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The Perceptions of Taproot Teachers and Their Sustaining Force on a Year-Round Educational Program

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THE PERCEPTIONS OF TAPROOT TEACHERS AND THEIR SUSTAINING

FORCE ON A YEAR-ROUND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

by

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Bachelor of Science in Education

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Abstract

The concept of year-round education is not new. Year-round education (YRE) has an

established foundation in the history of education. Research is available on the history,

costs, achievement, discipline, calendars, and attendance in YRE. This study investigated

the perceptions of taproot teachers in a rural agrarian Delaware school district. Two

questions drove the investigation: 1) What character traits are demonstrated by taproot

teachers? 2) How do the identified traits sustain and influence a year-round educational

program? Qualitative data were gathered from interviews with two teachers and the

principal currently working in a year-round school. The teachers were identified by their

principal, as emulating character traits reflective of a taproot teacher. Findings identified

the following five characteristics: 1) Student learning is the responsibility of the teacher.

2) Collegiality fosters student success. 3) Teachers pursuing the vision strive for success.

4) Teacher planning nourishes innovative and coordinated actions. 5) Facing change

together is seen as a challenge and embodies hope.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS (cont.)

LIST OF FIGURES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Cook and Carol, my wonderful sisters, I thank you for the understanding and encouragement you provided during the years of this endeavor. Many times I had to say no to events because I was writing. Thank you for your patience.

I also want to thank my children, Matthew and Kelly. You were both in degree programs when I started this chapter of my life. Now you are accomplished adults. I am so very proud of both of you. Together we beat the odds. I am honored to be your Mom. I stand amazed at the adults you have become and the contributions each of you gives daily to the world. You were reassuring at some very low times and shared my joy at high points. Matthew, you offered excellent technical support, read some text, and offered much encouragement. Kelly, you made me accountable by inquiring about my progress. At times, you forced me to sit and write as you reviewed the text with me. You had more faith in me than I did. Both of you had the confident expectation that I would complete this journey. Thank you for always returning those phone calls that sounded so desperate. I love you both very much.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my father and mother

George and Ethel Tressler

who packed my parachute physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher qualities that contributed to the success of and have a sustaining influence on an educational program. Specifically, the study examined these characteristics in the context of year-round education using the metaphor of the taproot teacher.

Research has shown that effective teachers perpetuate a cycle of success in their classrooms (Bandura, 1997; Ross, 1995). Bandura and Ross wrote that when a teacher can build a cycle of success for his or her students, that cycle increased the teacher's efficacy and the efficacy of the teacher's colleagues. Using Ross's and Bandura's theories of success, this study explored the influence of taproot teachers and how they sustained an educational program such as year-round education (YRE). In addition, the study also addressed how the sustenance these teachers brought to a YRE program in turn supported the taproot teacher and completed the cycle identified by Bandura and Ross.

While a definition of a taproot teacher will appear in chapter two, a short definition of a taproot is necessary to aid in clarity. A taproot is a straight, long, deep anchoring root known for its ability to anchor the plant and withstand most environmental threats to the plant's uprooting. Unlike a fibrous root system that grows horizontally and shallowly in relationship to the ground, the taproot grows perpendicularly and deeply into the ground in its search for food and water. In addition to its anchoring ability, the taproot provides for the sustenance of the plant as it stores resources that may be needed at a future time. The strength of the taproot and the

1

network of the lateral roots it sends out to further supply the plant enables the plant to grow, flourish, and continue its life cycle (http://www.britannica.com/ebc/article-9380262).

The metaphor of the taproot of a plant helps us understand how some teachers, because of their firmly grounded beliefs about good teaching and their knowledge of effective strategies to support student learning and achievement, can influence and sustain an educational program. This study examined the strength and power of such educators that help a YRE program survive and withstand the storms of public outcry, lack of funding, and lack of commitment to change (Senge, 2000; Tomlinson, 2000).

Year-Round Education: What It Is and What It Isn't

Year-round education has been a part of the American education scene for many years. Currently, it seems to be experiencing a rebirth, and many schools are considering, as well as implementing, some form of YRE (Inger, 1994; Kneese, 1996; Helton, 2001). Reasons for the adoption of a YRE program vary. Some districts choose YRE to relieve fiscal situations (Brekke, 1997). Others are forced to embrace a YRE program due to teacher shortages in some subjects at the high school level. Most often districts implemented a YRE program because of a population boom and a lack of funding to build new schools (Ballinger, 1995; Brekke, 1997; Forte, 1994; Glines, 1994; Shields & Oberg, 2000). By implementing a YRE program districts can take greater advantage of space available. Students can be on rotating schedules that alternate a percentage of the students to be on vacation while the others remain in school.

Because the term, *year-round schooling,* suggests that students are in school all year, considerable confusion can arise within the school community when a district attempts to change the traditional September to June school calendar (Shields & Oberg, 2000). The problems begin when the term is introduced without a thorough explanation. To avoid discord within the community, districts attempting to change their schedules, often eliminate the term altogether and simply refer to the change as a *continuous learning*, *balanced*, *alternative* or *modified calendar* (Shields & Oberg, 2000).

Merino (1983) found that year-round programs gained more support when the community was involved in the planning. In the six studies reviewed by Merino, parents were in favor of YRE if they had had some experience with it in the past. As predicted, those parents unfamiliar with YRE, found no need to change from the traditional calendar.

Glines (1994) suggested that YRE needs to be presented as more than a calendar change. With life styles facing increasing changes, YRE offers calendar, curriculum and family options which more closely fit today's societal changes. Glines advocated not only involving the parents, but also those community agencies impacted by a calendar change such as child care agencies, camping and recreational parks, and churches that offered summer programs.

To create such a calendar, a school district can employ a variety of YRE components. For example, a district may keep the same number of days school is in session, but arrange vacation days differently. A traditional calendar school (TCS) usually begins the school year in late August or early September and ends the school

year in late May or early June. In contrast, a year-round school might begin its school year in early August and not complete the school year until the latter part of June. Vacation times, called intersessions in a YRE program, consisting of two to three weeks can be interspersed throughout the year after approximately six to nine weeks of attendance by students and staff.

These intersessions offer another component of YRE not available in a traditional school calendar. During one of the intersession weeks, students return to school for either additional tutoring in a subject or some enrichment classes. These instructional periods typically last for four or five days. The school or district operating the YRE program determines how many days/hours the classes will be offered. A particular advantage of this component is that students in need of academic help early in the school year are able to receive remediation before they fall behind in their studies.

When Davies and Kerry (1999) examined studies focused on districts using components of YRE to adopt calendar change in the United States and Canada, they found that students, parents and teachers reported students retained more, experienced an accelerated curriculum, and encountered less down time than they had under a traditional calendar. In addition, the studies highlighted that improved learning occurred for students and contributed to student achievement because of tutorial time available during an intersession.

Statement of the Problem

Research has measured both the success and or disintegration, of YRE programs in specific schools, districts, and states (Helton, 2001; Serow, 1992; Shields

4

& Oberg, 2000). However, limited research has focused on identifying characteristics of teachers who sustain the YRE program in districts or schools where it has flourished.

The Success and Disintegration of YRE Programs

Documentation exists that proves YRE began in the United States as early as 1904 (Glines, 1997). These schools were designed to meet the particular needs of a specific community. For instance, schools in rural communities operated only two to six months because of farming, weather, transportation or finances. When these schools were in session, students attended class for eight to nine hours a day. Schools in urban communities during the same time period were open all year. Students attended urban schools six to seven hours a day. These early adoptions of YRE did not survive the financial crisis of the Great Depression or the need for national uniformity necessary to increase the workforce during World War II (Consolie, 1999; Glines, 1997).

A renewed interest in YRE in the late 1960's emerged as school populations grew. As the demand for more space in existing schools increased, districts again looked at YRE as a viable option to educating students in school with limited space. YRE increased the capacity of schools by offering multi-track enrollments therefore decreasing the need for new buildings (Bradford, 1995; Brekke, 1997; Glines, 1997; Goren & Carriendo, 1986; Merino, 1983). Population trends of the 60's saw states such as California, New Mexico, Arizona, and Florida growing. Year-round education grew in states that experienced a boom in their population.

As YRE districts experienced academic achievement, better attendance, fewer discipline infractions, and more options for parents and the changing community, the true philosophy behind YRE, posited by Glines (1994) started to emerge. Glines' viewpoint is that YRE is a philosophical rationale related to the quality of life. It goes beyond a mere calendar change to more closely fit the variety of student learners and the flexible lifestyles of today's families.

However, change does not come easily to many people. The idea of changing the agrarian calendar which most parents experienced in their own schooling was close to sacrilege. Parents opposing the change to a new calendar often commented in reference to the change, "If it was good enough for me, it's good enough for my children" (Shields & Oberg, 2000, p.88). Many year-round programs in California, Florida, and Colorado dropped the year-round calendar and returned to a traditional calendar when parental complaints grew (Consolie, 1999; Sardo-Brown & Rooney, 1992; White, 1992).

What Does Research Tell Us About Successful YRE?

Although the research is scarce, there are studies that focus on factors that promote the success of YRE. In some districts where YRE has been implemented, the program has remained in operation and appears to be successful. Glines (1994) believed the success of YRE lies in the philosophical rational that districts or schools choose for implementing the program. The best rationales, Glines proposed, are ones that promote a program based on a total learning environment that relates to the quality of life for students, their parents and the school staff. The educators in particular, Glines believed, must be committed and understand the potential of a YRE

6

program for the 21st century. Propelled by this rationale, changes can be made through curriculum and philosophy leading to school improvement, an issue that is of utmost importance to everyone.

Shields and Larocque (1998) theorized that YRE may be a first order change in school restructuring that has triggered, or at the very least, facilitated a second order change relating to how teachers teach and how students learn. Using their theory as a basis for research, Shields and Larocque studied two elementary schools and one high school. They concluded that a first order change such as a calendar change led the way to a variety of pedagogical changes: increased communication among teachers, new learning strategies for students, and a more solidified educational philosophy throughout the learning community.

Shields and Larocque (1998) isolated six themes prevalent in all three schools: teacher planning for instruction, formal and informal talk about teaching and learning, team-teaching and organizing instruction, programmatic changes based on philosophies of education, principal support for innovation, and a culture that supports innovation. These issues were not the primary focus as the change to YRE was implemented in each school. However, the calendar change provided more time for teachers to meet both formally and informally to reflect on classroom practices therefore providing a means for further instructional changes.

Michael Fullan (1991) studied the nature of school change. To promote successful change, Fullan (1991) identified vision building, initiative taking and empowerment, evolutionary planning, monitoring, staff development and restructuring as key components of successful change. Although he listed "vision" as crucial he

7

stated that the practice of effective vision building is not well understood. In fact, he noted that few year-round schools have started with a shared vision of what the school would become. In those schools where YRE has been successfully implemented, however, Fullan noted that a shared vision among staff had been an outgrowth of the calendar change.

What is the Role of the Teacher in Successful YRE?

YRE is not a new learning model but one that is getting a second look from educators. YRE has characteristics that make it an effective and efficient learning design. The literature on YRE identified some of its key factors as:

- use of intersession times for remediation and enrichment to promote student achievement;

- coordinated planning time for teachers;

- promoted use of team-teaching, cooperative learning strategies;

- addressed the curriculum through themes that could be taught in shorter time periods; (Ballinger, 1998; Davies & Kerry, 1999; Gandara & Fish, 1994; Glines, 1997; Shields & Oberg, 2000).

Although many researchers (Bandura, 1997; Brown & Moffett,1999; Ross, 1995; Stephens, 1993; Tomlinson & Allan, 2000; Whitaker, 2004) found that it is the teacher who plays the strategic role in any school improvement reform, few have isolated the characteristics that might identify those teachers most likely to act as change agents or specific to this study taproot teachers. If a school change is to be successful and benefit the students then administrators and districts may benefit from

identifying the change agents, taproot teachers, from within the professional staff and use those teachers to begin the process.

Significance of the Study

Change in educational systems is a complex, political, social, and personal process that according to Brown and Moffett (1999) occurs during a life cycle of educational innovation that is relatively short. When school leaders fail to provide an infrastructure that supports change, adequate resources to assist teachers in the change, a common language and explanation for new terminology associated with the change (i.e. terms such as performance assessments, benchmarks, authentic assessments) educators are frequently skeptical and view the change as another ill-conceived attempt at a panacea that will pass with time. What's more, mandates from administrators do little to change what happens in a classroom. Top-down declarations can be skillfully ignored when key stakeholders remain out of the loop and are ill informed (Bandura, 1997).

Years of research have been devoted to enhancing our understanding of why an educational system needs to be changed and the process that best promotes that change. Although the findings of that research are sometimes diametrically opposed, there does seem to be a consensus that the teacher plays a powerful role in the school improvement process. Connolly (as cited in Stephens, 1993) asserted that school reform or the resistance to it floundered or prevailed depending on the activities of the teacher. In fact there was overwhelming support for the notion that it is the teacher who plays the strategic role in any school improvement plan (Bandura, 1997; Gipps,

9

Brown & Moffett, 1999; Ross, 1995; Stephens, 1993; Tomlinson & Allan, 2000; Whitaker, 2004).

If the success of a school improvement program such as YRE is dependent upon teachers, then which teachers begin the change process and sustain it? Using the metaphor of the taproot teacher, this study examined their characteristics, armed with a presupposition that if an administrator can identify change agent teachers through taproot teacher traits, he or she could use that teacher to launch any new initiative. Just as the taproot starts as a small entity but grows into the anchoring support and nurturing system for the plant, so a taproot teacher can provide the initial anchor and eventual sustenance to educational change that continues to enrich the educational program, in this case, year-round education.

High stakes testing, accountability, and President Bush's landmark legislation of 2002, *No Child Left Behind*, are just a few educational directives that are driving school districts to look at new ways to raise student achievement scores. With these educational initiatives, change is eminent. As previously stated change does not happen easily or without involvement from all the stakeholders in the educational community. Given the characteristics of a YRE program it is the belief of this researcher that a YRE program is a successful course of action to help a district/school achieve not only higher scores but ultimately grow a better learning environment for students and teachers. Therefore, it makes sense to this researcher to address how change can best be implemented, supported, and sustained. The taproot teacher can be the energy necessary to bring that kind of successful change to a YRE program in a school or district.

Year-round education has often been considered a viable alternative to educating students when population growth is experienced in a school or district. Glines (1994) promoted YRE as a philosophical change. Yet, the main focus of the literature on YRE examines it as a logistical change. Clearly, when YRE is approached as merely a logistical change it did not endure when student populations decreased. Moreover, schools also reverted to the traditional school calendar when funds became available to support new construction. This study will fill a gap in the literature on YRE by addressing the conceptual nature of YRE and the unique ways that it drives schools to understand their taproot teachers and the sustaining force those teachers bring to an educational program such as year-round school.

Because it is the perceptions and beliefs of identified taproot teachers that were the basis of this research, it was vital to identify taproot teachers within a school using a year-round educational program. Bandura (1986) and Nisbett and Ross (1980) wrote that beliefs are often the best indicators of decisions made by an individual throughout his or her lifetime. The problem arises as to how you ascertain teacher's beliefs. Pajares (1992) proposed that inventories can be used but may not correspond with a teacher's particular beliefs and results may fall into a neutral area such as "it depends". Open-ended interviews were another alternative that may yield more accurate and richer results (Fontana & Frey, 2000). The researcher chose to do a qualitative study using open-ended interviews to identify teachers' perceptions of year-round education and how their perception could ultimately sustain the year-round educational program.

Statement of the Research Questions

The first presupposition was that taproot teachers have identifiable and observable traits. The second was that when these taproot traits are blended with the key factors in a YRE program a fertile learning environment was created that sustains the program, students, staff, and the continual efficacy of the taproot teacher.

Focused by the metaphor of a taproot teacher as a crucial change agent and sustainer of an educational program, this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What character traits are demonstrated by taproot teachers?

2. How do these character traits sustain and influence a year-round educational program?

To begin exploring these questions, the literature review will develop the metaphor of a taproot teacher through an examination of their "root system" in the literature on teacher beliefs, teacher efficacy, and collective efficacy.

Definitions of Terms

The following are commonly used terms in this study and in the literature pertaining to Year-Round Education:

Year-Round Education (YRE) -- A philosophy that learning should be continuous and available to learners throughout the calendar year (Glines, 1994).

Traditional Calendar School (TCS)--The typical calendar that uses approximately 180 days and begins the school term somewhere in late August or early September, ending the year in late May or early June.

Year-Round Calendar (YRC) -- A rearrangement of the school calendar. The summer vacation time in a year-round education program is 6-8 weeks. Vacation periods are interspersed throughout the year into 2 or 3 week periods (Kneese, 2000).

Multi-track schools—Schools that are using an YRE program where the students are divided into different groups or tracks. Several tracks would be in attendance at one time. One group would always be scheduled on vacation while the others would be in attendance. Schools can have anywhere from two to five tracks rotating in and out of the building at any one time (Glines, 1997).

