for what kind of applicant would work the best in the Community School:

In some ways we felt like those who didn't have experience worked out better than those who did because they weren't already cynical about the system. They weren't, they still had their ideals about philosophy and were really eager to learn and pitch in and work hard which was required because this was a lot of work. I mean, any start up venture is a lot of work . . . But in all cases, those who did not last had had previous experience in more structured systems and this was too chaotic for them. (11/14/98)

Jackie, although almost solely responsible for the choice of faculty, was not necessarily pleased with whom she chose. Melissa had been teaching sixth grade English as a Second Language for 2 1/2 years in Texas, before being hired to teach the 1-2-3 multi-age class at the Community School. Terry, although she had volunteered at religious schools for a number of years, went back to receive her teaching certificate after her children were grown and her position as a K-1 teacher at the Community School was her first public teaching assignment. Jackie described Melissa as a bad philosophical match: "she was much more used to command and control and hierarchy and people doing this much work and that's all" (11/14/98). Terry on the other hand, while inexperienced, was more what Jackie had been looking for. While Jackie may not have been pleased with the teachers

she ultimately hired, she was determined to hire teachers before the board contracted with the Management Company.

History of the Community School, Part II: More Agents, Changing Roles and Responsibilities, Many Expectations

In August 1997, the Community School Board decided to contract with the Jaffe Partnership. Benjamin was not pleased with the use of a management company, and said, “I still think that somebody could have convinced NSU that we coulda done it differently because there are schools that are still independent, that are running just like we were, that was a board, parents and staff that were working together to make it work. But they weren’t in a deficit so nobody bothered them” (11/14/98). In spite (or perhaps because) of Jackie’s reservations, the Jaffe Partnership was invited to bail the community school out of its financial hole. The teachers, hired by Jackie, became employees of the Jaffe Partnership once the management agreement was signed. Neither Terry nor Melissa knew that they were to become employees of the Jaffe Partnership⁷.

Agent #5: The Jaffe Partnership

The Jaffe Partnership was a private, for-profit corporation that was designed to provide financial and human resources to Michigan charter schools. Unlike the Essential Traditions School network, which launched schools, the Jaffe Partnership contracted with schools that were already in operation, and could not mobilize the technical resources to stay afloat. The Community School’s contract with the Jaffe Partnership was quite specific. Among the items included in the Management Agreement between the Jaffe Partnership, and the Community School Board were:

- The Jaffe Partnership will be responsible, and accountable to the Community School board for the administration, operation and financial, as well as the academic performance of the schools' students.
- The educational program at the Community School may be modified by the Jaffe Partnership within the parameters of the charter.
- The Jaffe Partnership will be responsible for the implementation and administration of the educational program, including the selection and acquisition of instructional materials, equipment and supplies. However, all costs incurred in the provision of the educational program, including salaries, materials, textbooks, building maintenance, and capital improvements, must be paid for with Community School funds.
- The Jaffe Partnership will be responsible for the administration of all personnel functions, including professional development activities and determining staffing levels. This includes, selecting, assigning, evaluating, and disciplining personnel at the school. The Jaffe Partnership shall also determine whether staff are employees of the board or the Jaffe Partnership.
- The Jaffe Partnership will have the authority to select and supervise a school administrator, who will in turn have the authority to hold accountable the school staff.
- The Jaffe Partnership is responsible for the operation of the school building, and the business administration of the school.
- The Jaffe Partnership shall own all proprietary rights to instructional materials, training materials, curricula and lesson plans, as well as any other materials created by employees of the school. (Management Agreement, August 1997)

For the services provided by the Jaffe Partnership, the Community School agreed to pay them 10% of their per pupil expenditures.

The Jaffe Partnership was hired by the board as a kind of accountability intervention. In effect, the Community School board signed over all formal authority and agency to the management company. According to the management agreement, the Jaffe Partnership had the authority to choose and train staff, change educational programs, structure the school administration, and own all products created by the school. In many ways it seems contradictory to note that the management agreement read that the Jaffe Partnership was responsible and accountable to the board, when they had more decision-making authority than the board.

The board's contract with Jaffe in effect introduced a new agent, with an alternate accountability framework. During the 1997-8 school year, there was a bona-fide power struggle between a number of agents who each claimed to have ultimate authority in the school. Jackie, in her position as founder, interim director, and funder of the Community School refused to relinquish ideological control over the school. Linda, as a de-facto leader had immersed herself in the day-to day operation of the Community School, and had invested a great deal of time and energy into keeping the school afloat. She too refused to give up control or her attachment to the school mission. Finally, the Jaffe Partnership, by virtue of their management agreement with the board, was responsible for all school functions, and making a profit

School Board: Changing Roles and Responsibilities

Under the new partnership with Jaffe, the role, responsibility, and authority of the school board was unclear. The Jaffe Partnership's responsibility was "managing the physical plant [and] finances, all of it. Pay the bills. Pay the rent. Pay the salaries. Find the people, hire the people. Approve every, you know, everything that goes with the human end of it" (Kay; 7/28/98). While Jaffe's roles and responsibilities were quite clear, the relationship between the board and the partnership was quite fuzzy:

Board of directors hired the Jaffe Partnership to manage. Manage the physical plant, hire employees, fire and lay off employees for that matter, and so really, they are, they have the governing power over all matters of the school . . . The board said look, we do not want to micro manage. You make your determination and we will okay it. We will, you know, you put up your school improvement plan report for us and we will vote to approve or not approve. So we don't wanta micro manage but as a governing body, they okay it. (Kay; 7/28/98)

On the one hand, the Jaffe Partnership agreed to be responsible to the board, but at the same time, the board delegated nearly all decision-making authority to the partnership.

A Jaffe employee commented that believed that “it is, it is the school with the school leader and staff in, in concert with the Jaffe Partnership that make the decisions,” but many staff members felt that the Jaffe Partnership had assumed control over all school functions (Kay; 6/29/98). Melissa commented:

The Jaffe Partnership, pretty much told the school board what was going on and the school board, . . . it was mostly, oh, okay. That sounds like a good suggestion, you know. We're glad you did the work for us so we'll just kinda do what you say . . . the parents that tried to speak at board meetings, I don't think the Jaffe Partnership was receptive to anything they said . . . The school board almost took a cue from the Jaffe Partnership, or maybe it was the Jaffe Partnership taking a cue from the school board. I can't tell you. But they would listen to the parents and the meetings I was at were somewhat condescending to the parents . . . the school board would defend the Jaffe Partnership and the decisions without really listening to the parents. (Fisher; 8/11/98)

According to Jackie, after her official departure, the Board accomplished very little, other than to implement decisions handed down by the Jaffe Partnership. Melissa Fisher concurred stating that the board “listens mainly to Jaffe, and does what Jaffe recommends” (Interview I Response). It was unclear to the staff who was actually “in charge” and who had ultimate authority.

The Community School Board had previously been highly involved in the daily operations of the school, however, after contracting with the Jaffe Partnership, the board took a more passive role, simply holding meetings, and no longer being involved with teachers and daily school practices. Jackie and the teachers were dissatisfied with the board's new role. Melissa commented on how she wished the board had operated: “[I want them to] have a brain of their own. Visit the school. Listen to the teachers and

parents (we're small enough), and I mean truly listen. They need to be involved, and if they're too busy, then vacate their seat and let someone with more energy and initiative sit on the board" (Interview I; Response). While the board had once rubber-stamped whatever decisions Jackie and Linda made, now they did the same for the Jaffe Partnership.

School Leadership and Administration: Changing Roles and Responsibilities

The Jaffe Partnership operated from an office located about one hour away from the Community School. This office housed the central administration of the Partnership. Structurally, the Jaffe Partnership looked like a traditional business hierarchy. In addition to a Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer, and Chief Financial Officer, the Jaffe Partnership employed personnel to handle human resources and a support staff who were supposed to provide services for Jaffe managed schools (i.e., grant-writing, marketing, curriculum). Lastly Jaffe employed site coordinators who were responsible for maintaining direct relationships with the schools. The Community School site coordinator was to be a liaison between school personnel, the board, and the Jaffe Partnership. According to the management agreement, all communications and requests for resources that came from the Community School faculty were to be directed to the site coordinator. Thus, once the Jaffe Partnership began to manage the Community School, roles and responsibilities shifted.

As per the management agreement, Jaffe assumed control of personnel decisions and budgetary concerns. Jackie, Linda, and the rest of the faculty had less decision-making power than in previous years. Terry commented that "I think the board and Jaffe made all of the decisions" (6/30/98). The Jaffe Partnership immediately impinged upon

the roles that Jackie and Linda had assumed in the school, which proved to be the source of much conflict. Darcy Jacobs commented:

Whenever you take someone's responsibilities, and say no, you're not gonna do that, just concentrate on this, there's always a certain part of you that says, well why not? You know, I can still do that. Don't do that to me. So [Jaffe was] seen as this big bad enemy that came in the door, and that's not in any way really what they did. The things that they put in place were, were very basic to running a business. (12/10/98)

Jackie and Linda both claimed that their problems with the Jaffe partnership had little to do with their loss of control over the school. Instead, they claimed that their problems with hiring a management company had more to do with the corporation's management style.

The hierarchical structure of the Jaffe Partnership was an abrupt departure from the collaborative administration set up by Jackie and Linda. Linda commented:

...the levels of bureaucracy that had been put into place, these people who removed themselves higher and higher so you can get to them less and less. It's no longer the way it was. It might as well be the same as everything else. I mean, to me, it's, you know, don't flush the toilet till you check with the next person and make sure that person's checked with the next. I mean, there's all this hierarchy. That doesn't fit with my style. I don't think it's necessary. There's levels and levels and levels of it. (Carver; 6/23/98)

Jaffe's management agreement with the Community School was quite clear in delineating the responsibilities of the Partnership, as well as the operational procedures of the corporate bureaucracy. However, the Community School staff was not prepared for new organizational structures, and Jaffe's hierarchy was not designed to accommodate the Community School's previously established collaborative leadership.

The Jaffe Partnership represented a direct threat to Jackie and Linda's assumed authority in the Community School. In many ways it appeared as though once the Jaffe

Partnership came on board, Jackie and Linda lost their authority for managing the school, and conceded responsibility for the program. Some teachers, and Jaffe representatives, felt that Jackie was trying to undermine the management authority of the Jaffe Partnership. It is unclear just how much of Jackie's behavior with respect to the Jaffe Partnership can be attributed to rumor, but what is clear is that Linda, along with Jackie perpetuated an environment of fear and paranoia over the Jaffe Partnership assuming management of the Community School. Melissa commented that the Jaffe Partnership "kept Linda in a tizzy" (8/11/98), and Terry remembered that,

the basic feeling was that Jaffe is gonna take us over. They're gonna start telling us what to do. And we don't need anybody telling us what to do. So there was like a sense of fear almost . . . that a dictator was gonna come in and start telling us what to do and we wouldn't be able to freely do our best at what we did best . . . I just know that Linda just kept saying to us, you know, just watch. They're gonna start telling us what to do. (Brenner; 6/30/98)

Melissa Fisher recalled that Jackie put a great deal of pressure on both board members and representatives from the Jaffe Partnership, creating a great deal of tension in the school. Jackie's negative attitude eventually led the board to fall apart:

I don't know if it was a matter of pride or a fear that the dream was going to be lost or what, but [Jackie] really had a problem and some of the notes that she wrote to the board are the reason that we lost board members. And they blatantly said that's why. They can't handle the pressure. And she was really putting pressure on them. I think she created tension from both groups to her. Not necessarily to each other and maybe from both groups toward the school (Fisher; 8/11/98)

While Jackie believed that she was trying to "save her school," others perceived her actions as undermining the efforts of the board and Jaffe to help the school. Melissa Fisher commented that while Jackie was in her position as interim director, the teachers felt as though she was not being fully honest with them about the Jaffe Partnership: "And

just because we're so small, Jaffe sometimes had direct contact with us and we would find out that things were not being shared through her. That she was almost in a way blocking a lot of communication" (6/3/98). While Jackie and Linda were desperately attempting to maintain the school that they had created, they were less and less able to command it.

While Jackie and Linda still believed strongly in their original mission and ideals, they seemed unwilling to take responsibility for any aspect of the Community School program, unless they were holding the reins. For example, according to Benjamin, the Jaffe Partnership made numerous promises that they did not keep, including: conducting weekly meetings with the teacher, sending out regular parent newsletters, organizing family, student, board and volunteer orientations, developing school opening and closing procedures, writing a student handbook, organizing a parent-teacher organization, providing facilities maintenance, and providing High/Scope training for teachers. Many of these activities should have fallen on the shoulders of the school staff, not the management company, but neither Jackie nor Linda wanted "help" the partnership succeed. Jackie felt as though the Jaffe Partnership began "treating the employees like dirt" (11/14/98), and didn't follow through on any of the policies and procedures that had been in place prior to their coming on to the scene, including providing fiscal information to the board, and settling debts.

Linda described Jaffe's organization as causing conflict and separation, and that they "eroded what we had rather than capitalizing on who we were" (Carver; 8/11/98). This feeling that Jaffe had fundamentally changed the school ultimately can be traced back to the entrance of new authorities into the school. Linda described:

[The] site coordinator blows in at random [and he's] there basically to make sure the walls are up and that no one's, you know, hissing at one another . . . you're basically notified that this is the guy that's in charge . . . we always had to-do lists and you signed up for what you could do and it always was dispersed and it always got done . . . One way or the other, it was done and we didn't need someone, you know, we didn't need Hitler over us . . . With a whip. (Carver; 8/11/98)

The greatest changes that were made in the Community School related to the administrative organization. While these changes did impact the educational program, what Jackie and Linda seemed to contest the most was the introduction of new leadership and authority into the school. The changes in school leadership and administration that accompanied the Jaffe Partnership's management of the Community School impacted participants roles, responsibilities, and attitudes towards the school, influencing the school climate. These changes contributed to the school closing its doors.

