Bureaucratic Structures in Urban High Schools

by

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Bureaucratic Structures in Urban High Schools

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ABSTRACT

With few exceptions, public secondary schools in urban areas have consistently exhibited low performance for decades. Many reporters and researchers have characterized the chronic poor performance of urban secondary schools as a national crisis, which, if left unmitigated, will have catastrophic consequences for America’s social and economic systems. This research project sought to address the pervasiveness of failed urban school reform efforts; it concentrated on the organizational structures that surround inner-city high schools. Within a large district in Southern California, this mixed methods study examined six purposefully selected urban high schools with varying levels of student achievement, analyzing how principals and teachers in these schools perceived and managed site as well as district level bureaucracies. Ultimately, the goal of this study was to discern whether or not bureaucracies vary in high achieving versus low achieving urban high schools, as well as to identify specific examples of enabling or hindering organizational structures.
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CHAPTER 1—INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2011, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan reported that more than 80,000 of the nation’s 100,000 (82%) public schools could be labeled as failing under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation (Dillon, 2011). While these figures, as well as NCLB’s definition of school failure, were subsequently disputed by researchers and reduced to 48%, the idea of public school failure still plagues America’s educational system (McNeil, 2011).

Whether researchers refer to struggling schools as “crummy poor-kid schools” (Chenoweth, 2010, p. 2), “stereotypical urban high schools” (Wagner, 2008, p. 48), or “dropout factories” (Balfanz & Legters, 2004), they persist, serve children, and are often characterized by chronic failure (Flessa, 2009). Stuit (2010) reported that these low-performing schools are typically found in urban areas, have high percentage of poor and minority students, and are likely to receive federal Title I funding. Furthermore, efforts to actualize sustained, replicable improvement for urban schools have been typified by failure, with few exceptions (Anyon, 1995; Hill & Celio, 1998; Katz, 1975; Loveless, 2010; Neild & Balfanz, 2006; Stuit, 2010; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

Some researchers have explored the reasons why efforts to reform urban schools typically fail. Anyon (1995) claimed that improvement efforts may have failed at secondary schools in a large city in New Jersey because of a “culture of resignation,” wherein most faculty members simply did not believe that their students could achieve. Similarly, Loveless (2010) speculated that stagnant achievement and resistance to improvement plans in urban schools may be “part of the institutional DNA … handed down from decade to decade” (p. 25). Manwaring (2010) asserted that concurrent,
fragmented, and even competing reform attempts may be the problem with urban school improvement plans. Manwaring’s case study revealed how one urban school, Markham Middle School in the Watts neighborhood of southeastern Los Angeles, was the recipient of overlapping reforms and over $3 million dollars in federal improvement funds for over a decade, yet still did not show any measureable improvement.

In California, low-performing secondary schools persist in urban areas. In 2006, a study from Harvard University and the University of California, Los Angeles, reported that California’s largest urban district, Los Angeles Unified School District, had only a 48% graduation rate (Landsberg, 2006). In 2009-2010, the California Department of Education (CDE) reported that within the second largest district in the state, San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD), only eight of 32 middle schools and ten of 45 high schools met their adequate yearly progress (AYP) targets as stipulated in NCLB. Over 70% of secondary public schools in San Diego are categorized as being in some level of program improvement (CDE, 2010). In California, test scores reviewed from 1989 to 2009 found “less than one out of seventy” low-performing schools became high-performing schools in a two-decade period (Loveless, 2010). Though ample research exists on effective schools as well as “turnaround” schools in urban areas, chronically low performing schools are still prevalent (Perez & Socias, 2008).

Neild and Balfanz (2006) noted that the reason why researchers and reformers have failed to adequately address and correct urban school failure was because they “have often lacked a deep understanding of the magnitude of the challenge associated with high-poverty neighborhood schools” (p. 5). Likewise, Greene and Anyon (2010) suggested that urban secondary school improvement requires more extensive measures
than simply altering the pedagogy or the curricula; they advocated that “research on the achievement of low-income students must begin to more explicitly acknowledge the power of socioeconomic status (SES) to trump education policy and the efforts of teachers and administrators in urban schools and classrooms” (p. 224). Thus, they and other researchers have argued that a more systemic examination is needed to determine at the causes of chronic low-performance in urban schools.

Considering prevalence of low-performing schools in urban areas and the scarcity of true turnarounds, future research should focus on why some schools are not achieving. In critiquing school improvement plans, Murphy (2010) reported, “Perhaps none is more disheartening than the reality that most school turnaround efforts jump from the problem situation (i.e., low and inequitably distributed achievement results) to solution strategies (e.g., choice or reconstitution) with little diagnosis of the problem” (p. 164-165; emphasis added). In addition to examining student achievement data, researchers must conduct in-depth analyses of the internal and external systems that may be hindering improvement. Perhaps with an extensive approach to identifying and diagnosing systemic causes of low performance, educational leaders could develop viable school improvement plans that have a lasting impact.

**Problem Statement**

Where sustained academic achievement in urban areas has been reported, those schools most often serve elementary students (Chenoweth, 2010; Duke & Jacobson, 2011; National Center for Urban School Transformation [NCUST], 2012). Thus, there is a need to continue research into attributed causes of the persistent low-performance of urban high schools, which are “often characterized by chronic student absenteeism, high
dropout rates, widespread course failure and low academic achievement” (Nield & Balfanz, 2006, p. 3).

With few exceptions, public secondary schools in urban areas have exhibited low-performance for decades. Many reporters and researchers have characterized this chronic low-performance of urban secondary schools as a national crisis, which, if left unmitigated, will have catastrophic consequences (Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967; Gardner, 1983; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003; Thornburgh, 2006; Tyack, 1974; Wise, 2008). Unfortunately, for all of the research conducted on the state of urban schools, few reforms have had a significant, lasting impact. Blankenstein and Noguera (2012) cited that many urban school improvement plans do not begin “with an accurate diagnosis of the problem” (emphasis added). For Kozol (1991), the diagnosis of urban schools involved describing the horrific conditions in which they existed: “where filth and despair were worse than anything I’d seen” (p. 5). For Greene and Anyon (2010), the diagnosis included analyses of systemic level issues, the “economic and social effects of poverty” (p. 225). For Chubb and Moe (1990), the diagnosis included analyzing institutionalized structures in which urban schools exist, such as politics and bureaucracy; they explored, “the issue of bureaucracy versus autonomy” (p. 35) as it pertained to urban schools.

Similarly, this research project sought to address the pervasive issue of failed urban school reform efforts—an inadequate diagnosis of the complex problems facing urban secondary schools. Like Chubb and Moe (1990), this research study concentrated on the institutionalized structures that surround inner-city schools, particularly the bureaucracy of urban high schools. However, this research differed from Chubb and Moe (1990), who wrote, “A world of autonomous schools would be a world without
educational bureaucrats” (p. 46) and advocated for an “educational market system” (p. 35). Instead, this study began with the premise forwarded by Hoy and Sweetland (2001) that “schools are bureaucracies” (p. 296) and their bureaucratic structures could be measured on a continuum, “from enabling at one extreme to hindering at the other” (p. 305).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to compare urban high schools with varying student achievement levels and analyze how principals and teachers in these schools perceived and managed site and district level bureaucratic structures. Ultimately, the goal of this study was to discern whether or not bureaucracy, or perceptions of bureaucracy, varied in high-achieving versus low-achieving urban high schools.

**Research Questions**

The primary research question of this study was: How do the bureaucratic structures in urban high schools vary relative to student achievement?

The secondary research questions involved the urban high school principals’ and teachers’ perceptions of bureaucracy as well as the management of site and district level bureaucratic structures. The secondary questions were:

- How do urban high school principals’ and teachers’ perceptions of bureaucratic structures vary relative to schools’ student achievement levels?
- How do urban high school principals’ and teachers’ approaches to managing site level bureaucracy vary relative to student achievement levels?
- How do urban high school principals’ and teachers’ approaches to managing district level bureaucracy vary relative to student achievement levels?
Methodology

In order to examine and compare bureaucratic structures within urban high schools, this study used a mixed methods research methodology. A 12-item survey instrument, the Enabling School Structure (ESS) from developed by Hoy and Sweetland (2001), was administered to 169 teachers from six purposefully selected high schools. The results of ESS form measured teachers’ perceptions of the bureaucracy at their sites and ranked these schools on a continuum from enabling to hindering (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001, p. 309). To complement the survey results, individual interviews with the principal and teacher focus group sessions were conducted at three of the six selected schools. The qualitative data was used to identify specific examples of the enabling or hindering aspects of the schools’ bureaucratic structures. Creswell (2007) indicated that combining quantitative and qualitative investigatory methods was useful to provide “a comprehensive analysis of the research problem” (p. 14).

The six urban high schools purposefully selected for this sample were all located in and serves students from a large urban school district in Southern California. In an effort to present varying administrative structures and organizational designs, the sample high schools differed in size, status (e.g. charter or traditional), and achievement level. Furthermore, the schools selected had student populations that reflect the prevailing characteristics of urban areas throughout the United States (Flessa, 2009); these schools served students from the following demographics: at least 65% of the students were identified as economically disadvantaged and 70% of the students represented the diverse cultures (including students of African or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Asian, or Native American ancestry).
The data collected for this mixed methods study came from three sources: (a) the 12-item ESS survey about bureaucracy given to the teachers at each school (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001), (b) semi-structured interviews with each principal, and (c) focus groups from each school that included at least four teachers responding to semi-structured questions about bureaucracy and achievement. Initially, the quantitative results of the ESS form were calculated to determine where each school’s bureaucracy ranked on the continuum, from enabling to hindering. Then, the qualitative data from the principal interviews and teacher focus group sessions was analyzed to discern specific examples of the bureaucratic structures within the selected schools. Finally, the quantitative and qualitative data was analyzed together using the concurrent triangulation approach (Creswell, 2007, p. 213) to identify major themes related to bureaucracy, such as procedures and structures, communication, and school mission.

**Limitations**

The study was limited by the sample group of urban high schools and principals. The selected schools were confined to an urban area of California. This particular geographic location had specific demographics that may not be present in all urban areas—particularly the high number of students whose primary language is not English. Additionally, dynamics of Southern California, wherein much of the economic base revolves around tourism, are significantly different from some Midwest or Northeastern metropolitan areas that have industrial and manufacturing economic foundations.

Furthermore, the generalizability of a mixed methods study is typically considered a limitation due to its incorporation of qualitative methods (Creswell, 2007, p. 190). Thus, the findings of this research, while significant to the participating schools,
districts, and respective faculties, may not be applicable to other schools and districts. Nonetheless, the goal of this research, regardless of the limitations, was to contribute to the knowledge base of the inner-workings of urban high schools, specifically how teachers and principals interact with the site-based and district-based bureaucracies.

**Significance of the Research**

Katz (1975) traced the history of urban school bureaucracies back to Boston, in the mid-nineteenth century, wherein officials responsible for over 200 schools “saw such innovations as the superintendency, the elaboration of hierarchy, and specialization as necessary ways of meeting their increasingly complex tasks” (p. 68). Since the 1850s, educational bureaucracy has become associated with sabotaging innovations (Katz, 1975), “mischief and red tape” (Berliner & Biddle, 1995, p. 257), and “alienated and apathetic employees” (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001). Sizer (2004) highlighted the significance of a site administrator’s ability to manage bureaucracy: “One jokes about … adroit principals who have made a fine art of circumventing bureaucratic ukases” (p. 209). Thus, this research explored the role of bureaucracy in urban schools, specifically if principals and teachers perceived it as hindering or enabling (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001).

Crowson (2011) concluded, “We are … far from an adequate understanding of just how to bring urban school district organizations into a turn-around mode of enhanced effectiveness” (p. 476); and thus, he advocated for the further examination of William Boyd’s study of urban organizational dynamics. This study followed Crowson’s recommendations, seeking to add to the extant literature on the organizational structure of inner-city high schools and to present ideas that could lead to sustainable improvement efforts for the millions of youth attending urban schools.
Definitions

Urban: In this study, “urban” denoted a metropolitan area with concentrated population over 250,000 inhabitants (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2011). Thus, an urban environment was specifically defined as an area “of dense population characterized by family poverty, racial and linguistic diversity, and close proximity, but unequal access to important economic and cultural resources” (Flessa, 2009, p. 338). This description of urban provided a thorough basis to discuss the conditions in which some school exist as well as an adequate criteria to limit the types of high schools included in this study.

Urban High School: Within this study, an urban high school was defined as a publicly-funded campus serving students in grades nine through twelve (graduation), wherein at least 65% of the student population qualified for the federal government’s National School Lunch Program and 70% of the students are categorized as students of color (primarily Hispanic or Latino, African or African American, Asian, or Native American) or English learners. The administrative structures of these public high schools varied in that they were organized in small learning communities, chartered by the local governing school board, or otherwise configured.

Student Achievement: This study used California’s academic performance index (API) as the quantified measurement of student achievement. Specifically, the “API is a single number, ranging from a low of 200 to a high of 1000, which reflects a school’s … performance level, based on the results of statewide testing” (CDE, 2011).

Enabling School Structure: Hoy and Sweetland (2001) developed the ESS, a 12-item, Likert scale survey instrument, to measure schools’ bureaucratic structures. The
results of the ESS were used to identify a school’s bureaucracy as either enabling or hindering.
CHAPTER 2—REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Many contemporary researchers have paid particularly close attention to schools deemed as effective (Barth et al., 1999; Carter, 2000; Chenoweth, 2010; Daggett & McNulty, 2005; Edmonds, 1979; Fullan, 2005; Izumi, Coburn, & Cox, 2002; Johnson & Asera, 1999; Kannapel & Clements, 2005; Lightfoot, 1981; McGee, 2003; Reeves, 2000, 2003; Stevens, Sporte, Stoelinga & Bolz, 2008). However, there is little in-depth research about specifically low-performing schools; in reference to the effective schools research conducted prior to NCLB, Brady (2003) posited, “Much is known about how effective schools work, but it is far less clear how to move an ineffective school from failure to success” (p. vii). Reinforcing Brady’s position, Mintrop and Trujillo (2005) remarked, “Systematic evaluations of low-performing schools programs are rare, and of corrective action initiatives even more so” (p. 3). More recently, Orr, Berg, Shore, and Meier (2008) commented on the paucity of thorough research on struggling schools: “No research, other than case studies of individual success stories, could be found on persistently low-performing schools” (p. 673). Wagner (2008) promptly admitted why he and his research team did not attempt to explore the plight of urban schools: “First, we will not visit the stereotypical urban high schools—which we know have been failing to educate students for years” (p. 48). Perhaps many researchers agree with Wagner that the failure of urban secondary schools is inevitable and not worthy of study, thus there is scarcity of a significant, thorough research on the topic.

Relatedly, there is plenty of research on bureaucracy, its theoretical framework, and its effect on schools (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Boyd, 1991; Chance, 2009; Chubb &
Moe, 1990; Grant, 1988; Hill & Celio, 1998; Hoy & Sweetland, 2001; Katz, 1975; Lane, 1993; Lennon, 2009; McVey, 2009; Ogawa, Crowson, & Goldring, 1999; Rosenholtz, 1985; Sedlak, Wheeler, Pullin, & Cusick, 1986; Shanker, 1990; Shedd & Bacharach, 1991; Sizer, 2004; Tyack, 1974; Tyack & Cuban, 1995); however, contemporary research on the bureaucratic structures of urban schools is limited (Crowson, 2011). Many urban and suburban secondary schools in the United States epitomize traditional bureaucratic models in that they are prime examples of labor specialization, rules and regulations, career orientation, impersonal climate, and hierarchal authority (Chance, 2009; Sizer, 2004; M. Weber, 1947). Berliner and Biddle (1995) confirmed “Schools in large districts are often controlled by large bureaucracies, and this causes many problems” (p. 252). Similar to the overall research on struggling schools, there is little analysis on how bureaucratic structures specifically affect urban student achievement or how principals and teachers perceive and manage bureaucracy.

This review of related literature begins with a brief chronicle of the problematic development of urban areas and their corresponding school systems (Anyon, 1997; Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967; Fusfeld & Bates, 1984; Grant, 1988; Kozol, 1991; Tyack, 1974), then proceeds with descriptions of some of the detrimental characteristics of schools within those urban areas (Balfanz, 2009; Check, 2002; Clark, 1965; Flessa, 2009; Fulks, 1969; Kozol, 1991; Neild & Balfanz, 2006; Sitkoff, 1993). The review continues with an examination of efforts to identify and address the problems of schools in urban areas, beginning with The Coleman Report (Coleman et al., 1966), then to the Effective Schools Movement and related studies (Barth et al., 1999; Carter, 2000; Chenoweth, 2009; Daggett & McNulty, 2005; Edmonds,

This review of related literature and subsequent research project is an effort to address the persistent “culture of failure” that surrounds America’s urban secondary schools (Sitkoff, 1993). This failure is not simply characterized by urban secondary students performing poorly on standardized tests, but also by disproportionately high rates of school absenteeism, drop outs, drug use, violence, prostitution, single-parent households, and unemployment (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Kozol, 1991; Nield & Balfanz, 2006). Today, these chronically failing educational
institutions serve a student population that is overwhelming African-American, Latino, and poor (Balfanz, 2009; Flessa, 2009). By examining the bureaucratic structures that exist on urban secondary campuses and discerning how the principals of those schools perceive and subsequently manage that bureaucracy may lead to a better understanding of the “institutional DNA” of chronically low-performing schools (Loveless, 2010).

**Development of Urban Areas**

The development of inner-city areas in the United States that conform to the definition of urban used in this study can be traced back to immediately before and after World War II. Just prior to World War II, cities such as Newark, St. Louis, and Los Angeles had “industries that had enticed black people here with promises of jobs” (Kozol, 1991, p. 22). Manufacturing industries such as coal refining and steel production had plants in city centers and thus attracted workers from more rural areas. During World War II, these same factory spaces were utilized for military manufacturing and required even more workers (Kozol, 1991). By the 1950s, Americans “stepped up their mobility and moved in increasing numbers from farms and small towns to urban centers” (Berliner & Biddle, 1995, p. 231); by the mid-1950s, almost 100,000 African-Americans lived in Newark (Anyon, 1997). The major difference between this urban migration and those of the past was that “after the war, large numbers of more visible minority, blacks, flooded into those cities” (Berliner & Biddle, 1995, p.231). This demographic shift continued through the 1960s and eventually led to the majority of Blacks in America living in densely populated urban areas (Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967).

This migration of African Americans into city centers, combined with the rise in automobile production, coincided with the dismantling of public systems of
transportation in favor of highways and freeways; concurrently, affluent Americans, mostly White, left the cities and commuted to their jobs from the now sprawling suburban areas (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). By the economic recessions of 1970s and 1980s, virtually all that remained in America’s metropolitan areas were unemployed, poor African American families (Fusfeld & Bates, 1984).