Single-track schools—Schools that are using an YRE program but all students and staff are on the same schedule or track (Glines, 1997).

Intersessions—The period of time between terms when all or part of the student body is on vacation and does not attend school; remediation and/or enrichment classes are often a feature of the intersession.

Calendar configurations--The numbers most often used to realign the 180 days into shorter segments with vacation times in between instructional sessions. Some of the more common alignments are 45/15, 60/20, 60/15, and 90/30. The first number represents the days students would be attending school with the second indicating the amount of days the students are scheduled off track or on intersession. Some of the intersession could be used for remediation or enrichment classes (Glines, 1994).

Taproot teacher-- A teacher rooted with strong beliefs that all children can learn. Such a teacher is willing to go to sacrificial lengths to support student learning and higher achievement. The behaviors of taproot teachers when observed by fellow colleagues, can lead to the building of an efficacious community. An efficacious community

usually has an impact that continues to support increased student learning and achievement.

Teacher efficacy--A teacher's belief that her efforts will have a positive effect on student achievement (Gibson & Dembo, 1984).

Collective efficacy--A group's shared belief in its joined capabilities to plan and implement strategies to reach a desired outcome (Bandura, 1977).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this review was to examine the literature that will inform the research questions:

1. What character traits are demonstrated by taproot teachers?

2. How do these character traits sustain and influence a year-round educational program?

To contextualize the perception and sustaining influence a teacher has on a YRE program, the literature review was examined in several categories. These categories are:

1. History of YRE

2. Teacher Perceptions of YRE

3. Teacher Beliefs

4. Teacher Efficacy

5. Collective Efficacy

6. Implementing and Sustaining Change

It is important to note that the literature did not yield studies that specifically addressed how YRE can be sustained. Nor were there studies located that examined the characteristics of pivotal taproot teachers and the influence they may have on the implementation of a new educational program. Because of this gap in the literature, a study of taproot teachers in the context of YRE might make a specific contribution to our understanding of dynamic educational systems as they change and develop.

History of Year-Round Education

Historically there have been many different calendar configurations in American schools. The Hopkins Grammar School in Massachusetts required twelve months of education as early as 1684 (Zykowski, 1991). In 1841, Boston schools were open for 244 days, and Philadelphia schools operated on a 251-day calendar (Association of California School Administrators, 1988). The extended school year was divided into four 12-week quarters with a week of vacation between each quarter. During that same time students in rural America attended school around the agricultural calendar. In addition, children living in the rural communities attended school for approximately 8-9 hours a day. Their city counterparts, in contrast attended school for 6-7 hours a day (Worsnop, 1996).

Prior to 1890, students, attending school in urban areas such as Baltimore, Buffalo, Cincinnati, Detroit, Philadelphia, New York and Washington, were in school for 11 months out of the year. By 1890, city schools had reduced their days of school attendance by 60 days. William T. Harris, the U. S. Commissioner of Education in 1894, expressed his disapproval for the shortened school year in his annual report. He argued that there has been a "distinct loss this year, the average number of days of school having been reduced from 193.5 to191." He added, "The boy of today must attend school 11.1 years in order to receive as much instruction, quantitatively, as the boy of 50 years ago received in eight years. It is scarcely necessary to look further than this for the explanation for the greater amount of work accomplished in the German and French schools than in American schools" (National Education

Commission on Time and Learning, 1994 p. 21). By 1900, the more popular 180 days, 9-month calendar had been firmly established.

Growth of YRE

Records exist from the 1900's documenting year-round programs as early as the turn of the 20th century. Bluffton, Indiana (1904); Newark, New Jersey (1912); Aliquippa (1928) and Ambridge (1931) Pennsylvania; Nashville, Tennessee (1925); Omaha, Nebraska (1924); and Minot, North Dakota all operated year-round educational programs (Consolie, 1999; Glines, 1997; Lowe, 2002).

Growth of YRS was slow. By the 1920's just a little over a dozen schools in the country were operating as YRS. With the Great Depression and the prelude to war only six districts continued as YRS by the 1930's. From 1938 to 1945, YRS ceased to exist except in theory. As men were pulled from the workplace, and women and children had to take their place to keep the economy running, a need for uniformity in school scheduling was necessary (Consolie, 1999).

After a 30-year dormant period, YRE began to make its comeback in the late 60's and 70's. Robert F. Williams, a Virginia educator observing the growth of the number of schools using summer school options, wrote in the Virginia Journal of Education in 1962, "As the world's knowledge increases and it becomes more and more imperative that we utilize to the fullest possible extent the time and talents of both children and teachers, not to mention making the fullest possible use of an enormously expensive educational plant, we will move forward toward a longer school year" (Worsnop, 1996 p.8).

By 1976, more than 600 schools in 28 states were operating some kind of year-round educational program (Multcher, 1993). This growth in YRE could be linked to the overcrowding of schools and the lack of funds to support new facilities (Consolie, 1999).

After the YRE boom of the 60's and 70's, the popularity of YRE began to decline. Some blame the reduction in YRE--only 287 schools operating as YRS during the 1980's-- on the declining enrollment. In addition, those schools had used YRE merely as an answer to overcrowding and had never really made a commitment to the YRE philosophy and the benefits it could have for student learning and achievement (Glines, 1995).

The 1990's saw an increase in YRE. In 1992 the number of YRE programs grew to more than 1800 schools in 26 states. Ballinger (1998), a former president of NAYRE, predicted that single-track YRS would continue to grow. He believed that although many schools used YRE as a way to ease overcrowding, the educational benefits were now being recognized and the increase in student achievement, better attendance for students and teachers, less discipline problems, and more parental support, would continue to expand the YRE movement.

Contrary to Ballinger's predictions, other researchers advanced the position that the number of YRS had peaked and might actually be on the decline once again. With the school age population declining, the need for larger buildings no longer existed. For example, YRE in Florida began in the 1960's and experienced its most rapid growth in the late 1980's and early 1990's due to growing enrollments. Like many other states, Florida's increase in enrollment was followed by a sharp decline.

The declining enrollments combined with parents' complaints against YRS, caused one county in Florida to return all 40 year-round schools to a traditional school calendar (Helton, 2001).

Another example of a return to a traditional calendar can be found in Jefferson County, Colorado. In the 1970's, Jefferson County decided to switch to YRS as a cost saving measure. The success of the program through the 1980's was enough that districts in other states copied Jefferson's model. When a new construction project began, Jefferson County also began the plans to switch schools from the year-round program to the traditional calendar (White, 1992). White noted that from the onset of the YRS program the board listed the program only as an acceptable alternative to be used when enrollments were up and a building program was not an option.

Year-Round Calendar Configurations

YRE is a reorganization of the school calendar into more balanced instructional blocks with vacations distributed across the calendar year. This reorganization allows continuous learning for students (Quinlin, George & Emmett, 1987). Ballinger (1998) stated that YRE could take many forms. He argued that such a redesigning of the school calendar emphasized instruction for longer periods of time while shortening vacations.

These broad definitions allowed for many calendar configurations in YRS. In addition to calendar configurations, YRS used single or multi-tracking, as well as variations in intersessions to further customize the YRE experience. Each of these variables is discussed in turn.

The most common calendar configurations are the 45/10, 45/15, 60/15, and the 60/20 (Consolie, 1999; Shields & Oberg, 2000; Worthen & Zsiray, 1994). In a school using the 45/10 plan, students are scheduled for classes for 45 days and on vacation for 10 days.

In addition to calendar configurations, YRE districts can use single-track or multi-track sessions. In a single-track school the students and teachers are on a unified attendance plan. With a unified attendance plan, all students and staff attend school during instructional days. All students and staff are on vacation during the intersession. In contrast, in a multi-track school or district, students and teachers are on a staggered attendance schedule.

Commonly, districts use the multi-track option to help ease overcrowding since some students and teachers are on vacations while others are in attendance. In fact, using a multi-track plan can increase a school's capacity as much as 33% to 50% and some schools may operate as many as five tracks (Glines 1997; Shields & Oberg, 2000). Single-track is normally a cautious first step of YRE usually taken at the elementary level. Multi-track on the other hand is usually a mandate and happens in a crisis situation like overcrowding (Kneese, 1996).

Intersession is another name for the vacation periods between instructional days. Intersession may be as long as 20 days as in a 60/20 plan or as short as 10 as in a 45/10 plan. Even though intersession is primarily vacation, some days are identified for instructional purposes. Districts use instructional periods during the intersession for remediation of students or for enrichment. When remediation and enrichment is offered students experience subjects or activities not available to them during regular

class sessions. The number of days of intersession can be changed to fit a district or school's individual community (Ballinger, 1995; Shields & Oberg, 2000).

<p style="text-align:center">Teacher Perceptions of Year-Round Education</p>

Year-round education has usually been preferred by teachers when they have the opportunity to choose between a YRS and a TCS. Most districts that offer some type of YRS also provide an alternative to those who do not choose to participate (Glines, 1994; Mutchler, 1993). Most of the schools that offered a choice have found that there is usually a waiting list for students and teachers willing to make the change to a YRE program (Gandara & Fish, 1994; Serow, 1992). Glines (1994) found that in districts/schools where teachers understood the difference between year-round schooling as a space saving alternative and year-round education as a life long learning process, those teachers who volunteered for YRE became the change agents and moved ahead to create exciting learning programs. This occurred because the teachers who committed to YRE were armed with the realization that its potential for increased student learning far exceeded the potential of the nine-month school calendar.

Moreover, researchers found that teachers had positive attitudes about their participation in YRE. Reoccurring themes in the research regarding teacher attitudes can be divided into several categories: less burnout for teachers, less instructional time used for review because students retained more due to shorter vacation breaks, more positive climate in the classroom and the school in general, and a better quality of instruction due to more productive planning time both while in and out of session

(Barber, 1996; Bradford, 1995; Davies, & Kerry, 1999; Kneese, 1997; Nasser, & Haser, 2002).

Gandara (1992) found that teachers' satisfaction with the YRE program grew with each year of their participation. She surveyed teachers participating in the Orchard Plan in California. Three schools participated in a 60/15 YRS program. At the end of each year teachers were asked to respond to the question "How satisfied are you with your job?" Their overall satisfaction increased from 74% in the first year to 92% in the second year and increased to 98% in the third year. In addition to the surveys used, teachers were invited to share what they perceived as ways in which the YRE program could be improved or comment on any aspect of the program. In each of the three schools, teachers stated that they perceived YRE to be a more dynamic program for the students and that the YRE program grew better each year. Others stated that they would never go back to a nine-month calendar. The teachers all perceived that their planning improved and that they were more organized with a definite beginning and end; they found it easier to plan thematic units.

In another study, Helton (2001) found that teachers perceived that YRS provided a better learning environment for students. Teachers noted that the continuity of instruction took advantage of the natural learning peaks and valleys experienced by both teachers and students. They reported that the shorter breaks allowed for a time of refreshment but less time to forget. In addition, teachers felt that shorter vacation periods required them to spend less time reviewing when the students returned to the classroom (Alcorn, 1992; Davies & Kerry, 1999; Inger, 1994).

But the calendar organization itself was not the only positive aspect of YRS that teachers discussed. Teachers perceived the overall climate in the classroom and the building as better in YRS (Alcorn, 1992; Gandara & Fish, 1994; Rasmussen, 2000). With an intersession time always on the horizon they perceived relief from distracting personalities and less friction among students and felt the welcomed breaks led to fewer discipline referrals (Helton, 2001; Lowe, 2002). In fact, Shields and Larocque (1998) found that teachers identified fewer student discipline infractions in YRS.

Planning was another positive element of a YRS perceived by teachers in the study by Shields and Larocque (1998). New teachers, especially, said that if certain techniques were not working they could reflect and make changes during the intersession times. Furthermore, teachers found that three-week breaks promoted more succinct planning. They said planning in the summer was difficult because they did not know their students. But with breaks built into the year, their planning was focused and more productive. An elementary principal interviewed by Shields & Larocque said that there was more talk among staff about teaching and learning. The principal believed professional talk among teachers increased because teachers would usually take the first week of vacation for relaxation. Teachers used the second week for things they had to do. The third week teachers began to plan instruction.

Another study of teacher perceptions of YRE occurred in the Wake County Public Schools. The Wake County Public School System in Raleigh, North Carolina introduced YRE in 1989 in one elementary school (Prohm & Baenen, 1992). The program expanded to seven schools by 1994. Wake County compared their YRS with

their TCS by collecting and comparing data over a three-year period. When results of the survey questions were compared, teachers in the YRS responded more positively regarding the climate in the YRS than those teachers working in a TCS. The staff in the YRS also believed a positive climate in the building promoted better learning for the students.

Yet, with all of the reports of positive teacher perceptions of YRS, the findings were not without detractors. Critics of YRS challenged any positive comments shared by researchers regarding the positive perceptions of teachers. Burgoyne (1997) argued that teachers differed in their opinions of YRS. She found that while teachers agreed that primary students did not need a long summer break, they believed older students performed better without starting and stopping school several times a year. Furthermore, Burgoyne noted that teachers missed out on summer opportunities to continue college programs they wanted to pursue. However, Shields and Oberg's (2000) research revealed that teachers taking university classes, for the most part, found classes were scheduled at times convenient for them. In addition, teachers on the YRC found it easier to complete college assignments during intersession times when they were not working. Only one teacher in Shields and Oberg's survey of 100 professional teachers, trying to complete a master's degree, found it difficult to schedule a summer class.

Burgoyne (1997) also found rebuttals to the notion that teachers experienced less burnout in YRS. For example, the Folsom Cordova Unified School District in California adopted a multi-track year-round system in three elementary schools, a middle school and a high school. One teacher–administrator said, "The never-ending

24

school was a nightmare" (p. 3). Communication among staff broke down when some teachers were off track. Because teachers shared rooms, there was never an opportunity for teachers to come into classrooms ahead of their on-track-schedule to set up their rooms. In addition, since buildings were older, adequate storage space was not available for teachers to store their materials while they were off track.

Charles Naylor (1995) disagreed with studies that praised the positive benefits of YRS. Naylor believed results noted in the research provided by the National Association of Year-Round Education were skewed because the association used only the literature that reflected positive results for YRE programs. He went on to note that other researchers such as Gandara & Fish (1994) found other changes made in the schools that went beyond the implementation of YRE. Naylor suggested a variety of changes may have impacted the positive response of participants in the program. For instance, when one district changed its calendar the district also changed teaching strategies to include cooperative learning and team teaching. Therefore, Gandara and Fish argued that positive perceptions could not be attributed to a mere calendar change.

Rasberry (1992) agreed with Naylor's opposing view of the success of YRE. Rasberry disputed that students retained more than they lost in a YRS. He argued instead that students forget most of what they learn in the first three weeks after a lesson. He found that two-thirds of the educators in the Houston Independent School District perceived the 45/15 plan as unsatisfactory. In addition, he reported that an educator in Lodi, California responsible for coordinating the year-round schools believed that any improvement in learning was not a result of the YRE program. It is

important to note that Rasberry's findings have been questioned for their validity. Primarily, Shields and Oberg (1999) argued that Rasberry based his information on excerpts from newspaper reports in twenty-six different states and not on controlled data collection that is the foundation of objective research.

Teacher Beliefs

In *Social Foundations of Thought and Action*, Bandura (1986), depicted a system of human behavior and motivation where the beliefs that people have about themselves are key elements in the exercise of control and personal agency (Pajares, 1996). According to Bandura, knowledge, skill, and prior attainments were often poor predictors of future accomplishments. Bandura (1986) proposed the beliefs individuals hold about their abilities and the individual's belief in the outcome of their efforts, were a powerful influence of the way they will behave. In his book, *Self-Efficacy: the Exercise of Control,* Bandura (1997) expanded on his thoughts of the casual relationship of a person's actions. A person's actions, "…are based more on what they believe than on what is objectively true" (p. 2).

Bandura (1996, 1997) expanded on his theory as he related it to teachers in the classroom. He viewed teachers' beliefs in relation to what they felt they could accomplish with the students in their classroom. A teacher's beliefs, Bandura indicated, affected the way he or she instructed students. Teachers, who believed strongly in their ability to educate every student, planned lessons that promoted mastery. Teachers with strong beliefs in their personal teaching efficacy accomplished greater success with their students. These efficacious teachers prevailed because they believed they have the ability to help students overcome environmental circumstances.

We are all inventors and we are always experimenting and have the power to inspire and empower each other (St. John, 1999). Teachers often hold this belief among other strongly held beliefs. But, where do the individual beliefs that teachers hold about teaching and learning originate?

Murphy, Delli and Edwards (2004) suggested that individuals began to form their belief system as early as the preschool years. They discovered, through their research involving second grade students, pre-service teachers and in-service teachers, that beliefs formed early by a profound experience were more difficult to change. The more profound the experience, the more difficult it was to change. This was especially important considering that prospective teachers entered college preparatory classes, armed with at least twelve years of personal observations of good and bad teaching. Their beliefs, therefore, tended to be tenacious, entrenched and difficult to change since they had already formulated strong beliefs about their future classroom practices (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Moss, 2001; Pajares, 1992; Schreiber & Moss, 2002).