Enter Agent # 6: Jaffe School Leaders

After the Community School contracted with the Jaffe Partnership, Jackie Benjamin still attempted to maintain a high level of involvement in the school. Before the Jaffe Partnership was involved with the Community School, the school budget couldn't accommodate a school administrator. Jackie acted as "interim director", she making lists of things that needed to be done with the school, prioritizing projects, and outlining the mission of the school for the corporation representatives. In spite of Jackie's attempts to stay in the loop of what was happening, the Jaffe Partnership did not keep her as involved as she would have liked:

I kept trying to have a weekly meeting with the teachers and getting a little memo sheet every week about what I knew what was going on. But . . . they wouldn't share anything with me. They wouldn't follow up on anything they told me they'd follow up on and so I finally said to the staff . . . I don't know what's going on here but obviously I'm not able to get anything done. (11/14/98)

As Jackie fell more and more out of the official loop, she became more determined to remain involved in the school, but was less able to influence the day-to-day happenings. While Jackie may not have had any official authority in the school, her mission and vision lived on through Linda. Linda attempted to operate and run the school as she and Jackie had before the Jaffe Partnership came into the picture taking responsibility for all the duties of an administrator as well as a teacher, and instructional leader to the staff.

The Jaffe Partnership saw the lack of an additional school leader at the Community School as a problem. In November, after four board members resigned, the Jaffe Partnership and board asked Jackie to step down from her position as interim director. Jackie, feeling that the remaining board members had been "brainwashed" by Jaffe, was not pleased when she was asked to leave and was reluctant to do so. She commented, "And they told me that I had to leave and I'm going leave? You know, I've never been employed here. You know, I've been a volunteer. You're operating on my money. I'm not going anywhere. Sorry, you know. This is my money. I have to manage my investment. This is my retirement you're dealing with, you know" (Benjamin; 11/14/98). After Jackie was removed as interim director, the Jaffe Partnership hired two different school leaders.

The first school leader was already the principal of another Jaffe managed school and was placed in the Community School as a second site in which to work. Although he

was well liked by the Community School faculty, this first school leader was rarely on site, and found that he could not divide his time between two schools and he chose to step down as Community School Leader. After the first school leader stepped down, the Community School faculty claim that Jaffe Partnership representatives offered to let the school go on for the rest of the year without a school leader, operating as they had before contracting with the Partnership. The teachers said that they did not want another school leader, they had been through too much change and transition over the previous months.

In spite of the teachers' protests, in January the Jaffe Partnership introduced Beth Kay to the board. Beth had been a teacher at another Jaffe Partnership school, and although she had no administrative experience, Jaffe felt that she could "unravel a real sour morale situation" (Kay; 6/29/98). While the teachers believed that their wishes to not hire another school leader were being honored by the Jaffe Partnership, they didn't realize that the board wanted Jaffe to install another school leader. Darcy Jacobs remembered when the board made the final decision to hire Beth: "We welcomed it. Once we met her, and checked her credentials, and all those other good things, the board said, yes, we will have her here" (12/10/98). Without teacher input, or fully disclosing the tumultuous history of the Community School to Beth, the board and Jaffe hired Beth to take over the position of school leader.

The Jaffe Partnership installed Beth as the leader of the Community School without consulting or warning the teachers. Terry Brenner remembered the circumstances surrounding Beth's first day at the Community School:

We got a fax about 10:00 in the morning, saying Beth Kay, our new school principal, will be on site that day. [The site coordinator], would be bringing our new principal to introduce us and we should plan on a staff meeting at noon to meet Beth Kay . . . So we got the fax at 10:00 in the morning . . . We had no time for the staff to talk. I get a break at 12:00. I come over here and [the site coordinator is] here. And he said Beth Kay is coming and I said no, she's not. I said we were told that we didn't have to have a principal and we don't want a principal. And he said that he did not know about that. He told us that he, he was like confused. What do you mean [the CEO] said you didn't have to have a principal? (Brenner; 5/28/98)

The staff mistrusted Beth Kay, as a Jaffe Partnership representative. According to Jackie, Community School faculty had not had good experiences with other Jaffe personnel. The teachers reported to Jackie that the Jaffe leadership that was sent in did not work with the teachers as part of a team, but instead provided directives. Jackie said that all of the Jaffe personnel made “ the staff feel uncomfortable because they felt like they were being watched” (Benjamin; 11/14/98). The teachers at the school believed that Beth was there not to help, but to change them, and impose new structures and hierarchies on the Community School.

While the Community School teachers were kept in the dark regarding Beth's arrival at the school, Beth was equally unaware of the situation which she was entering:

The staff told me, but not 'til after I was there for a couple weeks that the Jaffe Partnership had come to them and asked them if they wanted to, if they realized that, realizing you guys have been through an awful lot of change this year and it's been hard. How would you feel about a new school leader or would you rather take it on your own 'til the end of the school year? And to a one, they agreed no more school leaders. We'll do it on our own. And then the Jaffe Partnership went ahead anyway. That is how they told me. The Jaffe Partnership didn't tell me that but I, I believe it's true. And so when I arrived, I found out not only was it a horrible mess, but I was unwanted and I was, they gave me a pretty rough time . . . They were cordial. But they were, they were, they were hostile. They didn't want me. I mean, they were cordial but cold . . . I literally came into a place where there wasn't a place for me to sit down and where I was under a microscope. (Kay; 6/29/98)

Although Beth entered under difficult circumstances, she remained at the Community School for the rest of the year. Beth attempted to be a school leader, but never really felt comfortable asserting her authority: "I was the person who knew the least. So the least, so the person who knows the least shouldn't come in, in my opinion, and be barking orders" (Kay; 6/29/98). Rather than functioning as an instructional leader, Beth ended up providing administrative support to the Community School and it's staff.

Continuing Financial Issues

The primary reason that the Community School board contracted with the Jaffe Partnership was for the purpose of bringing the school out of debt. This fiscal responsibility and control was necessary, because as Darcy Jacobs noted, "the staff spent money with a great deal of disregard for what they were doing, we felt, and that was one of the ways to bring that in" (Jacobs; 12/10/98). Even though the Jaffe Partnership had financial authority in the school, before they had installed a school leader, there was no one on site to keep track of the financial decisions made by either Jackie or Linda.

Just prior to the management agreement with Jaffe, Jackie hired five teacher's aides. More concerned with keeping the student to teacher ratio low than absolving the Community School of its debt, Jackie felt that it was appropriate to hire such a large support staff with only 38 enrolled students. These aides were soon fired by the Jaffe Partnership. Terry Brenner commented:

Jackie went ahead and . . . hired teacher aides because she knew the classes, she knew what the enrollment was. She knew I had more than 15 students in my classroom. But then we were like two or three weeks into the school year and Jaffe was totally unaware that we had teacher aides on site every day. So they had no intention of hiring teacher aides. They had no intention of sticking to the philosophy of the school. But they were doing their job to try to get us out of debt and manage numbers. (Brenner; 8/20/98)

This tension between preserving the integrity of the program and creating fiscal solvency at the Community School continued throughout the school year.

The Jaffe Partnership froze the Community School budget approving no new expenses, whether it was for teacher training, classroom materials, or any other kind of instructional support. Benjamin, while still operating as interim director, told the staff: "They took the checkbook away and so you're just gonna have to live with that . . ." (11/14/98). In assuming budgeting and purchasing controls, the Jaffe Partnership no longer permitted teachers to be reimbursed for school-related expenses without clearing the expense through the Jaffe Partnership first. Beth Kay described the procedure:

If a teacher had some materials or something that they wanted to purchase, they wrote out a request. I would okay it or not and send it along to the finance director at the Jaffe Partnership. And they would do a purchase order, order the materials, they would be shipped to the school, the bill sent to the Jaffe Partnership . . . Teachers could also write out a request for a direct check which would be, say they had been, they had taken the van and purchased gas. Then they would bring the receipt and request a check for that. (Kay; 7/28/98)

While the Jaffe Partnership's freezing of the school budget, and curbing expenses stemmed from a need to save money, the faculty felt that Jaffe's decisions represented a shift in priorities -- from education to profit.

According to Darcy Jacobs, Linda Carver, in rebellion, continued to pay for those school-related expenses she felt were necessary to the operation of the school, whether they had been approved by the Partnership or not. Linda stated that:

before we were, we were given the, not an open rein with the budget but if we saw justification and needed something, you know, within reason, you know, we could, we could purchase it. And now it was, [Jaffe] pulled the purse strings tight, and they deemed what was necessary which was nothing. And you know, if they didn't think it was important, regardless of how the teachers felt we didn't get it. So it was this total flip of them calling the shots for the classroom and they were never in the classroom" (Carver; 8/11/98).

Since Linda never sought approval for most of her expenses, any of the bills that she incurred were not paid by the Jaffe Partnership. Linda was furious when she discovered that her bills were not being paid, and claims that as a result her credit had been "trashed" (6/23/98). Linda's rebellion and refusal to accept Jaffe's budget administration and rules was her method of maintaining her own educational priorities, even at the expense of her personal finances.

The financial decisions made by the Jaffe Partnership were nearly always sound business decisions, but they did not necessarily take into account the educational mission of the school. Darcy Jacobs felt that Jackie and Linda took business decisions personally which prevented them from seeing the benefits of those decisions to the school. While the board felt that they were "fighting for the survival of the school", Jackie and Linda felt that they were destroying it (12/10/98).

The Community School's new agents, authorities, and representatives created a divisive environment at the school. Whereas the Community School could have once been characterized as a cohesive community of value, the school now consisted of constituencies at odds with one another. Jackie, seeing her "investment" moving further and further out of her control and away from her philosophy, continued to try to assert influence and authority in whatever way she could. Jackie's investment was both monetary and ideological. Linda, seeing the empowerment she had felt in her authority slipping away, chose to ignore new structures being put into place and created a "fearful" environment. Linda invested solely in a philosophical crusade. But the Jaffe Partnership was only concerned with a financial investment. The Jaffe Partnership, under a new accountability framework, continued to assert the authority granted by the management agreement, but wrongfully assumed that the agreement was enough to convince the Community School staff of their authority. The Jaffe Partnership attempted to create agents without taking into consideration the previous agents and frameworks were still in operation. The result was a war between new and old agents and frameworks.

Market Influences: Changing Roles for Parents/Community

The Jaffe Partnership's influence on the Community School was primarily manifested in their financial decisions. In their attempts to absolve the Community School of debt and achieve fiscal viability, the Jaffe Partnership made numerous changes to the school program and operational procedures. One of the most influential and controversial efforts that Jaffe made was an attempt to raise student enrollment.

When the Community School was founded, there was a small and homogenous community of parents. As Jackie and Linda assumed control of the school, they

perpetuated those values, even as the parental community began to change. With these demographic changes came demands to change the educational program. Parental demands on the Community School were primarily requests to make the school look more traditional (i.e., a principal and traditional homework). In the early days of the Community School, when enrollments were not of great concern, the program, and High/Scope philosophy took precedence over parental satisfaction. Linda commented:

So parents wanted to see more paper pencil work but that was not the philosophy of the school. So there was constantly this difference of opinion . . . as I realized that our school truly is based on this philosophy, it was okay to stand up for it, I would say to parents, well, you know, basically you chose this school and this is what we represent. And therefore, you know, if this doesn't work for you, oh, well. I mean, I didn't say that . . . But you know, I began to, to stand behind the program rather than constantly being a chameleon to parents, to... I didn't try to appease the parents at the expense of the program. (Carver; 10/14/98)

When the Community School paid little attention to market accountability mechanisms, there was little concern over whether or not parents were happy with the educational product they were delivering. Melissa Fisher commented that she thought parents did not have much input into the program or operations of the Community School. She did note, however, that parents did remove their children from the school when they were dissatisfied (Fisher; 8/11/98). Linda and Jackie saw no problem with parents leaving when they were dissatisfied with the program. After the Jaffe Partnership came into the picture, however, the market became a much greater influence on the program.

Terry Brenner noted that Jaffe wanted to raise student enrollment, telling teachers that the Community School needed "a bigger school population to be able to survive. Its the old mom and pop shop . . . you gotta stay competitive. You know, you gotta have 200 kids" (Brenner; 5/28/98). When Jaffe attempted to raise student enrollment, they paid

little attention to cultivating a community of value surrounding the Community School.

As a result, the newer Community School parents had little in common:

There's a few parents who choose it because um, they're, their child hasn't achieved in another setting and they think something different is gonna help them. Or he's been identified or recommended for special ed services. They don't want their child to have that label so they pull them from the system and go to another school. Some it's just a matter of convenience. (Brenner; 5/28/98)

The growing Community School population looked far different from the small group that had founded the school. The new Community School parents were not running to the school's philosophical mission, but running from other schools. The more diverse the school population became, the more demands Jaffe tried to meet.

Jaffe's effort to raise enrollment was in direct conflict with, and therefore a threat to the program espoused by both Jackie and Linda. Terry commented:

[Jaffe was] really focused on numbers and there seemed to be a conflict because my understanding was that, you know, we'd have small class sizes. We were expected to do individualized instruction so it was kind of like I had these expectations from the board and Jackie to, to implement this kind of program and yet there was this conflict with Jaffe where Jaffe was just packing the bodies in there. (Brenner; 8/20/98)

The Jaffe Partnership made it clear to teachers that the school enrollment needed to rise and that individual teachers were expected to be responsive to parental demands: "I think we, as teachers, have just had to accommodate [parents] for financial reasons" (Brenner; 5/28/98). Linda also claims that Jaffe placed more expectations on teachers regarding parent satisfaction:

You know, do the, go the extra mile to keep the parents happy even if it meant, you know, keeping their kid an extra hour after school because mom had a doctor's appointment or, you know, accommodating, hidden accommodations in order to keep students. They were a commodity. So in order to keep them, the parents, the public really held the reins . . . there were a lot of hidden expectations in terms of social obligations in order to maintain your student count. (Carver 8/11/98)

Parents who chose to send their children to the Community School and were unknowledgable about the program, proved problematic for the teachers. Terry Brenner stated:

You know, we're off on something new but it's not necessarily the parents' concept or the parents' experience of what school was. And so to them, it's like well, this isn't serious enough. Or they're not learning enough. Or we need more . . . I just feel why can't we just have our program and people come to us because that's what they want? (5/28/98)

The Community School program was rapidly getting lost in the quest for student bodies, and the money they brought to the school.