The configuration of today’s urban ghettos have many of the same features of their 1980s predecessors—“most residents of large cities are African American or Latino” (Anyon, 1997, p. 4). The National Center of Children in Poverty reported that 42% of all children residing in urban areas (approximately 24 million) live in low-income families (Addy & Wight, 2012). Furthermore, many reports have indicated that urban areas consistently experience disproportionately high rates of unemployment, single parent households, violence, and drug use, coupled with minimal access to adequate health care and other social services (Anyon, 1997; Flessa, 2009; Neild & Balfanz, 2006). Clark (1965) termed the phenomenon resulting from perennial hazardous conditions of urban areas as “the pathology of the ghetto.” This “chronic, self-perpetuating pathology” provides the unique context from which to further analyze urban schools and their bureaucratic structures (Anyon, 1997; Clark, 1965; Flessa, 2009).

**Urban Schools**

The shifting demographics of American cities in the 1940s to 1980s corresponded with significant changes in urban schools. Anyon (1997) provided a poignant example of the drastic demographic change at high school in Newark, New Jersey: “Weequahic High School, the formerly all-white college-preparatory school that had been predominantly
Jewish, had 19% black enrollment in 1961, 70% in 1966, and 82% in 1968.” (p. 110).

Grant (1988) chronicled a similar account in an urban area of Pennsylvania:

The neighborhood surrounding the school had also changed as middle-class whites moved out and blacks and less affluent ethnic whites bought substantial homes at bargain prices. By 1972 white enrollment has declined by three hundred fifty students and real estate prices in the Hamilton district fell by half. (p. 46)

Some historians have termed the exiting of White students from urban schools with increasing enrollments of African American and other racial groups as “resegregation,” referencing the legally segregated schools of the pre-Civil Rights era South (Anyon, 1997; Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967; Check, 2002; Clark, 1965; Fulks, 1969; Sitkoff, 1993). Larner (1966) described the conditions of the racially segregated schools in the cities: “Lower class Negro kids find themselves isolated in schools which are understaffed, underequipped, overcrowded, demoralized, and conspicuously lacking in the mixture of cultural backgrounds which can make life in New York such an educational experience” (p. 9). Racially isolated schools continue to pervade the urban centers as “nearly three-fourths of Latino and African American students attend high schools where most students are minority” (Balfanz, 2009).

Researchers have documented the problematic conditions within these racially isolated urban schools. Kozol (1991) described the urban schools he visited in the late 1980s and early 1990s as “large, extraordinarily unhappy places. … Their doors were guarded. Police sometimes patrolled the halls. The windows of the schools were often covered with steel grates” (p. 5). Anyon (1997) reinforced the inferior physical features of schools in urban areas as she noted, “Old school buildings, many dating for the
nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, have not been well maintained” (p. 7). Flessa (2009) echoed the depictions of decaying inner-city campuses, describing “school buildings and materials that reflect generations of disinvestment in urban public infrastructure” (p. 336).

In addition to decrepit buildings, researchers have also noted that urban campuses are often plagued with inferior teachers that “have little understanding and appreciation of these poverty-stricken children—and even less empathy for them” (Fulks, 1969). Furthermore, Clark (1965) reported, “Schools in deprived [urban] communities have a disproportionately high number of substitute and unlicensed teachers” (p. 138). Sitkoff (1993) succinctly summarized the lasting effects of the deleterious circumstances of urban schools:

The negative impact of cutbacks in compensatory programs, unqualified or uncaring teachers, schools plagued by drugs, violence, and low expectations, … and the typically inadequate resources of schools in less affluent neighborhoods perpetuates an interlocking cycle of poor education leading to poor or no jobs, which leads to living in poor areas, which means an inferior education for one’s children. (p. 224)

Sitkoff’s perpetual “interlocking cycle of poor education,” combined with Clark’s ghetto pathology provide the framework for the following analysis of urban school reform efforts as well as the examination of bureaucratic structures within and around inner-city campuses.
The Coleman Report and the Effective Schools Movement

Since the 1960s, attempts have been made to identify and address the problems faced by urban schools. In the landmark, quantitative study, *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, Coleman et al. (1966) surveyed more than 645,000 students as well as teachers, principals, and superintendents from over 4,000 schools. Perhaps the most controversial, yet still relevant, finding from this massive dataset was that most students of color (who, for the most part, were also poor students) began school with educational deficiencies and continued “to exhibit this disadvantage throughout the twelve grades of school” (Coleman et al., 1966, p. 297). Moreover, Coleman et al. found that in most cases schools appeared “unable to exert independent influences to make achievement levels less dependent on a child’s background” (p. 297). Over 40 years later, others researchers continued find that low-performing schools were typically be found in urban areas and have high concentrations of low-income students and students of color (Balfanz, 2009; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2009; Loveless, 2010; Stuit, 2010).

Coleman’s findings prompted researchers to search for data regarding effective schools, specifically effective schools that served students who fall into the categories typically associated with failure--minority, poor, urban. Edmonds (1979), in an article duly titled, “Effective Schools for the Urban Poor,” cited numerous studies wherein researchers had discovered schools that “bring the children of the poor to those minimal masteries of basic schools skills that now describe minimal successful pupil performance for the children of the middle class.” Notably, Edmonds referred to G. Weber’s (1971) study, *Inner-City Children Can be Taught to Read: Four Successful Schools*, in which G. Weber described attributes of four effective elementary sites, including “strong
leadership, high expectations, good atmosphere, … individualization, and careful evaluation of student progress” (p. 26). Edmonds’s work led to the Effective School Movement, wherein numerous researchers sought to locate and examine schools that successfully serve students, primarily in poor, urban areas.

Edmonds continued to search for effective and improving schools; in 1982, he published “Programs of School Improvement: An Overview” in which he reviewed district, state, and university improvement practices in an effort to discern some common characteristics. He studied local school improvement plans from major cities like New York City, Milwaukee, Chicago, New Haven, and St. Louis; state plans from Missouri, Ohio, Connecticut, and New Jersey. Edmonds (1982) identified five traits of effective schools:

1. The principal’s leadership and attention to the quality of instruction;
2. a pervasive and broadly understood instructional focus;
3. an orderly, safe climate conducive to teaching and learning;
4. teacher behaviors that convey the expectation that all students are expected to obtain at least minimum mastery; and
5. the use of measures of pupil achievement as the basis of program evaluation.

(p. 4)

Regarding the fifth characteristic, Edmonds (1982) emphasized that all school programs should “use increased achievement of low-income children as the measure of gain” (p. 10), denoting the enduring achievement struggles of children living in poverty.

Lightfoot (1981) also researched successful and improving schools. Her case study of George Washington Carver Comprehensive High School, an all-Black high
school south of downtown Atlanta, chronicled the transformation of a school from “an ugly reminder of the deterioration, chaos, and unrest that plagues many big city schools” (p. 18) to a campus of “order and decorum … bathrooms are free of graffiti, hallways are swept and clean, and students express pride in their restored campus” (p. 22). Lightfoot’s research concurred with Edmonds (1979) findings in that focused on Dr. Norris Hogans, the principal and his leadership—“the catalyst for change” (p. 20). Her four-year study concluded with Dr. Hogans continued efforts to improve instruction and exhort involvement from the surrounding business and religious community.

Barth et al. (1999) published a seminal work of the Effective Schools Movement, titled *Dispelling the Myth: High Poverty School Exceeding Expectations*. The researchers created a directory of 366 elementary and secondary schools from urban and rural areas that effectively served predominantly poor students. The survey data collected by Barth et al. (1999) revealed six traits shared by most of the schools. Most of the schools tended to:

- Use state standards extensively to design curriculum and instruction, assess student work, and evaluate teachers.
- Increase instructional time in reading and math in order to help students meet standards.
- Devote a larger proportion of funds to support professional development focused on changing instructional practice.
- Implement comprehensive systems to monitor individual student progress and provide extra support to students as soon as it’s needed.
- Focus their efforts to involved parents on helping students meet standards.
• Have state or district accountability systems in place that have real consequences for adults in the schools. (pp. 2-3)

Though most of the schools in the study by Barth et al. (1999) enrolled students from low-income families, the racial demographics did not match those typically found in urban areas: “The average school [surveyed] had a student enrollment in excess of 60% white; 17% African American; 13% Latino; 2% Asian; and 4% Native American” (p. 12). While Barth et al. (1999) furthered the effective schools research base, their findings were not directly applicable to modern-day urban schools.

Extending upon the study of effective schools, Johnson and Asera (1999) conducted case study research on nine urban elementary schools that, despite existing in low-income neighborhoods, successfully served poor students of color. None of nine of the elementary schools had selective admission policies, and the majority of students in each school qualified for free or reduced-price lunch (Johnson & Asera, 1999, p. vii). Achievement data from mathematics and reading assessments were used to determine if students were performing higher than state averages; in fact, the researchers reported that had this study been conducted five years earlier, “none of the nine schools would have been considered high performing” (Johnson & Asera, 1999, p. 9).

Similar to Edmonds (1982) and Barth et al. (1999), Johnson and Asera (1999) found eleven specific strategies employed by the elementary schools to sustain achievement:

• School leaders identified and pursued an important, visible, yet attainable first goal.
• School leaders redirected time and energy that was being spent on conflicts between adults in the school toward service to children.

• Educators fostered in students a sense of responsibility for appropriate behavior and they created an environment in which students were likely to behave well.

• School leaders created a collective sense of responsibility for school improvement.

• The quantity and quality of time spent on instructional leadership activities increased.

• Educators aligned instruction to the standards and assessments required by the state and school district.

• School leaders got the resources and training that teachers perceived they needed to get their students to achieve at high levels.

• School leaders created opportunities for teachers to work, plan, and learn together around instructional issues.

• Educators made efforts to win the confidence and respect of parents, primarily by improving the achievement of students.

• School leaders created additional time for instruction.

• Educators persisted through difficulties, setbacks, and failures. (pp. vii-ix)

Johnson and Asera’s eleven findings were consistent with Edmond’s traits of effective schools; both studies identified the significance of the educational leader in school improvement, the importance of teachers’ expectations and instruction, and the relevance of an environment conducive to teaching and learning.
Reeves (2000) reviewed four years of test data from hundreds of schools in Milwaukee, Wisconsin to find some that met his “90/90/90” criteria—90 percent low-income, 90 percent minority, 90 percent met or exceeded proficiency levels on standardized tests (p. 186). Though Reeves (2000) acknowledged that no “single instructional intervention can be said to ‘cause’ a particular achievement result” (p. 185), he, much like Edmonds and other Effective Schools researchers, recognized five common characteristics of the 90/90/90 schools: “(1) A focus on academic achievement, (2) Clear curricular choices, (3) Frequent assessment of student progress and multiple opportunities for improvement, (4) An emphasis on nonfiction writing, and (5) Collaborative scoring of school work [numerals added]” (Reeves, 2000, p. 187). Reeves (2000) concluded his study with references to similar research conducted in the urban areas of Indianapolis, Indiana; St. Louis, Missouri; and Los Angeles, California, citing “teachers and leaders … are more influential over student achievement than the intractable variable of poverty, culture, and language” (p. 204).

In the same Effective Schools research tradition, Carter (2000) revealed 21 campuses he termed as “No Excuses schools.” Not all of the schools Carter (2000) profiled were located in urban areas or even public schools; however, in all cases “three-quarters or more of their students qualify for the federal lunch program” (p. 7). As with other Effective Schools studies, Carter (2000) listed seven common traits he found in his No Excuses schools:

1. Principals must be free.
2. Principal use measurable goals to establish a culture of achievement.
3. Master teachers bring out the best in a faculty.
4. Rigorous and regular testing leads continuous student achievement.

5. Achievement is the key to discipline.

6. Principals work actively with parents to make home a center of learning.

7. Effort creates ability. (pp. 8-11)

Similar to previous studies, Carter research proffered that the work of educators could prevail over the problematic factors of poverty.

Focusing specifically on secondary education improvement efforts, Daggett and McNulty (2005) analyzed 30 successful high schools identified by “Bringing Best Practices to Scale” initiative. The researchers found the high schools had undergone a three-step process to initiate and sustain reform plans:

1. Convincing educators, parents, and community members as to why the school needs to change.

2. Using good data to determine exactly what needs to change.

3. Determining how to change the school once people embrace the why and the what.

The schools profiled by Daggett and McNulty were not urban, or even diverse. For example, Kennesaw Mountain High School in Georgia was located in a suburban area with a population over 50% White; similarly, Merrimack High School in New Hampshire was 96% White, located in a rural area (NCES, 2011). Though Daggett and McNulty’s analysis followed the Effective Schools format, it did not highlight schools in urban or poor areas, such as the research done by Edmonds (1979), Lightfoot (1981), Johnson and Asera (1999), and Reeves (2000).
More recently, Chenoweth (2009) conducted site visits at six schools that were making great strides with students of color. Among other attributes, Chenoweth (2009) reported that these high achieving schools “ruthlessly organize themselves around one thing: helping students learn a great deal” (p. 39). She concentrated on teacher and staff member collaboration as strategy to improve instructional practices as well as campus climate: “If the school has a rule, every grownup in the school (and that includes nonteaching staff) enforces it because everyone has a stake in providing a safe, respectful, and comfortable environment in which students can learn” (p. 42). Like Edmonds (1982) and Johnson and Asera (1999), Chenoweth found that the school environment, established and supported by adults, was a significant factor in the effective campuses she visited. The idea of the school environment as a common characteristic of the effective schools research led to an examination of how schools can be structured for success, or failure.

**Turnaround Efforts and Other Reforms**

Since the passage of the NCLB legislation in 2001, many researchers have focused on *turnaround* efforts—attempts to rapidly transform campuses failing to meet stringent AYP requirements into schools of academic achievement. Mintrop and Trujillo (2005) outlined district and state-induced corrective action protocols taken against schools that failed to meet AYP targets. Gathering data from case studies, reports, web sites and interviews in the states of Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, California, Florida, Texas, and New York, Mintrop and Trujillo (2005) reviewed the following school turnaround strategies: reconstitution, takeover by educational management organizations (EMOs), external partners, charters, district takeovers, vouchers, and
Their study found that none of the corrective action strategies schools and districts used to prompt turnarounds was “universally effective or robust enough to overcome the power of local context” (Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005, p. 10).

Duke (2004) recognized the unique requirements of NCLB and the corrective actions, from reconstitution to closure, that could be enacted for persistently failing schools. His synthesis of case studies of effective turnaround principals found that leaders must consistently address the challenges of instructional improvement, campus and classroom management, as well as organizational capacity building (Duke, 2004, p. 16). Furthermore, Duke (2004) asserted that turnaround principals realize that school failure is a complex phenomenon, requiring “a healthy dose of counseling skills” to effectively manage all the components needed for a successful transformation (p. 16). Ultimately, Duke cited personal commitment as a significant trait of turnaround specialists. He observed, “In case after case of schools that have reversed downward spirals, turnaround principals have taken a personal interest in seeing that struggling students do not slip through the cracks” (Duke, 2004, p. 22).

Further research of seven turnaround principals of elementary schools revealed five essential attributes of these transformational leaders. Candelarie’s (2009) grounded theory research proposed to study “the human experience of turnaround leaders in education and the search for the theory regarding their essential attributes” (p. 77). The primary tool for data collection was interviews of the seven principals. Through constant comparative analysis, Candelarie (2009) was able to discern the following five main categories of her grounded theory:
• Moral leadership - [The principal’s] main concern is improving the lives of the children in their schools through educational achievement.

• Beliefs – Turnaround educational leaders have strong beliefs systems. They believe in themselves, in their teachers, in their students, and in the work they do.

• Systemic strategist – Turnaround principals were systemic in how they approached the turnaround process, they did so in a logical manner, encompassing the school.

• Challenger – [The principals] confronted and questioned the status quo operations of their schools.

• Reflector – Turnaround principals were reflective practitioners; they used reflection both in action and in introspection. (pp. 113-189)

Though she only utilized interview data for her study, Candelarie (2009) suggested that these traits could form the basis training and evaluation of principals of low-performing schools (p. 232).

Fullan (2005) also researched educational leadership; however, instead of focusing on principals, he analyzed the roles of district and state agencies in school turnaround efforts. In his synthesis of previous studies, Fullan (2005) described ten lessons of district-wide reform:

• a compelling conceptualization by district leaders—envisions both the content of reform and includes a special commitment to capacity-building strategies;

• a collective moral purpose—characterizes the whole district and not just a few individuals;
• the right bus—the structures, roles, and role relationships that represent the best arrangement for improving all schools in the district;
• capacity building—training and support for all key leaders;
• lateral capacity building—connecting schools within a district so that they learn from one another and build a shared sense of identity beyond the individual school;
• ongoing learning—districts learn as they go, including building powerful “assessment for learning” capacities that involve the use of student data for school and district improvement;
• productive conflict—some degree of conflict is expected when difficult change is attempted and, thus, is treated as an opportunity to explore differences;
• a demanding culture—care is combined with high expectations all around to address challenging goals;
• external partners—selective external groups are used to enhance internal capacity building; and
• focused financial investment—new monies are invested up front to focus on capacity development but are framed in terms of future accountability. (pp. 177-178)

Similar to the effective schools findings of Edmonds (1982) and Johnson and Asera (1999), Fullan’s turnaround research emphasized the use of assessments (“ongoing learning”) and the expectations of school personnel (“a demanding culture”) as key components of school improvement. However, differing from previous studies, Fullan
(2005) also underscored the superficial and illusory aspect of school turnarounds, indicating that external, district-level accountability pressure led to only short-term gains in achievement (p. 177).

Murphy and Meyers (2008) published their in-depth study of turnaround efforts, first analyzing “how churches, hospitals, universities, government entities, for-profit firms, and nonprofit organizations have successfully or unsuccessfully engaged in recovery efforts” (p. 4) then, applying those findings to schools. Murphy and Meyers (2008) outlined various types of turnarounds, including expert assistance, provisions of choice, and reconstitution (p. 294). Additionally, the researchers examined the level of the governmental agency that initiated the turnaround effort—“federal, state, city (mayoral), and district” (Murphy & Meyers, 2008, p. 307). The research resulted in eight key lessons:

1. Turnarounds can work, although success is not guaranteed. … No one intervention appears significantly more successful than others.
2. Since single turnaround interventions do not always succeed, mixing and matching to develop a comprehensive approach seems promising.
3. Successful turnaround schools almost always have good, if not exceptional, principals.
4. Capacity building appears to be an imperative component of turning around failing schools.
5. Teachers must believe in the turnaround intervention being implemented.
6. Connecting with parents is another important aspect of school turnaround.
7. Failing schools need ample fiscal resources to turn around.
8. In their attempts to turn around, failing schools should consistently assess themselves, especially considering it is not unusual for standard cost-benefit analyses of interventions to be misplaced. (pp. 321-322)

The lessons of Murphy and Meyers coincided with other findings in turnaround and Effective Schools research in that they highlighted the importance of the principal’s leadership, teacher buy-in, and parental involvement (Barth et al., 1999; Carter, 2000; Duke, 2004; Edmonds, 1979; Fullan, 2005; Johnson & Asera, 1999; Lightfoot, 1981).