Timmerman (2004) further substantiated the role that pre-service teachers' beliefs played in influencing their future teaching practices. Timmerman's study focused on changing the beliefs of pre-service teachers regarding their teaching of mathematics. Before 24 prospective elementary teachers began their mathematics method course, they were given an initial survey to determine their concepts of the teaching of math and how they believed children should learn math. Timmerman postulated that because these prospective teachers had spent years of learning in traditional classrooms their current beliefs resisted change. Her survey found that although 71% of these prospective teachers believed mathematics was a way of

thinking about and solving problems, 22% believed that they should focus on teaching basic skills. Fifty-four percent of the prospective teachers believed they should present information in a simple and straight-forward manner.

During the mathematics method course, the prospective teachers participated in peer teaching, kept problem solving journals, and focused on understanding children's thinking by examining, interpreting and evaluating students' work. The post course survey data showed a shift away from traditional beliefs of teaching mathematics as an arbitrary collection of facts and procedures to be memorized as steps to solve an equation. Only 13% of the prospective teachers believed they should present information in a simple and straightforward manner as opposed to 54% at the beginning of the course. The number also decreased from 92% to 42% of those that believed they should focus on teaching basic skills. All of the prospective teachers (100%) believed that they could use nonstandard procedures for solving math problems. Timmerman concluded that providing opportunities to explore alternative instructional methods could lead to change in prospective teachers' beliefs.

Errington (2004) saw teacher beliefs as a professional set of guidelines for teaching, a blueprint teachers designed for what they believed was or was not possible, an open or closed door that promoted or inhibited change as they delivered curricula to the students. Errington saw the challenge facing academic developers as helping teachers acknowledge their beliefs about teaching and learning. Teachers needed to identify their beliefs, articulate and evaluate their beliefs in order to justify, support, or change their behavior in the classroom. "Teachers own beliefs provide a natural

starting point for investigating good practices as well as accepting innovative procedures in the delivery of instruction" (p. 43).

A belief system can bring either positive or negative results to the classroom. Those who believed that the introduction of any innovation is simply a matter of applying economics to a program or using resources available to teachers more wisely underestimated the impact of teachers' beliefs. Their beliefs impacted their views about learners and how they learn, the nature of knowledge and what it is that should be taught, how the knowledge should be delivered, and which assessment practices should be used to gauge student learning (Errington, 2004; Nespor, 1987).

Stern and Shavelson (1983) believed there were two assumptions on which teacher behavior in the classroom could be based. The first assumption they proposed was that teachers were professionals who made judgments and decisions within a complex community. The second was that teachers' thoughts, judgments, and decisions guided their classroom behavior. Using the second assumption, teacher beliefs acted as filters through which the teacher operated and made sense of his or her classroom practices (Danielson, 2002; Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Shavelson, 1983).

Duffy and Anderson (1984) stated that while teachers were able to articulate their beliefs outside the classroom their actual behaviors in the classroom were often governed by tacit beliefs and by classroom life and forces within the political community. High stakes testing and government expectations sometimes allowed little time for classroom teachers to activate their beliefs and put them into practice.

In fact, although teachers had the knowledge base and the theoretical background regarding how to teach they tended to revert back to their years in the

29

classroom and imposed their beliefs about what good teaching was within their current

classroom (Murphy, Delli, & Edwards, 2004; Moss, 2001; Poulson, Avramidis, Fox,

Medwell, & Wray, 2001; Schreiber & Moss, 2002; Timmerman, 2004).

In his book, *The Fifth Discipline,* Senge (1990), founder and director of the

Center for Organizational Learning at MIT's Sloan School of Management, described

such behavior as the mental models or those deeply engrained assumptions that

influenced how we understood and interpreted our world and how we acted within that

measure of understanding. Senge did not separate our mental models from ourselves

as things we have. Rather he saw our beliefs as what we are, the medium through

which we interact. In other words, our beliefs are woven into our personal history.

Senge suggested that these mental models created a gap between what he defined as

espoused theory, what educators called the knowledge that all pre-service teachers

study, and theory-in-use, what educators referred to as those pedagogies and strategies

used in the classroom. This gap can be related to a lack of time for reflection that

creates an inconsistency between what teachers believe and the methods they choose

to practice instruction (Danielson, 2002; Duffy & Anderson, 1984; Kinzer, 1988).

Bamburg (1994) suggested that educators must be able to dialogue with peers

in a risk free environment in order to be able to challenge the gap between theory and

behavior. This is a skill that educators must learn before they can suspend their mental

models of theories-in-use and address the tension between beliefs and practices that

will lead to closing the gap and therefore perpetuate better instructional pedagogies.

In fact, without recognizing and addressing this tension, the gap between these

mental models can never be realized. With the intensity of the 21st century classroom

there is little time for the kind of reflection necessary for the filter of teacher beliefs to act and hence decrease the gap on their own (Danielson, 2002). Senge posited that educational organizations work the way they work, ultimately because of how teachers think and act. No learning can occur until the gap between theory and practice is realized. But Senge cautioned that this gap cannot be realized by an individual teacher on his or her own because it is difficult to recognize one's own educational theories-in-use in the classroom. In fact, Senge concluded that it is impossible to assess ones own behavior referring to the old adage the "eye cannot see itself".

Poulson, Avramidis, Fox, Medwell, and Wray (2001) did not see a strong relationship between educational practices and teacher beliefs. They argued that teachers hold beliefs and values that were implicit and therefore difficult to access. And, because of the implicit rather than explicit nature of teacher beliefs, classroom practices did not always correlate with the beliefs that teachers held.

Studies of teacher beliefs varied in methodology and quality. Researchers tried a variety of ways to pinpoint the relationship between teachers' beliefs and teachers' behaviors (Fang, 1996). Many of the studies Fang reviewed did not use classroom observation. Instead they relied on hypothetical written situations used to assess what teachers did in a given circumstance. Fang concluded that the responses to these hypothetical situations quite possibly reflected what teachers proposed should be done and not necessarily what the teachers actually did in the situation. Fang found that other studies gathered data on the mental processes of teachers by using direct probes of teachers' thoughts, judgments, and decisions. Such probes used think-aloud, stimulated recall, and journal keeping. Likewise, Fang concluded that by using these

techniques, the resulting data sets were still collections of self-reports and as such, they yielded unreliable and invalid information about teacher beliefs.

Moreover, Bandura (1986, 1997) proposed that judging a person's beliefs about how well that individual will perform required task specificity. Using a global scale to define a person's beliefs required the respondent to interpret what was being addressed. In order to accurately assess how a person's beliefs will impact behavior, any assessment must list the specific task and correspond it to the critical task being assessed. Pajares (1996) offered an example of Bandura's specificity. Teachers were asked to answer the question "How much can you …? [completed by various teaching-related tasks—e.g. "influence the decisions that are made in your school"]. Answer options were on a scale of 1 (nothing) to 9 (a great deal). Bandura argued that a reflective evaluation of personal performance was weighted by what a person believed was an expected assessment of her performance. Furthermore, Bandura reasoned personal abilities were often overestimated and produced a vague assessment.

Teacher Beliefs, Year-Round Education and Taproot Teachers

This study, proposed that taproot teachers shared St. John's (1999) viewpoint that we are all inventors and therefore we are all continually experimenting. Moreover, this study explored the characteristic traits of taproot teachers who were usually willing to be the risk takers in the learning community and were open to new models that helped maximize student learning. It follows then, that any district that expects its YRS program to be successful may profit by identifying taproot teachers and beginning the change process with them. These taproot teachers possess strong belief

systems that promote their own self-efficacy for teaching all students and in turn might have a positive influence on increased student learning. It is possible that when taproot teachers embrace the philosophy of continual learning found in YRE, implementation of such a program, as well as the success of the program, is almost guaranteed (Merino, 1983; Hoffman, Wallace & Reglin, 1991). In this way, taproot teachers in YRS may find themselves in a context that empowers and encourages initiative taking and vision building.

Fullan (1991) identified vision building, initiative taking and empowerment, evolutionary planning, mentoring staff development, and restructuring as key components of school change. He agreed vision is important but found that few YRS started with a shared vision. However, he noted that in schools where YRE had successfully been implemented, shared vision had been an outgrowth of the calendar change. Such a long term vision for student success, although not necessarily stated by taproot teachers, yet ingrained in their belief system and demonstrated by their efficacy, flowed out of their classroom and into the school community. When the vision was pursued by the school community it continued to grow into the success demonstrated by the student learners.

Shields and Larocque (1998) compared the implementation of YRE to a dance in which the steps, tune and rhythm were not always known. This metaphor highlights the willingness of the teachers in YRS to make new conceptual links to their educational practices. This is very similar to the theory Senge (1990) was addressing in his inquiry and advocacy techniques, which had participants sharing their mental models and listening to their colleague's mental models. Perhaps taproot teachers,

when first introduced to the idea of a YRE program, may be drawn to the concept for several important reasons. Because of their deeply rooted beliefs as to how students learn, their personal beliefs on their role as a teacher, and their willingness to do their professional best for their students, taproot teachers are willing to take the steps and investigate how a new learning cycle might enhance students' success.

The teacher plays a uniquely powerful role in the school improvement process (Bandura, 1997; Gipps, McCallum & Brown, 1999; Ross, 1995; Shields & Larocque, 1998; Stephens, Gaffney, Weinzierl, Shelton & Clark, 1993; Whitaker, 2000). Shields & Larocque (1998) are convinced that it is the willingness of the participants, in this case taproot teachers, to make new conceptual links to their educational practices that will make YRE a success.

But what is the nature of effective, strategic change? Tomlinson & Allan (2000) wrote that "school change is complex, unpredictable and messy". And, although no one has devised a fail safe plan, they have identified nine principles that leaders should address as they implement change:

1. Change is imperative in today's classroom.

2. The focus of school change must be classroom practice.

3. For schools to become what they ought to be, we need systemic change.

4. Change is difficult, slow and uncertain.

5. Systemic change requires both leadership and administration.

6. To change schools, we must change the culture of schools.

7. What leaders do speaks with greater force than what they say.

8. Change efforts need to link with a wider world.

9. Leaders for change have a results-based orientation. (p. 34).

I propose there are teachers in nearly every school who have a strong belief in their own efficacy and who demonstrate personal and collegial efficacy. Intuitively adults and students are drawn to them. People are drawn to them not because of what they know but because of who they are and what they do.

Whittaker (2004) considered effective teachers to be architects because it was these teachers who built students into life long learners. They make schools better for students through their willingness to not only participate in innovative educational ideas, but to also help to bring their colleagues to a higher level of professionalism. They are the teachers who believe all students can learn. Taproot teachers design research-based, best practice instructional lessons that promote student success (Danielson, 2002). These are the teachers who are viewed as resources by their colleagues because of their personal reflective practices, questioning of their own aims and actions, and their ability to monitor the short and long term outcomes of the learning strategies they use with their students (Whitaker, 2004).

Teacher Efficacy

Miller and Dollard proposed a theory of social learning as early as 1941. However, their theory rejected behaviorist notions in favor of drive reduction principles. The theory of social learning was expanded using observational learning and vicarious learning as defined by Bandura and Walters (1963). Bandura adapted his own theory of social learning with his book, *Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change* (1977). In the book, Bandura identified and defined the necessity of self-beliefs to take on a task or to change a behavior.

Rotter (1966) believed in locus of control that referred to one's belief in her abilities to control life's events. Locus of control is not the same as self efficacy. Locus of control focuses on the perception of control. Self efficacy (Bandura, 1977) on the other hand focuses "on the perception of the ability to act competently and effectively" (Strausser, 2002).

In an attempt to measure self efficacy in teachers, RAND (1976) published a study that examined the success of reading programs. Two efficacy items that were used in the questionnaire were influenced by Rotter's locus of control research. The two RAND prompts have appeared in most of the research on teacher efficacy. These prompts are:

1. When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can't do much because most of the student's motivation and performance depends on home environment.

2. If I try really hard, I can get through to even the most difficult and unmotivated students. (RAND [R-2007-LAUSD]p. 23)

Teachers participating in the study were asked to indicate their level of agreement with these two statements using a 6-point Likert scale. The sum of the two scores was called teacher efficacy (TE), a construct that revealed the extent to which a teacher believed that the consequences of teaching, student motivation and learning, was in the hands of the teacher or under the teacher's locus of control.

Furthering the concept of teacher efficacy, Gibson and Dembo (1984) developed a 30-item scale that included the RAND items in order to measure TE. Through their factor analysis they confirmed a two-dimensional construct of teacher

efficacy. They labeled the dimensions as general teaching efficacy (GTE) and personal teacher efficacy (PTE). General teaching efficacy is the belief that educators, in general, can impact student performance. Personal teacher efficacy refers to an individual teacher's confidence in his or her own ability to reach diverse learners and to help them be successful. Based on their resulting two-dimensional model, Gibson and Dembo (1984) defined self-efficacy, as the personal efficacy and teacher belief that a teacher holds that he or she can make a difference.

Outcome expectations and efficacy expectations, as postulated by Bandura (1977, 1978, and 1997), related directly to the two Likert-scale RAND prompts. Bandura defined self-efficacy as, "beliefs in one's capability to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainments" (1997 p.3). He maintained that efficacy beliefs largely determine outcome expectations. Bandura continued by indicating teachers' beliefs in their instructional efficacy determined how they structure academic activities for their students. Teachers with high efficacy structured a variety of learning modalities for their students. They devoted more classroom time to learning. High efficacious teachers operated on the belief that difficult students were teachable but they required extra effort from the teacher.

Bandura (1997) offered four sources that shaped teacher efficacy and necessitated the development of an individual teacher's perceived efficacy and impacted collegial efficacy. These sources are mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and affective state (p. 79). Mastery experience, according to Bandura, is the most powerful source of efficacy both in individual teachers and the system as a whole. It is based on the premise that school

communities, like teachers, know what they do well and successfully, and repeat those actions. Teachers as a group experience success and failures. Their success as a group, as gauged by student tests scores for instance, is a definite predictor of mastery experience and the perceived collective efficacy of the staff.

Vicarious experience, Bandura posits, is the process through which someone else models a skill in question. When the observer identifies with the model, the efficacy beliefs of the observer are most likely enhanced. Perceived collective efficacy may also be enhanced when teachers observe other successful organizations. Staff members learning a new strategy or attempting to implement a new program often observe teachers in another building using the strategy or program. This type of borrowing from other successful organizations is a form of vicarious organizational learning.

The third source of perceived individual and collective efficacy that Bandura (1997) proposed was social persuasion. Social persuasion can be as formal as feedback from an administrator or colleague or as informal as a discussion in the teacher's lounge that focuses on the ability of a teacher to positively influence a student's performance. A strong sense of group capability establishes a strong press for collective performance. What's more, teachers who are brand new to the school are socialized by the school culture. Therefore, a high sense of perceived collective efficacy presents a more positive environment while promoting the expectation that extra effort by all staff members is the norm and that staff must do whatever is necessary to help students excel (Goddard et al., 2004; Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990).

Pressure and crisis are a given in any position. The affective states of Bandura's construct of perceived individual and collective efficacy provide the ability for efficacious teachers and organizations to tolerate the pressure and stress while continuing to function without debilitating consequences. An efficacious teacher and organization understands that failures will happen. But a belief in their collective efficacy affects their sense of mission and vision of their organization. The strength in a common commitment forms the basis for the group's resiliency in the face of difficulties.

Teachers' beliefs in their perceived efficacy affect their receptivity to, and adoption of new and innovative educational programs. Because innovations add to an already heavy workload, many new programs are met with indifference or resistance. A teacher's sense of efficacy is one of the best predictors of his or her willingness to adopt new educational programs (RAND, 1977). Efficacious teachers will be the flag bearers and Bandura (1997) postulated because of their high efficacy they will be able to accept the lack of success and failures that occur initially and still continue with the program.

Smylie (1988) suggested that teacher efficacy, in particular personal teacher efficacy, acted as a filter through which new ideas and innovations must passed before teachers internalized them and changed their behaviors. Efficacious teachers have been described as possessing a range of organizational strategies and teaching techniques. They can select from their broad range of pedagogical repertoire, to meet the needs and circumstances of their professional situation (Alexander, 1995).

Others reported that pre-service teachers perceived teacher efficacy in a much different way. When Artiles and Trent (1990) asked pre-service teachers to complete a survey to ascertain what characteristics they believed defined an effective teacher, they found that pre-service teachers listed personal character traits, not strategies of teachers, as having the strongest impact on them as students.