The cohesive parent community that launched the Community school dissipated over the three years that the school was public. In a charter school, parent satisfaction is one of the main indicators of school success. Without satisfied parents, Jaffe couldn't maintain financial solvency and see the Community school as a successful enterprise. While the school was small and homogeneous, the Community School faculty encouraged parents to exercise their "exit" option, when dissatisfied. Once the parent community no longer had the same vision as the board, Linda, or Jackie, Jaffe made all attempts to satisfy their new needs and wants. One could say, that Jaffe no longer accepted "exit" as a suitable means of communicating discontent. Instead, Jaffe began encouraging and embracing parental "voice".

Many (Unclear) Expectations

When Jackie and Linda had provided the sole guidance for teachers, expectations regarding curriculum and assessment as well as teacher roles and responsibilities were unclear. The introduction of new agents (Jaffe Partnership, Beth Kay, and parents), managed to confuse matters more. Terry Brenner described how she understood her role in the Community School:

1) The board expected professional, community, and parent relationships;
2) Jackie (school leader) expected commitment to philosophical ideas of the school and High/Scope curriculum; 3) Co-Worker Linda expected personal attributes of flexibility and handling lots of roles at the same time, the ability to jump in and handle what needs to be done, ability to handle class. I felt equally responsible to all three sets of expectations for me. (Brenner; Interview 2 response)

Terry described an allegiance to multiple agents and no clear explanation of how she could meet all of their demands simultaneously. In most cases, teachers were left to determine just how they would be able to manage the multiple demands placed upon them.

Curriculum and Assessment

The Jaffe Partnership did not attempt to change the Community School educational program directly. However, through freezing the budget, changing levels of staffing, and emphasizing the importance of standardized tests, the partnership impacted both curriculum and assessment at the Community School. This created additional demands and expectations on teachers.

First, the Community School teachers were given little guidance as to how to follow the High/Scope philosophy in their classrooms. Melissa Fisher remembered that

when she was interviewed, Jackie, Linda, and the board simply told her that the Community School was a High/Scope school:

Jackie, the board, and Linda all told me [what was expected of me]. When I responded with "hands on learning" I was told that I was right. I was led to believe that we had many self-motivated, hard working students (at the interviews). Then I found out that we weren't High Scope accredited, and I felt like it was false advertising. (Fisher; Interview I Response)

She also noted that "meetings have been, regarding daily activities and staff development, as a staff, non-existent" (Interview I Response). According to Melissa, there were also no professional development opportunities offered for teachers, including High/Scope training (6/3/98). Both Linda and Terry concurred with Melissa, repeatedly commenting that there was no training provided to teachers. Carver said: "Jaffe did no in services for the teachers this year. Spent no money on training" (Carver; 6/23/98). Terry recalled when she was hired: "So this is my first year here so it's like we, we use the high scope method so that's what we expect you to do. But it's not like we're gonna send you for training or anything. But here's some printed materials you can read through" (5/28/98). Unclear expectations and no training or help to guide new and incoming teachers was not a kind of autonomy, but a constraint.

In addition to the lack of explicit directives, Linda Carver claimed that Jaffe's management and organizational structure changed her job as a teacher and contributed to the degradation of the school program:

I was encouraged to follow more of a, of a set, predictable state mandated curriculum as opposed to following what the children wanted to learn . . . [Jaffe] wanted more accountability in terms of like the MEAP testing and California Assessment, California Achievement Test. They wanted field trips limited so that you were forced to stay in the classroom. Made it harder for you to do the things that allowed you to connect to the community . . . they tried to intimidate you, to like really, really question the program to the point where you'd think geez, am I really doing this right? (Carver; 10/14/98).

Most of the changes that Jaffe made were financially motivated, which impacted the mission of the school. For example, the limits on field trips were an attempt to cut costs, and standardized student assessments were both a marketing tool, and monitoring mechanism. Testing was seen as a way to increase the student population. While Linda perceived Jaffe's management as an attempt to "rein her in," and change the school, Jaffe perceived their decisions as beneficial to the school.

While the State did collect MEAP scores, teachers at the school did not necessarily see student performance on the tests as an evaluation of their school or program. Linda Carver commented that standardized tests were "a contrived situation [and] our school doesn't use the MEAP as a real measure of success . . . we don't get real bent out of shape about the MEAP scores" (6/23/98). Even though the Community School participants placed a higher premium on qualitative measures of student achievement than quantitative testing, the Jaffe Partnership included testing as part of the Community School educational program. The Jaffe Partnership required that Community School teachers administer both the CTBS and Terra Nova standardized tests. The teachers at the school all commented that they didn't approve of the new testing policy, which again created tension between the Partnership and teachers. Terry noted:

When Jaffe came in and said we're gonna do pre and post testing, it was kinda like this: 'You're gonna what? You're gonna make us what?' You know, it's like... then all of sudden, it was a us and them. You are gonna make us do what? You know. So it set up that, that conflict. (Brenner; 5/28/98)

In addition to the standardized tests required by Jaffe, the Community School teachers continued to make use of anecdotal notes and portfolios as student assessment tools, but there were few guidelines provided as to how to keep these kinds of qualitative records. Report cards were supposed to be narrative, but some teachers, like Melissa used "checklists" as well.

The faculty and board of the Community School never did resolve their philosophical conflicts surrounding standards and testing. Benjamin remembered that the board had considered using standardized tests as an additional assessment tool: "we thought because the world is so quantitative and they don't really care about qualitative, then we'll give them something quantitative at least to look at" (11/14/98). Darcy Jacobs commented that,

Our school philosophies didn't really support standardized testing. And really it was tough staying in that way at all. However . . . much as I personally don't even like standardized tests, the thing that I felt was that it allowed us to have something tangible as an accountability system that we as a school could show those to the world . . . and I felt that this was something I didn't want to do it, I don't like to do it, but we have to do it, because there has to be some way. Anecdotal records are great, but that's not something that, you can't print it in the paper, people can't relate to that. (12/10/98)

Finding a balance between "authentic assessments" and state curriculum and testing requirements proved to be a struggle for the duration of the Community School's operation. With so few students taking state standardized tests, the data sample was too small to draw State attention to the Community School's students' progress, and no one

was ready to take responsibility for quantifying student achievement. For marketing purposes, the Jaffe Partnership did want to see student test scores rise, even in the face of teacher skepticism. Melissa Fisher commented: "I do think that [the Jaffe Partnership] really expects the kids to do well on standardized testing or whatever and of course, they wanta show an improvement. Honest to goodness, I don't really give a rip roar one way or the other if they want the kids to show an improvement on the standardized testing" (6/3/98). The layering of curricular expectations, and tension between valid and invalid outcome measures contributed to the muddled state of affairs at the Community School.

Teacher Roles and Responsibilities

There was little structure or guidance for teacher behavior in the Community School. Both Terry and Melissa noted that they were unprepared for the jumbled delineation of roles and responsibilities at the Community School, especially the expectation that they be involved in administrative and janitorial activities. Laura Silber, in her capacity as an aide, said: "[the faculty] kinda floated, so all our strengths would kind of rub off on the different areas . . . every half hour I was a completely different person, doing a completely different job" (12/24/98). Beth also commented that "I think the roles were very blurred . . . Sometimes it was difficult" (Kay; 7/28/98). These multiple, unclear expectations proved to be quite burdensome to the teachers at the Community School.

Both Melissa and Terry commented that they were hired to be teachers, and that many of the things that they were asked to do "weren't their job". Melissa said:

I finally decided just to say forget it. I'm gonna break free of all of this and do what I think I need to do instead of trying to meet their expectations and the school's philosophy and do this and do that and . . . I mean, the administrative stuff, the secretarial stuff, the whatever else was going on . . . I thought I just need to shake those chains off and zero in on a few key concepts. And as we go with that, then progress because I was feeling myself get mired down and become stagnated and not being effective at all. (7/11/98)

Terry Brenner similarly commented:

And if I spent every night at school for a week doing office work, then that's gonna affect my performance in the classroom and I'm there for the kids. You know. So every time I had to clean the bathroom or shovel snow or take out the garbage, do things like that, that could have been done by somebody else, you know, that really took away from what I could have been doing for the kids. I mean, if I was willing to put in 12 hour days, you know, I could have been making educational materials instead of scrubbing the toilet, you know. (Brenner; 8/20/98)

Terry and Melissa were caught in a difficult position. On the one hand, they felt overburdened, but they also did feel a sense of responsibility to the school and their students.

Terry Brenner commented that without training or professional development it was impossible to do her job: "so it's like well, they expect me to do my job but you don't support me" (Brenner; 8/20/98). With minimal support provided by Jaffe, Jackie, or Beth (who had no knowledge of the High/Scope framework), the teachers relied on their own backgrounds to develop an educational program:

Terry used more of her Montessori background to help her as she tried to apply it to High/Scope. I used my past teaching experience/creativity to do what I interpreted High Scope to be. Linda developed her own program, because High Scope is only K-3. No one ever explained High Scope as anything more than child centered, hands on, real life learning. (Fisher; Interview I Response)

Melissa commented that the expectations for her job performance were "pretty nebulous", and that there were no formal rules for her conduct as a teacher. As a result, in "breaking

free", Melissa allowed Jackie and Linda's emphasis on the High/Scope philosophy, and student centered teaching methods fell second to her desire to monitor her students' behavior

Quite honestly, my feeling is that Jackie's expectations were: chaos is good. Actually she said that a couple of times. Chaos is good. That what did she say? Order comes from chaos. So I don't, I think because I did pretty much demand that there had to be some sort of control in the classroom, she didn't like that. (Fisher; 7/11/98)

Melissa's experience with finding her own standards for practice was reflective of all the teachers at the Community School. Terry Brenner also stated that there were definitely some rules and expectations at the Community school, but "I just don't know what they are" (5/28/98).

The difficulties associated with unclear expectations were exacerbated by the fact the teachers were unsure about to whom they were responsible. This was especially evident in the teacher evaluation procedure. While Jackie served as school director, she had been responsible for evaluating the teachers. According to Linda Carver, when the Jaffe Partnership assumed control they asked her, as lead teacher to conduct staff evaluations. Although Linda had reservations, she agreed, but did not tell the other teachers that she would be reporting on their performance to the Jaffe Partnership.

When Linda set out to do the evaluations, she was concerned with the manner in which Melissa Fisher was dealing with her students. In her capacity as lead teacher, reported her concerns to the Jaffe site coordinator. When the site coordinator asked Linda if Melissa should be terminated, Linda did not want to take responsibility for that action. Instead, Linda suggested that Melissa's probation be extended by the Jaffe Partnership.

Although the initial concerns and suggestions for action came from Linda, she never let Melissa know that she was responsible:

[Jaffe] wanted me to sign the letter, putting her on probation and I said no. I said that's, you put me in that position and it's the end of me. I said, you know, you've asked me to, to look at what's going on here and to let me know professionally what's I see. Not personally, but professionally and this is what I see professionally and you're gonna have to make a judgment. You're the company that she works for. You know, I can't take responsibility for this because I don't, I'm, she doesn't know... do you know what I mean? I was just, it was a horrible thing . . . but she was never aware that the information came from me to begin with . . . And I probably should have stepped up to the plate and said hey, you know, I'm the one responsible for this happening . . . I mean, I'm not gonna be a martyr, Joan of Arc. And they didn't ever come over and talk to her. She was furious and I don't blame her. They never sat down and said these are the things, you know, that we've gotten observations on. This is the process we went through. These are the things you need to improve. (8/11/98)

The extension of Melissa's probation, while Terry's was lifted, drove an even larger wedge between the faculty and the Jaffe Partnership, because neither Jaffe nor Linda provided an explanation. It appeared as though a phantom agent was punishing Melissa. Melissa and Terry, believing that Jaffe was making unfair and unfounded conclusions about their capacity as teachers, mistrusted all representatives from the Partnership even more, including Beth Kay.

The first time that teachers ever got any inkling of a formal evaluation procedure was when Beth Kay became the school leader. According to Melissa Fisher, the teachers were never given any information about the method or guidelines for teacher evaluations. What she did know was that the school leader (Beth) was supposed to conduct a classroom observation, which never happened (Fisher; 6/3/98). Terry Brenner also was not given any kind of criteria, verbal or written, describing on what she was to be

evaluated. She was even unclear as to why the Jaffe Partnership, through Beth, would be interested in evaluating the Community School teachers:

It's just that um, I guess because that's what's done in schools. Principals evaluate teachers. It just, it's just a given. And so we shouldn't be going hey, we don't do this at this school, you know, with the hair raising thing again about tests. You know. You don't have principals. You don't evaluate, you know. Just trust that we're responsible, you know. (Brenner; 5/28/98)

Without any clear understanding of what Jaffe expected of them, confounded by Linda's distrust of the corporation, the faculty dismissed the Jaffe Partnership as ineffectual and solely in place to make a profit. In the end, according to Beth, she never conducted teacher evaluations because she was not comfortable with that role. Jaffe, however, offered all three teachers, contracts for the next school year, on Beth's recommendation.

