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DISSERTATION

WHAT INFLUENCES SUCCESS OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

Submitted by

George V. Raterink

School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Spring, 2001

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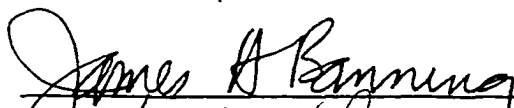
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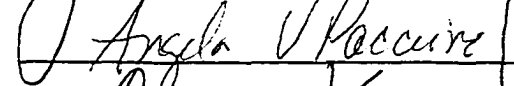
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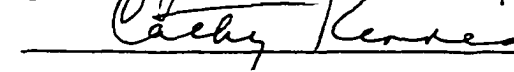
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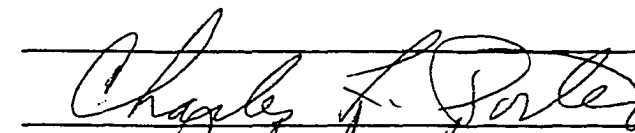
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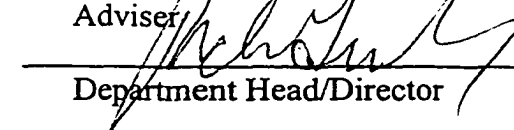
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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

WHAT INFLUENCES SUCCESS IN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

The concept of how students achieve success in high school is a difficult one. The researcher assumed that student success was affected by both internal and external forces. The purpose of this qualitative study was to discover what those forces were and how faculty, parents and administrators might assist high school students. Research included a brief history of the small rural community. Assumptions were made by the researcher about possible affects on student success that included but were not limited to peers, family, school faculty, and the culture of the education in the community.

After nominations by the high school's accountability committee, five successful participants were selected to be involved in the focus group. During the focus group five questions were asked. The focus group was taped; field notes were taken, and later transcribed. The focus group identified three skills needed for success in high school: (a) technical skills, (b) communication skills, and (c) personality skills. Four commonalties were also identified by the focus group as significant for success: (a) influence of a significant person, (b) experiencing failure, (c) having a leadership role, and (d) involvement in extracurricular activities. Focus group answers were used to develop further questions for the individual interviews with each of the same participants. The interviews were taped, notes were taken, and transcriptions were made. The individual interviews determined nine attributes that students perceived that were important to their success: (1) self-responsibility, (2) self-starter, (3) self-confident, (4) street-smart, (5) quick-thinker, (6) flexible and adaptable, (7) risk-taker, (8) change-agent, and (9) life-

long learner. I followed the interviews with phone calls to gain further reliability of the information gathered.

From the focus group and the individual interviews three central themes emerged. Successful students are happy. Successful students are goal oriented because they tend to mentally mature earlier. A third theme is successful students are not afraid of failure and have the resiliency to bounce back after failure. It appears that internal influences such as one's own motivation and maturity are more significant to success than external influences.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made. School districts should promote several initiatives to help students succeed including:

1. Greater faculty involvement with students and parents.
2. Comprehensive counseling programs for students, parents, and faculty.
3. More parent involvement in academic and extracurricular activities for students.
4. A board of education strategic plan focused on the three central themes, pursuit of happiness, goal oriented, and resiliency.

Further study should be done on both successful and unsuccessful students. A study should also be done of students who are moving through the school system, before they reach high school.

George V. Raterink
School of Education
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, Colorado
Spring, 2001

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Completing this degree has been most rewarding to me. The process, however long, has always been supported by many.

Thank you to my committee chairperson, Dr. Charles Porter, for his advice and encouragement. Thank you to my committee members – Dr. Angie Paccione, Dr. Kathleen Kennedy, and Dr. James Banning for their time and interest in this project.

Thank you to the people who willingly participated in this process.

Thank you to my family who encouraged me through this process. It would not have been possible, without the support of my wife Ginger, my daughter Leslie, and my son J.J., for me to stay on task the last three years.

This project is the effort of many people who shared their time and confidence in me; I am most grateful.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this study I wanted to find out what influences the success of public school students. I have developed a case study from the Phenomenological Perspective using interviews and a focus group (Roberts, 1982). The culture of the community has been evolving since 1836 when people first settled there. I have studied about the history of the community in order to get a look at its culture. I have also looked at internal and external forces on its students. What role have parents, peers, teachers and administrators had on success of students? Webster's Dictionary defines success as a favorable termination of a venture: The attainment of wealth, favor, or eminence. The American Heritage Dictionary defines success as the achievement of something desired, planned, or attempted. Using these definitions, I further hoped, through this study, to find out how students have become successful in this school and community.

History and Cultural Influences of the Community

To gain some understanding of the culture of the community, I have gathered information about the community and its long history. The community is located approximately twenty-six miles north of Denver on U.S. Highway 85. Census reports from 1996 give a total population of 5,159. In the last few years the population has increased very little. The town presently has three motels, twelve restaurants, fire and police departments. There are several small businesses in the community. Several liquor

stores, a pharmacy, jewelry shop and four gas stations operate in the community. A health clinic, one independent family doctor, and a chiropractor work in the community. There is a small two-year college campus just outside of town. This community college works closely with the local school district. Together they have collaborated on dual credit courses and federal grant monies. Several Protestant churches, a Roman Catholic Church, and a Buddhist temple are still active. The local recreation department maintains parks, tennis courts, fields and a combined school and city swimming pool. It should be noted that the public library is attached to the local high school, this was a planned school district and city cooperative venture.

According to Carrillo and Mehles (1992), the original town was a fur trading post founded by an army lieutenant in 1836. During the gold rush of 1859 the original fort was converted into a livestock corral and then into an overland stage station for mail and passenger coaches. The town started roots of a community when the people realized the wealth from trapping and trading furs in the Rocky Mountain Area.

There was an abundance of wildlife available in the area including buffalo and deer for hunters. However, there was also an abundance of wolves, foxes, prairie dogs and rattlesnakes. Some early educators gave unfavorable reports and even proclaimed the area unfit for cultivation or uninhabitable by people. In 1822 the Rocky Mountain Fur Company was formed. The community to this day in late August holds a parade and fair called Trappers Day in honor of the first settlers.

The first official school was held inside the "The Fort" in 1861. It was called the Grout School, a name given to the material used in construction of the Fort. The school

started with two teachers, a man and a woman. The first high school class to graduate was not until 1916.

The community has a history of well-documented problems. Periodic epidemics of disease, bitter cold weather, Indian wars and a major flood have all affected the early building of the town.

Japanese immigrants were the first to try and farm the area around the town. Many of the ancestors of those immigrants remain in the area. Farms that surround the community are still productive today. In 1925 the Japanese Language School was established because of the increasing number of Buddhists who had moved to the community. The Japanese American Citizens League was established in December of 1930.

A labor camp was established in the community in 1935 under the authority of the Emergency Relief Appropriations Act of 1934. The camp was built by the Farm Security Administration in 1942, for the primary purpose of housing agricultural laborers. Their families were needed to thin, hoe, and top sugar beets, and to harvest handworked crops. Two types of housing were provided in the camp: permanent and temporary. For seasonal occupancy, there were 109 shelters 18 by 12 feet. Centrally located sanitary and washroom buildings provided toilets and washbasins. During harvest season was the only time the buildings were cared for; then they were sprayed daily. Beds, stoves, tables, and mattress pads were provided to the migrants. There was a community center building, which was used to provide recreational facilities. The Great Western Sugar Company rented the entire camp at certain periods of the year to provide temporary housing and processing quarters for sugar beet workers recruited from the Southwest states. When

not leased, the shelters were available to migrant families on a rental basis of \$2.50 per week (Thomas & Taylor, 1951).

It is estimated that 12,000 workers lived in this camp until the closing. On June 5, 1969, the State Public Health Department condemned the living conditions in the town camp as “subhuman”, and demanded repairs be implemented immediately or the camp would be closed down. On June 24, farmers and businessmen associated with the camp met with the state commissioner and the County Housing Authority to discuss possible ways to keep the camp open for the season. The CHA determined that they did not have sufficient resources to make the necessary improvements, and decided that they should close the camp effective July 1. Local churches intervened; offering to donate many refrigerators and pieces of furniture called for by the Department of Health. Despite the protests from the CHA commissioners, businessmen and concerned citizens voted to keep the camp open, but the summer of 1969 was the last the camp was open.

Workers passed through the camp from April through September each year. Most of the residents were Mexican laborers. In a study done by Thomas and Taylor only 40 children who lived in the camps age seven to sixteen out of 372 had completed the fifth grade in 1951. Many parents considered schools harmful to their children. A quote from Thomas and Taylor (1951).

Our children were sent to school. If the schools were not too crowded or if the children were not sent home for some other reason, they would be home crying and begging us not to send them back. Why? Because the other children made them feel that they are different. Their clothes are not so clean. Sometimes their shoes are too big or worn out, and all the other children laugh at them. Our food is not like the food of the Anglos and that makes the other children laugh at what our girls and boys have to eat... Everybody laughs at them because they speak so funny. Then, because they can not understand easily, they are thought to be stupid. When this is told to the children, they are hurt and they cry. Our children do not play the Anglo games well. They stand by the side and are called names

and made to feel ashamed... So, you see, we keep our children home-not to make them work, but because it is not so bad as seeing them come home crying.

William Butler, a long time school administrator in the community, was once told by a man he was replacing that

the Hispanics, or whatever they called themselves, them Mexican kids, are ... will probably leave; we encourage them to leave after they finish eighth grade. This is an agricultural community, and they need to make a living and get a job and farmers need the work and so we encourage them to leave in the eighth grade. (Cross, 1995).

On December 7, 1941 the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor damaged many community relationships. The Japanese Language School closed immediately. At this time the Japanese Language was abandoned for English.

In 1943 Jamaicans and Mexican Nationals were brought to the area to work in the beet fields. Also, German prisoners of war were used to top beets in and around the community.

During the late fifties and early sixties the states consolidated many rural school districts. The local school gained population by doing this. In the late sixties Migrants in Action was formed. Migrants lived in small communities and associated only with other migrants in the community. The jobs they did or had their children do did not require much education. The living conditions for the migrants were often of low quality. Lack of running water and sanitation problems were normal. One program set up for migrants was the Salud Del Valle Clinic; that program's health clinic still operates today.

Many start-up businesses other than farming have contributed to the local economy. Golden Aluminum Company, a plant to recycle, is one of them. Oil drilling companies such as Amoco have supplied jobs in the oil and gas exploration business.

In 1969 there were no more official migrant laborers, the migrant families who stayed were now called "Chicanos" at least in the public records. During this time there was much unrest about the rights and privileges of the Hispanic community. The school was the site of many protests having to do with civil rights. Some community members, protesting the treatment of some of its members, set the local police station afire.

The present high school was built in 1976-1977; it opened in September of 1977. Incorporated into the new building is a combined school-community library. Enrollment in the high school is presently 700 students, ninth through twelfth grades. The high school has approximately 350 males and 333 females enrolled. Of these students 400 are white, 270 are Hispanic, six American Indian, seven Asian, and four black. The average attendance for the total population is 93% for 1998-1999 school year. It should be noted all grades are over 91% in attendance. The researcher notes that attendance is high possibly because there is not much else for students to do. Owner-operators fill most of the jobs.

Need For Study

For individuals to be successful in the community, I feel there must be successful schools. I feel if a community is to have successful students in school, students need to be tested and evaluated. Currently, the results of the test scores are low in this community when compared to national or state achievement scores.

Testing of students in public schools is currently done annually in most schools. This community chose the TerraNova test battery because it aligns with the content standards presently being taught. The TerraNova multiple assessment was given to ninth,

tenth eleventh grade students in 1999. The following tables show the results of the TerraNova tests.

Table 1-1

Analysis of Reading Scores (450 high school students took the test)

Grade	Below	Average	Proficient	Advanced	Total Number
9 th	80	56	35	3	174
10 th	53	63	40	6	162
11 th	42	47	25	0	114
Total	175	166	100	9	450

Note: Total Number = total number of students taking the test

It should be noted that from 9th to 11th grade the following seems to occur:

1. Scores improve at below level.
2. Average and proficient scores stayed the same
3. Advanced levels went down.

Table 1-2

Analysis of Language Scores (450 high school students took the test)

Grade	Below	Average	Proficient	Advanced	Total Number
9 th	84	60	20	10	174
10 th	59	65	31	7	162
11 th	69	34	9	2	114
Total	212	159	60	19	450

Note: Total Number = total number of students taking the test

It should be noted that from 9th through 11th grade the following seems to occur:

1. Below scores went down slightly.
2. Average and proficient scores also went down.
3. Advanced scores went down.

Table 1-3

Analysis of Math Scores (448 high school students took the test)

Grade	Below	Average	Proficient	Advanced	Total Number
9 th	86	49	34	3	172
10 th	57	54	44	6	161
11 th	42	45	19	9	115
Total	185	148	97	18	448

Note: Total Number = total number of students taking the test

It should be noted that from 9th through 11th grade the following seems to occur:

1. Scores improved at below level.
2. Average scores stayed the same.
3. Less students scored proficient.
4. A low number of students in the advanced column.

Table 1-4

Analysis of Social Studies (444 high school students took the test)

Grade	Below	Average	Proficient	Advanced	Total Number
9 th	47	79	43	3	172
10 th	31	71	53	2	157
11 th	15	56	40	4	115
Total	93	206	136	9	444

Note: Total Number = total number of students taking the test.

It should be noted that from 9th through 11th grade the following seems to have occurred:

1. Score improved at below level.
2. Average scores went down.
3. Proficient scores went down.
4. Advanced scores stayed the same.

Table 1-5

Analysis of Science Scores (451 high school students took the test)

Grade	Below	Average	Proficient	Advanced	Total Number
9 th	82	52	34	6	174
10 th	52	38	60	12	162
11 th	33	40	30	12	115
Total	167	130	124	30	451

Note: Total Number = total number of students taking the test

It should be noted that from 9th through 11th grade the following seems to occur:

1. Below scores went up.
2. Average scores went down.
3. Proficient scores were up then down.
4. Slight gain in advanced scores.

In summary, I have noted that in all subjects in all tables the ninth grade had the lowest scores. It appears that ninth graders were not prepared to take tests or are not good test takers. This raises a question of what is being taught or learned at the middle

school grades? Language scores as indicated in Table 1-2 were the lowest of the five subject tests. The ninth graders had the most advanced scores in language.

In 1998-1999 the school started giving an exit test called Work Keys. This test is given to all high school seniors. Several local companies use the test in order to look at employability skills. The local college administers this test. Table 1-6 gives these results:

Table 1-6

Work Keys Analysis

Test	Poor	Low	Below Average	Average	High	Superior	Total # of Students
Listening	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Writing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reading for Info.	10	11	37	35	13	2	108
Applied Math	6	22	20	30	25	8	111
Locating Info.	17	26	56	14	0	0	113
Teamwork	23	26	23	16	0	0	85

It should be noted that the following seems to have occurred:

1. 99 of 113 students scored below average or lower in locating information.
2. 69 of 85 students scored below average or lower in teamwork.
3. 63 of 111 students scored average or above in math.
4. Reading scores were similar for above and below average.

The listening and writing test were not administered in 1998-1999. The total number of students taking the tests varied because of absenteeism during the week when the test was being given.

In the school year of 1997 - 1998, 80 exit surveys were given to students leaving the high school before graduation. The question was: What is the reason for leaving this high school? The results are below:

Table 1-7

Exit Survey

Reason	Number of Students
Poor Attendance	14 students
Low Grades	three students
Teachers	two students
Administrators	one student
Problems at home	one student
Dropout (no interest in school)	nine students
General Education Degree	eight students
Job Corps	two students
Other Students	three students
To get a job	two students
Moving	seven students
Transferring	38 students

Table 1-7 seems to indicate besides transferring, most students drop out of school because of poor grades or poor attendance. I feel that poor attendance leads to poor

grades. It should also be noted that eight students felt an alternative diploma GED was preferable.

Statement of the Problem

In this study, I hope to find out what factors motivate some students to become successful. I also want to identify what factors, internal or external to the school, influence success of the students. This information is considered valuable in order to establish possible solutions for keeping students in school and producing more successful students.

