January 2016

The Implications of the Turnaround Process on a Rural Kentucky High School: Teacher Perspectives

Sonya Edwina Anglin
Eastern Kentucky University

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE TURNAROUND PROCESS ON A RURAL KENTUCKY HIGH SCHOOL: TEACHER PERSPECTIVES

By

Sonya Edwina Anglin

Dissertation Approved:

Chair, Advisory Committee

Member, Advisory Committee

Member, Advisory Committee

Dean, Graduate School

STATEMENT OF PERMISSION TO USE

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Ed.D degree at Eastern Kentucky University, I agree that the Library shall make it available to borrowers under rules of the Library. Brief quotations from this thesis are allowable without special permission, provided that accurate acknowledgment of the source is made. Permission for extensive quotation from or reproduction of this thesis may be granted by my major professor, or in [his/her] absence, by the Head of Interlibrary Services when, in the opinion of either, the proposed use of the material is for scholarly purposes. Any copying or use of the material in this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Signature Sonya E. Caglar

Date 5/2/2016

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE TURNAROUND PROCESS ON A RURAL KENTUCKY HIGH SCHOOL: TEACHER PERSPECTIVES

By

SONYA EDWINA ANGLIN

Master of Special Education
Campbellsville University
Campbellsville, Kentucky
2004

Bachelor of Arts
Berea College
Berea, Kentucky
1984

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
Eastern Kentucky University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
May, 2016

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my family and the many special friends who have provided me with wise counsel, love, and support at all times throughout my life. I especially dedicate this work to my mother, grandmother, and brother.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my appreciation to my faculty and staff of the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Eastern Kentucky University for their guidance in this journey. I could not have completed this program without you. To my committee Chairs, Dr. Charles Hausman and Dr. Deborah West and committee, Dr. James Bliss, and Dr. Michele Reynolds, I offer my most heartfelt gratitude. Thank you for your patience, kindness, and unwavering support in bringing me through this endeavor.

I also want to express my gratitude to my colleagues and principal at my school for their support and assistance. Thank you for taking the time to listen to me, answer my questions, and provide words of encouragement.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a phenomenological study of the effects of the turnaround process on a high school in rural central Kentucky. Data used for this study include interviews with teachers and archival materials such as school reports cards. Across Kentucky some forty-one schools have been identified as “priority schools” or persistently low-performing. As such, each one of them has been required to undergo changes in their daily instructional practices, procedures, and policies. The change process has affected faculty and administration and lead to overall school improvement. This study provides a look at how the turnaround process has influenced school improvement and increased student learning from the perspectives of teachers and administrators. The purpose of this study was to offer insight into how the turnaround process has impacted a rural Kentucky high school and how teachers perceive the influence that turnaround has had on their practice and the school as a whole.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE TURNAROUND PROCESS ON A RURAL KENTUCKY HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Improving the quality of the nation's public schools has been the focus of educational policy for the past 20 years. Educational leaders have conveyed a strong sense of urgency about improving student achievement and particularly in schools that have been designated as "low-achieving" under the guidelines of the 2001 legislation, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). To further this end, the federal government has set forth a number of sanctions for schools that fail to make "adequate yearly progress" on their NCLB goals (U.S. Dept. of Ed Office, 2010). The sanctions include, among other things, state takeover or a restructuring process that involves replacing both the principal and teachers. Federal dollars have been poured into low-achieving schools for a variety of programs, such as reading and math remediation for students, extended school services, technology, and professional development for teachers and administrators. The schools that have undergone a restructuring process have been provided support by a team of educational recovery professionals (a group of three to four skilled educators) who work on site with the school, helping to implement the school-turnaround process.

While the push for school improvement has been part of the educational landscape for at least 20 years, turnaround schools have been in existence only for the past five or six years. The research on turnaround schools has focused primarily on specific reform practices that are implemented by the schools to increase student achievement and the characteristics of effective leaders in the schools that have achieved

success. Most of the literature on turnaround schools has focused on urban schools with a high degree of cultural and ethnic diversity.