The Community School teachers found themselves torn between Jackie and Linda's philosophical expectations, and the reality of the Jaffe Partnership's management. Without any clear understanding of to whom or for what they were responsible, the Community School teachers relied on their own understandings of what should be happening in a school to do their jobs. As Melissa Fisher noted, "I don't think about . . . who am I responsible for or what is my job. I just . . . do my job which, you know, teachers teach..." (Fisher; 8/11/98). Without one accepted agent, clear expectations, and agreed upon outcomes and measures of those outcomes, the Community School could not function.

Epilogue

When the Community School board decided to close down, many people tried to place blame. While both Jackie and Linda believed that the Jaffe Partnership destroyed

the Community School, there was little consensus as to the root of the school's problems.

Melissa Fisher noted that the Community School was:

...very disorganized and it's not just the Jaffe Partnership's fault. It appears that it has been this way for the past three years. You know, there are, there are people in, you know, parents and different people who want to blame it all on Jaffe. Well, some of these past due bills and some of these other things were not from Jaffe. They were from previous years. Bills not getting paid and things like that. (6/3/98)

Beth Kay agreed, noting that it was untrue that the Jaffe Partnership had any ulterior motives, or that they were trying to "steal the school". She said: "the Community School was running in such a way that, that it was not fiscally able to stay afloat. If they didn't make some changes, the school would go under. But did [Jaffe] wanta change the mission? No" (Kay; 7/28/98). It is difficult to separate out who was at fault for the demise of the Community School. One could blame Jackie, for her dictatorial grip on the school mission. One could blame Linda for failing to concede authority to the Jaffe Partnership and Beth. One could blame the Jaffe Partnership for trying to change the school into something it was never intended to be. One could blame NSU for not asserting more authority in monitoring the Community School for compliance. One could argue that the nature of the Community School's mission and ideals made it unsustainable as a public enterprise. The fact of the matter is that the Community School failed because of all of these factors. It was not the Jaffe Partnership, it was not Jackie or Linda, it was their struggle for power in the school that led to the end.

Competing Accountability Frameworks

At the Community School, the teachers claimed that they wanted to be "trusted to do their jobs" and that they didn't need someone to tell them what to do. However, at the

same time, they blamed unclear expectations for their inability to succeed. Terry articulated his tension between wanting individual autonomy and being given explicit directives for practice: "I think accountability is something that teachers need. They need to be accountable to parents and students and each other. And I guess it's always gonna be a fine line between that teacher-principal relationship where there's accountability without being, without the principal having to be so heavy handed" (Brenner; 8/20/98). While the teachers all noted that they were responsible people and could be trusted to follow through on agents expectations, those expectations at some point needed to be made clear to them. And those expectations could never be made clear if teachers were juggling between multiple authorities, and never knowing to whom they were responsible.

The transformation of the Community School from an independently operated "mom-and-pop" school to a corporate subsidiary revealed many issues of accountability that might have otherwise been overlooked. The struggle for power and authority in the Community school came down to issues of ownership. Beth Kay described the conflicts of ownership that plagued the Community School:

The school doesn't belong to the Jaffe Partnership. The school doesn't belong to the person who wrote the charter either. The school doesn't belong to five or six teachers who were there from the beginning. The school has a life of its own . . . The other is, has been, the Jaffe Partnership has been hired by the school to facilitate a number of things. But they are not the school. The Community School is the school. I also did hear a few times, you know, some of the very serious stake-holders at the Community School say well, it's my school. You know, they're messing with my school . . . You help give birth to it but it is not yours. It is not theirs. It's everybody who has helped in a positive way breathe some life and give it life. (Kay; 7/28/98)

The various stake-holders at the Community School each felt that had the primary claim on defining the expectations and desired outcomes for the school, layering them one on top of the other. As a result, the accountability framework at the Community School was overburdened, and often contradictory, creating a confused and ineffective environment (see Table 11).

Table 11: Community School Accountability Mechanisms

COMPETING AGENTS	Jackie Benjamin & Linda Carver	State, Authorizer & School Board	The Jaffe Partnership
Norms or Standards	Collaborative Organization	State Mandated Regulations	Chain of Command
	Adherence to Charter Contract		
	High/Scope Philosophy, Experiential Learning	State Curriculum Frameworks, Financial Efficiency, Parental Satisfaction	
Indicators of Performance	“Authentic” Assessment, Anecdotal Observations	Standardized Tests (MEAP, MAT, etc.), Enrollment Levels, Fiscal Solvency	
Incentives & Sanctions	Personal Approval or Disapproval	None Offered	Proposed Merit Bonuses for Teachers
Opportunities for Redress	N/A	Request Management Company Intervention, Rescind Charter	Dismiss Employees, Hire School Leader

Each of the three groups of agents described in Table 11 attempted to implement their own accountability mechanisms without regard for the other accountability frameworks in operation. The result was a conflict and subsequent competition between mechanisms and frameworks. Without a coherent set of mechanisms or a clear, specified agent, the teachers at the Community School were subject to multiple, simultaneous expectations.

In addition, the battle for ownership of the Community School eliminated the possibility of creating a cohesive community of value. Jackie Benjamin asked: "Who's

gonna be accountable here? . . . Who's in charge of this school?" (11/14/98). The question of who was in charge, and who owned the right to make decisions the Community School was never resolved. Terry Brenner reflected:

What has kind of bothered me is the fact that if Jaffe is just the management company, there shouldn't be this sense of ownership that it's their school. The sense of ownership should come from NSU, the board, and the staff. But NSU has not been in the picture at all. I've had no connection with anybody from there. I have had no sense that they take pride, this is one of our charter schools. And the board, I guess, has just been under so much stress and trying to make things right, the way they need to be, that I don't really have a strong sense from them either. That this is our school, sense of ownership. But I do get a real strong sense from Jackie and Linda, that this is our program. And I respect that but I guess as a staff person, I guess I don't feel like, I don't feel like I have that strong ownership to carry on the vision of this school. (Brenner; 6/30/98)

With Jackie, Linda, the Board, Jaffe, parents, and the teachers each feeling separate from the mission and vision of the school, it seemed unlikely that any kind of accountability framework would be accepted by all.

Accountability frameworks are potentially limited in their capacity to produce their intended actions, consequences, and outcomes. In order for accountability frameworks to function, participants must "buy-in" to the processes and relationships involved. This involves a great deal more than the presentation of a framework, or the imposition of a mechanism. As Beth Kay noted, "to make the quality school, to make quality environment you need a lot of happy players. You need a lot of full, invested participants" (Kay; 9/29/98). Such was not the case at the Community School. The interaction of multiple agents and multiple accountability frameworks alienated the school stakeholders, and ultimately contributed to its demise.

Chapter 7 Notes

- ¹ Trailers commonly used by schools as temporary classrooms.
- ² Most of the Community School students would have qualified for free or reduced lunch, but the Community School did not provide food services, so this aid was never applied for by school administration.
- ³ The Michigan Public School Academy Program (also known as the Michigan Department of Education Charter School Office) is responsible for administering the U.S. Department of Education charter school grant, providing liaison services to charter schools and authorizers, as well as providing information and assistance to those who may be interested in starting charter schools. The program supervisor, Cindy Funke, says that she also does a lot of “troubleshooting” on issues with which charter schools may need assistance (i.e., teacher certification, state aid, federal formula grants, special education). The charter school office serves as a kind of Department of Education directory service. When charter schools need assistance from various MDE offices, they contact Cindy Funke who can then put them in touch with the correct department.
- ⁴ A kibbutz is an Israeli collective settlement that is commonly considered to be the embodiment of pure socialism.
- ⁵ Jackie was not an educator by training or vocation.

⁶ Linda Carver taught for four years immediately after attaining her bachelor's degree. She then took an extended hiatus to raise her children. After about twenty years, she decided to become certified to teach in Michigan, and her first full-time position was working at the Community School.

⁷ Linda, Melissa, Terry, as well as the school aides all became Jaffe employees. Because Linda had been previously employed at the Community School, she knew that the board was contracting with a management company and would be a corporate employee once the management agreement was finalized. The new staff, when hired by Jackie, were not informed of the impending management agreement.

CHAPTER VIII DISCUSSION

The three cases of accountability presented in this dissertation demonstrate that multiple accountability frameworks operated and interacted in Michigan public schools. Research participants noted that they were accountable to multiple agents and for numerous accountability mechanisms, which layered responsibility on their individual work environments. However, the layering of accountability frameworks in Michigan public schools was only a portion of the story. The accountability environments in each of the three schools in this dissertation demonstrate that understanding how accountability frameworks interact (i.e., compounding, congruent, or competitive) is a vital element to understanding how each school operated.

Since agents author accountability frameworks, the interaction of accountability frameworks in the schools in this study was determined by the relationship of the various agents who attempted to exercise authority in that educational environment. The level of agreement and correspondence between agents dictated whether or not the accountability mechanisms they attempted to employ conflicted with one another. The educators in this study perceived their roles and the expectations placed on them to be a function of the relationship among their agents of accountability as well as the relationship between themselves and agents.

A school's accountability environment involves the relationship between

accountability frameworks (i.e., agents, standards, indicators, etc.), as well as the consequences of that relationship. Although three separate accountability environments emerged from this research, they may not be representative of all American public schools. It is easy to imagine different relationships between agents and frameworks that would contribute to different accountability environments in other schools. The schools in this study presented distinct cases of accountability that may or may not be found elsewhere.

Furthermore, the differences between the accountability environments described in this study may not be absolute. Accountability frameworks and environments are complex and cannot always be “tidied up” with categorical distinctions. The accountability environments described in each case chapter were based on themes and patterns that emerged during data analysis. These patterns, while potentially “essentializing,” are a useful tool in making sense of complex contexts.

Compounding Accountability Frameworks: Mann Elementary School

At Mann Elementary School the multiple frameworks in place did not conflict with one another, but represented multiple means of achieving the same ends. That is, the multiple agents working to exert influence at the school had the same goals, objectives and visions for education, broadly speaking, but different ideas and spheres of influence relating to how they ensured their success. As a result, the accountability frameworks at the school were compounded, simultaneously placing many demands and expectations on educators.

The compounding accountability frameworks functioning at Mann Elementary were a consequence of the bureaucratic hierarchy that operated above the school. The vertical lines of administrative authority and horizontal compartmentalization of responsibility within the district created a culture of regulation within the CSD that likely distanced teachers from their agents of accountability. The state of the CSD is common to public school districts. Elmore (1993) argues that:

Growth and specialization of administrative functions in local districts occurs, in part, because the scale of the enterprise is increasing (more students mean more schools, which in turn means more managerial oversight) and, in part, because of the increasing use of policy as an instrument for resolving the issues of purpose and control. (p. 113)

Educators in the CSD were part of an established bureaucratic hierarchy that clearly defined their roles and responsibilities. Teachers, who resided at the bottom of the hierarchy, had limited authority and were subject to policies, procedures, and organizational directives produced by those above them. Mann Elementary school was a perfect example of how in a traditional public school system those with the smallest jurisdiction of authority could be subject to the greatest breadth of demands.

The case of Mann Elementary School provides an image of what the American public considers to be a “traditional” school. The accountability frameworks in place at Mann were a product of what Meyer and Rowan (1978) called bureaucratic standardization and ritual classification. Mann Elementary School was organized around socially defined categories that granted and supported legitimacy to the educators’ work within. Through the implementation of accountability mechanisms such as core curricula and standardized tests, the agents operating at Mann reinforced the “grammar of schooling” that legitimated public school work (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). In spite of the

fact that Mann's agents publicly enforced these ritual regulatory mechanisms, they were not necessarily coordinated with educator activities. This was most clearly evidenced when teachers spoke of the district purchasing textbooks that sat unused because they did not fit with the teachers' lessons. Meyer and Rowan (1978) argue that the result of the conditions that pervade American public schools is that, "schools [such as Mann] in practice contain multiple realities, each organized with respect to different internal or exogenous pressures" (p. 92). American public educators are in a position where their job and responsibilities could revolve around meeting others' expectations amidst escalating demands.

The compounding accountability frameworks at Mann Elementary School were a product of the American public school system, and that which charter school advocates were working against. However, compounding accountability frameworks are not a necessary consequence of the American public school system. A number of schools, such as some of those in New York City, and reform efforts (other than charter and choice) managed to negotiate large urban bureaucracies with great success. Public schools are not doomed to mire teachers in the minutia of heavy regulation, but they may tend toward it.

Congruent Accountability Frameworks: Eisenhower Public School Academy

The congruency of the accountability frameworks at Eisenhower PSA stemmed from ETS's conscious effort to recruit and maintain a community with accordant educational values. While ETS may have been the core agent that gave birth to the Eisenhower accountability environment, the alignment of parents, the principal, and teachers with the corporation produced a sense of shared agency. This shared agency,

where there were few competing visions, allowed for the harmonious operation of accountability frameworks at Eisenhower. The result was stability and unity of vision for Eisenhower faculty.

The case of Eisenhower PSA appears to lend credence to the argument that “systemic reform” is the best path towards improving schools. Systemic reform is predicated on the notion that current educational systems are fragmented and what is needed are agreements surrounding objectives for schools and the coordination of multiple policies in support of those objectives (Elmore, 1993; Fuhrman, 1993; O'Day & Smith, 1993). At Eisenhower all of the operating agents embraced the same objectives and accountability mechanisms. As a result, their signals were all lined up creating a defragmented accountability environment.

Charter school and choice advocates (e.g. Chubb & Moe, 1990) argue that markets alone will provide schools the opportunity to develop coherent missions, and congruent accountability frameworks. It was not markets and choice alone, however, that created the congruent system at Eisenhower. ETS's recruitment of the Eisenhower community facilitated the synonymy of educational values at the school. ETS's recruitment techniques were enabled by choice and charter legislation, but they were not necessarily a product of the educational reform. Thus, the coherence at Eisenhower may not have been common to all charter schools.