Rationale

The drop out rate at the high school has remained constant over the last three years at just below 5%. The district goals for the high school are the same as Colorado Department of Education goals.

1. Raise graduation rates.
2. Raise attendance rates.
3. Improve achievement.

According to the Colorado Department of Education report for 1999, this community's high school graduated 70.5% of its class.

The rate of graduation has been constant for the past few years but there is still a large decline in the last 10 years. It is important that communities look at their success rate of graduating students.

Table 1-8

High School Graduation Rates for This Community

Year	Percentage
1990	76.4
1991	79.7
1992	78.4
1993	71.7
1994	70.4
1995	67.9
1996	54.3
1997	65.6
1998	69.5
1999	70.0
2000	69.9

In 1999, 124 students graduated from the high school. Table 1-9 indicates the number of students who have enrolled in colleges or universities.

Table 1-9

College Enrollments for the Class of 1999

College	Enrollment
Colorado State University	10 students
University of Northern Colorado	Seven students
CU Boulder	Seven students
Colorado School of Mines	Two students
University of Southern Colorado	Two students
Denver University	One student
Metro State	One student
Mesa State	One student
Aims Community College	14 students
Westwood College	Eight students
Front Range Community College	Five students
Arapahoe Community College	One student
Northeastern Junior College	One students
Otero College	One student
Parks Junior College	One student
CIA College	One student
Healing Arts	One student
Out of state	Five students

In 1999 with a senior class of 124 students the following was documented as to their post-graduate status.

Table 1-10

Post-Graduate Status for the Class of 1999

Status	Percentage
Two year school	30.25% enrolled
Four year school	27.7% enrolled
Military	3.36% enrolled
Working	34.45% working
Undecided	3.36%
Out of state colleges	4.0%

In 1998 with a senior class of 132 students the following was documented as to their post-graduate status.

Table 1-11

Post-Graduate Status for the Class of 1998

Status	Percentage
Two year school	19.7% enrolled
Four year school	26.3% enrolled
Working	48.1 % - includes some two year students
Military	2.9%
Undecided	3.0%

In an attempt to increase the numbers of students who may attend schools of higher education two programs have been adopted at the high school: Upward Bound and Talent Search. Both of these programs are targeted at first generation college bound

students. One program is generated from the University of Colorado and the other from Colorado State University.

In 1997-1998, 27% of college bound students received financial assistance. The number of scholarships and awards were 128 with a monetary value of \$454,847.00. Many of the scholarships were given to minority populations and financially needy students. Low test scores, low graduation rates and a smaller than normal entrance into higher education after high school is a concern to the administrators, teachers and the community.

General Research Focus

The following areas will be the focus of this study, while examining the research question of what impacts success of students at the high school?

1. To determine how internal and external forces influence student success.
2. By interviewing successful student alumni who were perceived successful students. The researcher will dedicate time to determine:
 - a) how state or federal interventions influence success of students
 - b) how parents influence success of students
 - c) how peers influence success of other students
 - d) what influences the culture of the community has on success of students.

Limitations

This study was limited to one moderate size town in Colorado. It is further limited to the study of a minimum of five former students who have graduated from the High School. Due to the narrow scope of the study, it cannot be generalized to other

communities. It will, however, be of value to the school board, high school staff, and this community in planning for and understanding success for its population.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This review of literature will be divided into two parts. The first will be to discuss the external forces on students' education. External forces such as the community, state and local governments will be researched. The second will be to discuss the internal forces that students must deal with in schools. Sociologists have established that people acquire knowledge from family, peer groups, personal experiences, community, media and the formal school (deMarrais & Lecompte, 1995). I will devote time looking into this subject, and hope to see if acquired knowledge and success are one and the same for high school students. The research was conducted by Internet and the researcher's community library.

External Forces

The Community

The community in which a school lies often will dictate the type of education a child receives. The values and beliefs of a community are important. It has been said that schools don't educate, communities do. I feel it will be valuable to determine if the community consciously or unconsciously drives the education in the high school. It is important to have a purpose and focus of the education delivered to students. The following was the mission statement of the school district while the participants were in

the high school. "We empower students by providing challenging educational opportunities." Research will provide insight in to whether the community wants its students to learn by any particular theory.

A theory is a worldview; we organize and explain the world we live in (deMarrais & Lecompte, 1995). Social and cultural beliefs have influenced education theories.

Sociologists think about schools as a social transmission theory, interpretive theory or transformational theory. Social transmission theory believes each elder generation passes on to the next generation rules, customs and behaviors. Inside that structure, a community must determine what is to be passed down and what is important.

A community may choose some of the following:

1. Intellect - that schooling is cognitive skills (reading, writing, and mathematics).
2. Politics - that schooling is to promote patriotism, history to ensure public civility and confirm laws.
3. Economic - to prepare students for a work force.
4. Social - schools should promote social and moral responsibility, and seek solutions for social problems.

Sociologists within the interpretive paradigm believe in real-world situations. Qualitative data as opposed to quantitative studies are preferred. Reality is not fixed but depends on the context within which it is experienced. The social structure is not important in this paradigm. The most important thing is what people do, who are they, and what will become of their past. Interpretives view schools as structured, where meaning is built around the social interaction of people.

Transformational theories of education draw upon critical theory. Critical theory is objective judgement, which transcends simple fact-findings. Critical theorists believe schools have two opposing groups; dominate and subordinate. They further contend that power of dominant groups is reinforced in schools. They believe that people are pigeonholed by academic selection, socioeconomic status, and gender. Critical theorists believe the only way to break away from this is for students to structure their own destiny. New ways of thinking will challenge the dominant groups. By uncovering some of the ways schools give power, these theorists hope to propose transformative changes in education. Critical theorists believe that the end results of confrontation and dialogue between groups will result in consensus (deMarrais & Lecompte, 1995). If the researcher is able to establish a theory used in the community, further insight into the phenomena of why some students are successful may be more evident. Varenne (1997) suggests most communities involve children in Rite of Passage. These rites can be painful because they involve relevant real life moral issues. He further states parents are the closest to the child and therefore are most influenced by them.

Federal Government

The report, A Nation at Risk (1983), said that something has gone seriously wrong in our educational system. The Educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and as people. The book also states that our educational institutions have lost sight of the purposes of schooling. The chairman of IBM states that schools are failing to produce a labor force that is prepared to solve global problems. There is no agreement nationally as to the direction of school reform. National standards, or an expectation of

what students should be able to do, is an initiative that is growing. Subject areas such as English, Arts, Foreign Languages, Geography, History, Civics, Mathematics, and Science are generally the preferred courses of study. New World standards will be developed for each of the five core subjects that represent what young Americans need to know and be able to do if they are to live and work successfully in today's world. These standards will incorporate both knowledge and skills to ensure that, when they leave school, young Americans are prepared for further study and the work force.

It would be helpful if as a nation we had a common understanding of what to expect from our schools. Goals 2000: Educate American Act (2000) was a step in that direction. Many believe this systematizing trend will not make educational decisions easier. Others disagree believing that this is the beginning of school reform thinking. The legislation relies upon the elaborate machinery of governmental bureaucracies to operate as a catalyst for school reform. The federal government will tell state governments that they need to do better, state governments will tell local districts that they need to do better, and principals will tell teachers that they need to do better – trickle down school reform. Will the government designate “core curriculum”? This is a question that scares local communities.

Adler (1994) stated that government had responded to pressures from education by starting initiatives that amount to meet the needs of young people through various forms of collaborative service delivery. Collaboration of services is beginning to occur between community, social services, health and education.

The National Curriculum Congress for Curricular Reform compiled the following lists of national objectives:

- high expectations for all students
- more challenging and interesting content
- less ability grouping and tracking
- more responsiveness to diverse needs
- more hands on real life contexts
- more small group learning
- more performance assessment of students
- more critical and creative problem-solving
- learning a few essential things thoroughly
- more organization of time around student learning
- more diverse kinds of teaching methods.

The traditional way of classroom instruction is teacher centered. Reformers want classrooms changed. The reformers believe a child-centered school where students take responsibility for their own learning is the key. Traditional view of teaching is presentation of information and maintaining order in the classroom. The reformers believe students with less information drive students with more. Schools, classrooms, and school systems can and do improve, and the factors facilitating improvement are neither so exotic, unusual, nor expensive that they are beyond the grasp of ordinary schools (Clark & Astuto, 1994).

State Government

Beginning in July 2000, schools in the state of Colorado will be required to have in place a contract in order to be state accredited. The Colorado General Assembly, through passage of the Educational Accreditation Act, requires every school district in

the state to adopt a written accreditation contract (22-11-101 through 22-11-202, CRS). The statute also mandates that certain elements be included in the district's accreditation contract.

This document has been developed to assist school districts in developing their accreditation contract, which meet the requirements of the law and the State Board of Education Accreditation Rules. The basic purposes of the Colorado Accreditation Program are:

- To foster greater accountability from public schools and school districts for the betterment of public education
- To provide a process for the State Board of Education to fulfill its constitutional responsibility for supervising the public schools of the state
- To encourage excellence by assessing student performance in relation to state standards assessments
- To help all schools and school districts improve academic achievement for all students in safe schools
- To ensure equal access to educational opportunities for every student in the state
- To support local efforts to reform and restructure public education
- To promote high standards, equal access, and educational opportunities for all students' academic growth
- To develop and maintain a school and community partnership for the ongoing improvement of public education and

- To enhance the public understanding of school and district performance by reporting on accreditation indicators in concise, specific and comparable formats.

Each district will enter into a contract with the Colorado State Board of Education to administer the accreditation process for each school in its district. The Colorado Department of Education shall administer the accreditation process for each school in its district. The contract shall specify the process that the district will use to accredit its schools.

The Accreditation contract shall explain how the district and its schools will meet or exceed expectations of the following targets:

Ultimate Goals:

100 percent of students are proficient or advanced on CSAP; or

Intermediate Benchmark:

80 percent of students are proficient or advanced on CSAP; or

Short Term Benchmark:

A school or district must meet or exceed each of the following three targets:

- a) Over a three-year period there is a 25 percent increase in baseline percentage of students who are proficient or advanced on the aggregated CSAP assessment, and
- b) Over a three-year period there is a 25 percent decrease in the percentage of third grade students identified as not on grade level by the third grade CSAP literacy assessment, and

- c) The school or district meets or exceeds any district-established goals for other state indicators and local goals.

It will be important to find out if students were concerned with state test scores or whether school grades were more of a focus to the successful students.

Internal Forces

The Family

It should be noted that the characteristics and demographics of the American family are changing. Single parent families, working mothers, and birth among unwed mothers is on the rise. The number of children from Hispanic and Asian backgrounds has increased with immigration. It may be difficult to find out the relative contributions of families, schools, and the community towards a student's success. What influences a student's success? Analysis should include income, family size, parent education, number of parents working and age of parents. It is important, when measuring success results, to measure students with similar family characteristics. Both two parent and single parent families need to be analyzed for student success.

Conflict in the family can affect a child's development. Divorce, for instance, may have an affect on children. The age and the family responsibilities that are placed on older children need to be analyzed.

Several adverse affects of family environment on educational outcomes are:

1. Soaring divorce rate that has resulted in higher incidence of single parent families. Survey data reveal that only one in six children living with their mother had weekly contact with their father after divorce. However, divorce can also remove a child

from a conflictual family environment – a condition that has been shown to be helpful to a child.

2. A sharp rise in birth rate of single mothers, particularly among minorities.

3. An increase in the number of children living in poverty. High poverty rates are often associated with single parent families.

4. An increase in the civilian labor force of women and children under 18 years of age. From 1970 to 1990 the number of married women with children under six years of age, working part time or fulltime, increased significantly.

5. The education of parents has been shown to affect students and how far they continue their education.

American children are in trouble, not all children to be sure, but many observers consider today's children to be worse off than their parent's generation in several important dimensions of physical, mental and emotional well being (Reklis & Fuchs, 1992).

It will be important to see how many times these five issues surface in either the focus group or individual interviews.

Influences of Learning

Environment. Dunn (1987) has been doing research profiling influences of environment and learning styles on student learning abilities. The following are 18 kinds of environmental issues he has researched:

1. Noise level
2. Light
3. Temperature

4. Design
5. Motivation
6. Structure
7. Learning alone/peer oriented
8. Authority figures present
9. Learn in several ways
10. Auditory
11. Visual
12. Tactile
13. Kinesthetic
14. Requires intake
15. Morning
16. Late morning
17. Afternoon
18. Needs Mobility

The more students are involved in an activity the more worthwhile the activity seems to be (Marshak, 1997). Many teachers have begun to teach in a more non-conventional way that is getting away from get the book, read the chapter and take the quiz. Learning may depend on the material one is learning, the environment in which one is learning, or the interest level of the students. Research also shows that classroom attitudes and behaviors (discipline) improve when teachers plan instruction based on how people prefer to learn. Like fingerprints, everyone has a unique learning style, and it is

important for teachers to know what style students have and adjust or vary their teaching style.

The researcher hopes through a focus group to find out if these factors played a part in student success. It should be noted that students have different learning styles that may have an affect, either internal or external, on the success of these students.

Peers. Peer group and youth cultures are closely tied together. Peer group is the social entity that is developed in youth culture. Youth culture is the behavior patterns of children and adolescents. We must recognize the cultural and individual differences of our students in school. Differences such as language, skin color, gender, dress and economics are realized, if not talked about openly, among students. There is, therefore, a mix of culture and peer groups throughout most of our schools today. Pressure to affix oneself to one of these diverse groups can be a conflict for some students. Many of our students are involved with several groups at one time. It is not uncommon for a student on a given day, to have to make several decisions about which group with which to affix. Schools, to date, have not capitalized on the differences of their populations. There are also both social and psychological pressures against crossing cultural as well as language barriers in our schools.

In order for students to have a culture and climate that is nurturing, a middle school in Bowie, Maryland, began a multidimensional program focusing on social exchange. Social exchange was an opportunity to learn about each other. Time was set aside during the school day to socialize with students not known before. Many were uncomfortable with cultural differences at first, but after several weeks it was felt that students felt a sense of belonging. In this particular program's study, student grades

improved, average daily attendance increased, and there were fewer discipline referrals. The researcher was impressed enough by this study to implement this program in his school. Females continue to be stereotyped and are misrepresented in educational activities. Females have been counseled away from Math and Science courses. Developing and integrating knowledge by and about females in the curriculum is a final frontier for those seeking general equity in access to knowledge (Goodlad & Keating, 1994).

I feel that it is important for the school to understand and respect its diversity. Diversity is not just gender or ethnicity. Diversity is all the differences we have as individuals. It will be important to learn about the school climate when students were enrolled at the school. I hope to learn if there was mutual respect for all of the diversities.

Teachers. In 1918 the Commission of Reorganizations of Secondary Education introduced the seven cardinal principles of education:

1. Health
2. Command of the fundamental processes
3. Worthy home membership
4. A vocation
5. Civil Education
6. Worthy use of leisure time
7. Ethical character

These principles guiding teachers on how to educate children stood for over fifty years. The principles are still there but the list is longer and the responsibilities and

expectations of teachers are higher. The age of technology has increased the opportunities of learning for students.

Schools have been subject to a social revolution. Three areas most affected are interpersonal relations, teaching and learning. Interpersonal relations are the changing of relationships between persons of dissimilar race, sex or social class (Brown, 1972). Teaching and Learning have been centered around teaching and the teacher, but more recently the emphasis has shifted to learning and the student; and the big question is no longer how to teach, but how to learn. Teachers are teaching more courses with laboratory work and mini courses in which a single concept is explored thoroughly. Motivation is a skill teachers need to have when dealing with students (Perkins, 1995). Teachers need to convince students who and “why are we studying this”? The reason why – what will the benefits be for mastering in a subject area. Teachers should consider what the cognitive economy gain for students is and talk to them about that gain. Work-study and school-to-career initiatives are being administered to students, supported by state and federal grants.

