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**CREATING HOPEFUL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS:
COLLISIONS IN PRACTICE**

VOLUME I

By

Ranae Beyerlein

A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

CREATING HOPEFUL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS: COLLISIONS IN PRACTICE

By

Ranae Beyerlein

Neoliberal discourse and a public demanding accountability and efficiency in education forebode a “growing testing” culture that advantages more privileged groups of students. In this dissertation, Hopeful Learning Environments (HLE’s) are envisioned as diversified, democratically engaging, and welcoming places that utilize community resources, action research, and learning theory to promote effective teaching and learning for all. This study uses qualitative methods, including the use of a modification of PhotoVoice, to investigate where the collision points are that constrain teachers from building capacity to create HLE’s in three suburban high schools in Michigan. The findings show that the essential elements that contribute to building capacity to create HLE’s include: (a) accessing resources to support students’ learning in schools and its extended environment; (b) building authentic relationships with students, teachers, administrators, and community members that are respectfully reciprocal and productive; (c) accessing ongoing professional learning to ensure their relevance as teachers, in particular the use of technology as a learning tool and (d) acknowledging the teacher’s sense of value (self-efficacy) as contributing citizens of school experiences. It appears that when these four elements are positively present an HLE thrives. The factors that constrain teachers are the lack of adequate funding in Michigan, students’ lack of readiness to learn, a divestment from building learning relationships among teachers through professional development and from engaging in a professional environment,

school policies that divert attention to testing and away from nurturing the human spirit, and the lack of time is an overarching constraint that may result and contribute to a number of the other constraining factors. Educators can better construct their work by engaging in dialog about creating HLE's, making time for students and colleague relationships, being reflective about practice, making practice public, and engaging the community in the process of making HLE's.

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PREFACE

Although apparently structured as such, this document is neither a typical dissertation, nor is it atypical. As a researcher, I choose to include in the findings selected photographs taken by the participants as their responses to my prompts. They select the subjects in the photographs, as they also select the comments they make about those photographs. In my role as researcher, I select which of their photographs to publish in this document, as well as which of their comments to share. I try to present the comments that best describe the meaning that I think the participants attribute to their own and others' photographs, but because of my selectivity, situatedness, and biases, and the contextual limitations of this document, the intentions of the participants and my intentions may not be entirely consistent or transparent. Because the participants are real people, their photographs, and any comments they make are also contextual for the same reasons. Because of this, I invite further dialog among educators regarding the topics in this document.

The presentation of both the selected photographs along with the selected comments juxtaposes a tension between my voice as a subjective researcher with my own perspective and the allegedly objective vantage point of a researcher. This tension causes a messy puzzle for me, a conundrum with trying to negotiate that tension and trying to create an opportunity for the reader to engage in reading and interpreting the text in a dynamic fashion. In choosing to present the data in this fashion in this document, I am hoping to encourage the reader to talk-back to the text, making your own sense of the photographs and the comments that the participants make regarding them, knowing that these are selected from a quantity of photographs and comments that the participants

shared. It is difficult for me to present complex dynamics here without being reductive, and yet in presenting data in any form, that is exactly what a researcher does.

I recognize that the presentation of this data presents interesting questions regarding the presentations of innovative methods in a dissertation format. The resolution of how best to handle that as novice researchers is yet to come. I encourage further experimentation and creativity as technology and our human imaginations and courage allow.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Building Capacity through Sharing a Common Vision

[T]o know how to teach is to create possibilities for the construction and production of knowledge rather than to be engaged simply in a game of transferring knowledge. When I enter a classroom I should be someone who is open to new ideas, open to questions, and open to the curiosities of the students as well as their inhibitions...I ought to be aware of being a critical and inquiring subject in regard to the task entrusted to me, the task of teaching and not that of transferring knowledge.

It is important to insist...on this kind of teaching as necessary to being a teacher and as necessary to everyone in education. (Freire, 1998a p. 49).

As the first waves of reconstituted schools roll in, after having failed to make the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act's mandated adequate yearly progress (AYP), budget constraints from a weakened economy and a public demanding accountability and efficiency in education forebode changes in the educational environment. Authorities call for teachers to lead educators through these trying times in education via teacher leadership activities, such as collaborative decision making and shared capacity building (Barth, 1990, 2001; Cooper, 1993; Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster & Cobb, 1995; Duke, 1994; Fullan, 1994; Lambert, Collay, Dietz, Kent & Richert, 1996; Leithwood & Pristine, 2002; Lieberman & Miller, 2004; Lieberman, Saxl & Miles, 2000; Louis & Riley, 2000a; Sergiovanni, 1984; Smith & Scott, 1990; Tanck, 1994; Walling, 1994; West, Jackson, Harris & Hopkins, 2000). Almost in contrast to the calls for accountability and school efficiency, which characterize schools as factories of learning, Paulo Freire (1998a) advocates for what I will call a hopeful learning environment (HLE). This vision, also

shared by others (Hargreaves, 2003; Kozol, 1996; Lambert et al., 1996; Lieberman & Miller, 2004; Lieberman et al., 2000; Louis & Riley, 2000), is to create schools where the deep or powerful learning (Finnan & Levin, 1998) needed to transform society into an inclusive and sustainable productive community is cultivated. Some of these same authors advocate for teachers to assist in leading us there. As teachers attempt to create these deep and HLE's, their efforts collide with many internal and external factors that impede their progress.

If HLE's are envisioned as diversified, democratically engaging, and welcoming places that utilize community resources, action research (Sagor, 2005), and learning theory to promote effective teaching and learning for all, then creating them is imperative. HLE's might be able to engage learners in the learning process, and engage teachers in the teaching process, with all stakeholders benefiting from their results. To create these HLE's within existing schools is a daunting task that might require teachers to join in partnership with administrators and other stakeholders. Hence, teachers would share in the school leadership process. This vision of teachers sharing the responsibility of leading schools might mean, at a minimum, having a voice in school-related decision-making (to include curriculum and instruction, budgeting and planning, and any supporting structures that might impact their instructional efficacy) as well as sharing in the work to build the school's capacity to create HLE's among the teacher core. The essence of this idea collides with traditional views of school leadership (Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970). Those colliding structures and practices will be examined here, as well as whether shared capacity building or some other decision-making practices may provide a more direct route to creating HLE's. For example, if shared capacity building is thought

to be beneficial to schools and likely to result in creating HLE's, then analyzing the colliding factors will likely show which practices, currently embedded in school culture are preventing educators from creating HLE's. Knowing these colliding forces will help us to better negotiate them when we attempt to create HLE's. Studying the colliding forces may enlighten the best routes to take in creating HLE's.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate the collision points that constrain teachers from building capacity to create HLE's, to better understand what the possibilities for an HLE might be, and to determine the best routes to create them. The focus of this study will be to study how teachers, who are interested in improving teaching and learning, negotiate the constraints that prevent creating HLE's. This exploratory study will elucidate existing tensions that compromise educators' efforts when they attempt to create HLE's. In investigating this process, the power relations that affect participation and outcomes will be examined through a shared capacity building model (SCB model), which will be described later. Additionally, the effects of existing institutional structures, such as time allocation, on building capacity and in creating HLE's will be studied.

Examples of Hope and Hopelessness

Tina (pseudonym) is at college now, but when I first met her as a high school junior at the school where I teach, she looked like she could have been in middle school. She appeared to be a plump but happy teen with fantasies of fast cars and rich husbands. I knew her to be lonely and afraid, sad and cheated out of the normal life that she saw other girls her age parading as they preened. Tina found all of her belongings on the

front lawn next to the street one wintry afternoon. She was embarrassed that her friends would see that she'd been evicted. Tina's mother's breast cancer had returned and metastasized and would kill her in a year. Because of her illness, she hadn't been working, and as a single parent with no income, she fell behind in the rent. During Tina's school years, until her illness disabled her, Tina's mother paid three or four times the rent she would have paid for the same apartment just a mile away in order for Tina to attend school in a high achieving district.

After being evicted, Tina and her mother moved into a flat with Tina's older brother where they shared a double bed on an unheated, screened summer porch with plastic wrap providing the only insulation during a cold Midwestern winter. As her mother's health deteriorated, Tina cried when she told me she was afraid she wouldn't have a place to live. She was afraid no one would want her. Her father didn't want anything to do with her and she hadn't seen him in years. During spring break of Tina's senior year, while most of her classmates were sunning on Mexican beaches, she attended a memorial service for her mother, who passed away the first day of vacation. While other girls shopped for designer gowns and made plans for limousines to take them and their friends to the prom, Tina hoped that her father would send some money from Georgia so she could get a dress. He didn't.

Tina's story would be poignant if it were set in any school, but it occurred in a school that has won both national and state recognition for academic, performing arts, and athletic achievement. A year later an underclassman at Tina's school, whose family provided all of the stability and accoutrements that an upper middle income in Tina's affluent community could produce, was successful in his suicide attempt, leaving his

educators feeling as if we failed him even while we feel pride for our other accomplishments. Experiencing the loss of life of a fourteen year old from a self-inflicted gun wound makes me more aware that we have yet to create an HLE in the community where I work. In other communities, those with fewer economic resources and fewer social support networks, the problem may be worse.

About ten years ago a group of my high school students collected school supplies for a neighboring school in an urban environment and we went to the school to deliver them to the children. The principal greeted us at the door and walked us through the building. She was excited about a roomful of new computers, but distraught they were sitting unused because no one knew how to use them and there were no funds available for training. As we walked through the building, there were obvious signs of disrepair: leaking roofs, peeling paint, and damaged fixtures. My high school students looked stunned when they saw the elementary students standing in line to receive a four-square allotment of toilet tissue before heading into the bathroom. As each student came out, the teacher dispensed one small squirt of liquid soap into the tiny pair of hands cupped like beggars' hands receiving rice in famished foreign lands. One of my students nudged another and pointed to missing tiles in the ceiling on our way out. There was residue surrounding the hole that I knew to be exposed asbestos. There were no artwork displays on the walls, no volunteer lists with weekly snack treat duties neatly organized, no club meeting announcements posted. That there were children sitting in desks and women presiding over them were the only similarities between my students' experiences in elementary schools with what we were seeing.

My students were so moved by the experience that they asked if they could make regular visits to tutor students there after school. What my students did was one small step in creating an HLE in an impoverished neighborhood. They invested themselves in helping a school where the students had neither grass on which to play nor any recreational equipment in their school yard. My high school students, who until then had never been so intimate with a school in an urban environment, easily recognized the hopelessness present in such a desolate setting. My students, without being told, sensed that fewer than half of the students present at their tutoring sessions would make it as far in their education as they already had. They wanted to help in some small way.

More recently after reflecting on Freire's (1998b) work (among others), I worry that as white, middle-class visitors to an urban school, in helping to create an HLE, although we weren't calling it that then, that we were "creating, in turn, a new form of methodological rigidity laced with benevolent oppression...by refusing to deal with the issue of class privilege" (Macedo & Freire, 1998, p. xiv). It was difficult to imagine my then fourteen year old students harboring a secret oppressive agenda, but class and race issues are pervasive and seemingly subconsciously rooted. That my students wanted to tutor less privileged younger students could be an example of the insidious cultural elitism that Freire warns us against. Instead, more hopefully, it could have been my students' attempt at "reinvent[ion], in communion, [of] a society where exploitation and the verticalization of power do not exist, where the disenfranchised segments of society are not excluded or interdicted from reading the world by reading the word" (pp. xiii).

Defining and Envisioning Hopeful Learning Environments

Hopeful learning environments provide three things that are implied. They provide “hope” for all parties involved in them. “Learning” is an essential ingredient in them. In choosing to use the word “environment” instead of schools, we can begin to envision learning in an era that is very different from when schools were first organized in the way that most adults today first experienced them as students. I will elaborate on each of these three components.

Hope

Being hopeful gives purpose to learning and to the lives that will be impacted by the learning. In Freire’s (1998b) thinking, this is the act of “reading the world by reading the word” (p. xiii). In many rural, suburban, and urban schools today, over 50 per cent of the students live with either a single parent or an adult who is not a parent. Children in single parent households are more likely to be below the poverty level and are less likely to achieve at grade level on standardized tests (National Center of Educational Statistics [NCES], 1995). In Michigan, over 30 % of the school-aged children are eligible to receive free and reduced lunch and 10.8 % live in single parent households (Standards & Poor’s, 2007). Disadvantaged in parenting and socio-economic status, they begin school already behind the advantaged students in both social and academic skills (Alexander, Entwisle & Olson, 2004; Roderick, Jacob & Bryk, 2004).

Hope is defined as a wish or desire accompanied by confident expectation of its fulfillment. In its verb form, it is to wish for something with expectation of its fulfillment, to have confidence and trust, and to look forward to something with confidence or expectation (American Heritage Dictionary, 2006). In schools, having hope can be

extended to mean that students and their families have confidence that the schools will teach students what they need to know in order to achieve success in their future endeavors.

Learning Environments

In a hopeful learning environment, students believe they can learn and that their teachers can facilitate their learning. Students willingly work on meaningful tasks, realize the importance of practicing and acquiring skills, and know that learning is progressive. Students are eager to learn and select age appropriate tasks of interest. They try challenging tasks because they know that there is hope that they will be successful if they continue to take on challenging and more challenging work. They are respectful of others' learning and help others when they are able to. They respect their own learning and ask for help when they need it. They are respectful to their family members and to others in their school and community because there is hope for a better world when we are respectful to each other. Students in a hopeful learning environment can talk about their learning, and are hopeful that it will help them to be successful in their endeavors.

In an HLE, teachers believe they can teach. They believe that their students can and want to learn. They know their students will learn when they are given the conditions that promote their learning and that not all of their students will learn at the same rate in the same way (Danielson, 2002). Teachers in an HLE try different methods and use variety of assessments to ensure learning is occurring. If learning doesn't occur, they take another route to get there (hooks, 2003; Marzano, Norford, Paynter, Pickering & Gaddy, 2001). Teachers in an HLE provide the support that their students need to be and feel successful in their learning. Teachers interact with other teachers in a

professional and collegial way, by interacting with peers to advance their profession (Lieberman & Miller, 2004). Teachers know that they have made a difference in their students' lives and believe that in being who they are and in doing what they do, that their students' lives will be better for it. Teachers in a hopeful learning environment live and work in the present to make a better future. They possess what Freire (1998b) calls "lovingness not only toward the students but also toward the very process of teaching" (p. 40).

Yet schools are expected to move students (regardless of context) forward, making prescribed increases in performance on standardized tests. Standardized tests have been shown to further disadvantage minority groups (Hedges & Nowell, 1999; Heller & Shapiro, 2001). To be successful in this environment, disadvantaged students may need additional support and nurturing that might be available in the homes of other students. They need someone who cares about them, someone who gives them hope that their lives will be better. Not only do we need to provide children an opportunity to be hopeful, but teachers and parents need to have hope that they can help their students and children be successful in school and afterwards. Our society needs to be hopeful that our educational institutions can assist in preparing our children to be able to form healthy relationships and to be successful in setting and achieving educational and personal goals (Obama, 2007). HLE's, therefore, are transformative for those that engage in learning in them.

In an HLE, the community believes that the schools are working to their potential for all learners. The community works with students and educators to build capacity to sustain the HLE. The community commits its resources in supporting the learning,

utilizes the products of the learning, and encourages more learning. The community realizes that the learning of its youth is a hopeful predictor of a better future for all (Obama, 2007).

In an HLE, the learning is deep and meaningful to its members. All members in the HLE view learning as a worthy goal in and upon itself and as a means to other goals. Members in the HLE view learning as a life long process and realize that learning is a process that occurs in layers over time. Learning skills is essential before process can be expertly enacted, but skills alone aren't worth as much as the deep and meaningful learning that can transform one's thinking (Freire, 1998a).

Students in an HLE view the learning environment as something that is both personal and collective. The students frequently make choices about what to learn, how to learn it, and how to demonstrate the learning that has occurred. The students collaborate with each other and with their teachers to individualize their learning program. A student's learning can occur individually with personal study goals and acquired skills, collaboratively in groups involved in research, or in whole group instruction. Learning can occur both in and out of school. Learning will occur using technology and community resources, locally, nationally, and globally. Learning is thematic, project-based, engaging, relevant, interactive, and an expected norm.

The environment in HLE's is hopeful and conducive to learning. It can be envisioned in at least three physical places, which are the school, home and community. When hopeful learning is happening, students feel valued, safe, and supported in all three locales. An HLE can also be envisioned as transcending traditional institutional practices to provide occasions to support learning out of the mainstream via utilization of

community resources and alternative learning venues and times. What bell hooks (2003)

depicts regarding universities, I advocate applying to the high school setting:

Teachers who have a vision of democratic education assume that learning is never confined solely to an institutionalized classroom. Rather than embodying the conventional false assumption that the [high school] setting is not the 'real world' and teach accordingly, the democratic educator breaks through the false construction of the [high school] as set apart from real life and seeks to re-envision schooling as always a part of our real world experience, and our real life. Embracing the concept of a democratic education we see teaching and learning as taking place constantly (p. 41).

In an HLE, the physical plant of the school would be comfortable, and learning resources for students and teachers would be available including state-of-the-art-technology, manipulatives and other materials as needed. The plant would have rooms designed or retrofitted with structure to support the learning activities that are housed there. For example, science rooms would have proper safety equipment, such as eye wash stations, showers, fume hoods; adequate storage, work, and display space; proper functioning equipment such as microscopes, interface devices for integrating measurements with computers, glassware, adequate consumable supplies, and the means to readily access learning materials. The school building would be safe and pleasant. Some schools already provide such an environment but far too many fall short in providing these environments (Kozol, 1996).

In extending HLE's to include the student's home environment, a student's home would have a learning nook carved out for the student, both physically and figuratively. The student's family would make space in the family's schedule to support learning outside of the school and practice habits that would enable the student to be a better learner, such as providing proper nutrition and an adequate sleep schedule (Maslow,

1968). Accordingly, a student in an HLE will have a physical space to practice learning in the home. The space could be a desk in a bedroom, or a den or closet dedicated to learning. In creating an HLE, schools, families and communities will collaborate to create learning spaces in students' homes.

Being hopeful is being optimistic but not naïve; being hopeful can be translated into being realistic by insisting on setting goals that are achievable and worthy. Being hopeful is providing the needed support for teachers and students to be successful in their endeavors. Being hopeful is looking and moving toward a better future. They are places where parents can learn how to help their children be better learners and how to be hopeful about their children's future.

Finally, when educators share capacity building to build HLE's, students will find learning opportunities in their communities. They will have access to technology in their neighborhood or school libraries, and will utilize other community resources for learning. HLE's facilitate school-aged students learning in a variety of venues, such as independent studies in art or history museums, cooperative employment or apprenticeships in local businesses, investigating and helping to resolve community problems, utilizing community resources for purposeful learning. Aside from schools' custodial function, which prescribes days and hours of instruction by law, in an HLE, school buildings can be utilized to support learning outside of the normal school day. Studies have shown that certain types of learners show less regression over an extended vacation when they attend summer school (Roderick et al., 2004), for example. Providing convenient and engaging opportunities for summer and after school learning, rather than mandating attendance in stifling hot rooms with rote and repetitious programs, will evidence hopeful learning for

those that will benefit from it. HLE's are schools where students and their families *want* to come, perhaps evenings, weekends, and summers.

The tradition of public compulsory education in the United States is steeped in generations of expectations and tradition. How educators negotiate the colliding factors that constrain them from improving teaching and learning is a complex process involving organizations, professionals, policy makers, parents, students, and other community members. To give justice to such a complex process, I began with several theoretical lenses full well knowing, especially in light of the qualitative nature of this study, that they may shift over time as it was informed by the empirical data collected.

The two main theoretical lenses that I employ in this study are Freire's critical theory, and Blase and Anderson's (1995) shared capacity building (SCB) model. Freire's critical insight into the politics of power and struggle in a cross-cultural educational setting has relevance to this study for several reasons. First, he speaks to the dichotomy of practicing administration in school organizations—the polarity of authoritarian vs. democratic administration. He recognizes the disparity of power in the roles of teacher and students, the teachers and administrators, the oppression that can result from this disparity, and the oppression that can result from empowered class, gender and race disparities.

Recognizing the work of organizational theorists on inclusive organizational structures in decision-making as a venue for enacting change (Hall & Hord, 2001), the shared capacity building model (Blase & Anderson, 1995; Day & Harris, 2002; Finnan & Levin, 1998) is a good tool for analyzing factors that impede creating HLE's (Spillane, Hallett & Diamond, 2003). If teachers are the hope-givers, and they feel hopeless; if they

are to empower their students, and they feel powerless; if they are to teach tolerance, and they are not tolerated as professionals, then it is not likely that they can accomplish what is needed in education.

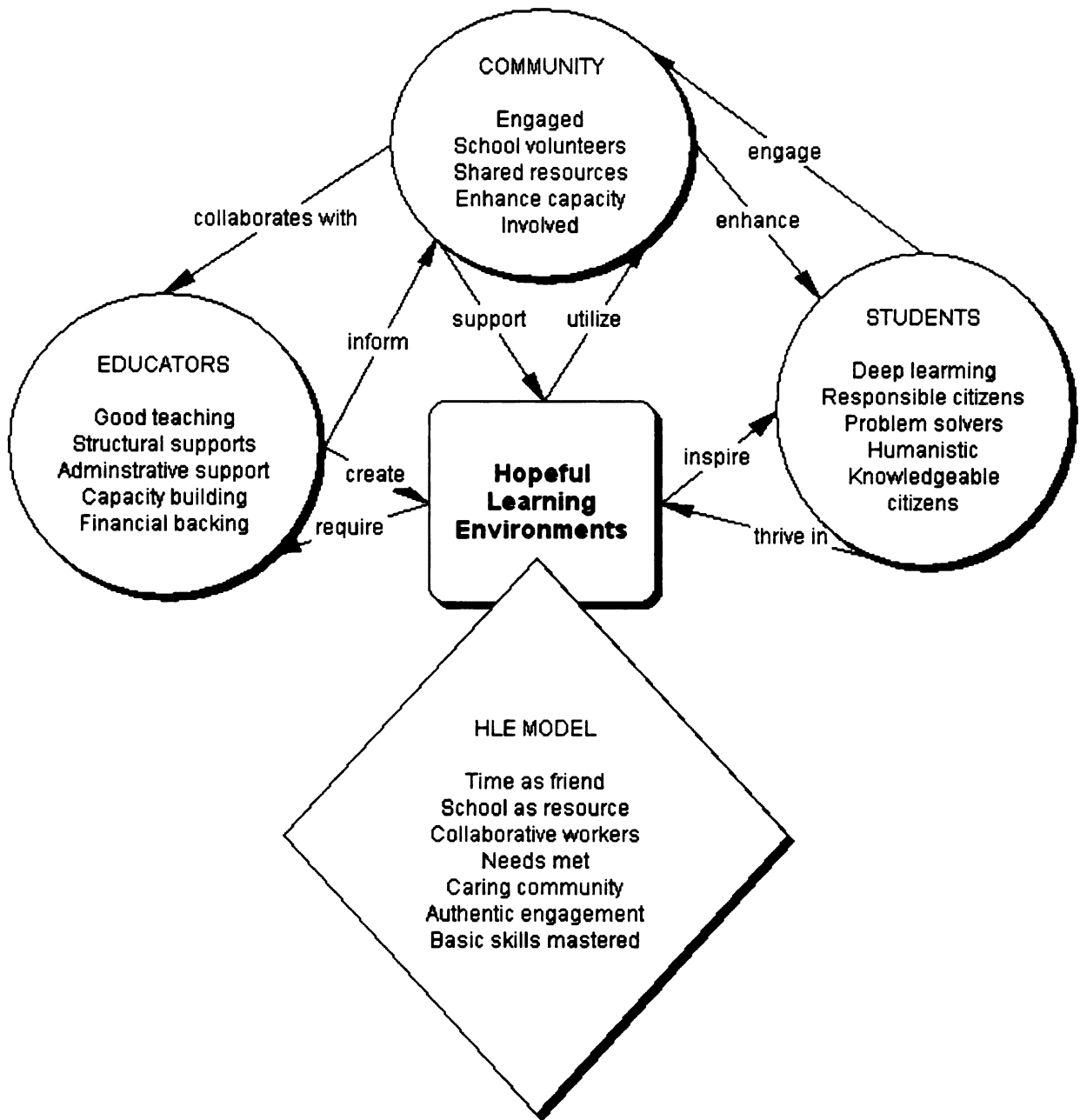
Each of the following theories also provides insight into what educators face when they try to improve teaching and learning. Feminist theory, postmodernist theory and psychology's branch of relational theory address power relations and the dynamics of dialogue (Estrich, 2000; Ferguson, 1984; Holquist, 1990, 2002) operating in bureaucratic organizations such as educational institutions. They also address the paternalistic relations that Freire depicts in school organizations (Gitlin, 1996). Classical and contemporary organizational and power theory speak to school organizations and culture, their maintenance and sustenance, and to the struggles one encounters in trying to make change (Morgan, 1985). Work-life balance theory (Jacobs, 1995) from the field of employment relations speaks to the issues of time commitment, career advancement, professional and personal choices that teachers, mostly women (Padavic & Reskin, 2002), make in order to accommodate the realities of the job as it currently exists and the capacity building needed in order to create HLE's (Preston, 1995). Each of these theoretical lenses contributes in analyzing the complexity of why educators collide with each other and with structures and policies in their attempts to create powerful, diverse, and engaging deep learning. In addition to the brief discussion above, the literature review provides a more in-depth look at the breadth of theory that I utilize to estimate the damage from these collisions so that our journey to create HLE's can continue.

Conceptual Model of a Hopeful Learning Environment

Figure 1.1 is a diagram of the conceptual model of a Hopeful Learning Environment. Despite Wolcott's (1990) admonition "[T]hat the chart speaks for itself happens to be both a fact and a condition for material that appears separate from the text:" (p. 65), I am including a brief description of the initial conceptual model I designed before undertaking this investigation, which will appear again and be discussed more thoroughly in its modified form later in this manuscript. The model shows the HLE as the central component, being somewhat utopic in its vision of time as friend, school as resource, teachers and students as collaborative workers, teachers' and students' needs met, caring community, authentic engagement, basic skills mastered.

The model groups educators together as creating HLE's and informing and collaborating with the community. Ideally all educators including administrators, staff, teachers, and people who inform legislators would collaborate to provide "good teaching, structural supports, administrative support, capacity building, and financial backing," to contribute to HLE's. I envisioned the community as being engaged in supporting HLE's by "volunteering, sharing resources, enhancing capacity, and by being democratically involved." The community consists of students and their families, business owners and workers, residents, legislators and other politicians, and any other stakeholders in ensuring children have HLE's. HLE's will inspire students to become knowledgeable and responsible citizens, humanistic, problem solvers who engage in deep learning. The model depicts students as thriving in HLE's and engaging the community in its support of HLE's. The model was transformed through the research process and the resulting model will be shared in the analysis chapter.

Figure 1.1. Conceptual Model of a Hopeful Learning Environment



Exploratory Questions

The purpose of this investigation was to study the process of building capacity to create HLE's, and to discern the factors that constrain the process of producing powerful learning environments. The overarching exploratory question was

How might teachers in high schools better construct their work in order to create HLE's?

The following sub-questions were also addressed:

1. *In exploring high school teachers' attempts to create HLE's, what factors constrain teachers from creating them? What causes these constraining factors? Where do they occur in the high school organizations? How do these factors prevent teachers from creating HLE's?*
2. *What elements enhance the creation of HLE's? Where is "hope" found in the high school? How and who creates and sustains it?*
3. *In light of this, what can we learn from this study to better foster HLE's in high schools?*

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Terms

Shared Capacity Building

Much existing work in teacher leadership and in organizational leadership is in the area of collaborative decision-making and distributed leadership. The focus of this paper is on the aspect of shared capacity building to create HLE's. Capacity building is conceptualized here as improving teaching and learning by a variety of means including professional development, coaching, professional learning communities, in-service, professional organization conferencing, and peer support groups. Shared capacity building specifically includes teachers in the processes of deciding what support(s) are needed, in providing that support to each other or being empowered to seek it elsewhere as needed, in engaging in action research, and in reflecting on their practice both collectively and as individuals. There is a need to study the processes involved in engaging in shared capacity building, and especially those processes that impede it, if we are to going to be able to use it to improve teaching and learning.

The relevant literature is found in three main areas, which are teacher leadership, including shared capacity building and collaborative decision making; the suspected colliding structures and practices in school settings (such as school culture and tradition, for example); and power theory as it relates to situating the teachers' work of decision making in processes that affect teaching and learning. These areas draw on and interrogate the school organizational structure and culture (to include power relations) and acknowledge the importance of the change process at both the human and

organizational levels. The theory that pertains to each of these areas will be contextually referenced as appropriate.

Teacher Leadership

The first area of this literature review is in the broad area of teacher leadership. This literature provides the theoretical background for the proposition that teachers' collaborating to build capacity is a viable way to improve teaching and learning. The teacher leadership literature is prolific and broad. The literature can be divided into the previously mentioned two categories of shared capacity building and collaborative decision making but there is not always a clear distinction between these categories. As could be expected, there is a great deal of overlap, and some research assumes one aspect of the teacher leadership is present when the other is also present, which may or may not be the case. The focus of this study is on the processes involved in creating HLE's utilizing shared capacity building in high schools.

Including teachers in decision making has been well-studied. Although there are some research areas that need to be further developed in teacher-led decision making, particularly at the high school level, shared capacity building has many areas that haven't yet been studied. The focus of this study is on the aspect of teachers working with other teachers through shared capacity building to create HLE's in high schools. It is hoped that through shared capacity building, schools will be transformed from their current state into more productive, inclusive, and deeper learning environments.

Much has been written on teacher leaders and their potential as resources in schools (Barnes, 2002; Barth, 1990, 2001; Blase & Anderson, 1995; Burch & Spillane, 2003; Caldwell, 2000; Cooper, 1993; Darling-Hammond et al., 1995; Day & Harris,

2002; M. Fullan, 1994; Furman & Starratt, 2002; Goldring & Greenfield, 2002; Grossman et al., 2001; Hargreaves, 1993, 1996, 2003; Johnston & Caldwell, 2001; Lambert, 2003; Lambert et al., 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Leithwood & Prestine, 2002; Lieberman and Miller, 2004; Lieberman, Saxl, & Miles., 2000; Little, 1990, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1996; Smith & Scott, 1990; Smylie et al., 2002; Smylie & Denny, 1990; Spillane et al., 2003; Tanck, 1994; Walling, 1994; Wasley, 1991; Wheatley, 2000; Wilson, 1993; Yarger & Lee, 1994; York-Barr & Duke, 2004) . These studies include both theoretical and empirical pieces. Some examine teachers as decision makers, as in distributed or transformative leadership, while others elaborate the role of teacher leaders in professional development and in reshaping school culture. Collectively these roles are called “teacher leadership,” but considered separately, the activities of teacher leaders can be quite varied. York-Barr collaborated with Duke to perform a comprehensive review of the major contributors to the teacher leader literature. Their work, along with that of Lieberman and Miller provide summaries of the contributions that are already present in this field.

Lieberman and Miller (2004) categorize this literature into the three broad areas. The first is individual roles and organizational realities, which include empirical studies of teacher leadership roles. The major findings include that teachers leaders experience uncertainties about their roles and tensions about time and divided responsibilities (Little, 1995), that they must build trust and rapport (Miles, Saxl & Lieberman, 1988), overcome resistance of peers (Wasley, 1991), negotiate differences between their expectations and those of their principals (Smylie & Denny, 1990), and that they are highly regarded by their peers if they are experienced, knowledgeable, have vision and respect for children

(Miller & O'Shea, 1992). In the second area, learning in practice, they cite literature from outside of the educational field, which are mainly theoretical foundations. Schön's (1983) reflective practitioner, as well as Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning model are included in this group, as well as Hargraeves's (2003) admonishment of instruction via standardized scripts. Lieberman and Miller do not mention contributions of West (2001), who studies professional learning communities among practicing physicians in Britain, or other adult learning models nor do they cite Britzman's (2003) critical study of teachers' emergent practice. Their final category is "Broadened Conceptions of the Teacher Leader Role," which examines professional communities and reshaping school culture. Fullan's (1994) six domains of distributed leadership and Lambert's (2003) delegating teacher leaders to build trust and to perform action research are two of several empirical pieces examining school culture and how teacher leadership has the potential to build capacity.

By analyzing how new organizational roles are learned and enacted, furthering this research may result in normalizing shared capacity building, rather than theoretically prescribing its efficacy. Lieberman and Miller (2004) note, "Th[is] research provides a foundation for understanding the power, promise, and perplexities of teacher leadership" (p. 156). They demonstrate that schools' best response to a variety of external tensions and demands is to utilize teacher leaders via a "cosmopolitan rejoinder" that "supports policies that enable good practice rather than prescribe it; recognize the knowledge, skills, and abilities of teachers; and provide incentives to increase their knowledge" (p. 153).

While some studies show that there is not a quantifiable relationship between teacher leadership (at least in the shared decision making and empowerment studies) and increased performance on standardized test scores (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000), there may be other benefits that weren't detected in these studies. Marks and Printy (2003) show that with integrated leadership, characterized by the co-existence of both shared instructional leadership (including teachers and administrators) and transformational leadership, evidence of both high-quality pedagogy and high student performance levels on authentic assessments. When using data from cross section analyses, the long term benefits of capacity building may not be easy to observe, because benefits from capacity building will accumulate over time as capacity is built. As teachers develop their practice as shared capacity builders, and facilitate the professional growth to change the practice of other teachers, several years may pass before the students' learning benefits directly. Many of the studies are too short term to produce any measurable effect in learning outcomes. This limitation of cross sectional studies can be addressed when the duration and intensity of collective activities in teacher leadership studies are documented.

In concert with Lieberman and Miller (2004), York-Barr and Duke (2004) clearly demonstrate the foundational research in teacher leadership has been laid. York-Barr and Duke present a summative review of forty-one pieces of teacher leadership research, categorizing each by the research question(s), design and method, the nature of the teacher leadership studied, and the key findings of the study. In comparing their compilation to Lieberman and Miller's, there were only three pieces in common. Those were Little (1995), Smylie and Denny (1990), and Wasley (1991). A quantitative summary of the 41 research pieces presented in York-Barr and Duke's appendix,

including the three mentioned in Lieberman and Miller's summary are presented in Table 2.1, which totals their account of atheoretical and theoretical studies, the methods used, and the leadership roles studied.

Table 2.1. Summative Analysis of York-Barr and Duke's Appendix One

Type of Study	Primary Method(s)	Leadership Roles Studied
24 Atheoretical	23 Qualitative 11 Quantitative 5 Mixed Qualitative and Quantitative	16 Decision-making 11 Varying roles 7 Career ladder 3 Professional Development
17 Theoretical	3 Reviews 2 Reports	Schools 2 Unclear/unspecified 2 Government initiatives

York-Barr and Duke classified 24 of the teacher leadership pieces as atheoretical, meaning that there was no theory derived from the empirical work conducted, and 17 as theory generating. Eleven of the studies were described as quantitative studies, 23 were qualitative. The rest were mixed research methods, reviews or reports. The leadership roles studied were categorized as 16 involving some sort of decision-making whether at the school or district level and the remainder were mixed types or unclear teacher leader roles. The major findings are summarized in Table 2.2, as organized by themes. I examined the findings and organized them into five like groupings, which are the themes of *Tensions* teacher leaders face, *Roles* teacher leaders play, *Benefits* of teacher leadership, *Outcomes* shown in the studies, and *Characteristics* of teacher leaders. Some of the findings were repeated in several studies, but I am not emphasizing the preponderance of any of the findings in this analysis.

Table 2.2. Summary Analysis of the Major Findings of Teacher Leadership in York-Barr and Duke's Reviewed Pieces as Organized by Attributes and Themes

Attributes of Teacher Leaders		Emergent Themes	
Roles	Characteristics	Tensions	Benefits
-Mentors -Curriculum developers -Problem solvers -Change agents -Researchers	-Resourceful and organized -Build skills and confidence in others -Collaborative -Experienced -Leadership skills -Subject area expertise	-Time management -Pressure and demands -Colleague distancing -Non-supportive culture -Risky -Disappointment in actual role -Little apparent impact in others' practice -Sharing leadership in a hierarchical system -Lack of incentives	-Increased morale -Big picture perspective -Increased communication - -Increased student motivation -Growth producing -Extrinsic and intrinsic rewards -Reduced isolation
Summary of Reported Outcomes			
-Teacher leader advice more likely to be followed if not obligated -Limited access to teacher leaders produces little impact on changing teacher practice. -Collegiality doesn't extend if teacher leaders have hierarchical authority. -Norms of practice are negotiated proximally. -Empowerment and improvement are not correlated with improvement in student achievement. -In principal dominated schools, teacher participation was sporadic, teachers didn't take initiative or responsibility. -Individual teacher leaders who preferred teaming enjoyed collegiality of decision-making. -Individual teacher leaders who preferred authority preferred administrative functions of roles. -Some principals are most comfortable with selling rather than participatory decision making models. -Most teachers think site-based decision model benefits outweigh the disadvantages. -Most teachers derive little satisfaction in administrative decision-making but prefer to be involved in things that impact teaching.			

Other authors not cited by Leiberman and Miller nor by York-Barr and Duke, such as Richardson (2003) for example, congeal the two different teacher leadership categories of decision making, including various aspects and benefits of empowerment, and capacity building through peer coaching and professional development together when speaking of teacher leadership. Disparate research has focused on teacher empowerment, and has demonstrated improvement of work quality, enhanced professionalism, and enhanced effective implementation of school reform (Dee & Jenkin, 2003). The process by which leaders become efficacious was studied by Howe and Stubbs (2003), which

followed science teachers assisting elementary teachers in science content and pedagogy. As summarized above, much of the teacher leadership findings have implications for building capacity to create HLE's, for improving instruction, and as mortar for creating HLE's. This study focuses on the *process* of shared capacity building to create HLE's. Future research that is longer term could examine the potential benefit of shared capacity building as a catalyst for standardized test performance improvement.

Capacity Building

In addition to the previous definition, capacity can be defined as the ability of a system to provide structure for all students to demonstrate increasingly challenging outcomes but should also include descriptors of the relationship between teacher capacity and the ability of the educational system to accomplish standards-based or systemic reform (O'Day, Goertz & Floden, 1995). A collection of policy briefs of empirical studies reported in the Consortium for Policy Research in Education publication (CPRE) (Massell, 1998, 2000; O'Day et al., 1995) examine themes in capacity building. If the capacity of a school is inadequate, O'Day et al. contend it could be increased by improving the performance of workers—cited by the authors as being the teachers, but it could conceivably be equally applied to the students as well—by increasing available resources, such as staff or technology, or by restructuring either the organization or service delivery. In their empirical study of capacity in three states, O'Day et al. elicited three themes, which are teacher capacity multidimensionality and evolution, and teacher capacity interactions with organizational capacity, and boosting organizational capacity with outside ideas. From their study of K-8 schools involved with reform, they suggest four strategies to build capacity, which are as follows:

- Articulating a reform vision
- Providing instructional guidance
- Restructuring governance and organizational structures
- Establishing evaluation and accountability mechanisms (p. 4)

When discussing what they call the dimensions of organizational capacity, O'Day et al. list vision and leadership, collective commitment and cultural norms, knowledge access, organizational structure linked to learning goals, and the resources of time, personnel, and materials (and especially essential at some sites are social and health services) as part of the necessities in schools.

Massell (2000) lists the four most frequent strategies that districts have used to increase capacity, which are using and interpreting data, building teacher knowledge and skills, aligning curriculum and instruction with standards, and targeting intervention at low-performing schools or individuals. Based on an empirical study of 22 districts in eight states, she writes a case vignette of a district that exemplifies each of the four strategies, stating that in many cases “districts are *the* major source of capacity building for schools...” (emphasis in the original, p. 6). In an earlier piece in the same publication, citing findings from the same study, Massell (1998) organizes seven areas of capacity into the classroom level, including teachers’ knowledge and skills, students’ motivation and readiness, curricular materials; and the school, district and state organizational levels including quantity and types of people supporting the classroom, quantity and quality of interaction within and among levels, material resources, and organization and allocation of school and district resources. She reports four different but related strategies for building capacity, which are building external infrastructure to provide professional

development and technical assistance, setting professional development and training standards, providing curriculum materials, and organizing and allocating resources. She also reports a decentralized approach which promises locating resources closer to schools, creating and facilitating professional networks, guiding curriculum, and setting professional development standards.

In a theoretical treatment, Kelly (2004) describes the importance of “marry[ing] know-how with *know-why*” (p.133, emphasis in original) when he advocates what he terms “knowledge continuity” stating that the “stored replicated expertise must be eventually moved by teachers from the core to the periphery, where pupils and parents are” (p. 133). He stresses that the

successful transfer of retained intellectual capital for reuse at the periphery... is that it resides in the network in a format that a common protocol can access. The need for such a protocol...cannot be overstated. It is essential to effective communication and allows the efficient diffusion of know-how to take place, although the way in which individual schools and their issue teams access diffusing expertise in practice is limited by the nature of their expertise and the skills of those who have access to it (p. 134).

One role of leadership in Kelly’s view of capacity building is to manage what he calls this “knowledge continuity network” (p. 134). He also recommends quantifying this construct to measure the value added to the organization so that the school can identify and measure an intangible asset like intellectual capital. Such a method could also be used to quantify capacity building. He suggests using the “Value Added Intellectual

Coefficient” (VAIC) to “measure financial return on the intellectual capital investment” which would “allow similar comparisons to be made between schools with different student intakes” (p. 145). This is a quantitative treatment that uses national averages as predictors of the next level of test scores and compares them to the actual test scores achieved to see if a particular intervention, which was precipitated by a particular teacher training, worked.

Kelly’s self-acknowledged limitation is that measurements that make perfect sense in the business environment frequently lack practicality in non-profit organizations like schools. Although he presents a good argument for using the VAIC and a hypothetical case of where it might be able to quantify a return on investment in capacity building, he does not present an actual case where this method has been successfully applied in a school setting.

Summary of Teacher Leadership and Shared Capacity Building

The literature treatment shows that the predominant levels of investigation have been at almost every level except the high school, mainly concentrated in grade schools, or at state or district levels. Secondly the literature study reveals a great deal of variance in conceptualizing the constructs of both teacher leadership and capacity. The attributes of teacher leaders have been well studied, as have disparities in capacity between districts and between schools in districts. There is little existing research on the process of building shared capacity at the high school level. With this in mind, moving to the next area of the impediments and constraints in building shared capacity may provide further insight.

Collisions

Tensions continually pull between what educators want to do and the things that prevent them from accomplishing their goals. In this section, three main areas of research will be examined along with the relevant theories that might enlighten our understanding of the colliding factors in building capacity to create HLE's. The three areas are the organizational structure of schools, teacher culture, and work life balance. The theories that will help with the analysis of the collisions are critical theory, feminist theory and its psychology's subdivision of relational theory, and work-life balance theory from the field of employment relations. As will be seen, one over-arching theme that permeates through all of these theories and seems to play an important role in manifesting some parts of the colliding forces is that of power.

Organizational Structure of Schools

The collisions that shared capacity building makes with existing practices and structures in schools make up the bulk of the second area of literature reviewed. These collisions occur in three ways. The first and perhaps most compelling collision may be the typical organizational structure of schools. They are hierarchically managed with a definite chain of command, and yet teachers act as loosely coupled "street level bureaucrats" (Weick, 1976). Decisions are frequently made by higher authorities for teachers to implement. Leadership within educational settings is particularly patriarchal (Shakeshaft, 1990, 1998) or paternalistic (Blase & Anderson, 1995) coming from predominantly male policy makers who have authoritative or charismatic power (Morgan, 1985; Weber, 1947) to impose their decisions on mostly women teachers. The current climate in schools with mandated AYP evidenced by annual standardized testing

of all students is consistent with Blase and Anderson's adversarial or authoritarian leadership and Freire's (1970) "anti—dialogical banking educator" (p. 93). To promote the "open, honest, and proactive micropolitical interactions (Blase and Anderson, p.19)" conducive to transforming schools, Blase and Anderson recommend democratic, empowering leadership, which "represents a shift from an emphasis on leadership as management...to leadership as a form of empowerment" (p. 21).