Competing Accountability Frameworks: The Community School

The competitive accountability frameworks operating at the Community School highlighted many of the problems and pitfalls that faced charter schools. The case of the Community School supported the findings of a number of choice and charter researchers.

For example, among her many conclusions, Wells (1999) found that charter schools have not been able to achieve a great deal of school-level accountability because they must answer to multiple audiences, and are torn between being accountable to many agents. Wells also found that small charter schools run the risk of overburdening teachers, potentially chipping away at their commitment to the school. The Community School faculty all reported that they felt as though they were being pulled in many directions, and were responsible for too much.

At its inception, the Community School's accountability frameworks were quite similar to those found at Eisenhower PSA. However, unlike Eisenhower, the Community School's community did not remain congruent. Whereas the Community School could have been characterized once as a cohesive community of value, by the time the school closed it consisted of constituencies at odds with one another. The Community School's new agents, authorities, and representatives created a divisive environment at the school. With multiple agents, each attempting to achieve different goals at the school, the Community School teachers were subject to competing demands and expectations along with no clear guidance to prioritize them. While the difficulties that faced the Community School could easily have been attributed to its charter status, the school's competitive accountability frameworks were not a function of being a charter school, but were facilitated by the charter.

The Community School faced a crisis of accountability. This crisis grew from four underlying problems at the school: faculty turnover, changing demographics, Jackie's leadership of the school, and poor finances. The combination of these conditions and factors created conflict and divisiveness at the school. Any one (or even two) of

these factors alone may not have led to the school's downfall. It was the four in concert that sealed the fate of the school. The divisiveness and conflict found at the Community School is not the sole domain of charter schools. One could imagine similar difficulties in any school environment. However, what distinguished the Community School crisis was the inability to mend and rectify the situation.

Arsen, Plank, and Sykes (1999) argue that Michigan charter schools are responsible to multiple agencies creating a potentially heavy accountability burden. In spite of this potentially highly regulated environment the authors note that it is unclear how closely these agencies are monitoring charter schools. Further arguing that oversight is crucial in charter schools, Arsen, Plank, and Sykes suggest that agents must take responsibility for monitoring and correcting charter school problems. At the Community School, the State, NSU, and the school board deferred to Jackie and Linda, waiting until lightning struck to take action. Then, when they did take action, these agencies failed to acknowledge or recognize Jackie and Linda's hold on the school. Rather than replacing problematic agents and accountability frameworks, the agents layered conflicting goals and expectations on the school, facilitating a struggle for dominance and control.

Accountability Frameworks and Accountability Environments

The distinction between compounding, congruent, and competitive accountability frameworks helps to illuminate the conditions of the participating schools at the time this research was conducted. At Mann Elementary School, the compounding accountability frameworks operating in the school were a repercussion of the bureaucratic hierarchy that compartmentalized and distanced educators, through agents' emphasis on directives rather than consensus building. At this school, teachers were implementers rather than

creators of the conditions in which they worked. At Eisenhower PSA, the congruent accountability frameworks emerged from a pre-existing community. The purposeful recruitment, and subsequent self-selection of school community members, provided a “ready made” cohesive community. The school community’s buy-in to the corporate mission and vision served almost as a prerequisite to their participation, thereby eliminating the need to socialize or enculturate educators. At the Community School, the competing accountability frameworks were a result of a disagreement about basic educational values and the purposes of schools. The conflict of visions between the various agents at the school bred the power struggle that pitted accountability agents, frameworks, and mechanisms against each other at the school.

Ideology vs. Regulation

Exploring the accountability environments at each of these schools revealed that accountability is composed of two elements that contribute to the development and operation of accountability frameworks -- what I term the regulative and the ideological. A common theme across all participants in this study was that they distinguished between those ideas¹ to which they felt responsible and the tasks that they believed they were expected to accomplish. For example, at Mann Elementary, teachers commented that their jobs were about following rules and regulations, without any real feeling of connection to their purpose or objective. Similarly, at the Community School, teachers reported that they felt they were responsible for many tasks and objectives (even if they weren’t sure what they were) without any ownership over the ideas that drove the school. In contrast, at Eisenhower PSA, teachers spoke of regulatory compliance as being aligned with their own sense of internal responsibility. Teachers reported a distinction between

accountability **to** something, and accountability **for** something. In this study, teachers' distinctions between the things they did, and the way that they felt about these actions highlighted the relationship between the ideological (I) and regulative (R) aspect of accountability.

Ideology

As an aspect of accountability, ideology reflects a feeling of responsibility that individuals have to an ideal or philosophy that is shared with their agents. When educators speak of "commitment" or "passion", or "the way we are", they are demonstrating a sense of communal ideology. In some cases people embody ideologies, in others, ideologies are reflected in personal beliefs and ideas about education. For example, one could argue that teachers at Eisenhower PSA were ideologically accountable, because they reported a responsibility to the same ideals and values as their agents of accountability. On the other hand, the teachers at Mann Elementary School claimed that they were distanced from the decisions made for their school and district, feeling indifferent to their agents' ideals, thereby demonstrating minimal ideological accountability. The ideological aspect of accountability addresses whether or not correspondence between educators and agents' educational values exists. The nature of ideology, as an aspect of accountability, corresponds to an agent's normative orientation (i.e. democratic, market, etc.). The cases in this study illustrated that there were many variations and kinds of ideologies that agents could embrace including, but not limited to, democratic, professional, and market normative orientations.

Regulation

Regulation is demonstrated in the mechanisms that agents choose and ask educators to implement. These are the things that individuals state that they are responsible for. In most cases directives, policies, and other accountability mechanisms are an “accepted” part of educators’ work. The rules and regulations to which educators are subject correspond with an agent’s ideology. However, an educator need not subscribe to an ideology that corresponds to the regulations to which they are subject. For example, at the Community School, teachers commented that they used the Intermediate School District curriculum and administered standardized tests, as per State and Management Company directive, but they did not believe that they were useful educational tools. Thus, they fulfilled their regulative obligations, but did not necessarily subscribe to the same educational values as their agents. Teachers at Mann reported their experiences much the same way, claiming that they were required to accomplish many tasks, which they perceived to be an integral part of their job, without necessarily believing in their educational value.

The Relationship Between Ideology and Regulation

While the educators in this study described a practical difference between the regulative and ideological aspects of accountability, they are closely linked in theory. At the core of the relationship between an agent and a subject is a proposed ideological alignment. In other words, what agents want is for educators to be aligned with their ideologies. If agents and subjects are ideologically aligned, then there may be no need for regulation, as all stakeholders are working towards the same goals and objectives via the same means. As a result, there is an interpersonal and/or social component necessary to

the ideological aspect of accountability that could be likened to the issues of alignment discussed by Abelman and Elmore (1998). Abelman and Elmore believe that alignment can come from selection and/or socialization. Agents can recruit teachers and principals who hold the same ideals, or they can attempt to enculturate educators into a community of value.

In the absence of ideological correspondence, agents regulate their subjects in an attempt to attain at least the appearance of ideological alignment. In many ways, agents' creation of accountability frameworks attempts, through regulation, to enforce an ideology. Within a public school system, even if agents' and subjects' ideologies correspond along numerous dimensions the regulative aspect of accountability must be addressed. The regulative aspect of accountability is not only an instrument by which agents attempt to enforce an ideology, it is also a public symbol of an ideology.

The very nature of public schools negates the possibility of private educative goals and missions. By virtue of the receipt of public funds, public school agents need to prove to the public at large that they are accomplishing their goals. Thus, schools must, in some fashion, provide the public with an opportunity to observe and evaluate educational processes. Ideological correspondence may reassure agents, but that relationship is invisible to the public. Accountability frameworks not only provide agents with an opportunity to ensure that their own goals are being met, but also provide the public at large an ability to judge school processes. The result is that the regulative and ideological components of accountability must both be addressed in American public schools. In creating an accountability framework, agents attempt to implement accountability

mechanisms that reflect their ideologies. Thus, at their inception, accountability frameworks have theoretically aligned regulations and ideologies ($R \approx I$).

Accountability Environments

The cases of Mann, Eisenhower, and the Community School demonstrated how the relationship between ideology and regulation can differ dependent upon school environment. The combination of corresponding or non-corresponding ideologies with either highly or minimally regulated environments can produce a variety of outcomes (see Figure 2).

		IDEOLOGY	
		corresponding	non-corresponding
REGULATION	+	Eisenhower PSA	Mann Elementary
	-	???	Community School

Figure 2: Possible Relationships Between Ideology and Regulation

The Mann Elementary School Accountability Environment

At Mann Elementary, there appeared to be minimal ideological correspondence between agents and teachers. There was also a highly regulated environment. Employees of the City School District were not recruited based on their personal visions of education, but by virtue of their attainment of certification. The relative isolation of teachers and compartmentalization of responsibility within the district structure inhibited the possibility of ideological socialization. Mann’s agents invested minimally in the

creation of a cohesive community and instead focused on regulating teacher behavior through compounding accountability frameworks. The intense regulatory focus of Mann agents forced the ideological to take a backseat to the responsibilities and pressures of accomplishing numerous tasks. Mann agents monitored for compliance with rules and regulations, consequently transforming educators from decision-makers to implementers.

The bureaucratic hierarchy in which Mann resided heaped regulations on successive layers, while simultaneously minimizing ideological correspondence (see Figure 3). As a result, the teachers at Mann reported that they were responsible to their own missions and educational ideals.

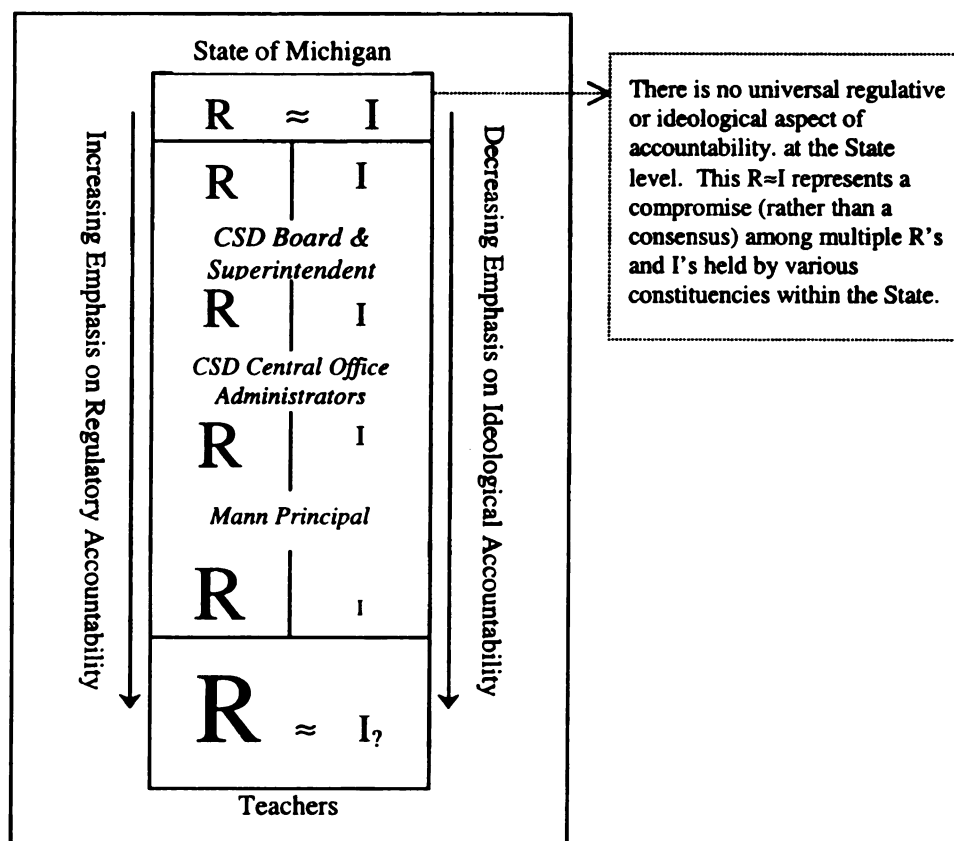


Figure 3: Mann Elementary Accountability Environment

Eisenhower PSA Accountability Environment

Through the active marketing to, and recruiting from a homogenous community of value, ETS created a congruent community at Eisenhower PSA. Parents, teachers, and the principal all chose to be a part of Eisenhower based upon their commitment to ETS's educational vision and mission (see Figure 4). This tight ideological correspondence bred a compliance with the multiple regulations employed by Eisenhower agents. Unlike Mann Elementary, the number of regulations placed on Eisenhower teachers did not appear to decrease the level of ideological correspondence. Rather, teacher compliance with the objectives and expectations of the corporation along with a demonstrated

commitment to corporate ideals created an environment where agents' goals were being met.

The ideological alignment between Eisenhower parents, Eisenhower faculty and ETS provided stability to the school. With a common ground on which to stand, members of the Eisenhower community rarely saw conflict or felt the need to socialize anyone to fit the model. By tapping into an already cohesive community, ETS facilitated commitment to the ideals set forth in their program. The community's ideology pre-existed the school, and was viewed as a niche from which ETS could draw families. The Eisenhower accountability environment resulted from all stakeholders subscribing to the same value system, and no one challenging it.