Since the late 1990s, another inner-city school reform effort surfaced; some urban and suburban educators looked to reorganize large, comprehensive high schools into smaller, more personalized learning environments. Meier (2002) chronicled the achievements of four specific small schools in New York City, highlighting that 90 percent of the 1991 graduating class of Central Park East Secondary School “went directly on to college and stayed there” (p. 16). Similarly, the Chicago High School Redesign Initiative “worked to improve educational opportunities for Chicago adolescents by opening and supporting small high schools across the city” (Stevens et al., 2008). Toch (2003) presented five case studies of small high schools from across the United States. He summarized that small schools are focused: “Their curricula, their teaching strategies, the way they organize the school day, even, in many instances, the design of the buildings, are aligned with their educational aims” (Toch, 2003, p. 17). The proponents of small high schools hailed the configuration as a viable systemic improvement, claiming, “Students in less affluent areas achieved at higher levels when they attended small schools” (Vander Ark, 2002); however, some advocates also admitted that the results have been mixed (Stevens et al., 2008). After hosting four small
schools for seven years with poor to mediocre achievement results, the Crawford High School Educational Complex will revert to a comprehensive site in order to “create a single accountable principal model on the campus” (SDUSD, 2012).

Murphy and Meyers (2008) referenced mayoral control as a reform measure undertaken by metropolitan leaders in order to improve urban schools. Cibulka (2003) characterized the recent trend toward mayoral control of schools, beginning in Boston, Massachusetts in the 1990s, as “almost entirely an urban strategy that has emerged to address the substantial performance problems of urban schools systems” (p. 258), wherein elected school boards were replaced with boards appointed by the elected mayor (Hess, 2008). Proponents viewed mayoral control as a definitive action against “bureaucratic dysfunction” by providing more centralized accountability for school improvement (Kirst & Bulkley, 2001). However, detractors pointed to ambiguous research findings, specifically Cuban and Usdan (2003) indicating that mayoral control “may have established certain conditions for improved academic achievement, but have not yet led directly to improved classroom teaching and learning” (pp. 156-157).

Additionally, Wong and Shen (2005) concluded “no general consensus is emerging about the overall effectiveness of mayoral takeover [of schools]” (p. 86). Because of the persistence of low-performing schools in urban areas, research from Effective Schools, turnarounds, and mayoral control continues to be questioned and scrutinized.

Criticism of Effective Schools and Turnaround Research

Following the research of Edmonds (1982) and others, Purkey and Smith (1983) conducted a critical review of the initial Effective Schools studies. Primarily, Purkey and Smith examined the methodologies of the effective schools research. They cited sample
selection flaws, noting that many researchers only studied effective elementary schools (Purkey & Smith, 1983, p. 7). They also found that much of the effective schools research relied on case studies and thus lacked empirical, generalizable data (Purkey & Smith, 1983, p. 5). Further, they found that few of the studies were longitudinal, noting, “It is not clear that an effective school snapshot taken of a third grade class’ reading scores will look the same when that class is in sixth eighth grade” (Purkey & Smith, 1983, p. 27).

Studies since Edmonds’ initial Effective Schools research were subjected to the scrutiny advanced by Purkey and Smith (1983); Johnson and Asera (1999) exclusively investigated elementary schools, spending only two days on each research visit (p. 3). Similarly, of Carter’s (2000) 21 “No Excuses Schools,” only three had included grade configurations that served high school students and none of the schools served high schoolers exclusively. Additionally, both Reeves (2000), with the 90/90/90 schools, and Chenoweth (2009) in Academic Success in Unexpected Schools, relied on site visits and analyses of assessment data for their research; case study datasets are difficult to generalize, according to Purkey and Smith (1983).

Perez and Socías’s (2008) quantitative study, wherein they reviewed four years of staffing allocations as well as assessment data from all California schools in order to rank them as high- and low-performing, also brought forth some conclusions in contrast to the common attributes of previous researchers. Their analysis of the funding allocations of schools found as effective implied that “their success may be based on characteristics that are difficult or costly to replicate” (Perez & Socías, 2008, p. 110). They further explained the challenges in transitioning Effective Schools research into actionable improvement
plans, stating “Learning from successful schools is not a straightforward proposition” (Perez & Socias, 2008, p. 110). With regards to low-performing schools, Perez and Socias (2008) indicated that a significant number of high-poverty schools, especially those that served African-American students, remained low-performing in the four years of the research dataset (p. 118); however, they did not find significant difference in funding allocations to explain the lower achievement. Although Perez and Socias (2008) questioned using Effective Schools studies as models, the researchers did find attributes similar to their predecessors, concluding, “Successful schools seem to differ from other schools mostly in terms of high teacher quality … effective implementation of their curriculum using curriculum guides, data-driven decisions regarding instruction, and programs and/or interventions that complement the core curriculum” (p. 126).

A decade after the implementation of NCLB, studies have surfaced indicating that a plethora of schools continue to fail. In 2003, Brady estimated that 4 million students attended low performing schools (p. 1). More recently, in her dissertation of turnaround principals, Candelarie (2009) reported that over 12,000 public schools nation-wide had failed to make AYP targets and were in various stages of NCLB program improvement (p. 2), with Secretary of Education Arne Duncan predicting thousands more will be labeled as failing in the coming years (Dillon, 2011; McNeil, 2011). In a longitudinal, mixed-methods study, Stuit (2010) reported that after five years, over 70 percent of the over 2000 low-performing public schools he studied were still in operation—and still low-performing (p. 10). Stuit (2010) further explained the scarcity of turnarounds—only 1.4 percent of the district public schools he studied rose above their states’ 50th percentile in proficiency rates; only 0.4 percent of low-performing charter schools met the
turnaround criteria (p. 29). Stuit’s (2010) research revealed the complexity and challenges of turnaround efforts, citing that it was unlikely low-performing schools fully engaged in the intensive reforms that proponents of effective schools and turnaround research deem as essential to success (p. 32).

Moreover, Hassel and Hassel’s (2009) case studies of non-profit organizations, governmental agencies, and for-profit businesses showed that turnarounds do exist, but mostly outside of education; they noted that “turnarounds [in education] have been rarely tried and studied even less” (p. 22) Hassel and Hassel (2009) suggested that education programs need to be developed to adequately train more turnaround leaders, even look to “noneducation leaders with turnaround competence … and equip them with the education know-how they need succeed” (p. 27).

Smarick (2010) identified what he termed the “turnaround fallacy,” supporting the research of Stuit (2010) and Hassel and Hassel (2009): “Turnarounds in the public education space are far harder than any turnaround I’ve ever seen in the for-profit [private business] space” (p. 25). Regarding the prevalence of case studies that describe the efforts of successful schools, Smarick, like Purkey and Smith (1983) earlier, criticized that they were “particularly weak in determining causal validity for several reasons, including the fact that there is no way to be confident that the features common to successful turnaround schools are not also common to schools that fail” (p. 23).

Instead of focusing on turnaround efforts, Smarick (2010) advised state and district educational leaders to examine the controversial tactic of closing failing schools and sending students to other campuses (p. 21). de la Torre and Gwynne (2009) challenged this strategy; they tracked over 5,000 students enrolled at 18 Chicago schools
that closed between 2001 and 2006 (p. 6). The results of de la Torre and Gwynne’s (2009) statistical analysis of reading and math assessment data as well as of teacher and student survey data showed that closing schools and displacing students had little effect, positive or negative, on academic achievement (p. 26). The research of de la Torre and Gwynne suggested that instead of closing schools and having a negligible impact on student achievement, investigators could individually diagnose each persistently low-performing school in an effort to improve it.

In his quantitative study, Loveless (2010) also concluded that very few instances of turnarounds exist in education. He collected and analyzed California middle school test scores from 1989 to 2009, noting “The statistics are eye-popping and, in a way, depressing. School achievement appears astonishingly persistent” (Loveless, 2010, p. 22). He advocated for further study, “analyzing longitudinal data and tracking the institutional trajectories of schools over extended periods of time” (Loveless, 2010, p. 25). Loveless’ research also supported the notion that more examination was required to better diagnose and address persistently low-performing urban schools and their bureaucratic structures.

**Relevance of Bureaucracy**

The improved diagnosis needed to address failing inner-city campuses could be grounded in a better understanding of the structures that envelop urban education—particularly, the bureaucratic structures of urban school systems. Katz (1975) detailed the growth of large city educational systems. Beginning in the 1870s, he described the formation of Boston’s school district, and subsequent school bureaucracy. He succinctly explained the failings of large bureaucratic school systems:

Despite the existence of free, universal, and compulsory schooling, most poor
children become poor adults. … It is the historical result of the combination of purpose and structure that has characterized American education for roughly the last hundred years. The purpose has been, basically, the inculcation of attitudes that reflect dominant social and industrial values; the structure has been bureaucracy. (Katz, 1975, p. xvi)

Similarly, Tyack (1974) recounted the development of inner-city school districts in the United States, from “village schools” of the mid-1800s, to “urban systems” in the late-1800s and early-1900s:

In attempting to systemize urban schools, the superintendents of the latter half if the nineteenth century sought to transform structures and decision-making processed in education. From classroom to central office they tried to create new controls over pupils, teachers, principals, and other subordinate members of the school hierarchy. … They were actually trying to replace village forms in which laymen participated in decentralized decision-making with the new bureaucratic model of a closed “nonpolitical” system in which directives flowed from the top down, reports emanated from the bottom, and each step of the educational process was carefully prescribed by professional educators [emphasis added]. (p. 40)

Tyack (1974) termed the resulting centralized, professional bureaucracy that dominated urban education as the “one best system,” complete with hierarchical structures, uniform procedures, and impersonal atmospheres that persist in today’s city school districts (pp. 40-42). While many researchers have criticized the one best system (Anyon, 1997; Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Chubb & Moe, 1990; Sizer, 2004; Thernstrom and Thernstrom,
Crowson (2011) offered this explanation of why recent investigators have neglected to study the bureaucratic aspects of urban education:

Much attention has been diverted from studying the within organization characteristics of large city districts to more contemporary issues or performance outcomes [testing], teacher retention and quality, data-based decision-making, innovation and entrepreneurship as vehicles for change, curricula alignment with standardized goals, restructuring schools into “small” communities of students and faculty, and reconstituting or otherwise upgrading failing schools. (p. 466)

Citing the rapidly changing inner-city school governance paradigms, such as the surge in charter school petitions, the imminent prospect of mayoral control, the ongoing debate around merit pay, and the dynamically shifting role of the principal, Crowson (2011) called for renewed focus on the bureaucratic structures that surround urban school settings, (p. 466).

**Models of Bureaucracy**

M. Weber (1947) developed the conceptual framework for contemporary analyses of bureaucracies. His schema outlined an idealized, formal model of bureaucratic structure (Lennon, 2009) that included five specific features:

1. Division of labor and specialization
2. An organization guided by rules and regulations
3. Technical competence and a career orientation
4. Impersonal orientation
5. A well-defined hierarchy of authority (Blau & Scott, 2003; Chance, 2009; M. Weber 1947)
These five attributes elucidated two defining features of Weberian bureaucracy—authority and efficiency, “wherein the procedure of the operation supersedes human interpretation” (McVey, 2009, p. 27). Each of M. Weber’s characteristics could be applied to school structures.

**Division of Labor and Specialization**

As an aspect of efficiency, tasks too burdensome or complex for one person could be distributed among multiple persons, who, in turn, can become experts in their specific duties (Lennon, 2009). Typically, American high schools were organized around specific, fragmented courses taught by teachers trained in specialized subject areas (Sedlak et al., 1986). Furthermore, other roles of staff members were clearly delineated: “guidance counselors rarely teach mathematics, mathematics teachers rarely teach English, principals rarely do any classroom instruction” (Sizer, 2004). Theoretically, this type of specialization led to more expertise in specific areas of education.

**Rules and Regulations**

A key aspect of every bureaucracy was the presence of formal rules and regulations (Weber, M., 1947, p. 330). These intentional rules were to establish uniformity in pursuing organizational goals as well as “provide for continuity in operations regardless of changes in personnel.” (Blau & Scott, 2003). In schools, rules and regulations played a significant role in virtually every operation—from defining how students were expected to conduct themselves to prescribing how administrators could allocate funding.
Technical Competence and Career Orientation

M. Weber’s (1947) model of bureaucracy provided for employee promotion by acquiring “technical competence and knowledge,” as opposed to “political family or other connections” (Blau & Scott, 2003). The idea of promotion further delineated school bureaucracies as career-oriented; over time, the employee could elevate his or her occupational status. This elevation is typically associated with the acquisition of more skills or knowledge (specialization) and longevity. The idea of promotion encouraged loyalty.

Impersonal Orientation

According to M. Weber (1947), bureaucracies needed to be impersonal so that decisions can be made in a rational manner, in order to prevent personal feelings from distorting rational judgment (Blau & Scott, 2003). This impersonal orientation provided for objectivity, and ideally, equity within the environment. M. Weber (1946) described this atmosphere as “without hatred or passion, and hence without affection or enthusiasm” (p. 331). Educators who did not employ this detached demeanor may be viewed as sacrificing academic learning for positive social interactions (Sedlak et al., 1986). However, an extreme impersonal orientation within a school setting could prove catastrophic, potentially lowering educator morale. Coupled with the idea of formal rules and regulations, the atmosphere of impersonality made Weberian bureaucracies cold, inflexible, and inhuman.

Hierarchy of Authority

The designation of leadership roles was present in all organizations. In bureaucracies, M. Weber (1947) specifically delineated that authority should be clearly
identified to create disciplined organizational compliance (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001). In schools, hierarchical roles were distinct as virtually all have a leader, most commonly referred to as the principal. In referring to district-level school management, an “organizational chart makes the hierarchy explicit, with the superintendent at the top, assistants, directors, principals, teachers, and students successively at lower levels” (Lennon, 2009, p. 8). Rigid hierarchies, similar to rules and regulations, reinforced the impersonal orientation M. Weber attached to bureaucracies.

Chance (2009) referred to a sixth trait of bureaucracies as the “separation of ownership and administration” (p. 22). In Weberian bureaucracy, there existed a notion that those who create policies (owners) were separate from those who enforce policies (administrators). This idea was readily apparent in school organizations as policies are typically decided upon by a school board, who then charged a superintendent and other administrators to carry out the determined policies. Sizer (2004) argued, “The distance between the directors [legislators, school trustees, superintendents] and the directed [principals, teachers, students, parents] has become greater” (p. 206), resulting in a dissonance that led to minimal compliance and other negative manifestations—absenteeism, cheating, or alienation (Lipsky, 1980).

All of these traits of Weberian, efficient bureaucracies could be viewed as problematic, especially when considering schools and school systems as bureaucratic entities; Hill and Celio (1998) concisely portrayed the school as bureaucracy paradigm: “City public school systems are now government agencies run by civil servants and operating under rules made by political decisionmaking bodies. … Staff members in the central office supervise schools from specialized perspectives” (pp. 64-65). Hill and
Celio’s description of school systems denoted the fundamental aspects of Weberian bureaucracy; however, many researchers have explored the impersonal nature of M. Weber’s model and have found that his theory did not adequately address the informal, human elements that persist within organizations.

Parsons (1960) expanded the static, informal, and impersonal traits of M. Weber’s bureaucratic models to encompass an organization’s relationship to the population it served. Parsons developed four categories to describe this relationship:

1. Economic organizations … acquiring sufficient resources and adapting to environmental demands.
2. Political organizations … operate to achieve basic societal goals.
3. Integrative organizations … serve to maintain solidarity and unity within the society.
4. Pattern-maintenance organizations … operate to preserve and transmit a society’s culture. (Chance, 2009, p. 13)

Though Parsons’ classifications were not mutually exclusive, schools primarily fell under the category of “pattern-maintenance” and were therefore, organized to “preserve traditional values and create a parallel system that reflects their modern community and the world” (McVey, 2009, p. 18). Sedlak et al. (1986) expounded on schools, and the bureaucracies within them, as pattern-maintenance organizations:

Administrative bureaucracy is more than a facilitator and organizer of people and events. It is the primary socializer in a primarily socializing institution. … While schools may fail to teach all students the content and curriculum, few escape the lessons of obedience to an administrative structure, the importance of rules,
regulations and bureaucratic processes, deference to superiors, or on the other hand, the seeking of ways to find personal satisfaction in informal friendships while giving minimal compliance to organizational demands. (p. 156)

The role of bureaucracy as a culturally-bound, socializing force had been explored by many researchers.

Research on Bureaucracy

In *The Dynamics of Bureaucracy*, Blau (1963) presented a comparative case study of two governmental agencies—a state employment agency and a federal enforcement agency. In both organizations, Blau (1963) found elements of Weberian bureaucratic structure: specialization, rules and regulations, hierarchies—all under “organizing principle of administrative efficiency” (p. 264). However, Blau’s (1963) research findings did not hastily characterize bureaucracy as inflexible or resistant to innovation; instead, he described bureaucracy as an environment wherein some “necessary innovations will often evolve spontaneously” (p. 263). He did acknowledge that the innovations he observed were a result of operational problems within the governmental agencies as opposed to conflicts with clients that the agencies served (Blau, 1963, p. 263). For example, at the state employment agency, Blau (1963) did find attempts to create an impersonal work atmosphere, supported by specific anti-discrimination rules; however, receptionists seemed to be influenced by “ethnic bias … so deep-seated in American society that it affects behavior unawares” (p. 90).

Crozier (2010) in *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon*, recounted case study research he conducted in 1960s France at a bank and cigarette manufacturer—both state-controlled agencies. He, like Blau, also found traits of Weberian bureaucracy:
1. the development of a vast body of detailed written and impersonal rules and procedures prescribing what is to be done in all conceivable situations,

2. centralization of decision-making away from where the action is taking place, thus putting great distance between those who have to decide and those who have the relevant information for these decisions,

3. the creation of hierarchical strata insulating one from the other and exerting great more pressure for conformity on its members, and

4. the creation of parallel power relations around the groups or individuals capable of coping with residual and unanticipated contingencies and uncertainties affecting the organization’s capacity to function in a satisfactory way. (Crozier, 2010, p. x-xi)

For Crozier (2010), these characteristics create “‘vicious circles’: of self-reinforcing behavioral patterns” (p. xi), which he perceived as counterproductive to reform efforts.

Using the client service model, similar to Blau, he elaborated:

Constant transformations affect a modern organization. They concern the services it provides the customers and the public with whom it has to deal. … Adjustment to these transformations can be gradual and more or less constant, if the agents of the organization who are at the level where the necessity of these changes is more obvious can introduce the wanted innovation or obtain such innovation for the competent authorities. But, a bureaucratic organization does not allow for such initiative as the lower echelons; decisions must be made where the power is located, i.e., on top. (Crozier, 2010, p. 195)
Contrasting Blau, Crozier did not find dynamic bureaucracies in the French agencies he studied.

Bureaucracy in Schools

Crozier (2010) extended his application of bureaucracy as a pattern-maintaining cultural phenomenon in his depiction of French schools: “The educational system of a given society reflects that society’s social system, and at the same time it is the main force of perpetuating it. It may also be perceived as the most powerful means of social control to which individuals must submit” (p. 238). He categorized the French educational system as very bureaucratic—first organizationally, “which is highly centralized and impersonal;” then, pedagogically, which “prepares the strata isolation of the bureaucratic system” (Crozier, 2010, p. 239). Of the dysfunctions of American bureaucracy, Crozier (2010) wrote, “Willful individual can block the intentions of whole communities for a long time … a large number of vicious circles will protect and reinforce local conservatism” (p. 236). Ultimately, Crozier found both French and American bureaucracies as socializing systems that perpetuated cultural concepts of the dominant class.

