Feedback Model Makes Changes in Education

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Abstract
Among the many tactical interventions to support school districts quest for No Child Left Behind (NCLB) compliance, the Strategic Schooling model has proven to be effective in several school districts throughout California, including Fresno, Berkeley, parts of northern and southern California. This tactical intervention promotes the concepts of identifying target students, providing feedback and using the skill and know-how of educators to bridge the academic achievement gap facing English Learners.

Key words: Transitional leader, organizational change, strategic schooling.

Introduction
Tactical interventions to improve the education and academic achievement of English Language Learners continue to be an ongoing necessity within school systems. Since the passage of Proposition 227, the English only movement, in California in 1996, the challenge to effectively educate English Language Learners has become a focal point among researchers, policymakers and stakeholders who aim to increase the academic skills of all students and reduce the achievement gap between minority and disadvantaged students and their white counterparts. Prior to Proposition 227, the research had been focused primarily on second language learners and language minority students (Cummins, 1986). As a result of the on-going research on English Language Learners, the Strategic Schooling Model (Parker, 2006), is one of the tactical interventions being applied to improve the academic performance of English Language Learner students. The Strategic Schooling Model has shown that a school system can substantively improve student achievement through collaboration, targeted goals, feedback, and data-driven decisions. By setting target goals, evaluating feedback, and applying pedagogical expertise, the Strategic Schooling Model is designed to hone academic skills and increase student achievement within the environment of the school community, specifically aimed at English Language Learner’s achievement.

The challenge of improving the achievement level of English Language Learners is best addressed with the findings of current research, sound policy implementation, and inclusion of
the voices of both teachers and parents. To date, many of the reform efforts have not yielded the results expected by many stakeholders. Educational reform movements necessitate that both teachers and parents maximize their collaborative efforts in educating children.

The Strategic Schooling Model has been “responsible for higher than average gains in student achievement as measured by annual state assessments in California” (Parker, 2006, p. 1). The Strategic Schooling Model applies the principles of complex systems and cybernetics. It is organized into four domains to produce optimal performance. The four areas are: (1) target, (2) feedback, (3) know-how, and (4) context. The four areas are universal elements in educational organizations. The Strategic Schooling Model suggests methods to improve both school and classroom targets, maximize feedback, increase know-how and create “a more supportive, functional context in which to operate” (Parker, 2006, p. 1).

The concepts of the Strategic Schooling Model can be defined as: (1) targets – identifying students who are at risk, (2) feedback - providing feedback both to the students through test-chats and to the teachers with observation checklists, (3) know-how – acknowledging the expertise of both students and teachers, and (4) context – identifying the curricular areas which need to be addressed in order to improve academic skills.

It is important to examine several perspectives when utilizing the Strategic Schooling Model. The research shows a deficit model and points to an array of gaps, recommended strategies, and failed implementation attempts (Marzano, 2005; Reeves, 2004; Shope, 2008). There is a dearth of research available on the implementation, effectiveness, and evaluation of the Strategic Schooling Model. This is the reason why this study is useful to administrators and policymakers. This study adds to the body of knowledge on the effectiveness of the Strategic Schooling Model. The study is useful to researchers, policymakers, administrators, teachers, and parent groups who are working to improve schools and eliminate the achievement gap between minority and low income disadvantaged students and their white counterparts.

For the past twenty years, there has been a continuum of intervention change strategies in school reform efforts. These intervention strategies have included comprehensive staff development with teacher initiated reforms, a team approach to committee and grade level work, managing by memo, and finally, the professional learning community approach using data-driven decisions and standards-based curriculums. The intervention focus is now for in-school, rather than out-of-school and after-school options. Interventions are set up for students who are at risk of failing the curriculum. However, many of these interventions lack a systematic format (Rothstein, 2007).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of teachers, parents and administration associated with the Strategic Schooling Model targeted at improving the skills of English Language Learners. Additionally, this study examined the effectiveness of the Strategic Schooling Model involving the target, context, know-how, and feedback necessary to change an educational organization’s focus. Lastly, this study examined what has worked and what has not work as an intervention for English Language Learners in a school where the Strategic Schooling Model has been implemented. The focus was on the Strategic Schooling Model as it pertains to the performance levels of English Language Learners.