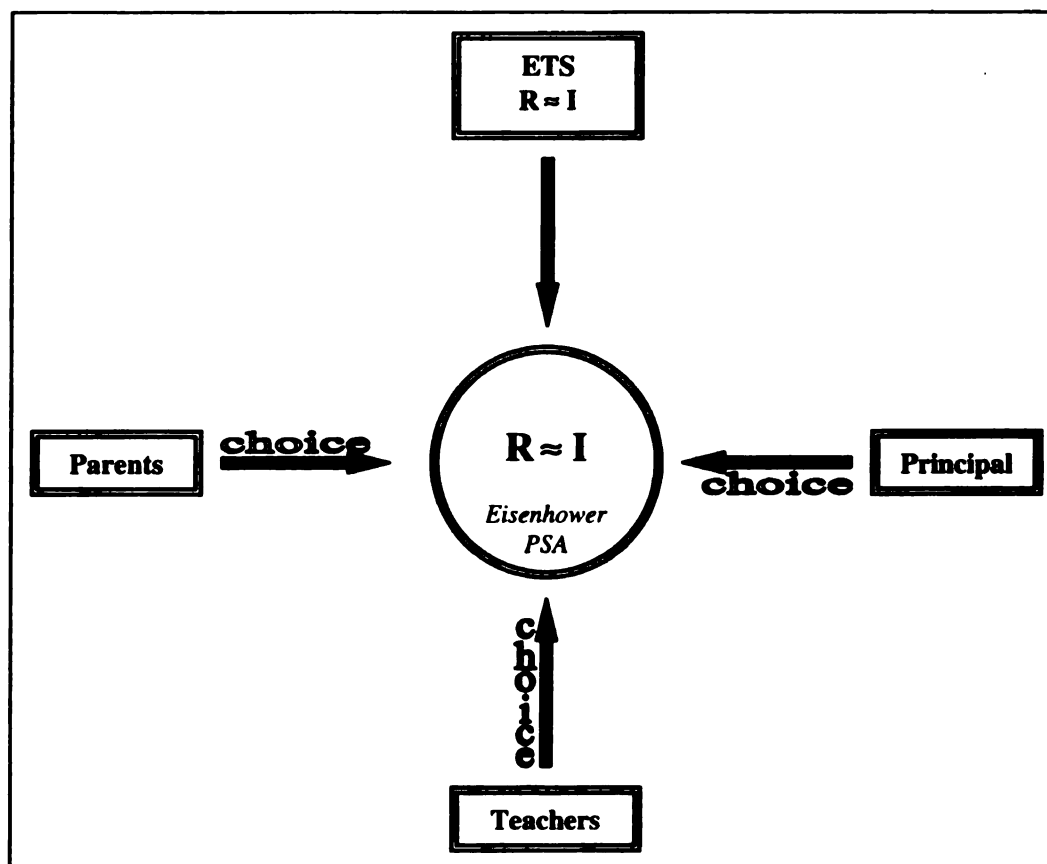


Figure 4: Eisenhower Accountability Environment

The Community School Accountability Environment

At the Community School, there was minimal ideological correspondence between teachers and their agents. While the various agents aligned themselves with one another, the teachers at the school were ideologically aligned with no one. Unlike Eisenhower PSA, whose accountability environment resulted from the careful selection of teachers who corresponded to agents' ideologies, the teachers at the Community School were not part of a pre-existing community. Furthermore, the Community School agents made no attempt to socialize teachers to a common ideology. With high teacher turnover, excessive teacher work burdens and competing ideologies in place, there was little chance for agents to focus on consensus or community building. In addition to a lack of ideological correspondence, there was a lack of coherent regulation at the Community School. Unlike Mann Elementary's agents who responded to a lack of ideological alignment with heavy regulation, the agents of the Community School spent so much time fighting for control of the school that there was no clear agent or set of mechanisms for teachers to follow.

The chaotic accountability environment resulted from the clash between the Community School's agents' ideologies and regulations (see Figure 5). The conflict and power struggle at the school left the teachers to pick and choose with what ideologies they wished to align themselves (I_1 I_2 I_3), as well as which regulations to follow (R_1 R_2 R_3). Without ideological correspondence or compliance with a coherent set of accountability mechanisms, teachers at the Community School appear to have relied on their personal beliefs and educational values when doing their jobs.

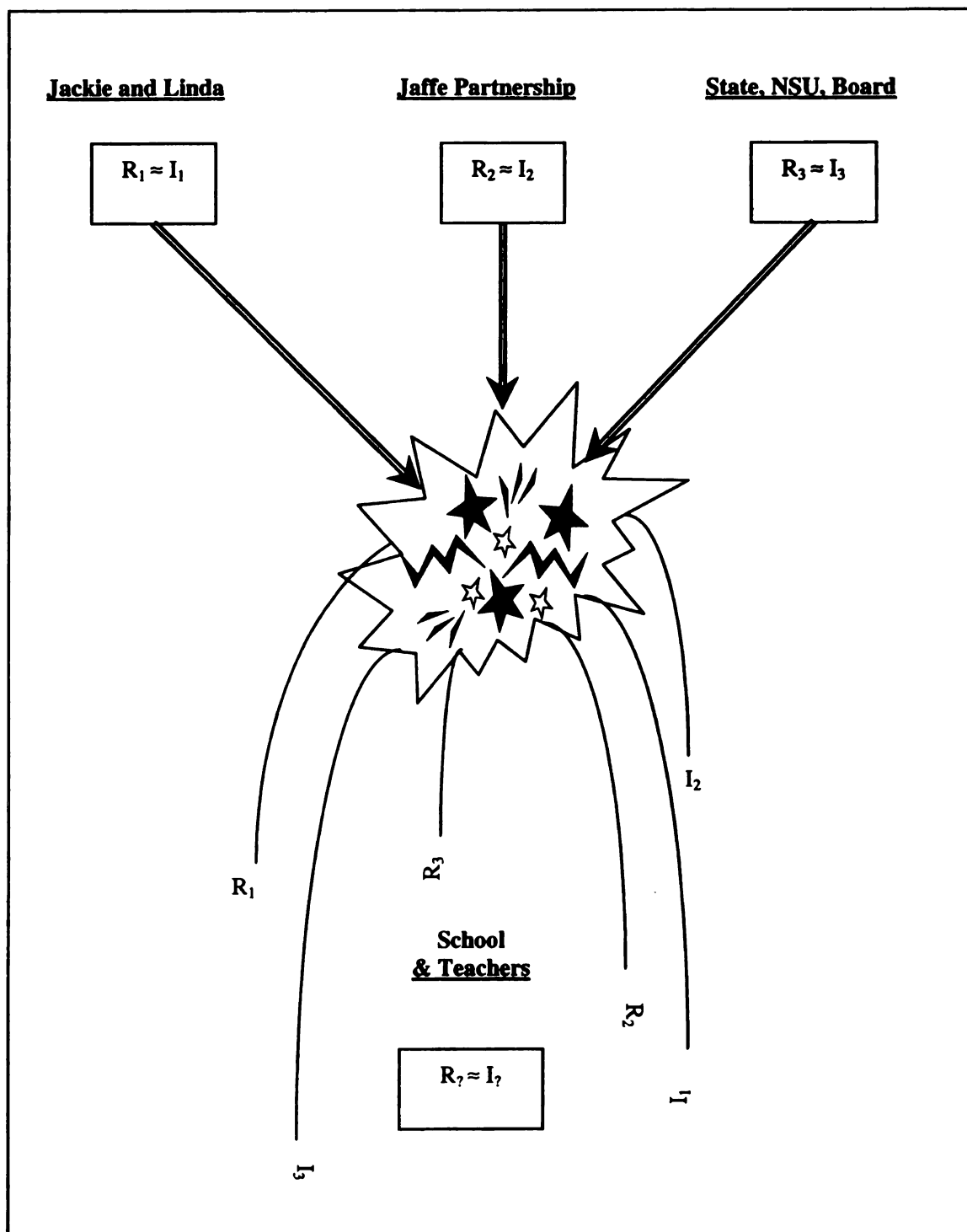


Figure 5: Community School Accountability Environment

Effects on Teachers

Determining the effects of accountability environments on teachers and teachers' work in classrooms was not the purpose of this study. However, the exploration of accountability produced some anecdotal data upon which modest conclusions and speculation could be based. At each of the schools in this study, teachers' attitudes, beliefs and dispositions appeared to be influenced by the accountability environments at their schools. Accountability structures in these schools seemed to shape important aspects of school functioning.

At Mann Elementary, the compounding accountability frameworks produced a work environment where teachers were relatively isolated from each other, and their work was highly compartmentalized. The tight jurisdictional boundaries of teachers' work within the CSD created an environment where educators perceived their responsibilities to be numerous, while their scope of authority was small. Furthermore, the responsibilities Mann teachers were required to manage were seen as distanced from their own conceptions and visions for education. The resultant effect may have been a lack of professional autonomy within the classroom for the Mann teachers. With few opportunities to determine the course of their work or develop ideological correspondence with their agents, external regulations rather than professional discretion structured the work of Mann teachers.

Eisenhower, much like Mann, also presented a case where teachers were implementers of externally derived regulations. However, the accountability environment at Eisenhower appeared to impact teachers differently than Mann. At both Mann and Eisenhower, teachers had minimal discretion to shape their classroom practice, but at

Eisenhower the teachers strongly believed in and agreed with the mission and educational values of the school. In this case, regulation provided support to a vision already held by the teachers. As a result, teacher work in the classroom closely mirrored the vision of accountability agents. Thus, it appeared as though regulation was used to sustain teacher work, rather than to coerce teacher commitment and compliance.

In contrast to both Mann and Eisenhower, the teachers at the Community School had a great deal of autonomy and discretion within their own classrooms. The competitive, explosive accountability environment at the school produced a situation where teachers had a great deal of individual freedom. The consequence of this freedom was chaos rather than asserted professional autonomy. Whereas regulations were experienced as coercive at Mann and supportive at Eisenhower, their absence at the Community School proved destructive to the school community. At the Community School, there were no mechanisms in place to ensure either teacher compliance with or commitment to agents' ideals. The lack of accountability mechanisms, in conjunction with a lack of experience on the part of teachers (and agents) contributed to a work environment where teachers floundered rather than flourished.

Future research into the consequences of accountability environments would likely reveal more substantive data regarding the effects on teachers. However, this research suggests that the consequences of ideological correspondence (or lack thereof) and regulations on teacher work environments is an important area to explore.

Summary

The three cases of accountability described in this dissertation have illuminated the complexity of public schools and public school reforms. In each of the three schools

participating in this study, identification of the accountability mechanisms to which educators were subject did not “explain” the accountability environment at the school. The process of accountability at these schools appeared to be a function of multiple agents and accountability frameworks operating simultaneously. Furthermore, these cases show that accountability frameworks within schools operated based upon the relationships between agents, the attention paid to cultivating shared values, as well as the emphasis on regulation to enforce ideology.

In all three schools studied, agents of accountability made conscious efforts through the development of an accountability framework to enforce their ideology through regulation. Accountability frameworks in this sense served as regulative instruments. What varied among these schools was the success of the frameworks in creating an environment where agents’ expectations were met. Whether or not an accountability framework facilitated an “accountable environment” was dependent upon ideological correspondence between agents, co-agents, and educators.

The greater the correspondence between teachers’ and agents ideologies, the greater the likelihood that teachers will understand and manage accountability mechanisms the way an agent intended, thereby increasing the chances that they are implemented and operate as intended. Eisenhower PSA was an excellent example of how ideological correspondence can be achieved through the careful selection of educators to work within a school. The principal and teachers at Eisenhower all claimed that they believed in the same ideals and valued the same accountability mechanisms as their agents of accountability. As a result, teachers appeared to use curricula and tests as well as respond to the merit pay system, at-will contracts, and parental exit threat in the

manner expected by parents and the corporation. In contrast, a lack of ideological correspondence can undermine the intent and effectiveness of an agent's preferred accountability mechanisms. For example, at the Community School, the teachers reported that they felt little connection to the ideological goals of their multiple agents. As a result, the accountability mechanisms that agents attempted to employ did not achieve their desired effect. Without a sense of ideological alignment, the standards that Jackie and Linda (as agents) attempted to implement fell short of their capacity to create norms for classroom practice.

In the end theoretical frameworks only scratch the surface of an understanding about accountability. Accountability is far more than agents and mechanisms. It involves the relationships among agents and the mechanisms that each agent endorses. For every educator, accountability was more than being subject to regulation; it involved a set of beliefs, processes, and relationships. Explorations of accountability that focus solely on expectations and outcomes ($O \geq E \rightarrow A$) or emphasize regulation as the core of accountability remove the all-important human factor. Accountability happens to and through individuals.

Chapter 8 Notes

¹ Often participants reported that they felt responsible to people. In these cases, individuals were the embodiment or representation of ideas.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

TEACHER LETTER

Dear Teacher,

Hello, My name is Brenda Neuman, and I am a doctoral student at Michigan State University. For my dissertation, I would like to explore how teachers and principals understand and manage the responsibilities and expectations that are a part of their everyday practice. Through interviews and collaborative work, I would like to create several rich "cases" that will be an attempt to describe, explain, and understand how educators interpret the nature of accountability in their own school.

If you agree to help me with my study I will ask you to participate in a series of interviews and reflective sessions that are designed to investigate how you construe accountability systems. This will include two interviews designed to each be approximately one hour in length, as well sessions in which we will examine and reflect on the interview transcripts together. I will be asking you to think about what accountability means to you and what it looks like in your everyday practice. As a "bottom-up" study, this dissertation will focus on the understandings of educators within schools to structure an examination of the larger Michigan public school system. Between interviews and reflective sessions, I expect that each participant will work with me for approximately eight hours total. The interviews and reflective work can be dispersed over as many or as few work sessions as you choose.

I would like to work with three teachers in this school, one lower elementary teacher (first or second grade) and two upper elementary teachers (third or fourth grade). It would be preferable if these teachers have been educators for at least three years (not necessarily in this school), although it is not required.

I would like to work with participants during the summer months as much as possible. In addition I will make every effort to schedule all interviews and work sessions at times that are most convenient for you and at locations that are of greatest ease for you to reach. Given the amount of time and energy being asked of participants in this study, I would like to offer an honorarium of \$50.00. Although this sum will not properly compensate you, I would like to acknowledge the time and energy involved in your cooperation.