Similar to Crozier (2010), Larner (1966) characterized school bureaucracy in the big city as detached and oppressive. In his analysis of the New York City schools, Larner (1966) clearly described the centralized, specialized, and hierarchical system of educational governance:

I have perhaps failed to mention the endless associations, commissions, sub-commissions, advisory committees, deputy directors, associate supervisors, district superintendents, coordinators, directors, foundations, and independent
consultants who must be involved in every policy decision. The trouble with such a set-up is that the basic concern on every level points up, toward impressing the higher-ups rather than down, toward serving the classroom teacher. (p. 26)

Regarding the impersonal nature of the New York City school system bureaucracy, Larner (1966) wrote, “The gap between theory and practice is nowhere more striking than among school principals. Many of them know little of what goes on in their own schools and make no effort to learn” (p. 26). Larner’s analysis portrayed bureaucracy as overbearing and stifling—an analysis supported by other researchers.

Sexton’s (1966) research of conditions in Chicago and New York City schools reached similar conclusions. She enumerated the entrenched and unresponsive nature of bureaucratic structures:

1. the traditional conservative reluctance of [school] boards to interfere in the operations of the bureaucracy;
2. the inertia and resistance of the bureaucracy to pressure for the board;
3. the usual tendency to become defensive of “their [bureaucratic] system and to take criticisms of the system as personal affronts. (Sexton, 1966, p. 31)

For Sexton (1966), the “conservatism and resistance within the bureaucracy” (p. 31) perpetuated the class struggles she observed in the urban school systems she studied.

In his exhaustive study based on more than 1200 interviews, Rogers (1968) thoroughly examined what he termed as the “bureaucratic pathology” of the school system of New York City (p. 12). Rogers (1968) described the “sick” bureaucracy as “organizations whose traditions, structure, and operations subvert their stated missions and prevent any flexible accommodation to changing client demands” (p. 267). He
enumerated the characteristics of bureaucratic pathology he discovered within New York City Schools:

1. overcentralization, the development of many levels in the chain of command and upward orientation of anxious subordinates;
2. vertical and horizontal fragmentation, isolating units from one another and limiting communication and coordination of functions;
3. the consequent development of chauvinism within particular units, reflected in actions to protect and expand their power;
4. the exercise of strong, informal pressure from peers within units to conform to their codes, geared toward political protection and expansion and ignoring the organization’s wider goals;
5. compulsive rule following and rule enforcing;
6. the rebellion of lower-level supervisors against headquarters’ directives, alternating at times with overconformity, as they develop concerns about ratings and promotions;
7. increasing insulation from clients, as internal politics and personal career interests override interests in serving various publics; and
8. the tendency to make decisions in committees, making it difficult to pinpoint responsibility and authority. (Rogers, 1968, pp. 267-268)

Rogers (1968) contended that the pathologies of a dysfunctional school bureaucracy maintained a symbiotic relationship with other aspects of urban systems, such as the “conditions with the ghetto [or] the fragmented structure of city government” (p. 12).
Other researchers have characterized bureaucratic structures in school systems as indifferent, unwieldy, and oppressive. Berliner and Biddle (1995) cited three problems of educational bureaucracies in urban areas:

1. They tend to evolve criteria for judging performance that have little to do with the task of instruction.
2. Educational bureaucracies tend to strip teachers of all opportunities to exercise professional autonomy.
3. Like other large bureaucracies, those in education create a host of rules, procedures, and paperwork that can interfere with the task of instruction and cause untold annoyance for teachers, principals, students and parents. (pp. 253-254)

They concluded, “At their worst, educational bureaucracies become endlessly expanding financial sinkholes that eat up resources and create only mischief and red tape” (Berliner & Biddle, 1995, p. 257).

Sizer (2004), through his 1980s case study research of American high schools, outlined six defects of educational bureaucracy, which he called a “system of pyramidal governance” (p. 207):

1. It overlooks special local conditions, especially school-by-school differences; “Differences among schools are usually seen as weaknesses.”
2. Bureaucracy depends on specific, measurable data—large, complex units need simple ways of describing themselves. When this data is collected in silly ways to convenience the researcher (for example, treating every course labeled English as of equal value), the result is distortion.
3. Large administrative units depend on norms, the bases of predictability. Inevitably, a central tendency becomes the rigid expectation.

4. Bureaucracies depend on elaborate job descriptions—they cannot function without them. The result is high schools run by specialists, each of whom is expected to “deliver” a specific “service” to each student.

5. Bureaucracies lumber. Every regulation, agreement, and license spawns a lobby dedicated to keeping it in place. The larger and more complex the hierarchy, the more powerful the lobby becomes, ever more remote from frustrated classroom teachers, poorly served students, and angry parents.

6. Hierarchical bureaucracy stifles initiative at its base; and given . . . the need for teachers and principals to be strong, inspiring, and flexible people, this aspect of the system can be devastating. (numerals added; pp. 207-209)

Following the trend of critical analyses of systemic bureaucracies by Crozier (2010), Larner (1966), Sexton (1966) and others, Sizer (2004) advocated for school governance structure that placed more authority and autonomy in the hands of the teachers as opposed to distant and ineffectual district-level administrators (p. 217).

Chubb and Moe (1990) echoed Sizer (2004) sentiments in their 1980s research on school governance structures, titled *Politics, Markets, and American Schools*. Their analysis of bureaucracy found “that school organization and performance are indeed related. High performance schools differ in goals, leadership, personnel, and educational practices from low performance schools” (Chubb & Moe, 1990, p. 99). Chubb and Moe (1990) attributed this difference in student performance to varying bureaucratic structures, stating, “The more extensive the control by external authorities, the less likely
schools are to be organized effectively” (p. 150). They measured five administrative functions in public and private, as well as urban and suburban schools—curriculum, instruction, hiring, firing, and discipline. They found that autonomy had “the strongest influence on the overall quality of a school organization of any factor” (Chubb & Moe, 1990, p. 183). Thus, schools with more autonomy, such as private schools “controlled by markets—indirectly and from the bottom-up” (Chubb & Moe, 1990, p. 183), had better overall quality of school organization and therefore, higher achievement. Chubb and Moe (1990) concluded that only through drastically restructuring our entire system of public education system, virtually eliminating all higher-level bureaucracies, and giving autonomy to schools to determine their own governing structures, will there be system-wide improvements in academic achievement (p. 219-223).

More recently, Payne (2010) also presented an unfavorable depiction of the bureaucracy of an inner-city school system in his analysis of failed reform efforts in Chicago Public Schools. He stated, “Urban schools exist in a larger institutional environment that is unstable, unsupportive, and undermining” (Payne, 2010, p. 122). In detailing the features of this “larger institutional environment,” Payne (2010) wrote:

Bureaucratic culture tends to reduce all decisions to the calculable, which means everything gets reduced to a kind of cost-benefit analysis, a calculus into which moral issues cannot fit. Bureaucracies also create neutralizing vocabularies to describe their work, thereby removing the emotional content of more accurate language, but the business leaders who call price-rigging “price stabilization” or [the doctors] who call lung disease “a symptom complex” could learn something from the school leaders who call school closing “system renaissance.” (p. 151)
Contrasting Research on Bureaucracy in Schools

According to M. Weber (1947) bureaucracy was “by far the most efficient instrument of large-scale administration which has ever been developed and the modern social order in many different spheres has become overwhelmingly dependent upon it” (p. 58). Blau (1963) supported M. Weber’s pronouncement, explaining that in America, where equality in social relationships is highly valued, “bureaucracies can be looked upon as institutionalized strategies for the achievement of administrative objectives by the concerted effort of many officials” (p. 251). Thus, Blau (1963) advocated for more effective use of bureaucratic tools (e.g. career orientation, rules and regulations) to promote team “cohesiveness and optimum performance of duties” (p. 260).

Similarly, Rosenholtz (1985), in her analysis of Effective Schools research, called for more specific measures to be taken within the constructs of bureaucracy in order to create positive change in schools. For example, she cited that “teachers in effective schools are buffered by administrators” from trivial administrative tasks and paperwork (Rosenholtz, 1985, p. 370-371). Rosenholtz (1985) recommended that leaders look to formalize, though rules and procedures, methods to buffer teachers from “obstacles that stand in the way of their teaching” (p. 370). Furthermore, Rosenholtz (1985) suggested that school officials reduce “role ambiguity” and clearly delineate the expectations of teachers and other staff members (p. 373). This push to design more specific and specialized job descriptions “reduced uncertainty and increased extrinsic satisfaction in the role relations with superiors” (Rosenholtz, 1985, p. 374). Through refinement of bureaucratic elements, Rosenholtz indicated that improvement, specifically with schools that serve urban students, could be achieved.
Shedd and Bacharach (1991) reinforced the assertions of Blau (1963) and Rosenholtz (1985) by defending the bureaucratic structures that exist in school systems:

The tension between individual discretion and organizational control … gives birth to new kinds of structures that are designed to balance both sets of needs. Rational rules replace arbitrary supervision. There is a name for the structures that sit at the middle of this continuum: They are called bureaucracies. Bureaucracies are not the quintessential bastions of top-down control many educational reformers paint them to be. … Bureaucracies are the quintessential compromises between competing pressures autonomy and control. (pp. 4-5)

Shedd and Bacharach (1991) described schools as being neither “tightly controlled organizations that many policy makers would like them to be,” nor “the collections of autonomous craftpersons that many teachers would prefer them to be;” instead, schools are identified as “remarkably complex combinations of ‘loose’ and ‘tight’ elements” (p. 59). They wrote:

Individual teachers are isolated and insulated … from direct contact with administrators and each other, with what … seems to be extraordinary [loose] freedom to decide what they and their students will do. Yet, these teachers are also tightly constrained by policies, student assignments, and resource limitations that are all beyond their control. (Shedd & Bacharach, 1991, p. 59)

In order to address this dichotomy of loose and tight organizational principles, Shedd and Bacharach did not promote the dismantling of bureaucratic systems; rather, they advocated for the restructuring of the roles of teachers to encompass more autonomy in policies, resources and evaluation. Furthermore, they proposed a redesigned relationship
between teachers and administrators that was less hierarchical and linear, more “circular and interactive” (Shedd and Bacharach, 1991, p. 194). Shedd and Bacharach (1991) concluded, “Systems where all adults are encouraged to lead and learn, and where children are allowed to teach, can meet demands that no one has yet imagined” (p. 195).

Hoy and Sweetland (2001) further explored the bureaucratic dichotomy presented by Shedd and Bacharach (1991); however, instead of focusing on loose and tight organizational aspects, Hoy and Sweetland described two conflicting human responses, or sides, to bureaucracy. They summarized: “The dark side reveals a bureaucracy that alienates, breeds dissatisfaction, hinders creativity, and demoralizes employees. The bright side shows a bureaucracy that guides behavior, clarifies responsibility, reduces stress, and enables individuals to feel and be more effective” (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001, p. 297). From this premise, they examined school bureaucracies through two significant features: “formalization (formal rules and procedures) and centralization (hierarchy of authority)” (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001, p. 297). Hoy and Sweetland indicated that these bureaucratic attributes, formalization and centralization, could be viewed on a continuum; coercive to enabling for formalization and hindering to enabling for centralization.

For the formalization continuum, Hoy and Sweetland (2001) defined the extremes. They wrote, “Coercive rules and procedures punish subordinates rather than reward productive practices. Instead of promoting organizational learning, coercive procedures force reluctant subordinates to comply” (p. 297-298). The other extreme, enabling formalization was denoted as assisting workers to develop solutions to their problems. Hoy and Sweetland (2001) elaborated, “Enabling rules and procedures are
flexible guidelines that reflect ‘best practices’ and help subordinates deal with surprises and crises” (p. 298).

Hoy and Sweetland (2001) also defined the extremes of the centralization continuum. Hindering centralization, they explained, “refers to a hierarchy and administration that gets in the way rather than helps its participants solve problems and do their work. In such structures, the hierarchy obstructs innovation and administrators use their power and authority to control and discipline teachers” (p. 300). Conversely, Hoy and Sweetland (2001) determined enabling centralization referred to hierarchies that “help employees solve problems rather than obstructing their work” (p. 300). They continued, “Enabling hierarchy is an amalgam of authority in which members feel confident and are able to exercise power in their professional roles” (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001, p. 300).

**Enabling School Structure Form**

Once they established a continuum, or scale, for the bureaucratic aspects of formalization and centralization, Hoy and Sweetland (2001) then developed a means to theoretically measure a school’s bureaucratic structures—from hindering to enabling. The initial measuring instrument was a 24-item, 5-point Likert-type survey. The survey was designed to be administered to teachers and included prompts like: “Administrative rules in this school are guides to solutions rather than rigid procedures,” and “In this school the authority of the principal is used to undermine teachers” (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001, p. 303-304). After giving this survey to 61 teachers and conducting the appropriate factor analyses, Hoy and Sweetland (2001) reduced the number of Likert-type items to 12 to “measure reliably and validly the concept of enable school structure” (p. 307). The
shorter, 12-item ESS form was then distributed to teachers in 97 schools and, assessed for factor stability, validity, and reliability (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001, p. 309). Hoy and Sweetland (2001) found the survey instrument to be a “good parsimonious measure of enabling bureaucracies” (p. 309). The results from the ESS form, combined with a Faculty Trust Test developed by the researchers, showed that “enabling schools encourage trusting relations between teachers and between teachers and the principal” (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001, p. 314). In the conclusion of their seminal study, Hoy and Sweetland (2001), echoing the closing remarks of Shedd and Bacharach (1991), postulated, “One key ingredient to more effective schools is a school structure that enables participants to do their jobs more creatively, cooperatively, and professionally. Designing better schools seems inextricably bound to creating enabling school structures” (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001, p. 319).

Two doctoral researchers, Lennon (2009) and McVey (2009) both used the ESS form in their studies. Lennon examined the relationship between bureaucratic structure and school climate. She administered the ESS form and another survey designed to measure school climate to 220 teachers in the state of New York. She found, ostensibly, that schools where teachers indicated there to enabling bureaucracies also had positive school climate. Lennon (2009), similar to Shedd and Bacharach (1991) as well as Hoy and Sweetland (2001), concluded, “If the principal and the teachers have a positive, open, and mutually supportive relationship, they work together to overcome obstacles. Working together as a team with one goal in mind, results in a strong, effective organization that can achieve reform, renewal, or improvement in education” (p. 37).
Similarly, McVey (2009) examined school climate and bureaucratic structures to determine if they were significant predictors of perceived school effectiveness. Using the ESS form and two other survey instruments, McVey collected responses from 374 teachers in 85 schools in New York City. She found that bureaucratic structures were not a significant predictor of perceived school effectiveness (McVey, 2009, p. 62). However, McVey (2009) did find that a school climate with an overt emphasis on academic excellence was a predictor of teachers’ positive beliefs about the effectiveness of their schools (p. 63). She concluded her dissertation with a call to expand the notion of school effectiveness beyond simply test scores or cohort graduation rates, into the development of environments wherein “teachers solve problems despite bureaucratic obstacles” (McVey, 2009, p. 70).

**Persistent Dilemmas of Bureaucracies**

In his study of federal and state governmental agencies, Blau (1963) identified what he termed as “a final paradox” (p. 264). He questioned the co-existence of democratic and bureaucratic institutions: “Bureaucracies seem to be necessary for, and simultaneously incompatible with, modern democracy. In a mass society democracy depends on bureaucratic institutions. … Yet, by concentrating power in the hands of a few … bureaucracies threaten to destroy democratic institutions” (Blau, 1963, p. 265). Chubb and Moe (1990) viewed Blau’s paradox differently; instead of bureaucracies destroying democratic institutions, Chubb and Moe (1990) promoted abolishing democratic control of schools in order to curb the influence of bureaucracy (p. 191). In both studies, there remains an on-going dilemma between bureaucratic and democratic systems.
Furthermore, Ogawa et al. (1999) examined persistent dilemmas that existed within school organizations. The researchers maintained that these endemic, “fundamental dichotomies … cannot be solved or resolved” (Ogawa et al., 1999, p. 279). The seven dilemmas outlined by Ogawa et al. are classified as being either internal (within the organization) or external (between the organization and the environment that the organization serves).

Internal Dilemmas of School Organizations
1. Goals – organizational goals vs. individual needs
2. Task Structures – formal task structures vs. informal social interactions
3. Professionalism – professionals entangled in bureaucratic structures
4. Hierarchy – centralized vs. participative decision-making

External Dilemmas of School Organizations
1. persistence – schools are particularly intractable organizations
2. boundaries – ambiguous boundaries

Ogawa et al.’s (1999) treatment of the third internal dilemma, professionalism, referenced Shedd and Bacharach (1991), in that the researchers described the professionalism dilemma as a “tangled hierarchy … an interweaving of bureaucratic management and professionalism in educational organizations that typically produces cross-pressures and compromises between key values … but no ‘solutions’” (p. 282).

Furthering their explanation of this enduring dilemma, Ogawa et al. (1999) cited Blau and Scott’s (1962) investigation into “alternative rationalities” (p. 283). Blau and
Scott, and subsequently Ogawa et al., contrasted professionals (those with knowledge expertise) with bureaucrats (those with organizational rules and regulation expertise). These categories, professional and bureaucrat, were not mutually exclusive. In fact, a school principal could embody both dynamics.

Finally, in defining this persistent organizational dilemma Ogawa et al. (1999) referred to Carlson’s (1996) critical theory warning that “organizational controls have long been heavily centered institutionally upon reproducing a culture full of structural inequalities and utilizing the classroom [and thus, a school] as a prime ‘sorting’ tool, per the ideologies of the nation’s dominant social system” (p. 284). Reinforcing Parsons’ (1960) conclusion that schools exist to maintain dominant cultural patterns, Ogawa et al. (1999), elucidated the notion that in order to affect positive change, school leaders must embrace the complexities and dilemmas inherent of bureaucracy and “act with and informed sense of these phenomena” (p. 291)

**Conclusion**

Shedd and Bacharach (1991) characterized bureaucracy as:

The *natural* result when administrative superiors are compelled to rely on the discretion of subordinates to apply general principles to unique and unpredictable situations, and when superiors resort to general rules and procedures (rather than specific instructions and direct supervision) to control the performance of subordinates. (emphasis added; p. 5)

Bureaucracy’s characterization as something organic, or natural, underscores its pervasiveness in American society. Hoy and Sweetland (2001) concisely stated, “Like it
or not, schools are bureaucracies” (p. 296). Furthermore, in urban school systems, Chubb and Moe (1990) candidly pointed out:

The institutions of democratic control are thus likely to respond to serious educational problems by adding to the schools’ already disabling bureaucracy—rendering them even less capable of solving the problems that face them. The more poorly [urban] schools perform, the more the authorities are pressured to respond with new bureaucratic constraints, which in turn make the schools still less effective. (emphasis added; p. 66)

The permanence, yet problematic presence of bureaucracy in our school system, specifically our urban school system, made it a very worthy topic of continued investigation and research. This study supplements the extant research on urban schools and their bureaucratic structures. Ideally, the goal of this research is to not only provide scholarly research on the persistent dilemmas associated with bureaucracy, but more importantly, to address the lagging achievement too often associated with our urban secondary schools.
CHAPTER 3—METHODOLOGY

In order to examine and compare bureaucratic structures within and around urban high schools, this study used a mixed-method research design (Creswell, 2007, p. 14). First, high schools in one urban district were ranked by academic achievement scores; then, six high schools were purposefully selected based on their varying student achievement levels. In order to measure teachers’ perceptions of the bureaucracy within the selected schools, a quantitative survey instrument was used. In order to capture principals’ and teachers’ views of not only the bureaucracy within their schools, but the organizational structure at the district-level, the qualitative research techniques of individual interviews and focus group sessions were employed. All of the data sets were collected, analyzed, and interpreted concurrently (Creswell, 2007, pp. 14-15). The quantitative results were calculated using descriptive statistical analyses, while constant comparative strategies (Creswell, 2007, p. 64; Merriam, 1998, p. 159) were used to analyze the qualitative data. Finally, the concurrent triangulation strategy (Creswell, 2007, p. 213) was conducted wherein the quantitative survey data was merged with the qualitative interview and focus group data in an effort to glean specific details of bureaucratic structures within the sample high schools.