Within the body of school reform research, there are no studies of rural turnaround schools. This study will examine the transformation made by one rural high school in south-central Kentucky, from a failing school to proficient school, and will thereby close the gap in the research. The study will examine the decisions that the principal and staff made and the changes that were implemented, which led to a sustained improvement in student achievement. The study focused on the how the teachers and administrators each perceive the way that turnaround has influenced school improvement and the extent to which these perceptions differ.

Background

Within the larger context of school reform, there is much discussion of what it means for a low-performing school to reach positive change in student achievement and how to arrive at successful change. There are programs that are imposed on schools and districts that have been designed by external agencies. These purchased programs are called *comprehensive school reform models*. These Comprehensive School Reforms (CSRs), usually come with assistance and support from governmental agencies (typically state departments of education) and universities. This path has proven successful for a growing number of schools and school districts. Others, however, have received financial and technical assistance through the federally funded School Improvement Grants (SIGs). These grants are awarded to state educational agencies that, in turn, award sub-grants to local schools that have been identified as “persistently low-achieving.” Teams of skilled

educators, referred to as *educational recovery specialists* work on-site in the schools to provide oversight to teachers and administrators (Burns, 2013). Achievement or *turnaround* is ultimately determined by measures such as the improvement of students on state accountability tests and gains in graduation rates.

Because student achievement is based on yearly assessments and graduation rates, the changes that occur within a turnaround school must be systemic, well-timed, and effective. The research in the field attributes successful school reform to a number of factors, ranging from changes in leadership personnel to changes in programming and school facilities. Successful turnaround, although not entirely formulaic, generally is found in schools that have the following, according to Duke and Landahl (2011):

- A shared mission/vision statement
- Distributed leadership
- An emphasis on basic skills (for example, literacy and math)
- The continuous collection of data
- Decisions based on data
- A commitment to ongoing staff professional development
- Assessment of students
- Involvement of all stakeholders

The research focus on turnaround schools has been in two areas: a) attributes and decisions of school leaders (principals); and b) the specific reforms that are implemented in the schools. Most of what we have learned about the turnaround schools has come from case studies of the schools or case studies of the leadership styles of principals.

Duke and Landahl (2011) have offered an extensive look at one elementary school's effort to sustain student achievement in the third year of the turnaround process. Duke and Landahl (2011) found that for Greer Elementary School in Albemarle County, Virginia, the most challenging part of maintaining the momentum of student achievement was deciding which practices to keep and which to discard. In other words, the difficulty was in determining which reforms should be institutionalized. Greer's principal concluded that raising testing scores was merely a first step and a byproduct of a more significant change in daily practices and procedures.

Duke and Landahl's (2011) research focuses on how an individual school accomplished turnaround and sustained the improvement in student achievement. Sustainability of school turnaround is a compelling issue in the literature. While it is tempting to cite the studies of schools that made remarkable progress in student achievement within the first year or two of the turnaround process, a more insightful study might include an examination of the changes in the teaching practices and procedures that led to the turnaround and that have become institutionalized. To date, there are no studies of rural Kentucky high schools that have experienced this kind of turnaround. This study of Pleasant Valley High School's journey from being near the bottom quarter of Kentucky schools up to the 88th percentile will be the first of its kind in the literature. It will examine teacher perceptions about the how the turnaround process has influenced school improvement and their daily practices.

Background of Pleasant Valley High School

In order to understand Pleasant Valley High School, it must first be placed within the context of the county. Like its adjoining counties, Pleasant Valley is rural and a large percentage of the population is living in poverty. In 2013, the population of the entire county was 24,370. Three years earlier, the population was only slightly larger, with 24,754 residents. Almost one-fourth, or 23.6% of the population is comprised of persons under the age of 18. Furthermore, the county is not ethnically or racially diverse. According to U.S. Census data, 95.9% of residents are listed as White and 2.4% are listed as Black or African-American alone.