Currently teachers spend most of their duty day with students (Lortie, 1975, 2002). There are generally more things that need to be done than the teacher has time to do. Teachers need time to meet with administrators, contact parents, plan lessons, check papers, read and write assessments, and other professional activities associated with teaching tasks. The profession is isolatory not only because teachers teach in their own rooms, but also because when teachers are out of their rooms, they have so many things to do that they don't take time to discuss much with other teachers.

A current trend in secondary schools is to create what are called Professional Learning Communities, a process which might provide structure for teachers to collaborate to improve teaching and learning (DuFour & Eaker, 1988). Hargeaves (1993) describes "contrived collegiality," which he says sometimes results from administrative purposeful scheduling of collaborative planning, which seems "inappropriate and incongruous (p. 105)" to the teachers. Grossman, Wineburg & Woolworth (2001) describe "pseudocommunity," when teachers

act as if they are already a community that shares values and common beliefs [which] draw on cultural notions of interaction often found in middle-class, typically White settings. [Its] imperative...is to 'behave as if we all agree.' An interactional congeniality is maintained by a surface friendliness, hypervigilant never to intrude on issues of personal space. (p. 955).

Work-life Balance

While there is overlap between these three areas, another way in which collisions might occur is in the management of teachers' personal and professional time. Trying to balance the professional demands that teachers place on themselves with their personal needs of being a healthy family member, being involved in their communities, and other activities can easily lead to an overload. This literature is less voluminous than the other areas mentioned but has been cited as leading to burnout and may result in teachers leaving the profession (O'Neil, 2003). Considering the structure of schools, including teachers' scheduled contact times with students and the demands of teachers' other duties, for teachers to take on the additional responsibilities implied in serving as shared capacity builders, either some restructuring must occur in schools or teachers will have to compromise some of their personal time in order to participate. Some of the research in this area comes from fields outside of education, and more contemporary studies focus on the particular importance of this balance in the lives of working women (Padavic and Reskin, 2002).

Many teachers work at their desks during lunches, and scheduling is so tight that teachers rarely have others with whom they could possibly discuss professional matters were they in proximity during their planning time. Most teachers take work home in the evening. Participatory leadership activities, if they are to include community members and parents, generally are held in the evenings, so that if teachers want to be included in decision making bodies or to provide input for capacity building, not only do they have to neglect their personal lives to attend the meetings, but they must also neglect the work that they normally take home to do.

Teacher culture

The final collision force that might prevent shared capacity building from becoming widespread is the teacher culture. Paradoxically known for its egalitarian norms (Cusick, 1992), in which teachers teach in powerless isolation, beginning teachers are quickly encultured by more experienced teachers serving as mentors. Yet a self-proclaimed aspiring teacher leader might be discouraged by her peers' admonition. The literature describing teacher culture spans from the seminal works of Waller (1961) and Elsbree (1939) to the more contemporary of Lortie (1975, 2002), Kidder (1989) and Britzman (2003). Sarason (1993), Levin (2001), (Finnan & Levin, 1998), and others (M. Fullan, 1994; Hargreaves, 1993) have documented the resistance of the teacher culture as well as the institutions within which they work (Tyack & Cuban, 1995) and their supervising principals (Wolcott, 1994) to change.

As in other professions, teachers demonstrate competency to enter the profession by credentialing. Degrees and testing outcomes allegedly ensure that teachers entering schools have the content and background to begin practice. However, exclusively relying on degrees and performance on pencil and paper tests could be problematic. Putting a degreed test passer in a classroom with thirty students does not necessarily produce learning as an outcome. Much of the practice of teaching is learned on the job by doing it (Britzman, 2003), by attending professional seminars, by learning in collegial relations with other practitioners, by using case studies as examples, and by utilizing problem solving techniques. Teachers facilitate many of these experiential learning environments and act as capacity builders as they do so.

Change theorists and organizational scholars have demonstrated that sustainable organizational change is best managed by enlisting internal advocacy (Weiss, 1995; Wheatley, 2000). While sending in outside agents may help initiate the change process, self-managed change is more sustainable. The current trend in business organizations is team-driven decision making (Hall & Hord, 2001). With national mandates pushing for accountability and efficiency, educational organizations are expected to become better at what they do. Because these same mandates impose sanctions for failing schools but don't provide capacity building means, educators must somehow create sustainable reform, evidencing progress in producing learning outcomes. By having teachers themselves involved in action research, it is possible that the best ways to increase learning outcomes can be enhanced by sharing through existing and future collegial networks via shared capacity building.

What would incite teachers to take on the burden of more work in hopes to build capacity for creating HLE's? Lortie's (1975) extrinsic and ancillary rewards are not increased with effort: like one teacher in my high school summarized, "There's no incentive to be on committees or write curriculum for a new course. I get paid the same whether I do it or not." Passion is the only incentive that keeps teachers creating novel ideas. Paradoxical to what Lortie says precipitates psychic rewards, which accordingly can increase with increased effort, Hargreaves (1993) describes the process of "intensification," originally proposed by Larson (1980). This process results from

growing dependence on an externally produced and imposed apparatus of behavioral objectives, in-class assessments and accountability instruments, and classroom management technologies [resulting in] a proliferation of administrative and assessment tasks, lengthening of the teacher's working day, and elimination of opportunities for more creative and imaginative work (p. 119).

Once in the spiral of intensification, which “leads to reduced time for relaxation ... , lack of time to retool one’s skills, ... chronic and persistent overload, ... reductions in the *quality* of service, ... [and] *enforced* diversification of expertise and responsibility to cover personnel shortages...” (pp. 118-119, emphasis in the original), each subsequent action further intensifies the process, deepening entrenchment. One consequence Hargreaves notes is particularly problematic in elementary schools (although it has always been a problem in secondary schools as well) is the “reduction of time and opportunity for elementary teachers to show care for and connectedness to their students” (p. 119).

As Lortie points out, “The culture of teachers and the structure of rewards do not emphasize the acquisition of extrinsic rewards. The traditions of teaching make people who seek money, prestige, or power somewhat suspect; the characteristic style in education is to mute personal ambition” (p. 102). This egalitarianism plays a role in the power relations in schools and in what is viewed as an incentive by teachers. Lortie asserts, “The structure of teaching rewards, in short, favors emphasis on psychic rewards” (p. 103). The culture of teachers, then, is to exert pressure on themselves to continue to improve their profession. It is from this process that they receive rewards that drive them, what Lortie calls psychic rewards. Hargreaves attributes this pressure to teachers’ “dedication to doing a good job and providing effective care within a work context that is diffusely defined and has no clear criteria for successful completion” and to “patterns of commitment and care, [which are] important modifications to the intensification thesis” (pp. 127-128). Noddings (1984) also speaks to the teachers’ ethic of care.

When asked to take on additional responsibilities, such as engaging in shared capacity building, a teacher’s response might be, “I already have a full time job.” There

are many teachers who feel obliged, whether from a political ideology of union loyalty, time constraints mentioned above, conflicting responsibilities, physical limitations, or personal reasons—sometimes read (possibly accurately at times) by outsiders as laziness—to limit themselves to strict interpretations of their job descriptions (for an excellent treatment of this and more see Hargreaves, 1993). Despite these constraints, some teachers engage in capacity building activities in a variety of ways, including mentoring other teachers, mentoring or tutoring students in addition to classroom instruction, advising or coaching student groups, serving on building, district, or state committees, representing members in union activities, presenting at professional conferences, or advocating for education.

Rather than being pessimistic about inertia, Levin's (2001) treatment of culture is proactive. Working within the context of the Accelerated Schools Project (ASP, again, grades K-8 primarily) in the United States and Hong Kong, he frequently cites Sarason's (2002) work on the tradition of treating educational culture as an impediment to reform, and turns it into a tool to use to implement reform. In his empirical documentation, he speaks of powerful learning replacing rote. He defines culture as the "shared understandings, behaviors and attitudes characterizing schools' participation, which are reinforced by interactions with others and their perceptions of the world." (p. 5). The dimensions and features most important to culture are normal behaviors, expectations of students and adults about the school experience, the role of adults in the school, opinions held about educational practices, and beliefs about change. If a reform is attempted that is incompatible with existing culture within a school, the reform is doomed to failure.

Because each school has its own culture, Levin explains why a reform that is successful in one school can fail in another.

With Finnan, Levin (1998) presents a way to make the culture of the school actually build capacity. He stresses the importance of starting to impact the existing school cultures within the United States, normalizing the powerful learning features common to ASP schools. Secondly he advocates building structure for inclusive participation and inquiry in the decision making process.

Some treatment of the factors of the colliding force of teacher culture against utilizing shared capacity building to create HLE's are elaborated further in the next section discussing the role of power and politics. It is unclear whether there is a clear distinction between the collisions caused by the role of power and politics in schools and that of teacher culture.

The Role of Power and Politics in Schools

Feminism, in particular, has taught that human beings invent knowledge with only limited access to potential explanations and limited claims to infallibility. Knowledge is always and inevitably filtered through the gaze of a culture and its power-laden and gendered processes... Those who have power to validate their own models of the world, and themselves, tend to validate their own power in the process. (West, 2001, p. 122).

To better understand why teacher leadership, in general, and more specifically, shared capacity building is not more widespread, studies in power theory were examined. Power relations are probably at play in the egalitarian culture of teachers, in the "them vs. us" adversarial relations that sometimes occur between various stakeholders in school organizations, and in how teachers view their career potential. Whether teachers aspire to add responsibilities or leadership aspects to their roles may result from their feelings about their own personal power, the power of others in their profession, and the power

that others have in their organization. The literature in power and politics ranges from the classical works of Weber (1947), Marx (1848, among others), and French and Raven (1960) through the more critical works of Foucault (1977), Popkewitz (1999a & b), and others. Additionally, the early feminists describe power relations and the role of power in gender (Bryson, 1992).

There is a great deal of collegiality among professionals accompanied with a sense of respectful egalitarianism. In some high schools department chairs do hold legitimate authority over teachers (Sergiovanni, 1984); in most others their authority and power is more referent (French & Raven, 1960). At grade schools, teacher leaders rarely hold authentic power positions (Glass, 2000).

The K-12 educational system in the United States has a long history of resistance to change (Tyack & Cuban, 1995), consisting of hierarchical authoritative structures with lots of bureaucratic control (Morgan, 1985) and the authority figures who head them, while they may come from the ranks of teachers, are primarily men (Banks, 2000; Glass, 2000; Hernandez, 1998). There is a power discrepancy in this relationship (Estrich, 2000). Teachers, predominantly women, are directed to follow policy made by administrators, legislators, and policy makers, who are predominantly men. In the feminist world, this power discrepancy would be called patriarchic (Bryson, 1992).

Power plays out in the relations between teachers and their students (Elsbree, 1939; Waller, 1961), between teachers and their student teachers (Britzman, 2003), between teachers and other teachers, between teachers and their supervisors (Sergiovanni, 1984, 1996), between school board members and administrators, and between parents and teachers (Blase & Anderson, 1995). Critical theorists (Foucault, for example) liken the

power in schools to that in prisons while feminists relegate schools as propagators of social power stratification (Ferguson, 1984) through its vast bureaucracy.

It is within this paradox of egalitarian and hierarchical professionalism that teachers and teacher leaders operate. Power utilization and distribution probably play a role in the extent of teacher involvement in creating shared capacity building. Power has been categorized into a variety of types. One such classification system gives the three types of coercive power, normative power, and utilitarian power (Etzioni, 1961; Sergiovanni, 1984). Coercive power is used when the lower-level participants will suffer some sort of negative consequence for non-compliance with requests. Normative power is evidenced when the workers comply with requests for intrinsic reasons. They may agree with doing it because it's important, right, or personally gratifying. Utilitarian power results in producing compliance by providing participants with some sort of extrinsic reward. According to Sergiovanni, organizations relying on coercive power "usually have goals and purposes that require order and reliability from lower-level participants and achieve these goals through routine tasks. Most lower-level participants are alienated from such organizations and would not participate if they did not have to" (Sergiovanni, p. 90). Prisons, mental hospitals, and concentration camps are given as examples. Utilitarian power is usually seen in organizations with economic goals and purposes, which are pursued as long as the participants derive some benefit from so doing. "Organizations that rely heavily on normative power usually have cultural purposes" (p. 90). The participants derive gratification by identifying with the purposes. Sergiovanni claims "Schools, universities, and hospitals are often cited as normative organizations" (p. 90).

Sergiovanni (1984) defines power as “the ability to act to produce an effect. It has neither positive nor negative connotations. In fact, *power is a neutral concept*. Since leaders are expected, by definition, to act in order to produce effects, power becomes the fuel for exercising leadership” (p. 473, Sergiovanni’s emphasis). Sergiovanni differentiates between self-serving politicking as being dysfunctional and behavior, which benefits the department, or organization as being functional politics. Three factors that can precipitate politicking behavior are power equalization, occurring in organizations with distributed power, which he thinks will lead to competition; scarce resources, also another catalyst for competition; and vague indicators of effectiveness, which precipitate politicking to “influence the subjective and ensure favorable evaluations” (p. 475). Because leaders rely on cooperation of their network constituents, Sergiovanni maintains that “cooperation cannot be mandated or directed. It must be obtained through power-oriented or political behavior...primarily directed at developing and using relationships in which others are to some degree willing to defer to your wishes” (p. 477) and advises building relationships that will enable successful leadership. Sergiovanni’s insights come from qualitative analysis of his extensive years in the educational field.

The distribution of power in roles in educational settings is something that needs to be further studied. York-Barr and Duke question, “By what means can existing *egalitarian norms* of the teaching profession be replaced by norms that recognize, value and actively support differentiation of teacher expertise?” (p. 292, emphasis in the original) as one of many on a list of suggested directions for possible research. Popkewitz (1999a) maintains that the educational studies conducted so far have dealt

only with the source of power. He uses Foucault's idea that power stems from the self-discipline people practice and is productive rather than repressive and negative.

Investigating the actors as power holders depicts power as "*sovereignty*"; that is, groups that are favored in decision-making and who organize the values through which decisions are made to produce a context of domination and subordination—that of the rulers and the ruled" (p. 5 author's emphasis). Later he relates power to positioning women within institutions, citing Riley (1988, as cited in Popkewitz, 1999b), who speaks of the social spaces women occupy: "The spaces that interred and enclosed women are the effects of power" (p. 28). In education, even while women comprise the vast majority of the teaching staff, there is a discrepant gendered representation in administrative staff. The population of women administrators is increasing, but there are many more power wielding men occupying the space of administrators than there are women. When discussing the relationship between philosophy of education and critical theory from the perspective of Pierre Boudieu, Calleweart (1999) states

Education has to do with the biological and spiritual transmission of life as a spiritual endeavor...the educational field can be located within the field of power, made up of those in power. More precisely, it can be located in the subspace of cultural production...more as a function of implementation than as a function of invention and creation. Culture is not created by the educational system—it is only transmitted (p. 121).

Society is mimicked in the educational arena when the positions of power are held by men.

The study of power in schools is very abstract and conceptual, with limited and disparate work ranging from the early descriptive pieces of Ianneccone and Lutz (1970), and from Foucault's critical theory (1977), to the more recent works of Sergioivanni (1996). One of the intents of this study is to operationalize the construct of power in

contemporary schools so that it can be better studied within the school setting in order to circumvent it becoming a colliding factor that prevents the creation of HLE's.

Factors that impact schools can be quite complex. Teaching and learning are complex processes that involve all of the nuances that might be expected in such a public forum. The process of capacity building is a complex process operating within schools that needs to be investigated. If educators are expected to improve learning outcomes, then practitioners must engage in a reflective process that generates the capacity to do so (Freire, 1998a). This study attempted to articulate how to best facilitate building capacity to create HLE's by studying the factors that impinge upon it. How to best negotiate the nuances of politics and power relations within the system, how to utilize teachers' talents, but most importantly how to improve teaching and learning so that HLE's are available to all students was and continues to be a complex quest.

Hopeful Learning Environments

Hopefulness is a construct that is embedded in the teachings of humanistic educational philosophers, whether implicitly (Sarason, 1993; Vella, 2001), explicitly (Freire, 1998a; Lambert et al., 1996; Lieberman & Miller, 2004; Macedo, 1998; Meier, 1995, 2004; Noddings, 1984) or by practitioners (O'Neil, 2003). While some claim relevancy is essential for learning, Freire (1998a), Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) are probably the most insistent about hope being present for learners and educators.

Hargreaves and Fullan state that

To get out there is going to require hopefulness and assertiveness when despair and defeatism can easily be justified. We will show that going deeper means having hope, even when the conditions do not seem to warrant it. The future of the teaching profession is in the hands of those who turn hope into an active virtue (p. vii).

Quoting Patricia Murphy, “Teaching is the most inherently hopeful act that I know of,” (p. 1) Hargreaves and Fullan’s opening presents the importance of the theme of hope in their text. Linking hope with feelings of self-efficacy, they maintain that “Hope’s real value is when the conditions are not hopeful. Hope should never disappear” (p. 57). Hope is credited with “mak[ing] a difference when it represents the capacity not to panic in difficult situations, the belief that all is not lost, that problems can be solved and that one’s own actions and interventions can have an important effect” (p. 57), can lead to better health (p. 58), and when “linked with moral purpose and emotional engagement, it can become an active, dynamic, transformative force” (p. 58). Citing Freire, they prescribe strengthening “moral purpose, emotional engagement, and active hopefulness” by “building strong alliances between people within schools and partners outside [of] them” (p. 60). While not directly linking hopefulness with increasing learning, they certainly advocate for it as a transformative virtue amongst educators. Their discussion of hopefulness in learning environments is theoretical without empirical evidence. Empirical analysis of the need for hopefulness in learning environments is wanting.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Introduction

A multiple case study design was used to tease out the nuances of how collision factors constrain educators from creating HLE's. As Benham (Ah Nee-Benham, 1999) suggests, "The mutual respect and community of learning that evolves because of the case process establishes an open forum for candid debate and meaningful dialogue" (p. 17-18). It is this respect and community of learning that is desirable in an HLE'. The units of analyses that were examined are the processes that educators use in their attempts to create HLE's so that the researcher detects the root cause(s) of the conditions that thwart their best efforts. Yin (2003) offers an example of analyzing a complex process of decision making within a case study (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973). Like the study he cites, "the process [of creating HLE's] is complex and involves numerous individuals, organizational rules, social norms, and mixtures of good and bad intentions" (p. 115).

The major benefit in using a multiple case study is replication, which is similar to using multiple experiments in a quantitative analysis (Yin, 2003). The schools selected to become cases sites in this study were similar in various attributes, such as the socioeconomic status of the communities, their location, the numbers of students at each school, and the resources available to the schools and their respective staffs. Table 3.1 summarizes some of the attributes of the selected school sites:

Table 3.1. Selected Information about School Sites

	Grand Bay West	Oak Tree	Curie
Per pupil expenditure in U.S. Dollars	\$ 7700	\$ 9300	\$ 8600
Single households	9.3 %	7.3 %	9.2 %
Parents with H.S. Diploma	92.5 %	91.1 %	89.4 %
Parents with B.A.	20.6 %	32.8 %	21.5 %
Households w/ < \$15,000 annual income	8.1 %	5.8 %	7.7 %
\$15 K-29,999	13.7 %	11.7 %	13 %
\$30 K- 49,999	18.9 %	17.8 %	19.8 %
\$50 K – 74,999	20.9 %	20.9 %	26.8 %
\$75 K – 99,999	16.4 %	17.2 %	16.8 %
\$100 K – 150,000	16.0 %	18.5 %	13.1 %
> \$150 K	6.1 %	8.2 %	2.7 %
Percent of students receiving free or reduced lunch	17 %	12 %	23 %
Students/teacher ratio	24.6	20.3	22.2
County Location	Z	Y	Y
White	90.5 %	93.6 %	60.4 %
Black	5.9 %	3.8 %	36.1 %
Hispanic	2.2 %	1.1 %	2.1 %
Asian	1.0 %	1.1 %	1.2 %
Native American	0.3 %	0.4 %	0.3 %

Data compiled from Standards & Poor's SchoolMatters (2007)

For further treatment of comparative data, please see Appendices XVI-XVIII for more information regarding the sites. Even though sites appear similar above, the schools have nuances that truly make them different, as will be shown in the findings. One notable difference is the percent of minority representation at Curie High School

compared to the other two schools. During the study it became apparent that there were some other important distinctions between the schools particularly in the areas that impact capacity building for HLE's. The differences were seen in things like advocacy, philosophy, decision making processes, and others.

While there are benefits in studying more cases, because of limited resources for this study, collecting and analyzing data from more than three case sites would have been a financial and physical burden on the researcher. According to Yin (2003), the evidence from multiple cases is more compelling or robust. The limitations of using only three sites will be discussed in a later section of this chapter.

Framing an Action Research Study

This method is also espoused as a method that will engage participants in critical reflection possibly resulting in advocacy for change (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001) "by using the power of their images and stories to communicate with policy makers" (p. 560). It exemplifies a form of action research in its attempt to fulfill a socially meaningful mission (Greenwood & Levin, 2000) of creating HLE's. This project is another example that "demonstrates that action research-based reform initiated from a position of little power within a profoundly bureaucratic and hierarchical organization...is possible" (p. 102).

Action Research is a fairly recent turn in qualitative methodology that "shifts its locus or control in varying degrees from professional or academic researchers to those who have traditionally been called the subjects of research." (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 2). While there is a wide variety of methodology that falls under the broad umbrella of what could be termed Action Research, in this study the term connotes an interaction

between participants and the primary investigator to investigate and advocate for change within the organization. It is typically cyclic in nature, with more action following the initial action. In this study, I specifically asked for participants, who were interested in improving teaching and learning, hoping to catalyze the participants to begin their own process of Action Research within their organizations. Although informal, participants voiced varying degrees of experimentation with the process on their own. Action Research is typically iterative, but because this is serving as a dissertation, the time constraint prevents this research from being iterative at this point.

PhotoVoice is used as a participatory tool that empowers participants to have voice in the research. Participants were given prompts for their photography but participants chose not only their subjects, but also which photographs that were shared in our focus groups. Participants wrote in their journals about what the photographs meant to them, and they spoke about what meaning the photographs held for them in the focus groups in response to the prompts. Other participants reflected on the photographs that were shared. The photographs elicited a great deal of dialog in response to the prompts.

Site and Participant Selection

Because most of my experience in education has been as a classroom teacher in Southeastern Michigan high schools, I am most comfortable in a secondary setting. Some high schools already exemplify the kinds of HLE's this study hopes to analyze but as Foucault (1977) reminds us, some resemble prisons meant to serve as icons of dominion. While any school level could be appropriate for an exploratory study such as this; I chose high schools because my personal experience in high school settings probably enabled me to recognize nuances that may be influencing the capacity building process more

readily. Because structures and climate differ at different school levels, using high schools as the only type of school in the study probably eliminated sample biases stemming from the apparent differences that might occur as an artifact of cultural differences between school levels if different school levels were examined.

High schools are frequently seen as the launching sites for students exiting traditional schooling therefore it is imperative that HLE's exist in them. To ensure that students will succeed in their future endeavors they need to have confidence, have mastered necessary academic and job skills, and have acquired the appropriate attributes to allow them to work collaboratively, systematically, and analytically. High schools that foster these constructs indicate the presence of HLE's. To find likely high schools attempting to create HLE's I administered an online survey to self-identified practicing teacher leaders in the Galileo Consortium, an organization with a mission dedicated to

creating professional learning communities through the development and support of a network of educational leaders ultimately resulting in transforming the communities into positive, joyful and reflective places of hope, where meaningful, challenging and powerful learning is celebrated and achieved by all (RESA, 2005).

The online survey instrument used is depicted in Appendix XV. The URL for the online survey was electronically distributed to members and participants of the Galileo Leadership Consortium through a shared email list. The survey asked a series of four repeating questions about perceived or apparent hopefulness regarding each of nineteen high schools located in Southeastern Michigan in three counties from which the Consortium culls membership districts. Using a corrected score (the formulas for the corrected score and response data are shown in Appendix XVI) from the results of the online survey, three schools were selected from the ones described by the teacher leaders



participating in the Galileo consortium. The corrected score was used because the number of respondents to questions at each of the 19 sites might not be consistent. Because survey respondents were able to elect which school sites they felt comfortable in rating, there were a different number of responses for many of the schools. In computing the corrected score, each response was given a numerical value. Then the total values for all respondents for all questions asked were determined. That total was divided by the number of respondents so that the corrected score was a relative score. The purpose of the survey was to give an idea of which sites might be places to find hopefulness or un-hopefulness in the same way that a barometer gives a reading of whether air pressure is falling or rising, but like a weather instrument, it is only one of many that would be used to determine if in fact it is raining. The focus groups and artifact collections serve as the meteorologist's eyes in determining whether the sites were raining HLE's.

School sites were arranged in ascending order for corrected scores, and one school with a low score, one school with a high score, and one school with one a moderate score were contacted to invite the schools to participate in the study. The letter shown in Appendix II was sent to the principal at selected sites via email. In some cases, a preliminary or follow up phone contact was made to the principal or other administrators. The first three contacted schools declined to participate so three other schools were contacted with the range of distributed scores as previously described. Even though care was taken to select sites with similar demographics and finances, these factors were not exactly similar as shown in Appendices XVI-XVIII. Once the school sites were determined, I contacted the schools to arrange a meeting with personnel at the site.

Background Information

Like all of the other high schools in the state, the sites in this study were experiencing the first year of implementation of a new state testing regime for their juniors. Prior to 2007, the State Board of Education, through the auspices of the Michigan Department of the Treasury, administered a state-wide test in several different iterations over the years, formerly known as the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP), the Michigan High School Test (MHST), and several other names and acronyms. This high stakes test was used to determine whether schools achieved No Child Left Behind's (NCLB) mandated Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), and was used to determine whether individual students received state endorsed diplomas and were eligible to receive the Michigan Merit Award, a financial incentive for students planning to attend college. In 2007 the state began calling the test the MME, for the Michigan Merit Exam, to distinguish it from the previous iterations and because the results were also to be used to determine which students were eligible to receive the Michigan Merit Award. The test had again been re-constructed and for the first time, the MME consisted of several components: the WorkKeys which was designed to provide information about career preparedness and inclinations, a newly designed subject matter test aligned to the restructured content specified in the state's new standards and benchmarks administered with the ACT, the College Boards Admissions test. Schools and students alike were experiencing a new testing genre for the first time.

The standardized test information is given in Table 3.2 for all of the high schools in the districts in the study. This information is for the year 2006. This information is given to set the stage for the climate of accountability that exists in high schools when the

study began. Not only are teachers concerned with creating hopefulness in their classrooms, but published test scores broadcast a school's hopelessness in improving achievement. Missing from this table is the MEAP Reading Proficiency for the state of Michigan at the high school level was 70.0% and the Mathematics Proficiency was 52.3%. Note that Oak Tree High School was below the state proficiency level in both Reading and Math, and that only Curie exceeded the state's Math proficiency level. PSAT/NMSQT is a national standardized test which prepares students for the SAT college entrance board, and is used to determine the National Merit Scholar semi-finalists. A high participation rate would indicate that students are being guided to take advantage of opportunities to help prepare them to be successful in entering college. The state participation rate for this test is 28%; only Oak Tree falls below the state level in this category.

Table 3.2. Standardized Test Information at All High Schools in Districts of Study Sites

District	Grand Bay		Forest Shores			Curie
HS	East	West*	Oak*	Maple	Hickory	Curie*
MEAP % Reading Proficient '06	70.2	70.9	66.5	69.1	82.9	74.5
MEAP % Math Proficient '06	50.3	45.5	51.3	55.9	69.0	53.5
ACT Mean '05	21.5	20.9	20.4	22.9	22.1	20
ACT % Participation Rate '05	52.4	43.4	59.2	63.3	77.1	56.5
PSAT/NMSQT Mean '05	138	139	146	159	155	129
PSAT/NMSQT % Participation Rate '05	48	30.6	20.2	26.2	33.5	57
'05 % AP Scores ≥ 3	53.3	54.0	39.1	89.1	74.6	41.7
'05 AP % Participation Rate '05	25.6	12.1	23.6	19.1	20.2	18.7
'05 AP Number of Students	105	47	90	98	111	43
AP Number Tests Taken	197	76	179	358	268	84
Total Enrollment	1758	1783	1703	2250	2194	1062

Data compiled from Standards & Poor's SchoolMatters (2007)

*Note that participant sites are shaded.

AP courses are taken in most instances for students to achieve college credit during high school by passing the College Board's test in that content area. A high participation rate indicates students are being advised to take both AP classes and tests and also that the school, district, or state distance learning programs make these courses available for students to take them. The state participation rate is 15.7%. This represents the percent of high school students who take one or more AP tests for the year 2005.

AP tests are graded on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the highest achievement. A score of 3 is considered “passing.” Most colleges will award some credit to incoming freshmen with scores of 3 or above on AP tests. The state passing rate is 65.2%, which is the percent of the AP tests taken in the state that receive a 3 or higher. Note that while the schools all exceed the participation rate, none of the schools in the study meet the state’s pass rate for AP tests. Not meeting the state passing rate could mean many things including students who wouldn’t normally be encouraged to take AP classes are being encouraged at these sites, teachers aren’t adequately prepared to teach the courses, or aren’t adequately preparing their students to pass the tests, or students are not preparing sufficiently for the course to achieve a passing score.

To meet its espoused goals of rigor, relevancy, and relationships, the state of Michigan’s Board of Education also endorsed a more rigorous set of graduation requirements to be phased in over several years. The state increased graduation requirements in most core content areas. At the same time, the state’s total number of required courses for graduation increased from one and a half (1.5) to 16.5 beginning with the graduating class of 2011 (Note that this class of students was in eighth grade at the time of the study and has now entered high school as freshmen at the time this is being written) in four years. The graduating class of 2016 will have an additional two years of a foreign language required, bringing the required total to 18.5 in order to fulfill state requirements. See Table 3.3. for graduation requirements. At the time of this study, all three high school sites were on a standard, six period day, with the exception Curie High School, which had a modified six period day that included a seminar period two days a week with a shortened schedule for all six periods meeting on those days. At all

three high schools, students could achieve a maximum of six credits per year, totaling twenty-four at graduation.

Table 3.3. Simplified Graduation Requirements and Recommendations

Content Area	State Requirements for Graduating Classes Prior to 2011	State Requirements for Graduating Class of 2011 and Beyond*	State Universities in Michigan's President's Council Admission Requirements	
			Required	Recommended
English	None	4 years	4 years	same
Mathematics	None	4 years including Algebra 2	3 years including Algebra 2	4 years
Science	None	3 years including Biology and Chemistry or Physics and one additional science	2 years biological/physical	3 years lab courses
Social Studies	1 semester of Civics and/or Government	3 years including one semester of Civics and/or Government and one semester of economics; one year of US History and Geography, and one year World History and Geography	3 years	3 years including 1 year US History & 1 year World History
Foreign Language	None	None but two years is required beginning with the class of 2016	None	3 years
Fine and Performing Arts	None	One year in Visual, Performing or Applied Arts		2 years
Computer Literacy	None	Computer class or competency demonstration	None	1 year hands-on experience
Health Education	None	One semester	None	None
Physical Education	1 year	One semester	None	None

Information taken from Grosse Pointe Public Schools 2007-2008 Program of Studies

* An alternate plan called the Personal Curriculum Plan developed by the parent(s), counselor, and principal, may be approved by superintendent with modifications of certain requirements under certain circumstances, for example, for students with IEP's and receiving special services.

The results of the districts' as well as the individual schools' in the study MME are given in Table 3.4. For the year of the study, ACT participation rates will be very close to 100% for all sites because it is now included as part of the MME, so this table does not relay participation rates, nor any other standardized test results. The state has not released the results of the ACT portion of the MME at the time of this report. The state average is given here for comparison. Demographic attributes of each high school, as well as financial and other relevant information are summarized in the appendices XVII—XIX.

Table 3.4. Compilation of Spring 2007 MME results for the Class of 2008

	Grand Bay	West	East	State	Forest Shores	Oak Tree	Maple	Hickory	Curie
Math % Proficient	47.7	52.0	56.0	46	55.3	44.3	58.2	61.1	33.1
Reading % Proficient	63.1	65.9	66.9	60	68.5	63.0	67.9	73.7	51.4
Science % Proficient	59.1	62.5	65.5	56	68.1	59.4	69.1	74.1	43.8
Social Studies % Proficient	87.5	89.5	89.8	83	92.1	91.7	91.2	93.4	83.0
Writing % Proficient	37.6	35.8	45.0	40	46.9	36.6	45.3	57.1	27.2
English Language Arts % Proficient	51.4	52.3	56.0	51	59.8	53.1	58.7	66.5	40.6

Data compiled from the Michigan Department of Education State Summary Report

Prior to the first meeting with selected site participants, an informational letter was sent along with some probing questions for them to consider and prepare responses. All interview prompts appear in the Appendices III-IV and IX-XIV. Participants were asked to give some specific examples of what steps they had taken in creating HLE's, and write about some factors that they think influenced their ability to successfully fashion HLE's. Interview and pre-visit probing questions were open-ended with prompting as

needed for a complete understanding of what the participants were experiencing in their school settings.

This section detailed the criteria used for site selection. Sites were convenient to the researcher, available for access, and had at least one group of teachers, who were interested in improving teaching and learning and who were willing to participate in the study.

Units of Analysis

Within each school site, the units of analysis are the processes individuals working in groups or teams are using to try to create HLE's. The participants were selected on the basis of recommendations by Galileo Leadership Consortium members at the sites, or at other sites, who had worked with teachers at the sites, and local administrators, who identified groups that were working on initiatives in order to create more HLE's. At each of the three selected sites, a team that exhibited these characteristics (as elaborated in Table 3.5.) was selected and members were approached to participate in the study.

Table 3.5. Group Selection Criteria Evidenced

Data Source → Group Type ↓	Self Report	Peer Report (Galileo Participants)	Administrative Report
Active in creating HLE's	HLE philosophy-whole child education, makes a difference in students' lives, teaches higher order thinking and problem solving, uses authentic assessment, collaborates with peers, student-centered approach, practices Action Research, life long learning	Holds referent authority, gives collegial support, focused on improving teaching and learning, servant leadership	Leadership initiative, accomplishments cited, respected by building and district leaders
Not Practicing Shared Capacity Building	Demonstrated independence, non- participatory, self- satisfied, disillusioned,	Lacks respect of peers, focused on self interests	Absent in report, or cited as not practicing

The units of analysis are the processes that teacher teams or working groups attempt in order to facilitate HLE's within each of selected high schools. The processes in which the participants engage at each site might include participation in staff development, professional learning communities, and staff meetings; interactions with students including engaging in pedagogy, personal relations and activities; participation in programs outside of school but related to school functions. This study will tease out the things that teachers do in their work to build capacity for creating HLE's and the constraining factors that collide with their efforts.

Within each school setting, any participants, who were interested in improving teaching and learning, were invited to participate. Because the structures of schools have a variety of levels and processes that educators have to negotiate (such as getting administrative, parental, and student support, developing and communicating goals,

developing and sharing action research, classroom teaching responsibilities, and personal and professional time management, as examples), a diverse group containing a variety of representative teachers in the school setting was invited to participate. Knowing the school climate and structure is important for understanding the context within which a particular team of educators work together to build the capacity for HLE's, but it is most important to study which specific features of the interactions and interrelationships support this.

Through this study, behaviors and traits exhibited by teachers engaged in creating HLE's including inter- and intra-personal relations, as well as those features of school context (culture and structure) supporting improved instruction via the creation of HLE's, were noted and analyzed. To tease out these constructs, the PhotoVoice method was slightly modified in its application to this study. Once participants were selected and briefed on the nature of the study and the required commitment, a schedule of meetings and timelines was distributed and reviewed with the participants at each site. Ethical considerations were discussed as will be outlined, and then Fuji FinePix A400 digital cameras with one gigabyte memory cards, and small bound journals were distributed to each participant at each site.

A high school photography instructor or I facilitated a brief lesson in photo composition. The protocol for processing and respective distribution of the photographs was explained. At subsequent meetings, each participant was instructed to choose a photograph, bring a hard copy printed on provided paper, and write a statement regarding its connection with HLE's to share with other participants. I facilitated a dialogue about the photographs, making notes and prompting as appropriate. The focus group sessions

were videotaped and audio recorded. After the introductory meeting, two meetings with each focus group were held. The final session consisted of individual interviews with each participant bringing a photo of what she or he considered to be an HLE.

Information regarding the attributes of the participants is found in Appendix XVIII. The dates of the meetings are found in Appendix XIX. The group sizes were kept at a workable level, between three to five people in order to ensure that all voices were heard and so that I was able to record and document the meetings.

Data Sources

As shown in Table 3.6., from the literature review, the indicators of hope are support, nurturing, optimism, and safety. The indicators of learning are high achievement and expectations, professional engagement, and making the learning personal and meaningful. Indicators of the environment component of HLE's are community and family support.

Table 3.6. HLE Components Evidenced in Data Analysis

	Indicators	Evidenced by		
		Focus Groups with Photograph Prompt	Artifact Collection	Interviews
Hope	Support: -Interventions explicit -Multiple paths available		-Crisis action plan -Adequate support staff -Alternative ed -Vocational outreach	
	Nurturing -caring attitude	Evident		Evident
	Optimism	Displayed	-Mission statement	Displayed
	Safe		-Crisis plan -Fully staffed -Updates	
Learning	High Achievement and Expectations	Pride in school	-Award -Test scores	Evident
	Professional Engagement	Display passion for profession	-Structure for collaboration	Evident
	Personal and meaningful		-Structures to support	Independent studies, authentic assessment
Environment	Community support	-Adequate funding	-Community involvement	Evident
	Family support	Evident	Parental support	

While the primary focus of the study was on the data collected through the modified Photovoice method, some additional available artifacts pertaining to creating HLE's were examined. See Table 3.7 for examples of artifacts and their locations with some examples of observation and interpretation.

Table 3.7. Artifacts, Locations, and Interpretation

Artifact Type	Site Location	Observation	Interpretation
Mission statement	Board Office	Includes collaborative and inclusive language	Supports HLE
	Web Site	Includes hopeful philosophy components	Supports HLE
Vision	Board Office	Includes inclusive language, HLE's	Supports HLE
	Web Site	Stresses content coverage and student orderliness	Doesn't support HLE
Staff Development Plan	Board Office	Goals generated by administrators for teachers	May or may not support HLE
	Web Site	Teacher planned and facilitated sessions	Supports HLE
Learning Essentials	Building Web Site or Team	Holistic, problem-solving, engaging	Supports HLE
Meeting Agendas	Team	Participatory, relevant	Supports HLE
		"Laundry List," announcements, trivia	Doesn't support HLE

Artifacts that were examined were documents produced in the capacity building process, such as mission and vision statements, professional and staff development schedules and reports, in-service and collaborative school improvement records, such as those generated by North Central Accreditation Outcomes Assessment or others, documents generated by the professional learning communities processes, schedules and structures that provide collaborative time for improving teaching and learning, meeting agendas, and action research initiatives. These artifacts served two purposes. Initially the artifacts helped delineate between school teams that were engaged in creating HLE's and those that weren't. Secondly, the artifacts were examined to determine their contextual relevance to the capacity building process.

Instrumentation

The interview questions, pre-visit response prompts, and other pertinent instruments are included in the appendices. The following documents appear as part of the instrumentation, although some might be more aptly depicted as procedural devices related to the study design:

- Screening Questions for Galileo participants to help select school sites and teams for study and to help hone questions for online survey (Appendix I)
- Informational letter of introduction of researcher and study (Appendix II)
- Probing questions as a writing prompt for the first meeting (Appendix III)
- Photovoice ethics/methods instruction for participants (Appendix IV)
- Three release forms for participants (Appendices V-VII)
- Timeline of study (Appendix VIII)
- Meeting agendas (Appendix IX)
- Dates and times of meetings (Appendix XIX)
- Two prompts for choice of photographed subjects (Appendices X, XI)
- Two writing prompts for participant free-writes about subjects' relation to creating HLE's (Appendices XII, XIII)
- Two discussion prompts for Photovoice discussion groups (Appendices XIV, XV)

- Individual interview questions regarding collision factors and their impact on creating HLE's (Appendix XVI)

Data Analysis

Because the investigation was conducted on a number of levels, data analysis produces rich results. Data was analyzed across levels using the matrix shown in Table 3.7. While the focus is on the reported processes the teachers utilize in each of the three selected high schools, the contexts within which the teachers operate are also relevant to the questions raised in this study. Presumably within each site there are teachers who are more successful than others in their efforts to create HLE's. Whether it is the nature of the practices of the teachers or the context within which the group operates that determines its efficacy was examined during this analysis. Within each group, there are intra-personal dynamics that were examined to determine the extent that they influenced practice. Within the same site, inter-personal relations across authority levels that were examined in order to determine the whether they mitigated outcomes. For example, Morgan (1985) relates power to the control of resources or knowledge, and if authorities at a certain site restrict access to information or resources, then groups might not be able to effectively create HLE's there, but may be able to at another site. This study attempted to tease out the subtle dynamics at operation while probing about the different levels of the organization and in the cross school analysis.

Table 3.8. Analysis of Data Matrix

Sites of Analysis → Levels of Analysis ↓	Group Site	District Site
Between team members	Within and across team members	Within and across districts
Between peers	Within and across groups	Within and across districts
Between organizational levels	Within and across levels	Within and across districts

This study attempted to assess tensions for possible constraining or colliding factors elicited from across district relations and between building relations. Because the study included only one high school that expressed tensions about cross building relationships within the same district, the analysis regarding those tensions must be tempered because only one high school within each district was investigated. Nonetheless, an attempt to interpret these tensions will be made. Curie High School only has one high school in its district, Oak Tree has three high schools, and Grand Bay West has another high school in their respective districts.

All tapes were reviewed, transcribed by me, and coded according to Table 3.9. For a more detailed coding system, please see Appendix XX. The codes and a descriptive phrase were written on a note card, and then the note cards were sorted according to the codes following the pattern coding method by Miles and Huberman (1998). Following their advice as well as Creswell's (1998), data collection and analysis were simultaneous and iterative. Appendix XXI shows the Data Sources for the Major Findings for data triangulation. A sample page is coded in Appendix XXII.

Table 3.9. Selected Codes for Data Analysis

Descriptive Label	Sub	Code	Research Q's
Constraining Factors		ConFac/	1a
	cause	CF/cau	1b
	Location	CF/loc	1c
	How	CF/how	1d
Attributes of HLE's		Att/HLE	Defining intro
Location		AH/loc	2b
	Evidence	AH/loc/EV	2b
	Indicators	AH/loc/IN	2b
Creating HLE's		CreHLE/	2a
	Who creates	CH/wc	2c
	Who sustains	CH/ws	2c
	How created	CH/hc	2c
	How sustained	CH/hs	2c
Fostering HLE's		FosHLE/	3

In this study the analysis of tensions that might contribute to colliding factors are limited to those that occur between members within a group, perhaps indirectly as evidenced in the PhotoVoice discussions, between and across peers and peer groups within the building, between and across representatives of other levels either at the school site or within the district, and finally tensions that occur across schools in other districts. This type of analysis yields sufficient detail to be able to make inferences about how teachers, who are interested in improving teaching and learning, negotiate the tensions to build capacity to create HLE's.

Because each of the three sites had not only its unique attributes as a site, and each of the participants at each site had her or his own story, when conducting the data analysis, each of the stories are told differently. The data analysis is presented uniquely for each site. For example, Oak Tree's story seems to focus more on the people, while Grand Bay West's focuses more on the structure of the school organization. How each school defined and enacted the HLE influenced how each school's story is told.

The data were examined through a critical lens, looking for emergent themes, recurrence of tensions, and consistency or its lack among reports about the same events and processes at the three different sites. Reported differences in respective perceptions indicated collisions between participants and constraints, indicating probable tensions. In attempting to negotiate shared capacity to improve teaching and learning, teachers expressed frustrations at collisions and gave examples of teachers opting out. By studying those teams that practice shared capacity building, these colliding factors were transparent and more obvious to the researcher.