It will be important to find out if such programs were considered contributors to the success of students. Students, processed as raw materials, are graded, hammered, shaped, processed, conditioned and turned into a standard and uniform product so says Purkey and Novak (1996). Behaviorists believe in a factory model, in which principals are managers, teachers are then factory line workers. This type of thinking is in line with the narrow specific roles which factory workers have had. Only in the past few years using the TQM (total quality management) model of the Japanese, has this model-undergone change in the United States. The researcher believes this model can work in

today's manufacturing industry, but is not as successful in schools. The role of the teacher should be based more on individual needs. The process should be as important as the product (Purkey & Novak, 1996).

Teacher "burn out" and absenteeism of teachers' in schools is on the rise. When teachers are under contract in one district for an extensive period of time it becomes difficult to move to another district. School districts usually give between five and ten year credit on a pay scale. Any teacher over this amount of time in one district might be subject to a reduction in pay if they move to another district. This could have an affect on their teaching style and climate in the classroom. Teachers are now dealing with standards and additional accountability issues across the country. Teacher workloads are also on the rise. Teachers will need to have the opportunities to discuss the standards among themselves so the teaching of those standards can be meaningful (Cobb, 1994).

The pool of teachers is not equal in all areas of the country. Some areas are more attractive to teachers. Location, pay and benefits are critical issues when a district hires teachers. Sometimes the schools with the greatest need get the least help. Remote area schools and large city schools often get few applications for teaching positions. Principals have few options to fill teaching positions in these areas. In 1985, 5000 teachers were hired on emergency certificates in New York, Los Angeles, and Houston (Goodlad & Keating, 1994). Shortage of teachers is a serious problem, but an inadequately prepared teacher is also a problem. There is a further question as to whether teachers become more productive as they gain teaching experience. A study conducted confirmed that teacher experience does not make a difference in student success. The research did say that the teacher's education and preparation in the content area, when

used in the classroom, did improve the instruction and success of students' learning. A teacher testing and placement exam at the end of a teacher's academic work is now being administered. The researcher believes this new trend of placement exams will hold positive results for students.

Before filling out an application for a teaching position, Collins (1982) suggests asking the applicant do you love children? She feels it is the most important criteria for a teacher, more important than credentials or college degrees. It is still important to examine the job description of a classroom teacher. I feel that the responsibilities of a teacher are very comprehensive. Teachers traditionally work many hours before and after school hours. Most teachers put in additional hours in extra-curricular activities such as coaching, class or club sponsors. The following is the community's classroom teacher job description:

1. Teaching Strategies and Techniques

- Uses diagnostic techniques to assess student need.
- Provides a perceivable objective for this lesson or assignment.
- Uses appropriate activities to assure achievement of objective based on diagnosis of student need.
- Gives clear directions focused on the objective.
- Uses appropriate motivational strategies (i.e., interest, expectancy, level of concern, competition, feedback, etc.)
- Relates new learnings to what the students know.
- Uses sequenced instruction to maximize remembering and transfer.
- Helps insure the student stays on task.

- Provides opportunity to go beyond recall and memorization.
- Assesses individual learning of objectives and re-teaches when necessary.
- Encourages student to generalize concepts learned to situations outside the lesson.

2. Classroom Management

- Consistently takes appropriate action in disciplinary situations.
- Establishes, reviews and enforces class rules.
- Uses instructional reinforce.
- Provides for involvement of all students.
- Shows students evidence of mutual respect.
- Exhibits adequate classroom record-keeping skills.
- Maintains and protects materials, equipment, and facilities.
- Adequately supervises paraprofessionals where appropriate.

3. Physical Environment

- Creates a student-centered environment conducive to learning. (i.e., small group settings, exhibits, projects, bulletin boards, positive climate, furniture and materials appropriately organized, etc.)
- Demonstrates effective use of materials and equipment.

4. Professional Qualities

- Exhibits enthusiasm and vitality for the teaching profession.
- Demonstrates commitment to professional growth.
- Demonstrates flexibility and the ability to cooperate with peers.

- Meets expectations of the workday. (i.e., punctuality, regular attendance, etc.)
- Willingly participates in building and district endeavors. (i.e., committees, meetings, etc.)
- Makes appropriate use of student services. (i.e., counselors, resources teachers, etc.)
- Communicates regularly with parents on student's progress and behavior.
- Effectively resolves issues with parents.

Teachers should be involved in the social capital skills of students. Rights and responsibilities for cooperative learning should be given to the group (Hallinan, 1995).

School teachers need to:

1. Be committed to students and their learning.
2. Know the subjects they teach and how to teach these subjects.
3. Be responsible for monitoring student learning.
4. Teach systematically and learn from experience.
5. Be members of the learning community.

Administration. The major role of the principal is to lead teams of teachers, parents and students through instructional and environmental problem solving (Goodlad & Keating, 1994). The principal should be a symbolic and cultural leader articulating the school mission. Schmoker (1996) states less than 10% of school principals are systematic problem solvers. Leadership studies show average school administrators simply reflect on lesser things than schooling and curriculum. One of the most significant roles of leaders is the creation, encouragement, and refinement of the culture

symbols and symbolic activities that give meaning to the organization (Deal & Peterson, 1999).

Deal and Peterson (1999) further state principals should take on eight major symbolic roles:

1. Historian - understanding the past of the school
2. Anthropological sleuth - understanding the norms, values and beliefs of the culture
3. Visionary - picture the future of the school
4. Symbol - affirms values through dress, behavior, attention and routines
5. Potter - shapes rituals and traditions
6. Poet - uses language to reinforce values
7. Actor - improvises in the school's drama, comedies, and tragedies
8. Healer - heals the wounds of conflict and loss

The role of the principal also appears to change from community to community. Principals, therefore, must decide on their own strengths and weaknesses. Two types of leadership that are often discussed are transactional leaders and transformational leaders. Transactional leaders bargain with employees for payment for services rendered. Transformational leaders try to persuade and transform employees to think and believe in the same values and have the same belief systems as themselves.

Glickman (1993) states that school principals should be viewed as a critically important faculty member responsible for coordination and articulation of the school and its students. Principals are often thought of as problem solvers. When solving problems related to learning and school improvement:

1. Focus on significant problems interfering with student learning.
2. Identify teams of teachers, students and parents to look for further information about the problem and its contexts.
3. Analyze to make sure all conditions for effective learning are in place, student motivation, clear objectives, appropriate tasks, confidence, reward, practice and transfer of the learning.
4. Search for solutions within a team.
5. Develop a new plan to seek change as needed.
6. Plan the implementation of change and estimate five to seven years to see significant change.

School administrators have the opportunity as the educational leader of the school to provide a variety of school policies. Purkey and Novak (1996) suggest social gatherings, faculty meetings that start and end in one hour. Improve the teachers' lounge and share success stories, telling what to do rather than what not to do. Take risks by doing something out of the ordinary. Say no, slowly, when giving a negative response to a teacher. Improve teacher evaluations by helping with growth as opposed to telling them all that is wrong. Leaders are in a unique position to ensure that each person is fully aware of a schools organization and goals (Schmoker, 1996). A document included in Appendix I is the Board of Education qualifications and responsibilities for building principals.

Summary of Review of Literature

I conclude that there may be many factors that influence success of students in the community. These factors may be external forces, such as the community itself, state or

federal government programs. The family, peers, teachers and administrators may factor into the success of students. Internal factors may also play a role in the success of students. Internal factors such as motivation, physical and mental state of being should be considered. External factors, such as time of day or structure of the lesson of day, should be considered. The climate of the school should be discussed and hopefully will come out in either the focus group or individual interviews. Because there may be a variety of factors on the success of students it will be important for me to be aware of many of them before the focus group and interviews begin. I feel that the success of students in the community may come from several different factors for each student. I hope to find that students in the community have common factors for their individual success.

It is hoped through this study to discover the reasons for student success in this community. It will be important to document the reasons for success so the researcher will be able to make recommendations to the community, the school board, and the school administration on these findings. It is further hoped that this research will assist the school district in helping more students achieve success.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the research method selected for this study in order to find out why some students are successful. It includes an in-depth description of the qualitative paradigm of research. This chapter further includes the procedures used in this phenomenological study. In order to find out what factors influence the success of students, the qualitative paradigm was selected.

Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative study is one of multiple realities. That is, participants are viewed subjectivity on an individual basis. Often participants are biased, but additional participants can verify their biases. The researcher needs to be especially watchful in qualitative research about the multiple sources of potential analytic bias that can weaken or even invalidate the findings, according to Miles and Huberman (1984).

Qualitative research is real world situations where people's opinions are their realities. Immersion in details and specifics is to discover categories, dimensions, themes, and interrelationships through the use of open questions. Qualitative data should be detailed and thick in description from its participants. Because the researcher has direct contact with participants the researcher is the "instrument" in a qualitative study. The researcher insights are important to try and sustain empathic neutrality in the study.

Staying as neutral as possible will give credibility to the study. Design flexibility with emergent design will assist the researcher in adapting as the study continues (Patton, 1990).

In this study I conducted interviews. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), there are twelve ways to find meaning in qualitative data:

1. Counting numbers in qualitative research is sometimes ignored. It is important to count how many times something occurs or is said. There are three benefits derived by counting.

- a. Seeing what you have and observing differences
- b. Verifying a hypothesis – I might reason an idea and by counting count or discount that idea.
- c. Keeping analytically honest – qualitative researchers work by insight and intuition. The problem is that sometimes the researcher may be wrong.

By counting numbers and establishing percentile from different responses the researcher may see how accurate the insights are.

2. Noting pattern themes – I should look for repeated themes, causes, and explanations. Patterns should be looked at with skepticism.

3. Seeing plausibility – I should analyze that a conclusion makes good sense.

4. Clustering – I need to put information in categories. Categories may be something pre-existing or emerge from the data.

5. Making metaphors – I should write and think metaphorically. The metaphor is a decentering device, that helps the researcher step back and ask, "what's going on here?"

6. Splitting variables- I should split variables once, twice or even into three when coding. This will give me a chance to split variables when variables are not relating to one another.

7. Subsuming particulars into the general - this is a conceptual and theoretical activity where the researcher saturates a category with data.

8. Factoring - I must decide after gathering information which pieces go together.

9. Noting relations between variables - the researcher must determine how variables relate to one another.

10. Finding interviewing variables - I must be aware that there is a possibility that two variables do go together, but it is difficult to reason why. It is then important to look for a third (interviewing variable) which might show how they go together.

11. Building a logical chain of evidence - I must, through a step by step process, specifically build a chain of evidence using the variables and information gathered. This process involves getting initial sense of the main factors, plotting relationships, testing them against new data, refining that data and testing against new instances.

12. Making conceptual, theoretical coherence - I must take the unobservable and put it with the observable information and connect the two.

Finally the qualitative research approach is a holistic approach. The focus is on the complex interdependencies of its participants. There are no variables—only the words, opinions, and interactions from the participants, which are in effect, the reality of the study.

The Phenomenological Approach of Qualitative Research

The purpose of phenomenological research is to describe an experience from the participant's point of view. The nature of the research process is to study individuals and focus on lived experiences. The goal of a phenomenological study is to obtain the truth of "what happened." A group of people has been through an experience either at the same time or perhaps at different times but the experience was similar. An assumption which further denies a phenomenological approach is that there is an essence or essences to shared experience (Patton, 1990). The goal is to further describe and then interpret what story has been told. The phenomenological study is not intended to gain empirical or logical evidence as with quantitative studies. A phenomenological study is a study that has no predictions of outcomes. Instead it is a study in which themes and patterns will emerge.

Phenomenological Analysis

Epoch is an attempt to set aside prejudgment and open the research interview with an unbiased, receptive presence. Epoch is a way of creating an atmosphere and rapport for conducting interviews. This is important not only to credibility of the study but to the validity of the study. It should be noted that the study should be of the highest possible ethical standard. One's conscience and concern for the participants should be foremost in the mind of the researcher. I should look at the implications during and after the study. Anonymity and providing informed consent is important to the study.

Confidentiality must be insured along with permission to reward or publish the results of the study. It is important for the researcher to become fully immersed into the

research. The researcher, by immersing himself in the study, will gain more information and be able to draw more valid and insightful conclusions.

Procedure for Collecting Data

Procedures for gathering and examining data for this study included:

A. Nominations - the accountability committee at the high school will nominate former students to be interviewed for both individual interviews and the focus group. Committee members will be asked to nominate former students who they deem to be successful. Criteria for success will include graduation from high school, academic achievement, athletic achievement, leadership, and job status. It is hoped that each member will nominate one person. There are twelve members on the Accountability Committee. Committee members represent school personnel, parents and interested community members. The members originally were selected for the committee by the school administration. The members were not selected solely to nominate students, but have many other responsibilities.

Nomination forms will be given to the accountability committee at the high school. Discriminate sampling will be used in the study. In discriminate sampling, a researcher chooses the sites, persons and documents that will maximize opportunities for verifying the story life, relationships between categories, and for filling in poorly developed categories (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

B. Gaining consent forms from the participants: (see appendix A)

Consent forms will be given to the participants. It is important for the participants to understand the focus of the study, the need for the study, and the process and time lines that will be followed. It is further important for the participants to realize

that the study will be done with total anonymity. Participants will also be made aware that the information gained will be accurate and in their words, not the words of the researcher. It is hoped that the participants will immerse themselves into the discussion because it is they that have lived through these phenomena. I will submit the necessary forms needed to the university for approval in regard to the human subject review.

C. Focus group – after focus group participants had been selected I will audio tape the discussion and have it transcribed. It will be important to create a rapport between the researcher and the participants. I assumed that the high school was an appropriate setting for the focus group. Participants might feel comfortable reliving some of their high school experiences in the same place many of them had occurred. The participants sat in a circle in comfortable couches. I stayed outside the circle, listened and recorded responses. Explaining the study and the need for it can do this. It is further important to inform the participants why they were selected for the interviews and focus group. They will be informed that the Accountability Committee nominated them as a successful student. I will make the final selection of participants. I hoped that the Accountability Committee would nominate former students that will include different gender and different ethnic backgrounds.

Five questions will be asked in the focus group. The focus group will be held before the individual interviews in order to bring out perhaps more discussion in this second phase of dialogue. Five people as a minimum have been selected. I will ask open-ended questions, record on a flip chart, followed by discussion while simultaneously audiotaping. Every effort will be made to keep the information as pure as possible. Because the goal is to accurately describe the phenomena no attempt to

theorize the experiences of the participants will be done at this time. Some of the sample questions to be used are as follows:

1. What motivates you?
2. What motivated you to succeed in high school?
3. What areas did you like best about school?
4. What areas did you succeed in, in high school?
5. Were you always successful in high school?

D. Formal interviews - The interviews will be done one person at a time, using the same participants from the focus group. Questions will be asked using the information gained from the focus group. I hoped to gain further knowledge of the phenomena by combining the information from both venues of focus groups and individual interviews. Formal interviews will be held at the high school. Interviews will be scheduled for one hour. I will use my office as the setting, sitting directly across from the participants.

The formal interviews, it is hoped, will provide a time for people to speak with only the researcher present, and provide an even more in depth look at this phenomena, success. It was important to look at the district's focus on the mission statement that was in place while the participants were in high school. This might provide some understanding of the responses given.

During the years the participants were in school a mission statement was used to drive the focus of the curriculum. The district mission statement was- "we empower students by providing challenging educational opportunities". The mission statement adopted in the year 2000 changed focus and reads – "as a result of our efforts, students

will be academically prepared to pursue happiness and lead successful, contributing lives. The school district shall strive to provide a safe environment, meaningful opportunities and innovative educational programs for all students so that they reach their learning potential, including that they meet or exceed state and district content standards, through partnerships between home school and the community."

The following governing beliefs developed by the district school board were used along with the mission statement to give focus to the faculty. It read:

- That achieving excellence is worth the time, effort and sacrifice.
- High expectations promote improved performance.
- Achievement improves self-concept.
- Learning is a life long process.
- Learning promotes wise decision-making, creativity and responsible risk-taking.
- Education is a shared responsibility among students, parents, school and community.
- A high level of communication and interaction promotes progress.
- Every person can and will learn.
- Every person has worth.
- Every person has the right to be treated with respect.
- An educated citizenry is a foundation of democracy.
- Knowledge has intrinsic worth, any gains value when shared.
- Every person has the responsibility to improve both self and society.
- Honesty, respect and responsibility are basic values reinforced our district.