In 2013, 23.8% of persons in the county lived below the poverty line. In the years from 2008-2012, the median household income was $34,454, with a per capita income of $17,331. Pleasant Valley High School was designated a Title I School, and it is within this context that Pleasant Valley was designated a "persistently low-achieving school" in fall of 2011.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to present a phenomenological study of a rural high school in South Central Kentucky, which examines the school's transformation from a low-performing high school to proficient. The study focused on both changes that were mandated by external forces—namely the state department of education and changes that were initiated from within the school.

This study investigated the following research questions: a) How did the turnaround process at one successful rural high school influence school improvement

from the perception of teachers and administrators? and b) How did teachers perceive the effects of being identified as a "priority school?"

The data from these questions will contribute to a better understanding of how a similarly situated school might successfully bring about a school transformation. Because school accountability is likely to be an issue in education for years to come, this study will have relevance for both practitioners and administrators.

Research Design

This was a phenomenological study focusing on the single subject of Pleasant Valley High School in south central Kentucky. This study will also rely on some quantitative data, such as EOC, ACT, and other assessment scores. Graduation rates and career readiness measures will also be analyzed. The researcher primarily used qualitative data, such as archival reports (for example, school report card data) and interviews to provide information about perceptions of the school culture and the process of transformation. The researcher analyzed the data from these sources to present a descriptive, exploratory study of Pleasant Valley High School and how it transformed itself under scrutiny and how the change was perceived by teachers and administrators.

Conceptual Framework

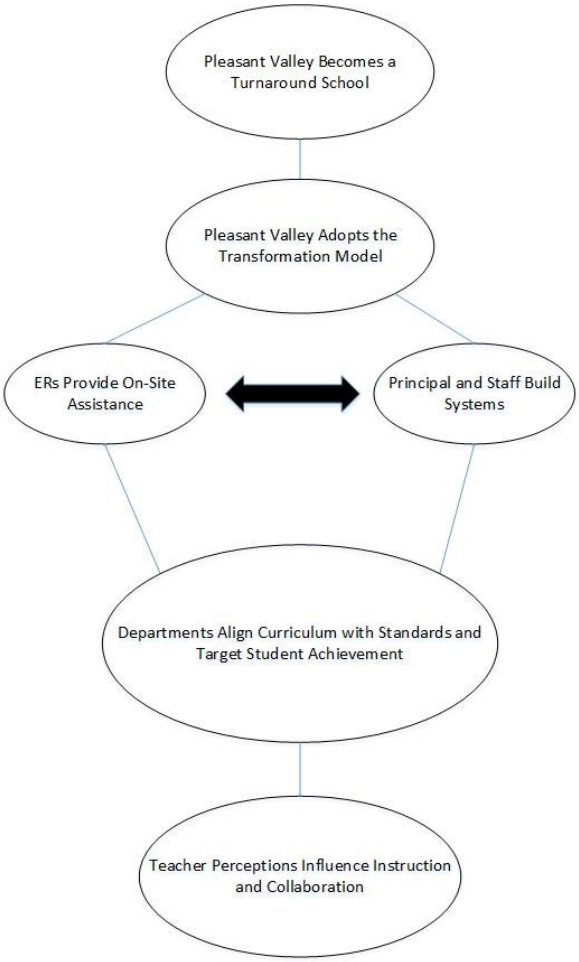

Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

Significance

The turnaround process in Kentucky is a relatively new approach to dealing with persistently low-performing schools. Most of research that is related to turnaround schools comes from the perspective of administrators. The questions that were discussed and the point of view that were provided about what has produced a successful school turnaround has often come from a top-down perspective. Practically no studies have

closely examined the perceptions of teachers and administrators. The emphasis has typically been on externally mandated changes (often referred to as *reforms*), with little consideration for changes that have come from within the schools and that, having produced a positive effect on student learning, have become institutionalized.