Ross (1995) defined teacher efficacy, as the extent to which teachers believed their efforts had a positive effect on student achievement. He went on to say those teachers with high TE contributed to the implementation of new teaching ideas and tended to the needs of lower ability students. Efficacious teachers went further by developing programs to meet the needs of special children in their classrooms. Moreover, teachers with high TE were willing to implement new instructional programs even if it meant they needed to learn new teaching skills. Finally, Ross found that high TE characteristically involved parents in the learning process.

Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk, Hoy, & Hoy (1998) proposed a different model of teacher efficacy. They described teacher efficacy as the teacher's belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action necessary to successfully accomplish a specific teaching competence in light of the critiqued task and situation. Tschannen-Moran et al. casted teacher efficacy as contextual and situational.

According to Ashton (1984) there were eight dimensions to the development of teacher efficacy. They are:

1. A sense of personal accomplishment: Teachers viewed work as meaningful and important.

2. Positive expectations for student behavior: Teachers expected students to make progress.

3. Personal responsibility for learning: Teachers accepted accountability and displayed a willingness to evaluate performance.

4. Strategies for achieving objectives: Teachers planned for student learning, set goals, and identified strategies for achievement.

5. Positive affect: Teachers felt good about teaching, self and students.

6. Sense of control: Teachers believed they could influence student's learning.

7. Sense of common teacher/student goals: Teachers developed joint ventures with students to accomplish goals.

8. Democratic decision-making: Teachers involved students in decision-making aspects regarding goals and strategies. (p. 28)

Whittaker (2004) in his book, *What Great Teachers Do Differently: 14 Things that Matter Most* stated the difference between effective and non-effective teachers was not what they knew but what they did. He addressed fourteen areas that identified how great teachers make a difference. Whittaker participated in five different studies that examined effective educators. In each study the research team visited outstanding schools and schools with less stellar reputations. After observations and interviews, the team began to identify differences between more effective and less effective teachers. Upon compiling their data, a list of effective teacher traits emerged. Whittaker's list mirrored some of the same traits identified by Ashton. Whittaker offered the following list of effective teacher traits:

1. Great teachers never forget that it is people, not programs that determine the quality of the school.

2. Great teachers establish clear expectations at the start of the year and follow them consistently.

3. When a student misbehaves, great teachers have one goal: to keep that behavior from happening again.

4. Great teachers have high expectations for students but even higher for themselves.

5. Great teachers know who is the variable in the classroom: *They are.*

6. Great teachers create a positive atmosphere in their classroom and schools.

7. Great teachers consistently filter out the negatives that don't matter and share a positive attitude.

8. Great teachers work hard to keep their relationships in good repair.

9. Great teachers have the ability to ignore trivial disturbances and the ability to respond to inappropriate behavior without escalating the situation.

10. Great teachers have a plan and purpose for everything they do. Their personal reflections allow them to adjust plans.

11. Before making any decision or attempting to bring about change, great teachers ask themselves one question: *What will the best people think?*

12. Great teachers continually ask themselves who is most comfortable and who is least comfortable with each decision they make. They treat everyone as if they were good.

13. Great teachers keep standardized testing in perspective; they center on the real issues of student learning.

14. Great teachers care about their students. They understand that behaviors and beliefs are tied to emotions, and they understand the power of emotions to jump-start. (p.127-128)

Pressley (1995) arrived at his definition for teacher efficacy after he found a gap in the research as he sought to compare types of reading instruction. He discovered that there was no systematic study of effective primary teachers regarding their knowledge of what needed to be included in a successful instructional program. Pressley felt that characteristics of effective reading teachers needed to be identified so educators could determine what teaching strategies made their students successful readers and writers. He asked reading supervisors nationwide to identify their effective teachers in the primary grades. Instead of providing a list of effective characteristics, Pressley asked the supervisors to list the indicators they used to identify their effective teachers. The supervisors listed characteristics that resembled effective traits. Some of these same traits were identified by Wong (1998), Whitaker (2000), and Ross (1995). The combined results of their research offered the following traits of an effective teacher:

1. Has positive expectations and outcomes (Pressley, 1995, p. 18; Ross, 1995, p. 230; Whittaker, 2000, p. 127; Wong, 1998, p. 9).

43

2. Uses good classroom management to change behavior (Whittaker, 2000, p. 127; Wong, 1998, p. 9).

3. Plans lessons that will help all students reach mastery (Pressley, 1995, p.18; Wong, 1998, p. 9).

4. Is more willing to implement new instructional programs and sees themselves as a continual learner (Ross, 1995, p.233; Whittaker, 2000, p. 127; Wong, 1998, p. 296).

5. Takes responsibility for the learning of all students and attributes learning outcomes to the teacher's actions (Pressley, 1995, p.18; Ross, 1995, p. 230; Whittaker, 2000, p. 127; Wong, 1998, p. 197).

6. Always acts professionally and treats their colleagues and their students with respect (Whittaker, 2000, p. 127; Wong, 1995, p. 266-267).

7. Knows that a positive learning environment must be developed for students to learn and the teacher is the filter that allows that to happen (Pressley, 1995, p. 18; Whittaker, 2000, p. 127; Wong, 1998, p. 35-36).

8. Is a leader within his/her school community and his/her peers' value his/her input (Whittaker, 2000, p.127; Wong, 1998, p. 273-276).

Teacher Efficacy, Year-Round Education and Taproot Teachers

Using the descriptors above, efficacious teachers can readily be identified. These definitions of teacher efficacy can be used to support the metaphor of the taproot teacher. Efficacious teachers are the taproot teachers that bring the enthusiasm

and excitement to the implementation of a new program such as YRE. Clearly it is the taproot teacher who, propelled by high self-efficacy, is willing to take the first steps necessary to help begin the planning necessary for the implementation of YRE. That is because a teacher's efficacious beliefs determine how much effort she will expend on an activity, how long she will persevere when confronting obstacles, and how resilient she will prove to be in the face of adverse situations. The higher the sense of efficacy, or the deeper the roots of the taproot teacher, the more effort, persistence and resilience will be available to support the success of implementing the program as well as the long-term sustaining of the program and the success of the students (Pajares, 1996).

Because YRS is often a controversial subject, the support of the taproot teacher can be an asset when it is time to educate staff, district office personnel, parents, community, and possible financial supporters on the many positive benefits such a program will bring to the students. The taproot will also be a sustaining force when the winds of resistance and dissent tend to bend and break teachers with a lesser degrees of self-efficacy.

<div align="center">Collective Efficacy</div>

Bandura (1997) defined perceived collective efficacy "as a group's shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce levels of attainment" (p.477). For a school faculty to demonstrate collective efficacy, it requires more than the aggregate of the individual efficacy of its teachers (Henson, 2001). Collective efficacy has its roots in a common belief base in the school community. Teachers' beliefs in their collective efficacy influence where they are

going (goals), how they are going to get there (strategies), and how much effort (planning) they expect to put into the project. These processes affect how well the group works together and how much they will be able to accomplish collectively (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2004).

Relationships appear to be the underpinning support of the perceived collective efficacy of a school community. It might be advantageous then for school leaders to develop the skills and tools that create patterns of relationships that facilitate collegiality and promote the reflective inquiry that builds common goal setting, shared vision, and decision-making. The often informal nurturing among colleagues should be recognized and formalized if an administrator seeks to bind the learning from room to room and support the culture of the community (Losee, 2000).

Collective efficacy judgments are shared beliefs about a group's capability. For schools, this perceived collective efficacy refers to the judgments of teachers that the faculty, as a whole, can organize and execute the courses of action necessary to have a positive effect on students (Goddard et al., 2004). These perceptions of their colleague's abilities directly influence the diligence with which a group chooses to pursue their goals. Therefore, perceived collective efficacy is a strong behavioral influence of an organization's commitment to implement and sustain their educational vision.

Knowledge about the perceived collective efficaciousness of a faculty is critical to understanding the school's performance, teachers' performance and students' performance. Just as an individual teacher's efficacy has a positive effect on students, a perceived collective efficacy in a school will build a positive climate and in

turn affect student and teacher performance. In fact, Goddard, Hoy and Woolfolk-Hoy (2000) reported that collective teacher efficacy was more predictive of elementary students' math and reading achievement than gender, ethnicity, and even socio-economic status.

The first steps in both revealing and building the relationships required in collective efficacy begin with collaboration (Ross, Hogaboam-Gray, & Gray, 2003). This collaboration creates a climate that legitimizes help seeking, joint problem solving and instructional experimentation. As teachers work together there is a trust built that develops each other's competency and increases efficacy. This increased efficacy leads to greater collegial interaction and an increase in collective efficacy (Ross, 1994; 2003). Conversely, collective efficacy will be low in a school where there is a lack of trust, limited collaboration, and negative attitudes expressed by the staff. Furthermore, if school leaders believe the research that organizational systems have a great potential to impact individual behavior and the perception that individual behavior can impact organizational behavior both negatively and positively, then school leaders must view the role of collective efficacy with increased importance in the school system (Henson, 2001).

It follows then that a positive group atmosphere built and supported by perceived collective efficacy can have a beneficial effect on morale, motivation and the self-image of the members of the learning community. To complete the cycle of success as described by Bandura (1997) and Ross (1995), when a school staff judges themselves to be effective as they educate students, the positive atmosphere within the community grows. The results of this positive atmosphere are characterized by

47

increased collaboration between teachers, parental involvement in the school, team teaching, and constructive "teacher talk" where teachers share instructional decisions within and across grade levels. High collective efficacy is nurturing to the student body in general and tends to promote the academic success of the students (Bandura, 1997). When students are successful, Bandura believes their success directly feeds the teacher's efficacy, which begins the successful learning cycle again.

Collective Efficacy, Year-Round Education and Taproot Teachers

Cultural climate in schools consists of a complex range of collective beliefs among the staff of the school. This climate is likely to determine the degree to which a change can occur within the climate or be facilitated by teachers within the climate. When a school staff firmly believes that through their determined efforts, all students are teachable regardless of their background, academic success is an achievable and attainable goal.

Taproot teachers can be the initial thrust that launches a restructuring program such as Year-Round Education. That is because a teacher's sense of self-efficacy is the best predictor of his or her willingness to adopt new practices (Bandura, 1997). This being the case, the educational leader should begin the restructuring process with the efficacious teacher. Not only might these high efficacious teachers be willing to start a new educational program that is in the student's best interest, but they will most probably have the "stick-to-itiveness" to keep going when the difficult times come (RAND [R-1589/7-HEW], 1977). Consequently, a taproot teacher can be characterized by his or her ability to use Bandura's sources of efficacy (mastery experience, vicarious learning, social persuasion, and the affective state) to nurture

48

and support personal efficacy and the collegial efficacy of colleagues. When those

attributes are used, a taproot teacher's circle of influence is extended and collaboration

is built among fellow staff members. Such collaboration can go a long way to

improving and sustaining a collective sense of efficacy. The success of the group

requires effective interdependent links of tasks and skills and the collegial trust in their

colleagues' ability to perform. Schools where staff members collectively judge

themselves as highly capable of promoting academic success have proven that an

atmosphere with a positive learning atmosphere is conducive to raising achievement

scores (Goddard et al., 2004). As a result of higher scores, the cycle continues to

perpetuate student success, individual teacher efficacy, and the collective efficacy of

the staff.

<p style="text-align:center">Implementing and Sustaining Change</p>

Senge et al. (2000) reasoned that the school is a fulcrum point for educational

change. Classrooms only change if the school around them changes. Parents and

community members tend to hang on to their mental models of the TCS. Such mental

models are seldom examined for their benefit to student learning but are often held

sacred for the nostalgic feelings they bring to mind.

Can we realistically prepare the citizens of the future in the schools of our

childhood? In today's global society those schools do not meet the needs of the

students of the 20th century and are even less equipped to prepare students for the 21st

century. The assembly-line education system is under stress. Its graduates are often

judged unacceptable by society. The system is responding by doing what most systems

do: keep doing what you have always done but harder. Accountability is intensified,

testing is increased, and workloads on all of the school's population are increased. But are students learning more?

Some school leaders believe that mandating change will make it happen (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Senge et al., 2000; Tomlinson & Allan, 2000). These educational leaders believe that calling for change in writing ensures that an initiative, program or priority will be implemented. This type of thinking directly impacts the professional staff's belief that "this too shall pass". Whenever a school system fails to take into account the need for involving all the stakeholders in key systemic change initiatives, professional staff claim to have seen it all before and describe the way in which educational fashions come and go (Brown & Moffett, 1999; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992).

Change in educational systems is a complex political, social, and personal process (Brown & Moffett, 1999). If schools are to become more systemic as they face change, more collegial, collaborative and learning communities must be established with a group of willing change agents. Strong professional communities of teachers successfully help change to take root and grow and eventually adapt to the change. This type of a learning, growing community must be supported by time to discuss and reflect on their beliefs and strategies as they change. The professional staff, when seen as a learning community, must also be supported by continual professional development.

Perhaps a growing, learning community has as its charter members taproot teachers who support change and draw others to them by virtue of their strong beliefs and their willingness to take on the challenges of a new initiative. When a taproot

begins to push down and ground itself deeper in the earth, it increases its strength through the effort that it takes to go deeper and deeper through the hard soil and around or through the rocks if necessary. When a teacher can pursue a vision of success for children no matter what the status quo does and is willing to step forward and implement change, others will be more likely to follow. In this way taproot teachers use their strong belief systems and efficacy as support to both anchor themselves deeply and to grow undeterred toward the light.

A taproot teacher's sustaining power to keep a program growing and going might lie in his or her commitment to personal as well as organizational growth. Because of this commitment and shared vision, taproot teachers create the conditions necessary for sustainability through their personal character traits (Fullan, 2003). Fullan summarized the characteristic traits of leader teachers into three personal factors: hope, enthusiasm, and energy (p. 93). Leaders may not be born with these traits. But their belief system which drives their moral purpose supports the hope they need when conditions may sap their energy. The energy and enthusiasm teacher leaders engage others and in turn energize the working community. Teachers, who possess these traits, go on to create environments for student success and the capacity to sustain programs or learning initiatives.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the study designed to investigate the character traits of taproot teachers and the sustaining influence taproot teachers bring to a year-round program. The first section of the chapter describes the purpose of the study while subsequent sections describe the selection of the district, sample participants, data collection and analysis.

Purpose of the Study

The population growth of the 1980's saw a revitalization of YRS because it was a way to expand the capacity of a building without spending construction dollars. As year-round educational programs grew across the nation, more student benefits of the program were realized by educators and researchers. Much of the research has been devoted to academic gains, use of a single or multi-track program, absenteeism of students and staff, and the perceptions of students, staff, and parents about the program. Although the perceptions of staff teaching in a year-round program have been documented (Davies & Kerry, 1997; Gandara & Fish, 1994; Lowe, 2002; Merino, 1983; Quinlin, George & Emmett, 1987; Rasmussen, 2000; Shields & Larocque, 1998), no evidence exists to document what sustains a year-round educational program.

This study investigated teacher characteristics that contributed to the success of and sustaining influence on a YRE educational program. Two research questions guided this inquiry.

1. What character traits are demonstrated by taproot teachers?

2. How do these character traits sustain and influence a year-round educational program?

The literature clearly points to teachers as the change agents in any new educational thrust within a school climate. Therefore, if character traits demonstrated by taproot teachers can be observed and isolated, those teachers with a high probability of sustaining a YRE program should be engaged in its implementation.

In addition, as discussed in Chapter Two, the efficacy of the taproot teacher not only sustains a program such as YRE but also adds to the continued success of the individual teacher. This cycle of success continues by overflowing to colleagues and students (Bandura, 1997; Ross, 1995).

Sample

In 2003 the National Association of Year-Round Education (NAYRE) provided a list of school districts using year-round education. A school district in the state of Delaware was listed as using a *balanced calendar,* the district's term for a YRC, in two of its schools. I knew where the district was located in Delaware because I had lived in the state for 10 years. The district had an elementary school and a middle school operating on a year-round calendar. From a practical viewpoint, the district was within a feasible driving distance from my home.

There were five elementary schools in the district. In 1997 the district decided to reorganize the five elementary schools into four. At the same time, several conversations between the superintendent and a then middle school teacher, Linda (a pseudonym), had transpired about the instructional time lost every September due to extended review when the students returned to school after a twelve week summer

break. The superintendent had entertained the idea of adopting a year-round calendar to address the impact of such a program on student learning and achievement. Linda was immediately interested. With the redistricting of the five elementary schools, the superintendent believed it was a good time to suggest a change to a year-round educational program by making one of the elementary schools a school of choice. The school board agreed and decided to send a team of parents, teachers, board members and administrators to the national convention of the National Association of Year-Round Education (NAYRE) in San Diego, California.

This group, representative of district stakeholders, included those that were in favor of a year-round program and those that harbored negative opinions about the program. However, upon their return, all team members agreed that a year-round calendar would benefit students. The first committee for a year-round calendar in the district was born and planning sessions began. The following year another team went to the same national convention. Linda, now the new principal of the elementary school of choice, was part of that second team.