In analyzing the data, I used both a transformative and a critical approach. Because each of the cases, while they illuminate information around similar elements of HLE's, were told differently in their participants' stories, I will structure each findings chapter differently in order to focus on the subtle differences, while illuminating their commonalities. In other words, the differences in how each school defined and enacted their versions and understandings of HLE's led me to write their stories in different ways. In the critical vein, the stories of these cases are constructed in such a way that results in a different conceptualization of what feels natural or obvious (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000), by analyzing "competing power interests between groups and individuals within a society—identifying who gains and who loses" (p. 281) in maintaining the status quo in educational institutions. The research was transformative in its use of the Photovoice (Killion & Wang, 2000) method, which is based on "the theoretical literature on Paulo Freire's education for critical consciousness, [and] feminist theory..." to "...promote critical dialogue and to enhance knowledge about issues through group discussions and photographs" (p. 311).

Criteria of Rigor

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was ensured by the use of several sources of evidence (Yin, 2003), including documentation, archival records, interviews, the use of physical artifacts and dialog surrounding the photographs. Photovoice projects are credited with bringing breadth and depth to understanding community concerns that would not be achievable with surveys or quantitative data (Wang, 2005). Because participants kept journals with writing prompts, spoke at focus group meetings and individually with me at their exit interviews, and photographed subjects responding to prompts, any inconsistencies were evidenced and noted.

Even though three sites were used, observations and interpretations will not be generalized to other sites for reasons previously mentioned. In addition to the situated nature of these kinds of dynamic processes, the issues and processes are quite complex, too complex to be blanketed to another setting. But while they should not be generalized, there is inherent value in examining these processes to see if there are commonalities among educators' efforts to effect reform. That there may be implications for all high schools considering maximizing their potential capacity to produce HLE's that would not be noticed if a critical study were not performed. So while the results and implications may not be generalized, some may be transferred to other settings and there may be benefit in doing that.

Credibility

The data and analysis were reviewed by four different individuals, including myself, my advisor, a doctoral candidate at Wayne State University, and a recent doctoral graduate from Michigan State University. Any inconsistencies were corrected on advisement.

Transferability

While each case is unique, and each school setting has its own unique culture unlike any other, I located as much information as was realistic to include so that the readers could see the similarities between sites and the uniqueness at each site. If readers are careful and analytical about interpreting the findings in these cases, there may be potential benefit in transferring some of the conclusions to other sites experiencing similar phenomena.

Confirmability

The claims are supported by the data collected, which should all be evidenced in the data that are presented in the text of this dissertation. In a narrative case study, the researcher has a great deal of discretionary authority to consider. The reader needs to consider that even though I attempt to present the material in an unbiased fashion, everything nevertheless is interpreted through my filters as well as through the filters of the participants, who took the photographs and who talked about them. The participants chose the subjects to photograph; they selected the photographs to share for discussion. I selected the photographs and the text to display in this dissertation.

Limitations and Delimitations

The limitations of this study include but are not limited to the limitations of my abilities as an interpreter of data. I feel that I was able to read the nuances of the dynamics involved in high school settings surrounding the creation of HLE's. In fact, though, my situatedness in this study may have inhibited my interpretative abilities. One way to know the limits in this analysis is to scrutinize it from different perspectives, ask if the data and the following interpretation make sense, if the arguments and the evidence that have been presented are transparent and robust enough to be able to draw conclusions from them. For that reason, the following chapters of findings were shared with all of the members at their respective sites and I invited comments about my perception of their thoughts and feelings. In the instances where there were discrepancies, I have noted that.

This study is limited by the work that one researcher with a little help from some friends can accomplish in a reasonable amount of time. For a more extensive look at these issues, how these processes play out at different levels of school settings would be an interesting related study. The focus group sizes were limited by a workable group. Meeting with them such few times seemed to be long enough to build a rapport so that the participants were open. This study demonstrates common limitations of this type. Because the participants self-selected and were not inclusive of all teachers, and because I only interviewed teachers, and not administrators, parents, students and others active in the school community, I am only witnessing a very small portion of the larger field.

An original concern of mine was whether the dialog generated about the photographs would be sufficient to generate knowledge about the processes that school

organizations must participate in to move toward HLE's. After completing the focus groups and interviews, I know that the study was not exhaustive in its coverage of all possible sources of tensions and constraining factors, nor was it exhaustive in its capacity to know how and why these occur. Neither was the study exhaustive in its coverage of all things contributing to build capacity to create HLE's. The conversations, however, were very rich in their generation of knowledge about processes and collision points and about potential enhancing elements for creating HLE's. Another concern was my naiveté as a qualitative researcher. Because the design didn't include live direct observations of the groups conducting their business, it is possible that the participants' reports may not have accurately portrayed all or the intensity of the constraining factors faced in their quests for HLE's. My awkwardness probably contributed to my teasing out fewer of the nuances than a more experienced researcher might have. This was evidenced when at times instead of probing I heard myself telling stories on the tapes.

Considering Ethics

Referring to Gross, Katz and Ruby's (1988) book on moral rights of people in visual media, Wang and Redwood-Jones's (2001) discussion of the Flint Photovoice project prescribes the use of ethics in designing a PhotoVoice study. Table 3.10 outlines considerations taken in this study to accommodate their suggestions. The term subject refers to the image(s) captured by the photographer. The term participant in this study will refer to the photographer-participants.

Table 3.10. Ethical Considerations in Photovoice Method

Gross <i>et al.</i>'s	Wang	This Study
Intrusion of private space	Extended from individuals to groups, neighborhoods and communities, clear disclosure of intents and goals, voluntary nature, no cost to participants, three consent forms, photography lessons	Protections for anonymity; waiver, clear disclosure of intents and goals, voluntary nature, no cost to participants, three consent forms, photography lessons,
Protection against embarrassment	Permission of subject, inclusion in project by giving a photo to subject	Permission of subject, inclusion in project by giving a photo to subject
Protections against distortions of truth	Permission of subject, integrity of researcher and participants	Permission of subject, integrity of researcher and participants, approvals of participant and subject in context
Deprivation of commercial benefit	Photos in honoraria of subjects, return of honoraria to participants	Researcher will contribute honoraria to HLE projects.
		Safety of participants and subjects above all else.

As suggested by Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001), in order to avoid ethical compromises, the participants were trained to be sensitive to intrusion, embarrassment, and distortion when photographing subjects. Participants kept digital and paper copies of their photos to keep or give to their subjects in honoraria of their participation in the study. No participant or researcher will derive economic benefit from this study without appropriately compensating subjects and/or participants or forwarding their compensation in honoraria to further the pursuit of hopeful learning. Wang and Redwood-Jones prepared three consent forms as noted in their “Minimum Best Practices” table (p. 570). The first was a general consent form for participants, the second for the subjects whom the participants chose to photograph, and the third was for the participants to acknowledge consent to publish whichever of their photographs that were selected for

publication. Additional minimal ethics standards were to train participants “about the use of cameras, power, and ethics, emphasizing safety and the authority and responsibility that come with using a camera” (p. 570), to provide written information about the study for distribution to photographic subjects, and to provide a letter for participants to give to their peers and supervisors about how cameras would be used at school or work. During the training sessions, their suggestions were followed regarding the use of PhotoVoice ethics.

My Role as a Researcher

Thousands of stories to tell...

Flora Purim, 1973

It was difficult for me to use my power as a researcher for decisive incisions. It was difficult to dissect because I felt that my participants’ description was better than mine. I also feel that it is important for the reader to really know the participants, because, after all, it is their stories that I am telling here. Because these are their stories, I wanted the reader to hear all of their idiosyncratic diction and syntax. It was painful for me to take a thousand pages of their single-spaced dialog and reduce the data to the form that it appears here.

At the beginning, I felt like a novice, and was clumsy through the process of introducing the protocol, describing the research, and probing. And yet, I’m not so much of a novice, as I have done research of one sort or another for most of my adult life. In this study as a participant researcher, I personally and professionally benefited and my students will benefit from interactions with the participants in this study. Many of the participants were reciprocally thankful for the experience and listed ways in which the

groups were beneficial to them. Most expressed interest in reading the product of the research. Most shared carrying some aspect of what we were doing back to their classrooms for their own versions of action research. In my role as a postmodern, interpretive researcher as described by Creswell, (1998) of Lincoln's (1995) criteria for an emerging approach to quality, I attempted to meet the standards of commitment including relations with participants, maintaining a stance, and to promoting justice with this research.

It was difficult as a classroom teacher, who was going through similar experiences of my own as were many of the participants, not to share in their mind set, but to use our experience as a spring board for dialog about what we can do to improve learning for all students. Because all of us who engaged in this process are at least espousing to be interested in improving learning and creating hope, the participants and the process made it easy for me to facilitate the dialog to move us there. The training that I received during my graduate program and through the Galileo Leadership Institute was also very helpful. As a summer school principal, I understand the dilemmas that administrators feel in trying to support teachers' efforts to create HLE's in these difficult times of budget constraints and high stakes testing. As a researcher in this study, I felt empowered to glean crystals of validity (Richardson, 1994). In the end, we had dialog in our focus groups that generated professional growth toward creating HLE's.

CHAPTER 4

GRAND BAY WEST HIGH SCHOOL: A FORTRESS OF HOPE

Introduction

Grand Bay West High School (GBW) was built in the seventies. Situated in a previously rural location in a western suburb of a major metropolitan area, its campus is sprawling, with ample parking for students, staff, and visitors. It is surrounded by subdivisions of middle income homes. The surrounding community once was mainly farmlands, which then gave way to golf courses, and are currently being quickly converted into housing developments surrounding the scenic Grand Bay River that flows through the township. The new homes going in seem to be more spacious and artistically dramatic than the homes of the parents who originally approved the millage to construct an additional high school in Grand Bay's district.

Of the three high schools included in the study, Grand Bay West received the highest rating in the online survey for its HLE as shown in Table 4.1. As described in the methods chapter, the corrected rating scores for the high schools considered for inclusion in the study are given in Appendix XVI. GBW's principal, John Finley, at the time of the study had been principal for one year. In addition to having the highest HLE ranking, there is one feature of GBW that further distinguishes it from the other two sites in the study. During the year of the study, GBW implemented a restructured day at the semester as shown in Table 4.2, which consists of increasing the class period length on each of four days during the week, and running a shortened schedule for the students on Wednesday mornings with an early student release, in order for the teachers to meet Wednesday afternoons. Because scheduling may be a part of the support structure

needed for teachers to create HLE's, the schedules for all schools in the study are included in Appendix VII. Although Oak Tree also experimented with reconfiguring some of their days to accommodate staff being able to meet in their Professional Learning Communities (DuFour & Eaker, 1988), Oak Tree did not continue the practice after one semester. Grand Bay West is currently still using the Restructured Day Schedule.

Table 4.1. Corrected Scores for Nineteen High Schools Considered for Participation in the Study*

High School	Corrected Score	Total Number of Respondents	Total Minus NATS**
Grand Bay West	4.00	10	1
Oak Tree High School	3.27	18	5
Curie High School	2.33	14	5

* See Appendix XVI for more detailed information regarding corrected scores.

**Informational responses means that respondents felt qualified to state an opinion in response to the survey prompt(s) for that site.

Table 4.2. Schedules at Grand Bay West

Prior to Restructured Day	Restructured Day Schedule	
	Wednesday-early release for students	Remaining Days
Period 1 7:15 - 8:30	7:11 - 8:01	7:11 - 8:25
Period 2 8:36 - 9:46	8:07 - 8:57	8:31 - 9:30
Period 3 9:52 - 10:42	9:03 - 9:53	9:36 - 10:35
Period 4 10:48 - 12:18	9:59 - 11:29	10:41 - 12:11
Three 30 minute lunches	no lunch for students	Four 30 minute lunches
Period 5 12:24 - 1:14	11:35 - 12:25	12:17 - 1:16
Period 6 1:20 - 2:10	12:31 - 1:20	1:22 - 2:20

In this first chapter of the findings, I will begin in the *First Impressions* section by presenting a vignette to introduce the site while introducing the women who are participants in the study. See Table 4.3 for information regarding the participants at this site, as well as Appendix XVIII, which shows information regarding the participants at

all sites in the study. The next sections, beginning with *Defining Hopeful Learning Attitudes*, illustrate the necessary ingredients in order to create HLE's. These necessary ingredients include hopeful attitudes, structural support, and a learning community including meaningful relationships. In the following sections, I will describe both the components these women at Grand Bay West High School defend in their efforts to continue providing HLE's for their students and the constraining factors they attempt to keep at bay. They defend their learning community from the onslaught of constraints stemming from bad attitudes, power and control issues, time, and budget limitations. The attitudes of all stakeholders in a high school are important. In order to sustain HLE's, teachers will need to work to keep the important ingredients in place, and to keep the constraints at bay. At Grand Bay the teachers in this study have shared a variety of ways in which they sustain and foster HLE's, which will be shared at the completion of this chapter. The findings for Grand Bay West High School indicate that key ways in which to sustain and foster building capacity are through viable staff development, building relations within the HLE, expanding those relations outside to the community, and by giving teachers and students the support and power they need to be successful in their endeavors.

Table 4.3. Snapshot of Grand Bay West Participants

Participant	Attributes
Penelope	• Teaches English and French • Three years teaching experience at GBW • Wrote curriculum for language instruction firm • Female, Caucasian, single, no children • BA and MAT, attended local private school and out of state private college • No committee or extra-curricular participation other than what is required for NCA
Emma	• Teaches Journalism and Upper Level English • 15 years teaching, ten at GBW • Female, Caucasian, single, no children • BA, MA, graduated from GBWHS, attended public in-state university • Belongs to communications professional organizations, and facilitates student participation in publication organization, directs yearbook and newspaper, has participated in out of district workshops and has presented at professional organizations
Molly	• Teaches Freshman English and Writing courses • Three years teaching experience at GBW and three years teaching experience in summer school in other high achieving suburban high school • Worked in finance for several years before pursuing teaching as a career • Female, African-American, married, no children • BA MA, attended an urban setting magnet school for high achievers, and an urban university • Belongs to professional organizations, co-directs student council, participates in one or more school improvement committees in addition to those required by NCA

First Impressions

On my first visit to Grand Bay West High School (please note that all names of sites and participants, as well as some features of the participants and sites have been changed in order to assure anonymity), I notice a construction sign at the entrance to the staff parking lot. It thanks the community for its support in passing a millage for an addition to the high school facilities. Unlike Curie High School, another site in this study, there is no apparent construction underway. Instead of the construction fences at Curie, large yellow buses line the sidewalk at the perimeter of the building, surrounding the brick fortress like a moat surrounds a castle, all spewing diesel fumes into the student parking area where visitors are probably supposed to park, although no signs designate in which spots. Most of the spots are numbered but there is a bank of four or so spots with no numbering and no handicapped blue sign. They are full. I elect to park in one of the many empty numbered spots, figuring the students to whom they belong might be home ill, or attending classes at the district's vocational site, or at the county's acclaimed math and science center. I know I need to hurry to beat the onslaught of hurried students exiting the building at the last bell. I have many things to unpack and wheel into the building, and will be hampered by hoards of students in the halls after school. I need not mention my aversion to being a pedestrian in a high school parking lot once the students reach their cars. Besides, I purposely am arriving at what I think is early, hoping to be able to meet John Finley (please note that all names in this study and other information have been changed to help retain anonymity) for the first time.

Like most post-Columbine, post-9/11 high schools, doors have been installed that only allow visitors into the building at a main, monitored entrance. Students, of course,

can exit through twenty or so other doors to the outside, but apparently according to security advisors, they won't open these same doors for mass murderers or perfect strangers, the latter of which applies to me. My experience working with teens for the past twenty-eight years tells me that they would most likely open any door and admit me, but it is January in Michigan and I am not willing to take chances on whether a student will be passing an entrance at the time I happen to approach it. On my first visit, I decide to do things conventionally, and enter through what I think is the main entrance. I cut through a small gap in the buses as even more line up in formation at each end, reminding me of my own high school thirty-five years ago, and pull my overloaded cart through two sets of doors. A few students leave now, some dressed in GBW's colors of black and gold. One offers to hold the door for me. I stop at the now obligatory greeter's desk and sign my name, indicating the "Time In." Several students mill about the table, conversing with a perky middle-aged, probable mom to one of the students here. She doesn't ask for ID, when I mention Emma and Molly's names, and I give a brief account of my purpose in the building (a meeting), and ask to see John.

"He's not in," she says and hands me a sticky name tag to wear while visiting, and then asks if I need help to find Molly's room. A hall monitor, carrying a walkie-talkie, escorts me to the elevator. Again, I get a fortress sensation, as if we've been up and down the turrets a few times. I spot Molly's room number first and thank him. He laughs as if he's a little embarrassed that I found it so easily before him. There is an attractive and quite elaborate Shakespeare showcase across the hall from her room, and I wonder if she has created it.

A few more students enter the small, low-ceilinged, brightly painted halls, stopping at their lockers, conversing with one another. If not for the iconic lockers, I might think I was in a professional office complex. I can hear what I presume to be Molly's voice behind her closed door. I catch peeks of her through the skinny reinforced glass window in her metal door. I rummage through my equipment and begin to assemble the video camera. I notice that students in the hall are wearing similar T-shirts, all the same color, some with French, some with Spanish, and some shirts have some German phrase on the front. The students' names seem to be on the back of the shirts, but I think it may be their foreign names instead of their real, given names. The student population here is fairly diverse. There are Hispanics, Asians, African-Americans, but by far, most students are Caucasian (See Appendix XVII for demographic and other information about all of the sites). Instead of a bell, a tone, almost as ubiquitous as lockdown drills are in post-Columbine high schools, signals the end of the school day and instantly the halls become a writhing hoard of teenagers, all talking at the same time, moving, stopping at lockers, snapping them open, slamming them shut, all wielding jackets and coats, books and backpacks, a teeming mass of adolescence. I steady my equipment against the errant big foot or elbowed nudge or slam by a friend. After what seems to be most of Molly's students have exited, I try to make my way across the crowded hall, carrying most of my things, afraid to leave anything out of my direct line of sight.

At our first meeting, we talk about the study and about what I'm trying to know about how schools work. I introduce the cameras to the participants and we all snap pictures of each other. They introduce themselves, and then I ask them to share what

they think of as HLE's. We close with them selecting pseudonyms and making their first journal entries. Being English teachers, they select literary characters as their namesakes, although they also sound like they could be the names of pioneers.

Emma teaches mostly junior and senior students in English, and has one section of Journalism, an elective that students need before becoming staff of the Grand Bay Gazette, the award-winning school newspaper. She also serves as the yearbook advisor, and conducts a yearbook class as well, where she trains students to do layouts and write depictive, witty captions. Emma is a graduate of GBW, and has the most teaching experience of the three members of the cohort at her site (Appendix XVIII contains comparative personal and professional information about each of the participants at the three sites). She taught a couple of years in New York in the Bronx, and for a couple of years at one of GBW's neighboring small city high schools. Emma is single, has no children, and lives in her paternal grandmother's home in an adjoining community. Emma refers to herself as jaded, rather than experienced, and is soft-spoken, but highly articulate and as witty as the captions she teaches her students to compose. She claims that the assignment to find things that get in the way of creating HLE's "would be easy to find but difficult to photograph."

The other two members of our discussion group are less experienced, and one, Penelope, has a difficult time with one of the photography prompts, to photograph things getting in the way of creating HLE's. She explains,

Why it was hard for me is because I am like an optimist through and through and I couldn't even begin to look in my classroom for a non-hopeful environment because I just don't believe in it. I didn't want to look for that hopelessness (Penelope, Focus Group, February 23, 2007).

She drifts off and then continues,

Today I had to rip up PJ's quiz because he was cheating, and I had to yell at my freshmen, and even with that, it doesn't affect me and I don't feel like it made a hopeless—and I've even become more and more a positive type (Penelope, Focus Group, February 23, 2007).

Penelope attended both a private high school and college; both are esteemed for their academic rigor. Like Molly, she originally did not intend to be a teacher.

Penelope's mother commutes to teach in an urban pre-school. Penelope began her career by teaching English to students in Austria. When she returned to the United States, she worked for two years as an instructor and curriculum developer for a major foreign language instructional firm. After that, she entered into a fast-track master's degree program that would enable her to receive a teaching certificate in a year's time.

At the time of this study Penelope is in her third year teaching at GBW, a traditional suburban public high school. Penelope splits her time between GBW's Modern Languages Department and the English Department, although she claims she is teaching less French each year. Also known as "looping," whenever possible, GBW schedules students in such a way that second and third year foreign language students have the same teacher every year. Being the youngest member of our discussion group, Penelope is single and without children.

Molly brings diversity to the group, both from being of African-American descent from an urban public high school background, and being the only member of this group who is married. Like Penelope, Molly is in the middle of her third teaching year at GBW, but Molly had taught summer school for several summers at a different prestigious suburban high school in an adjacent county. Molly's parents were both teachers but Molly originally intended to defy her heritage by entering the banking field. After several years, she returned to school to obtain a teaching certificate, and began to teach

partway through her master's degree program. Like Emma, Molly teaches courses exclusively within the English department, and like most members of her department, she has three different classes she teaches each term, including Freshman English, an upper level literature course, and a lower ability writing course for upper classmen. At the beginning of her third year, Molly took on the additional responsibility of moderating the Student Council. Molly has no children of her own and lives the farthest distance from GBW, commuting from a suburb located in yet another county.

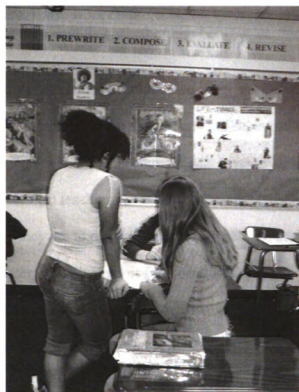
Defining Hopeful Learning Attitudes

At the end of our study, after having several opportunities for discussion, Molly describes a Hopeful Learning Environment as

one in which the teachers feel they can teach and make a difference, and the students believe they can learn and be successful. The students need to feel comfortable enough to take risks because lots of learning starts from confusion or mistakes. I don't think many kids believe that so they never admit they had a mistake and then they never move past it. That requires a lot, so the teacher has to establish policies and procedures that make the kids feel safe (Molly, Interview, March 5, 2007).

To exemplify an HLE, Molly describes a photograph of three female students, who are gathered at a student's desk with a white board. The girls are engaged in the lesson and evidencing their learning. Molly's account demonstrates an attitude of feeling safe during what might feel risky if Molly hadn't taught her students how to engage in productive group work.

Figure 4.1. Coming to a Consensus, Molly, March, 2007



The kids were reading *Romeo and Juliet* in ninth grade, which is challenging text... So their assignment today was... who or what is most responsible for *Romeo and Juliet* meeting? They had to brainstorm a list of all the possibilities and then agree, then find some evidence to back it up and share it. This group of girls was really excited about the assignment, and so their discussion was something like, 'Well no, it's not Mercutio, because he only did... I think it's not Tybalt. Tybalt only did this. No it's Benvolio.' They really believed that they knew it well enough to do it. I was tickled by that kind of conversation. It shows that they know more than they think they do (Molly, Interview, March 5, 2007).

When asked to write about her vision for an HLE, Emma writes that both teachers and students are excited about the subject matter and see how it can benefit the students in their future lives. To exemplify what constrains creating HLE's, Emma shares her view of apathetic attitudes:

That's what I see happening here to sort of poison the overall learning atmosphere in certain classes. Sometimes it occurs in older students more often than younger. It can, however bring an entire class "down" if the apathy overwhelms or catches on. I see an HLE being one where students are eager to share, learn, work on projects, ask questions, and the teacher is eager to assist with anything asked of him/her (Emma, Journal, January 12, 2007).

Apathy and other constraining attitudes also permeate the instructional staff as evidenced on several occasions when we discuss one colleague at Grand Bay. On one occasion we begin talking about what the administration has planned for one of the first "Restructured Day" meetings: teachers are to work in small teams on various relevant tasks. In Molly's team, they are to develop a plan for a new initiative called freshman teaming, but teachers later must also report for a central meeting involving all staff.

Molly gives an example that ties the interplay between attitude and time,

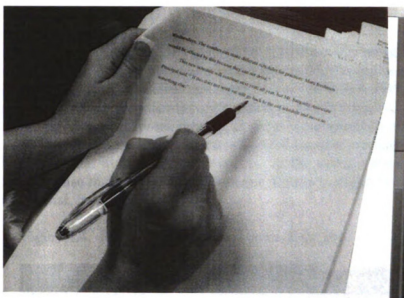
I like the idea of freshman teams and I like the idea that we're supposed to have time; I just feel like we never accomplish anything so it irritates me. One, because we only get forty-five minutes and then we have to go do something else. But two because, and I love [the freshman team leader], but [he] has a way of guiding the meetings that takes too long. Then we have people on the committee who like to complain and he tries to— He tries reigning them in but it's hard, especially for one person in particular, so I feel we spend too much time listening to this person complain and maybe I'm especially bitter because he's [in so many of my meetings], so I listen to this person complain at [all of these] meetings and it's like, huh? (Molly, Focus Group, February 23, 2007).

Penelope and Emma laugh at this, and Molly continues, indicating what she might say to the man, were he present,

You know, I agree with you; I think some of this stuff is stupid. We can't do anything about it. So let's just talk about what we can do and quit complaining. It drives me crazy (Molly, Focus Group, February 23, 2007).

For her first photo, Emma brings a picture of a student's paper, which is used to depict the hopefulness of a student's attitude about learning in her classroom.

Figure 4.2. Educating Editors, Emma, February, 2007



A student in first hour came to me with a question while editing a classmate's news story. I was impressed and hopeful because I feel like they are remembering what they learn and interested enough to take such care in correcting someone's work (Emma, Journal, February 23, 2007).

Figure 4.3. Educating Educators, Emma, January, 2007



Both students and teachers need to have attitudes that enhance building capacity to create HLE's. Another of Emma's photos depicts teachers being in-serviced. The in-service is scheduled on a day when students are not attending school. Because teachers

chose to attend, Emma depicts this as having an attitude that contributes to capacity building:

In the morning, all district teachers gathered at [GBW] at this initial meeting in the gym. I shot photos of all the teachers who would come to our school—really it's remarkable that more do not call in sick. We were told this year by a union rep that though the district *has* to schedule professional development for us, most of us (who are *tenured*) do not have to actually show that we *attended*! This is hopeful because teachers learn here about ways that we can help our students. At the initial session, our administrators also make it *fun* for us to attend (Emma's emphasis in the original, Journal, February 5, 2007).

Figure 4.4. Hands on Education, Emma, February, 2007



Being prideful about a good work ethic is also seen as an essential attitude for creating HLE's. Emma indicates that she has that attitude and that her students' newspaper indicates they also have that attitude,

the newspaper is hopeful to me because it is student-run, student-created, and it is a published piece that showcases a lot of things that happen in town and at [GBW]. I am proud of those kids and their abilities (Emma, Journal, March 5, 2007)!

To illustrate more indicators of HLE's she tells about students returning from college and sharing how their experiences in her classes benefited and prepared the

students for success at college. Having a helping attitude is important for educators. In her last reflection, Emma notes,

I think that as long as we keep in mind the philosophy “do what’s best for kids” we’ll be on the right track to maintain HLE’s in school. Yes, sometimes things seem bleak but those things pass and you remember why you took this job. Or someone acknowledges your hard work and it makes it all better! I really do love this job but I do feel that I’ve become jaded over time and don’t like to feel that way (Emma, Journal, March 5, 2007).

While Emma worries about becoming a jaded teacher similar to the one that Emma labeled a complainer, at an almost opposite extreme, Penelope is so loquaciously vivacious, it is difficult to tease any acknowledgement of bleakness out of her. Her first photo depicts a colleague with a hula hoop and Penelope effervesces as she tells us the story,

Figure 4.5. Hula Hoop, Penelope, February, 2007



She has this hula hoop around her neck as you can see. This is in the little courtyard right outside our classrooms with her French I class. The day before a student had asked her how to say hula hoop in French and he had some attitude about it, so she said, 'Fine I'm going to bring the hula hoops. And I'll teach you the word in French.' She had the hula hoop around her arms, and the kids were getting involved in it. I just thought it was awesome, because how often would kids say things that we just say, 'Oh, whatever!' I don't want to be bothered, you know. It was so positive that she just said, go, that very next day with the hula hoops and made a point of validating that kid, of him having brought it up, and her being able to do something with it....and especially in a language when you try to get as much reality in as possible so that the kids can concretely touch things, and learn the words and that kind of thing. It teaches the kids that she's a real person and hopefully it gives them the idea that they can express themselves (Penelope, Focus Group, February 2, 2007).

HLE's are seen by the participants as places where people, teachers and students, especially, have optimistic attitudes about students' potential success. They are places where adults care about kids, where kids feel safe enough to take risks, and learning is fun and relevant. Trust and honesty are part of this experience.

I broach the possibility of despair during Penelope's individual interview, asking if she thinks that any situations of pessimism might stem from people's backgrounds and that their attitudes may be impacted by events or situations in their personal lives outside of school. She disagrees. This time I poke at her with a different instrument of torture; I mention our current bleak economy in Michigan:

It seems so silly to me because it's not going to turn around if you're negative! I just have never been one of those types of people and it's so far from my brain that I can't imagine. I know the economy's bad, but why should I let it affect my day to day life? Why should that affect how I teach these children (Penelope, Interview, March 5, 2007)?

She acknowledges that perhaps it would be difficult to go about her job if her hypothetical husband had just lost his. But she reminds me again that people need to get over it. I palpate a little deeper this time, finally striking a nerve, when I ask, “OK, so if the kid’s hungry, still they...”

She interjects, “No, *that* I don’t believe. *That* I feel is a different...”

I ask, “Can you remember a time when you experienced that where...”

And her experience with despair shows itself in a vignette she paints of a former student:

I feel like it’s happened a lot to me recently. I’ve had lots of kids unloading heartbreaking stories. I had a kid who was leaving the school district, who told me all these heartbreaking things on the last day of school. It sent me into such a tailspin; I cried all weekend long because I had this kid for three years. He was a C, D [grade-wise] student. I knew he didn’t come from money, but I didn’t realize that his situation was as bad as this. He was so respectful with me and the other kids. It was so shocking to me that this kid could be in there just like any other student and then go home and have to face the things he was facing. I felt so helpless when I drove home on that Friday. I know I’m a good teacher; I know I’m impacting these kids in a positive way but there is a limit to what I can do. I can’t be there if that child is getting hit again or when that kid is making the decision to sell drugs or not. I can’t be there when he’s being kicked out of the house. I really felt like, I don’t know if I can do this. I don’t know if I can be a teacher. I can’t take these and not be able to do something about it. So I talked to some people, the social worker here. She called his new school to have somebody keep an eye on him, but I feel like recently I’ve had a lot of students, who have told me that they’ve been hit, or just terrible stories (Penelope, Interview, March 5, 2007).

Feeling powerless about her ability to help the student, knowing that she can’t control what goes on in the student’s home, she contacts the authorities, as she is required to do by law, knowing that what the state does to intercede may or may not help, and might make things worse. Even while Penelope reaches out for help for herself, she takes this story of despair and puts a hopeful spin on it:

I give a lot of my personality to these kids. You have to be professional and whatever I'm battling is not their problem. But for the kids, who have all of this that they're coming with, that actually even makes me more hopeful, that these kids can come to school with the problems that they have and still perform. I don't know what I would have been like in that kind of a situation (Ibid).

Even though this story about Penelope's student doesn't surface until the exit interview in March, Penelope's journal entry at our introductory meeting, describes one essential component of Hopeful Learning Environments as places

where every child feels safe and motivated to learn. I would want the students to positively interact with one another and engage with the content of the class. [It] would also inspire the students to make connections between what they are learning in class and the "real world." A hopeful classroom would encourage students to perform to their highest potentials, where they would be free to make decisions. Honesty is also a large part—where the students can be honest with themselves, each other, and [with] the teacher. I think one of the biggest parts would be for the students to feel hope themselves, to allow themselves to dream and be challenged (Penelope, Journal, January 12, 2007).

At the exit interview, when Penelope is asked whether Grand Bay West typifies such a place, she begins at first by describing how her classroom is, but when prompted, she responds,

The school as a whole? You know, I don't know. Because I'm still sort of stuck in my own classroom a little bit. You know, I don't spend a lot of time out, checking things out (Penelope, Interview, March 5, 2007).

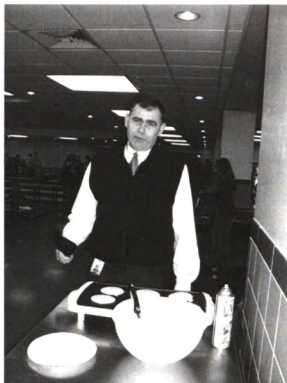
Ideally, HLE's inspire both teachers and staff to both imagine and achieve their most coveted aspirations. Like Penelope, all teachers in HLE's care about what happens to their students, and, like Penelope, all teachers can only affect students within the confines of their professional relationships, but in HLE's, teachers and students are encouraged to care about other people, and are seen as being more humanistic in

pedagogy than non-HLE's. This humanistic and optimistic presence is an essential component of the HLE.

Learning Relationships

Penelope ventures outside of her classroom when she photographs her principal, John Finley, spatula in hand,

Figure 4.6. Pancakes, Penelope, March. 2007



This last one, what I took a picture of was our principal. He did pancakes on Friday morning for the students before school starts, so I went down there and took a picture of him as he was cooking... I'm such a big fan of his. This shows how much he's willing to do to prove to the kids that he cares about them (Penelope, Journal, March 3, 2007).

Her principal cooks pancakes several times a year. His assistants help out with preparing the batter, and he cooks them on an electric griddle and dispenses them to students and staff. Penelope adds,

That's what I feel is such an important aspect of HLE. It's just—

(Penelope, Interview, March 5, 2007).

She seems to be searching for a word, so I prompt with, "Relationships?"

She quips,

Exactly. And I don't know how to teach without building them. And so that's why it's hard, that's why I try to make my classroom as hopeful as possible because I'm just so interested in the kids. I don't know how to relate to them without treating them like people. Even those that get under my skin sometimes; I can find something good in everyone (Penelope, Interview, March 5, 2007).

Penelope responds to the prompt of photographing the capacity for creating an

HLE:

Excellent. I like positive, happy assignments. And even like when things come down from administration, I like, John, our principal, so much that I just I believe in him, and so I feel like I'm working towards a good goal, like aligned with him (Penelope, Focus Group, February 23, 2007).

Penelope doesn't mind directives from the principal because she has a trusting relationship with his authority. The other two teachers don't feel the same relationship, which is evidenced in the next section. Later Penelope talks about relating to her students,

You know, I mean, even when kids not knowing me—and this year I have exceptionally good kids—I feel like my freshmen are great except for my last class. And my third year kids are those kids who I've had for so long and I'm just so fond of them. You know that even when they annoy me, I just feel very positive about things, so, in general, and having had those kids for three years, I feel like I've seen myself that I've been able to really help some of these kids. Some of them have had lots of tough situations. Even when there are bad days, I can sense that it doesn't have anything to do with me and I am still creating a good environment for them (Penelope, Focus Group, February 23, 2007).

There is reciprocity about HLE's and relationships between students and staff, and amongst professional colleagues who foster them. Not only are forming

relationships imperative to create HLE's, but relationships are fostered by creating HLE's. In HLE's, relations between people are both a requirement and a product.

Structuring Support: Conflict in Control

Some talk in the focus group depicts administrative policies and decisions as being discordant with the needs of teachers and students in creating HLE's. Despite airing misgivings about policies, the discussions also entertain frequent supportive and appreciative comments, particularly regarding the bureaucratic layer directly above the participants, as Penelope frequently does, when speaking of John, her principal. The dialog regarding governing of high schools mentions the gamut of the administrative levels, including building level oversight, district level at the Board or Central Office, the School Board itself, in addition to state and national levels of administration and legislators. In general, the more removed the administrative entity is from the ranks of educators dealing most directly with students, the more likely it is "they" will be mentioned as a source of constraint from teachers' efforts to create HLE's for their students.

The state's increased graduation requirements are seen as a deterrent to creating HLE's. When asked to compare her school to an ideal HLE, Emma responds,

We fluctuate is what I would say. For a while, probably a few years ago, two or three years ago, I would say we were at the high end of what I would envision as being hopeful. We fluctuate with both administration and what is going on with budget cuts that are made. All of those are factors that the teachers can't control much of except within the classroom. We haven't seen too much with this new rigorous curriculum. That's going to be another factor that's going to come in. In some ways [I see that as hopeful]. In other ways it's a little scary for those of us who teach classes that are not considered rigor or the academic realm. If we switch to twelfth grade English and what if we don't have all these class choices anymore? What's going to happen to some of the great programs that we have?

That's not so hopeful (Emma, Interview, March 5, 2007).

Emma speaks of the elective English courses she teaches, Journalism and Yearbook and she continues,

And even the other electives, music, you know, art. I mean, these are career fields that people can go into. And I understand academic rigor. Maybe there's a way to have both; the kids will get what they need but they'll also be able to take what they like (Emma, Interview, March 5, 2007).

Figure 4.7. MME Woes, Emma, March, 2007



Emma speaks to some issues with the state mandated MME, as she introduces us to the photograph she brought in to share about factors colliding with capacity building to create HLE's,

I just took a picture from the back of the room, from first hour when they were taking the practice WorkKeys [Applied Mathematics and Reading for Information] test last week, not because I don't think they need the practice. They do. We've had three, three-day weeks in February [due to scheduled vacations, teacher in-service, and the weather], so my time for curriculum stuff is so cut down because of the lack of days of school. Not that I'm complaining about days off...but it's hard to catch up. Trying to get in this practice, which had to be done today, because of ACT [s and the state's testing rules state that all test preparation exercises must cease

with a ten day moratorium before testing]. Yes, and [the administrators] are very worried about if anybody should mess that up. The sad part is, even though you present it, like I tried to present it to [the students], “This is great, you need this practice.” I try to be all positive about it, but they’re very negative about it. “Man, we’re doing this again!” [Laughs.] This class is actually the better of the three. They whine...not as much... They’re whiners (Emma, Focus Group, February 23, 2007).

The group chuckles at her sincerity and the group jokes a bit about bringing shame upon the school in such a fashion. Emma points to one student in the photograph,

This one here, he whines a lot. Some of them just mark in answers. I just said, “You need this practice, because you have no clue of what this test is going to look like” (Emma, Focus Group, February 23, 2007).

We laugh at her comment about the particular student. These women demonstrate that a good sense of humor is an asset that helps them not to take themselves too seriously. Penelope adds,

Right. I think so many of them think it’s going to be easy and they hear all these high scores and they’re like, “Uh, whatever,” and then they take it and they get like a seventeen (Penelope, Focus Group, February 23, 2008).

A seventeen is not a good score on the ACT. The highest possible score is a 36.

A seventeen will not result in a prestigious college admission. Emma continues,

Plus the fatigue of the overall testing environment...All those days and if they miss a day, they’ll yank them out a couple of weeks later and catch up and, high stakes, but, why do they (Emma, Focus Group, February 23, 2007)?

She questions the district policy of removing students from class in order to make up missed days of testing. This results in the students missing curriculum content and discussion. Each district can create its own non-testing schedule, but the state mandates testing dates for this high stakes test. Some districts allow their juniors to go home for the afternoon after the test, while the rest of the students attend classes in the afternoon.

Some districts allow their juniors to leave early on the last day of testing, and some districts require that juniors test in the morning, and attend classes in the afternoon.

I ask Emma if she has a mixture of age groups in her elective English classes, and she responds,

I have a mix and that's what also makes it hard. In certain classes I have more juniors and a couple of sophomores thrown in. Now second hour, I have six seniors, some juniors, some sophomores, and so it's a tough mix. I've been making the sophomores do it, because they'll have it next year. But I have girl that's so negative about it. She's like, "Are you going to grade us or on how we do or grade us if we just do it?" In her essay portion a few weeks ago, she didn't even try! I wrote her a note and I said, "Should I give you participation points for not even trying to write a decent essay?" That really bothered me because it's a waste of their class time. They waste that whole hour and then they just sit there being irritated because they've got to be quiet while everyone else is working. It's not really about the test but it's more about the demand of time that it takes so long (Emma, Focus Group, February 23, 2007).

When Molly talks about preparing her students for the test, she differentiates between her juniors, who she depicts as compliant, but barely,

Their faces said, "I don't want to," but they did it. Those were the ones who probably would have taken the ACT anyway. The grief came from the three seniors who were in that class, because they would say, but I'm a senior and I already took the ACT. And I said, "But this is what we're doing today." "But I already took it." And finally one junior told him, "I already took it, too. Just take it."

They weren't as much of a problem but my lower level kids! They did it the first time. In fact, that was the only thing that made them be quiet. Voila! Let's take a quiz every day. But by the time we got to the third or the fourth one, it didn't work. They were disgruntled, so when we did the last one this week, I had to say, "OK, it's the last one," to get them to take it. And even then, some of them—I watched them—just went all the way down: A, A....AAAA all the way down (Molly, Focus Group, February 23, 2007).

Molly's story-telling is very entertaining. Her voice and mannerisms are very theatrical. Her diction is perfect and her delivery is dramatic. While she describes what

she calls her lower level students marking random answers without reading the questions, she motions them bubbling in answers on a pretend answer sheet. She continues,

But even though they're disgruntled about it, I found an obstacle with the Work Keys test in particular, because when I read it through it, that thing is really hard! There were some questions I'm like, "I think that the answer is 'A,' but I can't tell you why." I don't even know what they're talking about. We talked about with the advanced kids, what do you do when you can't make heads or tails? We talked about skimming and reading the question first and then going back and skimming until you find the word, if you don't know what the heck they're talking about. That was a pretty good conversation.

And then there was one that made my head hurt. Something about shelving books in the library. And this code and they use two letters and a series of numbers and then they put certain books over here that don't have this and certain books over here and then you get some new books in and I mean, it's long! And then finally it says, "You get this book that's like RA 43.25 AC, where do you put it?" And the kids are like, huh? So we actually talked about for a question like this, I'd have to make a chart. I did a chart on the board. It says, "First do the letters," and so I did the letters and then here's the numbers and then when we did all these bullets and this chart, they were like, "Oh, it goes there." I would write all over the ACT booklet, that's what I would do (Molly, Focus Group, February 23, 2007).

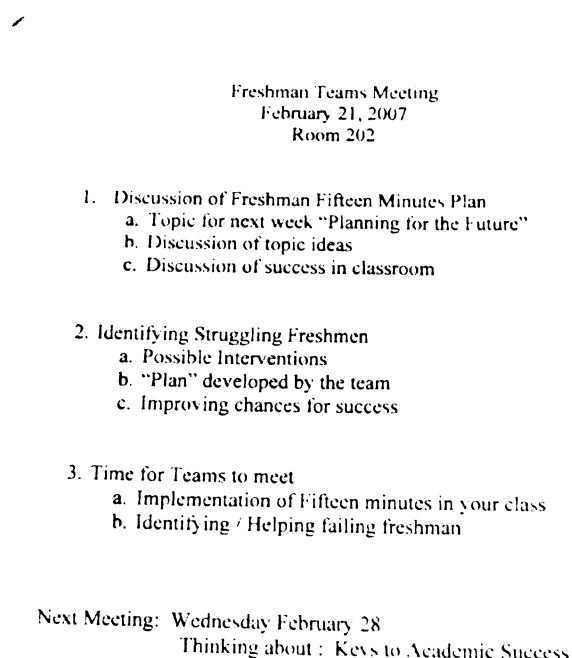
Molly relates that the students were appreciative of the coaching and then goes on to describe the reaction of what she calls her lower level kids. Their reaction is to ignore the same lesson, to use the teacher's back turned to construct a chart on the board, as an opportunity to socialize. Again we laugh at her imitations of her students.

The participants use the test preparation environment as an opportunity for teaching and learning, despite their misgivings about it. They also seem to empathize with the understandable negative attitudes of the juniors' classmates in mixed level classes, when they are subjected to test preparation lessons for a test they won't be taking. The participants demonstrate that humor helps to assuage the discomfort of complying with mandates that neither they nor their students completely agree with but

they struggle with the waste that this mandate produces. They also illustrate, via their explicit examples, that mandating the testing regime, and following a test preparation protocol, will not serve their intended purposes when students fail to cooperate. These participants clearly regret both the testing and its recommended preparation's impact on their students learning.