Research Questions

The central research question of this study was: How do the bureaucratic structures in urban high schools vary relative to student achievement?

The secondary research questions focused on the urban high school principals’ and teachers’ perceptions of bureaucracy as well as the management of site and district-level bureaucratic structures. The secondary questions were:
• How do urban high school principals’ and teachers’ perceptions of bureaucratic structures vary relative to schools’ student achievement levels?
• How do urban high school principals’ and teachers’ approaches to managing site-level bureaucracy vary relative to student achievement levels?
• How do urban high school principals’ and teachers’ approaches to managing district-level bureaucracy vary relative to student achievement levels?

Sample Selection

Six high schools from the Sunray Unified School District (pseudonym) in Southern California were purposefully selected for this investigation. Sunray Unified School District serves students that live in a major metropolitan area of over one million inhabitants from more than 15 different ethnic groups. Over 120,000 students, from grades pre-kindergarten to adult school, attend over 200 schools in Sunray. The district has over 30 high schools with varying configurations, from traditional, comprehensive high schools to charter, magnet and alternative schools.

Using the 2013 Growth Academic Performance Index (API) base scores, all of the urban high schools were ranked from lowest to highest performing. Descriptive statistical analyses were used to calculate the mean and standard deviations and the schools were selected in the following manner:

• 2 schools from the group with API scores one standard deviation below the mean; these schools were considered as low achieving.
• 2 schools from the group with API scores in between the lower and higher standard deviations; these schools were considered as average achieving.
• 2 schools from the group with API score on standard deviation above the mean; these schools were considered as high achieving.

The purposeful selection of schools with varying achievement levels provided for an opportunity to compare the survey results from the study to the schools’ reported academic performance.

Furthermore, the schools selected for this research reflected the demographics typically associated with urban areas of the United States: dense population, racial and linguistic diversity, and limited access to cultural and economic resources (Flessa, 2009). Thus, the high schools in this study served students from the following demographics: 65% economically disadvantaged and 70% students of color (including students of African or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Asian, or Native American ancestry). The ethnic and racial demographics of each school was determined by information included in each site’s published School Accountability Report Card (SARC). The percentage of economically disadvantaged students was determined by the number of students qualifying for the National School Lunch Program on each campus—information also included in the school’s SARC.

In an effort to protect the confidentiality of the participants and the integrity of this study, the actual names of all schools, as well as their respective principals and faculty members, were altered. Pseudonyms were used throughout this study.

Table 1 shows the selected schools, ranked according to their 2013 Growth Academic Performance Index scores, as well as their respective percentages of economically disadvantaged students and students of color.
Table 1

Selected High Schools Ranked by API Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>2013 Growth API Score</th>
<th>% of Students of Color</th>
<th>% Socioeconomically Disadvantaged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forewind High School</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>92.1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ridgepoint High School</td>
<td>649</td>
<td>95.6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starlight High School</td>
<td>658.7</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>70.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>API MEAN</td>
<td>737.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canyon Academy</td>
<td>791</td>
<td>85.7</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crestview High School</td>
<td>866</td>
<td>84.2</td>
<td>67.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stonemark Charter School</td>
<td>888</td>
<td>96.4</td>
<td>98.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 displays some of the descriptive characteristics of each school in the research sample.

**Data Collection**

The data collected in this mixed-methods study were derived from a survey instrument administered to teachers, individual interviews with site principals and focus group interviews with selected classroom teachers. All data sets were collected, analyzed and interpreted concurrently.

**ESS Form**

For the quantitative component of this mixed methods study, the ESS form (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001) was administered to the teaching faculty at each of the selected urban high schools. A sample of the ESS is included in Appendix A. These teachers were identified as providing instruction in any subject area; however, the survey was only distributed to classroom teachers, not to other certificated faculty (e.g. resource teachers, counselors), classified staff, or students. Hence, the total number of surveys collected was
Table 2

Descriptive Characteristics of Selected High Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forewind High School</th>
<th>Ridgepoint High School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type: <strong>Small</strong></td>
<td>Type: <strong>Comprehensive</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement: <strong>Low</strong></td>
<td>Achievement: <strong>Low</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment: <strong>446</strong></td>
<td>Enrollment: <strong>1,210</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Teachers: <strong>25</strong></td>
<td>No. of Teachers: <strong>68</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator: <strong>Principal</strong></td>
<td>Administrators: <strong>Principal, 2 Vice Principals</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note: New principal assigned Sep 2013</td>
<td>Note: Restructured in Sep 2012 from 4 autonomous small schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Starlight High School</th>
<th>Canyon Academy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type: <strong>Comprehensive</strong></td>
<td>Type: <strong>Small</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement: <strong>Average</strong></td>
<td>Achievement: <strong>Average</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment: <strong>1,240</strong></td>
<td>Enrollment: <strong>140</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Teachers: <strong>65</strong></td>
<td>No. of Teachers: <strong>8</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators: Principal, 2 Vice Principals</td>
<td>Administrator: <strong>Principal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note: Middle college model; located on a community college campus</td>
<td>Note: Middle college model; located on a community college campus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crestview High School</th>
<th>Stonemark Charter School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type: <strong>Small</strong></td>
<td>Type: <strong>Charter</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement: <strong>High</strong></td>
<td>Achievement: <strong>High</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment: <strong>433</strong></td>
<td>Enrollment: <strong>829</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Teachers: <strong>19</strong></td>
<td>No. of Teachers: <strong>37</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators: <strong>Principal</strong></td>
<td>Administrators: <strong>Principal, Vice Principal, Chief Administrative Officer, Developmental Director</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note: Principal assigned to also oversee adjacent small school</td>
<td>Note: Admissions process; located on a university campus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

189, while the total number of teachers reported at all of the six schools was 222.

Furthermore, the ESS form was only administered once at each school during a scheduled faculty meeting, thus absent teachers did not have any opportunity to complete a survey.

Finally, in accordance with the informed consent procedures of the university’s institutional review board, teachers completed the ESS form voluntarily and did not have to participate.
Hoy and Sweetland (2001) developed the ESS form to measure a school’s bureaucracy on a continuum, from hindering to enabling. The ESS form included 12 Likert-type items, focusing on the areas of formalization and centralization, significant to bureaucratic structures within schools (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001, p. 307). The 12 prompts and factor structures were:

**Enabling (positive) formalization items:**

- Administrative rules in this school enable authentic communications between teachers and administrators.
- (5) Administrative rules help rather than hinder.
- (10) Administrative rules in this school are guides to solutions rather than rigid procedures.

**Coercive (negative) formalization items:**

- (2) In this school red tape is a problem.
- (7) Administrative rules in this school are used to punish teachers.
- (9) Administrative rules in this school are substitutes for professional judgment.

**Enabling (positive) centralization items:**

- (3) The administrative hierarchy of this school enables teachers to do their job.
- (6) The administrative hierarchy of this school facilitates the mission of the school.
- (12) The administrators in this school use their authority to enable teachers to do their job.
Hindering (negative) centralization items:

(4) The administrative hierarchy obstructs student achievement.

(8) The administrative hierarchy on this school obstructs innovation.

(11) In this school the authority of the principal is used to undermine teachers.

(Hoy and Sweetland, 2001; p. 307)

Hoy and Sweetland (2001) assessed the ESS for factor stability, validity and reliability (p. 309). They and other researchers have used the survey instrument in numerous studies to determine how teachers perceive their school’s bureaucratic structures.

The results of the ESS forms were first separated by school, then calculated to determine an average ESS school score. Those school scores were converted to standardized scores with a mean of 500 and a standard deviation of 100. Finally, a Pearson-r correlation coefficient was calculated to determine the relationship between the standardized ESS scores and corresponding 2013 Growth API scores for each school. However, due to the small sample size of six schools, no statistically significant conclusions could be made regarding the API-ESS correlation.

Permission to use the ESS form was granted by its developer, Dr. Wayne Hoy.

Interviews

One of the qualitative components of data collection for this mixed methods study was the individual interviews conducted with three principals of selected schools. The schools selected for the principal interviews were also purposefully culled in order to ensure one the three academic achievement levels were represented. Thus, the principals of Ridgepoint High School (low achieving), Canyon Academy (average achieving) and Crestview High School (high achieving) were picked to participate in the interviews. The
purpose of the interview was to ascertain the principal’s specific perspectives on the bureaucratic structures that exist within her school, as well as on the bureaucracy from the district office. The principals responded openly and honestly about their views of bureaucracy and how they managed it on their school sites and with the district hierarchy.

The interviews followed a semi-structured format (Merriam, 1998, p. 74). A series of open-ended questions related to bureaucracy were used and, depending on the responses of the principals, unstructured, follow-up prompts or questions were asked. Specific questions included:

Internal/Site-Based Prompts

1. Tell me about the leadership structure of your school? Who, or what groups, are responsible for day-to-day decisions as well as long-term planning and decision-making?

2. Who establishes, communicates, and maintains the mission, vision, and purpose of your school? Are those responsibilities shared?

3. How would you characterize the following features of your school:
   a. student achievement?
   b. learning environment; is it personalized?
   c. bureaucracy; is it enabling or hindering?

External/District-Based Prompts

1. How do you interact/interface with district-level leadership?

2. Do you have one person or office or many people or offices you consult with at the district for assistance at your school site? For example, if you have a problem with some equipment, whom do you contact?
3. How would you characterize the operations of the district offices in support of your school? Are the people that work at the district enabling or hindering to your work as a site principal? Cite some examples.

Prior to conducting the study, these interview prompts were piloted with a small group of educational leaders—researchers and principals (Merriam, 1998; p. 75). Feedback regarding the validity and reliability of these interview questions was obtained. A sample of the principal interview worksheet is included in Appendix B.

All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed. The data from the interviews were reviewed and coded using the constant comparative analysis method (Creswell, 2007, p. 64; Merriam, 1998, p. 159). The analysis examined the principals’ responses, looking for emerging thematic patterns around bureaucracy, specifically structures and procedures, communication, and school mission.

Teacher Focus Groups

The other component of the qualitative data collected for this study was from teacher focus groups sessions. The focus groups were conducted and the same three schools as the individual principal interviews—Ridgepoint High School, Canyon Academy and Crestview High School. The purpose of the focus groups was to gather data on the teachers’ perspectives on the bureaucracy at their respective schools. Creswell (2007) affirmed, “Focus groups are advantageous when the interaction among interviewees will likely yield the best information, when interviewees are similar and cooperative with each other … and when individuals interviewed one-on-one may be hesitant to provide information” (p. 133).
Each focus group included at least four purposefully selected teachers, controlled to represent different secondary content areas (i.e. English, history, mathematics, science, special education, elective classes). These selected teachers responded to semi-structured questions about bureaucracy and achievement, such as:

1. Tell me about the leadership structure of your school? Who, or what groups, are responsible for day-to-day decisions as well as long-term planning and decision-making?
2. How would you characterize student achievement at this school?
3. How would you characterize the bureaucracy of this school? Would you describe the bureaucracy as hindering or enabling?

Prior to conducting the study, these focus group interview prompts were piloted with a small group of teachers at school unrelated to the study (Merriam, 1998; p. 75). A sample of the worksheet used in the teacher focus group interview is included in Appendix C. Feedback regarding the validity and reliability of these interview questions was obtained. All focus group sessions were recorded and transcribed. The data from these focus groups were reviewed and coded using the constant comparative analysis method (Creswell, 2007, p. 64; Merriam, 1998, p. 159). The analysis examined the teachers’ responses, looking for emerging thematic patterns around bureaucracy, specifically structures and procedures, communication and school mission.

**Concurrent Triangulation Comparison**

Another aspect of data analysis for this mixed-methods study was to conduct a concurrent triangulation comparison (Creswell, 2007; p. 213). This comparison identified specific items from the ESS form and juxtaposed those results with the qualitative data
gleaned from the interviews and focus group sessions. This merged dataset revealed five topics closely to the themes generated by the constant comparative analysis: communication, red tape, enabling teachers, facilitating school mission, and professional judgment.

**Limitations**

This study was limited by the purposefully selected group of urban high schools and their respective principals and teachers (Merriam, 1998; p. 42). The selected schools of this study came from one urban school district in southern California. The demography of this specific geographic location is unique, particularly the high number of students whose primary language is not English. Furthermore, the economic base of urban southern California revolves around tourism, which is a very different industry from some Midwest or Northeastern metropolitan areas that may have industrial and manufacturing economic foundations.

Certainly, the generalizability of such a small sample is considered a limitation (Merriam, 1998). Thus, the findings of this research, while significant to the participating schools, districts, and respective faculties, may not be applicable to other schools and districts. Nonetheless, the goal of this mixed methods research, regardless of the limitations, was to contribute to the knowledge base of the inner-workings of urban high schools, specifically how teachers and principals interacted with the schools’ bureaucracies.

**Ethical Concerns**

Merriam (1998) warned against research bias in conducting a qualitative research (p. 42). In this particular study, the principal researcher attempted to remain as objective
as possible. The ESS form had already been vetted by the initial researchers, Hoy and Sweetland (2001), and thus had established factor stability, validity, and reliability. Furthermore, all responses, interviews, and focus group data collected from the participating school remained confidential. Pseudonyms for the schools and all participants were used throughout this study. Additionally, the principals that participated in the study were provided transcribed copies of their individual interviews so that they could conduct member checks to establish veracity (Reilly, 2013). Finally, an advanced draft of the study was provided to the principals of each school; thus, the principals had an opportunity to give feedback and point out any inconsistencies prior to final submittal.

This research project was approved as exempt by the Institutional Review Board of San Diego State University. The approval letter from the university is included in Appendix D.

Conclusion

This research study of various bureaucratic structures of urban high schools in relation to student achievement was conducted using a mixed methods research methodology. Six urban high schools from one district were purposefully selected for this investigation. The source of the quantitative data is from the published 2013 Growth Academic Performance Index (API) scores, indicating each school’s student achievement, and from results of the ESS, an instrument developed by Hoy and Sweetland (2001) designed to measure a hindering or enabling aspects of a school’s bureaucracy. The qualitative components of this mixed methods study came from individual interviews with the principals and focus group sessions with the teachers at three further purposefully selected schools—one low achieving, one average achieving,
and one high achieving. The multi-component, mixed methods data collection provided a rich accumulation of information from which to compare the bureaucracies of the six selected schools and specify examples of enabling or hindering structures.
CHAPTER 4—FINDINGS

In an effort to analyze principals’ and teachers’ perceptions of the internal and external bureaucracy, this mixed methods study examined six purposefully selected high schools in a large, urban district in Southern California. In all six of the high schools, the 12-item ESS was administered to teachers. From that survey instrument, an ESS score was calculated and the schools were categorized on a continuum from hindering to enabling (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001, p. 318). Additionally, individual principal interviews and teacher focus group sessions were conducted at three of the six schools. That qualitative data was analyzed and coded for three dominant themes related to bureaucracy: procedures and structures, communication, and school mission.

This chapter includes a brief overview of the urban high schools examined in this study, a synopsis of the ESS survey results and corresponding continuum, and a constant comparative analysis of the qualitative data gathered during the individual principal interviews and the teacher focus group sessions. This section concludes with a juxtapositional view of the survey and interview data sets.

The Sample Schools

Six urban high schools from the Sunray Unified School District (pseudonym) in Southern California were purposefully selected for this research. In order to meet the urban requirements as defined by this study, the student populations at each school had to have at least 65% of the students qualifying for the National School Lunch Program and at least 70% students of color (African or African American, Latino, or Asian descent). Table 3 depicts the six selected schools along with their respective percentages of students of color and of socioeconomically disadvantaged students.
Table 3

*Students of Color/Economically Disadvantaged at Selected High Schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>% of Students of Color</th>
<th>% Socioeconomically Disadvantaged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forewind High School</td>
<td>92.1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ridgepoint High School</td>
<td>95.6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starlight High School</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>70.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canyon Academy</td>
<td>85.7</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crestview High School</td>
<td>84.2</td>
<td>67.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stonemark Charter School</td>
<td>96.4</td>
<td>98.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Quantitative Data Analysis**

The ESS form (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001) was administered to the teaching faculty at each selected school. The ESS included 12 Likert-type prompts, which Hoy and Sweetland (2001) described as “a balanced measure with 6 enabling items (positive loadings) and 6 hindering items (negative loadings)” (p. 309). Hoy and Sweetland developed the ESS form to gauge a school’s bureaucracy on a continuum, from hindering to enabling. They described this bipolar construct as:

An *enabling bureaucracy* is a hierarchy that helps rather than hinders and a system of rules and regulations that guides problem solving rather than punishes failure. … In enabling school structures principals and teachers work cooperatively across recognized authority boundaries while retaining distinct roles. Similarly, rules and regulations are flexible guides for problem solving rather than constraints that create problems. In brief both hierarchy and rules are mechanisms to support teachers rather than vehicles to enhance principal power.

A *hindering bureaucracy* is a hierarchy that impedes and system of rules and regulations that is coercive. The basic objective of hierarchy is disciplined
compliance of teachers. … To achieve the goal of disciplined compliance, the hierarchy and rules are used to gain conformity. … The power of the principal is enhanced but the work of the teachers is diminished. (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001, p. 318; emphasis added)

According to the parametrics of the ESS form reported by Hoy and Sweetland (2001), a standardized score of 500 was the average from normative data established in previous research samples. Thus, the ESS Standardized Scores calculated for three of the schools (Forewind, Starlight, and Ridgepoint) were below the determined mean, and would be considered on the hindering side of the bureaucratic continuum. The ESS Standardized Scores for the remaining schools (Crestview, Canyon, and Stonemark) were above the established mean, and thus would be considered on the enabling side of the continuum. Table 4 displays the six selected high school ranked by their corresponding ESS Standardized Score.

As stated in Chapter 3, the six urban high schools were purposefully selected based on student achievement, as evidenced by the 2013 Growth Academic Performance Index (API) scores. The six schools were selected as follows:

- 2 schools with API scores one standard deviation below the mean; these schools were considered as low achieving.
- 2 schools from the group with API scores in between the standard deviations; these schools were considered as average achieving.
- 2 schools from the group with API score on standard deviation above the mean; these schools were considered as high achieving.
Table 4

*Selected High Schools Ranked by ESS Standardized Score*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>ESS Standardized Score</th>
<th>Bureaucratic Continuum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forewind High School</td>
<td>360.89</td>
<td>Hindering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starlight High School</td>
<td>397.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ridgepoint High School</td>
<td>410.76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MEAN</strong></td>
<td><strong>500</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crestview High School</td>
<td>628.61</td>
<td>Enabling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canyon Academy</td>
<td>660.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stonemark Charter School</td>
<td>704.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 displays the schools in order of their 2013 Growth API scores, with their corresponding ESS Standardized Scores, as well as descriptors of their respective student achievements and bureaucracies.