Jordan-Bank Elementary School, a pseudonym, was designated as the elementary school of choice. As a school of choice it adopted a year-round calendar and parents voluntarily applied to have their children attend. The school board decided that if the school of choice was going to come to fruition, 325 students must be enrolled. Three-hundred sixty applied. Because this was considered a new school by the district, teachers had to apply to teach at the school. Approximately 25 professional positions were needed. Thirty-five applicants applied.

Using the NAYRE's link to the district, I was able to obtain the name and phone number of the assistant superintendent in charge of the elementary schools. It was necessary for me to speak with the educators in the district who had launched the YRS program. I wanted to know if the district had used teachers in the district that embodied taproot teacher characteristics to implement the program. In making plans to speak with the assistant superintendent, questions began to formulate. Who spear headed the program in the district? Why were those particular people chosen? Which teachers did the district involve early in the program? How was the building staffed?

In the fall of 2003, I contacted the assistant superintendent by phone. I explained my study and that I would like to talk with several teachers at the elementary level who were teaching in the modified calendar educational program. My interest, at that time, was at the elementary level because my professional educational experience has been at the elementary level. During our conversation I explained the concept of a "taproot teacher" and shared some of the characteristics of a taproot teacher predicted by the literature review. I also explained that a taproot teacher may possibly have a sustaining impact on an educational program such as the modified calendar program currently used in one of the elementary schools. I asked the assistant superintendent, given the description of a taproot teacher, if he believed any teacher currently teaching in the modified calendar program could be a taproot teacher. He assured me, "They are all taproot teachers because they all volunteered to teach in the program." He suggested I contact the elementary principal and talk with her directly about the information I needed.

When I contacted the elementary principal, I provided a brief description of who I was and the scope of my proposed study. She quickly gave me the names of two teachers that she identified as taproot teachers. She shared the names before I explained the characteristics that the literature highlighted. After I explained the characteristics, she remained strong in her conviction that these teachers were indeed taproot teachers.

It was necessary to employ this purposive sampling (Krathwohl, 1998) to select the teachers. To support the presupposition that taproot teachers in a year-round educational program have observable character traits and create a sustaining influence on the program, it was the perception of those teachers that need to be heard. It was also necessary to interview taproot teachers to determine if these professionals, currently teaching in a YRE program and identified by their principal, embodied this concept.

During the initial interview with one of the teachers, the principal stopped in to see how we were progressing. She made several comments at that time regarding how well the students were doing on standardized and state wide testing. We spoke briefly about her role as the principal throughout the implementation of the YRC program. After reviewing her comments in the transcribed notes from the teacher interviews, it was evident that I needed to investigate her reasons for initially identifying the two participants. What character traits had she observed that led her to choose these two particular teachers? How did she see those traits demonstrated? I made an appointment to meet with the principal on the day I was going to meet the teachers for the second interview. I interviewed the principal at her new office in June 2005 (Appendix E). At

that time she also signed a consent form and it was agreed she too would have a pseudonym. We talked for approximately 45 minutes. The audio taped interview was transcribed into text by the researcher.

Shank (2002) described this kind of sampling as theoretical sampling: sampling with a purpose. The participants were selected because they were considered to be rich sources of informational data. Interviewing these teachers and their principal allowed me to explore the beliefs and actions of taproot teachers. The researcher needed to interview taproot teachers and their principal by listening to their personal accounts of their involvement in the change from a traditional calendar to a year-round program. Therefore, purposive sampling was the most appropriate type of sampling for this qualitative study.

Participants

Three educators participated in this study. Two of the educators were teachers. The principal, who identified the teachers as demonstrating taproot teacher characteristics, also participated. Each participant was given a pseudonym to protect their identity and the identity of their school. Each participant is described in turn.

Participant 1: Rebecca, a veteran teacher of 30 years, had been a teacher at Jordan-Bank Elementary School for 26 years prior to the school becoming a school of choice. She is a single mother and in addition to her public school position serves as an adjunct professor at the nearby state college. She had taught in a self-contained third grade classroom for 26 years before being hired to teach at the school of choice under the year-round calendar.

Participant 2: Sally, also a veteran teacher, has taught for 25 years. All of those years have been at the Jordan-Bank Elementary School. Sally has served twenty years as a Title I reading teacher under the traditional calendar and five years in the same position under the year-round calendar. Sally is a wife and a mother and was born and raised in the community where Jordan-Bank Elementary is located. Being a member of the community has proved to be advantageous when seeking support for her volunteer tutoring program and for the year-round school program. She sees 46 students on a daily basis and supervises 71 volunteers. When Jordan-Bank was changed to a YRS, Sally was concerned her volunteer tutoring program would be impacted. But the volunteers were very willing to follow the school's new calendar and the program remained strong.

Participant 3: Linda had been a middle school teacher in the district. She has been an elementary principal for ten years. Seven of those years were in another district and three years were at Jordan-Bank. At the time of this study she was the principal at Jordan-Bank.

<center>Data Collection</center>

An initial interview with the teachers was arranged by the principal to ensure minimal disruption to their teaching schedules. The first interview scheduled for December of 2003 was canceled due to weather. It was rescheduled for January, 2004. To minimize interruptions, interviews were held in the morning at the elementary school prior to the start of the school day. After a brief description of the study, and an explanation of the protection of confidentiality for the interviewees and the district, the participants were asked to sign the informed consent forms (Appendix A). As agreed

all participants were given a pseudonym to protect their identity and the identity of the district.

In order to gain insight into the teachers' perspective, questions for the first interview were semi-structured and open-ended (Appendix B). Both participants were asked the same set of questions. Fontana and Frey (2000) defined structured interviewing as a process of asking all respondents the same limited response questions. During a structured interview process the researcher has little flexibility. On the other hand, a semi-structured interview technique provides the qualitative researcher with opportunities to use the original question as a stem and to also ask additional questions based on the participant's response. According to Krathwohl (1993) such an extension of the interview questions is particularly useful in pursuing a respondent's incomplete or nonresponsive answer, identifying the aspects of a situation that may be leading to an effect, and explaining discrepancies in answers. The intent in using a semi-structured list of questions in the first interview was to uncover the participants' perception and individual characteristics of taproot teacher qualities while not explicitly leading them to the answers (Shank, 2002). Shank called this interviewing technique, "shining the light into dark corners," (p. 48). It was my hope to uncover some unexpected and delightful information. Each interview was audio taped and lasted from 30 to 45 minutes. The recordings were then transcribed by the researcher.

After the initial interviews and review of the data, I sent an email to each participant to seek clarification specific to their initial responses. In the process of discerning themes and patterns in the data, it was imperative that I not disclose any

specific taproot teacher characteristics to the participants. Yet I needed to know more about the teachers and their delivery of instruction in the classroom. Fang (1996) described this task as difficult. A researcher often probes a teacher's belief of best classroom practice by various forms of self-reporting. The problem with self-reported data is the extent to which the information reported is what the teacher believes should happen in the classroom and not necessarily what actually does happen in the classroom. When a researcher probes a teacher's response to an interview question, the intent is to stimulate recall concerning a particular instructional lesson, activity or a student's response to the learning. Additional probing is meant to activate the teacher's think-aloud protocols in actual classroom contexts. This type of semi-structured interviewing helps to define the paradigm that links teacher beliefs to teacher behavior in the classroom and ultimately to student learning (Fang, 1996).

Because the first interview addressed general questions and was not specific to the individual teacher's instructional delivery or classroom procedures, the email was directed more to classroom behaviors. Eventually by using all the data collected, the researcher tried to avoid the pitfall identified by Fang.

Preliminary data analysis looked for recurring themes. The reoccurring themes helped to further explain the perceptions of identified taproot teachers and the characteristics they exhibit. Preliminary data analysis also led to additional questions. Whereas the first interview consisted of more general questions, the second interview aimed at capturing more precise data that helped to explain each teacher's behavior within the school community. In order to address the behaviors specific to each teacher, the questions in the second interview were unique to each teacher (Fontana &

Frey, 2000). A second face to face interview was scheduled to gather information that

would answer the following questions:

1. What was their individual role in educating the community?

2. How much time had they committed to the development process?

3. Where did they get their support throughout the development stages and

   beyond?

4. What was their perception of the kind of teacher the district was seeking to be a

   part of the new school?

5. Did they know the vision of the staff for this new school?

6. Changes were happening in the district. How were the teachers handling the

   changes?

The second interview (Appendix C and D) took place in June 2005. Questions

for the second interview differed for each teacher. The questions were specific to each

teacher to expand on the initial interview and the email discussions to solidify the

perceptions of these taproot teachers. The second interview lasted approximately 45

minutes and was audio taped. The researcher transcribed the audio tape into text.

Data Analysis

Several processes were used to analyze the data. First, the participants'

responses were read several times to determine if there were reoccurring themes,

patterns or strands that ran through the conversations. This initial review of the data

was aimed at listening to the stories of the taproot teachers as they described their

year-round program. Data collected from all of the interviews were organized around a

framework identified by Shank (2002). In Shank's framework, he offered "three

fundamental technological innovations that have allowed human beings to see things that they ordinarily would not be able to see" (p. 8). These three means of empirical inquiry that allow researchers to view data more richly are the mirror, the window and the lantern.

The mirror, as defined by Shank and used by the researcher, views data as a reflective-based inquiry into the events and stories of everyday life. The mirror allows the empirical inquirer to see himself or herself within the picture. This reflective nature of the mirror in research may not be only visual. The mirror also allows the observant researcher to speculate on the parallelism of her life and the situations happening around him or her. The observant researcher strives to apply the reflective nature of the mirror to the parallelism of her own life.

The window as a clear, translucent glass allows the researcher an undistorted view of what is happening while he or she is outside of the specific event. The researcher must keep in mind the glass lens can also be used as both a telescope and microscope offering another window to enhance the perspective. However, the researcher must not accept the window view as unflawed. Glass is seldom unflawed or completely streak free. Those flaws and streaks, according to Shank, limit or bias the viewer's perspective.

Shank's third visual perspective is the lantern. Just as any kind of luminary directs light on a path, so the lantern illuminates areas of data that remained in the dark. The swinging of the researcher's lantern uncovers meaning where before no meaning had been clearly illuminated.

In this study, the researcher used the window strategy to develop the literature review. By looking through the window of teacher beliefs, efficacy and collegial efficacy as viewed by the current body of educational literature, a clear picture could develop pertaining to the character traits embodied in a taproot teacher.

The researcher employed the lantern perspective to listen to and reflect on the conversations of the participants. Using the lantern, the researcher sought to illuminate new insights about taproot teachers and communicate these new insights in a way that would broaden the educational knowledge base of how these taproot educators sustain new educational programs. Applying the lantern perspective to the data allowed a thick description of taproot teachers and their sustaining influence on the year-round program in this particular district.

Using the lantern perspective to analyze the data allowed me to reveal patterns that could be grouped into themes. The themes were organized around the taproot teacher criteria identified in the literature and also present in the responses of the participant's.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

In this chapter the researcher will present examples of taproot teacher characteristics identified in the data. The data was gathered through several interviews with the participants. The following research questions drove this exploratory study:

1. What character traits are demonstrated by a taproot teacher?

2. How do these character traits sustain and influence a year-round educational program?

Teacher beliefs are the grounding force of a taproot teacher. These beliefs support and connect the other intentional traits, automatically, causing not only the taproot teacher to grow but all whom s/he encounters.

The transcripts of the three participants were read and reviewed numerous times to determine major ideas and conceptual clusters. In addition, notes taken during the interviews were read and reread to understand the nuances of the interview.

Five major categories of character traits demonstrated by the taproot teacher emerged. These categories are:

1. Student learning is the responsibility of the teacher.

2. Collegiality fosters student success.

3. Teachers pursuing the vision strive for success.

4. Teacher planning nourishes innovative and coordinated action.

5. Facing change together is seen as a challenge and embodies hope.

Facing Change Together is Seen as a
Challenge and Embodies Hope

Teacher Planning
Nourishes Innovative
Coordinated
Action

Collegiality
Fosters Student
Success

Teachers Enrolled
In The Vision
Strive For Success

Student Learning
Is The
Responsibility
Of The teacher

Taproot Teacher Beliefs
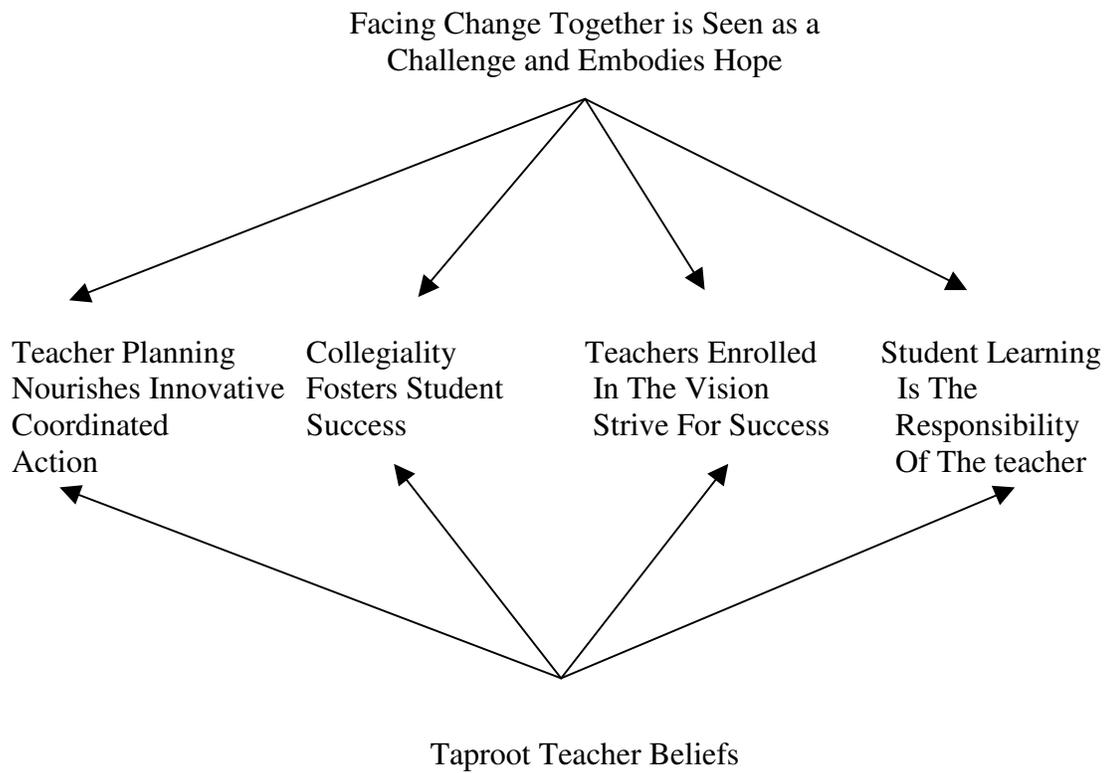
Figure 1. The cyclical sustainability of Taproot Teacher Characteristics

Figure 1 is a graphic representation of the characteristics that emerged from the

data analysis. It shows the five characteristics of a taproot teacher and the

interrelationship of those characteristics. Taproot teacher beliefs are at the heart of the

behavior of the teacher. Such deeply rooted beliefs were developed early and are only

changed by intentional practice and continual self-monitoring (Bandura, 1977;

Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Edwards, 1996; Errington, 2004; Fullan, 1991; Nespor,

1987; Ross, 1995).

Pajares (1992) described the connection between attitudes, values, and beliefs.

Beliefs are not an independent subsystem. Beliefs give intention to behavior. This

cyclical action as identified by Bandura (1997) and Ross (1995) creates the positive impact necessary to sustain any educational reform in which these taproot teachers may be involved.

As teacher beliefs are formed over time and with great pressure, these beliefs sustain professional relationships, instructional practices within the classroom and contribute to future practices by promoting a vision for the teacher. Taproot teachers seek out other taproot teachers to share their successful pedagogies. This sharing of practice creates a bond and a collegiality that promotes greater student achievement (Bandura, 1997; Fullan, 2003; Goddard, et al., 2004). A higher level of student achievement adds to the efficaciousness of the individual teacher and the collective efficacy of the staff. The collective energy of an efficacious staff can foster an unwritten vision for increased student achievement. Such a vision, when shared by the staff, drives the purpose and passion to implement and sustain an educational program.

In the following sections, each of the five categories that were identified as taproot teacher characteristics will be presented. First, the findings will be presented by category, using the words of the participants as they articulated their demonstration of taproot teacher characteristics. Then, the patterns and commonalities across each category will be presented.

Student Learning is the Responsibility of the Teacher

Each teacher articulated that her efforts, both as an individual and as part of a group, were responsible for her students' performance. The teachers' belief system drove the instructional decisions they made to promote student success. This section

presents the findings from the participants' interviews in their own words specific to their beliefs as to how they contributed to students' learning and achievement.

Rebecca: I maintain a positive attitude with students. I use my sense of humor to chide students to follow classroom rules. I encourage students constantly to set high standards for themselves. I let them know I will help them be successful and we will work through it until they understand. I'm enthusiastic and I feel that is contagious as well as positive for the children. And our scores show our students are doing better. Scores have improved every year.