If you would like to be a participant, or to know more about this study, please contact me as soon as possible:

phone:
e-mail:
address:

Thank You,
Brenda Neuman

APPENDIX B

TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL INFORMED CONSENT

Dear _____ ,

My name is Brenda Neuman, and I am a graduate student at Michigan State University. For my dissertation research, I am investigating questions of accountability in Michigan charter schools, and the ways in which individuals construct and make sense out of educational accountability mechanisms. You are being asked to participate in a series of interviews and reflective sessions that will be devoted to developing a collaborative "Portrait of Accountability" that will be used as a source of data for my research. These "portraits" will be used to both examine the nature of accountability in Michigan schools, and to identify those "agents of accountability" outside of your school that construct the accountability framework that you describe.

The following process will be involved in developing the "portraits of accountability":

1. I will conduct an interview that should consist of no more than two hours that is designed to answer questions about your understandings of accountability means in your school setting. This interview will be recorded on an audio-tape. Your responses will be transcribed in an accurate and confidential manner. You may refuse to answer any questions and end the interview at any time with no penalty to yourself. All audio-tapes and transcriptions will remain under my exclusive control.
2. I will have the first interview transcribed, review it, intersperse commentary or questions, and then forward this document to you. You will then be able to review the written text, answer the questions, comment on the text and forward those responses to me either by mail, phone, or personal meeting.
3. Based on the interview transcript, commentary, and questions, I will construct a protocol for a second interview. Based on the responses to the first interview, I will identify relevant documentation that either you or I will provide as a launching point for discussion for the second interview. The second interview will be designed to delve more deeply into your understanding of accountability. This interview should consist of no more than two hours, and you may refuse to answer any questions and end the interview at any time with no penalty to yourself. This interview will be recorded on an audio-tape. Your responses will be transcribed in an accurate and confidential manner. All audio-tapes and transcriptions will remain under my exclusive control

4. I will have the second interview transcribed, review it, intersperse commentary or questions, and then forward this document to you. You will then be able to review the written text, answer the questions, comment on the text and forward those responses to me either by mail, phone, or personal meeting.
5. Using the transcripts and commentary from the two interviews described above, you and I will cooperatively reflect on the interview transcripts and commentary to build an "explanation" of your understanding of accountability in your school. The cooperative reflection should take no more than eight hours, dispersed over as many or few work sessions as you choose. These work sessions may be recorded on audio-tape. If so, your responses will be transcribed in an accurate and confidential manner. You may refuse to answer any further questions and end the work sessions at any time with no penalty to yourself. All audio-tapes, transcriptions, working drafts, and final "portraits" will remain under my exclusive control to maintain confidentiality.

Given the amount of time and energy being asked of you as a participant in the study, I would like to offer you an honorarium of \$50.00. Although this sum does not properly compensate you, I would like to acknowledge the time and effort that you will put forth as a participant in this study. Furthermore, I will make every effort to schedule all interviews and work sessions at times that are most convenient for you and at locations that are of greatest ease for you to reach.

All data gathered in this study will be used only for research purposes and will be viewed only by the researcher. For research purposes, all participants and schools will be given pseudonyms, and any data that may be seen by outside audiences such as transcripts or copies of written work will have all identifying characteristics masked or deleted.

You may also choose to give permission for all written data (transcripts and portraits) to be shared for other educational and research purposes such as sharing at conferences, or data analysis. In these cases names of the participants will not be revealed, however those who are familiar with the participants or the research study may recognize the identities of the participants.

At any time during the study you may choose to stop participating, and there will be no penalty for choosing not to continue.

If you would like to know more about the study or to contact me directly, I can be reached at home or my office at Michigan State University. If you would consent to participate in this study, please fill out the attached sheet, sign and date it, and return it to me either in person or to the office address listed above.

Thank You,
Brenda Neuman

APPENDIX C

TEACHER/PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW I PROTOCOL

1. What are your responsibilities here at _____ ?
Probes: What is the formal job description of a classroom teacher/principal?
What responsibilities do you have that might not be in a “formal” job description?
What are the primary attributes you look for in a teacher? (principal only) What
are the explicit guidelines for teachers? Are there any informal expectations?
What are the terms of your employment?
2. What is/are your primary goal(s) as an educator? How will you know whether or not
you have achieved that (those) goal(s)?
Probes: How do you develop these goals? Where do they come from? Have
your goals changed over time? How? Why? What is the most important part of
being an educator? In your opinion, what is the most important part of this
school’s “mission”?
3. To whom do you feel most responsible in your capacity as an educator? How does
that relate to your work environment?
Probes: What do you think that the principal/parents/school board, etc. expects
of you?
4. What kinds of records are kept on: students, teachers, and principals?
Probes: Are there any kinds of tests given? Why? Are teachers evaluated?
How? Why? Are principals monitored in any way? How? Why? What
information is collected and used to determine how the school is doing? How do
you assess important outcomes of the school?
5. How do you know whether or not the school/your class is “good” or “effective”?
Probes: How would you describe an “effective”/“good” student? How would
you describe an “effective”/“good” classroom? How would you describe an
“effective”/“good” teacher? How would you describe an “effective”/“good”
school?
6. Is it possible for you to “mess up” your job? How? If you do “mess-up”, what is
supposed to happen? What really happens?
7. Could you tell me a little bit about your professional background?
Probes: Schools attended; degrees recieved; Teaching career: length of time in
former and present schools, positions, and assignments; Other education-related
experiences; How were you recruited to this school?

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE TEACHER/PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW II PROTOCOLS

Beth Kay; Interview 2

1. I am interested in understanding the many different expectations you understood as being part of your job, how they were communicated to you, as well as enforced:
 - What were your responsibilities with respect to student outcomes?
 - What were your legal responsibilities?
 - Could you describe your responsibilities for governance in the school?
 - What kinds of responsibilities and expectations are there for your performance as a school leader?
 - What kinds of responsibilities and expectations were there for your performance as a supervisor? Are you responsible for teacher performance?
 - What were your financial responsibilities?
 - How were you responsible for student behavior and classroom management?
 - Were you responsible for developing the character of your students?
 - Do you have any other responsibilities? For what do you feel most responsible?
2. What does the term accountability mean to you? How about the term responsibility?
3. In what ways did you feel responsible to parents? How did parents communicate their expectations to you? What did you think was important to communicate to them? On page 19, you mentioned a parent survey. What kinds of items were on that survey? Could I see one? What was done with the charted data?
4. How were you accountable to the board? What is the Board's role in hiring, firing, and disciplining faculty?
5. What do you think that the Beverly Group is supposed to do for a school? What have they done?
 - Do you think that the Beverly Group has changed the mission or operation of the school?
 - What kind of communication (with respect to the Community School) could, should and did happen?
 - Is there a Beverly principal handbook?
 - What kind of guidance would you have liked?
 - What is the hierarchy of the Beverly Group?

6. To whom else did you feel a responsibility?

7. On page 6, you mention that when you arrived at the Community School that there were already “a whole bunch of structures in place about how things are done”. What were these structures? What were everyone’s roles at the Community School (see page 17)?

8. You mention on page 7 that when you arrived at the Community School, you defined your role as being a student of the schools’ needs. Why did you choose to define your role that way? How did you assess the needs of the school? What were the needs of the Community School?

- What do you think that the staff at the Community School expected of you, as a school leader?
- Could you, in a more detailed fashion, describe your leadership style?
- You mention on page 3 that you have a vision of schools. What does that mean? Could you elaborate on that?
- On page 11 you say that you guide teachers. To what are you guiding them?
- On page 12 you mention that you were responsible for relationships in your capacity as school leader. In your opinion, what were the most important relationships for which you were responsible?
- In your first interview, you repeatedly mentioned that you were “of the school”. What does that mean (i.e. see page 14)? What does it mean to be responsible to the school (see page 22)?
- On page 16, you spoke of the qualities that are part of a team working well together. As a school leader, what is your role in helping make that happen (i.e. attain similar visions, trust, respect, empowerment)?

9. How much decision-making ability did you have regarding curriculum? How could you assess whether or not a sound, balanced, well thought out curriculum was in place?

10. Could you describe what a “professional” teacher looks like?

- Could you describe to me what it means to be a master or artist with respect to education (i.e. “it takes a long time to be a master in teaching” or I am an artist in a lot of ways” p. 10)?
- What does it mean to be student oriented?
- On page 14, you mentioned that immature, improper, or immoral behavior could be grounds for dismissal. Could you be more specific about what these behaviors might be?
- You mention on page 21 that the Beverly group does not yet have an evaluation tool. What was done in the interim? Could I see a sample of the draft tool?

11. Why do principals have “at-will” contracts, and teachers “for cause” contracts? How are teachers’ contracts at the Community School any different than any other district contract? May I see a copy of your contract?
12. What is the role of the school improvement team?
13. You mentioned that there are many different interests that are represented in the multiple expectations that are placed on the school leader and school. What different interests are represented?

Ruth Beal; Interview 2

1. On page 6, you talk about feeling responsible to yourself. Is that the same as being responsible FOR what you believe? You also state that you feel responsible to your students. Is that the same as feeling responsible for them? Is feeling responsible to someone the same as feeling responsible for someone? For what do you feel most responsible? Who else do you feel a responsibility to?
2. What does the term accountability mean to you?
3. On page 6, you speak about students needing to “attain things” at “certain grade levels”. What do you think that your students need to attain? How do you know what needs to be attained at certain grade levels? You also speak about students needing things that are more far reaching than curriculum. Could you elaborate?
 - What are your responsibilities with respect to student outcomes?
 - What are your legal responsibilities?
 - Do you have any responsibilities for governance in the school?
 - What kinds of responsibilities and expectations are there for your performance as a teacher?
 - Do you have any financial responsibilities?
 - How are you responsible for student behavior and classroom management?
 - Are you at all responsible for developing the character of your students?
4. On page 5 you speak a bit about needing a core curriculum, could you explain a little more about why a core curriculum is a “necessity”? What kind of sequential goals do you need in curriculum areas? At what point are you trying to arrive?
5. I am interested in understanding the many different expectations you understand as being part of your job, how they are communicated to you, as well as enforced:
 - On page 7, you mention the different expectations of parents and the principal. Could you elaborate?

- On page 5, you speak a bit about parents telling you about how their children feel about learning. You also mention on page 7 that you “think parents expect their children are going to be excited about learning, and that they’re going to learn”. How do you know about these expectations? How are they communicated to you? What kind of role do parents have in the decisions you make?
- You also mention on page 7 that the principal expects kids to learn. What does that mean? How does she determine whether or not students are learning? What happens if she determines that students aren’t learning? Why do you think Rebecca has a goal of making sure that all students can read by the end of first grade? Why do you think that she wants to put a sign outside?

6. Do you know what Rebecca is looking for when she comes in to observe you? Is there a formal rubric? What are you supposed to be looking for when you do a self evaluation? What happens if your and Rebecca evaluations aren’t in line with each other? Are these evaluations part of the tenure process? What kinds of behaviors could “get you out of a job” (page 10)? Are there any kind of “ultimate consequences” to negative evaluations?

7. Could you talk to me a little bit more about what your philosophies are (see page 12)? Could you explain to me what kinds of dictates you are speaking of on page 20? Who would be giving you these dictates?

8. Could you tell me a little bit more about the MSU testing program that you talk about on page 11?

9. On page 12 you speak of the schools’ “clientele”, what (and whom) do you mean by that?

10. Could you tell me more about what kinds of changes you are trying to implement (see page 14)? How do you implement change?

11. Could you tell me about how you determine where individuals are (page 15)?

12. On page 3, you speak about the school improvement team, and writing goals for school improvement. Could you tell me a little bit more about the team, and what it means to set school wide goals?

APPENDIX E

TEACHER/PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW III PROTOCOL

1. a) Over the course of our first two interviews, we have talked about responsibilities, expectations, norms and standards at the school, whether they be formally articulated, or informally understood. In your position as a _____, are you encouraged in any way to adhere to school norms, rules, and regulations? Are you at all discouraged from deviating from any kinds of standards or expectations? Are there any incentives for you to “be a good _____”? Are there any sanctions against you if you are a “bad _____”?

b) **PRINCIPAL ONLY** In your position as a supervisor of staff, do you encourage teachers in any way to adhere to school norms, rules, and regulations? Do you discouraged them at all from deviating from any kinds of standards or expectations? Do you provide any incentives for them to be “good teachers”? Do you sanction them if they are a “bad teachers”?

2. a) If you do (or did) a “bad job” at the school, how would someone make sure that you did a “good job”, or change your practice? For example, if a parent didn’t agree with the way that you _____, how would they go about trying to make sure that you changed in a way that would make them happy? Would this be any different for the district or corporation? Is there anyone else who might try to change your practices? How would they do this?

b) **PRINCIPAL ONLY** If a teacher did a “bad job” at the school, how would you make sure that they did a “good job”, or changed their practice? What actions might you take if a teacher was not satisfying your expectations? What actions might you take if a teacher wasn’t meeting a parent’s expectations? Is there anyone else who might try to change teacher practices? How would they do this?

3. Do you (or did you) ever find yourself in a position where you felt as though you couldn’t fulfill all of the responsibilities of your job at the school? For example, did you ever find the district or corporation to want you to focus on something that was contradictory to your own vision of education? Have you ever found some expectations of you to be mutually exclusive, or perhaps working against one another? Were there ever times where you felt that others’ expectations of you were unreasonable? How did you handle these situations?

4. a) Could you please list a minimum of six (there is no maximum) people, or groups of people with whom you developed or maintained relationships in your capacity as an educator at the school? I would appreciate it if, while you are thinking through how to fill out the sheet, you could think aloud, and try to explain to me why you are choosing the people or groups that you are writing down.

- Why do you have relationships with these people?
- Are these “required” or formally articulated in any way?
- How did you develop or maintain these relationships?

b) Now that you have listed these people, are they listed in order of their importance to you, as an educator? If they are not, could you please rank them in order of importance in the box next to the names? Once again, thinking aloud would be very helpful.