- Physical, mental, social and emotional well being and fact learning.
- Parent and guardian involvement is vital to promoting quality education.
- Cultural diversity enriches our community.

The primary function of our schools is to provide a strong academic foundation for students.

Trustworthiness

There are four problems, while obtaining information, which must be considered.

1. Misinformation
2. Evasions
3. Lies
4. Fronts

In order to insure the trustworthiness of the study, several techniques will have to be implied. I will use reflexivity. Reflexivity is a technique used in order for the researcher not to become overly involved. I have not lived in the community where this study will be done. It is important for the researcher not to give his thoughts, ideas, and opinions while in the study process.

The next area to protect the trustworthiness of the study will be that of triangulation. Triangulation is a method where the researcher compares information from either the focus group; or compares information received from the individual interviews. There are four kinds of triangulation that contribute to verification and validation of qualitative analysis:

1. Checking out the consistency of findings generated by different data collection methods

2. Checking out the consistency of different data success within the same method

3. Using multiple analysis to review findings

4. Using multiple perspectives or theories to interpret the data (Patton, 1990).

Data Analysis

Qualitative research seeks understanding (Guba & Lincoln, 1988) and strives for credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability in working with data. The researcher will use the following in the data collection and data analysis process.

1. Maintain audio tapes

2. Transcribe audio tapes

3. Maintain notes during analysis

4. Use educator reviewers, throughout

5. Check with participants before final printing

6. Share the findings with the participants, the school board and the community.

Wolcott (1990) states that summaries invite both the redundancy and the evaluative stance you may have been working to avoid. The summary allows a review of what I have done in terms of the original statement of purpose. I will stop the research when redundancy occurs. When participants have revealed commonalties in experiencing the phenomena; the researcher will conclude the focus group and individual interviews.

CHAPTER IV

DATA FOR THE STUDY

Introduction

This was a phenomenological study of how students succeed in high school. I first met with all five participants in a focus group session to get them acquainted with the project and to ask them some initial questions. Several weeks later, I met with each member of the focus group in an in-depth interview to gain their individual views and experiences.

I felt it was important to describe the participants who were involved in this study. It was important to know something about the background and upbringing of the participants. Because the backgrounds were very different from one to the other, it gave the researcher a more powerful project if similarities and commonalities surfaced.

Participants

#1. The first participant was the oldest of the group. He was a 56 year-old male who graduated from the high school in the 1960's. He was of Japanese descent. He was born in 1944 in Ft. Lupton where he was raised on a farm with 11 brothers and sisters. He ran his own company and was a parent of a student at the high school.

#2. The second participant was the second oldest of the group. This person was an Anglo-American male who graduated from high school in the 1960's. He was raised

with his mother, father and one sister. The family had an auto business in which he worked. He was the owner of a large automobile dealership.

#3. The third participant graduated from the high school in the 1990's. He was also an Anglo- American male. Solely their mother raised him and his brother. His parents were divorced when he was 3 years old and his mother worked while he grew up, as a public speaker. This participant worked as an artist and was self-employed.

#4. The fourth participant graduated from high school in the 1990's. This person was a Hispanic female. She was raised with one brother and one sister in a two-parent family. She was the youngest of the staff at her place of employment, yet held the lead secretary position.

#5. The fifth participant was a 19 year-old Anglo-American female who graduated in the 1990's. This participant was also the valedictorian of her class. She was raised by her parents and one older brother. Her father was self-employed and her mother worked for the school district as a secretary for 15 years. She was a full-time college student.

Focus Group

I began the data collection process by meeting with the five participants on the focus group. The group met for ninety (90) minutes, at the local high school. During this time the participants were asked five initial questions about their high school experience.

The questions were:

1. What motivates you?
2. What motivates you to succeed in school?
3. What areas did you like best about school?
4. What areas did you succeed most often in?

5. Were you always successful in school?

After open discussion about these questions I was able to ask additional questions and gain a more in-depth look at the high school experience. From this discussion I also was able to derive at the questions used in the individual interviews. I used the technique of the focus group first, then the individual interviews, to promote discussion and to formulate questions about what the participants themselves had said. I was also able to ask about issues other participants had discussed during the individual interviews.

Individual Interviews

In an effort to evaluate the questions that helped these people succeed, the researcher conducted individual interviews. During these interviews the five same questions were asked of each participant. These five questions were:

What motivates you?

What motivates you to succeed in school?

What areas did you like best about school?

What areas did you succeed most often in?

Were you always successful in school?

The questions were repeated individually in an effort to look for redundancy and to allow the individual participant to expand on the answers in a private environment.

The following is a summary of the initial answers to the lead questions asked of the participants during the individual interviews.

Question 1 - What motivates you?

The participants stated that numerous things motivated them during high school. The participants all gave credit to some other person for motivating them to do the best

they could do. The participants now realize that the pursuit of happiness was perhaps the most motivating factor in their success in high school. It is now almost ironic that the new mission statement for the school district is- "as the result of our efforts, students will be academically prepared to pursue happiness and lead successful, contributing lives". The word happiness was a new focus and applied to all students who were in school in the year 2000. The school district held a forum made up of community members in order to create this new mission statement. There were approximately thirty individuals at this forum. Members included school administrators, school board members, city council members, chamber of commerce members, booster club members and students.

Question 2 - What motivates you to succeed in high school?

The participants stated that while in high school they wanted to succeed in several areas. These included the desire to succeed academically, socially, and in extracurricular activities. The participants stated they were motivated to do this because it made them happy. The participants also stated that their parents motivated them. They expressed the desire to make their parents happy by achieving parental expectations as a part of their individual motivation in high school.

Question 3 - What areas did you like best about high school?

The participants stated what they liked best about high school were the friendships that they gained. Several of the participants gained friendships with their peers through extracurricular activities. The participants stated that they made lifelong friends with teammates and associates in extracurricular activities. Other participants stated that the friendships they made were with instructors. The participants said that the

instructors made a positive impact on them in high school, which carried over into their lives after high school.

Question 4 - What areas did you succeed in high school?

The participants stated that they were most often successful in the school's extracurricular activities. Such activities such as athletics, club and cheerleading were among those with the most success. Most of the participants stated that they felt they could have been more successful in the academics if they had applied themselves. The success they experienced through extracurricular activities could also have been enjoyed in academic studies with application of more time and effort.

Question 5 - Were you always successful in high school?

The participants felt that they had not always been successful in high school. All of the participants experienced failure during their high-school years. The participants failed socially, academically, and at times in extracurricular activities. The participants felt that their failures were not due to their lack of ability but their lack of effort.

Research was conducted by gathering data from a focus group and from individual interviews. The focus group revealed commonalties of the group. Four commonalties were agreed upon after discussing many different potential commonalties. The focus group also revealed three skills, which were helpful to their success in high school. The skills discussion developed over the fact that participants admitted not always trying very hard but being able to achieve success because of these skills. Again there was agreement on the three skills they felt they possessed.

The individual interviews revealed, among other things, attributes which participants had which helped them achieve success. Participants did not have total

agreement that they possessed all of these, but the attributes were particular to certain participants.

Four Commonalties

The following is a list of these commonalties.

1. Influence of a significant person
2. Experiencing failure
3. A Leadership role
4. Involvement in extracurricular activities.

Influence of a Significant Person

Every one of the participants gave partial credit for their success to another person in their lives. All of the participants stated that another person influenced their lives. The one person mentioned most as a positive influence by the participants were their mothers. At one point or another in every interview the participants mentioned their mothers as the most influential person in their lives as they were growing up. They felt that the time they spent with their mothers getting and seeking advice were instrumental to all of them and their success in high school.

Participants # 1 and #2 in particular mentioned that their fathers had been very influential in their success, but all mentioned their mothers. It appeared that all of the participants verbalized with their mothers more frequently than they did with their fathers.

Participant #3 was raised entirely by his mother. This participant did give credit to other significant people in his life also. This participant mentioned a male school faculty member who was very influential in his life. He stated that this instructor taught

him to appreciate life through his work. He further stated he is an artist today because of this man. He felt this person gave him the passion to pursue art, which carried over, into happiness in his life.

Participant #2 gave credit to his father as helping him be successful because of the discipline under which their family had been raised. Several participants mentioned their fathers as the driving force for their early success. Their motivation to succeed stemmed from the fact that they never wanted to let their father down with anything that they might have done. Two participants mentioned that their father was the disciplinarian of the family. Several participants mentioned that the consequences of doing something wrong would bear significant penalties with their fathers. These participants said that their fathers expected them to succeed.

Participants #4 and #5, both females, gave equal credit to both of their parents for their success; they stated that at different times in their lives one or the other parent played the more significant role in their success. Participant #2 related a story of a worker at his father's store as a person who would influence his life. The person he spoke about had been the Service Manager for 36 years in this business. He retired with 50 years of service to the company. During that time the employee had only one sick day, out of work, for this entire career. This particular individual made tremendous impact on the work ethic of this particular participant.

Another participant, #3, who said his mother was the most significant person in his life, not necessarily talking to him about achieving, but by putting forth the effort to achieve being more important. He said he thought he had disappointed her by not being a

medical doctor. He felt that was the only time he let her down. He said his mother was always pushing him to study, to read and to do the best he could.

Another participant, #2, said that his father pushed him and was the most influential person in his life. His father wanted him to carry on the business that he had so successfully started before him. He stated his father brought him to work and took him seriously when his father asked him to perform at work.

I was always kind of against him as far as the work or can I participate in athletics question. There were few games that he didn't come to, not very many, but there were some. I kind of held that against him but I don't anymore. He had this thing, he lost his father when he was 14 years old and that's when he went to work. My dad never got out of high school; he had a ninth grade education. He worked hard, he was honest and it's certainly come back well to serve him. He was a successful man and passed on a sizable estate to my mother and myself when he passed away. So, if hard work and being honest is a key to success, I think that's probably something to think about and because my father passed that on to me I believe I have been successful also. I think he passed along a legacy for me not to fail and I certainly hope I can accomplish what he wanted for the business in the future.

Experiencing Failure

All of the participants had experienced failure during their years in high school. Every one of them felt that failure, while not planned, was beneficial to them in later years. Some of the participants were able to get through this experience by themselves; others needed a significant person in their lives to assist them through this process. Participants #1, #2, and #4 experienced some sort of academic failure. While in the first year of high school all three of the people had less than satisfactory grades. All of the participants said they were not focused on academic issues all the time. These participants stated that their peers' easily influenced them into other activities other than extracurricular or academic classes and therefore sidetracked their energies.

The participants related that as they matured in high school they focused more on academics. Several participants said that they thought success early on in high school meant being popular. They later admitted that this really was not the case. The participants said when they focused more on the academics they felt more confident in their abilities to attain more in many areas. It should be noted that every one of the participants felt that when they applied themselves to the academics of the school, their goals for academics were obtained fairly easily. Again several of the participants were afraid to fail because of their fathers. They did not know what the consequences would be, but did not want to face those consequences.

Several of the participants felt they could have done better in school in the early years. The participants said looking back they could have done much more and considered not getting involved was a type of failure. Participant #3 stated that he had social failures,

I was kind of clumsy at times; I wanted to be friends with all the cool kids. I wanted to be liked by all the pretty girls for whatever reason.” This participant said his greatest failure was a lesson he learned when he ran for head boy of the student council. “I figured I've got it in the bag. People like me, and the other people that are running are not very popular. I've got it in the bag and going to win was my attitude. So I put up a couple of posters and I think I was even out of town the day they had the debates and all the speeches that go with running for student council. I did not take it seriously at all, I thought it doesn't matter I'm going to win anyway, guess what? I lost. That was the reason you know I failed like a said I failed before, but this particular time I didn't even try. The failure, I've come to realize, was that I failed my character because I didn't even try.

Leadership Roles

All of the participants had experienced the role of a leader. One of the participants, #5, did not get into leadership role until just after high school. The rest felt that they were a leader of some type during high school.

Participant #2 stated that he always was looked upon as though he was the leader. He further stated that he didn't necessarily want the role of a leader. Whether it was a social event or sporting event he said the others would always stop, look at him, and wait for him to decide what they were going to do next? I asked him if he liked to the role? His response was at times he enjoyed it, but at times he really wished that others had become more of the leader than him.

I try to delegate more and more as time goes on, but more often than not still to this day when we have something as simple as going out to eat, it always ends up back to me. I don't know if it's my personality or what ever, if I'm in the mix they don't want to make a decision. The people around me ask me to make decisions all the time. I'm not sure where this attribute has come from but it certainly is real.

The participants had all fallen into leadership roles; some by choice and others had it thrust upon them. All but one of the participants chose to be a leader. In Howard Gardener's book Leading Minds (1995), Gardener described different leaders and how they came to their position of leadership. Gardener wrote about leaders who by their position in society automatically were leaders, perhaps through hierarchy. He further described leaders such as a military leader who worked his way through the ranks. None of the participants were born into leadership all evolved into leadership roles voluntarily or involuntarily.

When asked, do you consider yourself more of a leader or more of follower?

Participant #1 said,

I think I used to be a follower when I was younger and then I went to college. That changed everything, I went into a no man's land where I wasn't a follower or a leader while in college. I was working, taking 17 hours of college credit and I didn't have time to be a leader. As I grew older I became more of a leader. I was the school board president for many years. I was definitely a leader in this role for the six years that I had that responsibility. In my office and outside my office I am a leader and especially I am a leader at home, with my Oriental background. You will see that my wife is a diminutive follower, 10 paces behind. My way is

the way it is. I now have backed off being a leader in the community since I've resigned from the school board. I was asked to be on different committees from time to time, but I just say no right now, I just need to back off. I've had my time as a leader and now I just need to run my business and raise my family and if that's a leadership role that's the one I need to fill right now.

Participant #5 had always been a quiet leader. She tended to lead by doing things such as being active in cheerleading, student council, and academics. By doing this she found that other people tended to follow her example. The last participant and the second youngest participant in the group said it took time for her to develop a leadership role. Because she was the youngest in the office setting, but had the lead responsibilities, she felt that it was not just automatic that she was the leader. This participant felt that the leadership roles had to be earned rather than dictated by her job description.

Because most of the participants were involved in several activities simultaneously, it appears that their time management skills were also very good.

Involvement in Extracurricular Activities

Every one of the participants had been involved in high-school sports in one way or another besides being a full-time student. Football was very important in the lives of two of the participants, #2 and #3. Participant #1 was a wrestler, #2 was on the basketball team and #5 was a cheerleader. The participant on the wrestling team said at first he wasn't allowed to go out for wrestling. One of the coaches spoke with him and his father because he was the correct weight that they needed for a classification. After asking his father if he could wrestle his father told him if he could stay up with his studies and finds a ride to and from practice he could participate. This participant started wrestling and he was quite successful after four years. He later was also allowed to be involved in baseball for three years, vocal music, band, and the Letterman club. This

participant also played football for two years. He felt his involvement proved to his father that he could do several activities at one time and each one would make the next one more successful.

Another participant, who played football, #3 said football was probably the most important thing to him in high school.

When I still run into the guys I played football with in high school it was like we went to boot camp together. Those days in August when it was 90 degrees and you just wanted to die, you wanted to stop, but everyone else kept you going. You learn that through that physical rigor you realize I've got a little bit left. You make great friendships and it's exciting when the people show up, fill the stands and the lights on the scoreboard are on. It's a magical moment playing a high-school football game on Friday nights.

Participant #5, who was a cheerleader, stated that extracurricular activities were one of the reasons that she got up early every morning for class. She also stated that an exciting early morning class that was interesting to her, helped her get focused for the days activities. She maintained that she still tries to build a schedule each morning that would be stimulating for her and keep her focused for the rest of the day.

Participant #4, who worked in the school office, was active in sports for the first two years of high school. She stated that the extracurricular activities consumed so much of her time in her early high-school career that it pulled her away from academic success. As a junior and senior she dropped some of her athletic activities and worked full-time in the school office. She stayed involved into business clubs, which she felt helped her with her role in the school office.