Sally, a Title I teacher for 28 years, designed and implanted the HOSTS (Help One Student To Succeed) program. When I asked her to share what her beliefs were about how children learn and how that was demonstrated in her classroom she laughed as she replied:

That is my classroom. I have to figure out how they learn and start from that point. Each one can be different. Then I set up a program and see if they do learn. If not, I change the program and find another way to help them understand. They have more time in my room, of course, and the one-on-one I offer with the mentor program is invaluable to their learning. I've handpicked my mentors since I grew up in this community. They are very faithful to me and the program, naturally. I never have a problem with them not showing up.

I asked Sally to share with me how she found 71 mentors to volunteer. Why did she give up time after school to continually seek tutors for her Title I students?

I know my students are growing. I know they are gaining progress because of the strategies I, we, use. I know the one-to-one is the best way for most of them to learn. If they are not successful in reading, their other subjects will suffer. I need to make whatever additional time I can get for them as beneficial as possible. My HOSTS program is doing that. It was working before the calendar change and continues to be a good program.

Linda, the principal of the school of choice, shared the teacher characteristics that she believed the administration was looking for as they staffed the new school:

We wanted teachers that care about their kids. We were looking for those teachers willing to do the extra work that the students needed to be successful. Those teachers willing to go over and above and not always be asking for extra compensation.

Student Learning is the Responsibility of the Teacher: Commonalities Across Participants

Each participant articulated her belief about how and what students needed to achieve success. None of the participants viewed their actions as driven by a deeply rooted belief system or as a taproot teacher characteristic. As experienced and seasoned educators, however, they realized that it was their efforts and actions that helped students to be successful. As teachers, they knew they were responsible for students' learning.

Rebecca: Children have a natural curiosity. I need to address that to help them learn. I also set high expectations for them. I want them to set high expectations for themselves.

Sally: All students can learn. I need to find out how and go from there.

They need more time and as much 1-to-1 help as I can give them through

the HOSTS program.

My program changes every year because of the kids. I need to be flexible

and do what is best for the kids.

Linda: Intersessions give the students the additional time some of them

require for mastery. The planning time for teachers was a big change.

More involvement from the teachers and the parents. That is always good

for student success.

Each teacher verbalized how a teacher needed to create a positive environment
and to look on the positive side of what the child could do and take the learner from
that point. The administration recognized these strong beliefs as a trait necessary in the
faculty of the new school.

Collegiality Fosters Student Success

A strong collective efficacy has as its foundation the positive relationship
fostered among staff. This begins with administrative support, collaborative planning,
teacher empowerment, and the building of a risk free environment where teachers feel
comfortable asking for help, and have time to reflect with colleagues and to celebrate
successes. This section presents the data that reflects the atmosphere created between
administration and teachers, among teachers, and between teachers and students as
Jordan-Bank became a school of choice. The findings are presented first by the
individuals in their own words. Following the findings, commonalities that appeared
throughout the responses of the participants are presented.

Rebecca: The administration was behind us 100%. We had to be

interviewed to get a position at Jordan-Bank. I already worked here 26

years but that didn't matter. You could tell from the interview they

(administration) were looking for those people willing to go above and

beyond the regular work day. They wanted people who were willing to be

flexible with the students, administration and each other.

We started meeting frequently as a group even before our school

year ended in our prior teaching assignments. Since we were a new group

we really had to talk some things out and plan before the school year

started.

Rebecca commented on the fact that Jordan-Bank as a school of choice was a

selling point for parents:

They know everyone wants to be here. Even the parents had to apply. In

some cases that meant they had to make an extra effort. If parents are

interested in their kids being here, they (the parents) are more involved in

the educational process. That is always good for kids.

Rebecca is a member of the leadership team for her grade level. As a

leadership team member, she is the conduit from administration to her team and from

her team back to the administration. She believes Jordan-Bank is the most positive

place to work:

We all want to be here so it brings a new sense of enthusiasm. Plus with

the infusion of the new staff, they bring more positive vibes. I think that

kind of freshness is contagious. It helps us veterans to step out of the
routines we may have been comfortable in for a while.

Plus we have grade level planning times every Thursday. Each
grade level meets and plans what we are going to do for the next week.
We meet at impromptu times too, like over lunch. We have our blocked
planning times too. During intersession, since the building is open I may
pop in and if I bump into a colleague, we may discuss some things that
happened last session or new ideas we want to try in the next session.
Because we all want to be here we work well together.

Sally described the climate of Jordan-Bank as that of a family atmosphere:

We work as a family here. We are compassionate with things that happen
with our teachers and our kids. If anyone has a problem either personally
or in the classroom, we all help. We work as a team. We always talk about
what is best for kids. We want them to be successful. That is our goal.

Linda was involved in the early planning stages although she was not on the
original team. She too spoke about the administrative support and the group planning
sessions:

We started meeting as a staff in March. We called these times, "retreating
at Linda's house". We meet about four times a year those first couple of
years.

As far as administrative support, the assistant superintendent was
my biggest cheerleader. If the district office was not supportive and
permissive, I'm not sure it would have happened. The assistant

superintendent would have his thumb in my back (I could tell this

comment was all in friendship and kindness, although it sounded harsh)

and just tell me that we could do this and it will work. The district office

wanted to see the program succeed and supported it with words and

money.

Linda explained that Rebecca and Sally epitomize how taproot teachers are

viewed by their colleagues and how taproot teachers feel about their students:

They are both leaders. They are respected by their peers. Their peers look

up to them. They are always positive. They care for their kids and it shows

in their willingness to do what they need to do to help their students be

successful.

Collegiality Fosters Student Success: Commonalities Across Participants

The new faculty started building staff collegiality with their initial trip to San

Diego for the national conference on using a modified calendar. Learning a new

school language, sharing and promoting a new program to the community, and

striving to attain a common goal established mutual trust. This trust and unique

working relationship was necessary to build the ongoing strategic connection essential

for increasing student achievement as well as strengthening the teachers' own

efficaciousness.

The staff cares about one another and the students. Linda recognized the strong

relationship Rebecca and Sally had with their students, "They care about their kids."

Rebecca recognized caring among the staff, "We support each other. This is the most

positive place to work." Sally related a situation to me concerning a student that had

been diagnosed with leukemia. Even after the student moved to another school in the area, "…the students made him friendship emulates and sent him cards. He is visited weekly and we keep updated on how he is doing."

<p align="center">Teachers Pursuing the Vision Strive for Success</p>

The district had a plan to restructure the five elementary schools into four neighborhood schools and blend the restructuring with a modified calendar creating a school of choice. When the assistant superintendent shared the plan with Linda, she was immediately interested. As a middle school teacher she had felt frustrated reteaching information every September the students had learned the previous year. She had shared this frustration with the assistant superintendent. Linda now had the opportunity to implement the new calendar and steer the new school of choice as its principal. Creating a successful school of choice with a modified calendar and raising test scores was the new building and district goal. This was not a mission or a vision statement written by the district and given to the staff of the new school of choice. The plan was to create a successful school of choice for parents and use the modified calendar to help students improve their scores on the state achievement test. When the staff started meeting they did not write a mission or vision statement. They planned together for the most effective ways to increase student achievement. The new staff, which had made the choice to be part of the new school, was committed to the unwritten vision.

> Linda: As a school of choice we wanted to give parents an option. Those parents that were interested would become more involved. More parental involvement is always good for kids. And parents did become involved.

<p align="center">73</p>

Rebecca stated the vision of Jordan-Bank was to close the achievement gap. She also knew that scores for the students were going up every year and attributed that fact to the calendar change:

My continual encouragement that they (students) can learn and we can work on these things together help to create a positive learning environment. Our scores are great. I'm actually surprised more schools aren't asking to do the modified calendar because it has helped so much with our scores.

Sally expressed Jordan-Bank's vision this way:

Jordan-Banks' common vision is to do what's best for kids. We want them to be successful. That is our goal.

Sally explained how her evenings were busy supporting her son's academics and days were filled with planning and organizing her HOSTS program:

I like what I am doing. I'm doing it for the benefit of the students. You don't much mind having the added responsibilities when the students are successful. I know my students are learning. Their state test scores are going up and I see daily the progress they make.

In thinking more about their students' scores, Sally shared what she thought the other schools might be feeling about the fact that students at Jordan-Bank were achieving higher scores:

I think the other schools are probably kinda jealous. They think we have the cream of the crop.

I interrupted here, "The cream of the crop as far as staff?"

No, the cream of the crop as far as students. We are a choice school. But

we have the same amount of free and reduced lunch and special education

as they do. Black versus white, girls versus boys, I have those statistics.

Teachers Pursuing the Vision Strive for Success: Commonalities Across Participants

The two teachers and their principal in this study were intentional about their

personal vision for student success. They converted their beliefs into a vision that

made their students successful.

Rebecca: I create a positive learning environment.

Sally: Teachers have common goals and work for the common good of the

students. …need to look at the positive of everything and not at the

negative. We are given what we are given and we have to do our best to

take the students as far as we can.

The district made the decision to redistrict the schools and create a school of

choice. The goal was to increase state proficiency scores. All stakeholders needed to

enroll in the vision if they were to be successful. New ways of thinking and delivering

had to be in place. That would take additional effort from parents and teachers.

Linda: We wanted more involvement from parents and teachers.   With

the creation of the school of choice, there is more (parental) involvement.

Plus we have the scores to prove the students are doing very well.

Team Planning Nourishes Innovative and Coordinated Action

High quality instruction follows meaningful collaboration. As a teacher in a self-contained classroom, Rebecca had to think a moment after I asked her if there had been any changes in her teaching strategies with the change in the calendar.

> Rebecca: The curriculum has not changed. The district did change reading series and that necessitated some classroom instructional changes.
>
> We use block scheduling now. Oh not like the high school. We have an uninterrupted language arts block for 90 minutes and an uninterrupted math block for 60 minutes. Planning has to be more succinct. Units have to end when the current session ended. This helps to identify students that need remediation during intersession.

Sally's experiences as the Title I teacher and her HOSTS program is an example of her intentionality to use all the resources she can to help students learn. She plans for the 1-to-1 daily tutoring program for 46 students. The HOSTS program is a structured learning plan designed by Sally.

> Sally: I do spend a lot of time with my HOSTS program. I came up with the plan. I trained the volunteers so they know what to expect when they come in for the day. I have a folder for each child. The volunteers know when they come in here they will listen to the child read, go over vocabulary words, work on skills or on their writing. I'm also in the room so they know they can come to me if they are stumbling over a concept or a task. Everything is planned and organized and ready when they (volunteers) walk through the door.

Sally plans the intersessions for both the elementary school and the middle school. She has planned as many as 40 classes for 300 students K-7. Planning for intersession has to be completed during the regular school session. Students sign up in advance for the classes they will take during intersession. In addition, Sally schedules the teachers who will be teaching the intersession classes. Sally described the intersession for me.

> Sally: Certain students are invited to intersession and asked to take a remediation class. If they take the remediation class, they get to pick an enrichment class. I had 20 teachers that volunteered to teach. Linda had 20 community people that volunteered to teach. My workload has definitely increased. But the benefits to the students are the payoff.

Linda shared the following changes with the implementation of the school of choice:

> Intersessions were the biggest. Planning times for the teachers was another big one. We do less review because our students experience less summer learning loss.

Team Planning Nourishes Innovative and Coordinated Action: Commonalities Across Participants

A weekly planning time for a team of teachers during the instructional day is usually not a part of every school or school district's plan. Time set aside for teachers to reflect with colleagues, revisit goals, and plan for the next week is more of a luxury in most school buildings. This additional weekly planning time in the library at Jordan-Bank seems to be an outgrowth of the district's and the faculty's pledge to the

success of the school of choice. The necessity of planning in the early stages of the implementation of the program to which the district and the staff committed, seemed to fuel the continuation of grade level and team planning as a natural and welcomed development.

> Rebecca: Definitely more planning during the modified calendar. Every Thursday we meet in the library as a grade and share our ideas and plans for what we are going to do the next week. Grade levels have scheduled planning times together too, so we meet then also.
>
> Sally: The block scheduling has helped me get into grade level meetings to be a part of their planning. That doesn't always happen but the teachers are real good about getting their information to me.

Facing Change Together is Seen as a Challenge and Embodies Hope

Historically YRE has experienced peaks and valleys. The literature review revealed several reasons for the rise and fall of YRE programs. Each of the participants were asked what they thought would sustain the modified calendar program and Jordan-Bank as a school of choice.

> Rebecca: Money. I don't know what is going to happen since the grants are over. We get a little nervous with the economy being what it is and everybody is talking money.

During our second interview Rebecca was no more optimistic despite the fact that the program had continued without grants:

> Intersessions have changed so much over the five years. It was wildly successful the first year. There were so many more choices for the

78

students. Things they don't normally get the opportunity to do. Now the classes are more academically focused.

Plus there are other changes. This year and next maintenance is going to be working in the building. This year we had to box everything. We are starting school later and intersessions are not going to be part of the calendar. Next year we have to box it (all of our materials) and move it out. Linda has a new position at the district office. Our new principal is coming from the west coast. He has no experience in a program like this.

She eventually did find several positive points:

Of course the administration is still backing it and paying the tab. But we work well together as a staff and support each other. Linda will still be around. I think it will be hard for her to step back from it.

Sally shared her thoughts on factors that would sustain the program:

Money is the biggest factor in keeping the program going. The new principal is going to have to support the program and go to bat for it with the administration. Parents will have to continue to support it.

We have changed the intersession every year. It is more academic now. There are some enrichments but not as many. The fee has increased to $10.00. Charging parents ensures they get their kids up for it and the students attend. These children need the intersession. A lot of these kids just don't experience what some of the other students have. Intersession gives them that opportunity.

I noted that all participants had shared with me that scores have improved. Shouldn't that boost support. Sally continued:

They have gone up but everything is money and where it is going to come

from. The charge is to increase attendance. It does nothing to defer the

cost.

Linda reiterated the district support from the financial aspect and gave me her thoughts on what would sustain the program:

The intersessions will sustain the program. Intersession has changed but it

is still a good way to remediate students rather than a summer school

situation.

The program will most definitely continue. We still have the same

administration in the central office. We have data to demonstrate the

students are improving. The district has designated the funds to cover the

costs because there are more expenses to it.

Facing Change Together is Seen as a Challenge and Embodies Hope: Commonalities

Across Participants

Both teachers identified money as the most influential factor that would sustain the school of choice and the modified calendar. Each teacher did recognize that the intersessions had changed and currently there was a fee charged. Neither Rebecca nor Sally discussed the fact that even without grants the program had continued and intersessions had not been eliminated. Both teachers expressed uncertainty as to how long the district would pay for the program:

Rebecca: Maybe they aren't going to be doing this anymore. The money

issue is quite honestly is messy. The district committed, I don't know if

they committed on paper or not to 5 years. It takes that long to see.

Sally: Intersession has declined and it has changed so much. We have had

to limit options.

Even with the limitations of the intersessions, Linda believed the remediation

program was the key to sustaining the program. She had data that demonstrated the

difference in the scores of students that had attended intersession:

Linda: If they were invited and chose not to attend it is relevant. We do

see the scores of those students attending intersession are relatively higher

than those who don't.

All three participants did realize there is still support for the program:

Rebecca: The district is paying the tab.

Sally: The principal will have to go to bat for it. The community will have

to continue to support it.

Linda: We still have the same administration in the central office. We

have data to demonstrate the students are improving.

Rebecca vaguely saw the faculty as having some ownership to the

sustainability of the program during the second interview when she shared her concern

regarding the new administrator, "But we (building staff) work well together as a staff

and support each other."

At the beginning of the program, each participant articulated the district was

behind the program 100%. Financial support for the continuation of the program was

still in place. However, it was evident the teachers were concerned about the program's future. Staffing changes were transpiring. Building and ground maintenance was going to impact the calendar in the next year. The school calendar for the upcoming year had the students attending school more on a traditional calendar schedule. School would not be starting early in August and intersessions had been suspended for the upcoming school year.

<center>Interrelationship of the Characteristics</center>

People, or in the case of this study, teachers, who believe strongly in their capabilities, approach tasks differently. Difficult tasks become challenges to be mastered rather than threats to be avoided (Bandura, 1997). Bandura described such people as setting challenging goals for themselves, investing a high level of effort in what they do, maintaining focus, and thinking strategically. Strong beliefs in their personal abilities root and hold these taproot teachers firmly. They build relationships with their colleagues and their students. They also continue to gauge their success by the vision and stretch to attain it, plan with their colleagues to ensure learning is coordinated, and continue to face the changes in the program, over which they have no control, and see the changes as a challenge they can surmount.