In the sample from Sunray Unified School District, the ESS form was administered to a total of 169 teachers. The lowest scoring school on the ESS form, Forewind High School (360.89), was almost 1.5 standard deviations below the mean—lower than approximately 90% of the schools surveyed in the normative sample. Stonemark Charter Academy (704.72), the highest scoring school in the Sunray sample, was over two standard deviations above the mean—higher than 97% of schools from the normative sample. Both schools also had the lowest and highest corresponding Academic Performance Index scores, respectively. Forewind’s 2013 Growth API (637) was almost 1.25 standard deviations below the mean; Stonemark’s 2013 Growth API (888) was almost 1.90 standard deviations above the mean.
Table 5

Selected High Schools Ranked by API with ESS Standardized Scores and Study Descriptors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>2013 Growth API Score</th>
<th>ESS Standardized Score</th>
<th>Study Descriptor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forewind High School</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>360.89</td>
<td>low achieving hindering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ridgepoint High School</td>
<td>649</td>
<td>410.76</td>
<td>low achieving moderate hindering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starlight High School</td>
<td>692</td>
<td>397.64</td>
<td>average achieving hindering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESS MEAN</td>
<td></td>
<td>500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>API MEAN</td>
<td>737.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canyon Academy</td>
<td>791</td>
<td>660.10</td>
<td>average achieving enabling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crestview High School</td>
<td>866</td>
<td>628.61</td>
<td>high achieving enabling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stonemark Charter School</td>
<td>888</td>
<td>704.72</td>
<td>high achieving very enabling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

standard deviation = 79.3

standard deviation = 100

Though there was not a perfect, one-to-one correlation between the API scores and ESS scores (Ridgepoint High School and Canyon High School both had higher ESS scores than schools with higher API scores), the Pearson-\(r\) coefficient for the scores was +0.947—indicating a high, positive correlation (significant at the 0.01 level). However, the sample size—six schools—was too small to demonstrate any statistically significant conclusions between the ESS scores and the API scores.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data collection and analysis of this study included individual principal interviews and teacher focus group sessions in three of the selected schools. These three schools were selected based on their respective 2013 Growth Academic
Performance Index scores (Ridgepoint-low achieving; Canyon-average achieving; Crestview-high achieving). The purpose of the interviews and focus group sessions was to ascertain specific perspectives on the bureaucratic structures that exist within each school (internal), as well as bureaucracy from the district office (external). The prompts for both the principal interviews and the teacher focus group sessions were as follows:

Internal/Site-Based Prompts

1. What is the leadership structure of your school? Who, or what groups, are responsible for day-to-day decisions as well as long-term planning and decision-making?

2. Who establishes, communicates, and maintains the mission, vision, and purpose of your school? Are those responsibilities shared?

3. How would you characterize the following features of your school:
   a. student achievement?
   b. learning environment?
   c. bureaucracy; is it enabling or hindering?

External/District-Based Prompts

1. Describe the interaction with specific district offices or departments.

2. Would you characterize the district bureaucratic structure as hindering or enabling the work at the school site?

These principal interviews and teacher focus group sessions from the three selected schools were recorded and transcribed. These transcriptions were reviewed and coded using the constant comparative analysis method (Creswell, 2007, p. 64; Merriam, 1998, p. 159). Initially, the qualitative data from each school was identified as pertaining
to three broad categories: site-based bureaucratic structures, district-based bureaucratic structures, and student achievement. From these broad categories, the statements from the principals and teachers were identified as describing an enabling or hindering bureaucracy. In the last phase of the qualitative data analysis, three dominant themes related to school bureaucracy emerged: procedures and structures, communication, and school mission.

**Procedures and Structures**

At Crestview High School (high achieving/enabling), Principal Kelly Sutherland characterized the organizational structure of her school as “a distributed leadership model.” Sutherland related the size of the school to its organizational structure, stating, “I think that the small school-ness [of Crestview] really is a lot less bureaucratic.” She went on to describe the structure and process through which ideas from the faculty were handled at Crestview:

We [the principal, lead teacher and two counselors], as a group of four … come up with the big ideas. Then, we vet those through the ILT [instructional leadership team] … Remember it’s a small staff, so I’ve already covered half of the staff right there, with the ILT. So then we go to our whole staff and that’s where we get input from them.

Sutherland depicted a simple bureaucratic structure at Crestview High School, with a principal, a lead teacher and two counselors as the administrative team.

In the focus group session, the teachers of Crestview High School questioned the existence of a more formalized distributed leadership structure, with Teacher C asking: “Do we even have an SGT [site governance team] here?” Teacher A responded, “I don’t
even know if we actually have an active one.” Teacher B explained, “I’ve been her eight years. I’ve never heard of it.” Of the formal, collaborative structure, Teacher B further explained, “None of us want to spend our times in meetings. … If you need to talk to a teacher, you just talk to a teacher. … I do wish there was a little bit more push of structure.” Teacher A pointed out, “I would say for newer teachers, [Crestview] is probably not the most supportive environment.” Nonetheless, Teacher A (a veteran teacher) concluded, “I do feel every supported by the administration.”

When asked about her interactions with district-level bureaucracy, Principal Sutherland stated, “Well, to be honest … I try to limit my interactions until I need something. Otherwise, I don’t really have a desire or a need to interact.” She went on to describe the district’s organizational structure as expanding into “more rules and regulations, more people involved, more chain of command, more policies,” culminating into “a very bureaucratic system, where the sites are served really at the bottom of the list.” Ultimately, Sutherland stated that for Crestview High School, the district bureaucracy was “always hindering” and “rarely helpful.” She attributed this hindering, procedure-laden bureaucracy to the “lack of experience or knowledge that most of the people at the district level have.”

Specifically regarding the bureaucracy of Canyon Academy (average achieving/enabling), Principal Jody Morris defined the school’s uncomplicated administrative structure: “Our school has … a secretary, a counselor, and me.” Morris also reported, “My leadership style lends itself to collaboration and using … a democratic system of making decisions.” Principal Morris qualified the organizational structure of
Canyon Academy in terms of the size of the school, stating: “We’re so small, we don’t have a bureaucracy.”

Specifically regarding district-level bureaucratic structures, Principal Morris reported: “The district supports me by letting me fly under the radar. … I’ve had six bosses in six years and they’ve never really understood the program [Canyon Academy] or had the time to learn it.”

During the teacher focus group session, Teacher A reiterated the simplified hierarchy of Canyon Academy: “We have a principal and a counselor.” However, Teachers A and C indicated that most of the day-to-day decisions at the school were made by Principal Morris; they both stated that Morris “has the final say.” Regarding the democratic system Principal Morris referred to in her interview, Teacher B explained, “We work on a lot of things together, as a team, but things still happen in isolation.” In reference to the bureaucracy of Canyon Academy, Teacher B went on to state, “I think we are just very flexible. … As long as what you are doing is not going to fly in the face of policy … we do it.” Teacher D, succinctly mentioned, “We’re not really rule-bound.”

Also in the focus group session at Canyon Academy, teachers mentioned a distinct division between their school and the leadership structure of Sunray Unified School District. Teacher C indicated that Principal Jody Morris took “the brunt” of managing the district bureaucracy. Twice in the conversation, Teacher B stated that in his time at Canyon Academy, he never felt he “was part of Sunray Unified School District.” The separation between Canyon Academy and the district bureaucracy was further evidenced by Teacher A reporting, “The district doesn’t provide certain things. They look
Principal Melanie Baker of Ridgepoint High School (low achieving/moderate hindering) revealed a very complex organizational structure for her site. First, she described her administrative team: “the principal, the two vice principals, my director of student affairs, my financial clerk, the chief custodian, our school police officer, our language resource teacher, who is also a resource teacher over attendance, and our coordinator for our advisory program.” Baker specified the next level in the site bureaucracy as the “instructional leadership team that focuses purely on the academic focus of the school.” Then, Baker explained that the instructional leadership team directed the work of Ridgepoint’s 14 professional learning communities, each of which were led by “trained facilitators that have either been self-identified, nominated, or selected.” These professional learning communities, Baker elaborated, were arranged by “course-alikes, in terms of the core content, and then by electives for those elective classes.” She indicated two more organizational structures, “Site Governance and the SSC [school site council].” Baker stated that the Site Governance was the group that dealt with “shared decision-making of community, school site, teachers, and representatives of our service groups,” while the SSC “monitors and assigns funding through our categorical programs.” Finally, Baker described the student leadership team, the student government, that met to ensure “a flow of conversation in terms of students’ needs, school needs, and how to mutually support each other.” All of the groups mentioned by Principal Baker were scheduled to meet at least once a month, with the professional learning communities meeting a “minimum three times a month.”
Principal Baker further explained the rationale behind the elaborate organizational structure of Ridgepoint High School, specifically outlining the mechanism of the 14 professional learning communities:

We try to … build the capacity within our teachers to be those teacher-leaders that then carry that message to their smaller group, be that their PLC [professional learning community] or their department. That’s all a structural … organizational plan that’s very purposeful in how we get people to be involved in the conversations and to be involved in sort of the distributed leadership model [emphasis added].

In reference to the administrative procedures of Ridgepoint High School, Principal Melanie Baker recalled the previous organizational structure wherein the campus was divided into four, autonomous small schools. Of that small school structure, Baker indicated that while the teachers may have had more autonomy, she discovered some practices and procedures that made her very “nervous as a person who ultimately is responsible for what happens on-site.” She further explained, “There were just some things that they [the teachers] did without any guidance from an administrator.” Thus, Baker said, “There are some things that I’ve centralized,” referring to certain procedures teachers must follow for activities like securing classroom tutors or arranging student field trips.

Regarding the district-level management of specific features of urban high schools, such as staffing and budgets, Principal Baker stated, “For site administrators … there have been roadblocks every step of the way.” She summarized the cumulative effect district-level bureaucracy had on school sites:
I feel that we are being hindered by either negotiations that have been held, tentative agreements that have been made, and organizational changes that have removed people that understand their job and their role and that has deeply impacted the efficacy of certain departments at the district.

In the focus group session at Ridgepoint High School, Teacher D characterized the elaborate administrative rules that Principal Baker described as “more and more hoops.” Teacher D stated that they were “more and more things to do.” Teacher B posited that the administrative rules were enacted because “everyone is fearing liability.” Teacher E portrayed the bureaucratic procedures as “so many obstacles;” Teacher A reinforced the tiered structure, stating, “There’s different levels of bureaucracy, and this one says, ‘You have to go and get this.’ And this level says, ‘Oh that’s the barrier.’”

Also in the teacher focus group session at Ridgepoint High School, Teacher C disputed Principal Baker’s explanation of the school’s organizational structure to foster professional collaboration and participation in distributed leadership: “What happens in the ILT [instructional leadership team] meetings is not necessarily what happens during the PLC meetings … There’s some disconnect there.” Teacher A echoed Teacher C’s depiction of Ridgepoint’s structure, characterizing the day-to-day operations of the schools as “a lot more remote. It’s a lot more distant.” Teacher F harkened back to a time when the four autonomous small schools existed at Ridgepoint, “Things got done more quickly. And you felt like you had someone to talk to. [You] could approach the principal.”

In reference to district-level bureaucratic procedures, the Ridgepoint High School teachers in the focus group portrayed the work of their site-level professional learning
communities (PLCs) as following “district directives” (Teacher A) and as “counter-intuitive, because really professional learning communities are not ‘top-down’” (Teacher C). Relatedly, Teacher F described the district leadership team’s decision to alter the organizational structure of Ridgepoint High School as “top-down” and “against most of the staff’s wishes.” The consensus of the Ridgepoint teacher focus group was that the site-level administration acted as “buffer” to the “interference from the district,” with Teacher E indicating, “They need to give these people [school administrators] more authority. … I’ve never seen an organization of this size micromanage the way these people do.”

**Communication**

During the individual interview session, Kelly Sutherland, the principal of Crestview High School (high achieving/enabling), explained how she communicated with the faculty: “There’s also a lot of informal dialogue over email or calling each other … texting.” Later in the interview, Sutherland continued, “Teachers text me … they grab me … I’m in the classroom.” She also mentioned how she interacts with her staff in the school office: “I have a policy where if my door is open, anybody can walk in.”

Regarding communication among the faculty of Crestview High School, Teacher D stated, “If anyone has an idea, we want to hear it. And then we want to talk about it. And we’ll discuss it. … There’s no bad question or bad answer or bad comment.”

Teacher B spoke about the principal’s role in establishing a culture of communication, indicating that when hiring teachers to work at Crestview, Ms. Sutherland selected “people who she knows are going to be open to working with other teachers.”

Specifically regarding communication with the administrator, Teacher C said that
Principal Sutherland “gives us amazing access;” echoed by Teacher B: “It feels like there’s no bureaucracy. Our voice always gets heard. She [the principal] responds to everything.”

In describing communication between district officials and faculty members at the school site, Crestview Teacher B expressed, “I feel like I have no voice with the district.” Teacher C reiterated that sentiment, stating, “I feel like the district is not listening.” Teacher A, however, disagreed with her colleagues, mentioning that when she participated in district-level Reading Department meetings, her ideas and contribution were respected. She said, “My experiences with that particular department have been very positive.”

During the individual interview, Jody Morris, principal of Canyon Academy (average achieving/enabling), described the communication with the newly appointed district-level leadership team, stating that she had “no contact whatsoever” with them. Principal Morris detailed an account of a communication miscue when an expenditure for her school’s textbooks and physical education classes required approval from district-level management: “In June, I put in a request for [the] contracted services. ... I followed up in July, and then August, and then September.” Morris indicated that it was October before the funding was approved because of a communication breakdown: “It was obvious that they [district leadership] had no idea what we were doing, why we were doing it, why we wanted this money.”

Principal Melanie Baker of Ridgepoint High School (low achieving/moderate hindering) described the bureaucracy of Sunray Unified School District as an “ever-evolving organizational chart,” thus making communication with district “very
haphazard” and “less responsive.” She continued, admonishing district officials to systemically address the dysfunctional communication: “There has to be some sort of template, some articulation of timelines, planning, communication, where there’s a central calendar where we don’t have all these competing programs or deadlines. … I don’t believe [district] Department A is talking to [district] Department B.”

Ridgepoint High School teachers in the focus group session concurred with Principal Baker’s characterization of district-level communication to the school sites. Teacher D stated, “They’re [the district leaders] all way out there, so I don’t have any contact with them. … There’s no communication [between district offices and schools].” These same teachers at Ridgepoint also detailed hindering communication issues within their school; when commenting on student placement decisions for math courses, Teacher F stated, “They’re [the administrators and academic counselors] not listening. Not listening. The rules are the rules … even though they’re the wrong rules.”

School Mission

In the individual interview, Kelly Sutherland of Crestview High School (high achieving/enabling) first mentioned that she had been the school’s principal “for the last 10 years,” since it had opened. Then, in defining the mission of the school, she stated:

I have to go back to why the school was created in the first place and what the thinking behind the school was when it started. … We opened the school with the idea that we wanted to create a very academically-focused and academically-supportive school for students that traditionally would have access to post-secondary options. … That was our mission. … We wanted to provide an opportunity for students that traditionally don’t have access to college or
Principal Sutherland summarized the result of implementing the Crestview’s mission, tersely remarking, “The kids really do come to school knowing that it’s going to be a calm, quiet, academically-focused school.”

The Crestview High School teachers, in the focus group session, reiterated Principal Sutherland’s remarks about the school’s mission. Teacher A stated that the administration had developed a “college-going culture,” with a “places like advisory that give extra support. So, there’s a structure in place for student achievement.” Teacher B expressed, “At least in my personal experience, they [the Crestview administrators] always support the teacher.” She further explained how the school’s leadership facilitates the mission of the school: “There’s a structure for the kids, but I don’t feel like there’s this weird hierarchy or anything. … And, I believe that our administration takes away all of the things that would distract us from academics.”

At Canyon Academy (average achieving/enabling), Principal Morris indicated that the mission of: “All students will graduate from a four-year university.” She explained that when the school opened, “two teachers and I really worked on that vision [mission] together. And then it’s kind of organically grown. … It’s really helped me keep the teachers focused on why we’re here and what we’re doing.”

In the teacher focus group session, Teacher D announced the mission of Canyon Academy: “To have kids graduate and be successful in a four-year college or university.” In support, Teacher A stated, “That is the mission. And, when this school first opened, all of the teachers got together to work on the mission and vision with the principal.”
Teacher B elaborated, “We collectively had this singular mission for our students … that we’d do anything necessary to do what’s best for the students.”

When asked specifically about “goals, mission, vision,” Melanie Baker, principal of Ridgepoint High School (low achieving; moderate hindering) did not respond about the school’s mission; instead she reiterated the roles of the various structures of the school:

The administrative team has short-term and long-term planning and responsibilities for leadership. The ILT [instructional leadership team] … is really focused on the instructional, academic component of the school. … They’re [the ILT members] also charged with leading and facilitating those [14] PLCs [professional learning communities].

Though Baker characterized the atmosphere of Ridgepoint as one “that allowed and fostered for collaboration,” and described the learning environment as “evolving” in the faculty’s attempts to “increase rigor and give English learners multiple opportunities to use the language,” the principal did not directly refer to a stated, concise mission of the school.

Similarly, the six teachers from Ridgepoint High School that participated in the focus group referenced the creation of the school’s mission and vision; however, none of the teachers clearly articulated a mission statement during the session. Teacher A described the process:

In creating our mission and vision, we had a group of staff meet over the summer between the closure of the small schools and the opening of the big school. And so there were a group of teachers who were willing to meet over the summer and
they created the mission and the vision as sort of a melding of all the four mission and vision statements of the other small schools.

When directly asked if any of the six teachers in the focus group participated in these volunteer mission development groups, none responded. Later in the session, Teacher F commented, “Personalization is gone,” when referring to the administrators’ relationships with the students. As a concluding comment, Teacher C reflected on when Ridgepoint had small schools, stating “The personalities of the schools … definitely reflected the personalities of the principals … as well as the teachers because teachers had a lot more say on what was happening administratively.” The absence of any explicit statement regarding the mission of Ridgepoint High School was noted in both the principal interview and the teacher focus group session.

Concurrent Triangulation Comparison

Another aspect of data analysis for this mixed-methods study was to conduct a concurrent triangulation comparison (Creswell, 2007; p. 213). This comparison used selected items from Hoy and Sweetland’s (2001) ESS form and juxtaposed those results with data gleaned from the interviews and focus group sessions.