Skills

The participants also stated that there appeared to be three skills that were significant in their success. Technical skills and knowledge to accomplish a project,

communications skills in order to work in a team and the personality to get along with others as they worked on projects with others.

The participants spoke about technical skills as being very important to success. They stated that by being skilled or being able to demonstrate their mastery in certain subject areas around them gave them credibility. The second skill the participants felt was important was the communications skills. One of the participants stated,

I am convinced that one of the most important factors that contributes to success in the workplace is the ability that people have to work together, but more importantly it's about getting to know people and developing long-term relationships.

As a part of good communication, the participants also felt that presentation skills were important. The participants felt that by presenting themselves in such a way that other people felt comfortable talking to them, they were able to motivate and cooperate with others. The participants also felt that good communication included good listening skills and being good at giving feedback to others. Finally they felt they had the personality to deal with confrontation and conflict management. The participants felt they had good management and organizational skills, which helped them be involved in several activities at one time. Problem solving and being able to think and react quickly seemed to be a trait they had acquired during high school.

Attributes

During the initial interviews with the participants, I asked if there were any attributes they had developed in order to achieve success. The participants mentioned attributes, such as those listed below, as helping them achieve success in high school.

1. Self-responsibility
2. Self-starter

3. Self-confident
4. Street smart
5. Quick thinker
6. Flexible and adaptable
7. Risk taker
8. Change agent
9. Lifelong learner

They discussed, in detail, the ways these attributes contributed to their success. The following summary described the nine attributes as they were presented to the researcher:

Self-responsibility. The participants felt that what they had accomplished during high school was due to the fact that they knew ultimately they were responsible for their own actions. Many of the participants felt that they had responsibilities to their family, their friends, their teachers and themselves. The participants felt that when this became reality during high school or possibly after high school it was something that all of the participants took very seriously. The participants further felt that this was a maturity issue and it came at different times for different participants.

Self-starter. The participants felt that they had the ability to motivate themselves when starting a project. The participants felt that again this was a maturity issue and they became self-starters at different times in their lives. Becoming a self-starter was part of their work ethic. While being a self-starter was important, the participants seemed to feel that finishing what ever they had started out to do was significant in their success. The participants felt when they were happy they were able to start more activities.

Self confident. All the participants felt that being confident in whatever activity they were involved in was important. They felt it was important to be confident in the eyes of others or to appear confident in the eyes of others. The participants felt that being self-confident helped them especially in a leadership position. When it appeared they were confident about the activity they were involved in, they felt that the credibility factors of those around them were higher. Again, self-confidence came at different times for different participants. The participants did not always feel confident at all times in all areas. At times, the participants felt confident perhaps in athletics and not in their social life. All of the participants said that self-confidence builds as you go through high school.

Street smart. The participants felt that being aware of their surroundings was important to success. It was important to understand what was expected of them in the culture in which they were involved. The participants felt that they truly understood the school, the culture and the climate in which they were surrounded. The participants felt that they were able to distinguish the areas in which they should be involved, and the areas in which they should avoid as they moved through their school years. The participants felt that being street smart was, at times, more valuable than being book smart. It was perceived that knowing what was going on around them was important in order to make good decisions involving every day life not necessarily for the long-term goals.

Quick thinker. The participants felt that being able to make decisions quickly was important. The participants felt that again this added credibility and leadership skills that others could observe. Several participants stated that this was a skill they gained, as they

grew older. The participants stated that in their younger years in high school some of their quick thinking did not necessarily mean good decisions. It was stated that being able to think on your feet was a learned skill, and this skill seemed to have helped the students in the daily decision-making.

Flexible and adaptable. The participants felt that they were able to adjust to those around them, to the circumstances that they came upon during their years of high school. The participants further felt that they were able to change when something wasn't working. It was stated that in order to be successful it was important to go to school knowing that not every day was going to be the same. The participants stated that every semester they would have new teachers, which in turn meant new classes with new classmates. The participants felt that being able to change the way that they studied and communicated with the different instructors was an important skill they had. Meeting new classmates each semester and being able to adapt to their personalities was important to the participant's success.

Risk taker. The participants' felt that they all took risks during their high-school careers. Each one of the participants felt that they took a risk by being a leader or by being involved in extracurricular activities, where they would be in a position to be scrutinized. The participants all thought that being a risk taker was important because failure was involved. Failure, as has been stated before, was one of the commonalities that the participants all had. Without taking a risk the participants felt they would not have learned how to come back from failures. The participants felt that their risk-taking was part of their self-confidence. Self confidence grew when the participants took a risk, realized they had taken a risk, and were successful at what ever they attempted.

Change agent. The participants' felt as they went through high school that they could have an affect on others. The participants further felt that they needed to mature and change them selves. Again, the participants realized that change was inevitable in their lives and they needed to adapt to this. Several of the participants said that their leadership was a type of change agent. When leading, the participants felt they were the change agent for that particular group. The participants felt that being a change agent was important in the community and in the school. All the participants felt that the school and their lives should move forward and be subject to change. It should be noted that none of the participants felt that everything should stay the same at the school.

Lifelong learner. The participants felt that while they were in high school there was a lot to learn. Learning to the participants was much more than just academics. The participants felt that athletics, academics and their social lives were very important. Even though many of the participants had not attended college, all of the participants felt that as they went through their high-school years they continued to learn. All the participants stated that at some time in their lives, they continued to learn from different people in different ways. The participants stated that being a lifelong learner had some reference to their adaptable attribute. Admitting that they were constantly learning and maturing during high school were something that all the participants realized needed to happen to them. As we spoke about their present daily lives, the participants realized, now more than ever, that there was so much to learn while in high school. Several times during the interviews the participants made statements such as "if I'd only known". Many of the participants agreed that knowing what they know now, they wish that they could relive their high school years.

While the participants had mentioned nine different attributes they thought were needed in their personality in order to be successful, the researcher felt that the three central themes of happiness, goal orientation and resiliency were the most important. The researcher felt these themes were the basis for the success of all of the participants.

In Chapter II, the researcher discussed educational opportunities for women versus men. A stigma had existed in the public schools that had limited women's perceived interests in math and science and the related career positions. None of the participants felt that success was gender related. The two female participants did not feel they were held back from success because of their gender. All of the participants acknowledged that the stigma might have existed but did not believe that, at this high school, it had a negative affect on success.

Central Themes

Three central themes surfaced from this research, from both the focus group and the individual interviews. The central themes have emerged from discussions about commonalties, skills, and attributes. Participants agreed that major themes, even though not directly discussed initially, existed through constant feedback with the participants. This further reinforced that they exist. The first of these themes was happiness. All the participants realized that this feeling of happiness was a significant reason that they had been successful. None of the participants realized at the time that this was a top priority. However, after high-school all of the participants realized that happiness played a significant role in being successful. The second theme that surfaced during the study was that each one of the participants was goal oriented. A third theme that emerged from the research was that each one of the participants had been resilient.

Pursuit of Happiness

All of the participants said that their own happiness played a significant role in their success. The participants related they had not always felt happy, but when they were happy they felt they could accomplish more both in and out of school. The American Heritage dictionary (1981) describes the word happy, as satisfaction, gratified or well adapted. Schoolwork was easier when the participants said they were happy. Several people stated that early in their high school years they were not very happy. They believed they were not happy because they were not involved in very many school activities. The participants became more comfortable with their surroundings and were much happier when they became more involved.

The participants gained happiness in different ways. Several people stated making others happy, such as their parents, made them happy. None of the participants openly realized they were pursuing happiness. All of the participants said that when they were happy their lives seemed to be much richer. The participants felt happy and felt well adapted and secure in their high-school positions as they moved through the four years of high school.

Participants #1 and #3 stated that it was their humor that made others happy, felt this was an integral part of their success in high school. One participant stated that his best memories from high school were those of being happy with his teammates during athletic events. Most of the participants felt relieved when their parents were happy. Two of the participants stated that it was important to please their parents therefore making themselves happy. The participants said they felt less pressure from their parents when their parents were happy with the choices and decisions that the participants had made.

Several participants stated that the parents were happy when their grades were satisfactory or excelling. Parents also were happy when the participants excelled in sports, extracurricular activities, or academics.

Another aspect of the concept of happiness evolved from the acknowledgement that happiness also came from making others laugh. Participants #1 and #3 thought it was their responsibility to make their peers laugh and provide entertainment for their classmates. Both of these participants felt they were class clowns. The dictionary defines clowns as a jester who entertains or someone who is considered coarse, rude, or vulgar. One of the participants stated that he was the biggest “screw up” in town as well as in the school.

I was always happy and I got into trouble because I was happy in classes at times. Teachers didn't understand my acting out. My acting happy really wasn't meant to offend or distract anyone, but to entertain. I can still remember a teacher who sat me in the corner of the room. I used to have long hair and she would pull it. I cut my hair because the teacher used to think it was funny when she would grab my long hair. When I cut my hair the kids thought it was funny because she couldn't pull my hair anymore.

The same participant stated happiness was something you had inside you. He stated that even to this date every time he talked to someone on the telephone he tried to make them laugh tried to make them happy.

Participant #3 stated that happiness was a prime measurement of success. He stated that happiness was “what it's all about”. “If you're succeeding in life and you are happy in my opinion you're successful. If you're not happy with yourself, with what you're doing in life, then you really are not truly succeeding.” One participant said that people in his life made him happy. “I wouldn't say my artwork really makes me happy, it makes me content but it makes my life full.”

When asked the question of what motivates you, participant #1 stated, “I think it’s inherent what motivates any successful person is money and feeling good about what you do.” Participant #5’s answer was “I’m going to college, I’m planning on majoring in accounting and obviously money is a big part of that, but to me happiness is more important. And so, if I’m not happy in my job then I’m not going to last at it anyway and I’m going to do something else.” Participant #4 said, “I was happy here. I think some of the faculty made it easier. It’s a happy environment.” Participant #3 stated that happiness was a goal. “I’ve had a lot of financial success this year but I’m not happier now than before.”

Goal Oriented

Each one of the participants had achieved goals. The participants mentioned during the interviews that they were goal oriented. The participants had their sights set directly on what they’re doing today. All of the participants stated they strove to achieve goals while in high school. Being goal oriented seemed to have emerged as a significant theme, and was, in part, due to the resiliency that the participants seemed to have. The fact that each participant was goal oriented and had achieved success in many ways seemed to indicate that the goals of the participants may have been changing goals as they moved through their lives. Participant #5 states, “I would say, like my junior year, I started thinking about being the valedictorian. I set a goal and did accomplish it.

The participants in this study had different ultimate goals. #3 to be an artist. #2 wanted to run the family business. #5 wanted to be the valedictorian of the class. #1 and #3 wanted to be successful athletes. #5 to be the office manager. All of the participants achieved their goal ultimately.

During their high school years, the participants spoke about achieving smaller goals; making a sports team, playing in front of a big crowd, maintaining satisfactory grades while participating in extracurricular activities. Making their parents happy was a goal of several participants. Even though not all goals were achieved all of the time, the participants set goals and were not afraid to fail. Several participants stated they wish they had been even more focused and goal oriented.

The goals of the participants were different, but all agreed goals were significant to their success. Participant #1 stated that besides making people happy as a goal, his goal was to go to college. "There were 63 members in our class, I was probably the least likely to succeed. They had a class reunion and I had the most college of everybody in the class." Participant #2's goals in high school were to walk through the halls and be in contact with different people. "I wanted the stoners to think I was a good guy, I wanted the teachers to think I was a good student, I wanted my mother to think I was a good kid and I wanted the coach to think I was a good football player."

Participant #5 said,

My senior year since I was working and taking so many classes and didn't have any lunch periods, I was able to take electives in the morning and stay working three hours a day in the office. I worked in the office and took core classes in the afternoon. The summer after my senior year, I was working full time as a secretary. I mean I'm only 22 and I know the other ladies are twice my age. I think a lot of people thought it was a big responsibility at the beginning but at the end of my first year as lead secretary, I was nominated Classified Employee of the Year, which is a really big deal to me. A lot of teachers said we really didn't think you could do it.

Resilient

Each one of the participants demonstrated throughout their lives that they had been resilient. The participants mentioned the fact that they had failure in their lives or

diversity of some sort they had to work through. The fact that each one of the participants was able to overcome adversity seemed to be an attribute that the participants did not realize was part of their personality. As the interviews proceeded the participants shared stories of failing grades, failing in athletics or failing socially at times. All of participants overcame adversity with the help of another person; all were able to persevere through these difficult times and still succeed. All of the participants seemed to have a stick to it or try something else attitude when faced with a difficult situation.

When I asked the question, “were you always successful in high school?”, the following quotes came out. Participant #5 stated, “I remember the first time I got a D – I mean I didn’t know what to do, you know. It was how could I have done this? It’s a learning experience because it motivated me then to work harder in that subject and get really good at it.” Participant #2 stated, “we’ve had some really rough spots in our lives which I think anybody who’s in business for very long has, but you have to rebound, others are relying on you.” Participant #1 stated, “Failure is only something that you want to keep looking backwards at. I keep on looking into the future, I don’t look back.”

Nan Henderson, a member of the Resiliency Institute, shares numerous stories of troubled youth in The Faces of Resiliency (2001). She sighted a young girl who had attendance problems and was using drugs outside of school. One teacher told several students “they would be driving a Mercedes or BMW and Leslie would be working the window at McDonald’s”.

Leslie stopped doing drugs because of the influence of some school friends, but she gave the most credit to her mother. She said that her mother kept her going to school and would not let her drop out. The young girl said that during her skipping school her

mother got mad at her, but never gave up on her. No matter what, her mom was just always there. The girl's advice to adults trying to help kids succeed was to make sure to show the kids that they cared. What she said was significant because this was the same thing the participants said; their mothers were important to their success.

In a recent interview with Teacher Talk, Kimberly Gordon, Ph.D., defined resiliency as the ability to grow, mature and become more competent even in the face of obstacles or adversity. Students who were resilient drew upon all resources: biological, psychological and environmental. Schools were a valuable environmental resource, which also affected the psychological resources.

The question was could schools foster resiliency? The four methods for promoting resiliency according to a study done by Chandra Hawley, Center for Adolescent Studies (1999) were:

1. Increase the student's self-esteem
2. Stop the negative chain of events
3. Provide an alternate route to success
4. Remove the stressor

The implementation of these methods came from school administrators as well as teachers. She further stated that teachers could also help students increase their self-esteem and develop a positive self-concept. Teachers could create opportunities for the student to become successful by:

1. Helping the student set realistic and manageable goals
2. Allowing enough time for the student to complete the task
3. Furnishing the necessary resources

4. Helping the student problem-solve difficult situations
5. Starting classes on time
6. Interacting with all the student – not just a select few
7. Recognizing and understanding cultural differences among the students
8. Using visual aides
9. Offering “hands-on” experiences
10. Offering ample praise
11. Creating a trusting atmosphere in the classroom

I discussed four commonalties and three themes that seemed to emerge from the study. When these findings were shared with the participants, they were somewhat surprised by some of these findings and realized that what came out of the study really had a lot of truth to it.

Participants found four commonalties that they agreed they all shared. The attributed, skills and commonalties generated a discussion which lead me to generally believe three themes had surfaced. Participants agreed that happiness, theirs and making people around them happy, was significant to their success. There was agreement that achieving small goals helped them to achieve larger ones as they moved through high school. Finally there was total agreement that a stick to it or a resiliency was necessary to be successful in high school.

CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

I wanted to find out why some students are successful in school. The participants had been perceived as successful in the eyes of others. Internal and external influences were researched for their possible affects on student success. The researcher also wanted to know if the culture of the community had an affect on the success of its students. Because the school is a rural school with a small town population the researcher wanted to find out if this had an affect on the success of the students in high school. The researcher wanted to know if state or federal policies, or received grants affected students in this rural setting.

Rural schools often have different issues in dealing with education as compared to their city counterparts. It is often difficult for rural schools to attract administrators and teachers. The staffs of rural schools often tend to be more mobile and therefore break up the continuity of the education for students. The school in the study had a low graduation rate when compared to the rest of the state. The records reflect that the school also had low test scores and a smaller percentage of students who went on to higher education. Because of these factors, it was important to research former students who experienced success while in high school and/or after graduation.