Growing the Beliefs

Figure 1 (page 69), delineates the interconnectedness of the characteristics demonstrated by the taproot teacher. With the characteristics strongly rooted in teacher beliefs, they are able to grow, strengthen, and endure changes while remaining strong. With well grounded beliefs the teacher participants met daily and weekly to

<center>82</center>

plan and coordinate instruction to help students succeed. As we talked, their comments continually came back to the premise of student achievement.

Rebecca: Children have a natural curiosity and you have to address that. You have to be supportive and encouraging. Given the right atmosphere and support, they will be successful.

Sally: I do spend a lot of time planning for my HOST program. I have found that the students learn best on a 1-to 1 basis so I do my best to give them as much time as possible with their own mentor. I have to find the way they learn best and instruct them in that way. On a 1-to-1 instructional level, I can reach everyone. I need to be flexible to do what I need to do for the best of the students.

As their principal, Linda, identified Rebecca and Sally as having strong beliefs in helping students succeed.

Linda: Rebecca and Sally are willing to do the extra work necessary to help their students succeed. They are both very enthusiastic, positive teachers. They aren't afraid to try new things if they think the students will benefit.

Effective instructional planning built strong collegial relationships. Although neither Rebecca nor Sally identified themselves as leaders among their colleagues, their principal did.

Linda: They are both respected by their colleagues. Their peers look up to them. They are leaders. Rebecca is a team leader for her grade level. The teams vote on their team leaders. Sally is respected for the extra effort she

demonstrates in her Title I position and for the success she has with the children.

Sally and Rebecca talked many times about the collegial working spirit that is part of Jordan-Bank.

Rebecca: This is the most positive place to work. We are all here because we wanted to be here. No one forced us to teach at this school. Because we want to be here, there is a lot more enthusiasm. I love working here!

Sally: We have a great group of staff members. We work like a family. I like what I'm doing. I would hate to leave this school (if my son's school changed from a modified calendar schedule). Ya know that says it all when you enjoy doing what you are doing. We care about each others problems on a personal or a professional level. The staff knows we are here for each other and ready to help.

Supporting the Vision

Anchored with a strong belief in their abilities to help students succeed, the taproot teachers committed to the vision. They knew where they were going and strategically planned on how to get there. The district had the vision of higher achievement for students. Starting a school of choice and using a modified calendar was the district's goal to make the vision a reality. With a core of hand picked teachers, community supporters, and parents willing to commit to the extra effort to change to a modified calendar, the vision was soon embraced by the newly hired faculty. Planning for the new school happened over a three year period.

Rebecca: The district sent a team to the national convention. The district

did that twice. We were just to explore the idea and talk to people after the

first year. Do a little missionary work among staff and parents to see if

there was an interest. Because of the continued interest, the district sent

the second team. But parents were involved from the very beginning. That

is the best thing we did. They are even more involved now because they

want to be here. They want their children to be successful. The district

wanted to close the achievement gap. We are doing that.

Sally: We had a common goal and we wanted to make it succeed. We

want to do what is best for kids. Parents want to see it work and they are

all behind us.

Linda: The district wanted to improve student achievement. Offering

parents a choice was an idea to explore before the elementary schools

were redistricted. If parents wanted their children in the school of choice,

the parents would become more involved. And they did. The school has

seen an increase in achievement.

Nurturing the Characteristics

As depicted in Figure 1, the characteristics nurtured each other. Just as firmly

rooted beliefs strengthened a teacher's pedagogy, team planning increased collective

efficacy through collaboration. With increased collegial support, a new vision evolved

and from new vision came new instructional practices. In addition, the collective

efficacy formed extended to the students in the form of a positive school wide

atmosphere which translated to higher student achievement. Working as a team during

the three years of planning for the school of choice, possibly brought to the surface the taproot teacher characteristics that helped to sustain the school of choice and the modified calendar program throughout the many changes. The teachers and their principal did not see people as the sustaining influence of the modified calendar. They specified causes beyond their control.

> Rebecca: Money is the only one I can think of. Change in the economy, budget, no grants may change the program in a lot of ways.
>
> Sally: Scores have gone up but everything is money and where the money is going to come from. Parents and the principal will have to support it.
>
> Linda: The intersessions will sustain the program. Intersessions have changed but it is still a good way to remediate students. Intersession attendance has improved. The program will continue. We still have the same administration at central office. We have data to demonstrate the students are improving. The district has designated the funds to cover the costs because there are more expenses to it.

Taproot teachers frequently face challenges to their beliefs from colleagues, students, community, parents, administration or budgetary changes. Because a taproot teacher's beliefs are the foundation which supports the vision for student success, collegial capacity, appropriate student learning practices, and the ability to see change as a challenge, a taproot teacher may be the strongest link to supporting any new educational reform in a school or district.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher characteristics that contributed to the success and sustaining influence of a year-round educational program. To identify those characteristics, teacher beliefs, teacher efficacy, and collegial efficacy were reviewed in the literature. In addition, the literature on year-round schools was reviewed to identify why some districts sustained the program and others reverted back to a traditional calendar.

Discussion

A taproot is a specially designed root that starts from a seed and grows vertically into the soil. Because of its elongated, thick shape, it is a firm anchor to the plant above the soil (http://www.britannica.com/ebc/article-9380262). Picture the carrot or the root of a dandelion. Each of these plants, because of their particularly large, straight roots, is difficult to uproot. The anchoring characteristics of the taproot prevent the plant from being dislodged, and serve as a storage area for food and water for the plant. The taproot is responsible for growing lateral roots that deliver nutrients from the soil to the taproot and eventually to the plant.

Taproot teachers have deep, grounded beliefs concerning how students learn and the best environment in which they learn. These deep, grounded beliefs add to the teacher's personal efficacy. And like lateral roots of the taproot on a plant, taproot teacher characteristics, create students' successful performances and construct a starting point from which collegiality among staff grows and collective efficacy increases (Errington, 2004). This successful growth individually and collectively,

87

much like the growth of the taproot of a plant, creates the stronghold necessary for the continuation of an educational program.

The data was analyzed around the research questions:

1. What character traits are demonstrated by taproot teachers?

2. How do these character traits sustain and influence a year-round educational program?

The character traits of the taproot teacher, harvested from the data, provide the structure to further define the metaphor of a taproot teacher and the sustaining force that the teacher brings to the year-round school educational program. Those character traits are:

1. Student learning is the responsibility of the teacher.

2. Collegiality fosters student success.

3. Teachers pursuing the vision strive for success.

4. Planning nourishes innovative and coordinated action.

5. Facing change together is seen as a challenge and embodies hope.

Taproot teacher traits were explored using the lantern approach (Shank, 2002) to uncover a deeper meaning, seemingly not recognized by the participants yet clearly evident by their responses. Figure 1 (page 69) is the graphic representation of the interconnection of each of the taproot teacher traits that supports the individual teacher's efficacy, collegial efficacy and the modified calendar educational program in this district. The taproot teacher character traits acted as the lantern that shined a revealing light into the deeper meaning as to what had been happening at Jordan-Bank Elementary School- a school of choice. Using the first research question, each taproot

teacher character trait was analyzed. Further analysis of the second research question

showed strong support of the sustaining force of a taproot teacher.

Research Question 1—What character traits are demonstrated by taproot teachers?

Student Learning is the Responsibility of the Teacher

Bandura (1986) believed teacher behaviors could be predicted from the

teacher's beliefs rather than from his or her actions. He asserted a personal belief in

one's ability and positive feelings regarding personal effectiveness has a powerful

influence on the person's actions.

Pajares (1992) reviewed teacher beliefs and suggested that a teacher's belief

system does not lend itself to empirical research. One of Pajares assumptions about

beliefs addressed the behaviors discussed in the participants' conversations in this

study. Pajares saw beliefs as being inferred, and "this inference must take into account

the congruence among individuals' belief statements, the intentionality to behave in a

predisposed manner, and the behavior related to the belief in question" (p.326). I

purposed earlier in the study that all schools have efficacious taproot teachers and

most people know who the most efficacious teachers are. When I interviewed the

principal, she said that seven teachers were originally identified to participate on the

implementation committee. During our first phone conversation, I briefly described

my study. There was no hesitation in her voice when she quickly identified Rebecca

and Sally as the two teachers she wanted to participate in the study. There was never a

suggestion to talk to anyone else nor was any other teacher's name mentioned during

the principal's interview or the interviews with the teachers.

Neither Rebecca nor Sally viewed what they did as part of their professional efficacy or as part of a deeply imbedded belief system. It is who they are. When I asked each teacher how their personal efficacy had impacted the modified calendar, Sally responded, "Efficacy?" I explained efficacy as her ability to help her students to be successful. Immediately her response was, "I'm very effective in my program." She did not contribute all the success her students gained to the modified calendar program. She delightedly explained her efforts in securing her mentors, planning the students' programs and monitoring their gains. "I know my kids are learning," was her emphatic response.

Both Sally and Rebecca believed a positive attitude was necessary for students to learn. Their teaching practices, as explained to me, reflected their beliefs that all students can learn. Sally organized retirees as mentors, and planned individualized instructional maps for her Title I students. If students were not successful, she took the responsibility that she needed to change instruction. Sally knew she was responsible for student learning (Ross, 1995; Whitaker, 2004; Wong & Wong, 1998). Because of her strong, deep rooted beliefs on how students learn, she was willing to sacrifice her time and efforts to do what she could to help her students become successful.

Rebecca, a teacher in the building for 26 years, saw the modified calendar program as a better way for students to learn. She was willing to interview for a position in the new school of choice, realizing that there may be a chance she would not be one of the teachers selected. This willingness to take on the implementation of a new program, seeing it as a challenge, as well as an asset to student learning, mirrored Fullan's (1991) study in successful school change. Rebecca's strong beliefs in her

90

experience and abilities to help students learn, I believe, forged her decision to take the leap and interview.

Often teachers are unwilling to accept change or consider the challenges of possibly changing buildings, grade levels, or implementing a new program (Fullan, 2003). Rebecca made a professional choice to do her best to be part of the changes that would be implemented in the new school of choice, "I truly believe it is a better way for students to learn."

The lantern shining into the corners of the belief systems of both Sally and Rebecca illuminated how the actions of both of them were a reflection of their belief system. For instance, in Sally's case, to give up time after school to find, train, and plan for mentors to give Title I students one-on-one instruction. For Rebecca, it meant putting her 26 year career into an interview process and taking the chance of leaving a building and a grade level where she had crafted her professional efficacy for all of her career. Both teachers recognized student learning was their responsibility. I do not believe either teacher had to struggle to make the choice they did.

Collegiality Fosters Student Success

Fullan (2003), Whitaker (2004) and Senge (1990) all stipulated that teachers did not have to agree to build a system of collective efficacy to support student success. What teachers had to do was develop a trusting relational network that promoted the belief in each others capability to have a positive effect on students. This perceived collective efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Goddard, et al., 2004) had a strong link to student achievement.

In addition to greater student achievement, perceived collective efficacy served as an expectation for goal attainment. Teachers new to the school quickly learned about the school culture through their interactions with teachers and administrators. In a school with highly perceived collective efficacy, new teachers learned extra effort is the norm (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990). This robust sense of group capability created a formula for student success and increased personal and collective efficacy. Sally and Rebecca continually addressed the fact that the staff worked together as a family. Each said the community spirit experienced by the staff was in place before Jordan-Bank became a school of choice. Approximately 50% of the staff was new to the school when the change was made to a school of choice. The collegiality experienced by the staff resonated with Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) research that highlighted how staff new to a building was socialized into the teaching profession by their more experienced peers.

The many teacher discussions necessary, as the new staff met, not only solidified staff relationships into a sense of collective efficacy, but also perpetuated the positive climate in the building. Repeatedly, Rebecca and Sally articulated, "We work as a team," "This is the most positive place to work," and "We help each other." This type of collaboration broke down the walls that isolated teachers within their classrooms. Ross (1994) postulated that a reciprocal action occurred when teachers collectively collaborated. As teachers collaborated more, they persuaded each other of their individual competency and increased each teacher's individual efficacy. Increased individual teacher efficacy stimulated students' achievement as well as increased collective efficacy within the building.

Fullan (2003) indicated that successful school change must have parent and public support. Both teachers indicated one of the reasons to change to a modified calendar was to give their parents choices. The principal, Linda, echoed that thinking. All the participants agreed there was more parent involvement in the new school of choice. Rebecca explained that parents "were so into this that they demanded the Middle School do the same kind of thing. There is now a school-within-a-school at the Middle School using the modified calendar". Sally told me that the program won such approval that there was a waiting list of parents who wanted to enroll their children in the school. "They (the parents) have seen the benefits of the program." Linda also noted that parent involvement was one reason why the district created the school of choice. Linda documented, through the Title I program, that more parents became involved in the school.

The collective actions of the teaching staff, the planning committee, and the parents supported Fullan's (2003) research. Shining the lantern into the collegiality of the staff illuminated a deeper meaning of the changes happening at Jordan-Bank. The teachers' actions, to create a successful school of choice by changing the calendar, merely scratched the surface of the power they unleashed when they talked, shared, and worked collectively with each other, parents and their community. Researchers (Bandura, 1997; Goddard et al., 2004; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998) agreed the stronger the teachers collectively believed in their efficacy, the better the school as a whole performed successfully. Ross (2003) added, heightened interaction among teachers created a climate that "legitimates help seeking, joint problem solving, and instructional experimentation" (p. 7).

Fullan (2003) advocated that there were two basic principles to implementing change and sustaining it. He believed the purpose and passion that drove the best teachers were necessary to change the system. But Fullan also stated such passion and purpose went beyond the individual teacher. It was the collective energy and vision of a motivated professional group.

This was moral purpose with a glimpse to the future (Fullan, 2003). Candidates for the teaching positions at Jordan-Bank were interviewed. Teachers, even some that had practiced their profession for 20 years or more, chose to complete the interview process. The administration communicated the district's vision of a school of choice with more parental involvement and greater success for students. The administration sought teachers willing to commit to that vision. Few of the teachers knew all that was involved at the onset of this commitment.

Each teacher told me the vision of Jordan-Bank. Sally said, "…is to do what is best for kids. We want them to be successful." Rebecca answered, "Closing the achievement gap. Our scores are great. The scores have gone up every year." Neither teacher indicated it could be the collective efficacy of the staff causing the improvement of the students' scores. Sally recognized her mentoring program helped make her students successful. Rebecca stated she believed the students' success was based somewhat on the intersessions which afforded students the opportunity for remediation after each 9-week marking period.

It was clear in the words of all the participants that they had a vision of where they wanted to go with the creation of the school of choice. All three participants

articulated that the restructuring plan included the creation of the school of choice to do just that, "give our parents a choice". In addition, the goals and vision of the staff stated by the teachers as helping their students succeed and bringing up test scores, provided the measuring rod to assess their progress.

The planning team recognized the vision. It was necessary for the planning team to perceive the vision and to commit to it so they would be able to explain the school of choice to the many community groups with which they met. Senge (1990) explained this kind of deep commitment as wanting it, willing to make it happen, and creating whatever structure needed to be created to make it work. Senge continued by stating many workers in an organization were compliant. They followed the directions and did what was expected, no more than what was expected. The truly committed people wanted the vision. Surely, the 35 teachers that chose to interview for the new positions were willing to take the risk of applying for a new position in a new school and if selected were willing to leave their comfort zone in a familiar classroom or building where they currently worked. Those were the teachers who willing to pursued the vision of the district and demonstrated their commitment to the vision by their actions.

The vision became the energy field that served as the organizational culture that began forming when the new staff started meeting. This new faculty was ready to be part of the change. Immediately the faculty began to work collaboratively. They moved toward a vision creating their own steps. Their team building activities consisted of their collaborative efforts to pull the necessary resources together to begin their new school and their new program. They wanted to help students succeed.

Standardized tests scores needed to be higher. As a new faculty in a school of choice, they created the unwritten steps that defined their purpose as a committed staff and set about the job of making the vision a reality. This was not a vision they wrote in a strategic plan. This was a vision they lived daily as they planned for success. Sally said, "We always talk about what is best for the kids. We want them to be successful. We work as a team". Rebecca expanded on the success of the students, "They (students) learn better in a positive atmosphere and we have that here. We all want to be here, the teachers, the students and the parents. It is the most positive place to work."

Senge (1990) best summarized Fullan's idea of purpose and vision, "Real vision cannot be understood in isolation from the idea of purpose" (p.148). This same principle was expressed as genuine caring. People who genuinely cared were committed to their work. They had energy and enthusiasm. Senge cautioned, however, that there were differences between vision and purpose. Whereas purpose was a general heading, vision was a destination. You can't have one without the other. The participants in this study saw Jordan-Bank's vision as higher test scores achieved by the success of individual students. Their purpose as the teaching staff was to do everything possible to help the students raise their individual state test scores.