Due to the fact that literature reviews on the effectiveness of Parker’s Strategic Schooling model was limited, it was imperative that the researcher examined the effectiveness of the model
at a site where it had been implemented. It was important that both teacher and parent voices were heard in the process of change. As the findings of the case study were analyzed, the generative themes that arose were added to the body of knowledge needed to close the achievement gap for English Language Learner students.

Since Parker’s Strategic Schooling model provided a framework for change, it was important that the researcher examined the efficacy of the model. By conducting interviews, observing, and completing the checklist, the researcher gained new insights as to whether or not the model was effective in closing the achievement gap for English Language Learner students.

**Research Questions**

The following three over-arching research questions guided this study. Included under each of the research questions are the questions that were used to guide the interview dialogue. All participant groups were asked the same questions.

**Research Question #1:** To what extent is Parker’s Strategic Schooling Model an effective instrument in closing the achievement gap for English Language Learner students?
What components of the Strategic Schooling Model do you most often use?
For the components you most often use, why do you find them most functional?
How do you measure short range student success (each semester)?
How do you measure long range student success (each year)?
What for you will determine that the Strategic Schooling Model is an effective instrument in closing the achievement gap for your student?

**Research Question #2:** How do teachers and an administrator involved with the Strategic Schooling Model perceive the effectiveness of the model?
How effective is the Strategic Schooling Model and why?
What are the strategies used with the Strategic Schooling Model?
To what extent are these strategies effective and why?
To what extent are some strategies used as opposed to other ones and why?
What evidence do you have that these strategies are making a difference for your students?
What are the strategies that you consider to be the most beneficial for your students and why?
What do you consider to be the most effective practices for working with identified “intervention” students?

**Research Question #3:** How do parents involved with the Strategic Schooling Model perceive its effectiveness in relationship to the progress of their children’s academic success?
How effective is the Strategic Schooling Model and why?
What are the strategies used with the Strategic Schooling Model?
To what extent are these strategies effective and why?
What evidence do you have that these strategies are making a difference for your child?
What are the strategies that you consider to be the most beneficial for your child and why?
What type of parent training do you feel has benefited your child the most?
Theoretical Foundations

According to Collins (2000) Paulo Freire states that “Authentic praxis seeks permanent transformation of the social structure” (p. 224). In the descriptions of the qualitative research that was conducted, the researcher interpreted what she read, heard, and observed. The ongoing and multiple questions were asked of the participants within the research setting to provide descriptions of the context where targets, know-how and feedback were identified (Parker, 2006).

Freire also states that “dialogue is the value-means indispensable for praxis” (Collins, p. 226). The interviews in this study allowed for the role of dialogue to occur in a focused way to “engage in cultural action” (p. 226) which allowed for organizational change to occur. As teachers and parents reflected on their roles in the change process, perhaps their voices allowed for communication, rather than to simply “be conveyers of messages” (p.227).

In an attempt to change educational organizational structures, it is important that educators consider “change as a process that arises from the re-creation of previous actions” (Collins, p.224). By examining how organizational theory applies itself to the educational institution, perhaps we can discover how parental involvement and teacher collaboration can improve educational practices, through increasing the level of empowerment perceived by the stakeholders within the educational organization. The process of change can move towards heightened levels of awareness.

The theory of empowerment (Freire, 1999) is significant, since it directly relates to the issue of empowering teachers to become aware of their practices. Freire states that his theory also empowers parents by making them become aware of their importance in the organizational change process. Freire has laid the groundwork for developing literary and empowerment among illiterate groups of people.

Cummins (1986) indicates that an empowerment framework is needed to serve as a catalyst for change. Not only did the researcher’s dialogues with parents and teachers allow for a team effort to occur, but the scaffold model provided the basis to exhibit increased awareness and reflections on current instructional and organizational practices. The qualitative research sought to answer the important questions that allowed for communication with the stakeholders within the organization to occur through dialogues.

Cummins (1986b) has developed Freire’s ideas into the Empowerment Model which incorporates all of the stakeholders to move forward in transforming the organization towards empowerment through dialogue. Cummins’ Empowerment Model is outlined as follows:

Minority students’ language and culture are incorporated into the school program
Minority community participation is encouraged as an integrate component of children’s education. The pedagogy promotes intrinsic motivation on the part of the students to use language actively in order to generate their own knowledge. Professionals involved in assessment become advocates for minority students rather than legitimizing the location of the problem in the students (Cummins, 1986b).