This study involving Pleasant Valley High School provided an in-depth look at how a rural school assessed itself as a persistently low-performing school and set out to improve student achievement through changing practices, policies, and procedures. Furthermore, this study examined whether the reforms, championed by the principal, were fully embraced by the faculty and were embedded into the school's culture. This study of Pleasant Valley's turnaround fills the gap in the research. Heretofore, there has been no research involving rural high schools in Kentucky or elsewhere in the Appalachian region.

Limitations

The limitations of my study were as follows:

1. The study examined the first two years of the school's turnaround process. Interviews were reflective in nature (that is, they contain a great deal of subjective hindsight).
2. The faculty may have an interest in portraying their actions and responses in a positive light (also called the *halo effect*).
3. Because no similar studies of rural Kentucky schools exist, comparison data will not be available.

Definition of Terms

1. *No Child Left Behind*- Legislation passed by the U.S. Congress in 2001 to promote school improvement. It mandates that schools must set and meet minimum student achievement goals in math and science. Schools are required to make annual yearly progress (AYP). If the school fails to do so, sanctions will be imposed, including restructuring of the school and/or placing it under state control (Orr, 2008; Mass Insight, 2010; Duke, 2011).
2. *Persistently Low-Achieving School*– Term commonly used to describe schools that have failed to meet AYP for three or more years.
3. *Turnaround Team (Educational Recovery Team/Specialist)*–A group of two to five highly skilled educators assigned by a state department of education to provide on-site assistance to a low-performing school (Duke, 2011).
4. *Accountability Tests*– Nationally normed and curriculum based tests used by states to measure proficiency, primarily in language arts and math (Haretos, 2005).
5. *Stakeholder*– Any person who has an interest in school performance and student achievement (for example, a parent, teacher, administrator, state department of education or community member).

Conclusion

Student achievement and school performance are at the forefront of educational policy. Federal and state scrutiny of schools has led to a mandate for proficiency. Low-performing schools that once took refuge under the fact that they had high percentages of

impoverished and disadvantaged students must now show improvement regardless of these factors.

The *turnaround school* is a term that is now common in the parlance of education. This study examined the route, through teacher perceptions, that Pleasant Valley High School took on its path to proficiency. This study will fill the gap that currently exists in the research pertaining to turnaround schools. It will also, hopefully, provide a blueprint for other similarly situated schools that want to change their course.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The history of American public education has been characterized by remarkable progress, yet unfulfilled potential. It is obvious that throughout our nation's past, public education has been, at times, a commodity afforded to some while being denied to others. Depending on geographic location, gender, race, disability, and economic status, students received varying degrees of education, and quality of instruction, or none at all. However, because education has been considered to be vital to the preservation of American democracy, there has been a constant push to include everyone in the educational process. Over the past 150 years, the educational system—due largely to the effort of the Social Progressives—has become inclusive.

Unfortunately, not all schools offered the same quality of education. This has resulted in students who, by any measure, were not prepared for post-secondary schooling, training, or the work place. To use current terminology, these students were not "college and career ready." These students were not proficient in basic skills such as reading, math calculation, and written expression. The government first acknowledged this in 1983 with a report entitled *A Nation* at *Risk* (Khadaroo, 2013; Sanders & Jordan, 2000). Realizing that America's students were not prepared for a global economy, the task of shoring up the nation's lowest performing school began. The process continued under President George W. Bush's *No Child Left Behind* initiative.

Today in 2014, the effort to improve schools and increase student achievement has resulted in realigned curricula, common core standards, high-stakes testing, and

school improvement grants (Khadaroo, 2013). Another result of the emphasis on increasing student achievement in low-performing schools is the concept of the *turnaround school*. The idea of turnaround schools was an initiative that came out of the University of Virginia's School of Education (Hess, 2013). Schools that have not met their Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) under No Child Left Behind are designated as *Persistently Low-Achieving Schools (PLA)*, and as such are provided intervention assistance from the state department of education. This assistance comes in the form of financial assistance that provides resources, and technical assistance and oversight in the form of on-site support from a team of two to three educational recovery specialists (School Turnaround Models, 2010).