It was noted that all of the participants in this study had spent most of their lives or had grown-up in this community. I felt that this could have had something to do with the success of these participants while they were in high school. Five participants were selected for this study by the school's accountability committee. I did not ask for participants with local addresses or participants that would necessarily be easy to get in touch with. The accountability committee may have assumed by themselves that this was important to the researcher. I generally believed that these participants were well-known names to the community. Because these participants had been here for a long time, were easy to contact, and, in the eyes of the committee members, had been successful while in high school, they were nominated. All the participants were also considered successful in their professional or after high-school years. Again I did not ask that the participants be considered successful in their lives after high-school. I asked the committee members to nominate former students who they thought were successful in high school.

The Problem

The purpose of this study was to explore why some students at this high school had been successful. I wanted to hear the feelings and descriptions given by the participants of what their high school days were like. Over the years, many of the students at this high school had not obtained success. The graduation rate from the high school was under 70%. Most schools in Colorado were 10% above this number. The dropout rate for the high school had been as high as 8%. A small percentage of the graduating classes have attended institutions of higher learning. As a result of these facts the researcher was interested in conducting a study that would include an assessment of

the internal and external issues which might have affected students while they were attending this high school.

Methodology

I asked the high school's accountability committee to nominate who they thought had been successful students. After receiving fourteen nominations the researcher chose five of the nominees. I chose participants who had graduated in different decades starting in 1963. Two female participants and three male participants were contacted by phone to see if they would be interested in participating. The participants were told the research would have one focus group and one individual interview to be both held at the high school. It was hoped that during the research, commonalties and themes would emerge. This would give me insights into success of students and provide some direction for educating future students attending that high school.

Focus Group

The participants first met as one focus group to discuss and answer questions about their perceived success. The focus group that the researcher conducted was comprised of five participants. The discussion lasted approximately 90 minutes. The session was tape-recorded, and notes were taken by the researcher. Five initial questions were asked in an open forum. Further discussion by the group expanded on these initial questions. After the group session and prior to the individual interviews, the tape-recording was transcribed. After transcribing the tapes, the tapes were analyzed. Commonalties, differences, skills, and themes were forming by coding the information. This helped me develop more in depth questions of the participants.

Individual Interviews

After several weeks the participants then went back to the high school for an individual interview. I asked five initial questions to start each interview process. As the interview process proceeded different questions emerged from the discussion. I was able to ask more questions as I moved from the first participant to the fifth participant. This process further confirmed what each participant said, resulting in saturation of the same information. The individual interviews were held in my office in the high school. Each session was tape-recorded and notes were taken. The tapes were later transcribed. The transcriptions were then coded and attributes of the participants discussed. By taking the information from the focus group which including finding commonalties and skills needed for success, I then recorded the attributes after discussing them in the individual interviews. I made a telephone contact with each participant to clarify information obtained, where it was needed. After these three contacts were made with the participants, I started to see three themes emerging.

Summary of Findings

The analysis of data completed for this research study identified four commonalties found in all of the participants. The four commonalties were:

- the influence of a significant person
- experiencing failure
- having a leadership role
- involvement in extracurricular activities.

Each of these four commonalties was discussed in Chapter 4 in greater detail. The researcher found that the participants felt they needed three skills in order to be

successful in high school. The three skills identified were technical skills, communications skills, and personality skills. The participants further stated that nine attributes seemed to exist for them; self-responsibility, self-starter, self-confident, street-smart, quick-thinker, flexible and adaptable, risk-taker, change-agent, life-long learner. Three central themes have emerged from the research. It was found that each participant was in pursuit of happiness, goal-oriented and resilient. It was hoped that the information gathered from the research could then be used by the district to train its staff and to educate its students.

Influence of a Significant Person

All of the participants felt that one person had played a significant role in their success in high school. Three of the participants felt strongly that their mothers were the most significant person in their lives while in high school. One of the participants thought his father was the most significant influence in his life in high school. One of the participants felt that both mother and father had played the role of a significant person at different times in her life.

Experiencing Failure

All of the participants felt that they had experienced failure; either socially, academically, or in extracurricular activities, while in high school. All of the participants felt that this served as a motivating factor as they moved through high school. The researcher, at this point, started to note a resiliency in all of the participants.

Leadership

The participants had all experienced the role of being a leader at some point during their high school years. Participants said it was expected that they be the leader,

either by their peers or their parents. Several also said that at times they were a leader in athletics because they were successful in academics. They felt that these two areas were connected as part of their school curriculum. The participants stated that their leadership role had carried over into their lives after high school.

Howard Gardner (1995) has written about different types of leaders. He believes there are three types of leaders. Ordinary leaders are the most common. These people, he feels, simply carry on the business at hand. The second leader is the innovative leader who brings new ideas to a group. The third type of leader is a visionary leader who looks into what the future might be. The participants in this study all felt that they were ordinary leaders. None of the participants felt, while in high school, they had the ability or the maturity to be either an innovative or visionary leader.

Involvement in Extracurricular Activities

All of the participants felt strongly that being involved in extracurricular activities helped them be successful in high school. However, the participants warned against getting involved in too many activities especially at the ninth grade level. Because of the varied activities the participants were involved in, they thought it made them organize their time better. They further stated that the relationships that they built while engaging in extracurricular activities were extremely important to them and created a lot of happiness. The participants further made note that extracurricular activities helped them socially, becoming more teamwork oriented and goal oriented.

The importance of extracurricular activities cannot be overstated. All of the participants in this study stated that the more activities they were involved in, the more they seemed to succeed. Friendships made during these times were deemed significant to

the individuals. The participants felt extracurricular activities were a short-term goal from which they could be successful. They further stated that time away from the classroom made them prepare and organize in their high school years. Even though these individuals experienced failure in some extracurricular activities, they continued to participate in as many activities as their schedule would allow. Extracurricular activities provided not only friendships, but also happiness for the individuals and happiness for their parents.

Presently, approximately 50% of the students in the high school are involved in extracurricular activities. Most of the students are involved in multiple activities, which seems to be in their favor on their way to success, (see Appendix D for breakdown of numbers according to types of activities). The goal of the high school should be to involve more students, since the research indicates extracurricular activities play a significant role in student success.

Three Skills Needed for Success

Technical skills. The participants felt that it was important to their success that they had the technical skills to be able to achieve in the classroom. They felt that they were capable of doing their academic work at a higher level with these skills, but stated that they did not always focus on their work perhaps as much as they should have.

Communication skills. The participants felt that being able to communicate with peers and the faculty at the high school was important to their success. They stated that this communication skill was important because of the number of students, the number of classes, and the changing of classes each semester and the need to adapt to the changes

quickly. The participants felt that good communication skills helped them in their leadership role at the high school and beyond.

Personality skills. The participants felt that if they were liked socially they were happier in school. They further felt that being able to relate with their peers and maintain happiness while in school was important to their success. Two of the participants maintained that they were the class clowns. One used his sense of humor while the other mixed humor with mischief, which he felt, entertained those around him in high school. All of the participants felt that getting along with both peers and faculty was an important skill to have. Several participants mentioned that dances, plays and other social events were experienced as a group as opposed to going with just one peer.

Central Themes

During this study three central themes emerged. All three themes were understated for most of the focus group session. At the conclusion of the focus group, the researcher asked if the group could have consensus on anything what would it be? The following was what was agreed upon:

- All participants pursued happiness
- All participants were goal oriented
- All participants were resilient

During the individual interviews, I again pursued these three themes in order to confirm these to be significant to success of these individuals while in high school. Again in the individual interviews, these three themes emerged. The participants further gave examples of how the three themes were important to each of them.

Pursuit of Happiness

The participants in this study spoke about their perceived need to be happy. Participants stated that it was important to make those around them happy also. Peers, faculty, and the participants themselves needed to be happy. They further agreed that making their parents happy was significant to their success. Happiness was a theme that emerged through several of the commonalities between participants. While the participants discussed the four commonalities that existed between them, one commonality found in this research was the involvement in extracurricular activities. All the participants were greatly involved in extracurricular activities. Most of the participants were involved in several at one time during their high-school careers. The participants stated that their involvement in it self brought great happiness to them. Parents were said to be happy while watching or attending extracurricular functions in which their children participated in at the high school.

Goal Oriented

All of the participants set short-term goals for themselves when beginning high school. Goals such as being a member of a team or group were important to them. Two of the participants set the goal of achieving high grade point averages during their high school years. While in the later stages of high school, all of the participants set career goals for themselves. Three of the five participants attended college; one participant went in to the military service before pursuing his career goals. Only one participant went directly into her career path from high school.

Resilient

The participants in this study have all shown a resiliency on the way to success. Failure was not uncommon to any of the participants. Experiencing failure socially, academically, or in extracurricular activities was something that all the participants experienced. One participant stated that not trying something was failure in itself. All the participants had to overcome obstacles such as a lack of maturity, failure socially or academically. While students at the high school, these individuals came back from their failures. Several participants stated that their high school years got off to a difficult start because of differences with family issues. They blamed these issues on themselves and making what they deemed to be bad choices. All of the participants were able to resolve these issues and become more successful as they continued on in high school.

Community Background

In Chapter I the researcher gave insight into the history of the community the high school is in. The history of this community started in the early nineteen hundreds. The community had a diversified population and had tended not to become over built like many other communities along the front-range of Colorado. The town that lies in the center of this community has undergone some trying political times especially during the 1970's when the local police station was purposely set on fire. Through all of these turbulent times, the community now continued to have a steady growth of population and businesses.

The participants in this study have all lived in the community since childhood. Parents of the participants have also been lifelong or long-term residents. It should, therefore, be a logical question; how has the community had an affect on the students in

the high school? I generally believed that the community would have a significant influence on success of its high school students. As the research progressed this did not prove to be a significant theme. The participants, even though they graduated from the high school in different decades, were possibly exposed to different educational theories. A theory is defined as a world-view, and is used to organize and explain the world we live in (deMarrais & Lecompte, 1995). A community may choose such theories as intellect (cognitive skills), politics (promote patriotism), economic (prepare work force), or social theory (promote moral responsibility). The community in this study appeared to change its educational focus or theory as the Board of Education and the administration changed its members over the years.

The high school appeared to be a comprehensive one in which it promotes cognitive skills, promotes social capital skills, and work force skills. The community appeared to adjust its thinking towards the arts, technology, or any educational philosophy that seems in vogue at the time. With the change of leadership at both administrative levels, the high school and the Board of Education, the direction and focus of the curriculum has not stayed as a constant.

The participants did not feel that, while they were in high school, they were affected by the changes in local control. None of the participants felt that the reason for their success was related to how the school was administered. The participants failed to mention any conflicts with administration. Faculty issues surfaced but the participants said, for the most part, issues with faculty were not significant in how they achieved success. Several participants mentioned coaches who invited them to participate and

encouraged them to stay out for extracurricular activities. It was felt these teachers showed them a path to success, but it was up to them follow the path and truly succeed.

Forces Significant to Success

In Chapter II the researcher discussed the outside forces of the state and federal government policies and their impact on the high school. None of the participants felt that they had been affected directly by the state or federal grants or policies that the district had in place while they were students at the high school. None of the participants felt federal, state, or local control was anything they had sufficient knowledge about. While funding and laws from all of these areas existed, it was not thought of as a direct affect on the success of these participants.

One of the participants came from a single-parent family. In Chapter II the researcher discussed some of the difficulties of growing up in a single-parent family. The participant in this study felt that his mother was the most significant person in his life, but also gave credit to a male faculty member at the school for helping him mold his personality. He also gave credit to this faculty member for success in his life after high school. The participant who was brought up solely by his mother is also the only person to give significant credit to the faculty for his success. It should be noted that this faculty member might have filled the role of a male influential figure in the participant's life in high school.

In Chapter II there was a discussion about the possible affect peers had on the participants. Most participants stated that their peers were people they enjoyed participating with in extracurricular activities. Because of the movement of students in and out of classes during semesters, participants found themselves sustaining only a few

close friends throughout high school. Several participants stated that older peers, at times, tended to pull them off focus. It seemed that these peers did not care if the participants' academic or extracurricular activities were successful. Several of the participants stated that being around peers, tended to make them act out like class clowns. It was also stated that the first few years after high school, the participants maintained friendships with many peers, but slowly people became more distant by moving away or having different areas of interest. While in high school, the participants felt their friends would be life long friends. None of the participants said these peers were the significant person in their lives after high school. While none of them felt that their success was due to any of their peer relationships, all of the participants agreed that their successes were shared with their peers. The participants described the nine attributes they thought helped them be successful. Of those attributes mentioned one was that the participants were self-starters. This would seem to indicate the participants did not rely on peers to motivate them. The research, therefore, did not ascertain that peers of high school students had an affect on the success of the participants.

The participants failed to bring up learning environment issues as a force or factor affecting their success. None of the participants mentioned a concern with the building atmosphere or their different learning styles while at the high school as affecting their learning or success. It should be noted that with all of the discussion about drugs and alcohol today in our schools the participants who graduated in the 1990's did not mention this as a factor or a distraction for them during their high school years.

In Chapter II I discussed the faculty and the administration at the high school. The participants in this study failed to mention much about the personalities of the

faculty. The participants said that they could have achieved higher levels of academics if they had applied themselves to their learning, not as a result of the actions of others.

In a rural school setting the researcher feels that it may, at times, be more difficult to retain the staff. None of the participants said that the changing of staff had any affect on their success. The participants said that they, themselves, were the most important part of their own success.

I gained insight into the responses by coding and counting differences and similarities in the participants' answers. While counting the same responses, the researcher documented them, clustered them, and put them into categories. This process further helped enhance an understanding of the data obtained.

It should be noted that all of the participants agreed they had four commonalties; all identified the role of a significant person in their lives, all experienced failure, all experienced leadership, and all participated in extracurricular activities which played a significant role in their success in high school.

In Chapter II I made the assumption that several areas might have had an affect on the success of students at the high school. Several of the areas have been discounted based on the information gathered. At the same time, several areas were deemed to have a direct affect on student success, again based on the data collected.

Participants mentioned nine attributes that they felt were important to their success. These were self responsibility, self starter, self confident, street smart, quick thinker, flexible, risk taker, change agent, lifelong learner. Participants mentioned all nine attributes as they had done with the commonalties. There was also agreement among all of the participants that three skills were needed for success. These were

technical, communication and personality skills. These were categorized differently for research purposes because the commonalties were clearly stated by the participants, while the skills were implied. This lead me to deduce that they were also reasons for participant success, even though the participants did not directly describe them as significant. When I felt redundancy had occurred, the interviews were concluded.

Conclusions

Based on the review of literature possible influences were identified for student success. Several internal and external influences were assumed as being significant. I conclude that internal influences are more significant than external forces when dealing with student success. I did not, in the initial phase of this study, discuss or assume that internal forces such as motivation or maturity would be significant. As the study progressed, it became evident that the participants and their own state of mind were the most significant influences on their success. External influences did play a part and influenced all of the participants, but the participants themselves were the most significant influence on there own success.

Because of the external influences exerted on the participants, I would conclude that being successful is not inherited. Because a sibling or parent experiences success does not mean success is inevitable for students. It appears that being successful is a learned trait. This learned trait comes from maturity, experience, and with the help and guidance of a significant person in the student's life. This significant person often appears to be a family member and most often the mother. The participants in this study maintained a strong relationship with their mothers in early childhood through high

school. The participants' felt making their mother happy by achieving in academics, socially, or in extracurricular activities made themselves and their mothers happy.

Students need to be resilient in order to experience success. Failure in high school is helpful in that students learn from failure. From failure comes a "stick to it" philosophy which students appear to need.

The essence of what seems to be happening is successful students are happy. Successful students are organized, focused, and involved in extracurricular activities. Failure is acceptable as long as trying takes place. Other students depend on successful students for leadership.