Previous research has explored ways that organizations have been transformed through leadership, and new ways of working together through more social interaction, to close the achievement gap (Parker2006). In this case study there was a two-fold set of theories which guided the study. Freire (1999) has been instrumental in providing the empowerment theory needed to develop literacy in low literate communities. Freire provides a model of empowerment
which analyzes the other perspective of critically assessed landmark policies, such as the No Child Left Behind legislation.

From the patterns in the literature, the researcher identified the variables connected to the thesis that organizational change requires all stakeholders to revisit their existing ways of conducting business, thus requiring new forms of collaborative efforts to create change. Not only will the change be needed from an organizational standpoint, but it will also require an examination of the current instructional practices within the organization. The strength of Freire’s argument for transforming members within the organization to empower themselves with information, became a focal point for the research questions provided.

Since Freire (1999) has established this theoretical framework, Cummins (1986) has applied this theoretical framework to the empowerment model. This model includes the cycle of educators, parents and administrators who move to a higher level of empowerment by working as team members. This case study demonstrated Level III research, which includes the stakeholders as participants who are empowered through the process of reflective action.

**Strategic Schooling Model**

Parker (2006b) developed the Strategic Schooling Model which includes the elements of targets, feedback, know-how, and context. Many organizational theories use a feedback model to promote change within the organization. This is not to say that a potential for resistance to change can not occur (Brown, Campione, & Dapy, 1981). The overall organization can expect certain characteristics to appear in the process of change.

From a transformational perspective, one can assert that the organizational change process which has been researched over 40 years, has a set of collective beliefs that change can be examined from the organizational level, as well as a global level, to work in ways that are more effective (Adams, 1984). To date, many of the reform efforts have not been effective in producing higher achievement levels for English Language Learners (Linquanti, 2004). The Strategic Schooling Model provides the framework for these discussions to occur.

The Strategic Schooling Model

Figure 1. Achieving Optimal Human Performance in Education

Source: Parker, D. (2006b) Strategic Schooling Model
Best practices in the Strategic Schooling Model are listed in the open ended checklist that was administered to the teachers. Teachers selected which best practices they implement the most frequently. The results were analyzed by the checklist instrument used to conduct the case study.

What is the No Child Left Behind Act? The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 and expands on major reforms, particularly in the areas of state academic standards, assessment, accountability, and school improvement. The new federal law requires states to develop assessments linked to these standards for all students. The largest single program in NCLB is Title I, Part A, which provides local educational agencies (LEAs), or school districts, with additional resources to help improve instruction in high-poverty schools and ensure that poor and English Language Learner children have the same opportunity as other children to meet challenging California State academic standards (CDE, 2007).

The Strategic Schooling Model, (Parker, 2006b) is a systems thinking approach to reform efforts. This model has provided a framework which can allow practical implementation of change within educational organizations while simultaneously providing for a feedback loop which can promote less resistance and conflict. This model can be used as a springboard for change in instructional best practices, and organizational best practices and improve communication among and between staff members in the organization.

The purpose of the study was to examine the perceptions of teachers, parents, and administration associated with a Strategic Schooling Model targeted at improving the skills of English Language Learners. Additionally, this study examined the effectiveness of the model involving the various targets, data driven feedback, know-how exhibited by the expertise of teachers and parents, and the context, i.e. environment of the educational institution observed. All of these principles are necessary to change an educational organization’s focus. Lastly, this study attempted to add to the existing body of knowledge and effective interventions for English Language Learners.

Organizational Change

Over the past 40 years, organizational change theories have demonstrated a paradigm shift that calls for educators to let go of habitual patterns of self “preoccupied functioning” while moving towards a “conscious alignment” for a larger purpose of the entity (Banner, 1995). In reviewing the literature, more qualitative data was found to determine this approach, as opposed to quantitative or empirical studies. In reviewing the case studies related to organizational change, information supporting this paradigm shift became evident. Organizational change resulting from a change in leadership may be a critical component in affecting the achievement gap for English Language Learners. If the culture of a school is to be transformed, it may require the administration of a transformational leader.