There is a wealth of research about the turnaround process that focuses on how schools find themselves in a PLA status, the reforms initiated to affect a successful turnaround and sustain it, and the obstacles facing principals of turnaround schools. There were 3,300 turnaround schools in the nation from 2008 until 2009 and approximately 5,000 in the 2009-2010 school year. Approximately, 90% of these schools are located in urban areas. There is currently no research about how rural turnaround schools have fared. In Kentucky, the majority of the PLA schools are in metropolitan areas such as Louisville and Jefferson County.

This review of literature will discuss what we generally know about the turnaround process so far, school turnaround models, strategies to sustain turnaround, and finally the body of literature that focuses on case studies of turnaround schools and the

decisions of their principals. This review will provide the context into which my study on a rural high school undergoing the turnaround process will fit.

The Road to Turnaround

The mandate for public school improvement came in 1983 with the report, *A Nation at Risk*. Principals and school superintendents were charged with a "crucial leadership role" in garnering support for the recommended reforms. Local and state school boards, governors, and legislators were given the responsibility for financing the reforms. With this call for reform, the states and local governments were tasked with how to implement the policies.

In 2001, the struggle with determining how to effectively implement educational reform continued with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. This legislation required that all students reach proficiency in the core areas of math, reading, and written expression. The act also set forth the sanctions for elementary and secondary that failed to make adequate progress toward their student achievement goals, as defined by the state's particular plan. Schools failing to make *adequate yearly progress* for two consecutive years would be subject to corrective action, including restructuring. These schools were also required to submit an improvement plan. These sanctions actually contained the roots of turnaround.

In part as a follow-up to the No Child Left Behind Act, the Obama Administration, announced in 2009 that $3.5 billion would be made available for Title I School Improvement grants. The federal funds would be used to "turn around" the nation's lowest performing schools" (U.S. Dept of Ed, 2009). In addition to the Title I

School Improvement Grant, $3 billion would also be made available from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The grants were to be awarded to state educational agencies on a competitive basis through the *Race to the Top* grant program. The states that were awarded the grants were required to provide sub-grants to local districts. According to the School Improvement Grant (SIG) requirements, that states that applied for the grants were required to show a commitment to "serving and improving their Title I schools that had been identified for improvement, corrective action or restructuring under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act" (McNeil, 2009). The language of the SIG identified three tiers of schools for improvement. Among the models described were the Turnaround Model, which included the corrective actions of replacing the principal and at least 50% of the school's staff, establishing a new governing body, and implementing a new instructional program. The Transformational Model covered four areas: 1) developing administrator and teacher leader effectiveness, which includes the possibility of replacing the principal; 2) implementing instructional reform to include scientific-based practices and the use of data to guide instruction; 3) extending teacher planning time building relationships with the community; and 4) allowing for greater flexibility within the school and technical support (McNeil, 2009).

The impetus for all the changes in federal educational policies from 1983 through 2009 was to carry out the intent of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, which was to provide financial assistance to school districts serving areas with high proportions of impoverished families (U.S. Dept. of Ed Office, 2010). The ESEA was not always well implemented. It was stymied by the failure of state and local

educational agencies to cooperate and also by the lack of adequate assessments to measure educational change (Borman, Hewes, Overman, & Brown, 2002). Administrators often misused the funds that the ESEA allocated to districts. Not knowing how to properly use the money, local districts often diverted into their general fund coffers (Borman & D'Agostino, 1996). This uneven implementation and cooperation began to improve in the 1970's (Borman, et al., 2002). Over the decades after 1965, educational policies have evolved, but each state has approached educational reform from the standpoint of how to best provide for students who are at risk for failure and to establish a sound system of public education.