Recommendations

I feel that this study could help students who are presently at the high school as well as students who will be coming to the high school in the future. I feel that students, parents, faculty, and the Board of Education can all learn from this study. I further feel that all of these stakeholders can play a significant role in student success. Therefore they should develop a strategic plan that gives focus and direction to guide students to success. A strategic plan includes a mission statement and identifies governing beliefs, which the community holds for the schools. The school presently has a 1995 strategic plan (see Appendix E) which should be modified to include results of this study. Those modifications should include, at the very least, the three central themes that have emerged from the research. These themes include pursuit of happiness, goal oriented, and resilient.

Based on this study, I recommend that to address these central themes, the high school and community should promote several initiatives in order to help students succeed. These initiatives include:

- Faculty involvement
- Comprehensive counseling program
- Parent involvement
- Board of education strategic plan.

The initiatives should be undertaken in order to build a foundation of the nine attributes identified through this study. If these attributes are developed along with the skills discussed by the study participants, students will have a chance of achieving greater success. For a further explanation of these recommendations for the school district, see appendix J.

Further Study

I would suggest further study be done on perceived success of students. The participants in this study brought to light nine attributes that they believe were part of their reason for being successful. A study conducted on these nine attributes and how they relate to success of students presently would be valuable.

As states move to a standard testing method for all schools, it would be important to compile the results and compare a variety of factors. Such things as participation in extracurricular activities versus nonparticipation should be compared to standard state mandated test scores. Do those students who become more involved perform better on state mandated standard tests as the research in this study suggests?

A current concept among school administrations is to develop an inviting school environment. Research should be done to determine if a sense of safety and welcome encourage students to stay in school and participate at all levels. With the recent shootings in schools, it will be important to find out if students at the high school and parents of those students, feel the schools are doing all they can to provide a safe environment and one that is conducive to learning and success.

Success eludes many students. The research should continue to look at the four commonalties of influence of a significant person, experiencing failure, leadership, and involvement in extracurricular activities, that the participants in this study identified as important to their success. I have looked at only a small sampling of students focusing on their experiences at the high school level. A study of the middle school students could be done in order to assess the impact of that experience on preparing the student to move into the high school and continue on to graduation.

Finally I would recommend a study be done with students who are not deemed to be successful. This study would assist parents, teachers, and administrators in evaluating those factors that prevented these students from achieving success. The results could also be used in planning for a more successful high school experience. Having done research on both successful and unsuccessful students, the district would have a greater awareness of the needs of all of its students.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

LETTER REQUESTING PARTICIPATION AND CONSENT FORM

LETTER REQUESTING PARTICIPATION

January 10, 2000

Dear

I am writing to you to request your participation in a research project to examine the success of former students at Fort Lupton High School. The research will be used as the basis for my dissertation at Colorado State University. I will also be sharing the results with the leadership in Weld County School District RE-8 as they strive to improve the success of the students in the school district.

The data will be collected through a focus group and individual interviews. The focus group will meet for no more than 90 minutes. The individual interviews will last for no more than one hour. Each participant will be involved in the focus group and individual interviews. In order to insure confidentiality no individuals will be identified in any document produced from this research.

I will be calling you sometime in the next three days to answer your questions and determine your interests in participating in the study.

Sincerely,

George V. Raterink
Work – (303)857-7100
Home – (303)651-1607

COLORADO STATE UNIVERISTY

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

TITLE OF PROJECT: Success of Students: A Phenomenological Perspective

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Charles Porter, Ph.D.

NAME OF CO-INVESTIGATOR: George Raterink

CONTACT NAME AND PHONE NUMBER FOR QUESTIONS/PROBLEMS:
George Raterink, (303) 651-1607 (home) or (303) 857-7100 (work)

SPONSOR OF PROJECT: N/A

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: The purpose of this research is to assess the success of high school graduates and look at the impact the community has had on students.

PROCEDURES/METHODS TO BE USED: You have been asked to participate in a research study as one of six participants. Data for this research will be gathered through interviews and a focus group. The group will be made up of high school graduates from the local high school. Each participant will be asked to participate in one focus group and one individual interview. The focus group will last 60-90 minutes. The interviews will last for 60 minutes. As a participant you will be asked to answer questions about your perceptions of why you were able to achieve success in the culture of the community. The focus group and all interviews will be audiotaped to maintain accuracy of what is said. As a participant, you will have access by appointment with the researcher to transcripts of your focus group or individual interview for the purpose of checking accuracy.

Upon successful defense of the dissertation all audiotapes, transcripts and code information will be destroyed.

RISKS INHERENT IN THE PROCEDURES: The only known risk participates in this study is the possibility of concern which may occur as a result of talking about sensitive personal experiences in regard to success in the school and community

It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

Page 1 of 2 Subject initials _____ Date _____

CONFIDENTIALITY: Any personal information obtained or recorded in connection with this study will be kept confidential. Each participant will be given a code number at the beginning of the study, which will serve as a way to identify information specific to him or her. The list of names and numbers will be kept by the investigator and the co-investigator and will be seen by no other person. Participants requisition a review of their transcript will have access only to the information obtained in their focus group or individual interview. Upon successful defense of the dissertation all audiotapes, transcripts, and the list of names and numbers will be destroyed.

Participants if focus groups will be directed to respect the group process by agreeing to confidentiality regarding all comments made during the interview. Although no reference to individuals will be used in the final report, confidentiality can be guaranteed only to the degree participant's respect this direction.

LIABILITY: The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

Questions about subjects' rights may be directed to Celia S. Walker at (970) 491-1563.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 2 pages.

Participant name (printed)

Participant signature

Date

Witness to signature (project staff)

Date

Appendix B
TELEPHONE CONTACT GUIDELINES

TELEPHONE CONTACT GUIDELINES

1. Introduction of Researcher
2. Reason for Call
3. Summary of Study and Its Significance
4. Assurance of Confidentiality
5. Explanation of Time Requirements
6. Specific Request to Participate in the Study

Appendix C
TYPICAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

TYPICAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Purpose and process
2. Background and experiences of participants
3. Defining educational theory
4. The development of the educational theory
5. The development role of members in the theory
6. Core values, beliefs, values in the community
7. How participants have experienced the culture of the school district
8. Other comments

Appendix D
EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY PROFILE

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY PROFILE

Extra Curricular Activity	Number of students participating	Total number of students enrolled
Academic Decathlon	12	735
Athletics	273	735
Band	47	735
Chess Club	17	735
DECA - (Distributive Education Clubs of America)	64	735
FBLA – (Future Business Leaders of America)	102	735
FCCLA – (Family Career Community Leaders of America)	13	735
French Club	23	735
Knowledge Bowl	16	735

Appendix E
SCHOOL DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLAN, 1995-2001

SCHOOL DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLAN, 1995-2001

Mission Statement

As a result of our efforts, students will be academically prepared to pursue happiness and lead successful, contributing lives.

Governing Beliefs

- Achieving excellence is worth the time, effort, and sacrifice.
- High expectations promote improved performance.
- Achievement improves self-concept.
- Learning is a life-long process.
- Learning promotes wise decision making, creativity, and responsible risk taking.
- Education is a shared responsibility among students, parents, schools, and community
- A high level of communication and interaction promotes progress.
- Every person can and will learn.
- Every person has an equal right to learn.
- Every person has worth.
- Every person has the right to be treated with respect.
- An educated citizenry is a foundation of democracy.
- Knowledge is of intrinsic worth; knowledge also gains in value when shared.
- Every person has the responsibility to improve both self and society.
- Honesty, respect and responsibility are basic values reinforced by our district.
- Physical, mental, social and emotional well being affects learning.
- Parent/guardian involvement is vital to promoting quality education.
- Cultural diversity enriches our community.

- The primary function of our schools is to provide a strong academic foundation for our students.

District Policies

1. We subscribe to and practice the principles of participative management as follows:
 - a. the person doing the job is the expert and deserves support
 - b. information flows up and down through the organization
 - c. decisions should be made at the level of impact when possible and then supported
 - d. one cannot participate above his/her ability
 - e. accountability is commensurate with authority
2. We will not tolerate any person who deliberately takes away the human dignity and self esteem of staff member, parent or student.
3. We will always support personnel administering the current discipline policy.
4. We will not tolerate prejudicial attitudes or actions by any person.
5. We will not implement any new program unless it survives the scrutiny of cost-benefit analyses, provides adequate staff preparation, and sets in place evaluation procedures.
6. We subscribe to the employee credo of “We expect you to grow.”
7. We will not allow any student to drop out of school unless that student has been offered a minimum of three alternative educational programs to meet his/her learning needs.
8. We will hire only those people who support the district’s beliefs.
9. We will periodically review every educational program to determine its continuing effectiveness.
10. We will encourage risk taking designed to improve student achievement.

Goals

By April, 1996, we will define a plan to accommodate expected growth for the next ten years. The plan will be evaluated by the Leadership Planning Team and approved by the Board of Education.

By the year 2001, one hundred percent of all students will meet or exceed defined performance standards to move to the next level.

By the year 2000, students will learn in an optimum learning environment as measured by primary, elementary, middle and high school level surveys of appropriate stakeholders. Indicators:

- Communication among buildings
- Quality of facilities
- Quality of teaching
- Quality of curriculum, materials
- Mutual respect
- Technology
- Student-teacher ratio
- Vocational programs

By the 1997 school year, a safe learning environment will be created that promotes honesty, respect, responsibility, and communication. Beginning in the spring of 1996, success will be demonstrated by annual decreases in discipline referrals, accidents and vandalism reports as verified annually by building accountability committees.

Seven Major Objectives

Objective 1. We will actively develop a plan to create a safe environment by emphasizing discipline, citizenship, and school pride.

Objective 2. We will improve staff development, retention, and equity.

Objective 3. We will aggressively pursue innovative partnerships with family, parents, business, higher education, government, and non-profit agencies.

Objective 4. We will establish an effective and efficient communication system within the school community.

Objective 5. We will identify, prioritize and categorize the technology concerns and needs of the district to result in a comprehensive plan to meet those identified needs.

Objective 6. We will provide facilities that meet the growing needs of our students and community.

Objective 7. We will aggressively establish effective site-based curricula, aligning assessments and defining appropriate delivery systems while addressing immediate and long-term concerns.

Appendix F

THE SEVEN HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE

THE SEVEN HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE

1. Be pro-active – you have the initiative and responsibility to make things happen
2. Begin with the end in mind – if you want to raise responsible, self-disciplined children, you have to keep that end clearly in mind as you interact with your children on a daily basis. You can't behave toward them in ways that undermine their self-discipline.
3. Put first things first – organize and execute around priorities
4. Think win/win – everyone must feel good when decisions are made
5. Seek first to understand, then to be understood – listen, and then give your opinion
6. Synergize – the essence of synergy is to value differences, to respect them, to build on strengths, to compensate for weaknesses
7. Sharpen the saw- renew oneself physically, mentally, spiritually, socially.

Appendix G

IMPLEMENTATION FOR TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

IMPLEMENTATIONS FOR TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

- Helping students set manageable goals
- Allowing students enough time to complete tasks
- Furnishing necessary resources
- Helping students problem solve
- Starting and ending classes on time
- Interacting with all students
- Recognizing and understanding differences in students' ability culture and diversity
- Using visual aids
- Using hands-on experiences
- Praising students
- Creating an inviting school atmosphere in the classroom

Appendix H

FIVE WAYS TO ACHIEVE GOALS

FIVE WAYS TO ACHIEVE GOALS

1. You must have a specific time in which to achieve your goal.
2. Write down your goals.
3. Develop a plan to achieve your goals.
4. Decide what price you pay to achieve your goals.
5. Think about your goals every day.

Appendix I

JOB DESCRIPTIONS – TEACHER, COUNSELOR, PRINCIPAL

TITLE – CLASSROOM TEACHER DISCRIPTION

KEY RESULTS AND ATTENDANT RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Teaching Strategies and Techniques

Introduction

- 1.1 Learning is clearly stated to students.
- 1.2 Students are shown how learning is related to previous learning they have experienced or to the needs in their lives.

Teaching

- 1.3 Adequate explanation of the learning is provided before students are expected to put it into practice.
- 1.4 Various teaching strategies are used in the learning activities. (Lecture, group discussion, student input, inquire or questioning, role playing, and/or other.) These teaching strategies are approximately sequenced.
- 1.5 Teacher models the learning and its application for the students.
- 1.6 Teacher checks regularly to make sure that all students understood the learning.

Practice

- 1.7 Students practice the learning through some form of overt behavior.
- 1.8 Students' practice is directly related to the learning.
- 1.9 Teacher monitors each student's practice of the learning.
- 1.10 Teacher re-teaches the learning when and where necessary.

Closure

- 1.11 Teacher closes the lesson by having students identify the learning.

1.12 Students know and understand the lesson that is taught.

Follow-up

1.13 Homework is assigned based on the day's learning.

Motivation

1.14 Teacher uses various forms of motivation.

Increases/decreases anxiety Maintains a friendly atmosphere

Adds notes of interest Gives students knowledge of their success

Grants rewards Allows students moments of success

2. Classroom Management

2.1 Students know what is expected of them in terms of behavior

2.2 Students get into the learning atmosphere immediately.

2.3 All materials and equipment necessary for the class activity were in place and ready to use.

2.4 Classroom rules are established, reviewed and enforced.

2.5 Teacher and students show evidence of mutual respect.

2.6 Teacher consistently takes appropriate action in disciplinary situations.

2.7 No time was wasted during taking of attendance and/or record keeping.

3. Physical Environment

3.1 The classroom environment is conducive to learning.

3.2 Teacher demonstrates effective use of materials and equipment.

4. Professional Qualities

4.1 Teacher exhibits enthusiasm and vitality for the teaching profession.

4.2 Teacher demonstrates commitment to professional growth.

- 4.3 Teacher demonstrates flexibility and the ability to cooperate with peers.
- 4.4 Teacher meets expectations of the workday. (I.e., punctuality, regular attendance, etc.)
- 4.5 Teacher willingly participates in building and district endeavors. (I.e., committees, meetings, etc.)
- 4.6 Teacher makes appropriate use of student services. (I.e., counselors, resource teachers, etc.)
- 4.7 Teacher communicates regularly with parents on student progress and behavior.
- 4.8 Teacher effectively resolves issues with parents.
- 4.9 Teacher completes and submits required reports in a timely manner.
- 5. General
 - 5.1 Teacher accepts and fulfills assigned responsibilities and duties
 - 5.2 Teacher follows Board of Education policies and established district/building rules, regulations and procedures.
 - 5.3 Teacher performs other duties as may be assigned by the building principal or supervisor.

TITLE – COUNSELOR

KEY RESULTS AREAS AND ATTENDANT RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Counseling Strategies and Techniques

- 1.1 Provides individual and group counseling
- 1.2 Works with students in such a way that students recognize his/her personal interest in each one and his/her desire to help them attain their personal goals.
- 1.3 Provides individual guidance, counseling and consulting services to students and parents.
- 1.4 Assists faculty in working with individual students or groups of students in appropriate situations.
- 1.5 Recognizes individual differences in ability, careers, interests, and values and designs strategies to meet their educational needs.
- 1.6 Fosters effective career education and information diffusion, keeping students informed of relevant educational and career opportunities.
- 1.7 Will administer and utilize appropriate assessment instruments.
- 1.8 Assists students to become responsible and self directed.
- 1.9 Refers student to appropriate community resources.

2. Management

- 2.1 Provides services in a fair and impartial manner.
- 2.2 Utilizes available time in an orderly and purposeful manner.
- 2.3 Exhibits record keeping skills, appropriate to the assignment.
- 2.4 Meets the expectations of the workday.

- 2.5 Conducts follow-up surveys to assess the effectiveness of the district's overall academic program.
 - 2.6 Conducts follow-up surveys to assess the effectiveness of the districts overall academic program.
 - 2.7 Maintains and protects materials, equipment, and facilities.
3. Communication Skills
- 3.1 Is easily approachable by staff, students and parents.
 - 3.2 Is a good listener and uses information to facilitate problem solving.
 - 3.3 Communicates with student, parents, teachers, and administrators on student progress and behavior.
 - 3.4 Fosters positive school image with outside resources.
4. Professional Qualities
- 4.1 Demonstrates initiative and confidence.
 - 4.2 Exhibits enthusiasm for the job and demonstrates pride in his/her work.
 - 4.3 Demonstrates evidence of commitment to professional growth.
 - 4.4 Works cooperatively with colleagues to best meet the needs of students and provide comprehensive counseling services.
 - 4.5 Accepts and performs assigned duties effectively.
 - 4.6 Provides leadership in developing district counseling policies and procedures, which comply with legal requirements and board policy.
 - 4.7 Accepts responsibility for duties assigned regarding orientations, scheduling and placement of students.
 - 4.8 Participates willingly in building and district endeavors.