Restructured Day: Making Time an Issue

Figure 4.8. Rushed Meetings, Penelope, February, 2007

- 
- Freshman Teams Meeting
February 21, 2007
Room 202
1. Discussion of Freshman Fifteen Minutes Plan
 - a. Topic for next week "Planning for the Future"
 - b. Discussion of topic ideas
 - c. Discussion of success in classroom
 2. Identifying Struggling Freshmen
 - a. Possible Interventions
 - b. "Plan" developed by the team
 - c. Improving chances for success
 3. Time for Teams to meet
 - a. Implementation of Fifteen minutes in your class
 - b. Identifying / Helping failing freshman
- Next Meeting: Wednesday February 28
Thinking about : Keys to Academic Success

Being a new addition to the GBW environment, the Wednesday afternoon meeting time is a frequent topic of discussion. Penelope tells us about the photo she took and why,

I felt frustrated by that because on these restructured days we have two meetings on one day. Molly and I are both in this freshman teams meeting thing and that was like forty minutes or half an hour. It seemed really short. Then they even shortened it more and called us down earlier to go

to this NCA meeting. I just felt frustrated that there wasn't enough time to be in there in a meeting that was actually going to be really productive and we were going to meet with our teams and really talk about kids and see what we could do and then they—it was cut off and then we were sent down there...I've been reading all this stuff lately about changing all your, changing negative thoughts into positive thoughts, like you get what you put out there. So then, as I say, even once I label this NCA meeting as being frustrating, I actually felt bad that I had even thought of it (Penelope, Focus Group, February 23, 2007).

In addition to having freshmen teachers work with their students for the full year in their core academic classes, GBW also instituted freshmen teaming. Molly also voices disappointment at having to leave the freshman teaming meeting to go talk about the North Central Accreditation (NCA) model GBW uses, which requires faculty collaboration in the school improvement process. Molly describes the other initiative:

I'm also part of an NCA committee as well. I'm part of the reading committee, reading improvement committee. But what they were trying to do with the freshman teams is get the kids so that three adults all see them for the whole year because in times past, we only kept the kids for a semester and then they go to somebody else and there may not have been as much communication. We're trying to prevent the failing students from falling through the cracks. And we figured that if three people, who were talking to each other all had the same kids, that together maybe we could kind of save some of those failing kids (Molly, Focus Group, February 23, 2007).

GBW's recent implementation of working with its freshmen students resembles the teaming approach previously used in Grand Bay's middle schools. Molly continues:

Yeah, which they eliminated...This is the first year they haven't had that and then we got it (Molly, Focus Group, February 23, 2007)!

Emma states,

That was one of the cutbacks (Emma, Focus Group, February 23, 2007).

Molly adds,

At the middle school, they had common [team] time. We don't really. We all have the same conference period but we don't have extra time in the day to meet [like they had]. We're supposed to sacrifice our planning time to talk to each other about the kids... which some teams do often. My team does it very little. The social studies teacher and I though, have gotten very good, at least emailing each other, or we talk in the hall, about specific kids.

"What's going on with so and so?" And we talk about the positives and the negatives and then we try to, with the same kids, we'll mention what the other teacher said: "Oh, I heard you did really well on your social studies test," or "I heard you do your social studies work; why don't you do my English work?" or vice versa, and they're like, "You talk to each other [ABOUT ME]!" So that's kind of cool... But I really wish we had more [she pauses and whispers], *time* (Molly, Focus Group, February 23, 2007).

A great deal of money is saved when going from a seven to a six period day in Grand Bay's four middle schools. By eliminating one out of seven periods of the middle school day, and eliminating one seventh of the courses the middle school students could take, a district the size of Grand Bay might save over a million dollars of a hundred million dollar budget. At the high school, introducing teaming is cost neutral, because no schedule adjustments were made to allow teachers extra time to meet. Because teaming is new for all of the freshmen teachers, Molly adds,

It really would be nice [to have that once a week Wednesday afternoon meeting time to meet with our team]. I think I knew I was teamed at the end of last year but they didn't give us any materials on it until the school year had already begun. So I told them, "Respectfully, I can't implement this right now. I'm teaching. When do you want me to do this other stuff? Read all these binders you gave me and all these books? That's great stuff. I'll read it over the summer. I don't have—I find it challenging for me to read new stuff now." So you know, all the stuff we wanted to do, common policies, common syllabi, work on some things, it didn't happen because they didn't give us the time when we were ready to prepare and now we're in the thick of things (Molly, Focus Group, February 23, 2007).

I ask Molly if the teachers had hoped to create some thematic units for teaching across the disciplines, and if they would be able to do it during the Restructured Day meeting times. She responds,

The social studies teacher asked me at the NCA meeting was I interested in creating common [thematic units]... And I am, but the challenge is that—well, [getting together, that's] one challenge: time, but the other challenge is that he's... teaching U. S. History and in all honesty, he'd be better paired with American Lit, which is tenth grade. I don't readily see where this common theme would come with what I teach in ninth grade and with what he teaches (Molly, Focus Group, February 23, 2007).

I suggest some very broad themes, like personal commitment, identity, or citizenry as examples. Molly replies,

... We would have to manipulate... That doesn't fall into any of the things the state has given us for that grade now. Even if we don't tie it into what the state says, I still think it's a worthwhile thing and I still would be willing to do it. I've been saying that for a while. It's just a matter of finding the time (Molly, Focus Group, February 23, 2007).

Emma relates to the time constraint:

I think time is always an issue. I get frustrated myself by the lack of time to, whether it's working with other people, or just trying to—I feel like I'm holed up in my classroom by myself and I don't see a lot of other adults very often. Standing out in the hall on guard is when I talk to [my colleagues], and down at this end, [our department chair] will pass by your room [directed toward Molly]. That seems to be the extent of it. I don't even go down for lunch because I don't have the time. I'm always on a deadline and my lunchtime's got to be spent working, even if it's only twenty-five, thirty minutes long (Emma, Focus Group, February 23, 2007).

Time resonates as a constraint in several dimensions. The participants speak of needing time to meet with colleagues in order to better understand and teach their students; they need more instructional time to be able to meet both the district's and the state's request for a rigorous curriculum, and Molly notes they need more time to be able to meet with students outside of class time. Molly relates how difficult it is to work with

her freshmen individually, which is particularly important for those whose learning needs are not met in the regular classroom environment. Because freshmen typically ride the bus, they can't make it to school or home by other means, which limits their availability to teachers, being available only during lunch. And as Emma notes,

The students don't want to give up their lunch periods, either. It's their only time during the day to socialize. It's their only down time, too (Ibid).

Facing several new initiatives, the dialogs about constraints at the district level center on several topics which include, how GBW is preparing for and taking the MME, GBW's restructured day, and two other new programs recently introduced by the participants' principal. In addition to implementing the restructured school day at the semester break, GBW implemented a student discipline program based on incentives, rather than deterrents. At GBW's third Photovoice session, with participants bringing photos about things colliding with educators' attempts at creating HLE's, two of the three participants bring artifacts from a recent meeting. Prompted by Emma's photo of her students and the dialog that ensued, Penelope states,

I've noticed a lot of negativity just about, from the kids in general, about school. I actually talked to them yesterday. After our [focus group's] talk about student council, I took my two junior classes and we talked about why they weren't going to Snowcoming [Dance], what they would have preferred to see the days [referring to the attire for each day of the week, based on the prescribed theme of the day], cause they were all crabbing about what the spirit days were... But what kept coming up is just how negative they feel about the school right now because of the whole privileges thing... Things were made a lot more strict and they're not allowed to go out, things like this, if they have tardies and bad grades. So they're very negative about that and I asked them...if they felt respected in the school and the majority of them said no, which I thought was really interesting because especially those kids that I have are pretty good kids...so that surprised me a lot. They felt like they were just being squashed (Penelope, Focus Group, February 23, 2007).

Although the students had been told since the beginning of the year that the impending change was coming, they voice their opposition most vehemently when the change is upon them. Emma objects to some of the seeming transience of the initiatives, commenting on the new administrative team,

So I, in some respects I would say, back when I was here [as a student], it was better. Maybe our leadership was better, too. We had a more solid group, that had been doing it for a long time and stayed with it for like twenty-five years, and these folks, I feel like it's been a revolving door the last few years in the administrative end of things. It's hard. Yeah, you're just sort of starting over, starting new things. When I was in [the other high school I taught at in Michigan], it was the same thing for a long time, the revolving door of administrators. That's why the teaching staff was so tight over there, because we had to have each other to get through a lot of what went on over there (Emma, Interview, March 5, 2007).

After Molly returns from a short meeting with another student council advisor, she comments about the impact of implementing the new policies,

I'm stressed right now anyway, but I'm just so tired of kids and their sense of entitlement. Don't get me wrong. I know they have rights and privileges. But they feel they deserve so much more than I ever felt that I deserved at their age, so that when they complain to me, I'm like, "What, this is how it should be, or this is how I'm used to it being? Let me say that you have too many privileges as it is!" [She laughs.] "You need to quit complaining" (Molly, Focus Group, February 23, 2007).

Despite her joking about the students, Molly is unequivocal about what she views as her main professional responsibility. She voices her feelings about belonging to an NCA committee and its implications for her,

For the most part, even when they're getting on my nerves, I like kids. I mean I do lose it occasionally, but tomorrow, I'll walk back in the room and I love my kids. I have other problems with all the other stuff. I don't know how my parents [both teachers] didn't tell me that. I didn't get into teaching for the other stuff. I want to work with kids. So quite frankly, and respectfully, I don't give a hoot about NCA. I don't see how it directly impacts my kids. I would rather be working on freshman teams, where I can be trying to save a kid, than down there working on a stupid report. I don't care. That's what frustrates me, all the department

meetings that talk about all the additional stuff I have to do when I don't have time to work with my kids and all the other stuff I have to add to my curriculum when I can't teach what I already have right now. If they would just let me teach, I'd be great. Just leave me alone and let me be with my kids (Molly, Focus Group, February 23, 2007).

Emma echoes Molly:

They're really good at doing whatever they need to do to get the right statistics to put into these reports and make it look like we are doing this fabulous job and I think we do, do a fabulous job here without having to do reports and do the whole NCA cycle and stuff. I think we could continue as we are and never have to have an NCA, but I realize for the school, it's important, for them to have that accreditation. But I really have never seen or never been personally affected by what I have done for NCA. Just do it because we're required to; we have to go to these meetings. One thing I like about our restructured day is we only have to do that kind of stuff at those meetings (Emma, Focus Group, February 23, 2007).

Meetings can be seen as taking teachers away from their real jobs, as explained by

Molly,

We had just had a meeting on Wednesday, and it was like the first week of the semester and I'm trying to know my kids. I'm trying to get my work done. You want to have two meetings in a row (Molly, Focus Group, February 23, 2007)?

The teachers in the focus group seem to have a preference for their roles in relating to the students over their roles as professional colleagues in meetings. Although she seems to be in agreement with what Molly said here, Emma ends her interview by making the following comment,

Last week when I was talking about the NCA process, and you had asked, has it affected you personally? I just wanted to amend something because the last NCA here that GBW used to do, I came in on the very tail end when I started in 1999. From what I had heard, they had a fabulous group, prior to [this cycle]. Everybody had a buy-in. They had shirts they would wear, they had these big old wonderful days, when all these departments would collaborate and kids would get really into, like Shakespeare day and I think with leadership like that, you could get a lot out of the NCA process. Some of our leaders here don't know what they're doing, and

they don't know how to communicate it to us to what they want us to do. It's very frustrating (Emma, Interview, March 5, 2007).

The complexity of the tension between spending time interacting with students and interacting with other teachers and administrators is not something that was transparent in this study. The things that teachers need to do in order to improve teaching and learning are not always immediately clear. Perhaps the frustration that Emma and Molly express about their preference for teaching rather than meeting is a reflection of the types of experiences they've had at the meetings they've recently attended. Perhaps if they were engaged, as Emma refers to here, in a process that yielded some dynamics that made a dramatic impact in their students' learning, the teachers might be more amenable to meeting with their colleagues to build capacity. Their mutual frustration with their meetings, and their view that it seems to be interfering with rather than enhancing student learning is a matter of concern. Their ambivalence about the productivity of committees is demonstrated when I ask,

Now, have you ever worked on a committee where you—

Penelope interjects,

I haven't joined any committees here. I've done class advisor, but I didn't other than the four committees we've been forced into right now through NCA (Penelope, Focus Group, February 23, 2007).

Emma comments,

Forced is the right choice. (Emma, Focus Group, February 23, 2007)

Budget Constraints

The focus group dialog yields two examples of how budget constraints impact learning. The first example stems from the discussion about a disgruntled colleague that was labeled as a complainer. Budget cuts directly impacted the services he formerly

offered to both students and colleagues. The budget cuts also seemed to impact the colleague's attitude,

With cuts and this other person is bitter because at one point [his] job was to run the [debate program]. That was what [he] taught, a couple of classes and the rest of his day was devoted to running [this student center where kids came for research materials]. [He] did a fabulous job and I realize a lot of other districts do not have a [research resource]. We were very fortunate. He was kind of a consultant. He would come in and teach specific things about [researching.] He would do whatever you needed him for. He would [help teachers] because that's really what the lab was for was to help [us] with the load, but also to do these other consulting kinds of things. You could send kids in there who were having trouble and they would work with him. Little by little, this has been pared down. I think that's where that [negative attitude] comes from. He's much happier in his environment because that really threw him for a loop when they pulled him out. Now he's a full time teacher (Emma, Focus Group, February 23, 2007).

Molly is not empathic with the colleague's plight, and brings the discussion back to what she experiences in meetings,

There are lots of people, who want to talk about this. They want to talk about that. Even so, with everybody else, I at least feel like they can be redirected. Maybe they're just venting because we all need to vent. If they can, maybe we might actually get something out of it. But with that person, it's like, "OK, so what's the solution?" "Well, let me just tell you this. And I..." It's like we would never get past the problem (Molly, February 32, 2007).

The potential for attitude having a negative impact in HLE's is also previously mentioned in beginning of this chapter. The importance of attitude, and its inevitable recurrence, like time, portrays its complexity as both an essential component of, and as a possible constraint to creating HLE's. The interplay of attitude and attitude's ephemeral nature eludes educators' efforts to prescribe learning, just as this interplay and nature impede efforts to measure educators' efficiency in instruction.

While a more direct function of the state's budget constraints, the indirect results of administrative decisions that Emma describes here are seen as a constraint to creating HLE's:

With the higher [senior high school level] class, our contract says that we can have thirty four kids in an English class and I mean you can barely check thirty four papers, get some advice for the kids for the next time, before you're collecting a new set of papers. It's overwhelming sometimes. If they could keep the class sizes a decent, smaller size, I think it would be helpful even for the kids. They'd get to know one another better, too, in the class. I don't know if other people would agree with this, but I kind of like to have the kids all year long. I do in Journalism, Yearbook, and Newspaper, and that helps me to establish relationships with them as opposed to keeping them for a semester and see you, you're going into another English teacher's class and now you've got to get to know them, their rules, their activities...Keeping kids all year long is a better option for making an HLE. The freshman teachers certainly would agree because that's what they're doing now (Emma, Interview, March 5, 2007).

Having the students change teachers at the semester is not necessarily a budgeting issue, but more so a scheduling one. Class size, however, is clearly a budgetary issue that directly impacts teachers' relationships with their students, which is seen as an essential component of HLE's. Both the services that are provided to students and teachers and class size are related to budgets and result from decisions made by people other than teachers. In times of budgetary constraints, support services to students and teachers are cut and class sizes increase.

Summary of the Findings at Grand Bay West High School

The teachers in the study at GBW strive to build capacity for creating HLE's for their students mostly within their classrooms. They attempt to sustain their HLE's by maintaining hopeful attitudes as teachers and promoting them in students. They also feel maintaining meaningful relationships with their students are essential for HLE's. Time

constraints that result from a lack of structural support and budget constraints are the main detractors from HLE's, but negative attitudes also constrain them. The interaction of power and control and the teachers' response to the interaction is more subtle and will be addressed in the analysis chapter. In order to sustain HLE's the teachers in the study indicated that having more instructional time, and time to prepare to implement the things that they learn from their professional development opportunities would benefit them in being able to improve their students' learning.

CHAPTER 5

OAK TREE HIGH SCHOOL: A CLEARING IN THE WOODS

Introduction

Oak Tree's claim to fame this year is its basketball team, which was ranked in the state to finish in the top twenty, and placed first. True to their reputation, the Oak Tree Acorns celebrated too enthusiastically, resulting in national press coverage of the melee that ensued. Oak Tree's campus is sprawling, like the tree itself, with several halls branching from the main trunk. Oak Tree is the least academically acclaimed of the three high schools in a suburb known for its schools and pricey property, even though its standardized test scores ranked close to the state average in most areas, as is shown in a Chapter Four and in Appendix XVII. Oak Tree is located in the bedroom community adjacent to Curie High School's district, which is the third site in this study. As a participant of this study commented, Oak Tree is the "ugly step child" in the district. Some selected information is shown in Table 5.1 regarding Oak Tree's status compared to the other two sites. Notice that Forest Shores Public Schools, Oak Tree's district has the highest per pupil spending. Compared to the other two high schools in this study, Oak Tree has the lowest per cent of economically disadvantaged (SchoolMatters, 2007). Similar comparative information about the three sites is also presented in the first section of Chapters Four and Six and again in Appendix XVII for the reader's convenience. Of the three high schools in Forest Shores, Oak Tree has the highest per cent of economically disadvantaged students at 12 %, with the other two at 8% and 3% (SchoolMatters, 2007). Forest Shores District has 9% of the district students receiving free or reduced lunch, compared to over twenty per cent in the other two districts.

Table 5.1. 2005 District Comparative Information about Three Study Sites

	Grand Bay (West)	Forest Shores (Oak Tree)	Curie
Per Pupil Spending	\$ 7700	\$ 9300	\$ 8600
Single households	9.3 %	7.3 %	9.2 %
Parents with HS Diploma	92.5 %	91.1 %	89.4 %
Parents with BA	20.6 %	32.8 %	21.5 %
Percent of students receiving free or reduced lunch	17 % West HS 21 % District	12 % Oak Tree HS 9% District	23 % Curie HS 26 % District
Students/teacher ratio	24.6	20.3	22.2
Students receiving special education services	11.7	13.6	12.2

Data compiled from SchoolMatters (2007)

This chapter begins with an introduction to each of this site's participants, which is summarized for all sites in Appendix XVIII. A brief introduction to the findings at this site will be after that. The main sections of this chapter contain a more detailed presentation of the findings. This chapter will conclude with a summary presentation of the findings that promote HLE's.

The Participants

Oak Tree is unique in two ways regarding its participants. This is the largest group in the study with five participants and it is the only group with male participants. The experience of Oak Tree's participants ranges from Tyler (pseudonym) being in his first year of teaching to Veronica's (pseudonym) being in her twelfth year. The departmental representation at Oak Tree is broader than the other two sites with four

departments represented by two members from the Science department, and one each from the English, Social Studies and Business departments. Only two departments are represented at each of the other two sites. In the sub-sections that follow, each of the participants will be introduced. Table 5.2 below shows a snapshot of the personal attributes of each of the members of Oak Tree's focus group.

Table 5.2. Snapshot Information of Oak Tree's Participants

Tyler	• Caucasian male, single (engaged), no children • Teaches Business, Technology & Co-op for one year • BA from a local public university; MAT at a local public university; Attended high school in a neighboring suburban public high school • Coaches wrestling • Prepared Audit for Co-op, conducted survey about program's past participants
X2	• Black male, single (divorced), two school-aged boys • Teaches English for 9 years at Oak Tree, substituted at others, and taught at college level • BA at an out of state public university; MA from a local private college; attended high school in a variety of urban public high schools in different states • Has coordinated various extra-curricular activities
Reese	• Caucasian female, married, one small son • Teaches elective Social Studies for 9 years at Oak Tree • BA from a big ten university; MA from a local private college; attended high school at a neighboring public school • Participated in various NCA committee chairs • Pursuing teaching International Baccalaureate (IB)
Veronica	• Caucasian female, married, one small boy, one small girl • Teaches upper level Science courses for 15 years, parents are both teachers • BS from a private, out of state, college; MA from a local public university; Ed. Specialist from a local public university; attended high school at a local suburban public school • Galileo Teacher Leader • Science Curriculum Study Committee • NCA co-chair • Sponsor of various extra-curricular activities, including National Honor Society
Susan	• Caucasian female, married, school-aged boy and girl • BA from a private local college; MS from a private local college; attended high school at a neighboring suburban public high school • Teaches general level Sciences for 4 years, one of which was at a different high school in Forest Shores district • No extra activities

Tyler's Growth

Tyler appears as if he could have just acquired the age of majority, but he is thirty and engaged to be married during the summer after our focus group meetings. He has dark hair and friendly eyes, wears rimless glasses, and he is the only participant at Oak Tree with no children. Tyler's ready smile is pleasant; he is quick to laugh, and is not reticent about contributing to the conversation. He takes his role as teacher, coach, and participant in the study seriously, showing almost as much passion as X2, the other male participant.

Like everyone except Veronica in this focus group, Tyler came to teaching after taking a stint in another career. He initially wanted to be a computer engineer, but after a year at a local technology college, Tyler opted to pursue business. He managed a temporary employment agency and because he was interested in entertainment, working for a talent agency on the West Coast seemed a natural fit. Although Tyler loved his job, he didn't like the long hours he worked in the entertainment industry. When he decided it was time to start a family, he moved back to Michigan and thought about teaching at that time, but joined his father in real estate, and two years later started back to college for teaching because he loved coaching and working with kids. He began substitute teaching and used the network he'd established by coaching and substituting to help him land an interview for an opening at Oak Tree.

Tyler's teaching schedule is intense. Because he teaches in the business department with only one other teacher, he teaches four different classes. Because this is his first year teaching, he has only taught one of his classes before, and that was while he was student teaching, when most of the preparation was done by his mentor teacher. The

other teacher in his department, who is at the opposite end of the experience spectrum from Tyler, teaches four sections of the same course and one section of an Advanced Placement (AP) course. Unlike some beginning teachers feeling the brunt of low seniority, there is no animosity in Tyler about his position. Despite acknowledging he probably relates better to the students, being closer to their age and more familiar with their interests, he is not condescending or arrogant; his respect for his partner's experience and stature is clear. His passion for working with students is evident in his exuberance. In addition to plants in a terrarium, Tyler wants to grow the business program at Oak Tree. He also wants to grow as a teacher.

Tyler brings the least teaching experience to the study, but his growth during the short time of the study is apparent, perhaps the result of a modicum of introspective reflection, as he responds to X2's photographs depicting fighting and diversity,

This is my first year where I've had to learn all these budgets and paperwork and purchase orders. It's a learning experience for me. I felt those [issues] were the most important right now but seeing some of these things from the others really opened my eyes to, well, I wasn't thinking on this level, or I wasn't thinking that (Tyler, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

Figure 5.1. Controlled Chaos, Tyler, February 2007



At the first and second sessions, Tyler brought pictures of clocks, money, rules, policies, and competition. His candor about his growth in the group is evidenced by the comments on his last photo, *Controlled Chaos*, during his exit interview,

After the dialog it kind of got me thinking about different things: this is just a terrarium. But this has been in our house for a year and a half and we don't do anything to it. It just keeps growing. What I thought was interesting was talking about an HLE and thinking about our conversations with racism and how different factors come into play, whether it was [socio-economic status], or just the home environment. And how in this little controlled area, how survival—everything just kind of lives together, cohabitates and lives. It learns how to deal with its surroundings. Why can't we just learn how to—I mean we have some people that need to learn how to tolerate things. But some people try to push the limits and go above and beyond. Here it's kind of neat because you don't really see the plant growing outside of the jar. It's all staying within. What I was thinking about the classroom is being able to survive and get along and make do with what we have and live together. That was the biggest thing, was living together (Tyler, Interview, March 14, 2007).

Veronica's Garden

Veronica is the most experienced teacher in the focus group at Oak Tree. Her initial cynicism about trying to create an HLE in a conservative bureaucratic system surfaces, but then is softened by her devotion to the profession, and the tenacity with which she endeavors to do so. Veronica, the child of two teachers, carries the distinction in this group of being the only person who didn't first choose another career before beginning to teach. After hearing about Tyler's first set of photographs and the frustration he feels as a novice teacher, she quickly makes us all laugh with her quick wit. Her sincere advice to Tyler is,

It will be OK. X2 and I talked about it today; it's like every time I went to take a picture, I thought, well even with bad technology, you can still create an HLE. I did take the picture of technology. Or without the money, you still should be able to create an HLE, so I kept bumping up against that thought in my brain (Veronica, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

Besides serving as sage for Tyler, Veronica's role as the group's matriarch also plays out during the study in two ways: she hosts and acts as communicator between our meetings. Veronica is the contact teacher; she makes sure everyone knows about meetings, reminds them to bring photos, and facilitates communication among the members. We meet in her room. Each session between her last class of the day and before our group begins she cleans the surface of the students' tables before she moves them together for our meeting space.

Veronica is training for a triathlon. During our exit interview, she complains about feeling hot and very tired because she had ridden several miles on a stationary bicycle earlier in the morning. Not only is Veronica growing muscles, but she is growing

children. New to struggling with the tensions of fulfilling the needs of a three year old daughter, a six month old baby boy, and her husband, in addition to trying to create an HLE for her students, Veronica brings a photo of the baby's bottles for discussion about issues colliding with creating HLE's.

Being the sole income in her family, Veronica leaves their children with relatives for day care, and although she lives locally, she and her husband alternate driving forty miles round trip to drop off and pick up the children each day. They communicate regularly about their family's needs, and she has a schedule that she tightly adheres to, as indicated in response to another teacher's comment,

It's funny you say stamina, because that's what I feel like. Monday morning, five o'clock in the morning [snaps fingers], voom, hit the ground and run until eight o'clock Friday night, because we have swim class on Friday night. You know it's just really crazy (Veronica, Focus Group, March 1, 2007).

Susan's Room for Growth

Susan began adult life as a wife, spurning advice from others, and marrying young, but soon longed for a profession. First she studied nutrition and psychology and during her internship realized she might be better suited as a physician's assistant. She picked up the required courses, and was about to do her practicum, when she realized she did not want to work in a hospital. She decided, at great expense, she laments, to go into teaching. She entered a master of arts in teaching program that enabled her to become certified within one year, and soon obtained a job teaching Biology and Chemistry at one of the other high schools in the Forest Shores District.

She wears pants and casual tops to work; I did not see her in a skirt or dress on any of my visits. Her long brown hair is casually coiffed, layered and bouncy, as she is.

Susan's classroom is the only one I visit when students are present during the school day. This visit occurs only because we decide to schedule individual interviews during each teacher's planning time the week the MME exams are administered. Susan's brusqueness serves her well in the classroom; she is directive, calling out to her students suggestions for a successful endeavor in an evolution activity. When I visit her class, students have a lab sheet with few directions, and are expected to attempt to do various tasks with their thumbs taped to their hands, their essential tool immobilized by duct tape. The students are actively engaged with this activity, working in groups, and learning the evolutionary lesson of the advantages of being a primate, the animal with opposable appendages. Some cheat, working the thumb away from the palm and insert an implement in the crevasse there, held in place by the pressure the thumb exerts against the palm. She asks the students if their dogs or cats could hold those implements in the same way. Her room is full of hopeful and engaged students.

Figure 5.2. Underutilized Space, Susan, February 8, 2007



For the first Photovoice session, Susan brings a picture of what looks to be garbage.

It's garbage. We have two Chemistry labs built for Chemistry purposes. Well, there were only two Chemistry teachers in the building for a very, very long time so one lab was fine. Then I came and now it's three. Veronica and I do *a lot* of labs, so now it's trying to schedule not only a regular Chemistry but an Introductory Chemistry and trying to stagger days. There sits a chemistry lab pretty unused (Susan, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

X2's Arbor: Human and Other Resources

At our introductory meeting, the participants at Oak Tree are told that the pseudonym for their school will probably be Oak Tree High School. I ask each of the participants to select a pseudonym for themselves, and X2, who informs us all several times during the study, that, "You know, I'm Black," gets input from Veronica. She tells him to be "A," and X2 responds,

No, I was going to go with the whole X thing. Unknown. (X2, Focus Group, January 19, 2007).

I ask, "Malcolm?"

He affirms,

So, I was going to go with X2 (X2, Focus Group, January 19, 2007).

X2 is not just a Black man; he is a big, burly, dark-skinned Black man, who has the vocabulary of an Ivy League graduate. He is a writer, published; he confesses when I ask, on the web. He also is an amateur actor and director. Veronica and her husband acted with X2's direction in his home with a script he wrote. He is deep, thoughtful, introspective, yet can be alarmingly outspoken. It's not likely that he would be in a room and people wouldn't notice that he's there. He feigns unassumingness, but it doesn't fly with me. In the individual interview, I call him on it and we play word games, bandying

about synonyms to indicate his slight narcissistic turn. I'm charmed at our first meeting by how he sets up the video camera for me in such a way that I will have a greater view of the participants. He explains it's because he tapes a teen soap opera with his students that he knows how to set up the camera. He chivalrously attends to my digital voice recorder. He is gallant, yet appears boyish when he eats several packages of potato chips and drinks several lemonades. As I write this, in my mind, I hear him say, "But, you know..." and I attend to what is about to come out. Most times it's something worth hearing. Just the sound of his voice is alluring: it's a James Earl Jones kind of a voice. The cadence is smooth, the pitch is deep, and it resonates a good feeling. I tell him that I love the sound of his voice and I can almost see him blushing. X2 looks like a football lineman and sounds like an artistic intellectual.

X2 introduces himself as one, who has lived in many states from Missouri to California. He has worked with the deaf community, and has subbed in other schools, but has only been a contract teacher at Oak Tree. This is X2's ninth year of teaching. He says,

Love my job. I'm here for the students. Love the students. That's it. Oh, and I have two great sons (X2, Focus Group, January 19, 2007).

Figure 5.3. Untapped Resources, Reese, February 8, 2007



Reese writes in her journal as I imagine most participants in this study would. She is succinct, poignant, evocative, and passionate. She complies with my requests, responding to the prompts that I give her. She follows the action research protocol with precision when she takes one of her photographs, *Untapped Resources* to her department's professional learning community meeting and collaborates with her peers to develop a scavenger hunt activity utilizing her school's collection of primary historical documents.

Reese married her high school sweetheart. She attended another well-regarded high school in an adjacent suburb, and went to a Big Ten university, hoping to pursue a doctorate in psychology. Along the route, when she was working as a research assistant for one of her major professors, he suggested she might like teaching high school as a career. She tried it, and she loved it. She currently teaches in the Social Studies department at Oak Tree. Like the rest of the teachers in this focus group, with the

exception of Susan, who taught briefly at Maple High School in the district, Reese has only taught at Oak Tree. Reese went through her masters program in teaching with X2 at a local private college, and shortly after obtaining her degree, she gave birth to a boy, now two years old. She has taught Sociology, Psychology, and History. Reese's colleagues in the group seem to hold her in high esteem. They respect what she says and defer to her. While Veronica organizes and hosts the sessions in her room, Reese is a close second in her leadership potential.

She has a slight build and layered, but flowing, long blond hair. She is chipper and enthusiastic about being in our group. Because she took some time off with her son, she's eager to be back in the swing of professional development and is looking for something inspirational.

Constraining Factors and Issues

In this section the constraining factors and issues that the participants at this site present for discussion will be elaborated within each subsection. The factors that the participants at Oak Tree find constrain them from creating HLE's are time, budget, instructional resources, competition, administrative support, diversity, curriculum conflicts, the bureaucracy of the union, home situations, student attitudes, and others. These factors inhibit building capacity to create HLE's by misdirecting educators' and students' energy, interfering with students' ability to learn, focusing attention to tasks other than teaching and learning, and in other ways, as will be elaborated in this section.

Figure 5.4. Valuable Time, Tyler, February, 2007



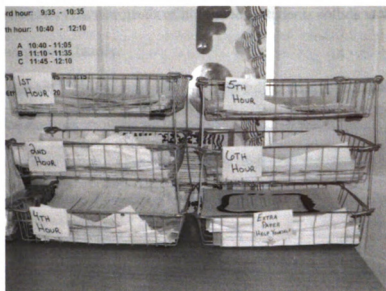
Time

Time can be seen as a constraining factor in many ways. Veronica and Tyler both bring pictures of clocks in response to prompts for both constraining factors and issues that inhibit creating HLE's. Tyler views time as a limited resource during his workday, while Veronica views time as a resource to be spent on family or on work. Both wrestle with time issues but wrestle in different ways. Other participants agree with time being a constraining factor and an issue. Tyler explains,

This is what it is. There [are] so many things that I want to do during the day but I just don't have the time to do it. I'd love to go to seminars and be able to spend hours on end researching the newest software, researching, reading books so I can elaborate my lesson plans and come up with [new ones]. Unfortunately that time, we don't have. That's the most valuable thing (Tyler, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

To illustrate her frustration with time as a constraint, Veronica introduces her photograph as an illustration of the competition between her professional and personal lives for her time and attention.

Figure 5.5. Fruits of my Labor, Veronica, February, 2007



My number one thing that I hate doing as a teacher is checking papers. So [with] 135 students, if you collect one assignment a day, that's 675 pieces of paper a week. And labs are like grading an English paper. It wears me down so that I don't have the energy to create hope in the kids. It's such a pull between trying to create hope in these 135 kids and preserving enough for me to give my kids when I go home at night 'cause they're my number one priority, and finding that balance. That is very new to me. I spent ten years teaching without kids where I could spend as much time as I wanted here at night prepping a wonderful lesson for the next day. That has gone away now. Feeling that guilt of an un-HLE, papers, for me, just represent that (Veronica, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

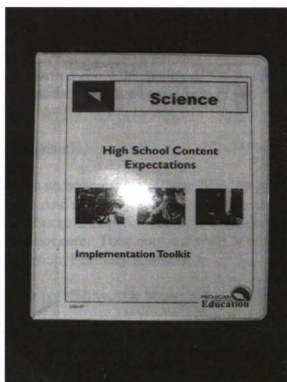
Susan voices agreement and, like Veronica, also views teaching and professional responsibilities as vying for the time she allocates for her family,

I know when I started teaching, my first job, they were like, "Well aren't you going to coach something, or aren't you going to do this or going to do that?" And I'm like, "Hey, I'm a first-year teacher; I'm finger-nailing it right now, hanging by my fingernails, and I don't leave and go home and it's just me. I have two little kids that are vying for every ounce of my attention when I get home, so no, I can't coach, and I can't run whatever. You don't understand; it's not a matter of I don't want to. I can't." And do I not go to my kid's soccer game so I can coach soccer [here at the high school] (Susan, Focus Group, March 1, 2007)?

Not only does the teaching aspect of the profession demand so much of the teachers, but the extra-curricular needs of high school students collide with secondary educators' evenings with family.

As a constraint, time has many facets. Scheduling time is an inherent responsibility for teachers, as planning lessons, in effect, allocates learning time to different topics. Veronica views the state's recent release of the content benchmarks as a constraining factor because it doesn't allow the learning time students need to fully comprehend the mandated topics.

Figure 5.6. Teaching 138 Benchmarks in 180 Days, Veronica, February 8, 2007



Veronica's photo of the state's newly revised curriculum illustrates her frustration,

Having gone through Galileo [Training Academy for Teacher Leaders], I'm very much about taking care of the child. Kids should enjoy learning. You should see those shining eyes. That's the environment I try to create in the classroom. I was trying to think of things that hindered my ability to create an environment of kids, who just love learning and are enjoying being in [my] classroom.

You're familiar with 138 Chemistry concepts in 180 days plus vacations, assemblies, pep assemblies, scheduling, whatever. I don't see how the intro[ductory] level kids or even my AP [Advanced Placement] kids could become proficient in all 138 different concepts. I don't even tell the kids that because they would be unhelpful from day one. We just keep going and we keep smiling and we go, OK, today's going to be a big learning day and we learn lots and we go on from there. But I really feel like that hinders my ability to create unique and interesting lessons or do inquiry labs. If you do an inquiry lab, that's four days because it takes them so long to inquire about it and to figure [out how] to get to the result, you've lost four days of content in there (Veronica, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

Tyler is surprised that there are so many benchmarks and asks,

And are we really worried about the quality of the material we're covering or the content of what they're actually taking in (Tyler, Focus Group, February 8, 2007)?

Veronica shares poignantly,

That's why it creates no hope for me. Cause I can't stop for that kid. I have to keep going. And that kid just keeps falling farther and farther and farther behind. That is so unhelpful for me to watch that in a student. Some teachers may not care. They may just want to cover the material (Veronica, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

I probe with another possibility, "Or blame it on the kid, that there's something about that kid that makes it OK to move on without him."

Veronica gives a personal example,

I had two kids drop today. They said, "Too much other stuff going on and I wanted to take care of the other stuff." I could care less that they learn Chemistry [but] you just watch that defeat in their body. You can see it in their skin and their hair and their clothes and that's just so unhelpful to me and this contributes to it [points to her photo of the benchmarks] (Veronica, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

X2 offers his preference for covering “depth, not breadth.” Given the tensions that play out in classrooms, Veronica shares her conflicted concern over the choice she’s made in dealing with these tensions:

And it’s proven in science, TIMMS study, depth always wins out over breadth. But that’s not what this document is, and I’m a rule follower, if they say you’re going to teach it, I’m going to teach it. I’m not the one to say, sorry (Veronica, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

Resources: Competing for a Limited Supply

Tyler shows a photograph of the district’s Technology Center as evidence of competition for resources. Tyler views the Center as a competitor in three ways. The first way that it competes is in the courses that he can offer. As Tyler “tries not to step on any toes...” he also tries “to promote their program,” but sees it as opportunity lost for students, who won’t be going to the tech center, so the students lose an opportunity for courses that are limited to being offered at the Tech Center by district policy (Tyler, Focus Group, February 8, 2007). The second way in which the Tech Center apparently competes is replicated by the district’s Math and Science Magnet, reports Veronica at another session. She gratefully acknowledges that her administrator doesn’t hold her accountable for her students’ Advanced Placement test performance because the magnet school culls the top twenty students from each class, and those would likely be her best AP performers (Veronica, Interview, March 14, 2007). The tech center is also seen as a competitor for technology resources. They have the most up-to-date hardware and software.

Another example of competition is illuminated when Reese describes the union’s effort to squash the IB Program that is being considered by the district. The reason the union gives is that they think the money should go to a different program (Reese,

Interview, March 14, 2007). This illustrates examples of the competition for funding between different programs.

Administrative Support

Administrative support is one of the resources that teachers need in order to be able to create HLE's. In its absence, or when dysfunctional, administrative support can be considered as a constraining factor in several ways. First, the experience and attributes of the administrators themselves, and what they offer as people in their positions is one consideration. Secondly structural support built by administrators can impede or enhance capacity to create HLE's in a variety of ways. Structural support built by administrators ranges from tasks like managing the support services for teachers such as plant, custodial and other services; managing and administering student support services such as special education, technology, and counseling; scheduling special events and programs; structuring departments, courses and programs; scheduling courses, rooms, and meetings; and a variety of other supports.

Administrative supports occur at several levels, including departmental support, building support, district support, state and national levels of support. The line between budget and administrative supports as constraining factors can become blurred at times, as administrators certainly make decisions about how the budget is appropriated, as well as oversee its distribution at various levels. The line between time and administrative support can be blurred as it is shown when Veronica presents the state mandated (by administrators) benchmarks as a constraining factor because she feels there is inadequate time for students to learn all of the benchmarks. The areas in which the participants find

a lack of administrative supports colliding with their efforts at creating HLE's are in technology, plant oversight, curriculum, and testing.

Technology

At the first photo sharing session, it appears there is a problem at Oak Tree with technology. X2's brings six photos, but apologizes that only two of the photos are printed in color, because the administration "took away all of their printers in [their rooms,]" (X2, Focus Group, February 8, 2007) which forces the teachers to go to centrally located printers. If teachers choose to keep utilizing their own personal printers, they may do so if they supply their own ink and technological knowledge about networking them. The lack of technology support is apparently pervasive at this site as the following examples will illustrate.

Veronica explains that her digital projector can not be permanently mounted to the ceiling because that would indicate that the projector actually belongs in her room. She is not allowed to "own" the Technology department's projector so it can not be mounted. Because the Technology department owns the projector, Veronica must get a cart, wheel it to the middle of her room when she wants to project something digitally, and hope that neither she, nor the students trip on the cords. The students have to adjust their seats to be able to see around the cart as an obstruction. Veronica says that she would use this expensive and highly efficient teaching aid more if it were easier (Veronica, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

X2 tells us about his technology issues:

We can't get pictures from off the Internet because of whatever. There are programs that are on the computer but we have no access to them because nobody bought a license. And we have like one or two cameras for like

how many students at this school? It's just ridiculous (X2, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

Susan adds,

And try to sign out a computer room (Susan, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

Reese states,

And even if you go down to the computer lab, the kids would rather just type it at home either because the Internet's too slow [here] and—(Reese, Focus Group, February 8, 2007)

Veronica cuts in,

Can't get to the websites, can't even do their research (Veronica, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

Resse continues,

So even if you provide the technology opportunities, really only about half of your kids are going to take advantage of it. And it's your motivated students who are just going to do it at home because it's way easier (Reese, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

X2 inserts,

Yeah but by the time you get them down to the computer lab, the technology is so out-dated that it's just ridiculous. You can't do anything with it. And if you do want to do something with it, you have to go through all these other channels just to bring stuff in that applies to your class. There's so much paperwork to fill out to go through the channels, I mean just to update to whatever, 2003 (X2, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

They tell me that there are no trained technology people in the buildings any more, just para-professionals and that there is quite a backlog of work that needs to be done. One of the participants laments that she would not be able to put the FinePix software for the digital cameras we are using in our study on her computer to facilitate

downloading photographs for this project. I assure them that they can use any photo software and explain that Microsoft has its own photo editor that will also work.

X2 says sarcastically,

Oh no, you could. But you'd have to fill out a piece of paper, you'd have to get the program, drop it off down there, make sure that you didn't have any other users (X2, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

Tyler illustrates the lack tech support by showing a photograph of a textbook on the same image as the computer monitor screen depicting the program the text teaches. The book presents information about a newer version of the software than is on the computer because the newer edition had not yet been installed. Tyler also shows a photograph of a digital projector on a makeshift cart with a cord running across the students' aisle. He points out that in other schools' computer classrooms he's visited, the projector is attached to the ceiling and controlled with a remote. He also complains that he has to prevent students from sitting at one of the students' desks because the projector is wired through it. Tyler must use this student seat located in the middle of the classroom with students sitting behind him as he conducts a lesson. As he displaces a student, his desk sits unoccupied.

Veronica describes her recent experience with the configuration of another school's chemistry room:

Well I just laughed. I was in [a similarly situated district as Forest Shores in terms of per pupil spending albeit slightly less, and similar student population demographics] last week and in their [high school] Chemistry lecture room they had—it was a theatre-like, auditorium type seating. He had in his room a regular computer, lap top computer, multi-media projector, TV and VCR off the ceiling, multi-media projector off the ceiling and a Smart Board. He had a whole Chemistry demo[nstration] table. And I'm like, [this other district] can do it. How come Forest Shores can't do it (Veronica, Interview, February 8, 2007)?

X2 examines one of Tyler's photographs and comments,

Look, [pointing at Veronica's digital projector sitting disconnected on her desk amidst papers, computer tower, and other things] I can't even get my cable—I have been asking for maybe four years to get my cable switched from the full wall (because it's facing to the other side of the room) [to] where it would be more useful (X2, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

Veronica explains the bureaucratic collision by stating,

Yeah. But you—someone put that X on the wall four years ago. Now it's never going to get moved (Veronica, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

When I comment that they all seem to resonate to the technology issues, Susan tells a technology story that confirms collisions inherent in their organization with the administration of technological support,

I have a very nice laser printer that Pfizer donated to me. It took me one month of every day practically begging the assistant principals to let me hook it up. [She imitates them,] 'Is it donated to you? Is it donated to the district? Is it donated to the Science department? Is it donated to Oak Tree? Can you get a letter? Nope, that's not a good enough letter. Get another letter.' Waste of my time! I don't care if you put it on the roof, how senseless is it to not have it hooked up when you took my printer away and never gave it back (Susan, Focus Group, February 8, 2007)?

In response to Susan's story, Reese quickly adds one of her own,

Find opportunities like United Streaming. Awesome video clips of amazing stuff where in history before I'd maybe have to show a whole video in order to get a couple of nuggets. Now I can show that ten minute clip and have it done and because I was involved in a different grant and we got finally a couple of projectors in our department and I am able to use it. Finally I can use that resource that's been sitting on my computer just taunting me. You know, so the district provides some opportunities, but again, how realistic are those when you don't have the technology to deliver that to the students (Reese, Focus Group, February 8, 2007)?