As noted earlier, principal interviews and teacher focus group sessions were conducted in three schools: Ridgepoint High School (low achieving/moderate hindering), Canyon Academy (average achieving/enabling), and Crestview High School (high achieving/enabling). Table 6 displays the item analysis for the five specifically selected ESS prompts (three with positive loads, two with negative loads). These items were selected for the concurrent triangulation comparison as they directly related to the
### Table 6

**Concurrent Triangulation Comparison ESS Item Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESS Item</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Once in a While</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Fairly Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Administrative rules in this school enable authentic communication between teachers and administrators. (+)</td>
<td>Ridgepoint</td>
<td>3(7%)</td>
<td>7(16%)</td>
<td>15(35%)</td>
<td>14(33%)</td>
<td>3(7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canyon</td>
<td>1(10%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3(30%)</td>
<td>6(60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crestview</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3(20%)</td>
<td>3(20%)</td>
<td>9(60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. In this school red tape is a problem. (-)</td>
<td>Ridgepoint</td>
<td>2(5%)</td>
<td>12(28%)</td>
<td>22(51%)</td>
<td>5(12%)</td>
<td>1(2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canyon</td>
<td>5(50%)</td>
<td>4(40%)</td>
<td>1(10%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crestview</td>
<td>3(20%)</td>
<td>4(27%)</td>
<td>4(27%)</td>
<td>3(20%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The administrative hierarchy of this school enables teachers to do their job. (+)</td>
<td>Ridgepoint</td>
<td>3(7%)</td>
<td>3(7%)</td>
<td>8(19%)</td>
<td>20(47%)</td>
<td>7(16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canyon</td>
<td>1(10%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4(40%)</td>
<td>5(50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crestview</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1(7%)</td>
<td>3(20%)</td>
<td>10(67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The administrative hierarchy of this school facilitates the mission of the school. (+)</td>
<td>Ridgepoint</td>
<td>4(9%)</td>
<td>4(9%)</td>
<td>11(26%)</td>
<td>17(40%)</td>
<td>4(9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canyon</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1(10%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3(30%)</td>
<td>5(50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crestview</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3(20%)</td>
<td>3(20%)</td>
<td>9(60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Administrative rules in this school are substitutes for professional judgment. (-)</td>
<td>Ridgepoint</td>
<td>6(14%)</td>
<td>15(35%)</td>
<td>10(23%)</td>
<td>9(21%)</td>
<td>1(2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canyon</td>
<td>6(60%)</td>
<td>2(20%)</td>
<td>1(10%)</td>
<td>1(10%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crestview</td>
<td>7(47%)</td>
<td>1(7%)</td>
<td>5(33%)</td>
<td>1(7%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

+=positive load
-=negative load
question of the semi-structured interview sessions and the three emergent themes of the qualitative analysis: procedures and structures, communication, and school mission.

The following narrative highlights some of the significant findings of the concurrent triangulation comparison:

**Authentic Communication**

At Crestview High School, 100% of the teachers surveyed with the ESS selected “sometimes” to “always” as a response to the prompt: “Administrative rules in this school enable authentic communication between teacher and administrators.” None (0%) of the Crestview teachers indicated “never” or “once in a while” for this prompt. These responses coincided with the qualitative findings in that during the individual interview, Crestview principal Kelly Sutherland stated that she was very accessible to her staff: “Teachers text me … they grab me … I’m in the classroom.” During the focus group session at Crestview, Teacher B supported the notion of the principal’s accessibility, “There’s no layers … you just go right to the principal.”

**Red Tape**

On the ESS survey, 90% of the teachers at Canyon Academy indicated that “red tape” was either “never” a problem or only a problem “once in a while.” Only one teacher (10%) responded that red tape was a problem “sometimes.” None (0%) of the Canyon Academy teachers indicated that red tape was problem “fairly often” or “always.” Canyon Academy Principal Jody Morris confirmed those ESS responses, stating, “We’re so small, we don’t have a bureaucracy.” Teacher B echoed that sentiment, recalling his tenure at another school when the teachers “dealt more with the school
policies instead of actual students.” He continued, “Everything we do is for the betterment of the school. … It makes our jobs easier.”

**Enabling Teachers**

The majority of Canyon Academy teachers (90%) indicated “fairly often” or “always” to the ESS prompt: “The administrative hierarchy of this school enables teachers to do their jobs.” Regarding the enabling culture at Canyon Academy, Principal Morris cited that the teachers, not the administration, “hold each other accountable.” She furthered explained her role as the leader in supporting the teachers, stating, “I really do try to protect them from outside forces that they don’t need to deal with. … They need to be teaching … that’s their job.” In focus group session, the teachers of Canyon Academy reiterated the principal’s supportive role in establishing an enabling environment.

Regarding external curriculum demands from the district office, Teacher D stated, “Jody says just do what the kids need and you have my permission to teach this curriculum and not that curriculum, regardless of what they [district officials] say.” Regarding external bureaucratic procedures like completing specific paperwork or adhering to district protocols, Teacher C reported, “Jody takes the brunt of that for us. … We are just sheltered from it.”

**Facilitating School Mission**

Eighty percent of the Canyon Academy teachers responded with “fairly often” and “always,” to the ESS prompt: “The administrative hierarchy of this school facilitates the mission of this school.” Principal Jody Morris succinctly articulated the mission of Canyon Academy as “All students will graduate from a four-year university.” Teacher D repeated the mission in the focus group session, stating, “The mission of the school is to
have kids graduate and be successful in a four-year college or university.” Noting the ubiquity of the mission at Canyon Academy, Teacher D continued, “I only started last year and I was told that that was the mission of the school.”

At Crestview High School, all 15 teachers (100%) indicated at least “sometimes” that the administrative hierarchy “facilitates the mission of the school,” with 60% of the faculty selecting “always” for that prompt. Principal Sutherland described the mission of Crestview as “a very academically-focused and academically supportive school for students that traditionally would not have access to post-secondary options.” In support of that stated mission, Teacher B reported, “Our administration takes away all of the things that would distract us from academics.” Teacher D contended that school’s leadership handled student behavioral issues so effectively, that the Crestview teachers “have so much time of classroom instruction, with little management [discipline].”

At Ridgepoint High School, 18% of the teachers responded “never” or “once in a while” to the same prompt regarding the school mission. The data from Ridgepoint’s principal interview and teacher focus group session supported this finding in that neither the principal nor the selected teachers directly articulated the mission of the school. Teacher D spoke about the process of establishing the mission when the campus converted from four small schools to a comprehensive site; however, the mission of Ridgepoint was not stated during the session.

**Professional Judgment**

Thirty-five teachers (81%) at Ridgepoint High School selected “once in a while” to “always” in response to the ESS prompt, “Administrative rules in this school are substitutes for professional judgment.” In reference to this finding, Principal Melanie
Baker mentioned how she had to establish some distinct protocols “for the safety of the students.” She admitted, “They [the teachers] may see the site bureaucracy as impeding some of their work.” The teachers at Ridgepoint concurred; of the new bureaucratic process for screening volunteers, Teacher E stated, “You can’t possibly come up with anything more daunting.” Regarding procedures to get field trips approved, Teacher D said, “Because of the bureaucracy … I had to cancel my Hope Museum trip … and not get those kids an experience of a lifetime. And lose thousands of dollars of grant money.”

**Conclusion**

The quantitative results of ESS form, coupled with the qualitative data collected from the principal interviews and teacher focus groups created a unique and compelling data set for this mixed methods study. The results of ESS survey determined the placement of the six purposefully selected urban high school on the continuum from hindering to enabling. The ESS Standardized Scores were closely related to student achievement as defined by the established academic performance index (API) scores of the six schools. The data from the interviews and focus group sessions provided specific examples of enabling and hindering bureaucracies, with the three dominant themes emerging from the constant comparative analysis: procedures and structures, communication, and school mission. Finally, the juxtaposition of the quantitative and qualitative data in the concurrent triangulation comparison defined some trends closely related to the emergent themes, and displayed some trends for further discussion in the following chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE—DISCUSSION

In 2008, the Cities in Crisis (Swanson) report indicated that the high school graduation rate in America’s 50 largest metropolitan areas was around 70%. For African American and Latino students—those most likely to live in urban areas—the noted high school graduation rate dipped to below 60%. In the years since the Cities in Crisis study, nation-wide graduation rates had reportedly climbed to over 80%, “for the first time in U.S. history” (Simon, 2014). However, the same recent news article indicated, “A handful of districts including Denver, New Orleans, Cleveland and Atlanta do not graduate even 60 percent of their students.” In response to this enduring problem in our urban areas, government and school officials have attempted myriad improvement efforts, including the closure of schools labeled as “failing” (Brady, 2003; de la Torre & Gwynne, 2009; Murphy & Meyers, 2008; Stuit; 2010), the “reconstitution” of struggling schools (Manwaring, 2010; Meier, 2002; Perez & Socias, 2008; Toch, 2003; Vander Ark, 2002), the implementation of the “high-quality academic” Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers [NGA & CCCSO], 2010), the expansion of “selective enrollment” public high schools (Ahmed-Ullah & Byrne, 2014), and the infusion of “college and career readiness” curricula in middle schools (Brown, 2014). However, none of these reform efforts squarely addressed the “study of schools and school districts as organizations” (Crowson, 2011). Even in the cases of “reconstitution” or restructuring of school sites into smaller units, the administrative personnel of a particular school or district could have been addressed superficially, but the bureaucracies of the systems have remained “rigid and incompetent” (Payne, 2010, p. 122).
Crowson (2011) explained the focus of most of the research on school and district bureaucracies, tersely referencing the prominent contributions of Tyack (1974), Rogers (1968) and Lipsky (1980).

Organizational analyses in education have traditionally been fond of faulting the vestiges of one-best-system bureaucratization in city schooling, exploring hierarchal or top-down against bottom-up relations in city districts, … faulting the “pathologies” of school systems in managing to resist reform and restructuring again and again, and examining the “street-level” implementation of the rules and regulations passed down from the central office above. (p. 466)

Instead of elucidating only the “organizational struggles of city school districts” (p. 466), Crowson (2011) implored researchers to consider “just how to bring urban school district organizations into a turn-around mode of enhanced effectiveness” (p. 476).

Beginning with the premise forwarded by Hoy and Sweetland (2001), “Schools are bureaucracies” (p. 296), this mixed methods research project examined the perceptions of site-level and district-level bureaucracy held by selected teachers and principals in a large, urban school district, in Southern California. The primary research question of this study was: How do the bureaucratic structures in urban high schools vary relative to student achievement? The secondary research questions involved the urban high school principals’ and teachers’ perceptions of bureaucracy as well as the management of site and district level bureaucratic structures. These secondary questions were:

- How do urban high school principals’ and teachers’ perceptions of bureaucratic structures vary relative to schools’ student achievement levels?
• How do urban high school principals’ and teachers’ approaches to managing site-level bureaucracy vary relative to student achievement levels?

• How do urban high school principals’ and teachers’ approaches to managing district-level bureaucracy vary relative to student achievement levels?

Six urban high schools with varying student achievement levels were purposefully selected for this study. Each school selected served students from the following demographics: at least 65% of the students were identified as eligible to participate in the National School Lunch Program, and thus considered economically disadvantaged, and 70% of the students represented diverse cultures (including students of African or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Asian, or Native American ancestry).

Teachers in all six schools (N=169) were administered the 12-item ESS form, a survey instrument designed to measure a school’s bureaucracy on a bipolar continuum, from enabling to hindering (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001). Concurrent with the administration of the ESS form, individual principal interviews and teachers focus group sessions were conducted at three of the six selected schools. The qualitative interview data were collected and through constant comparative analysis (Creswell, 2007, p. 64), three major themes emerged: procedures and structures, communication, and school mission. Finally, the quantitative and qualitative data were juxtaposed and analyzed using the concurrent triangulation comparison (Creswell, 2007, p. 213).

Quantitative Findings

The collected quantitative data did not reveal a perfect, one-to-one correlation between the student achievement indicators (the academic performance indices, or API scores) and the ESS standardized scores calculated from the surveys; Ridgepoint High
School and Canyon High School both had higher ESS scores than schools with higher API scores. But, the Pearson-\(r\) coefficient for the API and ESS scores was +0.947—indicating a high, positive correlation (significant at the 0.01 level). The sample size of six schools, however, was too small to demonstrate any statistically significant conclusions between the ESS scores and the API scores. Notwithstanding, the higher achieving high schools (Stonemark, Crestview and Canyon) all had ESS scores that were above the mean (enabling), while the lower achieving schools (Starlight, Ridgepoint and Forewind) all had ESS scores that were lower than the mean (hindering).

**Qualitative Findings**

Hoy and Sweetland (2001), the developers of the ESS form suggested that future research on school bureaucracy be qualitative in order to “map specific examples of enabling rules and enabling hierarchy, as well as the internal dynamics of such structures” (p. 316). Thus, the qualitative aspect of this study found examples of bureaucratic features, specifically those organizational aspects related to the major themes of structures and procedures, communication, and school mission. For example, Principal Kelly Sutherland, of Crestview High School (high achieving/enabling) identified the simplified hierarchy of the school’s administration—a principal, a lead teacher, and two counselors—as contributing to the school’s enabling bureaucratic structure. She also mentioned a “distributed leadership model,” wherein major issues were brought to the faculty for action, either through instructional leadership team meetings or through general staff meetings. One of the Crestview teachers echoed Principal’s Sutherland’s depiction of the simple leadership structure, noting there was
plenty of collaboration among the teachers and much “support from the [Crestview administration].”

Similarly, the interview and focus group data showed that communication at Crestview High School (high achieving/enabling) seemed unfettered by bureaucracy. Principal Sutherland reported that she engaged in mostly “informal dialogue” with her faculty: “Teachers text me … they grab me … I’m in the classroom.” Regarding communication between teachers and administration, a Crestview teacher clarified, “It feels like there’s no bureaucracy. Our voice always gets heard. She [the principal] responds to everything.” Another teacher explained the collaborative communication efforts between teachers within the simplified bureaucratic structure: “None of us want to spend our times in meetings. … If you need to talk to a teacher, you just talk to a teacher.”

Within the simplified site-level bureaucratic structure and open paths of communication, evidence of a clearly articulated school mission was also found in the qualitative data from Crestview High School (high achieving/enabling). Principal Sutherland defined the school’s mission as creating “a very academically-focused and academically-supportive school for students that traditionally would not have access to post-secondary options.” A Crestview teacher revealed how the simplified bureaucracy facilitated the identified mission: “There’s a structure for the kids, but I don’t feel like there’s this weird hierarchy or anything [for staff]. … And, I believe that our administration takes away all of the things that would distract us from academics.”

Conversely, the qualitative data from Ridgepoint High School (low achieving/moderate hindering) showed the bureaucratic features that negatively affected
procedures and structures, communication, and school mission. Though she also classified the bureaucracy of Ridgepoint as a “distributed leadership model,” Principal Melanie Baker described a complicated hierarchal structure that included the administrative team (“the principal, the two vice principals, my director of student affairs, my financial clerk, the chief custodian, our school police officer, our language resource teacher, who is also a resource teacher over attendance, and our coordinator for our advisory program”), the instructional leadership team, 14 professional learning communities, a site governance team, a school site council, and the student government. Of this elaborate team structure, a Ridgepoint teacher characterized the administration as “a lot more remote … distant.” Another teacher portrayed it as “more and more hoops.” Yet another teacher recalled a previous, small-school structure at Ridgepoint, wherein “things got done more quickly. And you felt like you had someone to talk to. [You] could approach the principal.”

The intricate bureaucratic structure of Ridgepoint High School (low achieving/moderate hindering) affected communication, as evidenced by the interview and focus group data. Principal Baker represented the site-level bureaucracy as an “organizational plan that’s very purposeful in how we get people to be involved in the conversations [of running the school].” However, a Ridgepoint teacher expressed a different sentiment about the school’s bureaucracy with regards to communication: “What happens in the ILT [instructional leadership team] meetings is not necessarily what happens during the PLC meetings … There’s some disconnect there.” Another teacher mentioned that when making student placement decisions, “They’re [the administrators and academic counselors] not listening. Not listening.”
The complex bureaucracy and problematic communication referred to in Ridgepoint High School’s (low achieving/moderate hindering) principal interview and teacher focus group sessions attested to the unclear articulation of the school’s mission. Neither Principal Baker nor any of the six teachers directly responded to the prompt about the school’s vision. Baker defined the school’s learning environment as “evolving,” with attempts by the faculty to “increase rigor and give English learners multiple opportunities to use the language;” however, she did not articulate a clear vision of Ridgepoint. Similarly, one of the Ridgepoint teachers reported on the process to create the mission and vision of the school, but none of the six teachers that participated in the focus group session directly stated the vision of the school.

**Concurrent Triangulation Comparison**

The concurrent triangulation analysis (Creswell, 2007, p. 213) revealed some specific bureaucratic structures at the three schools that participated in both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of this study. For example, at Crestview High School (high achieving/enabling) 100% of the teachers indicated “sometimes” to “always” to ESS prompt: “Administrative rules in this school enable authentic communication between teachers and administrators,” The responses to this survey item related directly to the bureaucracy of Crestview, as evidenced by the data from principal interview and focus group session. Principal Sutherland reported that she was purposefully accessible to the school community: “I have a policy where if my door is open, anybody can walk in.” Similarly, one of the Crestview teachers reiterated Principal Sutherland’s accessibility and the lack of administrative procedures regarding communication, “There’s no layers … you just go right to the principal.”
At Canyon Academy (average achieving/enabling), 90% of the teachers indicated “fairly often” or “always” to the ESS prompt: “The administrative hierarchy of this school enables teachers to do their jobs.” Principal Morris supported this survey result when speaking to the absence of a complex hierarchy at Canyon; she indicated that the teachers, not the administration, “hold each other accountable.” She furthered described her role as the leader in enabling the teachers, stating, “I really do try to protect them from outside forces that they don’t need to deal with. … They need to be teaching … that’s their job.” In the focus group session, one of the teachers concurred with Morris’ portrayal of Canyon’s bureaucracy: “[Our principal] takes the brunt of [external bureaucratic procedures] for us. … We are just sheltered from it.”

At Ridgepoint High School (low achieving/moderate hindering), 81% of the teachers responded “once in a while” to “always” to the ESS prompt, “Administrative rules in this school are substitutes for professional judgment.” During the individual interview, Principal Melanie Baker mentioned additional bureaucratic measures she implemented because she found teachers engaging in activities “without any guidance from an administrator.” Baker was specifically referring to certain procedures teachers must follow to secure classroom tutors or arrange student field trips. Baker stated that she had “centralized” the approval process for those procedures, placing it at the upper level of the Ridgepoint’s hierarchy, recognizing that the Ridgepoint teachers may view the site protocols as “impeding some of their work.” This bureaucratic shift was noticed by the teachers and identified as hindering. During the focus group session, one of the teachers described the newly implemented process for approving volunteers as “daunting,” while yet another teacher indicated that because the administrative rules at both the site and
district-levels were so complex, she had to cancel her student field trip to a prominent museum.