5. General

- 5.1 Accept and fulfill assigned responsibilities and duties.
- 5.2 Follow Board of Education policies and established district/building rules, regulations and procedures.
- 5.3 Performs other duties as may be assigned by the building principal or supervisor.

BUILDING PRINCIPAL

1. Qualifications

Colorado Type D Certificate

Minimum of seven years of public school experience, which includes at least three years of classroom experience and three years in school and/or district administration.

Graduate degree in educational administration.

Such alternatives to the above qualifications as the Board may find appropriate and acceptable.

Building Principal reports to Superintendent of Schools.

Job goal is to provide the leadership, atmosphere, environment, staff, materials and facilities through which learning may flourish for the optimal development of each child attending the School District Re-8.

2. Performance Responsibilities

Directs the educational program of the school in conformance with program goals, and procedures of educational accountability decided at the district level.

Assists in the development, revisions and evaluation of the curriculum.

Implements programs to meet specific needs of the school.

Establishes and maintains an effective learning climate in school.

Directs the development, implementation and evaluation of all extracurricular programs.

Encourages review of new ideas and alternative educational programs to meet the needs of all pupils.

Encourages and aids staff to use their talents in ways best suited to the needs of students.

Assists in the recruiting, screening hiring, training assigning and evaluation of the school's certificated and classified staff.

Supervises all professional, paraprofessional, administrative and classified personnel attached to the building.

Coordinates and supervises in-service programs to upgrade the instructional programs and performance of the staff.

Supervises all activities and programs that are outgrowths of the school's curriculum.

Supervises the administration of the school lunch program.

Provides for the staff all school regulations and general policies enacted by the Board of Education and Superintendent and shall administer these as they apply to his school.

Assists in the development of the school budget and keep such business records and execute such business forms as may be required and shall approve petty cash expenditures, expense vouchers and requests for payment. Shall be responsible for such accounting for moneys as the Board of Education or Superintendent may require.

Provides within the budgeting limitations placed on him, the necessary textbooks, library materials, and instructional supplies to carry on the educational program in his building.

Monitors all announcements and directions to teachers.

Monitors his school and see it is not used to distribute political or commercial information at anytime.

Shall see that no teacher is called from class to interview salesmen during the school day and that faculty names are not given commercial organizations or individual so that they might contact staff members.

Supervises the maintenance of accurate records on the progress and attendance of students.

Provides report, immediately in full and in writing, to the Superintendent of Schools any serious infringement of property rights within his school, any breach of contract affecting his school, or any serious injury to any pupil or member of the school staff that may occur at a time or place wherein the rights or responsibilities of the school may be involved.

Maintains and controls the various local funds generated by student activities.

Provides all reasonable precautions to safeguard the health and general well-being of his staff and of the children in his school; and to this end he shall provide definite plans by which the school staff and janitorial force may be able to provide for the safety and care of children in the case of fire, storm, and other sudden danger to the school plant and shall see that the children are adequately trained to make such plans effective at anytime in case of need.

Directly responsible for the safety and administration of the school plant.

Provides for adequate inventories of property under his jurisdiction and for the security and accountability for that property.

Maintains all attendance records for his building as well as pupil accounting records as set forth by the Superintendent and such other records and reports as the Superintendent may require.

Supervises newly assigned staff members and assists in their development, as appropriate.

Responsible for handling all complaints affecting his school, investigate the same where facts seem to warrant, and redress legitimate grievances where possible. He will refer to the Superintendent, in writing, cases he cannot adjust satisfactorily.

Budget school time to provide for the efficient conduct of school instruction and business.

Attends such committees and such meetings, as the Superintendent shall direct.

Supervises fire drills and an emergency preparedness program.

Establishes meetings when necessary with his staff to discuss the educational program and school business and problems.

Coordinates with college and university officials regarding teacher training and preparation.

Establishes the master teaching schedule and any special assignments.

Acts as liaison between the school and the community, interpreting activities and policies of the school and encouraging community participation in school life.

Establishes and maintains favorable relationships with local community groups and individuals to foster understanding and solicit support for overall school objectives and programs; to interpret board policies and administrative directors, and to discuss and resolve individual student problems.

Provides for someone when absent from school, to be in charge and assume responsibilities.

Supervises, coordinates, and directs implementations of all school activities.

Provides leadership in time of civil disobedience in school in accordance with established Board policy.

Provides for arrangements of special conferences between parents and teachers.

Responsible for staff assignments, duty assignments and work programs for the school and report it to the Superintendent of Schools. Shall have authority to appoint membership and define duties of committees deemed necessary.

Maintains active relationships with students and parents.

Maintains high standards of student conduct and maintaining student discipline.

Encourages teachers to handle discipline cases but shall have authority in the school over all discipline cases, and shall be responsible for supervision of pupils, for recommendation for expulsions, and for corporal punishment if it is administered. Shall handle all problems of pupils from his building in regard to transportation through bus drivers and/or the Director of Special Services.

Responsible for all official school correspondence and news releases.

Responds to written and oral requests for information.

Responsible for the environment, shall make regular and thorough inspection of the school properties in his charge and shall direct the operating and maintenance workers at his school as their activities may affect the work of the school.

Supervises the daily use of the school facilities for both academic and nonacademic purposes.

Delegates authority to responsible personnel to assume responsibility for the school in the absence of the principal.

Attends special events held to recognize student achievement, and attends school-sponsored activities, functions and athletic events.

Provides the Superintendent with information of the school's activities and problems of an unusual matter.

Attend and serves as an ex official member of all committees and council within the school.

Maintains awareness of changes and developments in the profession by attending professional meetings, reading professional journals and other publications, and discussing problems of mutual interest with others in the field.

Responsible for his own professional growth and developmental through membership and participation in the affairs of professional organization, through attendance at regional state, and national meetings, through enrollment in advanced courses and the alike.

He shall perform such other duties as the Superintendent of Schools may direct.

Terms of Employment: 220 day, one-year contract with four-week vacation. The contract to begin August 1st and end July 31st.

The Superintendent of School will evaluate performance of this job.

The following is strategy used by a school administrator:

The "C" Diet

My job is:

To keep the compass

To massage change

To build creditability

To cultivate my staff

To ask compelling questions

To be an advocate for children

I build the culture of the school

Curricular Consensus Constituents Community

I see my job as building my staff. I strive to build:

Confidence
Courage
Compassion
Character
Competence
Capacity
Commitment
Clarity
Consciousness
Communication
Collaboration
Connectedness
Collaboration
Collegiality
Challenge
Critical Thinking
Creativity
Curiosity
Contentment

(Sigmon Boloz, 1999.)

Part C. Protocol Information

Objectives

1. Why were you successful?

Human Participants description

2. Graduates of Fort Lupton High School
3. Six participants
- 4.
5. High School Accountability Committee will nominate
6. A letter will be sent to the nominees explaining the project
7. The first six to respond from the nominees will be included in the project
8. N/A
9. N/A
10. N/A

Procedures to be followed with participants (Methodology)

11. Fort Lupton High School
12. N/A
13. Verbal – focus group interviews (note taking)
14. Approximately seven questions will be asked initially
 1. What motivates you?
 2. What motivates you to succeed in school?
 3. What areas do you succeed most often in school?
 4. Have you always been successful in school?
 5. What did you like best about school?
 6. Do your friends share your goals?
 7. Do you have any role models?
15. N/A
16. N/A
17. N/A
18. N/A
19. N/A

Risks to participants

20. E – loss of confidentiality
21. If participants do not want to answer a question they can abstain
22. N/A
23. N/A

Benefits to participants

24. N/A
25. N/A
26. The benefit will be for the students who attend the high school in the future
27. N/A

Consent procedures

28. A consent form

- 29. See attached
- 30. N/A

Confidentiality

- 31. The names of the participants will not be given in the study or included in the dissertation
 - 32. Dissertation will be bound and kept at the high school
 - 33. The researcher will have a faculty member store the documents in locked storage
 - 34. Audio tapes will be destroyed at the end of the study
- N/A

Appendix J
SCHOOL DISTRICT RECOMMENDATIONS

SCHOOL DISTRICT RECOMMENDATIONS

Faculty Involvement

I believe faculty (teacher) involvement can play a significant role in success of high school students. Teachers have the opportunity to influence students with day to day contact in classrooms. The attributes identified by the participants that teachers have the opportunity to address include self-responsibility, quick-thinker, and the appreciation to become a life long learner. In addition one of the commonalties identified in the research involves a leadership role for student success. The researcher believes that a good model of personal leadership faculty can use to guide students to become good leaders is presented in a handbook written by Steven R. Covey (1989).

In 1999, as part of the Language Arts and Business Departments, the school adopted the use of Steven Covey's book, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People (1989), (see Appendix F).

In addition to developing personal leadership habits, teachers can help students' foster resiliency. In a recent interview in Teacher Talk (2000), Kimberly Gordon Ph.D. defined resiliency as the ability to thrive, mature, and increase competence in the face of adverse circumstances or obstacles. Students who are resilient must draw upon all resources: biological, psychological, and environmental. Schools are a valuable environmental resource, which can also affect psychological resources. In fostering resiliency, she suggests that faculty:

- Increase the students' self-esteem
- Stop the negative chain of a balance
- Provide an alternate route to success

- Remove the stressors.

The implementation of these methods can come from school administrators as well as the rest of the faculty. Administrators should insure that teachers have the resources to provide students with technical skills. Both administrators and teachers can help students increase self-esteem and develop positive self-concept. They can also create opportunities for students to become successful by helping establish reachable goals and assisting with good social capital skills (see Appendix G).

The resilient student may have the following characteristics: good social skills, independence, intelligence, and internal control. The presence of these qualities does not necessarily make a student resilient. The absence of these qualities does not prevent one from being resilient. The manifestation of competence helps foster resiliency according to Dr. Gordon. She further stated teachers are the key to finding ways for all students to experience success. Teachers and administrators can help foster resiliency by creating a conflict free environment, developing programs that support the family, allowing teachers to participate in decision-making, and providing a clean and well maintained learning environment.

Resiliency in Schools by Nan Henderson and Mike Milstein (1996) offers a profile of what students need for resiliency improvement. They define resiliency as how people bounce back from stress, trauma, and risk in their lives. Resiliency is a characteristic of student success. Henderson suggests that teachers need to convey hope and optimism to students. The profile they suggest includes:

- provide opportunities for meaningful participation
- set high expectations

- provide support
- teach life skills
- set boundaries
- increase pro-social bonding.

Comprehensive Counseling

The counseling department of the high school needs to offer a comprehensive program. Included in this program should be guidance for high school classes, development of career goals, and move students to become more involved in extracurricular activities. The primary focus of the counselors should be to address the central theme of goal oriented as a method by which students can achieve success. This should include counselors working with students, faculty, parents, and community members. Employers and graduates may also be involved. Norman C. Gysbers and Patricia Henderson stated this in their book Developing and Managing your School Guidance Program (1994). By doing this, students should be able to successfully articulate more quickly into the high school rigor from the middle school. If counselors can help assure the students are feeling safe during high school, the researcher feels students may be more likely to get involved in a variety of extracurricular activities. Goals should be discussed with students by the counseling department, according to John J. Schmidt Counseling and Schools (1996). Schools should not simply disseminate information but search for occupational possibilities and have students do self-assessments. The author suggests the use of technology to assist students in securing information about further education or a career path.

In a book written by Art L. Williams, All You Can do is All You Can Do (1988), he suggests five ways to help students achieve goals (see Appendix H).

As students enter high school, the high school staff should develop a program for students to look at their futures and set individual goals. Like the participants in this study, many students will not achieve all the goals but a lack of trying is what one participant said was truly failing.

Parent Involvement

The research on the benefits of parent involvement seems quite clear. The participants spoke of the influence of the most significant person in their achievement of success. Parents can guide their child's development of personality skills as well as addressing the attributes of self-confident, flexible and adaptable, risk-taker, or change agent. Involving parents in their children's formal education improves student achievement, regardless of the income levels of the families served (Luberetkin, 1996; Finn, 1998). Also, schools that relate well to their communities have student bodies that outperform all other schools (Henderson, 1987). And finally, the educational approaches with the most potential are those where parents play a variety of roles, including decision making, and where there is a structured program of training for parents and school personnel (Workman & Gage, 1997; Kala, 1998).

Research shows that educators cannot do their jobs alone. For this reason families and communities must help reinforce what students learn in school. Parenting workshops can train parents in child development and ways to support academic learning. Parenting workshops can cover such topics as nutrition, child abuse, and nurturing. Parent resource centers and schools can help draw parents into the school community while providing important information and assistance. Resources include videos, audiotapes and tips on helping children succeed. Family literacy programs can engage parents, who are lacking

in or limited in English, in their own learning and that of their children's. Home visits can be conducted by qualified staff to help parents reinforce their children's learning at home.

Parental participation in decision making at school can be developed by introducing parents to school leaders, committees and policies and giving parents the information and support they need for decision making at the school. Parent-school agreements can outline the mutual responsibilities of home and school for the purpose of helping students achieve high standards. Volunteer training can be conducted to educate parents about volunteer opportunities within the school rather than just expecting parents to get involved. Outreach strategies can help parents be informed of school activities and policies. Staff training is necessary to provide teachers, principals, and other school staff with strategies on how to work with parents.

It will be important for parents to communicate well with school faculties. Parents will often hear the child's observations of what happened at school, but parents should reserve judgement and respect the school's observations. A recent publication from the Educators Library stated that everyone, including parents, students and teachers, are responsible for their conduct and have an obligation to treat others with consideration and with respect. This statement should be adhered to if a school is to be an inviting school especially when a parent and school differ on a decision about student discipline.

In a book written by James E. Gardner entitled The Turbulent Teens (1983), the author maintains that parenting should include positive contact with children, and should provide them with a benign but definite structure. Again these activities would contribute to the development of attributes such as self-confident and flexible and adaptable. There

would be a set of rules or agreements that are reasonable for the child's age, peer group status and living situation.

Board of Education Strategic Plan

Thomas J. Sergiovanni (1994) writes in his book Building Community in Schools about a school's educational platform. He proposes the following elements be included:

1. Aims of Education - prioritize the aims of education for youngsters in the community.
2. Major achievements of students should be identified yearly to increase self-awareness and self-confidence.
3. The social significance of student learning will help to identify the emphasis to be put on vocational, citizenship or cultural heritage.
4. The image of the learner - look at the different types of learners in the school and decide how will they learn.
5. The image of curriculum and its attributes about what students learn.
6. The image of the teacher - elicit the role of the teacher.
7. The preferred pedagogy - what type of learning experience will be used - student centered or teacher centered?
8. The preferred school climate - the tone of the school, the environment and the classroom discipline.

The local school board could use these elements to guide the curriculum and endorse this platform into its long-range strategic plan. The plan outlines results from which the community and school district can measure progress. It provides a blueprint for the future. This plan summarizes the best thinking of not only participants in the process, but those they represent. The plan should not be viewed as final. Instead, the

plan represents goals to be achieved, specific objectives and strategies that can be modified as conditions and needs change. In chapter two, the researcher asked many of the same questions as Sergiovanni; questions about the theory of the community and learning styles. Sergiovanni seems to capture many of the same ideas as those, which have emerged in this study. These eight elements along with the findings of the researcher could be used as the basis for a strategic plan for the school district.

At the present time, job descriptions exist for employees (see Appendix I). In the future it is suggested that teachers', counselors', and administrators' job descriptions be rewritten to include data from this study. Along with a new strategic plan, which includes goals and objectives, I believe the present job descriptions need modification. New job descriptions should include an emphasis on the three main themes of this study; included but not limited to are to help students pursue happiness, help students become more goal oriented, and assist students in a process that helps them become more resilient.