Administering the Plant

At the introductory meeting, in addition to discussing the technology limitations, we establish that the participants feel there is something bureaucratically dysfunctional

going on in other areas. It becomes apparent as X2 talks about his first Photovoice assignment. He says he will take a picture of some administrators shaking hands, which he does, and brings to the next meeting. That none of the participants appreciate faculty meetings is evidenced as they collaborate to convene our next meeting so that it coincides with a faculty meeting.

One missing support is the administration's apparent lack of intervention with a group of chronically inappropriate staff members, who are apparently rude and disrespectful at staff meetings. During two sessions, two different teachers make reference to this group. After I describe a situation in which an administrator intervenes with a teacher, one participant, who asks to be anonymous, states in the exit interview,

And in defense of our administration, they're not like that. But it's almost like too hands off. Like you're really going to allow that kind of behavior at a staff meeting? You can't stand up as the boss and say, no. Or call those people in and say, "Do you really think that was appropriate? I'm going to write you up," or "This is a warning." Even [one of the really strong administrators] wouldn't do it. I talked about it [with the strong administrator]. I said I think the behavior of those [rude staff members] is ridiculous and I can't believe it's allowed. And [the administrator] goes, "Oh yeah, in the business world, they'd be fired." But it's the union, so afraid that the union repercussions of doing that (Anonymous Participant, Interview, March 14, 2007).

An example of another constraint is offered in the area of maintenance.

Figure 5.7. My Ghetto Blinds, Reese, February, 2007



Reese writes in her journal,

I have been in this classroom for eight years. At the end of each school year, we must report the room inventory and its status. Since year one I have reported new blinds needed. Finally, this year, they are not functional. It is all about how we present ourselves, [public relations] in a way. It shows neglect for even the most basic physical environmental concerns. It's a bad message to the public! I am all about brain-based learning due to my psych[ology] background. Natural light has a huge impact on circadian rhythms and preventing seasonal mood/affective disorder. That this is out of my control is annoying. But students always comment on this as proof that [Oak Tree High School] is the "ugly stepsister" to [the district's other two high schools] in [Forest Shores Public School District]. They feel [Oak Tree] gets the short end of any stick (Reese, Journal, February 8, 2007).

What seems to make sense for utilizing building space for the good of the students and teachers turns into a conflict between the science teachers about territory. When Veronica and Susan go to their colleagues to discuss making better use of the chemistry lab room, they are met with criticism. There are several other instances where dissonance

in their department is voiced at our focus group discussions, but in this case the administration supported their decision to better utilize the room and the change was made. Veronica summarizes she and Susan's feelings about trying to make the room change,

What makes me sad from the hopeful learning community aspect of the adult world is how many feathers it has ruffled because we want to clean it up. You think you're doing what's best for the interest of kids and the ease of teachers. It's just hard when you [have to] fight, fight, fight against it (Veronica, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

Conflicting Curriculum

In the introduction to this section, the complexity in the ways with which administration can impact building capacity to create HLE's is daunting. The state's revised curriculum, with its benchmarks and guidelines spawns a local conflict. Illustrating an example of the impact of changing state curriculum and its ripple effect to their building, Veronica explains how NCLB's trickle down to the state level then trickle down to impact their district's science sequence and how that impacts HLE's. She starts by sharing that Earth Science is usually the first science course for incoming freshmen,

For the next two years. [Then a]ll the Earth Science is going down to [eighth] grade and every kid will take Biology as a ninth grader and every kid will take Chemistry as a tenth grader, cause that's what our district decided everyone will take. This has created a huge, *not* hopeful learning department with a big, big problem here. With the Earth [Science] moving into the eighth grade, it displaces a lot of people in their certification. That leaves those people without a job. And it's been very, very difficult to...(Veronica, Focus Group, March 1, 2007).

Sensing Veronica's discomfort as she pauses with a choked voice, illustrating an example of one tactic teachers use to create hope, X2 interjects with what is intended to be a humorous quip,

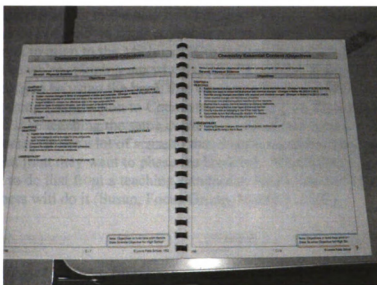
Is that that part of the whole no teacher left behind? (X2, Focus Group, March 1, 2007).

Smiling, and returning to her normal tone, Veronica continues,

Lots of teachers left behind. No *children* left behind. It's a very small population of teachers but it's enough to make your heart hurt. It's enough to make big divides. It's hard to watch and it's hard to be in part of the discussions because how can you go into a discussion with what's best for kids, which probably is Earth Science in the [eighth] grade, knowing you're sacrificing your friends' livelihoods? I mean you cannot make those decisions without thinking of those people's livelihoods and it's hard to balance those two (Veronica, Focus Group, March 1, 2007).

Veronica sounds truly saddened by this realization.

Figure 5.8. Curriculum Correlation, Susan, March, 2007



Susan brings a photo of a booklet of the state's benchmarks aligned with the district's curriculum. To create HLE's, Susan advocates inquiry learning as powerful and essential in an HLE, but talks about her Chemistry students,

I have kids now that come to me in eleventh grade that really don't know how to use a lab. They don't know a beaker from a graduated cylinder, so I'm busy teaching lab skills versus content or saying, OK, here's this chemical. I want you to do an experiment so that you can make this chemical. My kids are good and they work, but I don't think they know what they're working for. They didn't choose. I just wish I could give

them more choice and it would be more student-focused and student-directed. What do you want to learn in Chemistry? I just wish it were more student-directed and not so focused on well, they should be able to do gram to gram stoichiometry. That's a wonderful goal, but why? Why do they need to know that? And don't tell me it's because they're going to college because some of these kids are not. What about the kid not going pre-med or nursing that needs chemistry background? What they could learn that's practical? Let's do it as a discovery lab. But I don't have time to do stuff like that because I have to do this [points to district curriculum guide] (Susan, Focus Group, March 1, 2007).

Susan's concerns about the curriculum lead to a conflict with one of the district's central office administrators,

Because we have the new Michigan requirements, our curriculum person for science said we're getting a new text book. But he wanted us to realign our Intro[ductory Chemistry] curriculum, correlate the book that we're currently using to the new benchmarks. We're only going to be using this book for about another year or so, and then we're going to have a new book to align to the Michigan [Curriculum Guidelines], so it's almost like we're spinning our wheels. What's coming down the road, we're going to be using the book that we currently have *and* the new book to be teaching Introduction to Chemistry, depending on what grade they're in, so we'll be teaching the same curriculum out of two books, which again, doesn't make a lot of sense to me. I understand from a financial standpoint [that they want to phase the book in]. What I don't understand is trying to do that from a teaching standpoint. And I just don't think that the teachers will do it (Susan, Focus Group, March 1, 2007).

Growing Testing

With the added pressure from accountability measures, the tension between content coverage and depth of understanding that teachers continually struggle to ease is instead intensified. Teachers know that if they do not "cover" the mandated curriculum, their students may not score well on standardized tests that cover that material. On the other hand, as teachers move on to new topics to keep pace with mandated topics, students are left behind without fully comprehending the material, and won't test well on that portion of the content either. That the state's newest version of its accountability

measure is impending is evidenced in how the participants frame their discourse surrounding the benchmarks. Susan is the only teacher in the study who voices agreement with administering the MME. I ask if she thinks taking the MME will help kids and she responds:

I know it's a pain, and I know it messes up our classes and I hate it, but I think it gives us a guide to where our kids' strengths and weaknesses are. And you know that's not politically correct to say, nope, because everybody can learn. Well not everybody can learn the same thing the same way (Susan, Focus Group, March 1, 2007).

When I probe more to better understand her meaning she tells a story about a student who wants to be a physical therapist. Susan explains that the Physical Therapy (PT) admission process is as rigorous as admission to Medical School, Veterinarian School, and Dental School, and that the student would not likely be admitted to the program:

And you hate to discourage kids. . . She doesn't have that ability. That's not her strength. You know somebody that scores a 19 on the ACT when they've taken it for the third time and that's their best shot, probably is going to struggle tremendously in college (Susan, Focus Group, March 1, 2007).

Veronica, on the other hand, disagrees with Susan on the role and importance of standardized testing. First, she believes that scores and grades stigmatize the learner, and often lay blame (or responsibility) on the wrong doormat. She shares:

It makes me really sad that the kids, who normally wouldn't take the ACT, are now going to be slapped in the face with a horrible grade that says, "You're not as smart as everyone else!" I just think that's a horrible thing to do to a kid's psyche... When that kid gets that grade back, there will be some kids, like your little girl, that go, "Oh my God! Is it my fault that the school didn't?" (Veronica, Focus Group, March 1, 2007).

Veronica mentions that another constraining factor of the MME is that the state and the media use the scores to ascribe success or failure to schools. She argues that

using the scores alone to assess the AYP aspect of NCLB in the public domain gives incomplete information to parents and families. Susan, in favor of the information the tests provide, agrees with Veronica that limiting assessment of schools on test scores alone doesn't give the full-picture:

I don't think that's how the school should be judged because I think that again, we only can control here and we can maybe impact a little bit at home, but I can't control the fact that my kids don't have money for food. There's nothing I can do if they have an alcoholic parent. You know other than if I find out that they're being abused, I can report it. I can't control their home environment. I can't control the emphasis on education. I can't control the gene pool. Those are things that are out of my realm of control (Susan, Focus Group, March 1, 2007).

Susan's comment about the link between a child's home life and its impact on her/his learning capacity and standardized testing success raises key issues for other members of the group. X2 comments:

[T]hey are getting an education; it just isn't the one that you have foreseen. They're dealing with other situations as much as they can and they're learning as much as they can. So, it's not that teachers aren't doing their job; it's just that your expectation might be greater than what is allowable in that particular area (X2, Focus Group, March 1, 2007).

It appears that X2 recognizes that teaching colleagues must revisit their expectations and question whether or not they are unreasonable. Tyler suggests that what the students were learning would not show-up on the ACT, so, many would fail,

Like Veronica said, some of these students wouldn't have ever taken the ACT. Now they are going to have to see brutal honesty, right there in black and white: here's how smart you are (Tyler, Focus Group, March 1, 2007).

The Union

Merit System

Veronica is one of three of the participants at this site, who expresses disagreement with the union. She ventures into territory rarely approached by teachers when she asserts,

The educational system doesn't reward those who work hard at their profession. I mean everyone gets paid the same, depending on where you are in your tenure track and I think that's—uh, (Veronica, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

X2 takes Veronica's pause and responds with one objection to a merit pay system, which is, who would decide who merits what, and how would merit be decided,

Of course, there'd have to be more accountability on the administration staff because they'd have to come around and look at what you're doing (X2, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

The inference here is that the administrators in their building do not currently come around to observe teachers. Reese agrees with the idea of merit pay,

For that, I'd say, bring it on; let's clear out and go ahead. Challenge me; let's step it up. But more so, it's clearer now so that that HLE standard is swept away and it's stepped up (Reese, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

Reese maintains that if the focus of education is testing and accountability, rather than building capacity for hopeful learning, she's up for the challenge. When comparing the work ethics of different teachers, Veronica states,

I just wish there was a reward for actually [making an exciting classroom], compared to classrooms that don't do it and that would make it more rewarding for me and would make it more beneficial for me (Veronica, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

Reese adds,

I would take the bonus as some additional time. Wouldn't you if they said because you're doing so great, we're going to give you one extra hour a month to develop—(Reese, Focus Group, February 8, 2007)?

Veronica continues Reese's thought,

To develop your lesson plans to help develop your hopeful learning [environment], to get through the material, or just once a semester to give you a time bank day to plan great lessons. I mean I don't think this is right, [points to the book containing the state benchmarks for science], but it's there and I have to do it and if I do it [well], I'd like some reward for it (Veronica, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

Reese piggybacks,

With people who actually are curriculum gurus. They do the good stuff. Well, I'm just saying there's a difference, for someone in my department that's throwing out a worksheet; they don't need time. Someone that wants to plan a lab, they need time (Reese, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

During two focus groups and during their personal interviews both Veronica and Reese conspire to compensate teachers for their efforts. At another meeting, someone mentions the good feelings teachers get when students return and share their successes.

Veronica comments,

But I think we love that so much because we don't get any reward. That *is* the reward. And I mean, yes, we became teachers for that, but I think you would see people working differently if it [were] a merit system, or some other system involved in teachers' pay. And you would see them using their time smarter, not harder, to get there (Veronica, Focus Group, March 1, 2007).

Defending Incompetency

Susan's issue with the union as a constraining factor is voiced when I ask how she would rate her high school in terms of her ideal of an HLE,

I've worked in two high schools, so I think I can say pretty much for both, that for every one teacher you have that really does everything within their power to help students learn, you have ten that are either sub-standard or are status quo. They're just doing what they need to get by, or they're

below that; they're mediocre, or they're doing barely anything to get by and because either they have tenure or seniority, it's OK (Susan, Interview, March 14, 2007).

When I probe she indicates that her department in her school has a higher proportion of good teachers, but insists that school-wide one in ten are doing more than the minimum of what they need to do to help kids learn. I ask her to describe what's getting in their way; what's preventing them from creating HLE's for their students and she replies,

I think they're burnt out or they're here for the wrong reasons. A lot of people come to teaching thinking that it's something that it's not. Like, I'm going to be a teacher because I want summers off or weekends off. I want holidays off and great vacations. They don't come to it because they have a great love of kids, or a love of education; it's for that reason, or my mom and dad were teachers or my husband's a teacher, or whatever! But it's not because I really am interested in student learning (Susan, Interview, March 14, 2007).

Susan describes again how she came to be a teacher, that she tried two other fields and then

I was like, forget it; now I'm going to try something else but I think a lot of people don't do that. Because they're vested. And especially if they have tenure. You know maybe they made it, and they're like, it's going to get easier and it never does. It never fits but now they have tenure and now it's just easy to come in and put in a movie. Because there's really no check and balances here for teachers in my opinion. Once you have tenure, that's it (Susan, Interview, March 14, 2007).

Ultimately she blames the power and authority of the teachers union for some of the problems she has described,

Absolutely. And I think it's ridiculous; I think they hide mediocrity. And I hate it for that very reason. I worked with somebody at another school, who was the *worst* teacher I had ever worked with and she was granted tenure this year and I thought, how (Susan, Interview, March 14, 2007)?

When I ask if this was the fault of the union, or of the administrators, who evaluated this teacher she asserts,

Well, [the teacher] went to the union and she complained that no one was helping her. And nobody was mentoring her and you know, poor me, poor me, poor me. And you know: it worked! She's still sub-standard. You know kids still say, and it just amazes me that somebody like that slips through the cracks. And it happens (Susan, Interview, March 14, 2007).

Status Quo

Figure 5.9. HLE Found, Reese, March, 2007



When we meet for her exit interview, Reese comes with a new layered cut. She's taken care to straighten her golden locks, but despite her sparkling-eyed excitement, her voice is small and weak; she can barely speak and sounds strained. We meet in a small, windowless closet, which is the science department's abysmal workroom. There is one computer, a modern multiple choice test checking machine, an ancient file cabinet, a sign-out sheet for a TV, but no TV. Seat-wise, there is one rolling chair from the early eighties with well-worn edges shedding padding material. There is one plastic student seat and one plastic student desk. Reese sits in the student desk and I take the rolling

chair with no desk. The workroom “desk” is really a counter that lines the west and south walls. Every square inch of it is covered with something that doesn’t seem to be very important or very useful. Very tiny, the room is not large enough for one teacher to eat lunch in, although it does contain a small microwave for someone to heat a lunch and take it elsewhere to eat.

Reese shares her photos as if she is the bride sharing her wedding photos, or a proud father showing pictures of his son’s hockey game. With each of the three photos, she speaks with as much enthusiasm her shrinking voice can muster, squeaking away at how wonderful an experience her trip to be trained for the IB program was. First she shows what could be a post card image of Rice University’s campus, but it is on the eight by ten glossy computer photo paper I asked them to use. Beyond the red and white sticky folder label with “PHOTO # 7: HLE FOUND” penned in the foreground, it is morning in the early Texan spring. There is a mist, and some of the old trees are leafing out, while others hold only a few remaining wilted leaves, still clinging but shriveled after winter’s harshness has gone. It looks and is ethereal, knowing that in moments this idyllic setting will burst with scurrying back-packed students busting out of dorm rooms to make their morning classes, knowing that in a few weeks all of these trees will be fully green and sprawling their shade across the cement walkways carefully positioned where students once wore grass bare taking short cuts, knowing that this is the place where Reese sojourned, in order to learn about IB, what she thinks will be her vector toward HLE’s. I listen carefully, feeling her hope, listening to her learning, mesmerized by the environment. Her enthusiasm is contagious. I am inspired:

Rice University for IB training. That’s what all of my last journal entry was about. I snuck out on Thursday. Our union is really holding up

getting it started. There [are] a lot of problems there. For the past month, I've had arrangements for my son and everything to be gone for that weekend for training. As it approached, it was off; it was on; it was off; it was a maybe. And then Wednesday before I would have had to have left, my principal came up to me and he said, "You really want to go, don't you?"

And I said, "I'm going. I've paid for it myself. I don't care. Can you cover that I'll be gone for conferences? Is that OK?"

"It's done."

So it was like, you know, approval for any other teacher conference. If a teacher wants to go on [her] own, [she] can and it was so worth it. There's been backlash of course, of the union; I shouldn't have gone on their dollar. And him saying, "But she didn't; she went on her own dollar." So a lot of my journaling is I wrote about how this was the epitome of the HLE for me.

And then of course some of the ridiculous dysfunctional bureaucracy that gets in the way and how kind of identifying what destroys it for me a lot of times is just persistent red tape (Reese, Interview, March 14, 2007).

I ask what problems the union is finding with the starting up the IB program.

Reese responds,

I kind of know their agenda. Their main issue is yeah, this is money. But the school board, the community, everyone along the way has given it unanimous support for it to happen. So it's going to cost the district money that [the union] would rather see the district spend on other things, which is understandable. They're kind of fighting for the "common good?" But the problem behind that is, it really isn't, when you look at how much it is; it's a drop in the bucket. What you have to do is then look at other secondary issues and a lot of it has to do with it would be centered here at Oak Tree High School and again, that ugly stepsister. We're the three, the third high school, and here we are getting the top program, so there [are] a lot of teachers, who are fighting, saying, we don't get to go to OTHS to teach it, or it should be at [one of the other two high school's in the district] (Reese, Interview, March 14, 2007).

Student Relations

Attitudes

Many of the collisions X2 faces in attempting to create an HLE stem from human relations. At our first session, X2's photos include a photo that shows two guys "fighting." X2 comments on the photograph:

As I see it, it works against the HLE because if students are full of fear, then students are not able to excel and feel the comfort that they need to progress and be as successful, if they always have to worry about a fight breaking out in the hallways or being distracted by that (X2, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

X2 quickly picks up and shows another photograph, speaking,

The other thing that I think contributes to or distracts from or takes away from [HLE's] is student literacy. Their knowledge, and their fear of books is just amazing to me that they have such an aversion to acquiring any more knowledge than what they feel they already know. We're still struggling with the students who are just like, "Hey, you know what, I don't need to read, you know, it's boring." They're just so afraid of books and you have to really sell it to them instead of them trying to find it for themselves. Everything has to be entertaining because we live in such an immediate gratification society and it's all full of MTV and these short, quick takes and you're supposed to understand and it's supposed to encompass everything within four to five seconds and if they don't get that in literature, then they're just really reluctant to read that (X2, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

Students' home environments are not always conducive to creating hopeful students. Prompted by one of X2's photos of vending machines in the building selling unhealthy food Reese responds,

I have them do food diaries in my Psych class and we talk about how food impacts mood and energy levels. They eat just junk. They don't get—they don't even take vitamins to get replacement of the stuff that they're not getting. So how can we fuel a body if you don't have the necessary building blocks (Reese, Focus Group, February 8, 2007)?

Susan shows her soft side when she adds,

A lot of that comes from home. There's only so much realistically that we can do to counteract how a child lives. My first experience this year was with a girl who said—and I was floored because [I] work in Forest Shores, and I live in this neighborhood and I don't see poverty where I live. She was really sick, and I said "Well, why don't you go home?" And she said, "There's nothing to eat in the house and I get lunch here." And I said, "There [has to] be something," and she said, "No, my mom doesn't get paid until Friday." And I was floored. I can't imagine that! I just—I was at the fruit market yesterday because we need stuff before payday. I can't fathom it, so that blows my mind that somebody would feel that way:

Like, *I have to stay at school so I can eat* (Susan, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

The participants share other examples of how home environments impact student learning by creating unhelpful situations for students in the section above called “Growing Tests,” a sub-section of “Administrative Support.” That the collisions are presented in that section is not to infer that administrators have any control over students’ home environments. They don’t, as Susan states, any more than to fill out forms and call agencies to report suspected abuse. However, federal and state administrators mandate the standardized tests and mandate that those standardized test scores are used to sort both students and schools. Veronica and Tyler make a good case that it is this sorting that can detract from having an HLE. That students are sorted and ranked regardless of their home environments and that schools are sorted regardless of their students’ home environments is part of the mandate.

Alternatively, and perhaps ironically, some students are sorted *because* of their home environment. AYP is required in subgroups of students receiving a free or reduced lunch and in subgroups coming from particular racial ancestries. Schools are expected to raise the scores of students in those categories more so than in the other categories. Factors in students’ lives like substance, physical, and sexual abuse, malnutrition, improper nutrition and sleep habits impact students’ abilities to learn. Teachers and schools have little or no control over those factors.

Diversity

If X2 were a TV show, diversity would be the name of his theme song. To X2 diversity can be a constraining factor, but it is also a necessary ingredient in creating HLE’s. For that reason, this is the last sub-section of the “Constraining Factors” section.

We start with how it can constrain when he shows a photograph of a group of apparently popular guys, which he uses to generate a dialog about being popular, and about diversity. The fellows are sitting on a bench along a wall in the hallway. Some of them are wearing varsity letter jackets, and others are not.

One of the other things is student diversity, not so much the obvious, which would be the color thing, but just social echelons, so it's not just being popular and it's not just that [color thing]. It's crossing all those bounds so that if students can understand each other and at least have an understanding of where other people come from, that would contribute to a better learning environment where they can be supportive of each other and they can excel in those particular environments (X2, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

At the first photo sharing session, participants use the word ghetto two times. Reese uses the word in referring to her "Ghetto Blinds," describing how she needs to have them replaced. The second time the word is used is when Susan describes the balances for her Introduction to Chemistry students. She is describing how the Chemistry Lab is underutilized because it is very inconvenient for both the AP Chemistry teacher, and for her students. One day she takes her student into the lab and the very expensive analytical balances are out for the AP students,

And Veronica's got stuff in there that I don't want my kids touching. We were doing measurements and she's got the analytical balances in there and the kids go right over to them. I'm like, "Ahhh, don't touch them! Those are not yours! Yours are right there."
"Why do they get the good ones?" [mocks students] (Susan, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

Veronica interjects, with laughter,

Cause they're ghetto. (Veronica, Focus Group, February 8, 2007)

Susan pretends that she tells her students,

"You get the ghetto ones." (Susan, Focus Group, February 8, 2007)

Defining a Vision of Hopeful Learning Environments

In this section, I will elaborate on several essential components that are found to enhance creating HLE's. At Oak Tree High School, these components include defining a vision of HLE, engaging students in learning, maximizing available resources, creating community, and building structural support, among others. Each of these components will be elaborated with examples that follow.

Creating Hopeful Learning Environments

Creating a vision for an HLE is established at our first meeting at each site. At our last session in the study, we share photographs of HLE's. At our introductory session, X2 writes in his journal,

AN HLE is one where students, can predict accomplishments and goals that they have for themselves and have the aegis to achieve them. [It is a] place where students can see beyond the limitations of what surrounds them yet experience the freedoms that lay beyond those limitations with the acquisition of knowledge and experience. Here at this school, it would be great to create an environment like that one where students can excel and fulfill their dreams of being successful and educated (X2, Focus Group, January 19, 2007).

Reese writes in her journal that an HLE is a place where the key focus is on learning.

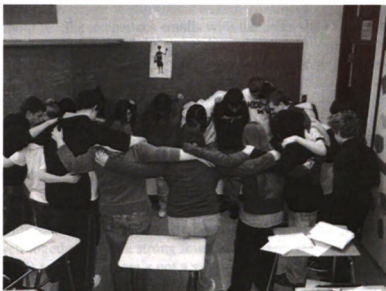
The *learning* could be subject matter, social interaction, skill, or life lesson. By being *hopeful*, it would be inspiring, goal-oriented, encompassing, and promoting a positive outlook to the future. The *environment* would consist of a group of people with a sub-culture of norms. All of these together in the context of education would be or would include the following

- Intellectual curiosity
- Student-driven
- Teacher as coach
- Authentic to real world problems & tasks
- Articulated rules, norms, expectations, goals
- Sense of anticipation, "What is next?"

- Sense of completion, pride in progress and product (Reese, Journal, January 19, 2007)

Creating Community

Figure 5.11. Huddle of Comfort, X2, February 8, 2007



This sense of togetherness impacts an HLE because if you can create community where everybody has a sense of belonging and feels like they're part of the complete circle then you can expand that circle and include other people in your perspective and that will help them excel and maybe support other people that will help them excel, too. It's not going to be a perfect circle, not everybody is going to join, [points to student in photo off to the side of the circle] as is noted by the people who aren't actually in the circle but that contributes and helps and impacts our HLE. If we don't have that then we have people breaking away and we have people having disrespect for the school and education and all those other things (X2, Focus Group, February 8, 2007).

When Reese goes to Rice for the IB training, she experiences a collegiality that she feels will enhance her ability to create an HLE. She speaks of this experience,

But looking at the other teachers that would be involved in making this happen, looking at the IB community I got to go train with, when you talk about hopeful learning community, my big epitome, [it was] kind of neat that the projects coincided. [I realized] I need to be around people who are hopeful, who are also learning themselves, who are students, who want to be excited about education, who don't just want to keep handing out the

worksheets, preparing for the test, who want to be energized, who value intellectual curiosity at the heart of it, and need to be energized themselves so that they can give that to their students (Reese, Interview, March 14, 2007).

We talk about some ways that it might happen at her building. She knows that others in her department, who didn't experience the training, won't get that same enthusiasm without it. She exchanges emails with the folks she met at the training, and we chat about her starting a focus group much like the one we've started, one whose focus is to be hopeful and inspirational for one another.

At our last session together, Veronica brings a photo of a training manual she and a colleague created

And we trained the staff again this year in professional learning communities. She and I still have a deep seated belief that people can work well together given a strong foundation. And unless that foundation comes from top down, there's not a whole lot she and I can do but we still really believe that the staff can benefit from working together given the tools. In this folder we try to give them tools, give them activities that they could do. We give them different scenarios that they could look at and go through with each other. But you know you have to give them lots and lots of tools to get through the hard stuff of working together, so I have hope that that will happen some day. And I will keep working any time I'm asked about it (Veronica, March 14, 2007).

She still makes presentations to the staff.

Making the Learning Engaging

Susan shows her photo, Liquid Nitrogen Day as an example of her efforts to create HLE for her students.

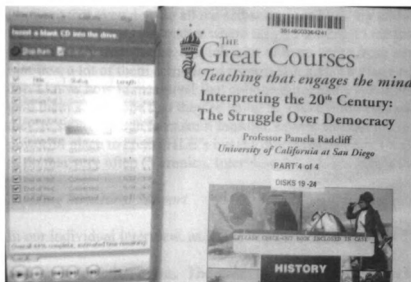
Figure 5.12. Liquid Nitrogen Day, Susan, March, 2007



This is my favorite thing that I do all year with my kids. I bring in liquid nitrogen, and I do a lot of demos with the kids. When I was at the other school, at Maple High School, we actually got a grant from BASF and [with] half of the money, we bought our own Dewar [flask] because the kids enjoy this so much, a lot of kids come back years later. I do a series of demos [including] what we're doing right here. We take the graham crackers and we soak them in the liquid nitrogen and we make sure that the liquid itself evaporates, but the coldness is left in the graham crackers so that when they put it in their mouths, then they can breathe the smoke and they love it. Then I can bring this up when I do gases and I can talk about all kinds of things. I'm like, 'Remember when we did the liquid nitrogen and how it felt in your mouth and how you almost had to open your mouth because the pressure got so great? Why was that?' And then, it just really engages them. This is a huge engage (Susan, Interview, March 14, 2007).

Maximizing Available Resources

Figure 5.13. My Professional Development, Reese, March 1, 2007



Piggybacking on Tyler's photo, *Different Versions*, Reese brings a photo montage of her computer screen behind a "Great Courses" book to our second photo sharing session. Reese explains her personal revelation in coping with the constraint of time and its impact on her ability to create an HLE for her students. She writes,

[This] picture of a computer screen burning to disc a great lecture series on democracy in 20th century made me think of our own discussions on limited time. How do teachers fit in the necessities, let alone any additional prep, learning, or research to improve their learning and create better lessons? My answer: AUDIO BOOKS DURING COMMUTE (Reese, Photo Journal, March 1, 2007)!

During the study, Reese brings her photo, *Untapped Resources* to her departmental team and they create a scavenger hunt that uses the resource. Her resourcefulness might create more engaging activities for students with other untapped resources at Oak Tree. Veronica and Susan collaborate to use a lab room that has formerly been unused. This creates more flexibility for them in scheduling labs, and allows more space for inquiry-based learning.

During our interview, Veronica brings a picture of her room number outside of her door, stating,

I believe that even despite all the setbacks, I really do try and create that for all my students. No matter where they're coming to me from, I give them hope for their future. I think a lot of them come from single parent families, a lot of them come from parents that aren't college educated and don't know how to maneuver that college thing and I feel like I try and give them some hope that they're going to make it through and that they're smart enough to make it through, I think that the lab is such a powerful place to create HLE's but the curriculum doesn't really allow us to do that very often (Veronica, Interview, March 14, 2007).

Building Structural Support

In our individual interview, as Reese begins to talk about the IB program her tone softens and her modulation evens. The storm created by the conflict with the union is calmed by embracing the program,

This program, once I went through the training on it; it's how education should be. It is holistic from the whole child. It teaches from the historian perspective, the skills that the historian would need to look at any document and derive the perspective and context. You have [the students] for two full years. You really focus on depth of learning. They are invested in taking these tests at the end that they can do. I can do this with my students and they should be good at this. This is something that is an opportunity for them. This is the difference between U of M and Harvard for a lot of kids in IB, an additional diploma (Reese, Interview, March 14, 2007).

She views this program as helping to create some of the structural support needed to help transform Oak Tree to a more HLE. Veronica's acting as a buffer to her students, giving them encouragement to be successful and feel successful in something is helpful in creating hope.

Summary

The teachers at this site were good at using humor with each other and describe many times when humor is used in their classes with students. Using humor is a way to connect with students, and by doing so, building community.

Working with this group of teachers has catalyzed hope in me. I think of our conversations back in my classroom as I interact with my students. The ideas of stereotypes and literary themes that X2 raises are not so appropriate for our content in my science classes, but creating hope in our students' learning environments is relevant for all stakeholders in education. In the next chapter, one more site's findings are presented.

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**CREATING HOPEFUL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS:
COLLISIONS IN PRACTICE**

VOLUME II

By

Ranae Beyerlein

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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CHAPTER 6 CURIE HIGH SCHOOL: THE KINGDOM OF HOPE

First Impressions

It is a Midwestern wintry day with a dull gray overcast. There's a week left before school children will be released for their winter holiday break. The snow forecasted for earlier in the day has been pushed back to arrive just in time for the ride back across town. Curie High School's campus is as gray as the sky with construction and highway dust settled everywhere. The fairly modern school building has construction fences and equipment flanking both sides. It sits on the service drive for a major freeway and the smells and sounds of fast cars and trucks permeate the heavy, breezy air. It is a modern castle with a freeway as its moat.

Even though I arrive well after school has been dismissed, there are a hundred students milling about the parking lot and on the apparently once grassy knoll between the bus lane and the parking lot. The groups are mostly racially segregated but there seems to be an equal distribution of African-Americans and Whites. The girls have tight pants and tight hair arranged in unique patterns, slicked in place and piled high on their heads with hair pomade, or loose and stringy hair, the tousled look. The boys wear teen-aged low-riding cropped pants or long, black parachute pants with chains and carabineers, and either clean, modern athletic shoes, or boots. The girls' hair is streaked with blotches of unnatural colors; their short winter jackets are open to reveal short, tight t-shirts showing flashes of belly flesh. One girl dressed in an over-sized, second-hand off-season parka runs to the middle of the service drive and sits cross-legged in the middle of it. I am thinking that she spots her ride approaching down the service drive and is playing possum with its driver. She sticks her thumb out like a hitch-hiker as if to

confirm my thoughts. All of the students are animated, much like playful cherubs, or baby animals at the zoo. These must be underclassmen waiting for their rides unlike the juniors and seniors whose second-hand cars have long ago vacated the parking lot.

There are post-card sized signs in the metal door windows directing visitors to report to the office but no signs anywhere indicating in which direction the office lies. The gym is definitely to the left with its protruding roof, distinctly taller than the rest of the sprawling single level building. I opt for the right, instead of straight ahead where custodians hurry to pull gates across the hallway. The office is not a welcoming place for students; it looks more like an insurance office or a travel agency. It is dark, as if already closed for business. I expect to find a number dispenser, but one of two middle aged women at desks located some distance from the counter, stops conversing and glances my way as if she might be inclined to help me. She gruffly tells me to sign the book, points down a narrow corridor, and continues her conversation.

In contrast, the principal's secretary is warm and welcoming, and her office is brightly lit with fluorescent ceiling lights and natural light from the gray overcast sky through a massive window facing the parking lot. Photos of her grandchildren and many signs of school affiliation demonstrate that students would feel at home here. She tells me that he's on a phone call as if we can't hear his part of the conversation from his adjacent office. She offers me a seat and calls down to my focus group to let them know I'm here. She notices something out the window, types a phone number, lets it ring on speaker, taps another number, waits, and then taps a third number. I hear the phone ring in the principal's office and him responding to her. She apologizes and then tells him that students are sitting in the service drive and that one of them just missed being hit by

a car. We hear a long muffled honk, and though I am not facing the direction in which the students are playing chicken, I know the game, and I imagine I know the players.

This introductory story serves as a reminder to the reader of the students, who populate high schools, and of the variety of situations that arise in educators' days that need to be handled. An hour earlier, the same girl who sits cross-legged in the face of on-coming traffic on a busy street sat in front of a teacher, who was trying to teach her algebra or how to compose an extemporaneous essay. Within a year's time, this girl and others like her will be taking standardized tests, the results of which will later determine to which colleges she'll be accepted, provided she applies for admissions. The results of those tests will also be used to categorize the quality of schooling she has received and to publicly rank Curie High School.

After principal, David Smith returns to the building, he apologizes for the wait and we shake hands. He welcomes me to his school and assures me that he is very interested in helping with the study and hopes that I will share my findings with the faculty in the future.

When I meet Mrs. Queen, the participant contact in Curie High School, she offers help in carrying my equipment to her room. We pass halls lined with windows, facing courtyards, dusted with a light snow just starting to drop big flakes. The windows are brightly painted with spirited sayings wishing Curie's basketball team victory over rivals. Some depict holiday greetings. We turn several corners, passing through gates that span the hall but haven't yet been locked. These halls have names, "Six hundred hallway, eight hundred, nine hundred," based on the first of three digits in the room numbers. Mrs. Queen is quite excited to be participating in the study. She teaches upper level Math

courses, to students who probably will attend college, or at least could, if they wanted to. I try to remember the turns so I can find my way back out again, and think that we have taken the route of a backward question mark. I comment on my surprise at how many students are around the school at this time and Mrs. Queen says that the students are freshman, who are staying after school to decorate holiday cookies.

Mrs. Queen's room is brightly decorated with kites hanging from the ceiling. They are constructed by the students from different colors of tissue paper and straws. These remain from the students who were absent on the day they took them out to fly. Photographs on display of Mrs. Queen's grandson as an infant in diapers depict her as a recent grandmother. She apologizes about the photos' lack of recency, and says she has more that she'll be happy to show, then laughs. She is about medium height and has chin-length brown hair. She smiles frequently but there is sadness in her eyes from recently losing one of her parents after a long illness. She wears a long woolen skirt, and a loose-fitting soft wool sweater. Mrs. Queen introduces me to Mrs. Goddess, who teaches art, and to Mrs. Princess, who is also an upper level math teacher. When Mrs. Goddess tells me that she didn't open any of her emails, Mrs. Queen jokes,

You're going to change your mind in about half a day. You'll go, "I'm not sure this is the group I want to be working with" (Mrs. Queen, Focus Group, December 14, 2006).

Mrs. Queen's blue eyes make merry. Mrs. Queen taught at a Catholic prep school for girls and taught college level math for fourteen years. She also supervised student teachers for three years. Mrs. Queen is enthusiastic about teaching. As a member of the school leadership team and a Galileo Leadership Academy past participant, she takes her

role as teacher leader very seriously. A self-proclaimed optimist, Mrs. Queen met Mrs. Goddess when they both started in Curie Schools ten years earlier.

Both Mrs. Queen and Mrs. Goddess are excited to be working on this project but Mrs. Goddess is effusively excited. If Mrs. Queen is colored mauve, Mrs. Goddess will be effervescent green. Both are similarly aged; both are experienced teachers. Mrs. Goddess teaches art. When she puts a student in the hallway, Mrs. Goddess tells the student to “Take ten.” One day she overhears one student telling another student to take ten and she revels in knowing that the students are copying her mannerisms. Mrs. Goddess taught in a major urban school system, followed by a short stint at the middle school that feeds students to Curie High School. She is tall and slender, with layered blond hair and a big, wide smile. Her older children are at college; her youngest girl is a senior at Curie High School. Mrs. Goddess is dramatic, using inflections in her speech pattern for her different moods. Sometimes she is intellectually engaging and at other times, she portrays a little girl, hoping for a mythical character to enter her world and make things right. Always she is vested in ensuring the success of her students in her courses.

In the Curie Kingdom, Mrs. Princess selects a name in deference to her two daughters, whose current passion is to dress up like princesses. Mrs. Princess regularly recounts endless hours of imaginative activities with her girls. She describes flashlight night, coloring night, painting night, and sledding. A devoted mother, she likes an agenda for the meeting, likes to share her photos first, and likes to speak in succinct perfectly articulated sentences. She has good posture and loves to eat snacks. Mrs. Princess is a light-skinned African-American with long, straight, dark hair. She dresses

professionally in slacks and blouses, which complement her slender figure. If she exercises regularly, we don't hear about it, but we do hear about her mothering, about her love of teaching, and about her passion for improving her practice and effectively improving student progress.

Table 6.1. Snapshot of Curie's Participants

Mrs. Queen	• Teaches Math for 30 years in both HS and college • Married, grandmother of two, Caucasian • BA, MA in Math + 40 hours post grad • Galileo Leadership Institute Participant • Teaches AP Calculus • Building leadership team • Various committees
Mrs. Goddess	• Teaches Art K-12 for 30 years • Married, three emancipated children, Caucasian • BFA, MA, Differentiated Instruction, + 50 hours post grad • National Honor Society Advisor • Detroit Institute of the Arts Docent • Various Art program participant
Mrs. Princess	• Teaches HS Math, eight years • Married, two young children, African-American • BA, MS in Mathematics Education • Professional Development Project-working with a professor at an urban university

In this chapter, I will attempt to show how collectively these women work magic in their world, attempting to create HLE's for their students. The next section articulates the tacit and explicit elements essential to creating HLE's. Some of those essential elements include positive climate, synergistic energy, relationships, celebrations, and growth, both organizational and individual. The dragons that act as impediments to creating HLE's consist of time constraints, lack of support, communication breakdowns,

and the issues of attitude and power relations. These impediments constrain school organizations from creating HLE's in a variety of ways, which will be elaborated later in this chapter. In closing this chapter, the insights gained at Curie to help educators enhance creating, sustaining, and fostering HLE's will be displayed in three areas. The areas in which HLE's can be created and enhanced are within the classroom, within the school, and within the community.

Essential Elements of Hopeful Learning Environments

Synergistic Energy

Mrs. Goddess describes the synergistic energy in an HLE:

I think an HLE is one where you wake up excited every day to be a part of. You're waking up and you're still stimulated and thinking of how things can evolve and about creative stuff. You're seeing timelines in your head; you're seeing strategies; you're asking questions. So when all of that mental stimulation is going on, that, I think, is a hopeful learning experience. In a non-HLE, you can also ask yourself a lot of questions, what's going wrong; what's going wrong; what's going wrong? But it certainly doesn't make you want to walk into it every day. It certainly kills your wanting to be part of that environment. It's defeating. And beyond non-hopeful, you feel stagnant. There's a huge difference in mental and emotional, and commitment and thought and feeling, the whole thing. You just project it. You carry it, so when you're part of that, you're very aware that you're part of that. And when you're not part of it, I think you're equally aware that you're not part of it. So it's beyond intuitive; it's just that you're just aware it's there. And you know that you can talk about it all the time and ignite that sort of passion in your peers without seeing their eyes glaze over and they shut down. Because if it's a hopeful environment, when you talk about it, it unites. There's an energy, instead of ugh! You see in their eyes; they give it back; they mirror it back, so it's real easy with the body language to give everything back. When it's hopeful, you have people buying in. And that makes it easier, too. You're all on the same page. And so whether it's just the kids performing in a class, or your department, or your whole school, or your district, or whatever, there's buy-in there. There's productivity there (Mrs. Goddess, Interview, March 7, 2007).

Figure 6.1. I Might Have That... Mrs. Goddess, February, 2007



Mrs. Goddess's ambivalence about negotiating the construction of her new room is apparent at the first meeting. The sole teacher in Curie's art department, she feels that having less than minimal equipment for her students would negatively impact creating an HLE for them. The previous year, she spent countless unpaid hours poring over catalogs, ordering new furniture and storage cabinets for the new art rooms being built. She carefully inventoried and packed the equipment and supplies to be moved to the new rooms over the summer but the new room wasn't ready yet, even at the time of our first meeting. At each meeting she reports progress and yet complains of more impediments. One of the biggest impediments in the process is the inconvenience to her students about accessibility to needed materials, equipment, and supplies, as indicated in Figure 6.1. Her expectations for equipment are disappointed. By the last meeting, she is

Well, settled in to the point that when a kid says to me where is such and such, I at least know if it's in proximity of where we're at or if it's still way down [in the old art room]. I can at least answer honestly, yes I have that here, or no, you'll have to wait until tomorrow. So that is more than

half of the battle. So that's good (Mrs. Goddess, Interview, March 7, 2007).

Despite the circumstantial inconveniences placed on both Mrs. Goddess and her students during the process of the move, she strives to maintain a positive climate for learning in her art classes.

Celebrations

Figure 6.2. Aha! They get it! Mrs. Goddess, March, 2007



Mrs. Goddess brings photos of her students' art work as celebrations of the improvement shown during the time in her semester class.

And then these other pictures are that the kids are still making great work and we're still functioning and when you shut that door, the hopeful community is that all these children in all their naivety, it still never enters their mind. It all still works. They can still produce. They can still do work. So for your viewing pleasure, baseline drawing: [She shows pictures she brings of students work on display—see Figure 6.2. Aha! They get it!] How do you draw before lessons? How do you draw after lessons? This little kid won an award for Scholastic Art Show. Here are the two other kids who won awards at Scholastics. But really, the fact that there's still learning going on! I have not filled their brains with vileness and neuroses, thank God (Mrs. Goddess, Interview, March 7, 2007).

Other celebrations are more personal, as depicted by Mrs. Queen's student, who expresses joy at having accomplished success in solving a calculus problem, shown in Figure 6.3. Joyful Learning, Mrs. Queen. This photograph illustrates another celebratory tactic used by Mrs. Queen. The charts and tables on the bulletin board on the rear wall display student progress and accomplishments by making the learning public. Students who receive certain scores have their accomplishments posted on display.