**District-Level Bureaucracy**

All three of the principals interviewed for this study described specific difficulties when interacting with district-level bureaucracy. Principal Sutherland of Crestview High School (high achieving/enabling) characterized the organizational structure of Sunray Unified School District as hindering, citing that it was expanding into “more rules and regulations, more people involved, more chain of command, more policies;” ultimately becoming “a very bureaucratic system, where the sites are served really at the bottom of the list.” Principal Jody Morris of Canyon Academy (average achieving/enabling) related a similar conclusion, stating that she had “no contact whatsoever,” with newly appointed district leadership, and that the same district bureaucracy best supported Canyon Academy by allowing her to “fly under the radar.” Morris elaborated, “I’ve had six bosses in six years and they’ve never really understood the program [Canyon Academy] or had the time to learn it.” Principal Melanie Baker of Ridgepoint High School (low achieving/moderate hindering) depicted the district-level bureaucracy as an “ever-evolving organizational chart,” thus making communication with district “very haphazard” and “less responsive. Baker summarized her sentiments about the district’s bureaucracy: “I feel … hindered by organizational changes that have removed people that understand their job and their role … and that has deeply impacted the efficacy of certain departments at the district.”
School Size

Several of the study participants identified school size as a factor in determining their respective bureaucracies as hindering or enabling. Principal Kelly Sutherland of Crestview High School (high achieving/enabling) stated, "I think that the small school-ness [of Crestview] really is a lot less bureaucratic." (At the time of the study, Crestview was reported as having 433 students enrolled and 19 teachers on staff.) Similarly, Principal Jody Morris of Canyon Academy (average achieving/enabling) asserted, "We’re so small, we don’t have a bureaucracy." (At the time of the study, Canyon Academy was reported as having 140 students enrolled and eight teachers on staff.) A teacher in the focus group at Ridgepoint High School (low achieving/moderate enabling) reflected on the former small-school structure of the now comprehensive campus, stating of the previous bureaucracies, "The personalities of the schools . . . definitely reflected the personalities of the principals . . . as well as the teachers because teachers had a lot more say on what was happening administratively." (At the time of the study, Ridgepoint was reported as having 1,210 student enrolled and 68 teachers on staff.)

However, when examining the data collected for the entire study, school size did not emerge as a significant factor in determining the school’s bureaucracy on the continuum—from enabling or hindering. Table 7 shows all six of the schools in the research project, in order of their ESS standardized scores (lowest to highest), along with their respective study descriptors, student enrollments, and numbers of teachers on staff.

Forewind High School, one of the three schools with student enrollments under 500, had the lowest ESS standardized score, and thus, was considered as having the most hindering bureaucracy in the sample. Stonemark Charter School had the third largest
Table 7

*Selected High Schools with School Size Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>ESS Standardized Score</th>
<th>Study Descriptor</th>
<th>Student Enrollment</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forewind High School</td>
<td>360.89</td>
<td>low achieving</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starlight High School</td>
<td>397.64</td>
<td>average achieving</td>
<td>1,240</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ridgepoint High School</td>
<td>410.67</td>
<td>low achieving</td>
<td>1,210</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crestview High School</td>
<td>628.61</td>
<td>high achieving</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canyon Academy</td>
<td>660.10</td>
<td>average achieving</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stonemark Charter School</td>
<td>704.72</td>
<td>high achieving</td>
<td>829</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

student enrollment in the sample and had the highest ESS standardized score, thus was considered as having a very enabling bureaucracy. Accordingly, in this small sample, school size was not determined to be a significant factor in designating a school’s bureaucracy as enabling or hindering.

**Implications**

Tschannen-Moran (2004), in *Trust Matters: Leadership for Successful Schools*, identified trust as a significant feature in our educational institutions (p. 15). Trust, according to Tschannen-Moran, acted as both a glue and lubricant for schools. As glue, trust “binds organizational participants to one another. … To be productive and accomplish organizational goals, schools need cohesive and cooperative relationships. Trust is essential to fostering these relationships” (p. 15). As a lubricant, “trust greases the machinery of an organization. Trust ‘lubricates’ communication and contributes to
greater efficiency when people have confidence in other people’s words and deeds” (Tschannen-Moran, 2004, p. 16).

Tschannen-Moran (2004) cited bureaucracy as foundational in establishing a trustful school environment (p. 36). She postulated:

Although bureaucratic structures often seem to get in the way of productivity, that need not be the case. In productive schools, … principals and teachers are able to work cooperatively across recognized boundaries of authority while retaining their distinctive roles. Teachers feel confident and are able to exercise discretion in their professional roles. … Trustworthy principals help teachers and staff members solve problems rather than get in the way of their work. In productive schools, principals use their power and authority to design structures that facilitate teaching and learning and buffer teachers from needless interruptions and distractions. (p. 36)

Thus, bureaucratic structures can be designed to support or discourage this ideal trustful climate. At Crestview High School (high achieving/enabling), Principal Sutherland was intentional in establishing a streamlined leadership team (a principal, a lead teacher, and two counselors) that fostered “informal dialogue” and open communication to and among the teachers and administrators. The result was more trust, as evidenced by a teacher stating, “I do feel very supported by the [Crestview] administration.” In contrast, at Ridgepoint High School (low achieving/moderate hindering), Principal Baker purposefully established several leadership groups (administrative team, instructional leadership team, 14 professional learning communities, site governance team, school site council, and the student government) to bring about a “distributed leadership model.”
Unfortunately, many of the teachers characterized this convoluted and complex bureaucracy as “distant,” “remote,” “more and more hoops,” and “so many obstacles.” That negative depiction of bureaucracy coincided with one Ridgepoint teacher hinting to his distrust of the administration, “They’re not listening. Not listening. The rules are the rules … even though they’re the wrong rules.”

The two contrasting views of school bureaucracy offered by Hoy and Sweetland (2001) include a negative, or hindering, bureaucracy “that alienates, breeds dissatisfaction, hinders creativity, and demoralizes employees,” versus a positive, enabling bureaucracy “that guides behavior, clarifies responsibility, reduces stress, and enables individuals to feel and be more effective” (p. 297). Using the ESS survey instrument developed by Hoy and Sweetland, this mixed methods study not only categorized the bureaucracies of six urban high schools on a continuum from hindering to enabling, but it also, using interview and focus group data, identified specific examples of hindering and enabling bureaucratic practices. From simplified hierarchies enacted to foster meaningful communication between teachers and administrators to haphazard implementation of complex procedures resulting in frustrated and discontented educators, the bureaucratic structures of our urban high schools and urban school systems demand as much scholarly attention as effective teaching practices and rigorous curricula.

Starbuck (2005) provided the etymology of the term bureaucracy. According to Starbuck, the term originated in 17th century France, when then King Louis XIV appointed Jean-Baptiste Colbert as the commissioner of finance. Colbert was reported to have developed a system under which corrupt officials and merchants could be
prosecuted. Starbuck (2005) wrote that Colbert “demanded that officials abide by certain rules and apply them uniformly to everyone.”

Starbuck (2005) reported that after 80 years of Colbert’s system of uniform rules and procedures, Jean Claude Marie Vincent de Gournay became France’s chief administrator of finance. Starbuck wrote that Gournay found that “the multitude of government regulations” were suppressing business activities. Starbuck continued:

To describe a government run by insensitive creators and enforcers of rules, who neither understood nor cared about the consequences of their actions, [Gournay] coined the term bureaucracy. Translation: “government by desks.”

Thus began the “long-standing tension in organizations between innovation and bureaucracy” (Starbuck, 2005).

Even in its etymology, the conflicts within bureaucracy became apparent—regulation versus innovation, control versus autonomy, rational versus arbitrary, rigid versus flexible, predictable versus unanticipated. Crowson (2011) summarized these opposing views:

One of the most fascinating aspects of organizational hierarchies is how thoroughly they tend to be wrapped in contradictions. Control is important to hierarchy, but opportunities for managerial discretion amid controlling forces are also essential. Hierarchies are both tight and loose, role-bound and rule-bound but highly ambiguous, insular and porous, goal centered and unfocused, selfishly survival-minded and unselfishly service-minded. (p. 475)

In the development of America’s public school system, educational researchers have typified the contradictory tensions around bureaucracy as negative and
undermining. Katz (1975) wrote, “If order, efficiency, and uniformity are preferred to responsiveness, variety, and flexibility, then, indeed, bureaucracy is inevitable” (p. 108). Berliner and Biddle (1995) asserted, “Schools in large school districts are often controlled by large bureaucracies, and this causes many problems” (p. 252). Sizer (2004) posited, “While there are obvious advantages to hierarchical bureaucracy, it has its costs, and these are today paralyzing American education. The structure is getting in the way of children’s learning” (p. 206). Payne (2010) explained, “I am equally convinced that the worst part of the problem [in urban schools] is the rigid and incompetent bureaucracies” (p. 122).

This unfavorable view of bureaucracy has permeated educational literature and research. Unfortunately, this static, negative portrayal of the organizational structure of public schools and districts has itself become a “sustained paralysis” (Sizer, 2004, p. 211). As the United States heads towards the third decade of the new millennium, current researchers and theorists are calling for new approaches and a reexamination of our school’s bureaucracies. Crowson (2011) argued:

Despite much talk of “going to scale” with educational reform that appears to work, research into the diffusion of innovative ideas and practices is found more today in the for-profit sector of organizational analyses than in public education. Little is known about how good ideas and improved practices get accepted and relegitimized deep within the bowels if urban school district hierarchies. (p. 475)

Thus, bureaucracy in our schools and districts must be thoroughly studied to determine ways to implement Senge’s (1990) “systems thinking” in order to create the forward-looking, requisite “learning organizations” in our public schools. Similarly, deep
examinations of Wagner’s (2008) “restructured high schools” need to occur to determine precisely the enabling organizational structures of the featured High Tech High schools and the Met network of schools (pp. 228-229) and how those schools are adequately preparing our students for the future. Ultimately, the close study of bureaucracy will reveal the educational pathway to fulfill Friedman and Mandelbaum’s (2011) declaration that companies of the new millennium need “as many people as possible to be creative creators and creative servers. … Workers who can think critically, who can tackle non-routine complex tasks, and who can work collaboratively with teams located in their office or globally” (pp. 76-78). Using innovative research techniques we can identify and develop an urban bureaucracy that is strategically and purposefully structured for responsiveness, trust-building and empowerment. Sizer (2004) even predicted this improved educational bureaucracy:

Better schools will come when better structures are built. Those structures have no inherent merit, however: their sole function will be to provide apt and nurturing conditions that will attract students and teachers and make their work together worthwhile and efficient. (p. 271)

**Recommendations**

The organizational structures within our schools and school systems cannot be taken for granted or ignored. Hoy and Sweetland (2001) cogently asserted, “The structure of schools is likely related to the effectiveness of schools” (p. 317). Thus, site and district leaders must continually search for viable methods to develop and maintain enabling bureaucracies that foster open dialogues and trusting relationships—among educators at all levels. For example, site administrators should be vigilant about their accessibility to
teachers, parents, students and community members. Minimizing rigid protocols and contrived layers of hierarchy can lead to effective communication between school leaders and stakeholders. Likewise, district-level officials must make concerted efforts not to simply rely on positional authority or prescribed regulations to manage schools, but rather build empowering connections to the campuses and communities they serve.

In urban settings, where “any inequalities that ‘disadvantaged’ children bring with them are later exacerbated—not ameliorated—by the schools themselves” (Flessa, 2009, p. 340), exploring ways to effectively implement enabling bureaucracies becomes even more critical. Specifically, designing and supporting urban schools with organizational frameworks that increase educator morale and encourage high collective efficacy should “promote higher levels of student achievement” (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001, p. 317). Consequently, legislators and educational policymakers ought to secure investments in ongoing training and professional development aimed at maintaining these enabling bureaucracies.

In an urban high school, the role of the principal is pivotal in cultivating an enabling bureaucracy. For example, instead of simply relying on prescriptive district procedures to arrange professional learning communities, urban principals must first ensure that the processes and structures of their schools facilitate authentic communication among all stakeholders, including students, staff, parents and community members. Fullan (2014) argued that principals that merely adhere to “compliance diktats” of the district-level hierarchy typically fail to build the necessary capacity among faculty members for sustained instructional improvement (p. 45). Furthermore, Fullan (2014) called for principals to become “system players,” wherein they acknowledge and engage
their counterparts at other schools and throughout their communities in an effort to “use all resources, including those outside the school, to build the professional capital of teachers so that student learning can flourish” (p. 97). Thus, to create lasting improvements for urban high school students, effective principals must thoroughly understand the bureaucracies within their own schools as well as in the district-wide systems. These savvy principals need to continually pursue and publicize methods that make those internal and external structures more enabling.

Finally, it should be exceedingly apparent that the ideal “culturally proficient” environment, wherein educators “shift from viewing cultural difference as problematic to learning how to interact effectively with other cultures” (Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2009, p. 4) can only be realized when “professional relations are open, collegial, supportive, and empowering” (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001, p. 317). In urban high schools, where the student populations are “racially segregated and overwhelmingly poor” (Neild & Balfanz, 2006, p. 9), the imperative becomes establishing an organizational structure that emboldens teachers and administrators to become culturally proficient leaders that “promote change through dialogue and collaboration” (Lindsey et al., 2009, p. 54). Succinctly, culturally proficient school environments exist and thrive within enabling bureaucracies—both of which are developed and maintained by visionary educational leaders.

**Future Research**

Certainly, more scholarly research on the bureaucratic structures in our urban school systems could provide a better understanding of the organizational framework necessary to promote academic success. However, significant efforts are needed to move
beyond the ubiquitous characterization of bureaucracy as “government by desks” (Starbuck, 2005), or worse as incompetent, paralyzing, or even pathological (Payne, 2010; Rogers, 1968; Sizer, 2004). Though these negative portrayals are commonplace in educational research, their usefulness is specious, especially considering that hierarchical bureaucracies exist in virtually every organization.

Instead, more investigation is needed on how to establish and maintain a framework that exemplifies Senge’s (1990) “learning organization” or Hoy and Sweetland’s (2001) “enabling bureaucracy.” More quantitative studies could be conducted using the ESS form (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001) to determine, with a larger, randomized sampling of schools, if there is a statistically significant correlation between academic achievement and enabling bureaucracy. Additionally, qualitative methodologies could be employed to explore specific cases of bureaucratization as well as the principal’s role in navigating district hierarchies and developing enabling structures. For example, schools that undergo significant organizational shifts from small schools to large comprehensive campuses or traditional public schools to charter schools could be great environments for phenomenological or ethnographic studies specifically examining bureaucracies and the leadership practices that exist within those school structures.

**Summary**

This study compared six purposefully selected urban high schools with varying student achievement levels and analyzed how principals and teachers in these schools perceived and managed site and district level bureaucratic structures. The goal of this
research was to discern whether or not bureaucracy, or perceptions of bureaucracy, differed in high-achieving versus low-achieving urban high schools.

Using a mixed methods research methodology, this research examined the quantitative results of the ESS form (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001) which identified the bureaucracy at each of the six schools on a continuum, from hindering to enabling. Then, at three of the six schools, individual principal interviews and teacher focus group sessions were held to collect qualitative data around the perceptions of the organizational structures present at the schools and the district level.

The quantitative findings reveal that the higher achieving high schools all had ESS scores that were above the mean (enabling), while the lower achieving schools all had ESS scores that were lower than the mean (hindering). The qualitative data supported the survey results in that principals and teachers identified examples of enabling and hindering bureaucracy, specifically as they related to three emerging themes: structures and procedures, communication, and school mission. Further analysis of the qualitative data indicated that most of the participants found district-level bureaucracy to be frustrating and hindering; whereas school size was not a significant factor in distinguishing a school’s bureaucracy as hindering or enabling.

Future research is definitely required to alter the static perceptions of bureaucracy as the hulking organizational feature whose sole purpose is to impede innovation. Thoroughly investigating enabling bureaucracies could reveal specific structural procedures and leadership practices that support trustful, professional, and culturally proficient learning environments.
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APPENDIX A

The Enabling School Structure Form

**Form ESS**

**Directions:** The following statements are descriptions of the way your school is structured. Please indicate the extent to which each statement characterizes behavior in your school from **never** to **always**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Once in a while</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Fairly Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Administrative rules in this school enable authentic communication between teachers and administrators.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. In this school red tape is problem.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The administrative hierarchy of this school enables teachers to do their job.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The administrative hierarchy obstructs student achievement.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Administrative rules help rather than hinder.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The administrative hierarchy of this school facilitates the mission of this school.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Administrative rules in this school are used to punish teachers.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The administrative hierarchy of this school obstructs innovation.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Administrative rules in this school are substitutes for professional judgment.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Administrative rules in this school are guides to solutions rather than rigid procedures.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. In this school the authority of the principal is used to undermine teachers.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The administrators in this school use their authority to enable teachers to do their job.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX B
Principal Interview Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal’s Code</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Internal/Site-Based Prompts**

1. Tell me about the leadership structure of your school? Who, or what groups, are responsible for day-to-day decisions as well as long-term planning and decision-making?

2. Who establishes, communicates, and maintains the mission, vision, and purpose of your school? Are those responsibilities shared?

3. How would you characterize the following features of your school:
   - (a) student achievement?
   - (b) learning environment; is it personalized?
   - (c) bureaucracy; is it enabling or hindering?

**External/District-Based Prompts**

1. How do you interact/interface with district-level leadership?

2. Do you have one person or office or many people or offices you consult with at the district for assistance at your school site? For example, if you have a problem with some equipment, whom do you contact?

3. How would you characterize the operations of the district offices in support of your school? Are the people that work at the district enabling or hindering to your work as a site principal? Cite some examples.
### APPENDIX C

**Teacher Focus Group Session Worksheet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participating Teachers’ Codes/Subject Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. Tell me about the leadership structure of your school? Who, or what groups, are responsible for day-to-day decisions as well as long-term planning and decision-making?

2. How would you characterize student achievement at this school?

3. How would you characterize the bureaucracy of this school? Would you describe the bureaucracy as hindering or enabling?
APPENDIX D

IRB Approval Letter

Exempt Verification
Reg: 46.101(b)(2) – minimal risk

September 5, 2013

Student Researcher: Richard Moore
Faculty Researcher: Dr. Patti Chance
Department: Educational Leadership
Contract/grant number: N/A
viRB Number: 1189087

Re: Bureaucratic Structures in Urban High Schools

Dear Richard Moore:

The above referenced research was reviewed and verified as exempt in accordance with SDSU's Assurance and federal requirements pertaining to human subjects protections within the Code of Federal Regulations (45 CFR 46.101). This review applies to the conditions and procedures described in your protocol. Given that this study has been verified as Exempt, signature is not required on the consent document.

The determination of exemption is final and requests for continuing review (Progress Reports) are not required for this study. However, if any changes to your study are planned, you must submit a modification request and receive either IRB approval (per 45 CFR 46.110 or 46.111) or IRB verification that the modification is exempt (per 45 CFR 46.101). To submit a modification request, please follow the necessary steps below:

Modification steps:
- Access the protocol via the Webportal (https://sunspot.sdsu.edu/ps/webapp/web_menu/login/)
- Protocol main page click on “Modifications” to enter a report
- Once the report has been fill out completely, click “submit”
- Make sure to email the IRB (irb@mail.sdsu.edu) notifying them that a modification has been submitted.

Additionally, please notify the IRB office if your status as an SDSU-affiliate changes while conducting this research study (you are no longer an SDSU faculty member, staff member or student).

For questions related to this correspondence, please contact the IRB office ((619) 594-6622 or e-mail irb@mail.sdsu.edu). To access IRB review application materials, SDSU’s Assurance, the 45 CFR 46, the Belmont Report, and/or any other relevant policies and guidelines related to the