Transformational Leadership describes a leadership approach where leaders engage followers around issues of values, beliefs, purpose, and vision. Through dialogue and strong levels of interaction, there is an ongoing shaping and reshaping of mutual focus and direction (Reeves, 2004). Reeves provides evidence for ongoing problem solving. He examines the consequences of a transformational leader. This is one of the common approaches to examining organizational change. The transformational leader uses influence, strategies, and techniques so
that the followers can enhance their self-efficacy and change their values, norms, and attitudes to be consistent with the vision developed by the leader (Bass, 1985; Conger & Kanungo, 1998). In the transformation of an organization towards implementing effective organizational practices, Porterfield and Holleran (2006) examine the need to identify both individual and organizational factors that facilitate or impede transformational change. The researchers’ descriptive case study portrays the process and context of changed educational practices in one rural, western Pennsylvania school district as a microcosm of the systemic change with which school districts nationwide are struggling. This is a significant study highlighting the challenges districts are experiencing with the NCLB requirements.

In addition to reviewing various research studies, the local efforts by the Sonoma County grass-roots movements towards closing the achievement gap became an example of highlighting the importance of finding a solution to the problem of closing the achievement gap at the county-wide level (Sonoma County Office of Education, 2007). For example, the Sonoma County Office of Education has taken strides to bring in several renowned national researchers to share their research findings, in the hopes of closing the achievement gap. Researchers, including, Marzano, (2005), Reeves (2005) and Goldenberg (2007) have provided guidance for the priorities directing school districts’ focus on student achievement. Typically, these findings have promoted working in the curricular areas of both language arts and mathematics.

Research Methodology

The purpose of this research was to investigate the implementation of the Strategic Schooling Model in a rural, elementary school in Northern California, from the perspectives of the administration, teachers and parents. The administration was represented by one principal of a rural elementary school in Northern California. Ten teachers voluntarily participated and ten parents are also included in the study.

Teachers’ perspectives were determined from the interviews, an open ended checklist, and observations. Data was collected from the open-ended checklist presented to the teachers. This instrument was a modified checklist to collect parent data. Parents’ perspectives were identified with the open ended checklist information. The parent information data was collected at a parent focus group meeting. Their participation was voluntary and they signed an Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects release form, stating that their identities would be protected.

By using the Strategic Schooling Model as a basis for departure for working together as a team, this study aimed to determine the degree of implementation of the model and the lasting effects of the model which have changed the organizational and instructional practices at the elementary school campus research site.

This research utilized a case study framework to investigate the implementation of the Strategic Schooling Model on a rural, Northern California campus. Patton (2002) refers to case studies as essential in describing organizations, programs, or communities. Creswell (2003) states that case studies can explore individuals, processes, actions, events, or programs in-depth. The researcher interviewed parents, teachers and administration using questions and a checklist.
Research Design and Methodology

Yin (2003) states, “a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13). Within the scope of this case study, the researcher utilized the methods proposed by Yin “to collect sources of evidence through documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation and physical artifacts” (p.16).

The research approach was qualitative in nature. For example, the research was conducted through open-ended interviewing (Creswell, 2003) and a checklist. Yin suggests that “descriptive data should be included” (p.157). In this case study, three important procedures were used. The first procedure was the descriptive details as they related to the research site and participants. The second procedure was to keep the identities of the participants confidential. The third procedure “describes a review procedure for constructing validity for the case study” (p. 155). This review procedure was completed by having participants read the transcribed versions of the interviews conducted by the researcher. This form of triangulation aided in the validation of the study.

This research used a case study framework to examine the perspectives of teachers, parents and administrators. In this qualitative study, the researcher began to meet the needs of the 21st century which require new methods to narrow the achievement gap between English Language Learners and their English speaking counterparts. The projections in the census data that Latinos will someday be the majority in California have come true. There is a need to find solutions to the problems of educating English Language Learners. Some of the solutions involve creating more collaborative methods of working together in organizations, improving strategies to instruct English Language Learners, and altering the perspectives of stakeholders who live and work with students who require additional interventions for academic success and closing the achievement gap.

Every year, school districts spend several thousand dollars on staff development trainings. The Springboard Leadership Network (2004) has offered several school districts opportunities to work as teams in order to improve their student achievement efforts over time. Teachers and administrators are required to work together as a team. Teacher training is included in some of the additional best practices learned by teachers. By examining the types of teacher training received in the Strategic Schooling Model, we can determine the amount of ownership of the model by the teachers. This necessary data was collected from the qualitative interview data received by the teachers.