Figure 6.3. Joyful Learning, Mrs. Queen, March, 2007



Mrs. Princess uses a similar means to celebrate student success, as depicted in her photograph, Student Directed Learning Stations (shown in Figure 6.8.). She displays student successes and progress on a variety of charts in her room as well. Students appreciate the displays and rally to have their accomplishments posted on the wall.

Organizational Growth

Both Mrs. Princess and Mrs. Queen use photographs of the new construction (see Figure 6.4. Hopeful: Community Support 1, Mrs. Princess; and Figure 6.5. Building Futures, Mrs. Queen) as evidence of hopefulness in their learning environment.

Figure 6.4. Hopeful: Community Support 1, Mrs. Princess, March, 2007



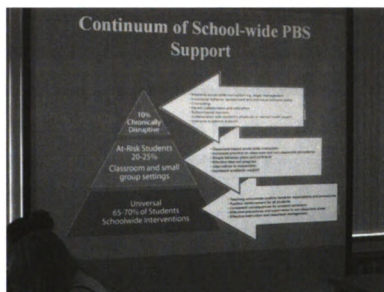
These are a collection of....pictures that I think are hopeful because with the situation that most of us are in now with regards to the economy and loss of jobs and loss of so many jobs, the community still found it worthy of us to invest in the school district. And these are just pictures of what we didn't have and what we have now. Yeah, those that help produce our morning announcements. This is where they are to sit and broadcast. I'm saying the community believed enough in us, in the district, that they wanted a more hopeful situation for their kids (Mrs. Princess, Interview, March 7, 2007).

Figure 6.5. Building Futures, Mrs. Queen, March, 2007



Also viewed as organizational growth, during the interview sessions all participants discuss a recent meeting with consultants, who will come to Curie (see Figure 6.6. Think Positive, Mrs. Queen) to work with teachers to begin the process of utilizing Positive Behavioral Support (PBS). The program uses existing school data to create a program that promises to intervene in unwanted student behaviors and generate a repertoire of desired behaviors. All three participants from Curie express optimism about the potential benefits of implementing such a program. Two participants, however, expressed concerns about how the program would be implemented and supported.

Figure 6.6. Think Positive, Mrs. Queen, March, 2007



This one was from today, from our in-service. This is a big grant that we had just gotten and will be working on. This is typical school data. And that's one of the things we're going to start doing is putting our own data into a pyramid like this. It could be that when they did the data, maybe the picture was so clear as to: here's our chronic offender and you can see [who the chronic offenders are], because they did the data a couple of different ways (Mrs. Queen, Interview, March 7, 2007).

Individual Growth

Individual growth is evidenced both in the educators themselves and in the students. As one example of student growth, Mrs. Goddess's students' growth as artists is depicted in her photo, Aha! They get it! Mrs. Queen's photograph, Joyful Learning also depicts individual growth as the student celebrates learning. Mrs. Princess's and Queen's charts of student progress document student growth and make it public. Evidence of both students and educators growth is evidenced when they participate in a school sponsored volunteer mission, shown in Mrs. Queen's photo, Figure 6.7. *We Are the World*. Mrs. Queen, as a teacher leader helped conceive and organize this volunteer activity for Martin Luther King Day, when students and teachers do not hold classes. This past year, the groups of students and teachers volunteered at an elementary school and in senior citizens' homes, where they assisted in various tasks.

Figure 6.7. *We Are the World*, Mrs. Queen, January, 2007

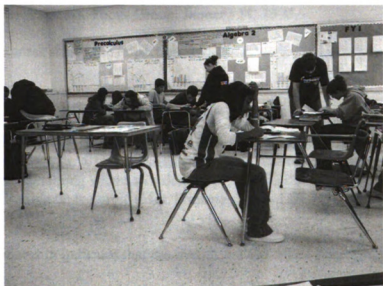


Mrs. Princess shares with the focus group that she has been looking for an opportunity to improve her practice. She begins by informing us of the impetus for using action research in her classroom,

This is my second year coming back to teach at Curie after being off for maternity leave. I found my last year back here, what I thought about over the year, as I [also] thought about over the year when I was with my daughters, that what I would like to get my students to do overall, as opposed to me, the teacher, [to do] most of the work. And it was easy when I had Carnegie, as the program that I taught in, because it was mainly student-based: students are to work. As receiving class, where it's more traditional, it's more difficult to organize instruction in such a way where students work as hard as the teacher (Mrs. Princess, Focus Group, January 24, 2007).

When she experiments with the program she designs for increasing learning, she shares with us her findings by bringing the photograph, Figure 6.8. Student Directed Learning Stations.

Figure 6.8. Student Directed Learning Stations, Mrs. Princess, March, 2007



This photograph shows both the celebration and growth of student progress in the background on bulletin boards, but depicts as subjects, the students standing, while assisting other students with their lessons. As Mrs. Princess describes her thinking

behind implementing this activity, we see that she is very systematic in her analysis of the problem and in implementing what she thinks might alleviate it. She hopes to increase the amount of positive feedback students get before they perform an assessment:

The response to that was very negative. And students and parents were not very accepting of my ideas because it did cause students to do more work than they were used to. This is my second year of trying the same ideas because I did not want to abandon them, because I really did think that my ideas were really good ideas. I wanted to go beyond just, do you know how to solve problems using a particular technique? It requires a lot of organizing, so, this right here is one activity that I thought about, [but] didn't really want to implement it for all five [of my] classes, but this class seemed more eager than the others. This was training students to be the teachers for a group of students. I plan assessments three weeks in advance, so I am able to tell the students that if you're interested in being a student teacher for this day that you can have all the material but you will be responsible for preparing for whatever you are to teach your classmates during this fifty six minutes. And I explain to them that this is my first time trying [this and] some of them expressed that they would like to have the opportunity to ... teach others. I had three students prepare three lessons, so of course it's like a rotating thing going on there. Well, this right here is what you see. You see students standing and actually teaching while I'm in the area listening and I'm letting them do all the work (Mrs. Princess, Focus Group, January 24, 2007)!

Mrs. Princess shares the impact on student learning after incorporating the idea in one class,

As a result of this activity, the average was in the seventies or eighties as opposed to the fifties or sixties, so it was a real improvement in regards to an overall average. A lot of benefit came out of the experience. I mean there was something where a student said, I wish my teacher was more knowledgeable on the topic (Mrs. Princess, Focus Group, January 24, 2007).

Mrs. Princess indicates that the overall process was a favorable one for the students and she had requests to continue the activity from students, who in the second semester transferred to another section, where that activity wasn't occurring. Her depiction of the program and its success generates much discussion about the logistics of

initiating and deployment of the activity. She indicates that the students who serve as teachers do not gain any additional benefit other than the extra knowledge they gain from the experience. She does not disaggregate the student teachers' scores from the rest of the student data, but suspects that their achievement gain might even be larger than that shown by the rest of the students. In implementing an activity that increased student success, Mrs. Princess grows as a teacher, increasing the repertoire of teaching strategies she can utilize to create HLE's for her students.

At the exit interviews at this site, all of the participants thank me for the growth they see in themselves as professionals, and for catalyzing the communication within their organization. During the study, all initiate some sort of activity that results in their growing their practice as teachers. Both Mrs. Princess's Student Directed Learning Stations and Mrs. Queen's facilitation of the Volunteer Day are unique activities that hadn't yet been practiced at Curie before this study. They both plan to continue these activities in the future. Mrs. Goddess's growth is witnessed in the adjustments she makes to be able to embrace her new rooms, and in the reflections she makes of increasing her teaching potential as she works with a student teacher. She nurtures the growth of a novice teacher during the study and we reflect on the importance of those kinds of relationships in our profession.

Relationships

The contribution of relationships as essential elements of an HLE at this site is first made apparent witnessing the collegiality of the participants of the study, and the collegiality between them and various teachers through the times that we meet. As an

example, at the exit interview, one of their colleagues comes into the room, and Mrs.

Goddess states,

I was going to take some pictures of the staff, and then I just, you know, it was there...[she trails off indicating with her hand that fleeting time intervened in her attempt to document an HLE via photos of colleagues]. There you go. He would have been one of my pictures. He's hopeful (Mrs. Goddess, Focus Group, March 7, 2007).

To another teacher she says,

Every time my daughter comes home and talks about brilliant people, you are always on the top of her list. "I'm telling you," she says, "he's so brilliant; he's so good." And I never get to see him teach or anything (Mrs. Goddess, Focus Group, February 21, 2007).

In addition to the relationships formed with colleagues, teachers develop essential relationships with their students. To depict this, Mrs. Queen shares a photograph of a teacher and student in her school as shown in Figure 6.9. Building Relationships.

Figure 6.9. Building Relationships, Mrs. Queen, March, 2007



She comments on the photograph as an example of building relationships with students,

Because I think that is our hope for the future. I think that is part of being hopeful. Because she can be, this young lady can be a bit of a challenge. But she's on [this teacher's] side, and [the teacher] know[s] she can count on her, even though [she knows] that [this student] can be a little sticky

wicket there. But [she] can count on her because for some reason, [they] do have that relationship. And so when we talk about creating HLE's, to me, I think that's number one, is giving them the opportunity to see you as a person and to build that relationship (Mrs. Queen, Focus Group, March 7, 2007).

Colliding Factors

The teachers in the study at this site related a number of constraints that impeded their ability to create HLE's. These colliding factors can be grouped under the headings of time issues, lack of support, communication breakdowns, and the issues of attitude and power relations. In this section each of these areas will be presented as impacting HLE's.

Attitude

Under the umbrella of attitude, teachers in the study mentioned attitudes of administrators, other professionals, parents, and students as possible detractors from creating HLE's. To represent the influence of attitudes of students and parents, when discussing the staff in-service, Mrs. Queen talks about the behavior of the teachers at the meeting depicted in Figure 6.10. Think Positive 2.

Figure 6.10. Think Positive 2, Mrs. Queen, March, 2007



She describes her feelings about their attitude toward the meeting,

I was thinking about that today at this, watching people talking, and doing other work and it was so embarrassing. It's just so embarrassing. And I'm thinking, if your students did this, you would be hitting the ceiling (Mrs. Queen, Focus Group, March 7, 2007).

Mrs. Goddess also protests the attitudes of the teachers in her department when she talks about events that have occurred during the move,

Oh, this is my little private complaint. Three new showcases, beautiful showcases, one has to be fixed. So last week I walk out and there's one that's full of the trophies. Another huge one got the yearbooks on the bottom shelf and I was saved here, and I'm not kidding you: I was saved the showcase that was this wide [indicates with her hands a very small space]. They decided and they said, you can have this one because we know you'll have work out in the building, so fine, yes, but when I'm out in the building, it's because someone said, I'm not putting up a display dah dah dah, whatever. I just thought, who knows when I'll actually have time to put up a showcase. But I just couldn't believe it. It was just decided. There's no communication in the communication wing (Mrs. Goddess, Focus Group, February 21, 2007).

The teachers in the study feel almost powerless to impact attitudes of parents and passionate about the need for intervention in order to help their students be hopeful about their futures. This topic is introduced by Mrs. Goddess in our discussion of the tardy policy,

And every college would come and sit at a table and parents would come and that place was full. Kids were walking around with their parents and what I see now is that either it'll go on the announcements say, if you're interested in U of M, come and sign up at so and so with your counselor and you can see them during your lunch hour. Well, lunch hour is when they'd rather socialize. So that's not going to get them. Their parents aren't notified at all. So I think so many of our kids do not, as Jennifer Granholm used to say, "You can't see it, you can't be it." They don't even see it. There's no purpose to get a good GPA (grade point average) cause they're not going to go on. They can't afford it; they don't see how they can do it anyway. Mom and dad have said I don't have the money. Whatever the reason, so there's no going on. The GPA doesn't matter and if the GPA doesn't matter, the attendance doesn't matter. There's this big trickle down of things that don't matter (Mrs. Goddess, Focus Group, February 21, 2007).

Mrs. Princess describes survey results that were shared at a faculty meeting, stating that ninety percent of Curie's students were interested in pursuing college, but that many of the students' mothers did not attend college themselves. She adds,

And if a lot of our students are living with a parent and probably the mom, [who] does not have a degree outside of high school, maybe does not even have a high school diploma, they are not getting the lesson that they need to understand how to use high school as a resource to get them to these goals that they've set (Mrs. Princess, Focus Group, February 21, 2007).

The participants have a dialogue about how the school organizations can help mediate the situation. It is mentioned that the students can no longer make appointments to see their counselors, and Mrs. Queen pledges to raise some of these issues at the next building leadership meeting. Their helplessness is further conveyed when Mrs. Princess comments,

And if [the parents are] in survival mode, worrying about are they going to have their job tomorrow or whatever, or how are you going to make the payments, they're certainly not going to be receptive to a kid coming in saying, I would like to go to college (Mrs. Goddess, Focus Group, February 21, 2007).

Support

This issue of the enforcement of the school's tardy policy is a recurrent presence in the study. It is discussed at every meeting. It constrains in two areas, that of support, because the teachers in the study feel that they are not being supported, and also in the area of communication. Its relevance there will be elaborated in that section. Mrs. Princess complains about the lack of administrative assistance in regulating the traffic in the halls. To document this issue, she photographs students in the hall after the bell in the photograph Figure 6.11, Hall Chaos.

Figure 6.11. Hall Chaos, Mrs. Princess, February, 2007



She speaks passionately about the situation in which she feels almost hopeless and in need of support to manage it,

All I could think of on the day that you gave us that assignment is what occurs in the hallway after the bell has rung and class should have started. Now I had a meeting with the principal not too long ago. We talked about tardies and how we can convince students to get to class on time. And it's to make each minute count, to start your class right away, and for those of us who are doing that we still have, even if you have all your students in your classroom, you still have so many students out and about in the hallway. And they're not quiet. They're very loud and you're constantly battling this invisible, unpredictable, enemy in the hallway. I call it an enemy because if I could get face to face with the problem, then that would give me a fair chance for me to say now how can I compete? How can I gather my audience back to focus back on me? But it's always that unpredictable sound, that very loud sound, that just takes my audience away from what I'm trying to get them to focus on, where I'm trying to lead them (Mrs. Princess, Focus Group, February 21, 2007).

Both Mrs. Queen and Goddess agree with the dilemma. Mrs. Queen reads from her notes,

Tardy. Tardy policy doesn't work, why? Why don't the students feel the need to be in class? Do they not care? Is there nothing they feel they are missing? And I was thinking about the same thing (Mrs. Queen, Focus Group, February 21, 2007).

When I ask what the policy is, Mrs. Queen informs,

Three tardies and supposedly they have to make up an hour after school, an attendance recovery, or they get no credit in class (Mrs. Queen, Focus Group, February 21, 2007).

Then Mrs. Goddess interjects with,

However, however, every report card, that gets moved. So if a kid has three tardies, now it can be twelve (Mrs. Goddess, Focus Group, February 21, 2007).

And Mrs. Queen continues,

It was twelve when we turned out report cards. We got this note saying, "Excuse up to twelve tardies" (Mrs. Princess, Focus Group, February 21, 2007).

Mrs. Princess adds,

At the very last minute so it was too late to argue it (Mrs. Princess, Focus Group, February 21, 2007).

Mrs. Queen finishes the statement,

As we were doing grades (Mrs. Queen, Focus Group, February 21, 2007).

To show the recency and emphasize their indignity about it, Mrs. Goddess states,

And that happened just last Tuesday. It was huge! Until the last and that just reinforces to the kids, because they get the idea. That's just reinforces that we really don't have to be anywhere on time (Mrs. Goddess, Focus Group, February 21, 2007).

The lack of control and powerlessness over the effects that it produces on their classroom environment is emphasized with Mrs. Princess's comments,

And what I have here in my write up is that this chaotic scene is absent of monitors, helping to push the students along, because they're probably busy themselves doing other things, not to say that they're not but when the hall monitors can't get out in full force to assist and clear these halls, why not have the administration also help. It might just take a few minutes of walking around at the start of each hour, to send the message (Mrs. Princess, Focus Group, February 21, 2007).

This statement generates another discourse about the lack of support from the hall monitors. The participants feel that the students and teachers view the hall monitors as ineffectual. The tardy issue had been discussed with the administration previously and teachers were told that they needed to start their classes on time, that there was a problem in that not all staff agreed on what defined tardy, and that teachers needed to be out in the halls to usher students to their classes. Recalling the previous discussion with their administrators initiates another dialog, most passionately expressed by Mrs. Princess,

In order for us, as teachers in the classroom, to have any impact on this whole tardy situation, we need to take those two excuses [our principal] shared with me and just take them away from him. [As if addressing him,] “And again, you can’t use them against us! Because now we addressed your two concerns... Now you need to listen to what we have to say in regards to the situation.” And like I said take away his one objection about there not being a clear and defined, agreed upon, by forty six individuals, who teach in the classroom, the definition of tardy, which could be very simple, but we’re not going to get into that now. And the second issue was why does Johnny rush to fourth and sixth hour, but not to first and third hour? What’s happening in those classrooms, so just being consistent and then starting right away, but again, taking those two excuses from administration and making them focus on the real problem. Not making us the issue (Mrs. Princess, Focus Group, February 21, 2007).

Mrs. Goddess also broaches the lack of support in other areas. She brings three photos to the group, one depicting a spill of some blue liquid on the tile floor. The other is a picture of a vending machine. Figure 6.12.’nuff said depicts a sign near the student cafeteria. The other participants agree that the rules are not being enforced.

Figure 6.12. 'nuff said, Mrs. Goddess, January, 2007



I really feel we have so many dynamic people in this building and so many dynamic departments and we spend a huge amount of time in this building making nonsensical rules that we don't enforce. And then *not* making a few rules and a few procedures we need to enforce. So we have this rule in the building: No food or drink outside the back cafeteria. And the fallacy of that is, our seniors have open campus, so they're leaving and coming back with food sitting all over the building so this is what you see, from fourth hour on, and yet, yes, we have vending machines in the building, to make money for the athletic department and for whatever else the money is deemed for, that are open before school, after school and at lunch. All full of tons of junk food. I mean, we have a healthy, supposedly, though we still sell pop. I mean, just thinking of some things that continually undermine and de-value what we try to do (Mrs. Goddess, Focus Group, January 24, 2007).

Communication

In addition to the lack of enforcement of agreed-upon rules, Mrs. Goddess asserts that the support needed from the administration in order to facilitate moving into the new art rooms has been absent. She contends that materials and supplies for which she submitted orders were not processed, that paperwork she submitted was lost, and repeatedly requested. She feels that being responsible for packing, carting, unpacking, and organizing the new rooms in addition to her regular teaching duties is enough of a

burden. The additional burden of having to resubmit paperwork, persistently requisition furniture only to re-requisition it, and having to have repeated communication with a variety of people through the process has been overwhelming.

I taught in two other school districts, and I've been under wonderful administrators, who really validate you and hear what you're saying and you feel that you made a connection and I can trust that he said this is going to take place or she said this is going to happen, it is going to happen. And as much as I feel more validated this year, personally a connection with my administrators, than in the past, I still have—I still think it's a fifty-fifty buckshot on whether I'm going to get any response at all...Don't ask me for the same paperwork five times and then call me back a year later, and say, now send it over there. Can you find it again and then send it to them? They'll take care of it. Oh my gosh, I gave it to you five times and it wasn't taken care of last year? That wasn't done? That's not in the works yet? (Mrs. Goddess, Focus Group, January 24, 2007).

Other areas that the participants believe demonstrate a lack of communication is between the school and the parents. The parents do not attend the Parent Communication Network, which the participants attribute to a disconnect between the parents and what the teachers view is essential for the success of the students. Many parents do not have the same values of punctuality that the school routine demands of its students.

At the interview session, when I ask her to rate her school in the area of building capacity to create an HLE, Mrs. Goddess expresses concern about communication, she responds,

Even if you put it on the levels of learning, the "I don't know what I don't know, I know what I don't know, I know what I know," and then the, "I know what I need to know." I sometimes think that as a school that we're floundering sometimes between the I don't know what I don't know and the at least I know what I don't know. I don't know data. I can't make interdisciplinary connections because I don't know what benchmarks were not made, meeting, in any core, even though I have, say standards and benchmarks in my room for every core. But even if someone were to say, you know the top three things that our kids just don't get on the [MME] in Math are, then maybe I could start hypothesizing and saying, how could I

correlate, how could I pull some of this together? Is there a way that I could make a connection? It would make me feel more integral and more helpful. Yeah...So sometimes I think, wow! Our kids could be performing at a higher level, too.

I think a lot of it is communication. And then I don't know, is it? Because I've brought this up to my department head before and I know I've said it to my principal before, "Hey, I would sure like to have some of this information," and it just kind of is blown by and I don't know whether I need to push the point more, whether I would normally be getting this if the department met, maybe not. Maybe the school doesn't see it as a need. But I guess, regardless of whether they see that that particular area is in need, I guess a question that I would throw out there is, if you have one person on staff, even just one, who's saying that they feel disconnected, or mal-informed or not part of the strategic plan, or any of those issues. Why would they not be steered toward the communication, and if there's communication out there, why wouldn't we be told where it is (Mrs. Goddess, March 7, 2007)?

Time

The conflict with time in this setting appears to be in two main areas. The first area is between the teachers and their personal lives, and the second area is between the actual requirements of the job and the allotted time in which there is to perform it. One obvious indicator of the time tension is at the end of every meeting when we try to reschedule the next meeting. Mrs. Princess is only available on certain days because she must take her girls to their dance practices. Mrs. Goddess is not available Wednesdays because she has National Honor Society meetings. Even though their site visits started in December, a full month before the other two sites, the site visits were completed in March at Curie, within a week of the two other sites.

Time tensions are most obvious with the extra burden placed on Mrs. Goddess with situating herself in the new rooms. She requires the unpaid assistance of her husband to complete moving some of the larger items. She also enlists the assistance of her students in carrying down some of the packed boxes to the new room. In a sense

having a student teacher relieves her of some of the burden of teaching, but only after an initial phase of enculturating the student teacher to the classroom routine. Another time constraint for her that the other two participants do not face is the burden of preparing for four different classes, and the burden of getting to know almost all new students at the change of the semester.

Participating in professional learning communities presents another time constraint. Although the district has entertained the concept of them, the district has not built a structure to enable professionals to meet together in purpose. When asked about meeting with her colleagues in professional communities, Mrs. Princess replied,

[We have] common assessments, but what's not occurring is, data is, in my opinion, not being collected and used to determine what's going on where. We are to create [our] own time in which to [meet with other professionals] (Mrs. Princess, Interview, March 7, 2007).

Because she indicates she doesn't believe there is a structure in place to support professional learning communities, I ask Mrs. Princess what she felt would help create them. She responds,

Well, suggesting it. Because we do have time through out the school year where you are to have staff department meetings and suggesting that maybe if a few times out of the month that those are dedicated to us meeting as a group and us within that hour or so meeting with those who are teaching your subject area and comparing thoughts, ideas, test grades, whatever, information (Mrs. Princess, Interview, March 7, 2007).

She believes that the curriculum is handed down by the administration and that the teachers rarely meet with their colleagues from the middle school or from the elementary buildings. When they do meet, it's not usually for dialog, but rather from what is called a "Sit and Get" in-service type setting. The meeting structure of the district does not currently support the development of professional learning communities.

In summary, the constraints with which the Curie participants struggle to overcome in order to create HLE's are bundled in the areas of time constraints, communication breakdowns, support, and the issues of attitude and power relations. The next section will share ways in which the participants at Curie suggest building capacity for creating HLE's might be enhanced.

Building Capacity for Creating Hopeful Learning Environments

The participants at Curie elucidate opportunities for creating and sustaining HLE's in three domains: their own classrooms, within their school and within the community. Although there are some overlapping areas, in this section the findings will be presented organized by the three domains. As individual teachers, this study empowers the participants to create HLE's within their own classrooms. The statements in this section arise directly or indirectly by means of summary or paraphrase from the participants themselves.

Within the Classroom

Mrs. Goddess makes explicit the kinds of things she does in her classroom to create an HLE for her students:

I tell the kids, unfortunately you only get one thirty-third of my time; I'm sorry. But I, we walk, and I tell my student teacher, this is what you do: And we visit every single kid, every single day. Walk around and give individual assessment every day, and guided practice every day. Instruction and modeling, and if we can get around the class twice, that's yippee! And we're after school every day and we're before school every day. You know they can come in to Flex [Curie's seminar period for all students], so we make ourselves available a lot. Let the kids know that no matter where you're starting, just start. What's more frustrating than anything: it's not where you're starting; it's not where you're at; it's if you're not starting. Ineffectual behavior and non-performance is not that it's just rewarding; it's a habit. You have to get out of the habit and that's frustrating. So if any kid gets negative stuff from me, it's pounding that home all the time. I try to be real open about everything else.

And then hearing them in the workshop again today say, “Make sure that three fourths of your communication is always positive. Try to be cognizant of that all the time.” But, that’s the best, I think, we can do. And they know we’re here all the time. I hunt them down. I’ll call them in other classes and say, did you remember to bring this in? Can you bring this to class? I call their special education teachers. I call home all the time. And not just negative stuff, because they don’t want to hear me if I call home repeatedly with negative stuff, but I’ll call and ask to speak to them and their parents are saying is everything OK? Oh yeah, my teacher’s just touching base. So, I let them know that I know where they live. Flaming arrows through your front door. I’m there all the time and I don’t mean to set the bar that high for some of my peers. But sometimes I just see ineffectual stuff going on (Mrs. Goddess, Interview, March 7, 2007).

Mrs. Princess’s take on how teachers can create HLE’s is more directed toward her students and other teachers. She thinks it’s important to communicate to students

Specifically how to handle situations and how to work for what you want to earn, that in general: how to handle situations. I don’t care if you’re in a situation where you are asked to perform a task, you’re to look for resources, or if there is a conflict with an individual, how do you handle the situation and then how do you work for what you want to earn? As opposed to feeling as if you are entitled. Or feeling as if an individual doesn’t give you what you want, how can you use your energy to make it seem as if there’s something wrong with the other person? (Mrs. Princess, Interview, March 7, 2007).

To other teachers, she more specifically instructs,

How do we define what we want our students to be able to do, to appear as they’re here in this school, and to appear when they leave our school? Not looking at that entire situation in bits and pieces, for example, not bickering about negative behavior of a student or a group of students. Look at the broader picture. What do we want to see and then focusing on, in on what that is. I think that a lot of those small situations will eventually be solved if we look at the broader pix of what the student is here at CHS (Mrs. Princess, Interview, March 7, 2007).

Within the School at Curie

At the exit interview, two of the participants share that they consider themselves to be “on the lookout” for evidence of HLE’s, and that participating in a structured group

where discussions focused on HLE's as a theme helped to focus them on looking for things that could create hope in their classes, and then they began to see things everywhere. The participants suggest having a structure that enables them to meet with their colleagues regularly in professional learning communities, to design and implement common assessments, and to assess their results in terms of using the information to improve practice. Mrs. Queen also suggests using meetings for teacher leaders to share best practices.

I did a brain-based [presentation] last year and the people were very supportive. We were shocked. I think part of it is, again, relationships. I think people were willing to listen to us because we get along with most of those people. And I did another one earlier this year on Professional Learning Communities. And again, people were like, yeah, I really buy into that. Even though they didn't buy into everything about it and they certainly wouldn't, but they were very positive and they were very good about it and so I think that's a lot of it. And a lot of it is that at a staff meeting, they'll listen to anybody rather than an administrator. They'll just think it's great (Mrs. Queen, Interview, March 7, 2007).

Curie has a structure that the other schools lack, that enables the teachers to interact with the students. Two days a week the students have a sort of study-hall time, where they are assigned to teachers, who don't teach any content. This time is called *Flex*. Students are able to use that time to do homework, to interact with teachers, to make up missed tests and/or laboratory assignments. The teachers in the study spoke favorably of this arrangement and feel the students and the teachers make good use of the time for additional one-on-one interaction that would not be possible without this structured time.

In January, Mrs. Goddess expresses frustration with the school organization, and suggests that the staff needs to have a mission. She feels that the talents of the teachers are being wasted, but Mrs. Queen offers,

Maybe it needs to start with you. And I think that's how I look at it, is you can't make other people do things. So you start yourself and then start studying it and you start saying, gee, I've been doing this and look at this, and then you start talking and then it kind of grows. It's like a little disease (Mrs. Queen, Focus Group, January 24, 2007).

Acting as Advocates within the Community

In the community, there are two areas of possible interaction. One area is within the community of parents, business owners, residents of the districts, and because of Curie's participation in Michigan's School of Choice plan, the school community will include members of other districts as well. The other area of possible interaction is within the community of educators. This distinction needs to be made explicit because some educators view community interaction as important with parents but not with other professional educators, while some educators view interactions with other professionals as important but don't value parent interactions as much. Many think that both areas are essential areas for interaction, while some educators choose to remain in isolation from anything external to the classroom and/or to the school building. In this section I will be explicit as to which communities the discussion pertains. In the first comment Mrs. Princess speaks to what the educational community can do using Positive Based Solutions to contribute to creating responsible citizens in the community as a whole.

In my opinion, [the students have] come to high school knowing those, all that which should be expected of them. What I think we should probably focus on is how to teach students to carry that forth when they leave high school. It's not only expected here. It's expected in your day to day life and give them reasons why. With regards to respect, students know how to be; they know the definition of what it means to be respectful. They know it well; they know what it means to have someone be respectful to them. But what would happen in they were in a situation where it's not their norm? Do you know how to be respectful to those that you're not very comfortable with or that you or a group of individuals that you've not been exposed to? So, it just depends on how we handle it. And if we look at it as just a single situation, only focusing on our walls and what it means

to be respectful or what it means to show positive behavior in our little world and will we be able to broaden it and teach them life lessons? I do feel that using this [PBS] program we need to keep in mind that everyone has something to learn. The adults and the students, and not just to single out a certain group of students and say that they will be our main focus, so I'm anxious to see how this will be handled... Some of us who, for me, my push will be to make it more or less a life lesson, not only for our students, but for the adults, maybe even the parents... I would love to know how I can become part of this whole support staff (Mrs. Princess, Interview, March 7, 2007).

Mrs. Queen's educational community's contribution to the community at large consists of organizing student and teacher volunteers to visit places in the neighborhood. For the first year of the program, they visit a local school and senior citizens housing to clean seniors' homes. Mrs. Queen plans to continue the project and make expansions in the next year.

In a more holistic way celebrating the learning that is currently focused mainly within the classroom can be expanded to the community. The teachers generate a few ways to do this as they respond to a prompt. One suggestion is to use available talents to stew on things and brainstorm ways to communicate with both the educational and citizenry communities both the needs and the accomplishments of school organizations. Another suggestion is to work on preparing interested high school students to become teachers, utilizing their services but also allowing them to earn credit as they take deliberate steps to consider pursuing a career in education. Most importantly, though is the idea of making the learning public by celebrating the school's accomplishments. More of these ideas will be presented in the discussion chapter.

CHAPTER 7

ANALYSIS: SYNERGISM

The work of this chapter is the result of a comparative analysis of the factors across the three school sites that either or both constrain and enhance educators' attempts to create HLE's. The process of locating emergent themes considered both consistencies and anomalies within and across: (a) work in particular classrooms; (b) activities at the broader high school level; and (c) elements external to/outside of the high schools (i.e., including the district, state, and federal administrative bodies). The chapter will present both the factors that promote building capacity to create HLE's and the constraining factors that impede educators' best efforts at building capacity to create HLE's at their high schools. In the previous three chapters, the findings from each of the three sites were presented, focusing on the essential elements that enhance the creation of HLE's and the factors that constrain them. The elements and factors were separately presented within the context of each school setting. Those essential elements of HLE's were garnered and will serve as the focus in this presentation, along with examples from the sites of how constraining factors act to prevent high schools from creating HLE's.

How Essential Elements of HLE's and Constraining Factors Interact

The elements that contribute to building capacity to create HLE's that emerged include: (a) accessing ongoing professional learning to ensure their relevance as teachers, in particular the use of technology as a learning tool; (b) building authentic relationships with students, teachers, administrators, and community members that are reciprocally respectful and productive; (c) accessing resources to support students' learning in schools and its extended environment and; (d) acknowledging the teacher's sense of value (self-

efficacy) as contributing citizens of school experiences. It appears that when these four elements are positively present, that is teachers report that they are actively, routinely engaged in all four elements, an HLE, like Tyler's plants can thrive. On the other hand, if these elements are missing due to a variety of constraining factors (e.g., limited funding, lack of leadership skills and vision, families without needed social supports, and so on), then it becomes more difficult for teachers to construct an HLE as they feel overwhelmed by the presence of these negative factors.

If HLE's are envisioned as places which are diversified, democratically engaging, and welcoming places that utilize community resources, action research (Sagor, 2005), and learning theory to promote effective teaching and learning for all, then anything that gets in the way of educators building capacity to engage in these activities would be considered a constraining factor. As was shown in the findings chapters, constraining factors can be part of the tensions that operate in the culture of high schools and in the organizations, including families, that impact what happens in high schools. A careful analysis of the case studies reveals five constraining factors that impeded the participating teachers' ability to create HLE's.

The first constraint is the lack of adequate funding in Michigan to provide what public schools need in order to offer all students the supports they need to be able to learn (Arsen & Plank, 2003; Arsen et al., 2005). The second constraining factor is students' readiness to learn that is impacted by mental and physical health issues, family economics, lack of quality early childhood education (Schweinhart et al., 2006), and student behaviors that interfere with students' school experience. A third constraining factor is a divestment from building learning relationships among teachers through

professional development and from engaging in a professional environment. A fourth constraining factor, school policies, diverts attention to testing and away from nurturing the human spirit, among other things. A fifth factor, time, is an overarching constraint contributed to by many of the previous factors.

After compiling the list of the constraining factors, and comparing them to the essential elements of HLE's, it appeared that the constraining factors operate in the same domains as the essential elements. That is to say that, for example, that budget cutbacks that prevent school organizations from providing professional learning, would serve as a constraint to the essential elements of (a) providing resources, (c) accessing ongoing professional learning to ensure relevance and certainly ability to form (c) authentic relationships between students and their teachers if class sizes increase. This tale of how the essential elements and constraining factors interact to prevent building capacity for creating HLE's can be told many ways. In the following treatment the essential elements needed to create HLE's will be presented with examples of how the constraining factors interfere with those elements. There is a good deal of overlap between the essential elements and the factors that constrain them.

Theme One: Professional Learning

In what is being called the Information Age, teaching and learning are evolving at an overwhelming pace for a profession that has been noted for its ingrained conservatism (Lortie, 1975, among others). In order for teachers to be able to utilize new resources in creative and innovative ways, teachers need to have access to training and development that keep them current in the practices that enhance learning. During the study participants described how professional learning took place at three of the sites, despite

budget cutbacks, in three different modes of transmission. Traditional professional learning occurred at GBW when presenters came to speak to the district staff. Staff teacher leaders led in-service training at Oak Tree. At Curie consultants established an on-going reciprocally respectful relationship with staff in order to increase positive support for appropriate student behaviors.

In this study, GBW excelled at having both access to professional development and having access to technology equipment. At our introductory session at GBW technologists were setting up for the following Monday's district-wide staff in-service. At our next meeting, both Emma and Molly used a photograph of technology to show its contribution to creating HLE's. Emma's photograph, *Educating Educators* (p. 85), showed two teachers sitting at computers during one of the in-service's technology break-out sessions about Web-based instruction. There were various break-out sessions for teachers to learn to use technology to enhance instruction and how to access and analyze data to make data-driven decisions for instructional purposes. The sessions were led by staff from the ISD serving Grand Bay. Emma evidenced technological expertise when she described how her Journalism students prepared the newspaper and yearbook using modern editing software.

Grand Bay seemed to have appropriate technological infrastructure and the participants seemed to feel adequately supported by their ISD's training. Molly's web site included several linked pages with assignments and resources for students. She required students to read and submit responses to probes in a virtual forum on a blog. Molly was the only participant in the study, who spoke of a Web-based instructional component to her course but told of other teachers at GBW, who were using the

innovations. Molly utilized the study's digital camera for motivational purposes by displaying photographs of her students as part of her decor. She was so inspired by the Keynote speaker at the in-service, who advocated using humor to motivate students in developing their literacy, that she bought the speaker's books and enthusiastically shared her success using the books. Penelope acknowledged that language students were using a Web-based text for their courses.

Just as students benefit from having their successes displayed, so do teachers. Making teaching and learning transparent and public is a goal for professional development, so that teacher leaders can inspire other teachers to create their own hopeful learning environments. Veronica and Reese at Oak Tree, Mrs. Queen at Curie, and Molly at GBW all use teacher leadership to impact peers' ability to build capacity to create HLE's (Lambert, 2003, for example). Veronica advocated for and trained teachers in her building to build community within their departments. Reese communicated with a national network of teachers she had met at the IB training program to garner support while she blundered through the process of investigating and advocating for the program at Oak Tree.

A group of consultants from the ISD that serves Curie's district began collaborating with Curie's staff in order to improve student behaviors through positive interventions. The participants seemed excited about the program's potential during their personal interviews, although Mrs. Princess seemed guarded about giving over her complete endorsement. The consultants will use Curie's school data and work with Curie's staff to develop behavioral goals for students, work with selected staff to design an intervention program to foster those goals, and then guide the staff through the process

of implementing the program to produce the desired effects. Once the entire process is experienced by the staff, the staff can then replicate it for new goals. Because the program uses positive incentives, builds relationships and ultimately results in producing responsible citizens, it seems as if it has the potential to be able to contribute to creating HLE's, but the staff had only had its first meeting with the consultants before the study ended.

Lack of Adequate Funding Constrains Learning

Current funding does not appear to adequately support what is needed to prepare our young people to be knowledgeable and responsible humanistic citizens engaging in deep learning and problem solving. There are three main areas in which participants noted budget constraints interfered with creating HLE's: (a) large class sizes; (b) inadequate technology infrastructure and support; and (c) lack of funding for teaching materials, professional development, and school and classroom maintenance and repairs. How each of these areas constrains efforts to create HLE's will be presented in tandem to the essential element it constrains. Both (b) inadequate technology and (c) lack of funding for professional development constrain the essential element of professional learning.

Technology

Because technological literacy is not a primary concern of NCLB or reflected in the Michigan Board of Education's recent push for rigor in its increased graduation requirements, there is little incentive or reason for increasing funds for technology in high schools. However, the participants at the three school sites viewed technological resources as essential for HLE's. Some districts and their communities recognize that if

students are to be successful, contributing citizens in our current economy, they will need to be technologically proficient. Those districts secure funding to fully support technology infrastructure, including hardware, software, tech support, and training. Other district officials might recognize technology's importance but are reluctant to approach the community to run a millage election. Still other districts fail to recognize its importance or lack the needed leadership skills to facilitate a comprehensive, fully integrated system.

The issue of inadequate technology equipment was voiced as a constraint at two of the three sites. At Oak Tree, Tyler, who teaches Business Technology courses, and Veronica, who teaches Science, produced photographs and generated dialogue about technology constraints in Forest Shores, which ranged from nonsensical bureaucratic rules, lack of technical assistance and training, slow processing, and lack of access to equipment. At Curie, both Mrs. Goddess and Mrs. Queen evidenced their reliance on computer savvy students to help them with their own technology. While both Oak Tree's infrastructure and teacher support were lacking, at Curie it seemed that only the support aspect was lacking. The technology seemed to be present in the district; all of the components were in place, but the teachers weren't fully literate with the technology. Both Mrs. Princess and Mrs. Goddess were required to have students use a Math tutorial program as part of their curriculum. While the teachers were apparently proficient utilizing the program, they complained there were not enough working stations to accommodate all of their students in the lab.

Many of the participants at both Oak Tree and Curie seemed uncomfortable using technology, did not access their email regularly, and had to learn how to up- and

download digital images. Some were uncertain about how and where to save digital files, and most were not proficient in any digital imagery programs. Only Mrs. Goddess seemed to be proficient in digital imagery and photography. At GBW, all of the teachers were proficient in using digital photography and imagery software, and all of them were able to up- and download digital images. The only technology complaint voiced at GBW was that Emma felt the NCA technology committee leaders focused on what she called their hidden agenda, rather than issues that impacted more of the teachers and their students.

Professional Development

Oak Tree participants also said that reduced or almost non-existent district spending on professional development directly impacts their ability to create HLE's. There were no longer any funds for conference costs or for funding substitute teachers for conference leaves. If teachers are not able to attend professional conferences, they aren't learning the current practices that enhance learning in their content areas. If they aren't learning current practices that enhance learning, their spirit is dampened, inhibiting their ability to create HLE's. The disinvestment detracts from HLE's because professional development along with building community provide the collegial relationships that supply both the emotional and pedagogical support teachers need (Lortie, 1975) in order to be hopeful themselves.

Theme Two: Building Authentic Relationships

How the sites used the benefits of professional learning to enhance their HLE's was presented in the previous section along with constraints to those enhancements. In this section, how relationships help to build capacity to create HLE's will be presented. It is through reciprocally respectful relationships that the strength of the dynamic synergism of an HLE is generated. In schools where the relationships are dysfunctional, energy is lost, and synergism decreases. When relationships are reciprocally respectful, they are at their highest functioning within HLE's; they are of benefit to all parties in the relationship. The importance of relationships in teaching and learning is well documented (see Noddings, 1984; Meier, 1995; Payne, 1996; Lin, 2001, for example). There are different types of relationships in schools, and hence in HLE's, that can be mined for their richness in contributing to enhancing hope (Payne, 1996). The types of possible relationships are (a) student to student, (b) student to teacher, (c) teacher to teacher, and (d) teacher to administrator. Students, teachers, and administrators have relationships with community members.

Mrs. Princess at Curie used student-student relationships to demonstrably increase student learning when she employed student led teaching stations. She described the process as empowering to both the students who were teaching and to the students who were learning. Molly encouraged student leaders in her student council to advocate for a charity fundraiser and was overwhelmed with contributions. Emma facilitated award-winning student generated publications. Veronica arranged for her National Honor Society students to serve as volunteer peer tutors at Oak Tree. The same group also volunteered at a food bank. Not only did the students interact in peer relationships during

the volunteer activities, but students also formed relationships with younger students and with community members through these experiences of their humanistic and responsible citizenship. Both Veronica and X-2 at Oak Tree used student-teacher relationships to engage their learners. X-2 led his students through exercises that increased their knowledge of the benefits of diversity. Veronica invited her students to her home for study sessions to prepare for their upcoming AP test.

All sites had at least one participant who only spoke affirmatively of her administration; at Curie it was Mrs. Queen, who served as a teacher leader (Lieberman et al., 2000) on her principal's leadership team. Mrs. Queen interacted not only with her colleagues in teacher-teacher relationships, but sat on a leadership advisory board to make policy decisions at Curie, participating in a teacher-administrator relationship. "I think it starts with where you're at," Mrs. Queen said to Mrs. Goddess at one of our sessions. "And then you go from there." (Mrs. Queen, focus group, February 21, 2007). At GBW, Penelope photographed her administrator in appreciation of his contribution to making the school an HLE. At Oak Tree Veronica and Reese were most aligned with the administrative team, but nonetheless remained critical of some of the teams' decisions.

Lortie (1975) depicts teachers as unabashedly "being shaped by deeper commitments to students...[adult relationships] are secondary and derivative in nature" (p. 187); however, teachers "see each other as the primary source of new ideas" (p 193). When asked, teachers confess they "worry about how others treat them" (p. 185). This section cited examples of how relationships amplify capacity for hope in the HLE's, as well as how learning was enhanced. In the following section, what happens when dysfunctional relating occurs in high schools will be described.

How Class Size Constrains Relationships

According to several participants in this study, large class sizes inhibit them from building authentic and reciprocally respectful relationships with their students in order to engage them in learning that builds self efficacy, hence, hope. Large class sizes also funnel more of Emma's and other teachers' time into keeping up with paperwork in order to provide essential feedback about their students' progress, which is needed to promote deep learning. Teachers need to be able to interact with students in dynamic ways in classrooms. Large class sizes inhibit their ability to do that. In Penelope's language classes, she is not able to hear every student speaking every day, and Mrs. Goddess is not able to say something positive to every student every single day. Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution (NCEE, 1983), advises that high school teachers should have contact with no more than 90 students a day. However, no teacher in this study had contact with fewer than 140 students daily. Large class sizes can also constrain by creating unsafe conditions of unsupervised students or overcrowded lab stations, and by complicating students' ability to form relationships with each other.