Using the lantern to look deeper into the vision of taproot teachers illuminated the significance that perhaps Jordan-Bank did have a plethora of efficacious teachers from across the district. None of the interviewees conveyed the fact that the willingness of the teachers to implement a new program was a demonstration of an efficacious, taproot teacher. However, researchers (Ashton, 1984; Pajares, 1996;

Pressley, 1995; Ross, 1995; Smylie, 1988; Tomlinson & Allan, 2000; Whittaker, 2004) purported that it was the efficaciousness of the teacher that initially produced higher student achievement. When efficacious teachers increased student achievement the cycle of success began (Bandura, 1997; Ross, 1995).

Teacher Planning Nourishes Innovative and Coordinated Action

Fullan (1991) noted educational change is dependent on what teachers do in their classrooms. Researchers have documented that efficacious teachers (a) willing to implement innovations, (b) accepted responsibility for student success and failure, and c) had positive attitudes toward students identified as lower achievers (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Ross, 1994).

Brown and Moffett (1999) recounted one of the educators they interviewed as stating:

"The heroic path for educators today entails our joining together to study, internalize, and put into operation the best that we know about the teaching and learning process" (p.105).

The Jordan-Bank staff began joining together as a faculty before they were all located in one building. Linda called these planning sessions, "retreating at Linda's house". As the staff began to build relationships at these meetings, they also began laying the ground work for their collegial efficacy. With a strong foundation that supported each other even before the school year began, their weekly planning sessions continued the collegiality and spun the natural outgrowth of sharing ideas and strategies. As a classroom teacher, Rebecca admitted the staff planned more together after the modified calendar was in place than they had before the calendar change.

This type of shared inquiry, collaboration, and teaming breaks down the isolation that many teachers feel when there is not an opportunity to think, reflect and act in sync with colleagues (Brown & Moffett, 1999; Senge, 1990; Tomlinson & Allan, 2000). Often those who have been in the teaching profession for a long time have deeply embedded traditions about how "to do" school. Rebecca realized the influx of new staff had a positive impact on the veteran staff. The weekly scheduled planning times benefited everyone. New staff was socialized by the positive climate already in place in Jordan-Bank. Veteran staff had the opportunity to enhance their energy and enthusiasm by collaborating with the newer younger staff members. Rebecca shared, "Their enthusiasm is contagious".

Students benefited by the collegiality shared throughout the staff. This synergy, a combined partnership for growth, unleashed resources that before laid in the dark corners of the isolation in individual teacher classrooms.

Research Question 2-How do the character traits sustain and influence a year-round program?

Researchers urged school leaders to create opportunities for peer support and encouragement among teachers (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003; Rivard, Follo, Walsh, 2004; Ross, Hogaboam-Gray, & Gray, 2003; Tomlinson & Allan, 2000). When those situations were created, teachers discussed curriculum, students' success, planned instruction, and were able to reflect on past experiences. By using those opportunities, teachers became the change agents and a strong sustaining influence on a new educational initiative (Scribner, 1998).

Fullan (2003) posited that sustainability involved transforming the system in a way that the conditions and capacity for improvement were built-in. As Jordan-Bank changed to a school of choice, the district took the initiative to send two different groups to learn about a modified calendar. Linda mentioned how the district provided time for the new faculty to meet prior to school opening and several times during the year after school was in session. Both teachers articulated that administration supported the program 100%.

Hargreaves & Fink's (2003) research led them to identify five key characteristics of change and the sustainability that supported change. Those characteristics were:

1. improvement that sustains learning

2. improvement that endures over time

3. improvement that can be supported by available or achievable resources

4. improvement that doesn't impact negatively on the surrounding environment of other schools or systems

5. improvement that promotes ecological diversity and capacity throughout the educational and community environment (p. 5)

Several of Hargreaves & Fink's characteristics mirrored what had happened at Jordan-Bank Elementary School. Higher test scores did not always indicate improved learning. However, the intentional planning times and the efforts that increased individual and collective efficacy did support increased learning. Scores had increased over the six years the school of choice has been in existence.

As to the negative impact the other elementary schools in the district may be experiencing, that question was not addressed in this exploratory study. Albeit, because the district made the decision to consider the school of choice a new school, all the positions were open and new people had to be hired. As stated earlier, teachers lacking in their own self-efficacy were probably not willing to implement a new program especially if it meant they had to apply for the position, and change buildings and/or grade levels (Fullan, 2003). I believe only those taproot teachers, who held strong beliefs about how students learn, and had a healthy perception of their own efficacy, were willing to attempt that kind of a challenge. Some people resist change. Others embrace it. Perhaps there had been a negative impact to the other elementary schools because those schools had lost some of their taproot teachers to the new school of choice. It may have been that Jordan-Bank now has the largest number of taproot teachers in the district's elementary schools.

The student population was about the same in each elementary school. According to Sally's comment about the students' demographics across the four elementary schools, all schools shared a similar mix of minorities, genders, and socially and economically deprived students. It appeared that the other elementary schools were not negatively impacted by a mass migration of a particular group of their student population to Jordan-Bank.

The relationships built by the staff at Jordan-Bank promoted their ecological diversity that survived and grew with each other as well as increased their capacity to learn from each other. Hargreaves and Fink (2003) explained ecological diversity and capacity to survive as the ability of a learning community to maintain the flexibility to

adapt to change. Ecosystems continually adapt and change with conditions. Jordan-Bank teachers and their administrator changed as their new program needed to change. Their weekly planning sessions helped with their flexibility to change. When intersessions had to change, the sessions changed to a more academic focus while still offering some enrichment classes. Intersessions changed again when a small fee had to be assessed to improve attendance. The changes occurred and the program continued to be successful.

When the lantern was used to shine into the corners of the sustainability taproot teachers brought to a modified calendar program, this study supported the concept that Jordan-Bank may have more efficacious teachers than any other elementary school in the district. In addition, the strategies in place which supported the efficacy of the individual teachers, i.e. their group grade level planning, time to reflect and plan with each other and the beginning foundation they all built together, fed the cycle of success posited by Bandura (1997) and Ross (1995). With the continued collegiality feeding student achievement, community support with involved parents, and the district's support, the successfulness of the program should persist despite the changes taking place to the program and to the school facility. Both teachers indicated in their answers how the program continued when changes were made. They faced the changes with hope and student success continued to grow.

Limitations of the Study

This study described a year-round educational program in a semi-suburban school district. Student population was approximately 350 students and 40 staff members. The program had been in existence for six years at the time of this study.

This district also has three other elementary schools. Whereas Jordan-Bank Elementary offers a modified calendar the other elementary schools operate on the traditional September to June calendar.

This study only represented the voice of the teachers that participated in the sample. It cannot be generalized that they speak for all efficacious teachers. The data gathered in this study can only be generalized to this specific district and school. This district was able to give their parents a choice in which elementary school their child attended. Many districts do not have the option of providing multiple elementary schools or a choice in school calendars.

The taproot teacher characteristics were identified as the traits were heard in conversations with the participants. In addition, this research was completed in the context of a year-round school setting. The data is particular to that educational setting. The procedures utilized and the knowledge gained may be transferable as others attempt to ascertain taproot teacher characteristics in other specific contexts.

 Only two teachers and one principal were interviewed for the sample. All participants were part of an elementary school staff. The teachers were both seasoned veterans with over 20 years of teaching experience. All participants were females. One teacher was a Title I teacher and worked with small groups of students on a daily basis.

Both teachers had been teaching in Jordan-Bank Elementary before it was designated as a school of choice. One of the participants was on the initial committee that volunteered to attend the annual convention for the National Association for Year-round Schools. The other two participants attended the same convention the following

year. All three participants were eager volunteers to launch the program in their school district. This eagerness may have biased their answers.

The research was completed in a school where half of the staff was new to the building. Because the staff was new and they faced a new calendar, frequent planning sessions were put into place. The Jordan-Bank staff had the opportunity for more planning than any other staff in their district. It was rare that a school the size of Jordan-Bank experienced an influx of 50% of new staff and a new change such as the adoption of the new calendar.

This research was based on the self-reporting of the teachers and the principal. They all said state scores improved. No statistical evidence was reported to support improved scores.

Recommendations for Future Study

Future studies could investigate the existence of taproot teachers in other educational contexts. Such studies could determine if taproot teacher character traits change from grade level to grade level, e. g., in a middle school, junior high or high school. A building that housed particular grade levels such as a primary center or an intermediate grade building could be studied to determine what taproot teacher traits might look like peculiar to the building.

Because this study was completed in a year-round school, future studies could address taproot teacher characteristics that are observable in staff members working in a traditional calendar school. Planning time appeared to be important to all of the changes taking place in Jordan-Bank. How is planning time approached by the taproot

teacher in the TCS? Do taproot teachers take the initiative to meet on their own no matter in what educational context they practice their craft?

Jordan-Bank is a relatively small school as compared to other suburban areas. Future studies could investigate the ratio of taproot teachers in a larger faculty. For instance is the percentage of taproot teachers a consistent number no matter how large the staff? Only two teachers were interviewed for this study. But because of the taproot teacher characteristics identified and the comments made by the participants, there could be more taproot teachers in Jordan-Bank. A study could be made that might determine if the number of taproot teachers increases as both the student and the teaching population increase in a school.

Future studies could explore taproot teacher characteristics that may be demonstrated by novice teachers. Efficacious teachers new to the profession may demonstrate different traits but with the results of increased student learning.

The fact that all the participants in this study were females could be viewed as a detriment. However, most teachers at the elementary level are females. Future studies could look at male taproot teachers and define taproot teacher characteristics demonstrated by men in the classroom. In addition, a heterogeneous sample could be used to determine if the taproot traits would be the same.

The participants interviewed in this study were identified by their principal. A future study might ask teachers to identify colleagues that they believe to be taproot teachers. Teaching peers might identify taproot teachers from a different perspective and determine different characteristics.

A qualitative and quantitative study could be made to determine if taproot teacher characteristics do improve student success. Over a period of time it could be determined if the qualitative data could be supported with quantitative data.

Concluding Comments

Jordan-Bank Elementary School was currently in their sixth year of a modified calendar program. Linda, the former principal said the program would continue. Both teachers wanted the program to continue at Jordan-Bank and at the middle school. However, teachers retire, administrators move on, and the original parents that initially supported the program would soon have children in high school. Changes had already slightly impacted the attendance during intersession. With changes continually occurring, a future study to follow-up on what occurred in the school would prove to be interesting as to what or who sustained the program or what circumstances, if any, contributed to the program's demise.

This study addressed the efficacious taproot teacher and that teacher's sustaining influence on a year-round educational program. More research is needed to address how teachers perceive their influence when any new program is mandated by the district.

This research was designed to add to the research portraying how strong, highly effective, taproot teachers can be identified and used to bring about and sustain change. The program in this school has been perceived by the teachers and the principal interviewed to be successful to the students, staff, and community. Students' success was based on standardized scores as shared by the educators and the students' participation in the intersession program. Teachers interviewed were found to fit the

criteria used to describe a taproot teacher as defined by the research. Their character

traits, observable and identifiable by their principal, were believed to have a

supportive role, as well as, a sustaining influence on the program with their students,

their colleagues and within their community.

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APPENDECES

APPENDIX A

Signed Consent Form

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY

CANEVIN HALL • PITTSBURGH, PA • 15282

INTERDISCIPLINARY DOCTORAL PROGRAM
FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERS
TELEPHONE 412-396-4038
FAX 412-396-6100
e-mail: idpel@duq.edu
www.education.duq.edu/idpel

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

APPROVAL DATE: _12-5-04_
EXPIRATION DATE: _12-5-05_

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Title: The Perception of Taproot Teachers and Their Sustaining Force on a Year-round Program

Investigator: W. Jean Allen
207 Wiltshire Avenue
Butler, PA 16001
724-287-4873
Jean_Allen@slipperyrock.k12.pa.us

Advisor: Connie Moss Ed. D
Associate Professor
Department of Foundations and Leadership
School of Education
Duquesne University School of Education
Pittsburgh, PA 15282
412-396-4778
moss@castl.duq.edu

Source of Support: This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in Education at Duquesne University.

Purpose: You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to investigate how teachers sustain an educational program such as year-round education. By agreeing to participate you grant me permission to interview you a maximum of two times. Interviews will be audio taped and transcribed. The interviews will be from 45 to 60 minutes in length. Your total time commitment should be no longer than two hours.

Education for the Mind, the Heart, and the Soul

questions about my participation in this study, I
may call the researcher listed at the beginning
of this consent form or Dr. Paul Richer, Chair of
the Duquesne University Institutional Review
Board (412-396-6326).

_____   _1/10/05_____
Participant's Signature   Date

_____   _1-10-05_____
Researcher's Signature   .   Date

APPENDIX B

First Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. Why did you volunteer to transfer to a year-round school?

2. What is your perception of the impact your personal efficacy has on the year-round calendar program?

3. What is your perception of the benefits of a year-round calendar to students, staff, parents, and the community?

4. What changes have you experienced in your teaching strategies since you began teaching in the year-round school?

5. What do you feel is the biggest factor in sustaining the year-round program?

6. Have there been other changes at your school in addition to the calendar change i.e. grouping, curriculum?

7. In your perception what are the negative factors in a year-round program?

8. What is your perception of the impact a year-round program has on your professional effectiveness?

9. What is your perception of the climate in your elementary building?

10. What is your overall satisfaction in working in the year-round program?

APPENDIX C

Second Teacher Interview

Rebecca

Second Teacher Interview-Rebecca

1. Talk to me about the timeline of speaking to the community and the staff about the implementation of a year-round calendar.

2. Let's talk about the interview. Do you remember any of the questions? Did you get a feeling about what the committee was looking for in a teacher for the program?

3. At the last interview, we talked about holding community meetings and you were a part of that. What was your role?

4. As you were in the planning stages and making presentations to community and staff, was there ever a time when it didn't look like the program was going to get off the ground?

5. If things looked bleak at times, where did you get support?

6. Things have changed and will change at Jordan-Bank. Where does support come from now and in the future?

7. What do you think is the vision of Jordan-Bank Elementary?

8. What are your beliefs as a teacher about how students learn?

9. How do those personal beliefs translate into your classroom?

10. Intersessions. Describe a typical intersession for you when you would not be teaching.

11. (if not mentioned in her intersession description) You mentioned at the last interview that you had time to do some creative thinking. How did that transpire? Do you ever plan with your colleagues during intersession?

12. You also mentioned that because teachers had to interview to work here at Jordan-Bank in the year-round calendar, you had an infusion of younger staff and that has revitalized everyone. How?

13. The planning times, every Thursday in the library, teachers' schedules were blocked so they have planning time together,

was that in place prior to the calendar change? If it was, have they been used differently since the calendar change?

14. Would you say teachers planned more together in the year-round calendar or more in the traditional calendar?

APPENDIX D

Second Teacher Interview

Sally

Second Teacher Interview-Sally

1. You mentioned in our first interview that the staff here at Jordan-Bank has always worked as a team and that they have common goals. Tell me about those goals and how they came into place.

2. As you were in the planning stages and making presentations to community and staff, was there ever a time when it didn't look like the program was going to get off the ground?

3. Was it going to happen whether there was community/staff support because of an administrative directive from the central office?

4. What do you think would have stopped the year-round calendar from happening here at Jordan-Bank? Were their times you were thinking it wouldn't happen?

5. How were you personally supported in the preparation for the year-round calendar and after the new calendar was in place?

6. As for the teamwork at Jordan-Bank, what does that look like?

7. How do you plan with the teachers in the building?

8. Do you think it is easier to plan with teachers in the year-round calendar or was it easier in the traditional calendar?

9. Tell me several beliefs you hold as a teacher as to how students learn?

10. How do those beliefs translate into classroom instruction?

11. You interviewed for the position here at Jordan-Bank. Do you remember the questions? What made you nervous about the interview? What do you think the committee was looking for in a teacher?

12. What do you think sustains the YRE program?

APPENDIX E

Principal Interview Questions

Interview Questions-Principal

1. How long have you been an administrator?
2. How long have you been the administrator at this school?
3. Tell me about your first introduction to the idea of a balanced calendar?
4. Why did you want to implement a balanced calendar here at Jordan-Bank?
5. When I originally called and explained my research you quickly knew which two teachers you wanted me to interview. Why did you pick Rebecca? Sally?
6. When you started the process of educating the community and the staff at Jordan-Bank about a year-round calendar how many teachers did you enlist to help with that process?
7. Why do you feel it was important to involve both Rebecca and Sally in that educational process?
1. 7a. (if not addressed yet in the answers) what characteristics do you see in Rebecca and Sally that influenced your decision to have me interview them?
8. Teachers were interviewed for a position here at Jordan-Bank when the year-round calendar was to be implemented. When they were interviewed, what was the interview committee looking for in a teacher?
9. How do you think their colleagues would describe Rebecca and Sally?
10. How are they leaders at Jordan-Bank?
11. What changes happened here at Jordan-Bank because of the implementation of the year-round calendar?
12. What do you think sustains the year-round program here at Jordan-Bank?

13. How are grade level leaders determined?

14. Will the balanced calendar continue at Jordan-Bank? Why or why not? How has it changed in the four years it has been in existence?