Population and Sample

Ten teachers, ten parents, and one administrator were interviewed and surveyed to obtain information in determining which organizational practices are more common in the low-performing school that contribute to English Language Learners’ success. The parents are immigrants, who are non-working, low-income, and have low-literacy rates based on the School Accountability Report Card. This information includes a demographic table with information on the parent participants.
Demographics of Teachers to be interviewed

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of years teaching</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Credential</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pal</td>
<td>20+</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Multiple Subjects</td>
<td>CLAD</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franchesca</td>
<td>20+</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Multiple Subjects</td>
<td>BCLAD</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lady Humphrey</td>
<td>20+</td>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>Multiple Subjects</td>
<td>CLAD</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>20+</td>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>Multiple Subjects</td>
<td>BCLAD</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarita</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>Multiple Subjects</td>
<td>BCLAD</td>
<td>Latina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>Multiple Subjects</td>
<td>BCLAD</td>
<td>Latina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renee</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Multiple Subjects</td>
<td>CLAD</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>20+</td>
<td>Fourth/Fifth</td>
<td>Multiple Subjects</td>
<td>CLAD</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>Multiple Subjects</td>
<td>CLAD</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadie</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Fourth/Fifth</td>
<td>Multiple Subjects</td>
<td>CLAD</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: California Basic Educational Data Systems

The subjects for this study include ten teachers, ten parents, and one administrator from the case study site located in a Northern California elementary school. The community is comprised of migrant workers and middle to upper class residents. The main industry in the community is the production of wine and lumber. Several small businesses comprise the economy. The teachers in the study include third, fourth and fifth grade teachers. All of the teachers are CLAD or BCLAD certified. There are two Latina teachers and eight Caucasian teachers.

The parents of the students in this study are typically immigrants, who are lower-middle, or non-working parents of Latino students. This was a convenience sample due to the proximity of the research site. The parents were part of a focus group. The study differed from other school reform effort studies in the size, content, and targeted sample population. The study was narrow in scope due to a convenience sample which focused on a school that was serving over 50% of English Language Learners, who are low-income and have been considered low-performing for three years.
Data Analysis

The researcher organized the data for analysis into three major categories of interviews, field observation notes, and documents. First, the interviews were conducted, recorded and transcribed. Secondly, the documents were collected from the organization. Thirdly, documentation of themes and ideas were reviewed by the researcher. A thorough analysis of the data included coding the data to establish themes for analysis. Finally, the themes were determined and correlated to the research questions and literature.

In reviewing the documentation collected, the researcher determined whether there were any contributing factors related to the implementation of Parker’s Strategic Schooling Model, which may give information as to its efficiency and effectiveness. This information was essential in describing the implementation process. The information was useful in order for the researcher to determine the effectiveness of the Strategic Schooling Model.

As the information from parents and teachers was compared, it was important to look for similar trends in the information relating to the Strategic Schooling Model. In contrasting the parent and teacher interview information, the research determined the salient points that each group member identified through the guided dialogues. This information allowed for the next steps in future research and for practices to be considered for further implementation.

The generative themes from the interviews were related back to the literature by revisiting the Cummins (1986) Empowerment Model. The Freire (1999) literature was related to the dialogues and to the information generated from the interviews. The theme of empowerment was a guiding theme throughout the interviews. Each interview allowed for reflection through dialogue as to the importance of implementing best practices on both an organizational level, and an instructional level.

Findings of the Study

The researcher’s interest in this study came about through curiosity and a need to see if that curiosity could be challenged or proven. The wonder of how such a complete organizational change package could truly impact student achievement scores was important to be researched and documented. By interviewing, observing and having the necessary dialogue with the teacher participants, the researcher was provided with an incredible opportunity to reflect on what was working with the Strategic Schooling Model and what actions needed to be taken in order for the Strategic Schooling Model to be effective. This section will contribute to the knowledge, policy and practice of the organizational change process.

The fact that parents also needed to become more informed about the model was an indicator of the need to involve parents as part of the loop in the overall organizational change process. The need for parent education as to what the goals of the organization were became a critical component necessary in the overall organizational reform process. Without this piece in place, many of the stakeholders did not feel the impact of the Strategic Schooling Model as a process for educational reform. This section will also include parent perspectives on what is working and not working in the Strategic Schooling Model as a reform tool.