Disinvestment in Professional Development and Community

In a profession that relies upon the ability to negotiate relationships, supporting relationships in the school environment is an essential component of HLE's. As mentioned, educators are dependent upon relationships to provide supports in their school organizations. Teachers need both emotional and pedagogical support from their teaching peers. Teachers rely on administrators to organize structure in the school environment that supports instruction, and they rely on their administrators to mete out consequences to students whose attitudes and behaviors interfere with their own or

others' learning (Sergiovanni, 1996). Additionally, teachers need the cooperation of their students and their students' families to be able to maintain an HLE. A lack of these emotional and professional supports constrains teachers from being able to create HLE's.

The emotional support teachers need from their colleagues and leadership ranges from recognition and encouragement, to the deep listening witnessed when Reese and Veronica tried to make sense of the union's response to considering the IB program. Teachers also rely on their relationships with their professional organizations including the union, to negotiate contracts, to defend their rights as professional employees, to contribute voice to policy making decisions (Johnson, 1984), and for acquiring new ideas (Lortie, 1975). The participants at GBW and Curie rarely referenced the teachers' union, but at Oak Tree three participants found fault with its representative politics and policies. Susan disparaged the union's helping to retain a teacher, whom she viewed as incompetent. Reese disapproved of the union's tactic to maintain status quo by squashing the IB program. Veronica opposed the union's party line of opposing merit pay.

Despite Veronica's and a colleague's best intentions to develop a Professional Learning Community at Oak Tree, there were pervasive conflicts with colleagues. Oak Tree's conflicts stemmed from territorial disputes over the lab space (Waller, 1961) and disrespectful staff members entrenched in maintaining the status quo (Weiss, 1995). All sites had participants who complained about inappropriate behavior of their colleagues at professional meetings. At Oak Tree, at least one participant had gone to an administrator several times in order to gain assistance in negotiating relationships with colleagues. As teacher leaders in their buildings, the participants experienced uncertainties about their roles and tensions about time and divided responsibilities (Little, 1995) and had not yet

built the trust and rapport (Miles et al., 1988) or overcome the resistance of their peers (Wasley, 1991). While they struggled to negotiate differences between their own expectations and those of their principals (Smylie & Denny, 1990), the teacher leaders didn't feel respected for being experienced, knowledgeable, having vision or respect for children (Miller & O'Shea 1992). GBW participants described a minor irritation with a chronic complainer; rather than describe conflicts at Curie and GBW, the participants complemented their colleagues effusively.

At least some participants at all sites described conflicted or dysfunctional relationships with their administrators. The participants said that the administrative team at GBW was not responsive to their needs in planning their meeting times for the newly implemented restructured days. This could be the result of the leadership mis-managing change (Marris, 1974). It could instead stem from top-down micro-managing that interfered with teachers' autonomy to direct their own professional needs (Louis & Riley, 2000). Other than Penelope, the participants at GBW felt that their administrative team was not sensitive to their needs as teachers struggling to meet the needs of their students while attempting to implement several new initiatives at the same time. At Curie, the conflict with administrators mostly involved Mrs. Goddess, who expressed frustration in negotiating the process of building, moving to, and supplying a new Art classroom. She was told paperwork was lost, essential furniture was cut from the budget, and she was initially told there was no Art budget for supplies for the year, but later was allocated the same amount from the previous year. In the interim, she experienced a good deal of angst and spent a lot of time and energy fighting for her students' Art needs. Mrs.

Goddess said that having to beg students and their families for financial contributions for the schools' successful Art program felt, at least for her, "less than hopeful."

Student Distractions

Several participants found creating hope difficult when students were distracted from learning. Their readiness for learning was limited because students had things that were more exciting or created fear. At Oak Tree, Tyler showed how students can easily be distracted from learning by cell phones and MP3 players. These distractions impede educators' ability to both form relationships with students and to facilitate students' learning content. X2 photographed students fighting and said that fear would detract from HLE's. Another powerful distracter was in student relationships with their loved ones. Each site had at least one student, who had difficulties negotiating school after a broken off love relationship or because of a death of a loved one. Molly photographed two students in her writing class, who were formerly disengaged from learning, but who had become re-engaged. One student was grieving a friend, who had succeeded in his suicide attempt.

X2 showed how hopefulness and learning can be impacted by class and race privilege issues. If students are raised to be disrespectful of diversity, those students may experience a problem getting past stereotypes to be able to interact with their peers and teachers in meaningful ways. These students may not have developed the ability to view things from others' perspectives and will have difficulty forming reciprocally respectful relationships with people who have different perspectives. X2 also took diversity to the level of the teacher. He challenged Susan's tacit racist remarks and subtly chided Veronica and Reese for their use of the word *ghetto*. He was tenacious in his treatment of

diversity, shared his experiences of visiting the Holocaust Historical Center with his students, and generated meaningful dialogue with his colleagues and students about both racism and diversity.

At the other two sites the issue of diversity was not part of the overt discussions. It seemed that there were some underlying concerns about it at both GBW and Curie, but it was more present as an undercurrent at Curie. Teachers there said things, like, “With more needy students coming here,” or, “The parents haven’t gone to college,” or, “Lots of single parent homes,” which may have been a polite way of saying that diversity was an issue. At GBW, where the topic of diversity was raised in discussion, the topic was raised by X2, who is Black. It is noteworthy that when X2 first raised the issue of diversity, he did so by

not so much the obvious, which would be the color thing, but just social echelons, so it’s not just being popular... It’s crossing all those boundaries so that if students can understand each other and at least have an understanding of where other people come from, that would contribute to a better learning environment where they can be supportive of each other and they can excel in those particular environments (X2, Focus group, February 8, 2007).

Participants’ emotions regarding the factors that impact their students’ ability and motivation to learn ranged from frustration to sadness. Shields (2004) gives a framework for educators to lead toward social justice. She advocates breaking from the status quo that marginalizes certain students by transformative leadership practices that empower teachers to engage in a moral dialogue. That dialogue will facilitate the formation of strong relationships needed to challenge existing beliefs and practices that detract from creating HLE’s. Shields would support X2’s bringing race to the table and the dialog he has with his students. She would not advocate lowering standards for any groups of

students, but would instead advocate creating new and innovative practices that encourage dialog in building relationships, and eradicating erroneous beliefs and practices that support the deficit psychology.

Ruby Payne (2005) focuses on the issue of poverty, with its concurrent lack of associated social and intellectual capital, as the root cause of behaviors that impede student success. She credits education and relationships as helping people move out of poverty. In schools both education and relationships can contribute to giving students hope for success in their lives. Payne also states that people leave poverty because they have a vision or goal, or because a key relationship helps them to see a way out. Teachers and schools can help students to acquire both. This idea will be further discussed in the following section.

Theme Three: Accessing Resources

The HLE model incorporates Freire's vision of education extending beyond the walls of the schoolhouse to the community, authenticating learning. This section will attempt will revisit some examples of the participants adeptness in being able to generate hope in a variety of venues. Not only were the participants adept in accessing available resources, but they were demonstrably resourceful in the ways that they added value to their communities by sharing their available resources.

Community as a Resource

Mrs. Goddess at Curie asked students for donations for supplies, funded some supplies herself and used her community connections to obtain some donated storage containers that were missing in her new room. She reported spending thousands of unreimbursed dollars the previous years in order to provide students with materials she felt

they needed for their Art experience. Her generosity extended beyond the walls of the school into the community when she wrote a grant and obtained funding to initiate an “Art on Loan” project where student art work is displayed upon request at various locations. Mrs. Queen initiated and facilitated a community volunteer program that placed student and teacher volunteers at an elementary school and a senior citizens’ residence in honor of Martin Luther King, Junior.

At Oak Tree, X2 took students to see the movie, *Freedom Writers*, a story about high school students who were empowered to write their own lived experiences and to the Holocaust Historical Center. The students engaged in dialog about anti-Semitism with a concentration camp survivor. Tyler met regularly with community employers to promote his co-op program and collaborated with them to create an audit report that he submitted to the state about the efficacy of the program.

At GBW, Emma continually used community resources to enhance her students’ journalistic opportunities by taking them to press conferences at professional sports arenas, and to the local newspaper facility. She also was actively involved in her own professional community outside of the school. Molly engaged students’ parents in an innovative way, as she invited them to blog along with her students. Her students enthusiastically endorsed the program when they learned that having their parents participate contributed to their academic success. Not only did the parents learn about what their students were learning in Molly’s class, but they were communicating with their children in ways that may not have happened otherwise, in humanistic exchanges. Some were also developing technology skills. Cognizant that some families might not

have access to the Internet in their homes, Molly made sure that she sent home explicit directions for parents to utilize public technology resources.

General Fund Constraints

Because budget constraints have forced cuts in student and teacher support services, maintenance, and repairs, participants at all three sites reported being impacted. Because GBW's participants were English teachers, they noted the impact of having lost resource teachers, who assisted them by providing feedback to students' writing efforts, and by meeting with individual or groups students in literacy centers. The participants were concerned that having lost these services, they would have more difficulty helping their students to acquire essential writing skills. They said they could not keep pace with assessing their students' work if they continued to assign the same number and kinds of assignments. Because not only had they lost the services of the consultants, but their class sizes were increasing every year, the teachers felt overwhelmed, distraught, and powerless about their situation.

At Oak Tree, Reese presented a cogent argument that aesthetics contribute to HLE's when she shared the photograph, *My Ghetto Blinds*. The participants discussed several budget shortcomings that directly impacted their classroom resources and ability to create HLE's. Like Reese's blinds, all participants at Oak Tree reported things in their rooms or building that were in disrepair. They also reported a one month budget freeze, which impacted ordering supplies, inconveniencing teachers, requiring more negotiating to receive reimbursement, or stymieing efforts to purchase class supplies. The teachers made do by either substituting paper and pencil activities or by eliminating labs or activities from their curriculum.

While X2 and others at Oak Tree reported giving students money for lunch or for other incidentals, all of Curie's participants reported giving financial support to their students. Curie's participants also reported supplying students with necessities for school and, in some cases, clothes. Curie's participants seemed to be most concerned about a lack of support services for their students, including college visitation day, for example. They were disgruntled that students were not able to schedule appointments to meet with their counselors. The participants at Curie felt that students having access to counseling service is an essential component of HLE's.

School Finance

Michigan's Proposal A (1994), which relegates fiscal control of educational funding to the state, has been shown to be inadequate in its ability to support the educational needs of the students (Arsen et al., 2003), particularly in years of state fiscal crisis. State school finance policy in Michigan limits the availability of capital outlay for infrastructure by requiring local districts to vote to increase their tax rates to fund bonds for construction. While residents in districts where tax rates are low can effectively afford to float bonds, residents in districts with the highest need for infrastructure are frequently not able to tax themselves at the needed rate in order to fund infrastructure. (Arsen et al., 2005; Sizer, 2004). Furthermore, Arsen et al., (2005) show that "more than half of the unmet need for capital spending is found in middle-income suburbs..." (p. 21), like the ones in this study. When districts float bonds for capital spending, they can allocate funds toward maintenance and repairs that might normally come out of general fund expenditures. Reese's unkempt blinds could be replaced if Forest Shores asked

voters to approve a bond for renovations. It should be noted, however, that in Michigan in 2005, only 44 percent of the millages on the ballot were approved.

At the time of the study, both Curie and Grand Bay districts had levied bonds to support construction and renovation; the participants indicated the district was unwilling to go to voters for technology bonds, which can also be financed through capital spending. At Forest Shores, Veronica stated the district had a technology bond that expired, and had not gone to the voters for renewal. Selected district financial information is provided in Appendix XVII and Table 7.1 shows construction spending and per pupil spending for 2005 for each of the three sites. Note that Curie had not yet begun its construction in 2005, and Grand Bay and Forest Shores were finishing some renovations. Proposal A prohibits local districts from running millage elections to improve funding in areas of instruction, but allows elections for capital outlay, technology, and some other endeavors. Even if the local districts wanted to improve funding for instruction for their students, Proposal A prohibits them from doing so. As Sizer (2004) admonishes, “Inadequately funded or equipped schools, however efficient, rarely provide a thorough education” (p. xix).

Table 7.1 District Per Pupil Spending Summary for 2005

	Grand Bay (West)	Forest Shores (Oak Tree)	Curie
Per pupil expenditure in U.S. Dollars	7700	9300	8600
Per Pupil Instructional Expenditure in U.S. Dollars	4417	5321	4508
Per Pupil Instructional Staff Support in U.S. Dollars	323	559	366
Per Pupil, Pupil Support in U.S. Dollars	565	813	846
Per Pupil Construction in U.S. Dollars	1534	292	0

Data compiled from SchoolMatters, 2005 using some rounded figures

Students' Readiness to Learn: Family Resources

A student's readiness to learn comprises an area that impacts teachers' ability to create HLE's. This factor could be construed to fall under the umbrella of *Accessing Resources* because families enable children to be successful or not by behaviors that support and prepare their children for school. Some participants in the study felt powerless to be able to help students who were struggling to learn because of the circumstances in their lives over which teachers, and in many cases students themselves, have little or no control over. Maslow (1968) states that the basic human needs must be met in order for a person to be ready to acquire knowledge. The participants at two schools in this study indicated that some students' families were in "survival orientation" (Payne, 1996, p. 51), putting their attention toward meeting their basic human needs. The following subsections describe how constraints in these areas impact creating HLE's.

How Socio-economic Status Impacts HLE's

Socio-economic status has been well-studied in the literature in regards to its negative relationship to student success. This negative relationship is the crux of how SES can inhibit teachers' abilities to create HLE's in their classrooms. How their

students' SES impacts a teacher's ability to create an HLE has not been studied directly, but was a topic of discussion of the participants in this study. A great deal of literature links students' SES with students' measured performance on tests. Heller and Shapiro (2001), for example, show that students from a lower SES do more poorly on Michigan's High School Proficiency Test (MHSPT, as it was called then), than their counterparts of higher SES. SES is linked to lower performance at colleges because "lower-income students are, in general, more likely to attend lower-quality elementary and secondary schools [both middle and high school]...These schools are less likely to offer...more demanding curricula..." (Breneman & Merisotis, 2002, p. 126). If students from lower SES come from elementary and middle schools with less rigor, these students may be coming to high schools with less academic preparation, or readiness to learn. If students come with less readiness to learn, their ability to be hopeful about having success in learning is limited. Teachers are challenged to help these more academically challenged students feel hopeful.

According to Schweinhart (2006), "Poverty and other factors contribute to the toxic stress that neuroscience researchers have shown to interfere with normal brain development...additional risk factors for young children—especially related to their academic and economic success—are their parents' level of education..." (p. 34). All of the factors that impair learning make it more challenging for teachers to create hope in these students because students do not have readiness to learn for a possible variety of reasons. Students, who have already been through at least eight years of low success in schooling because of these impairments, might have difficulty feeling hopeful about their potential for success in high school classes.

In Table 7.2 below, some attributes of homes in the districts of the school sites are shared (SchoolMatters, 2007). Remembering that Reese referred to Oak Tree as the “ugly stepsister,” because of their population’s perceived lower economic and social status in the district, the reader should use discretion when interpreting the information from table 7.2. The students, who attend Oak Tree and GBW’s campuses, are more likely from lower income families than are students who live in the other areas in their respective districts.

Table 7.2. Selected District Household Information Comparison Table*

	Grand Bay (West)	Forest Shores (Oak Tree)	Curie
Single households	9.3 %	7.3 %	9.2 %
Parents w/ HS Dip	92.5 %	91.1 %	89.4 %
Parents w/ BA	20.6 %	32.8 %	21.5 %
Median Age	35	40	37
Households w/ < \$15,000 annual income	8.1 %	5.8 %	7.7 %
\$15 K-29,999	13.7 %	11.7 %	13 %
\$30 K- 49,999	18.9 %	17.8 %	19.8 %
\$50 K – 74,999	20.9 %	20.9 %	26.8 %
\$75 K – 99,999	16.4 %	17.2 %	16.8 %
\$100 K – 150,000	16.0 %	18.5 %	13.1 %
> \$150 K	6.1 %	8.2 %	2.7 %

*shading indicates households may qualify for low income status by the federal government, depending on certain factors.

Data compiled from SchoolMatters, 2005

Family Support and Learning Attitudes

If education and literacy are not valued in the homes, then students come to school without a readiness to learn. The attitudes that students bring to school impact teachers’ abilities to create hopefulness in students’ learning environments of the attitudes depict schooling as not valued. If parents do not respect the services schools offer to their children, and students pick that up from their parents, then students will not

respect schools. Molly said that one of her students said that his father told him he “didn’t have to listen to what teachers’ say because teachers are ‘those who can’t’ and they don’t make any money anyway” (Molly, focus group, February 23, 2007). This disrespect can occur in any SES bracket, as Molly related; the student was the son of a professional, who was very well-educated.

Making a pseudo-administrative decision exemplifying Weick’s (1976) loosely coupled system, Mrs. Queen violated policy by not marking a student tardy on several occasions, because she knew it was not the student’s fault, but the parent’s, and that the student would ultimately lose credit for the class. That a parent would violate the sacrosanct attendance rules, jeopardizing her child’s academic status illuminates a disconnection between the rules that some families in their district live by, and the rules of the middle class educational system (Payne, 2005). As Payne (2005) depicts poverty impacting learning attitudes, the acquired skill sets and rules families use differ from those used by the teachers, who are mostly from the middle class with their own cultural rules.

Both Oak Tree and Curie’s participants felt their students’ parents weren’t able to support the students’ attempts at exploring higher learning opportunities because the parents were naïve in that area. This is consistent with the findings of a number of studies, including Heller and Rasmussen (2001). According to the data presented in Table 7.2, approximately eighty per cent of the families in the districts of these three high schools are led by parents who have not achieved a college degree. Participants at all three high schools depicted students’ attitudes as detracting from an HLE and seemed sometimes perplexed about how to handle it. Participants in this study expressed

frustration in their attempts to educate students who were experiencing issues that negatively impacted their learning. As Penelope stated, “I can’t be there when that student is being hit again” (Penelope, Interview, March 5, 2007).

Time as a Resource

Time’s presence in schools is as ubiquitous as posted calendars and schedules. Time as a construct is embedded in many of the previous constraints. For example, in order for teachers to build professional relationships, they need time to be able to meet with colleagues and administrators. In order for teachers to improve instruction, they need time to be trained to use methods that have shown to improve instruction and to learn about current technology and how it can benefit them and their students. Then they need time to implement the methods, time to see the impact that it has on their students, time to reflect on the impact, and refine the process through their action research. They also need time to meet with other stakeholders in order have voice in decision-making.

Lortie’s (1975) discussion of time is relevant here:

First, we can think of time as the single most important, general resource teachers possess in their quest for productivity and psychic reward; ineffective allocations of time are costly. Second, from one perspective teaching processes are ultimately interminable; one can never strictly say that one has ‘finished’ teaching students...If one is inwardly pressed by a feeling of not having finished one’s work, inert time must be particularly galling (p. 177).

Lortie fixes time as a resource that teachers find in short supply. That two participants brought in pictures of clocks to our focus group sessions about constraints and issues that collide with HLE’s indicates that the issue of time as a constraint continues to be a concern to teachers. Lortie would not be surprised. The participants characterized time as a constraint in the following ways: (a) MME testing preparation

conflicted with curriculum coverage, (b) the work demands of the job exceeded participants ability to perform them, and (c) to excel or even “get by” at their jobs, teachers felt they needed to make sacrifices in their personal lives.

Veronica and Susan shared their struggles of what they called “balancing” their work and professional lives. That she wasn’t able to take on new responsibilities, or even manage expected responsibilities was a new experience for Veronica. In the teaching profession, there is a tension that plays out between being involved in the decision-making and extra-curricular activities, and taking time from their teaching and/or personal lives to be able to do so.

Theme Four: Teachers as Contributing Citizens

At GBW, Molly probably best vocalizes her disdain for anything that diverts her attention from anything other than attending directly to her students’ learning needs. Advocating for students’ rights, confronting administrators for their lack of appreciation for the work that teachers’ and students’ do, Molly makes it her business to keep informed and to communicate her concerns to the sources who she believes will help. As Molly puts it, “And respectfully, I don’t give a hoot about NCA because I don’t see how it directly impacts my kids” (Focus group, February 23, 2007).

At Curie, Mrs. Princess, who was not typically demonstrative, expressed disappointment with several administrative policies or decisions, including the administrators’ lack of support in enforcing the tardy policy. When she went to the principal, he informed her that it was the teachers’ fault that students were late, which was deflating for her. Mrs. Goddess felt unsupported in her efforts to move and stock the new Art classroom. Her husband gave her more assistance in the process than the

custodians and her principal. She also disagreed with some of the building's administratively designed policies. Participants at Curie cited several examples of what they considered to be ill-conceived notions of policy from the district's office.

The participants at Oak Tree expressed disappointment with not only their central office decisions regarding curriculum, but also with their building administrators. X2 mocked administrative decisions on several occasions. "That's just ridiculous!" (X2, Focus Group, February 8, for example, in response to a binder with a new innovation sponsored by the district, and again on the same date regarding Tyler's technology issues, as examples) was frequently uttered by X2 regarding administrative decisions or policies.

All of the participants at Oak Tree felt that their administration was remiss in not confronting inappropriate staff behavior at meetings. Several teachers had gone to at least two administrators for assistance in dealing with peer to peer relationships gone awry but did not feel supported in their efforts. At Oak Tree, Susan felt micro-managed by the central office administrator, who assigned her the task of aligning the old book with the new curriculum. Creating barriers that prohibit and reproach teachers for participating in school decision-making is a way to control and perhaps contort (Benham, personal communication, November 12, 2007). In some cases administrators (at both the district and school level) do this by interpreting policy in ways that do not support teacher professionalism and creativity, hence, creating structures and an environment where there is a lack of hope and synergism (Benham, 2007).

Some participants questioned their administrators' decisions to practice for the MME, but all participants expressed discontent with some aspect of the state's new testing regime. Although the participants were compliant in administering both the tests

and the assigned pre-test preparation tasks at all sites, the participants were clear that they felt the testing regime, preparing the students for it, and the distractions the testing created were all impeding their ability to create HLE's. Darling-Hammond (2004) argues that these testing regimens paradoxically undermine low-performing schools' improvement by applying the labels of failure, inhibiting their ability to attract and keep highly qualified teachers, lose students and resources while in the process of complying with its mandates, and eventually reduce opportunity for students in those schools. The schools in this study were performing at or slightly below state averages, but their relative performance below the other schools in their districts was already eroding their teachers' hope for improvement.

Lortie (1975) describes the ambivalent tensions of teachers between "independence and dependence, autonomy and participation, control and subordination" (p. 186). In one sense the participants in this study echoed Lortie's description. The complexities and demands of classroom teachers are such that "the daily demands are not easily met. The complexities draw teachers more deeply into their involvement with classroom events; they foster preoccupation with influencing students and with conditions which seem to increase that influence" (p. 185). Lortie's ambivalent or martyred teachers "picture themselves as constrained, undersupplied, and underappreciated" (p. 185), who stand in contrast to Freire's (1970) dialogic teachers: "founding [themselves] upon love, humility, and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialoguers is the logical consequence" (p. 91).

As we engaged in our table dialogue in the focus groups, some of the nuances of how these thoughts play out in a modern high school setting became evident. In the original HLE model, (p. 13, this document) educators were depicted as a group of people unified in the purpose of creating HLE's for their students by practicing good teaching, providing structural supports, financial backing, and administrative support for building capacity to create HLE's. Yet, teachers feel powerless when policy that "teacher proofs" learning and teaching is implemented.

The current authoritarian trends of mandating adequate yearly progress toward impossible educational goals (Darling-Hammond, 2004) are as emotionally deflating to teachers as the administrative micromanaging Lortie described (1975). Similar to Freire's (1970) teacher as banker metaphor, authoritarian prescribed testing, interferes with a democratically engaging classroom. A democratically engaging classroom, working toward achievable goals, and engaging students in learning are all constructs that motivate teachers (Lortie, 1975). If teachers are hopeful about their students' learning, then they will be more inclined to create HLE's. In considering Lortie's (1975) "art of teaching," teachers can "do more" if their restrictions were lifted. Instead, through mandated curricula, accountability, and common assessments, more restrictions on teachers' freedom to use their craft in making their artistic contribution are being applied to the profession. That some educators are implementing and suggesting changes that constrain HLE's leads me to reconsider the original model.

Teachers value autonomy (Lortie, 1975) in their profession, and need to construct the learning in a way that is creative and responsive to students' needs. This autonomy is sometimes labeled as the "art of teaching," or attributed to the charisma that certain

teachers bring to the field. As accountability becomes more of a presence in schools, and as curriculum is more defined and prescribed, the love that teachers have for their work becomes diminished. The teachers in this study were experiencing the onslaught of a new testing regimen. Their reaction to it was a feeling of powerlessness. They resented the time it took from their instruction, the resources it took from their students. They resented their aspirations of deep learning for their students that the mandated pencil and paper tests seemed to be minimizing. Due to “growing testing,” the learning culture has narrowed, leaving no space for building of the spirit. As the resources in schools diminish, just as teachers are feeling that their students need *more* resources to support their learning, exasperated, the participants feel powerless.

These complaints are consistent with Lortie’s (1975) prediction that teachers’ ability to garner power through collective bargaining will leave them feeling powerless as their profession changes. Facing budget constraints, weakened bargaining rights, and erosion of autonomy with increased accountability, teachers’ ingrained conservatism (Lortie, 1975) is challenged by the current climate in education, leaving them feeling powerless and constrained in creating HLE’s. However, despite these constraints and the results of these constraints, participants in this study exuded confidence in their abilities to create HLE’s in their school environments. That gives hope to me that teachers still strive to create HLE’s in their own classrooms with their students. In the concluding chapter the ramifications and applications of this research will be discussed.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCUSSING HOPE

Figure 8.1. Wish You Were Here, Molly, March, 2007



With the amount of hopefulness witnessed in these participants' descriptions of their learning environments, I wonder how much hope would be generated if educators consciously chose to make creating HLE's part of their praxis. While the essential elements elevate the creation of HLE's, the constraining factors prevent the synergistic regeneration of the human spirit necessary for the generation of an HLE. In spite of these constraints, the participants in this study used what synergy could be garnered from their school community to engage in activities that promote creating HLE's. In attempting to describe how might high school teachers better construct their work in order to create HLE's, I chose to use Molly's photograph, *Wish You Were Here*, as a metaphor. Molly

took this photograph of some students at the Snowcoming Dance at her school. She planned to use the photograph as a display to other students, who did not attend the dance, to show them that their attendance was missed. In using it as a metaphor here, I do wish that all places where students go to school were *here*, creating Hopeful Learning Environments.

Given that, and given the constraints that teachers face in creating HLE's, what can teachers do? Teachers can better construct their work by focusing on how to create HLE's, by enhancing those essential elements that promote them and trying to circumnavigate those factors that detract from them. These practices include dialog about creating hope, making time for student relationships, being reflective about practice, making practice public, and creating HLE's in the community.

This study suggests implications for practice, including engaging in an on-going dialogue about how to create hope for students. That dialog will prioritize wrestling with the hard questions of race and class privilege and how that plays out in schools. Teachers must insist that learning environments are structured to enhance reciprocally respectful relationships with colleagues, administrators, community members, and students. As professionals being reflective about practice, teachers must engage in action research using data to inform decisions and make the practice public. The HLE model calls for extending learning and dialog to include community outside of the school building. Following that, I will make suggestions for policy which includes changing funding for public education, changing the nature of the profession's career ladder and the certification process to be reflective of the demands of the job. Local, state and national policy makers must also wrestle with an on-going dialog of race and class privilege that

plays out in an institutionalized setting configured by neo-liberals. In order to ensure that those less privileged are given voice and structural support in hopeful learning environments, a culture of *growing testing* must be examined.

Wishing You Were Here

Hopeful Dialog

The participants in this study expressed benefit from engaging in the small amount of dialog that was generated in our focus groups. They said, in effect, that participating in the focus group made them more aware of the things around them that created hope and detracted from hope. They found themselves “looking for hope.” If practitioners, who need the support of others, set aside some time to meet with each other regularly in a focus group about hope, they might find that they inspire each other to set into practice those things that spontaneously create HLE’s. If nothing else, being with professionals, who are supportive and positive about teaching, will be of benefit.

Making Time for Hopeful Relationships

Developing authentic relationships with students builds capacity for HLE’s in classrooms. Veronica created a birthday board to be able to connect with each of her students individually. X2 told a story about how having a relationship with one of his teachers changed his life and gave him hope. If every teacher took an hour a week or an hour a month to make a personal and deep connection with one or a few students, it might help those students feel more hopeful. Molly and her freshman team colleagues show extra interest in some shared students at school. High school teachers can act as advocates for their students. Sacks (2007) describes how his wife negotiated for a student, who, because of the limitations of her parents’ culturally disadvantaged

experience, did not have the “ information and cultural guideposts” that middle class students would have. At some schools, as part of their support structure for students, this practice is an official intervention that is applied to struggling students.

Publicly Reflective

In order to create HLE’s teachers need to not only build relationships, but to promote deep learning in their students. In order to improve their practice, teachers can engage in action research. Being consciously purposeful about improving and sharing our practice will result in enhancing professional learning through teacher leadership activities, or through professional organization presentations. If each school sponsored a poster board session at the end of the year to recognize their teachers’ professional contributions, the practice would improve by inspiring each other to elevate their practice. Veronica and some others might advocate giving a monetary prize for professional excellence at these poster board sessions. Instead of poster boards, teachers could both learn how to and utilize technology to create PowerPoint presentations or Digital Movies.

Extending HLE’s to the Community

Part of the process of creating HLE’s is extending the learning environment from inside the classroom to beyond the classroom, outside into the community. Many ideas were generated to promote HLE’s in classrooms, but how to extend the learning beyond the structures that exist proves more elusive. Participants in the study claimed that they wanted more interaction with parents and families of students, who weren’t having success, but frequently those are the parents that are least likely to participate in their children’s education. There may be many reasons that parents are not participating in

their child's education process, yet teachers need to have relationships with students and their students' families to the point that they can work together in trustful relations to support the learning of the students in the home and at school.

Communities of Hopeful Learning Environments: Implications for Policy and Practice

In this study the essential elements needed to create HLE's high schools were evidenced, as were the constraining factors that prevent teachers from creating them. In review, the essential elements were (a) accessing ongoing professional learning to ensure their relevance as teachers, in particular the use of technology as a learning tool, (b) building authentic relationships with students, teachers, administrators, and community members that are reciprocally respectful and productive, (c) accessing resources to support students' learning in schools and its extended environment and (d) teachers sense of value (self-efficacy) as contributing citizens of school experiences. Simply put, any policies that would enhance the opportunity or amplify any of these factors would benefit creating HLE's.

Inadequate funding is an issue in Michigan schools (and probably in other locations that weren't considered in this study) in the areas of instruction, instructional support, supplies, and infrastructure. How to go about improving funding for public education is a very important issue for all stakeholders, and it is an especially important consideration for educators, who are interested in creating HLE's for our students. The participants advocate for smaller class sizes in order to foster forming deeper relationships with students. Capitol outlay and hiring more teachers are the most expensive aspects of public education and probably both would be needed in order to decrease class sizes (Graue, Hatch, Rao & Oen, 2007). Teachers can be very resourceful,

but in forcing them to bear the responsibility of supplying their own resources, they are diverting their attention from attending to the learning needs of their students to doing things that could be done for them. As Veronica put it, “Middle level managers with less oversight than we have and fewer responsibilities, have a secretary to perform their mundane tasks. If I had a lab tech to prep for demos, or someone who could make copies for my students, I could accomplish so much more” (Veronica, personal interview, March 14, 2007).

But aside from what Veronica views as a pipe dream, what she and her colleagues at Oak Tree view as necessary but not forthcoming are adequate texts, funding for professional development, adequate funding for infrastructure for technology, more room in her class—renovations that incorporate today’s safety features, not those of the 1960’s—and smaller class sizes, just to name a few. Veronica would also advocate for a system of merit pay, and the funds to make it lucrative enough to inspire teachers to “go for it.” The participants at Curie would advocate for more support structures for their students, more counselors and social workers, more family counseling, and more in-service opportunities for technology. The teachers at GBW would advocate for smaller class sizes, more structural support and voice, and more opportunities for professional development to be incorporated into their schedules. Both they and the participants at Oak Tree wanted time to be able to meet with pedagogical “gurus,” as Reese called them, in order to get inspired, and then have time to incorporate their learning into developing lesson plans, implement the lessons, and then have time to reflect on the lessons.

Regarding the constraint of time, the state has the right intention in requiring that beginning teachers are inundated with required “workshop” hours, but in practice, the

activities in which they engage don't necessarily get translated back into the classroom to benefit students. As Tyler lamented, he was not prepared for the amount of paperwork the profession entailed. A vision of reciprocally respectful and meaningful collegial relationships might reconfigure the teacher career ladder in such a way that non-tenured teachers employed as interns would have more interaction with their colleagues, and more time to develop lesson plans, working more directly with their colleagues, perhaps serving as "under-studies." This arrangement might benefit both the interns mentor teachers, who, like Veronica, would prefer to delegate more mundane tasks to someone else. In an arrangement similar to other professions where interns are paid for their work, but at lower rates, they could teach two sections their first few years (instead of the five or six that are currently taught) and work the other hours assisting teachers. Tyler and Molly longed for more time to do their work and less time in extraneous activities, so beginning teachers need fewer "workshops" and more pragmatic and supervised time for developing their teaching repertoire of skills. Mentoring is currently required in policy, but in practice is not what it could be because of the time constraints discussed in this study.

Reciprocally respectful relationships mean being respectful of teachers' time. In buildings and districts, administrators can be respectful of teachers' time by communicating announcements via a newsletter or email rather than calling a meeting to read to their teachers from a list. By acting as educational leaders, administrators would structure meetings to engage their staff in meaningful dialogue about improving instruction and creating HLE's. Developing reciprocally respectful relationships with a moving target is nearly impossible so expecting administrators to be like football

coaches, using each high school as a stepping stone to make their way to a better team at a better school, is not conducive to HLE's, where teachers and administrators need to be connected and supportive of each others' needs. Because teachers, who have been teaching in the field, are accustomed to working in isolation, teachers and administrators need training and time to effectively change their practice to be more collaborative. Only one participant, Veronica, reported any training of this nature, and she was conducted it. This is one area in professional development that would enhance the capacity for reciprocally respectful relationships in HLE's. Additionally, because high school teachers are essential in preparing students to go into higher education or directly into the workforce, they need to have access to the most current technologies and receive training to be able to facilitate their students' using it.

If students are to be successful in today's global economy, they are going to need to be savvy about how to learn in higher educational settings independent of the support structures in high schools, and about how to use technology for learning. Educators need to be more resourceful in getting supports for students in their homes. How to make that happen is the conundrum. Programs that provide technology literacy training for parents and their students, who are awarded with a computer and supports needed to make that happen would benefit both the parents and students who come from homes where both literacy and technological literacy are lacking. Examples of what might be required to make that happen is to pay the parent participants for their time so that missing work to be involved in their child's learning does not create a financial burden for them. When relationships are formed through "the multiple strategies of learning about family funds

of knowledge” (Allen, 2007 as cited in McHatton, 2007, p.1) in bridging the home-school partnerships, educators will “build community through shared experiences” (p. 1).

The final recommendation that I would make for practice is to ask to what extent are school organizations able to ask the hard questions of their educators about how race and class privilege operate in their high schools? X2 was overt about race, and diversity being an issue in Oak Tree. He was willing to engage in a dialogue about it. He shared his feelings in a way that made him and the rest of us at the table feel vulnerable. It was productive in engaging us to think about how we, as beneficiaries of class privilege, and how those of us who are White, benefit from it in our positions. He attempted to lead us in the direction of exploring that and how it would translate to our relationships with our students. Regretfully, we only touched upon this topic.

Local, state and national policy makers must also wrestle with an on-going dialog of race and class privilege that plays out in a “societal institution...recast as markets rather than deliberatively democratic systems” (Hursh, 2007, p. 494). Policy makers must consider the efficacy and implications for the underprivileged of what I am calling the *growing testing* culture. Hursh describes these neoliberal policies as undermining “our capacity to maintain a democratic educational system and society” by “those who aim to remove government from any responsibility for social welfare” (p. 494). When considering the privileged position of Whites in *Struggles of Hope: How White Adult Educators Challenge Racism*, Manglitz et al. (2005) observe,

The interest in foregrounding whiteness occurs at a time when there has also been a proliferation in neoconservative racial projects in the United States (Omi et al., 1994) that seek to preserve White advantages through the denial of racial differences, the rhetoric of color blindness, and the myth of social equality and opportunity. The national rejection of affirmative action subtly represents race in apparently egalitarian and

democratic terms while also acting as a defense of the racial status quo (Fine, 1997). In general, there appears to be a refusal among many White Americans to see institutional and systematic connections between White privilege, power, and success and a tendency to promote a colorblind viewpoint that views achievement as totally meritorious and tied to individual achievement. Some of these reactions are influenced by the changing demographics in the United States, the changing economic and industrial conditions during the last few decades, and the declining wealth for all but the richest Americans (Bowser & Hunt, 1996; McLaren, 1997).

If certain rates of improvement of student achievement on standardized tests in certain academic areas by certain groups of students are used as barometers of a school's success, this may collide with teachers' efforts to create HLE's. Because low-performing schools with a higher number of subgroups are less likely to achieve AYP in NCLB (Balfanz, Legters, West, & Weber, 2007), this could detract from the diversity that HLE's value. For example, in the *growing testing* culture, because schools are judged on their students' performance on standardized tests, some schools may pull certain students from electives and place them in enriching academic courses. Those students may become disenfranchised from the school experience, creating a less hopeful environment for them. In arguing for increasing technology funds, teachers collide with the *growing testing* culture that maintains academics are priority for spending. Educators in other non-academic content areas may need to proselytize the merits of their disciplines while trying to build capacity to create HLE's.

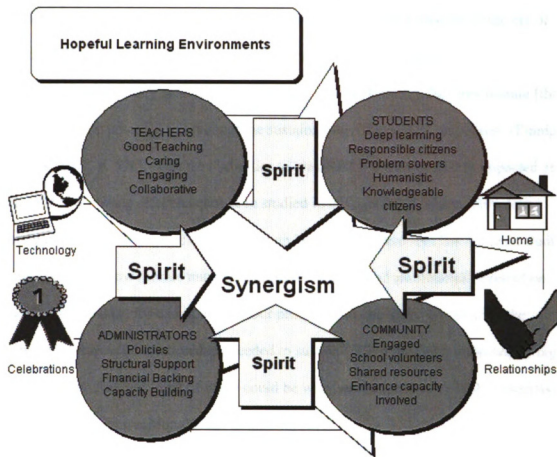
Rethinking the Model

Figure 8.2 shows the reconfigured conceptual framework that evolved as a result of the findings in this study. There are several significant differences between the earlier and the current model. They are (a) teachers and administrators are separated as distinct players in the new model, (b) the interactions between the players has been updated to

reflect the findings, (c) the physical structures and supports that enhance the creation of HLE's are included, and probably most significantly, (d) the concepts of synergy and human spirit have been added. When all of the essential elements and support structures are in place for the HLE, the overall effect is amplified, and the energy of the whole system is greater than the sum of its individual parts. The connections that the players make with their spirits and through their own spirits to the spirits of others help to generate more synergy.

When answering the question of how educators might better construct their work in order to create hopeful learning environments, educators need first to attend to their own human spirit. Like the flight attendants, who admonish us to put the mask on before helping others, like Covey's advice to "Sharpen the saw," teachers need to take care of their own human spirit. Through reciprocally respectful relations, their spirit energy can then shine on their colleagues, both teachers and administrators, and students, creating the synergy to give students what they need to grow. Teacher leaders must act as advocates by taking their needs and concerns public and by working with community members and other educators to bring about needed change. As nurturers, high school teachers need to cultivate the essential elements of accessing resources, developing authentic relationships that are reciprocally respectful, engaging in professional learning, and contributing to develop their own and others' sense of value in their professional activities. As soldiers, high school teachers need to defend against those constraining factors that detract from their abilities to foster HLE's. Finally as court members, high school teachers need to keep alive the hope that education will be the knight in shining armor that helps all students reach their goals.

Figure 8.2. HLE Dynamics



Implications for Research

The conclusions add to the theoretical conversation by including the term Hopeful Learning Environment and all it embodies to the discussion. It will hopefully validate the humanistic component of our profession by amplifying its importance for kids. The importance of patient centered medicine on contributing to the “human spirit” of patients is an ideal that is being advocated in medicine, another human service field (Evans, 2003) and needs to re-establish itself in the field of education.

As accountability becomes more of a presence in schools, and as curriculum is more defined and prescribed, the love that teachers have for their work may become diminished, if what Lortie says is true. If the norm of quantifying schools’ work plays

out and the culture of *growing testing* and neoliberal policies continues, long term studies will determine if the traits of teachers change in response to the pressures of the era of accountability. And then, if not humanistic, what will teachers be like?

When elementary schools were labeled as low-performing, the “low morale [that resulted] had the potential to undercut the sustainability of teachers’ responses” (Finnigan & Gross, 2007, p. 594). Teachers’ abilities to create HLE’s were probably impacted as well. The low morale effect has not been studied in high school teachers. How low morale impacts a teacher’s ability to create an HLE in her classroom has not been studied at any level. The low morale may have impacted teacher and administrative retention. One Chicago school, for example, had four principals in one year. Developing the reciprocally respectful relationships needed to sustain HLE’s would be impacted by high staff turnover. Another topic of study could be whether the creation of HLE’s impacts teacher retention in traditional areas of high turnover.

Another suggested area of research would consider Gladwell’s (2000) “tipping point” in relation to HLE’s, determining to what extent all of the elements need to be present and engaged in order to create an HLE. For example, can HLE’s exist without community support, and how much community support is needed? Further studies could also add to the model as praxis continues in this area.

This study also furthers the work of Wheatley (2001), who aspires to restore “hope to the future through critical education of leaders” by creating “a populist revolution among leaders...who support and nourish the human spirit and all life” (p. 46). It is consistent with the teachings of Freire, and other critical educators, who aspire to use dialog for the good of humanity. If the current system of neoliberal politics is seen as an

atrocities, out of it “can come strength, goodness and hope. Human spirit and group strength, unlike buildings, cannot easily be destroyed” (Glass, 2003, p 2). When reflecting on 9/11, he says that “the lesson to be learned from such experiences starts with human resiliency...In times of crisis the sum of our collective energy is much greater than the sum of our individual efforts” (p. 2). If the current trends in educational policy are seen as a crisis, the synergy that can be generated in a HLE would stem from “given purpose and clarity of mission, a group of people can accomplish miracles” (p. 2). When looking at the HLE through a systems lens, seeing hope within “the infrastructure of a community that leads to targeted actions and outcomes such as changing policies and practices, resource allocations, relational structure, community norms and values, and skills and attitudes” (Benham, 2007) finding the levers that are necessary to create it is a complexity that needs to be dissected.

While this dissertation only touches on the idea, there are deeper questions of race and class privilege that were not addressed in this dissertation. These hard questions which emerge, for example, in the “deficit” language (perhaps unknowingly) employed by some participants, require further study. This is one of the limitations of this study. Only X2 begins to explore this idea through dialog with his colleagues and his students. As I write this document, I struggle with deciding about including the “deficit” and perhaps pejorative language presented by the participants, and I struggle with examining my own privilege as an educated White woman. In any case the deeper questions of race and class privilege remain to be answered in a way that facilitates building capacity for HLE’s for all students.

Practicing Hope

As a classroom teacher of high school juniors (in eleventh grade), who take the MME in the spring of their year with me, I see the need for creating HLE's and for building capacity to create HLE's in all high schools. When my former juniors come back in the fall of their senior year to ask me to write college recommendations for them, I see them hopeful about getting into a good school. Students and their families hope for them to be successful, to feel prepared, and to be able to make relationships with people and with academic content that matter. Like the participants in this study have shown, there are many things teachers can do to create HLE's in their classrooms. We can "teach and students can learn, even brilliantly, without any sort of grade being in the picture. It happens all the time" (Wormeli, 2006). We can engage in a dialog that furthers praxis for creating HLE's, where students and their teachers have hope. We can create hope for students without grading them and their schools, and classifying them as future doctors or future auto mechanics at age sixteen. We can build an environment that builds human spirit for teachers, students and their families.