5. Using this list, I would like for you to draw me a diagram of how all of these people and groups operate in relation to both you and each other. You may graphically represent these relationships in whatever manner you choose. Please try to explain your diagram to me as you draw it.

6. Reflecting back on both of our interviews, as well as this session, do you have any other comments or thoughts on roles, responsibilities, expectations, or accountability? Out of my own curiosity, how often do you think about the issues and topics that we have been discussing, outside of the interview time? Had you thought about them before?

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW III LIST SHEET

Name: _____

School: _____

People or Groups with Whom I Developed or Maintained Relationships:

APPENDIX G:

EXAMPLES OF ACCOUNTABILITY DIAGRAMS

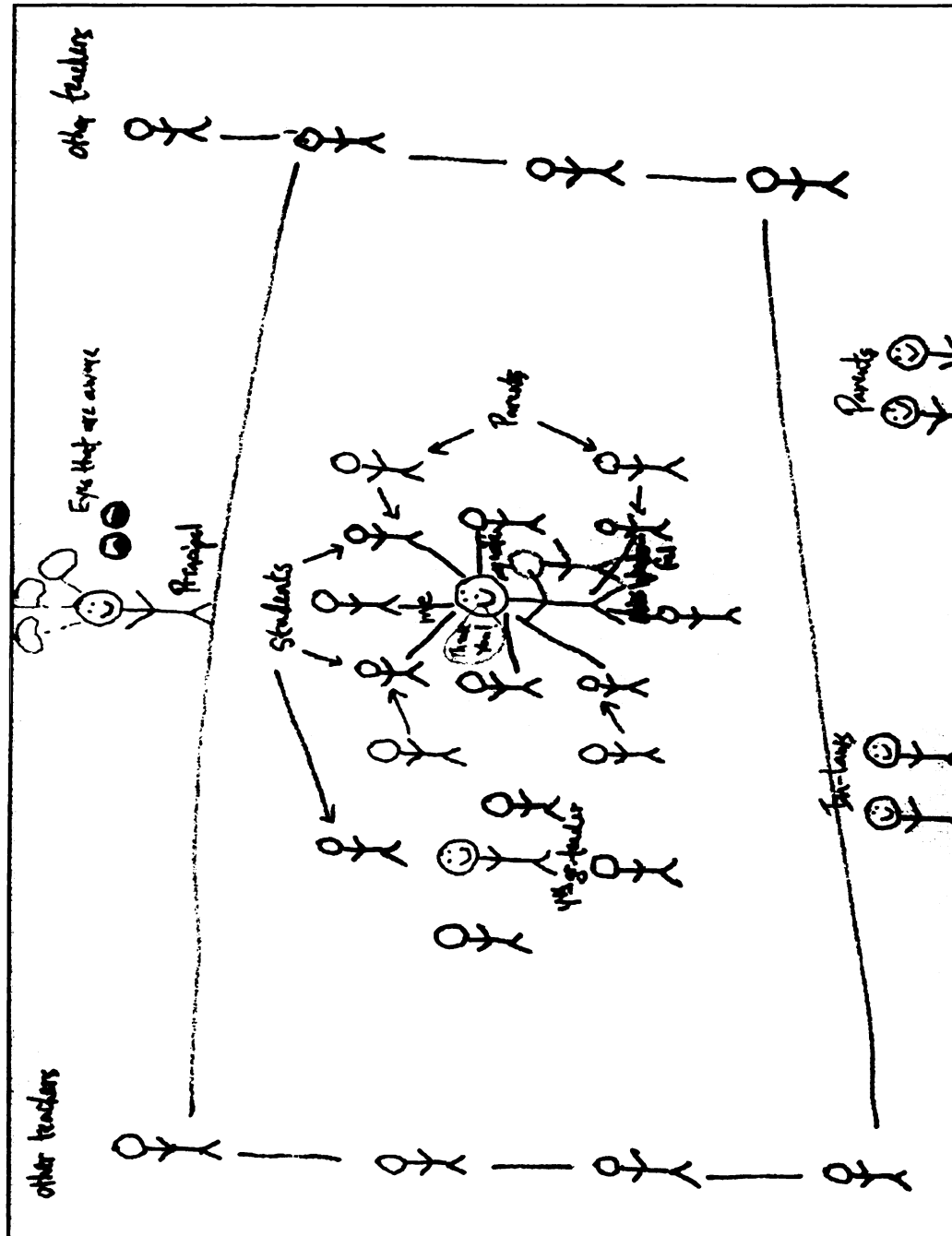


Figure 6: David Norman's Accountability Diagram



Figure 7: Pat Homer's Accountability Diagram

APPENDIX H

INTERVIEWEE COMMENTARY/RESPONSE

The commentary or questions which I interspersed throughout the interview transcripts became a part of the transcript text, so that I would later be able to identify common themes across interviews. These were separated from the actual interview conversation by being bracketed and bolded. In the event that an interviewee responded to either the transcript or a question I had written, their comments also became a part of the text. I introduced this discourse as italicized print. Thus, when I asked a question about the transcript that was then answered by the interviewee, the text might look as the following, an excerpt from Michelle Fisher's first interview transcript:

I: . . . would you say that you have any specific types of, related to subject matter, academic goals for your students as well? Or is it just all related to this idea of getting them to like learning?

C: No, I have, I guess academic goals by subject matter. Yes, I want them to learn. Yes, I want them all to read at grade level or higher. Some have difficulties that I don't exactly know how to teach. Dyslexic students. I don't know what to do for them. I don't know how to teach them to rearrange words. You know, we've not ever had any training. I will do my best to try to find out some day, you know, if I ever see a training seminar. Math, I want them all to know if nothing more by the end of 6th grade, at least how to add, subtract, multiply and divide in at least a complicated manner because from there, then they can work on percentages and everything else. Which are basic life functions.

[How do you set academic goals? -- *You know, I don't know how to explain it. I just do, it's almost instinctual. I look at where the child is, where the district says s/he should be, and go from there. I like to set a goal that is one level farther than I think they can go. It gives us both something to work on. When I say instinctual, it's because I have no set formula or rubric that I follow. Much is looking at their work, observing them, and "gut feeling"/intuition.*

In some cases, interviewees responded to the transcript text, clarifying, or expanding on areas about which I had not questioned them. For example, Terry Brenner wrote a commentary on her definition of accountability based on a portion of our second interview:

I: . . . So if account, if being accountable is not being told what to do and responding to that, what is it then? Or is it just a question of me reading too much into what you said?

J: Well, I think accountability is, I see what you're saying. I think you do need that part in about being told what to do. To be accountable.
[Accountability is following through on a project or responsibility, it is an ability to demonstrate that you can do the job (whatever it is). Somebody, somewhere is "counting on" you to do your job. So for me that would translate like the parents, students, and co-workers (Board, Leona, etc.) expect me to be able to account for how I spent their money, or my time, or their services (because they are paying me for the service of teaching). Accountability is like an abstract receipt for exchange of services.]

In this case, I entered her commentary into the portion of the interview where she had written it on paper.

Respondents occasionally made corrections to things that they had said in their interview, or filled in ahead that were inaudible. In these cases, the interviewee's corrections were added, but noted as written by the interviewee so as not to corrupt the original transcript. For example, Jerry Pleasants filled in some blank places in his first interview. The following passage is representative of the "changed" transcript:

J: Well, they expect you to be a good role model for teachers and your students. And be someone they can respect. (inaudible) you know, that's why they go *[through]* quite a *[stringent]* screening process. They wanta make sure that (inaudible) *[we can live up to their expectations of a good role model and instructional leader]*.

Thus, I was able to read both the original transcript, and the changes offered by Jerry, and distinguish between the two.

APPENDIX I:

AGENTS OF ACCOUNTABILITY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. What are your responsibilities as a/an _____?
What is your formal job description?
What other informal responsibilities do you have?
2. What are your primary expectations of a school?
What are the stated guidelines for teachers/principals/schools?
Are there any informal expectations?
- 2b. How do you encourage educators to adhere to your expectations? How do you discourage them from deviating from your expectations? Do you provide any incentives for educators to be “good” at their jobs? Do you sanction them for poor performance?
3. What is/are your primary goal(s) as a/an _____?
How will you know whether or not you have achieved that goal?
4. What kinds of records do you require to be kept on: students, teachers, principals, and schools?
Are there any kinds of tests given? Why?
Are teachers evaluated? How? Why?
Are principals monitored in any way? How? Why?
What information is collected and used to determine how the school is doing?
How do you gauge important outcomes of the school?
- 4b. What do you do with these records?
5. How do you know whether or not a school is “working”?
How would you describe an “effective”/“good” student?
How would you describe an “effective”/“good” classroom?
How would you describe an “effective”/“good” teacher?
How would you describe an “effective”/“good” school?
- 5b. If an educator or school did a “bad job”, how would you go about making sure that they did a “good job” or changed their practice? Is there any one else who might try to change school/educator practices? How would they go about doing that?
6. Are there any kinds of documents that would help me better understand the role that you play in holding schools, or educators, accountable?

Modified Parent Interview Protocol

1. Could you tell me a little bit about how you came to enroll your child at the school?
2. How are you involved with the school?
- 2b. What are your responsibilities as a parent at the school?
How did you learn about these responsibilities?
What do you think would happen if you failed to live up to the expectations of the school?
- 2c. What are your responsibilities as a _____ ?
Is there a formal job description?
Are there any informal expectations?
3. What are your primary expectations of this school?
What are your primary expectations of teachers?
What are your primary expectations of the principal?
What are your primary expectations of the corporation?
- 3b. How do you know whether or not your expectations are being met?
- 3c. How do you ensure that your expectations are met?
4. How do you know whether or not a school is “working”?
How would you describe an “effective”/”good” student?
How would you describe an “effective”/”good” classroom?
How would you describe an “effective”/”good” teacher?
How would you describe an “effective”/”good” school?
5. Let’s say you think a teacher is doing a “bad job”. What actions might you take?
What actions *can* you take? If you wanted to ensure that their practices improved, how might you go about doing that?
- 5b. Let’s say you think the principal is doing a “bad job”. What actions might you take?
What actions *can* you take? If you wanted to ensure that their practices improved, how might you go about doing that?
- 5c. Let’s say you think the school is doing a “bad job”. What actions might you take?
What actions *can* you take? If you wanted to ensure that the school changed, how might you go about doing that?
6. Do you feel as though you have any kind of influence over school policies, procedures, rules, regulations, etc. (i.e. curriculum or discipline)? How do you influence them?

APPENDIX J

DOCUMENTS COLLECTED

Table 12: Documents Collected

<u>Materials from Chartering Agents</u>	<u>Materials from Eisenhower PSA</u>
NSU Charter School Pamphlet	ETS Recruitment Pamphlet
NSU Analysis of 1998 CS MEAP Scores	Eisenhower Teacher Interview Questions
NSU Application to Charter	ETS Teacher Contracts
NSU Compilation of CS News Articles	ETS Teacher Employee Handbook
BMC Charter Application	ETS Effective Teacher In-Service Materials
BMC Charter Contract	ETS Teacher Performance Appraisal Form
BMC Fiscal Agent Agreement	D.Cole Completed Performance Appraisal
BMC Compliance Record	Formal Observation Form
BMC Oversight Responsibility Lists	B.Hughes Completed Formal Observation
BMC Applicant Rating Sheet	ETS Principal Performance Appraisal Form
BMC Performance Indicator Sheet	ETS Principal Performance Assessment
	Eisenhower 1997-8 Annual Report
<u>Materials from The Community School</u>	Notes -- School Strategic Planning Session
3-5 Year School Improvement Plan	Child Study Team Materials (Sp.Ed.)
Jaffe Partnership Teacher Handbook	Parent Satisfaction Survey
Original Community School Pamphlet	D.Cole Parent Survey Results Fall 1997
Goals 2000 Project Abstract	School Parent Survey Results Spring 1998
Evaluation Notes from Jackie Benjamin	Eisenhower Parent Contract
Jaffe Communications Re: Benefits	Eisenhower Parent Handbook
Parent Satisfaction Survey Form	Parent Questionnaire for Teachers
12 Principles of the Community School	Samples of Teacher Friday Newsletters
History/Philosophy of School Flyer	ETS Curricular Objectives/Standards
Teacher Competencies and Duties	ETS Curriculum Grade-Level Benchmarks
School Improvement Team Meeting Notes	ETS Curricular Guidelines
School Improvement Team Learner Goals	Saxon Math Curricula Materials
SIT Information from the Jaffe Partnership	Open Court Reading Curricula Materials
Melissa Fisher Personal Notes	E.D. Hirsch Science Materials
Jaffe Management Agreement	Daily Oral Analogies Materials
Jaffe Teacher Contracts	Daily Oral Math Materials
Jaffe Recruitment Materials	Daily Oral Science Materials
High/Scope Guidelines	
High/Scope Training Materials	<u>Other Additional Materials</u>
	Kent ISD Core Curriculum
	MDE School District Data Book
	MDE School Report

Mann Elementary Materials

1997 School Annual Report

1998 School Annual Report

Mann Community Questionnaire Form

Mann Elementary School Success Card

CSD School Improvement Goals

CSD 5 year Strategic Plan

CSD Core Curriculum

CSD Policies and Procedures Handbook

CSD Teacher Interview Questions

CSD Teacher Interview Grid

CSD Administrator Performance Appraisal

CSD Teacher Appraisal Handbook

CSD Teacher Evaluation Form

CSD Recruitment Brochure

CSD 1998 Annual Report

CSD Strategic Plan Update Memo RE: Schools Not Reaching MEAP Target

CSD K-8 Mathematics Parent's Guide

CSD Student Code of Conduct

CSD Report Cards

CSD Learner Objectives

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