It was instrumental for allowing teachers to self-reflect on the best practices they use on a daily basis with their students. Through face-to-face interviews sought to gain the perspectives of teachers who were familiar with the Strategic Schooling Model (SSM) and examined the effectiveness of the Model in closing the achievement gap for English Language Learners. All of
the ten teacher participants felt that there were elements of the SSM which were part of their routine practices, which in turn increased its effectiveness with English Language Learners by making students more aware of the expectations required of them by the State of California in terms of standards, test preparation and test taking skills.

In describing the components of the Strategic Schooling Model that were used most often, the majority of the teachers referred to their most frequently used strategies including the test preparation strategies, the test chats, use of whiteboards, increased focus on vocabulary development and development of reading comprehension strategies. As for the components that were used most often the reading, vocabulary and test preparation were top on the list. The reasons why the teachers found these strategies most functional were the instant feedback through whiteboard use, increased vocabulary development for the various English levels of proficiency in the classroom and attention to reading comprehension strategies. These three areas focused on checking for understanding, interactive student engagement and increased time on task, because the tasks were identified clearly through the articulation of the standards being taught. The standards were no longer a mystery for the student or for the teacher.

In reference to measuring short-range student success each semester, all of the teachers referred to in-class formal and informal assessments including end of chapter tests and weekly assessments in fluency and comprehension. The fact that the organizational practice was established to create grade-level opportunities for teachers to discuss individual student progress was an essential part of the Strategic Schooling Model that was being used. From the need to create awareness towards increasing teacher collaboration, the ‘co-ops’ were established. The co-op time is sacred time used to discuss student data, student progress and strategies which are working in closing the achievement gap for the English Language Learners.

In reviewing the data on the Checklist, it was evident that the ten teachers who completed the information on the checklist were aware of the need for full implementation of the Strategic Schooling Model in order for it to be more effective in closing the achievement gap. Three of the teachers (30%) felt that the Target (s) were actions to date. The salient features of this area of innovation included the Standards being posted in the classrooms. However, not all of the teachers saw that the achievement targets were publicized school-wide.

Throughout the ten classroom observations, it was evident that the teachers demonstrated the use of their practices to ensure that the students were receiving the benefits of increased instructional practices. As a participant observer, the researcher was forced to perceive the classroom observations from another perspective. It was difficult not to want to assist the students when they needed assistance and the teacher had not noticed their request for assistance.

**Conclusions**

The diversity in the background of participants who were interviewed and observed allowed both teachers and parents an opportunity to voice their concerns and identify the role they played within the Strategic Schooling Model. Not only did the stakeholders have the advantage of being part of the organizational change process, but they also were able to reflect on what was working for them and what was not working for them within the Strategic Schooling Model. In addition, many participants were able to be informed regarding the overall effectiveness of the model in relation to the No Child Left Behind Act.

Acknowledging that the research site stakeholders experienced organizational change from within the organization, it was evident that both teachers and parents were part of a far reaching transitional change process with the outgoing administration of President George W.
Bush, the incoming Presidential Administration of Barack Obama, along with a newly appointed school site principal. The research site stakeholders were exemplary participants in the organizational change process. This research study could be beneficial in the planning of future reform efforts for English Language Learner students who enroll in American schools and continue to be part of the educational process in the United States.

The interview process used in the study suggests the need to research materials and methodologies used in the current state standards of English Language Development programs. In this study, all participants were voluntarily selected. One of the key findings of the Strategic Schooling Model was the need for collaboration within the work day. It was evident from this study that the research was needed to bring another lens as to the role teachers and parents play in the educational process of English Language Learners. In order to be effective, the transitional change needed for the Strategic Schooling Model is dependent upon key factors such as: (a) a transformational leader, (b) full participation of all stakeholders, (c) complete implementation of the Strategic Schooling Model, (d) teacher and parent reflections as to the role they may play, and (e) the on-going need for organizational change based on reflection. The organizational as well as the instructional infrastructures allow for the Strategic Schooling Model to serve as a catalyst for change. The effectiveness of the model was also observed in the classroom practices demonstrated by each classroom visit.