As a summer school principal, I attempt to create an HLE when four hundred students come to our secondary program for their second chance. I see hope in students' being able to be successful in an environment that we structure to support their learning despite that they weren't successful during the "regular school year." Knowing the benefits of small class sizes, (Smith et al., 2003) we keep our class sizes to a maximum of fifteen. We use volunteer peer tutors to work with students needing individualized help, and we avoid using penalizing rules when students *can't* work at the same rate as others. We don't dumb down the curriculum; the students take the same assessments as the

regular school year students, but we use an immersion learning experience that seems to benefit most of our students. Before our six week session starts, I facilitate a day long workshop with my staff to help us to be able to form reciprocally respectful relationships with each other and with our students. We also discuss learning theory in order to create a school environment that supports learning.

The summer school population consists of a larger proportion of disadvantaged students, including students of color and students whose families qualify for federal subsidies, than the regular school year. Yet many students also come from homes that would appear to be advantaged. Students, regardless of their home environment, can be suffering from different forms of abuse, including substance abuse (either their own, family members', or both), physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect, or they could be suffering from mental health issues (again—either their own or living with someone with them). Many of the summer school students engage in behaviors that result in their losing credit during the regular school year because of attendance or in behaviors that could result in trouble with the law. Despite all this, we have a very low failure rate in summer school for those students whose failure rate is normally very high during the regular year. Our success rate is very high. I believe it is the result of creating an HLE in our summer school program.

As public school educators, we work with students who represent the diversity of our society, and the spectrum of its advantages and disadvantages. The *growing testing* culture administers tests to sort students into categories that further advantage or disadvantage them respectively. I recommend adequately funding education so that all students are advantaged, at least in their schooling. Rather than practice the neoliberal

politics that permeate our current society, I endorse a socially democratic dialog about what is needed to create HLE's in all schools in all communities for all students and encourage other educators and policy makers to do the same.

APPENDIX I

Screening Questions for Galileo Participants to Help Select School Sites and Teams

- Are you or do you know of groups of people or individuals at your high school, who are engaged in the practice of improving teaching and learning?
- How do these people go about the business of improving practice?
- What are the characteristics of people who work to improve teaching and learning?
- What do the district and/or the building administration do to support this improvement process?
- What things are needed that are not currently in place to support this improvement process?
- Which people in the school community should be involved in improving teaching and learning and what roles should they have?
- Are you or is anyone you know engaged in building capacity to create HLE's?
- Do you know anyone at your high school or at other high schools in your district or in other districts that is acting in these ways?

APPENDIX II

Informational Letter of Introduction of Researcher and Study

April 30, 2006

Dear Colleagues at _____ High School,

As educators, we are sometimes frustrated in our efforts to create what we think are the best learning conditions for our students. The purpose of this study is to study those factors that impede our progress in creating what will be called HLE's. HLE's can be described as places where the deep or powerful learning (Finnan & Levin, 1998) needed to transform society into an inclusive and sustainable productive community is cultivated. If these types of school settings are desired, then *how might educators better construct their work and their organizations to facilitate creating HLE's?*

Your school organization has been nominated by other educators as being a possible study site to help answer this question. I am inviting you and the members of your team to participate in this study. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from participating at any time. This will be a qualitative study, consisting of one informational meeting, two discussion groups, and one individual interview. It is expected that each of those four meetings will each take about ninety minutes. In between meetings, I will ask you to generate some documents, including, but not limited to photographs, concept maps, some personal information, and responses to free-writing prompts (up to one page in length). All of your documents will be stored in my home for the duration of the study. You can be assured that the highest level of discretion will be

taken to ensure your right to privacy and any reports or publications including information derived from this study will use pseudonyms to protect your anonymity.

I am hoping that we can arrange to have these meetings over the next five weeks according to the following schedule:

Informational Meeting: Date, Time and Place TBA

First Photovoice discussion group: Date, Time and Place TBA

Second Photovoice discussion group: Date, Time and Place TBA

Follow up interview: Date, Time and Place TBA

This promises to be an exciting opportunity to meet with other educators, who are also interested in improving teaching and learning to learn how to better improve our practice.

I am a graduate student in the K-12 Educational Administration Doctoral Program at Michigan State University, and with your help and cooperation, this study will become the foundation for my dissertation. I am working under the direction of Professor Maenette Benham, my advisor. I have been a high school science teacher for the past twenty six years in a variety of school settings, including public and private, rural, suburban, and urban, with children of all ethnicities and abilities enrolled in my classes.

Please attach a resume to your release forms and bring it as well as the forms to the first meeting on _____ at _____.

As a fellow educator, I know that asking you to commit this much time out of your already over-busy lives is quite an imposition. You can be assured that I will derive no financial gain from conducting this project; if I do obtain any remuneration in the future, I will dedicate an honorarium to a school in need of some financial support in

order to produce a hopeful learning environment. I am looking forward to meeting with you and hope that our work together will produce something meaningful that will improve the lives of our students. Thanks once again for your participation.

Respectfully,

Ranae Beyerlein, doctoral candidate

APPENDIX III

Probing Questions as a Writing Prompt Prior to the First Meeting

- How can teachers help other teachers improve the practice of teaching and learning?
- What conditions are necessary to create hopeful learning environments for students?
- Would you say that your school is a hopeful learning environment? Why or why not?
- Which people in the school community need to be involved in improving teaching and learning and what roles would they have?
- What kinds of things are people doing to build capacity to create hopeful learning environments?
- What would it take to get your school there?

APPENDIX IV

Photovoice Ethics/Methods Instruction for Participants

Outline of topics for discussion

Why the Photovoice method?

Richness of data, unpredictability of results, not generalizable, inclusive, participatory, transformative, advocacy

Choosing the medium

Film vs. digital, preferences and practicality

Choosing the camera

Instant or delayed images

Choosing the subject

Role of power in photography

Using consent

Waiting for the right moment

Composition of the “shot”

Choosing the image

What is it that the photograph says about hopeful learning environments?

What is it that you want to say about hopeful learning environments?

Choosing your discussion points

Speak, listen and learn

APPENDIX V

Consent Forms

Informed Consent Letter

Dear Participant,

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled *Creating Hopeful Learning Environments: Collisions in Practice*, which is intended to determine how educators negotiate their educational organizations in order to create deep and powerful learning for their students.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and confidential to the maximum extent allowable under federal, state and local law. You may decide to skip any question that you do not want to answer during the interview process or withdraw from the study at any time. There are no known risks in participating in this study.

The time commitment for this study will be approximately ten to twelve hours over two months according to the following schedule:

Informational Meeting: Date, Time and Place TBA (approximately two weeks from receiving the letter)

First Photovoice discussion group: Date, Time and Place TBA (approximately two weeks later)

Second Photovoice discussion group: Date, Time and Place TBA (approximately two weeks later)

Follow up interview: Date, Time and Place TBA (approximately two weeks later)

In preparation for all of the meetings, you will need to bring some materials to the meeting, such as your journal, and at least one photograph assignment. All of the information gathered during this study will be kept confidential and stored in a locked file cabinet in my home. Due to the small number of participants, anonymity cannot be guaranteed. However, all data and results will be treated with strict confidence. Neither subject names nor school names will be identified in any written report resulting from this study.

If you have any further questions please contact Ranae Beyerlein, the doctoral candidate, or her advisor, Dr. Maenette Benham. If you should have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as subjects and the duties of the investigators, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of the study, you may contact, anonymously, if you wish, Dr. Peter Vasilenko, University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects at (517) 355-2180, fax (517) 432-4503, email: ucrihs@msu.edu or regular mail: 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Sincerely,

Ranae Beyerlein
Doctoral Candidate, Michigan State University

Dr. Maenette Benham
Advisor, Michigan State University

General Agreement: Your signature below indicates your voluntary agreement to participate in this study.

Print Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Your signature indicates your voluntary agreement to allow the researcher to audio and/or video tape the interviews.

Signature: _____

Consent for Photograph

Dear Participant,

You are being invited to participate as a photographic subject in a study entitled *Creating Hopeful Learning Environments: Collisions in Practice*, which is intended to determine how educators negotiate their educational organizations in order to create deep and powerful learning for their students.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and confidential to the maximum extent allowable under federal, state and local law. If you are interested in having a copy of the photograph, please let your researcher know and give your name and address below.

If you have any further questions please contact Ranae Beyerlein, the doctoral candidate, or her advisor, Dr. Maenette Benham. If you should have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as subjects and the duties of the investigators, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of the study, you may contact, anonymously, if you wish, Dr. Peter Vasilenko, University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects at (517) 355-2180, fax (517) 432-4503, email: ucrihs@msu.edu or regular mail: 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Sincerely,

Photographer's Name
Title, Affiliation
Address
City, State, Zip
Phone number
Email

Ranae Beyerlein
Doctoral Candidate, Michigan State University

Dr. Maenette Benham
Advisor, Michigan State University

General Agreement: Your signature below indicates your voluntary agreement to be photographed in this study and release any rights to any financial gain resulting from its publication. If any financial gain is incurred, the researcher will contribute an honorarium for you to a school needing financial resources.

Print Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone number _____

Email _____

Your signature indicates your voluntary agreement to allow the research participant to photograph you.

Signature: _____

Releasing Use of Artifacts

Dear Participant,

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled Creating Hopeful Learning Environments: Collisions in Practice, which is intended to determine how educators negotiate their educational organizations in order to create deep and powerful learning for their students.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and confidential to the maximum extent allowable under federal, state and local law.

In preparation for all of the meetings, you will need to bring some materials to the meeting, such as a journal, photographs, etc. All of the information gathered during this study will be kept confidential and stored in a locked file cabinet in my home. Due to the small number of participants, anonymity cannot be guaranteed. However, all data and results will be treated with strict confidence. Neither subject names nor school names will be identified in any written report resulting from this study.

If you have any further questions please contact Ranae Beyerlein, the doctoral candidate, or her advisor, Dr. Maenette Benham. If you should have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as subjects and the duties of the investigators, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of the study, you may contact, anonymously, if you wish, Dr. Peter Vasilenko, University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects at (517) 355-2180, fax (517) 432-4503, email: ucrihs@msu.edu or regular mail: 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Sincerely,

Ranae Beyerlein
Doctoral Candidate, Michigan State University

Dr. Maenette Benham
Advisor, Michigan State University

General Agreement: Your signature below indicates your voluntary agreement to participate in this study and donate your photographs and journal to the researcher. If you desire them to be returned to you at a later date, please give your address below.

Print Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone number _____

Email _____

Print Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Your signature indicates your voluntary agreement to allow the researcher to audio and/or video tape the interviews.

Signature: _____

APPENDIX VI

State of Michigan Graduation Requirements and Recommendations

Table A.1. Simplified Graduation Requirements and Recommendations

Content Area	State Requirements for Graduating Classes Prior to 2011	State Requirements for Graduating Class of 2011 and Beyond*	State Universities in Michigan's President's Council Admission Requirements	
			Required	Recommended
English	None	4 years	4 years	same
Mathematics	None	4 years including Algebra 2	3 years including Algebra 2	4 years
Science	None	3 years including Biology and Chemistry or Physics and one additional science	2 years biological/physical	3 years lab courses
Social Studies	1 semester of Civics and/or Government	3 years including one semester of Civics and/or Government and one semester of economics; one year of US History and Geography, and one year World History and Geography	3 years	3 years including 1 year US History & 1 year World History
Foreign Language	None	None but two years is required beginning with the class of 2016	None	3 years
Fine and Performing Arts	None	One year in Visual, Performing or Applied Arts		2 years
Computer Literacy	None	Computer class or competency demonstration	None	1 year hands-on experience
Health Education	None	One semester	None	None
Physical Education	1 year	One semester	None	None

Information taken from Grosse Pointe Public Schools 2007-2008 Program of Studies

* An alternate plan called the Personal Curriculum Plan developed by the parent(s), counselor, and Principal, may be approved by superintendent with modifications of certain requirements under certain circumstances, for example, for students with IEP's and receiving special services.

APPENDIX VII

School Schedules

Table A.2. Comparison of Schedules as Support Structure at Three Sites

	Oak Tree	Grand Bay	Curie
Normal Schedule	Period 1 7:25 – 8:25 Period 2 8:30 – 9:30 Period 3 9:35 – 10:35 Period 4 10:40 – 12:10 Lunch A,B,C = 25 minutes Period 5 12:15 – 1:15 Period 6 1:20 – 2:19	7:11 - 8:25 8:31 - 9:30 9:36 - 10:35 10:41 - 12:11 Four 30 minute lunches 12:17 - 1:16 1:22 - 2:20	7:50 – 8:52 8:57 – 9:53 9:58 – 10:59 11:04 – 12:00 Lunch A, B = 30 minutes 12:40 – 1:36 1:41 – 2:37
Special Schedule	Period 1 7:25 – 7:55 Period 2 8:00 – 8:30 Period 3 8:35 – 9:05 Period 4 9:10 – 9:40 Period 5 9:45 – 10:15 Period 6 10:20 – 10:50	NA	7:50 – 8:21 8:27 – 8:52 8:58 – 9:23 9:29 – 9:54 10:00 – 10:25 10:31 – 10:56
Alternate Schedules	PLC Schedule Dropped Period 1 Period 2 Period 3 Period 4 Period 5 Period 6	Wednesday 7:11 - 8:01 8:07 - 8:57 9:03 - 9:53 9:59 - 11:29 11:35 - 12:25 12:31 - 1:20	Flex Schedule 7:50 – 8:43 8:48 – 9:35 Flex 9:40 – 10:33 10:38 – 11:26 A, B 30 minute lunch 12:06 – 12:53 12:58 – 1:45 1:50 – 2:37
Comments	The school had one semester of student early release for teachers to meet in Professional Learning Communities (2007), but the teacher vote did not support continuing the schedule.	Wednesday is a Restructured Day so that teachers can meet. Instituted in 2007.	“Flex” schedule two days per week. Students are assigned to a teacher, but may leave and go to other teachers for help and/or club meetings.

APPENDIX VIII

Timeline of Study

Table A.3. Timeline of Study

April 25, 2006	Proposal Defense
May-September, 2006	UCHRIS Approval Process
September-December, 2006	Participant Selection Process
December, 2006-March, 2007	Data Collection
March-August, 2007	Data Analysis
September-October, 2007	Findings, Conclusions, and Implications
December 6, 2007	Defense

APPENDIX IX

Meeting Agendas

Site selection process began October, 2006-January, 2007. Participant selection occurred while site selection was occurring. See Appendix XV for online survey used to select sites. See Appendix XIX for meeting dates at each of the three sites.

First Meeting Agenda

- I. Introductions
 - A. Researcher and other colleagues
 - B. Study
 - 1. Norms, expectations, procedures
 - C. Participants
 - D. Photovoice ethics and methods
 - a. Keeping a photo journal
- II. Free-write—Vision of a hopeful learning environment
- III. Photography training
 - A. Choice of camera-digital or film
 - B. Choice of subject
- IV. Preparation for next meeting
 - A. Brainstorm topics
 - B. Discuss photo shoot assignment
 - C. Schedule meeting times
 - D. Questions

Second Meeting Agenda

- I. Housekeeping
 - A. Reintroduce
 - 1. Review norms, expectations, procedures
 - 2. Researcher, and other colleagues
 - 3. Photovoice process
 - 4. Assignment feedback and discussion
- II. Photography sharing
 - A. Individual presentations
 - B. Participant response
- III. Free write response to photo sharing

- IV. Preparation for next meeting
 - A. Brainstorm topics
 - B. Discuss photo shoot assignment
 - C. Schedule meeting times
 - D. Questions

Individual Interview Agenda

- I. Housekeeping
 - A. Reintroduce
 - 1. Review norms, expectations, procedures
 - 2. Researcher, and other colleagues
 - 3. Photovoice process
 - 4. Review assignments
- II. Photography sharing
- III. Free write response to photo sharing

APPENDIX X

Three Prompts for Choice of Photographed Subjects

Prompt 1.

In our first meeting, we discussed what a hopeful learning environment would be like, but realized that not all schools are hopeful, not all activities in schools promote learning, and not all schools are good environments for kids.

Keeping the following questions in mind as you carry your camera and photo journal through the times between when we meet, find some things to photograph that remind you of the things we talked about in regards to HLE's and questions we have about creating them. What stops us from making HLE's? What are some examples of those things that constrain us? What things discourage teachers and their students in their efforts to create HLE's?

Prompt 2.

We've talked about things that get in the way of creating HLE's. In choosing your photovoice sessions this week, consider the things that were discussed in the last session and photojournal things that remind you of an important issue in what we were talking about. What are the factors that constrain educators from creating HLE's?

Prompt 3.

In preparation for your exit interview, please think about and photograph hopeful learning environments. What kinds of things can educators do to create them? What can educators do to foster them?

APPENDIX XI

Writing Prompts

Prompt 1.

Write a journal entry, if you keep one, regarding the benefits to your professional growth resulting from interaction with colleagues. In what ways do you imagine that you have influenced the teaching practice of others?

Prompt 2.

Draw a concept map or sketch depicting relations between people that have influenced your practice as a teacher. Include mentors, teachers, supervisors, relatives, supporters, students, parents, board members, philosophers, colleagues, and any others and indicate how they have affected the things you do in your profession.

Prompt 3.

Think back to the time when you first began the practice of teaching and where you are now. Make a wish list of things that would improve teaching and learning, enabling you to be a better teacher, and enabling your students to be a better learner. Your list can include tangible items intangibles, such as relationships, time, and various forms of support.

APPENDIX XII

Discussion Prompts for Photovoice Discussion Groups

Prompt 1.

What are the components of HLE's?

Prompt 2.

What prevents us from creating HLE's?

Prompt 3.

What can educators do to increase the capacity to create HLE's?

APPENDIX XIII

Individual Interview Questions Regarding Collision Factors

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study of shared capacity building. I will be making several site visits. To prepare for each visit, I asked you to do a small task that helped generate discussion material. At each meeting, I asked you to reflect on some aspect of building capacity to create HLE's. Looking back on this process, let's review your thinking in a few areas.

1. How do you envision HLE's?
2. Where is your school setting in comparison to what you envision as the ideal environment?
3. What's getting in the way of being there?
4. What can educators do in constructing their work and time to enable moving us forward in this direction?

APPENDIX XIV

Methods Summary

Table A.4. A Summary of the Components of the Research Design

	How educators construct their work? Overall and 3	Constraints 1a, c	Theory or Explanation of Constraint Operations 1b, d	Prescribing Hope for HLE's 2a, b, c and 3
Resume	*			
Artifacts	*	*	*	
Photovoice Artifacts I	*			
Photovoice Discussion I	*			*
Photovoice Artifacts II		*	*	
Photovoice Discussion II		*	*	
Photovoice Artifacts III	*			*
Photovoice Discussion III	*			*
Writing Prompt I		*		
Writing Prompt II		*	*	
Writing Prompt III	*			*
Personal Interview	*			*

APPENDIX XV

Online Survey Instrument

INSTRUCTIONS

Once you begin this survey, you may leave at any time. If you leave, your results will be tabulated. If you desire to return to the survey at another time that is more convenient for you, you may do so, but please do not respond again to any of the questions that you already responded to. Please only complete this entire survey one time per person.

There are three parts to this survey. The first part asks for demographic information about you. The second part asks for you to identify your affiliation with a high school and then to rate it. There are 19 possible schools to rate. You may rate as many or as few as you would like. The final part asks some open-ended questions for you to respond to. Feel free to skip any or all of the questions in any of the sections.

Thank you for your cooperation and for your participation.

Creating Hopeful Learning Environments

Questions marked with an asterisk (*) are mandatory.

TERMS AND GENERAL AGREEMENT

You are being invited to participate in Phase I of a study entitled *Creating Hopeful Learning Environments: Collisions in Practice*. Your responses to this survey are intended to be used to determine which three sites of nineteen possible sites to use in the study. This is a study about how educators negotiate their educational organizations in order to create deep and powerful learning for their students.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and confidential to the maximum extent allowable under federal, state and local law. You may decide to skip any question that you do not want to answer during the survey or withdraw from the survey at any time. There are no known risks in participating in this study.

The time commitment for this study will be approximately ten to twenty minutes, depending on the number of schools to which you are responding. There are nineteen schools to rate, but you may rate as few or as many as you would like in as many of the categories as you feel are appropriate.

The survey will ask you to report any affiliations with any of the schools you elect to rate, and it will ask you some professional demographic information, none of which will be used to identify you in any way.

All of the information gathered during this study will be kept confidential and stored in a locked file cabinet in my home. This survey will be potentially taken by a large number of participants, up to five hundred, but anonymity cannot be guaranteed. However, all data and results will be treated with strict confidence. The survey will not ask your name; neither will it ask the current place of your employment. No real names of individuals or schools will be identified in any written report resulting from this study.

If you agree to participate in this study, please scroll down and click on the I agree button below.

If you have any further questions please contact Ranae Beyerlein, the doctoral candidate, or her advisor, Dr. Maenette Benham. If you should have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as subjects and the duties of the investigators, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of the study, you may contact, anonymously, if you wish, Human Research Protection Program, Peter Vasilenko, Ph.D., Director at (517) 355-2180, fax (517) 432-4503, email: irb@msu.edu or regular mail: 205C Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Sincerely,
Ranae Beyerlein
Doctoral Candidate, Michigan State University

Dr. Maenette Benham, Advisor
Michigan State University

***General Agreement:** Your checking accept below indicates your voluntary agreement to participate in this study and to allow the researcher to use your responses for the purposes outlined in this consent agreement. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

I accept these terms and voluntarily agree to participate in this study and have my responses used for the purposes outlined above.

I do not accept these terms and choose not to participate. (If you select this option, do not complete the survey)

Creating Hopeful Learning Environments

PROFESSIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

2. Please indicate your affiliation:
 - Current Galileo participant
 - Galileo member
 - Galileo board or liaison
 - Other
3. Please indicate your professional role(s) (check all that apply to past and current profession)
 - Teacher, instructor, professor
 - Administrator
 - Teacher trainer, leader
 - Paraprofessional
4. Please indicate your current level or area of employment (check best fit)
 - High school
 - Middle school
 - Elementary school
 - College, university, or other post-high school
 - Administration outside of a school building
5. Years experience in the educational field as an employee or a board member:
 - 0-5
 - 6-10
 - 11-15

- 16-20
- 21-25
- 26 or more

High School/District [Actual names of high schools and districts given in survey.
The same series of the following questions were repeated for each of nineteen high schools pre-selected on the basis of location, demographics, and financial data]

6. Your affiliation with this high school. Check any or all that apply
 - Current or former Student
 - Current or former Employee
 - Professional Affiliation (i.e. site visits, collaboration)
 - Family member of current or former student
 - Other affiliation
 - No affiliation (scroll down and click submit for next school)
7. Please indicate the extent to which groups of people or individuals at this school are engaged in the practice of improving teaching and learning:
 - Frequently
 - Often
 - Occasionally
 - Rarely
 - Not able to say (NATS)
8. To what extent are the building and/or district administration at this school support the practice of improving teaching and learning?
 - Frequently
 - Often
 - Occasionally
 - Rarely
 - Not able to say (NATS)
9. If a hopeful learning environment is one in which students and staff are optimistic about their ability to sustain a collaborative and supportive learning environment that prepares students to be successful after high school, to what extent is this school involved in building capacity to create or sustain a hopeful learning environment for its students?
 - Frequently
 - Often
 - Occasionally
 - Rarely
 - Not able to say (NATS)

APPENDIX XVI

Survey Results

Table A.5. Corrected Scores for Nineteen High Schools Considered for Participation in the Study*

High School	Corrected Score	Total Number of Respondents	Total Minus NATS**
Grand Bay West	4.00	10	1
R (Grand Bay East)	4.00	11	1
L declined to participate	3.89	14	3
E	3.73	17	4
J	3.67	10	1
D	3.60	16	5
F	3.60	15	3
G	3.50	10	2
H	3.40	11	2
C declined to participate	3.38	17	6
I declined to participate	3.33	11	1
Oak Tree High School	3.27	18	5
P declined to participate	3.25	11	1
M	3.00	11	1
O	3.00	11	1
Curie High School	2.33	14	5
B	2.33	14	3
K (no informational responses)	0.00	9	0
N (no informational responses)	0.00	11	0

* See Below for more detailed information regarding computation of corrected scores

**Informational responses means that respondents felt qualified to state an opinion in response to the survey prompt(s) for that site.

Table A.6. Number of Responses to Survey Questions with Corrected Scores*
For Practice of Improving Teaching and Learning

School	Correct Score	Affiliate	Frequent	Often	Occasion	Rare	NAT S	L	K
OTHS**	3.27	9	3	2	0	0	13	5	18
B	2.33	8	0	2	0	1	11	3	7
C***	3.38	8	3	3	0	0	11	6	21
D	3.60	8	3	0	0	0	12	3	12
E	3.73	9	3	1	0	0	13	4	15
F	3.60	6	3	2	0	0	11	5	18
G	3.50	2	1	1	0	0	8	2	7
H	3.40	2	1	1	0	0	9	2	7
I***	3.33	1	0	1	0	0	10	1	3
J	3.67	1	1	0	0	0	9	1	4
K	0.00	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	0
L***	3.89	7	3	0	0	0	11	3	12
M	3.00	2	0	1	0	0	10	1	3
N	0.00	2	0	0	0	0	11	0	0
O	3.00	2	0	1	0	0	11	1	3
P***	3.25	2	1	0	0	0	10	1	4
Curie	2.33	6	0	3	2	0	9	5	13
R	4.00	1	1	0	0	0	10	1	4
GRWHS	4.00	1	1	0	0	0	9	1	4

*Corrected Score Formula = $(L+T+AB)/(K+U+AC)$ when L = Frequently + Often; K = L + Occasionally + Rarely + Not Able to Say (NATS) or total responses to the question

**Selected Sites shown shaded.

***Selected Sites invited to participate but declined.

Table A.7. Number of Responses to Survey Questions with Corrected Scores* for Administrative Support

School	Corrected Score	Frequently	Often	Occasion	Rarely	NATS	T	U
OTHS**	3.27	2	2	1	0	13	5	16
B	2.33	0	2	1	0	10	3	8
C***	3.38	3	1	1	0	12	5	17
D	3.60	1	3	0	0	11	4	13
E	3.73	3	0	0	0	14	3	12
F	3.60	3	2	0	0	10	5	18
G	3.50	1	0	0	0	10	1	4
H	3.40	1	1	0	0	9	2	7
I***	3.33	1	0	0	0	9	1	4
J	3.67	1	0	0	0	9	1	4
K	0.00	0	0	0	0	9	0	0
L***	3.89	3	0	0	0	11	3	12
M	3.00	0	1	0	0	9	1	3
N	0.00	0	0	0	0	11	0	0
O	3.00	0	1	0	0	11	1	3
P***	3.25	0	1	0	0	10	1	3
Curie	2.33	0	1	2	0	11	3	7
R	4.00	1	0	0	0	10	1	4
GBWHS	4.00	1	0	0	0	9	1	4

Table A.8. Number of Responses to Survey Questions with Corrected Scores* For Capacity Building for HLE

School	Frequent	Often	Occasion	Rare	NATS	AB	AC	Corrected Score
OTHS**	2	1	2	0	13	5	15	3.26
B	0	1	1	1	11	3	6	2.33
C***	2	2	1	0	12	5	16	3.38
D	2	1	0	0	12	3	11	3.60
E	2	2	0	0	13	4	14	3.73
F	3	2	0	0	10	5	18	3.60
G	0	1	0	0	10	1	3	3.50
H	0	1	0	0	10	1	3	3.40
I***	0	1	0	0	9	1	3	3.33
J	0	1	0	0	9	1	3	3.67
K	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	0.00
L***	2	1	0	0	11	3	11	3.89
M	0	1	0	0	10	1	3	3.00
N	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	0.00
O	0	1	0	0	11	1	3	3.00
P***	0	2	0	0	9	2	6	3.25
Curie	0	1	2	1	10	4	8	2.33
R	1	0	0	0	11	1	4	4.00
GBWHS	1	0	0	0	9	1	4	4.00

Table A.9. School Information with Corrected Scores*

School	Corrected Score	Enrollment	2005 Per Pupil \$ Expenditure	Per Cent Economically Disadvantaged	Student/Teacher Ratio
OTHS**	3.27	1703	9325	12	20.3
B	2.33	2194	9325	30	22.9
C***	3.38	1861	9387	2	17.6
D	3.60	1942	10198	2	17.3
E	3.73	1365	11744	4	15.9
F	3.60	1408	11744	5	15.8
G	3.50	1030	14414	5	12.7
H	3.40	1190	13134	1	12.7
I***	3.33	1578	8698	14	17.5
J	3.67	1799	8587	9	18.0
K	0.00	1932	8587	7	17.9
L***	3.89	1673	9707	20	19.2
M	3.00	1419	9707	28	15.4
N	0.00	1235	9383	24	20.9
O	3.00	1792	9554	11	19.0
P***	3.25	1492	9554	23	18.1
Curie	2.33	1062	8580	23	22.2
R	4.00	1758	7721	14	24.8
GBWHS	4.00	1783	7721	17	24.6

Table A.10. MEAP Proficiency with Corrected Scores*

School	Corrected Score	Reading	Math
OTHS**	3.27	52.5	20.3
B	2.33	84.7	69.9
C***	3.38	89.1	78.0
D	3.60	92.1	81.6
E	3.73	90.3	74.2
F	3.60	88.0	62.7
G	3.50	79.0	72.0
H	3.40	96.8	89.6
I***	3.33	77.9	54.3
J	3.67	80.5	61.6
K	0.00	80.3	65.5
L***	3.89	81.8	61.8
M	3.00	65.0	45.6
N	0.00	72.0	32.4
O	3.00	84.9	61.6
P***	3.25	71.6	48.5
Curie	2.33	84.3	85.2
R	4.00	78.7	56.8
GBWHS	4.00	71.4	45.9

Table A.11. Racial Distribution with Corrected Scores*

School	Corrected Score	Race				
		White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Native American
OTHS**	3.27	93.6	3.8	1.1	1.1	0.4
B	2.33	93.7	1.2	2.1	2.6	0.3
C***	3.38	81.7	3.2	2.5	12.6	0.1
D	3.60	90.2	1.7	0.8	7.2	0.1
E	3.73	84.9	8.6	0.8	5.6	0.2
F	3.60	80.5	11.5	1.7	6.5	0.1
G	3.50	79.0	12.7	0.7	7.3	0.3
H	3.40	95.5	2.0	0.6	1.7	0.3
I***	3.33	91.1	5.1	0.7	2.0	1.0
J	3.67	96.2	2.1	0.4	1.3	0
K	0.00	94.3	2.1	0.7	0.2	0
L***	3.89	94.0	2.7	2.2	1.0	0.1
M	3.00	92.3	3.9	2.3	0.9	0.7
N	0.00	78.5	18.5	1.3	1.2	0.4
O	3.00	88	5.3	1.2	5.3	0.3
P***	3.25	87.8	6.6	0.5	4.2	0.9
Curie	2.33	60.4	36.1	2.1	1.2	0.3
R	4.00	89.9	6.4	1.5	1.3	0.9
GBWHS	4.00	90.5	5.9	2.2	1	0.3

* All data compiled from survey results and/or SchoolMatters, 2005

APPENDIX XVII

Selected Comparative Information about the Three Sites

Table A.12. 2006 Compiled Comparative District Per Pupil Financial and Related Information About the Three Sites.

	Grand Bay	Forest Shores (Oak Tree)	Curie
District Enrollment	11,957	18,133	3310
Per pupil expenditure in U.S. Dollars	7700	9300	8600
District % Economic Disadvantaged (Receiving Free or Reduced Lunch)	21	9	26
District % Receiving Special Education Services	11.7	13.6	12.2
Per Pupil Instructional Expenditure in U.S. Dollars	4417	5321	4508
Per Pupil Instructional Staff Support in U.S. Dollars	323	559	366
Per Pupil, Pupil Support in U.S. Dollars	565	813	846
Per Pupil Construction in U.S. Dollars	1534	292	0
Per Pupil General Administration in U.S. Dollars	47	56	220
Per Pupil School Administration in U.S. Dollars	450	569	556
Per Pupil Operations & Maintenance in U.S. Dollars	684	1000	1070
Per Pupil Transportation in U.S. Dollars	339	373	379
Per Pupil Foods in U.S. Dollars	214	238	277
Per Pupil Other in U.S. Dollars	683	395	358

Data compiled from SchoolMatters, 2006 (some numbers are rounded)

**Table A.13. 2006 Compiled Comparative District Financial and Related Information
About the Three Sites**

	Grand Bay	Forest Shores (Oak Tree)	Curie
Compensation as % Core Spend	87.8	92	88.8
Salary as % Core Spend	62.2	65.6	63.7
Benefits as % Core Spend	25.6	26.4	25.1
Salary/Benefit % Distribution of Compensation	70.7/29.3	71.1/28.9	71.5/28.5

Data compiled from SchoolMatters, 2006

Table A.14. 2006 Compiled Per Cent Compensation by Function at the Three Sites

	Grand Bay	Forest Shores (Oak Tree)	Curie
Instructional Expenditure	63.4	57.1	58.4
Instructional Staff Support	4.1	6.0	5.4
Pupil Support	8.4	8.7	11
Gen Admin	0.4	0.6	2.2
School Admin	6.5	6.1	7.5
Operations & Maintenance	6.1	10.7	9.0
Transportation	4.6	4.0	4.2
Foods	1.6	2.6	0
Other (support)	4.9	4.2	3.4

Data compiled from SchoolMatters, 2006

Table A.15. Ethnic Distribution at School Sites

	Grand Bay West	Oak Tree	Curie
White	90.5 %	93.6 %	60.4 %
Black	5.9 %	3.8 %	36.1 %
Hispanic	2.2 %	1.1 %	2.1 %
Asian	1.0 %	1.1 %	1.2 %
Native American	0.3 %	0.4 %	0.3 %

Data compiled from SchoolMatters, 2006

Table A.16. Number of Schools in District

	Grand Bay	Forest Shores (Oak Tree)	Curie
Elementary	10	21	4
Middle	4	4	1
High School	2	3	1
Vocational/Alternative	1	2	0

Data compiled from SchoolMatters, 2006

Table A.17. District Household Information Comparison Table

	Grand Bay	Forest Shores (Oak Tree)	Curie
Single households	9.3 %	7.3 %	9.2 %
Parents w/ HS Dip	92.5 %	91.1 %	89.4 %
Parents w/ BA	20.6 %	32.8 %	21.5 %
Median Age	35	40	37
Households w/ < \$15,000 annual income	8.1 %	5.8 %	7.7 %
\$15 K-29,999	13.7 %	11.7 %	13 %
\$30 K- 49,999	18.9 %	17.8 %	19.8 %
\$50 K – 74,999	20.9 %	20.9 %	26.8 %
\$75 K – 99,999	16.4 %	17.2 %	16.8 %
\$100 K – 150,000	16.0 %	18.5 %	13.1 %
> \$150 K	6.1 %	8.2 %	2.7 %

Data compiled from SchoolMatters, 2006

Table A.18. School Safety Environment Comparison Table for 2005

	Grand Bay West	Oak Tree	Curie	State
Total Safety Infractions per 100 students	2.64	2.58	5.18	4.4
Assaults per 100 students	0.17	0.06	1.32	1.46
Weapons per 100 students	0.06	0.18	0.00	0.13
Drugs per 100 students	0.00	0.00	0.56	0.09

Data compiled from SchoolMatters, 2006

Table A.19. Standardized Test Information for 2005 at All High Schools in Districts of Study Sites

District	Grand Bay		Forest Shores			Curie
HS	East	West*	Oak*	Maple	Hickory	Curie*
% Read Proficient	70.2	70.9	66.5	69.1	82.9	74.5
% Math Proficient	50.3	45.5	51.3	55.9	69.0	53.5
ACT Mean	21.5	20.9	20.4	22.9	22.1	20
ACT % Participation Rate	52.4	43.4	59.2	63.3	77.1	56.5
ACT Number of Students	215	169	226	324	424	130
PSAT/NMSQT Mean	138	139	146	159	155	129
PSAT/NMSQT % Participation Rate	48	30.6	20.2	26.2	33.5	57
PSAT/NMSQT Number of Students	197	119	77	134	184	131
% AP Scores ≥ 3	53.3	54.0	39.1	89.1	74.6	41.7
AP % Participation Rate	25.6	12.1	23.6	19.1	20.2	18.7
AP Number of Students	105	47	90	98	111	43
AP Number Tests Taken	197	76	179	358	268	84
Students/Teacher	24.2	24.2	20.2	20.0	21.9	23.3
Total Enrollment	1758	1783	1703	2250	2194	1062

Data compiled from SchoolMatters, 2006

* Note that participant sites are shaded.

APPENDIX XVIII

Comparative Information of Participants at Each Site

Table A.20. Participant Information at Curie High School

Participants	Content Area	Experience	Personal Information	Education/ Training	Other Professional Activities
Mrs. Queen	Math	30 years HS & college	Married, grandmother	BA, MA Galileo Leadership+ 40 hours	AP Calculus Leadership Team
Mrs. Goddess	Art	30 years K-12	Married, 3 emancipated children	BFA, MA Differentiated Instruction, etc. + 50 hours	NHS, DIA volunteer, Various Art
Mrs. Princess	Math	8 years HS	Married, two young children	BS, MS	PD with WSU professor

Table A.21. Participant Information at Grand Bay West High School

Participants	Content Area	Experience	Personal Information	Education/ Training	Other Professional Activities
Penelope	English & Foreign Language	3 years HS	Female, Single	BA, MAT	NA
Emma	English	15 years HS	Female, Single	BA, MA	Yearbook, Newspaper
Molly	English	3 years	Female, Married, no children	BA, MAT	Student Council

Table A.22. Participant Information at Oak Tree High School

Participants	Content Area	Experience	Personal Information	Education/ Training	Other Professional Activities
Susan	Science	4 years HS	Female, Married, two school-aged children	BS, MAT	NA
Veronica	Science	12 years HS	Female, Married, two young children	BS, MA, Ed. Spec. Galileo	NHS, NCA co-chair, teacher-leader
Reese	Social Studies	9 years HS	Female, Married, one small child	BA, MA	NCA committee chair, IB
X2	English	15 years K-12	Male, Divorced, two school-aged children	BA, MA	Various student organizations
Tyler	Business	1 year HS	Male, Engaged	BA, MAT	Coaching, Co-op

APPENDIX XIX

Site Visitation Dates

Table A.23. Site Visitation Dates

Sites and Visits	Curie High School	Grand Bay West High School	Oak Tree High School
Orientation & Training	December 14, 2007	January 12, 2007	January 19, 2007
Photovoice Session 1 Focus Group	January 24, 2007	February 2, 2007	February 8, 2007
Photovoice Session 2 Focus Group	February 21, 2007	February 23, 2007	March 1, 2007
Photovoice Session 3 & Exit Interview	March 7, 2007	March 3, 2007	March 14, 2007 & March 16, 2007

APPENDIX XX

Coding Information

Table A.24. Codes and Descriptive Labels

Descriptive Label	Sub	Code	Research Q's
Constraining Factors		Con/Fac	1a
	cause	CF/cau	1b
	Location	CF/loc	1c
	How	CF/how	1d
Attributes of HLE's		Att/HLE	Defining intro
students		AH/stu	
	Deep learning	AH/stu/DL	
	Responsible citizens	AH/stu/RC	
	Problem solvers	AH/stu/PS	
	Humanistic	AH/stu/HU	
	Knowledgable citizens	AH/stu/KC	
teachers		AH/tch	
	Good teaching	AH/tch/GT	
	Capacity building	AH/tch/CB	
	Collegial support	AH/tch/CS	
	Relationships	AH/tch/Rel	
	Shared Resources	AH/tch/SR	
administrators		AH/adm	
	Structural support	AH/adm/SS	
	Capacity building	AH/adm/CB	
	Teacher support	AH/adm/TS	
	Financial backing	AH/adm/FB	
community		AH/com	
	Engagement	AH/com/ENG	
	Shared Resources	AH/com/SR	
	Enhanced Capacity	AH/com/EH	
	Volunteer/Involvement	AH/com/VI	
Location		AH/loc	2b
	Evidence	AH/loc/EV	
	Indicators	AH/loc/IN	
Creating HLE's		CreHLE/	2a
	Who creates	CH/wc	2c
	Who sustains	CH/ws	2c
	How created	CH/hc	2c
	How sustained	CH/hs	2c
Fostering HLE's		FosHLE/	3
Non-hopeful			
	Students	NH/Stu	
	Teachers	NH/Tch	
	Administration	NH/adm/pol	
	Policy or decision	NH/adm/dec	
	Community	NH/com	

APPENDIX XXI

Data Analysis

Table A.25. Matrix of Findings and Sources for Data Triangulation

	Site	Source of Data
Codes for Site and Source	C = Curie OT = Oak Tree GBW = GBW All = All	FG = Focus Group I = Interview J = Journal D = Document
Major Findings		
Constraining Factors?		
• Lack of Funding	All	FG, I, J
• Student Readiness	All	FG, J
• Divestment from professional learning and building relationships	Oak Tree, Curie	FG, D, I
• Policies	All	FG, D, I
• Time	All	FG, I, J, D
Where Found		
• Testing Regime	All	FG, I
• Policy (NCLB, for example)	All	FG, D, I
• Organizations	All	FG, D
What Causes?		
• SES	All	FG, D, I
• Power Distribution	All	FG, D, I
• Lack of Funding	All	FG, D, I
How do they Prevent?		
• Lack of Quality Education, leaves students behind	All	FG, I
• Lack of Health—can't see board, etc	All	FG, I
• Different Norms	All	FG, I
• Large class inhibits personal relations	All	FG, I
Essential Elements Enhance HLE's		
• Accessing Resources	All	D, I, FG
• Authentic Relationships	All	D, I, FG, J
• Professional Learning & Technology	All-not so much at Curie	D, I, FG, J
• Teachers' Sense of Value	All	D, I, FG, J
How and Who creates?		
• Educators	All	FG, I
• Students	GBW	FG, I, J
• Administration	All	FG, I, J
• Community	All	FG, H, I
Fostering Them?		
• Humanistic policies	All	FG, I
• Respect time	All	FG, J, H, I

APPENDIX XXII

Sample Coding with Codes Shaded

Site: Oak Tree, February 8, 2007, lines 369–413, page 9

V I think the kids can just key in and you don't know

R OK

V You don't know who's keying in for a free lunch and who's keying in for their paid account. CH/HS

T That's a good idea.

R Yeah but it will take a while for that to catch on and get around that that's the way it is. I notice that everybody got up now and got their refreshment snacks.

Laughter

V I really like the circle picture. I had a study group for my AP class the night before finals at my house and there were about 15 or 16 kids in the class at the time and there were about 8 there for the study group. And I was in the kitchen setting up dinner and I hear them introducing themselves to each other. And I'm like, I come out of the kitchen and I'm like what? My most hopeful learning community, my little tiny AP class and you don't know each other's names? CH/HS

S Yeah

V And they're like, no. They sit like here and here, [motions to where they sit, which is in close proximity] I'm like: it was shocking to me in that where I thought I had created the best hopeful learning community in that small class, they didn't even know each other. And they said, no, we don't get up from our tables and talk to anyone. We stay at our table and talk to the same four people. And so that for me was very shocking, and yeah, it made me sad. Something I just never realized. AH/loc/ev

S That was my thing. With the whole eating thing. I don't know. I mean I . Every time I look like at this picture right here: Mr. [students' names], I've have both of those kids and they do hang with the popular kids. I don't know how to overcome that. I think that there will always be cliques. How we overcome cliques, I'm not sure. There were cliques when I was in HS; there's cliques now. AH/Stu/ Hu

Although you would like all the kids to get along, and you would like them all to interact, I don't know how you facilitate that. Because there will always, I had a kid last semester, who, I had to go to his counselor because his body odor was so bad that, I mean, I was at my desk and I could smell him. And I mean the kids, of course, they're Kids: they're gonna say things and there's only so much that you can field as a teacher. And the counselor called home but it was ineffective. Mom was not responsive to it and the behavior didn't change so how do you change that? I mean that's not a kid that's gonna be able to hang with those kids. NH/stu

X2 I'm just curious and I'm just gonna toss something out there. Do you think that there's cliques among the staff? CH/wc

S Oh, yeah. (laughter in background) Absolutely.

X2 Do you think that that impacts the way the students have cliques here? Because if they're seeing it modeled,

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