In reflecting on the dialogues with the participant teachers and parents, an area of salient interest was the relationship between the educational organization and the parents. The parents felt the need to become more connected to the school, by allowing the teachers to demystify the educational process through explaining the technicalities of the Strategic Schooling Model. Although the model seemed somewhat far removed from the parents’ current reality, the teachers had not truly embraced the completeness of the model and were not able to own all of the elements involved in the implementation of a full model. The teachers felt that they needed the model to become part of their daily routine, before truly implementing the model to its fullest potential. The factors which motivated the teachers to accept parts of the Strategic Schooling Model included some of the elements within the target, context, feedback and know-how, but not all of the elements were used to the fullest level of implementation. Perhaps if the teachers were allowed to incorporate all of the elements involved in the target, context, feedback and know-how, there would be another level of implementation and success for the entire organization, as opposed to some areas becoming an institutional practice, while other areas have not been fully developed.

Full implementation or fidelity of implementation is the key to a successful program as stated by Cummins (1989). If the program is not implemented fully, then the results will be reflected by increases in some areas but not other areas. For example, the most common strategy used by the teachers was the use of whiteboards. This strategy is simple and allows for multiple levels of impact within the curriculum. It also allows for quick assessment of state standards and can be part of the test preparation section of the Strategic Schooling Model. Without fully implementing all parts of the Strategic Schooling Model simultaneously, the outcomes for achievement will become “hit and miss” opportunities for students to successfully access the curriculum. A fundamental question to be researched further could be, “Should the Strategic Schooling Model be implemented to its fullest capacity to become more effective or should a few elements, if done well, suffice and allow for more impactful gains?”

The dialogues with the teachers suggest an area for further research, specifically in the area of policy development and implementation and how this might affect the Strategic
Schooling Model. By including the input from teachers in the development of policies and implementation of reform efforts, perhaps there could be more ownership for more effective implementation of strategies. The voices of the teachers are important in the future success of educational reform efforts.

In the area of knowledge contribution, the researcher discovered that there needs to be additional venues, to develop the arts and alternative forms of communication for student achievement, besides the rigorous curriculum prescribed by the state. Through teacher dialogues, it was evident that teachers were under pressure to produce results, increase test scores, and rethink how they work together. Many of the teacher participants stated how the shift in education has now turned to increasing test scores, without much time left for any additional teaching in the arts, music or other enrichment activities.

The need for additional time for more collaboration and sharing of strategies was also expressed within the interviews. All teacher participants expressed the need for additional planning time with their colleagues. Although collaboration has been a focus, time for planning together with colleagues, was a prevalent reoccurring theme which appeared in the data.

Within the realm of the organizational practices, the new knowledge contributions include a need to develop system-wide consistent practices in the areas of collaboration, strategic development, and school-wide campaigns in reading, writing and vocabulary. An additional research question could include what is the effect of incorporating the arts into the Strategic Schooling Model on the cognitive development of English Language Learners.

**Implications**

The results of the research conducted in this case study have implications for classroom teachers, parents of English Language Learner students, and educational institutions. Implementations of changes for these three constituent groups were major themes resulting from the research study. Participant feedback on the Strategic Schooling Model and results of the Checklist Instrument indicated a need for change in order to enhance effectiveness.

In the area of teacher training, the implications are far reaching, since the strategies used to work with English Language Learners have a direct impact in closing the achievement gap. The strategies used by teachers of English Language Learners need to be consistent and practiced school-wide to improve the quality of instruction. The fidelity of implementation of an organizational model needs to be fully implemented to create consistent academic success for the organization and for the strategies used to improve academic performance. Among the salient features identified by the teachers, the use of whiteboards, student engagement activities, test preparation strategies, reading, writing and vocabulary development seem to be the top strategies used by all of the teachers who were interviewed and observed. It is critical that teachers of English Language Learner students play an inclusive role in creating policies that affect the delivery of their classroom instruction.

Implications for parents evolved around the area of having the necessary skills and tools to assist their students in the education process. The research showed that parents needed more parent education and specifics on strategies to assist their children to become more successful with their academic abilities. A byproduct of this research was a parent DVD/Video which was distributed to parents in parent education classes with techniques outlining how to assist their children with homework, reading, and math. These were elements from the Strategic Schooling Model which extended the outreach to parents and allowed them to be empowered while
working in collaboration with the teachers to assist their English Language Learner students in developing their academic abilities at home.

A significant theme resulting from the parent interviews was the necessity for parents to continue to work as partners in their child’s education. It was also important for the school to involve parent participation in the development of policies and offer parent education sessions on topics generated by the parents. The research indicated that parents are extremely willing and able to support teachers and the school in a variety of ways including helping with homework, attending school functions, and participating in parent education classes. It is important for parents to have a voice in the development of policies and procedures. Parents must be included as partners, giving voice to determine how they can become academic supporters of their child’s education.

In addition to teachers and parents, the findings of the research have implications for principals and administrators of educational institutions. An important element involved in the school reform effort is collaboration between administrators and teachers. Creating the time and place for administrators and teachers to develop and discuss effective strategies for English Language Learner students is a critical component in effecting the Strategic Schooling Model.

The use of effective time management is necessary in creating the time for collaboration. It is important to identify the areas of focus in a systematic way in order to improve all areas of the Strategic Schooling Model in a consistent manner. In addition, the curriculum and state standards must be updated yearly to support English Language Learner students’ linguistic and academic needs. The research indicated that the role of teachers, parents, and administrators serve as strong links in determining the level of effectiveness of the Strategic Schooling Model as it relates to closing the achievement gap for English Language Learner Students. Collaboration is an essential component of the Model.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

As partners in the Strategic Schooling Model process, parent education must be used in developing better practices for working with their children. It is essential that teachers have time to collaborate either paid time after school or embedded as part of their contractual duty. It is also important to incorporate the arts into the model to allow for further expansion of the curriculum to be integrated into English Language Arts and Mathematics. The impact of such suggested program changes could improve the effectiveness of the Strategic Schooling Model in eliminating the achievement gap for English Language Learner students. These are areas for future research.

The reading, vocabulary, and writing campaigns were evident throughout the curriculum; however, the need for rubrics in each of these areas to focus instruction on the students is essential. Rubrics would allow teachers to gain a more accurate picture of student progress in each curricular area. This is an area to be explored in further detail with additional research.

In terms of compliance to state standards, all of the teachers observed had the standards posted on their walls. The need for a public display of achievement targets needs to be a next step, however, the implications for displaying student data information needs to be worked out with regard to sensitivity and confidentiality. The student data component is a subsequent step that is being considered in the ongoing process for using the Strategic Schooling Model. This step will result in additional organizational change procedures by allowing more time to be devoted to work with student data in various grade level teams.
Recommendations for Professional Practices

The researcher observed the need for consistent school-wide practices in working with English Language Learner students. The teachers who were trained in the Strategic Schooling model were instrumental in creating the organizational change necessary to improve instruction. There is a need for further training in the Strategic Schooling Model for new teachers and teachers who have not been part of the current staff. This training could be done by a mentor teacher or a peer coach to improve the delivery of instruction to English Language Learner students.

In the area of new knowledge to the profession, it was evident that implementation and practices must be internalized before teachers will commit to using suggested practices of the model. Perhaps a subgroup of leadership representatives could pave the way for other teachers to accept the changes being proposed by the administration. Know-how must be developed through professional development provided by the district within the school site.

A partially implemented model will not yield the successes of a fully implemented model. Parents of participants need to be informed as to how they can assist their children in the content areas. Parents would benefit from training on how to help their children become more successful in their educational experience. Even a minimum requirement of establishing basic study habit routines for their children would be beneficial.

The community will gain information as to how the educational system operates if there is adequate communication in the local press regarding changes the school system is making internally. The teachers and parents will gain information as to how to assist English Language Learners students in better ways to meet their academic and linguistic needs, as well as their social developmental needs. There is a need for heightened awareness of teacher strategies in use for delivery of curriculum in order to become more effective.

In the area of policy, mandated policies must have ownership by the teachers. Policies must support professional development within the school district, as opposed to sending teachers out to workshops. The research findings indicated that it is important for teachers to have access to professional development opportunities that become part of their common planning time. Setting time aside for teacher inservice and training, values the teacher’s expertise and time investment.

In the area of practice, practices must be internalized and reviewed to become part of the teacher’s daily routine. Organizational practices will become routine if teachers provide feedback to each other on the effectiveness of their practices. Collegial suggestions may improve the current practices demonstrated by teachers. The organizational and instructional practices must be part of an overall on-going planning process to be successful. The instructional practices must be directed at English Language Learners linguistic and academic needs.
References


**Author Biography**

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