School Turnaround Models

The Massachusetts Insight Education and Research Institute defines school turnaround as a process that is designed to bring about significant improvement in student achievement within two years, and prepare the school for the longer process of conversion that will sustain the improvement for years to come. Turnaround is a transformative intervention process (Mass Insight, 2010). The process is relatively new and began in the public schools of Chicago, IL. The next major initiatives took place in the South with the training program for turnaround principals at the University of Virginia's School of Education and the launching of the Achievement Zone in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area schools. The creation of a "zone" of similarly situated schools is considered one of the earliest models in which schools cooperated with each other and with supporting partners (for example, state departments of education and funding bodies). This model was referred to as "Partnership Zones." The lead partner

supports three to five schools and works to coordinate all outside programs (Mass Insight, 2010).

The Mass Insight Research delineates three factors that are necessary for successful turnaround. These factors include a) conditions (changes that involve time, money, and programs); b) capacity (building the skills of school personnel within the zone through professional development and other activities delivered by the partners); and c) clustering (schools within a zone are organized systematically and intentionally by geographic location) (Mass, Insight, 2010). This model has been tried successfully in larger districts of New York, Chicago, Louisiana, and California. While this model offers conceptual guidelines and goals for the process, there is little consideration for the differences and unique needs of individual schools. In fact, this conceptual framework for turnarounds fails to address the culture of the individual schools or the demographic challenges that they face.

In comparing the obstacles that principals of low-achieving schools face, Daniel Duke, Tucker, Salmonowicz, and Levy (2007) have offered a conceptual framework for examining the common conditions in low-performing schools and some suggestions for approaching turnaround. Duke and his associates conducted a study of 19 principals who were assigned low-performing elementary and middle schools. The study focused on the conditions that contributed to low student achievement. The results of the study have some interesting implications for how principals could be trained for administering the schools (Duke et al., 2007).

The study organized the conditions of the schools into five clusters: 1) student achievement and behavior; 2) school programs and organization; 3) staffing and personnel; 4) school system concerns; and 5) community involvement. The study also addressed 24 conditions across the five clusters. These conditions are considered "primary" in that they must be addressed in order to bring about improvement in student achievement. These conditions include low reading and math achievement, student attendance problems, student behavior problems, unaligned curriculum, ineffective instruction, lack of data, lack of teamwork, dysfunctional culture, personnel problems, lack of district support, and low parent involvement (Duke et al., 2007). What then are turnaround schools to do when they are faced with these daunting problems? One of the points of debate on the issue of school turnaround is how to implement that turnaround. The question for school administrators and partners is how to arrive at improvement in student achievement and, more importantly, how to sustain improvement.

Kentucky's Turnaround Schools

Under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, each state is required to identify schools that fail to make their annual yearly progress for two or more consecutive years and to have a plan for school improvement. Kentucky complied with NCLB by passing Senate Bill One in 2009. This legislation gave the Kentucky Department of Education the administrative task of identifying for the state's persistently low-achieving (PLA) schools. The accompanying legislation was Kentucky Revised Statute 160.346. This legislation defined a PLA as falling into two categories: 1) a Title I school within the group of Title I schools whose students performed in the lowest 5% based on averaging

the percentage of students scoring proficient or higher in reading and math assessments, that do not meet adequate yearly progress for three consecutive years; and 2) non-Title I schools with grades 7-12 that have a 35% poverty rate and have failed to meet adequate yearly progress for three consecutive years. High schools in this category have a 60% or lower graduation rate for three consecutive years (Kentucky Statute 160.346, 2014).

After the PLA status of a school is determined, the process of intervention begins. The governance of the school can be removed from the council and placed with the superintendent or the commissioner of education. The principal can also be replaced if he or she is deemed to lack the capacity to lead the school. One of several intervention options for the school is *transformation*, commonly referred to as *turnaround*. This option requires that the school initiate an "extensive" set of strategies designed to "turn around" the school and improve teaching and learning. The school is assigned a turnaround team of three to four highly qualified educators who will provide oversight, assistance, and support to the school. The placement of this team is not voluntary (Burns, 2013). The turnaround team is also referred to as the *educational recovery* (ER) team. This team stays on site for three years, during which time the school submits quarterly reports as to its progress. The school must also submit to audits from the state department of education. If the school makes progress toward the goals it has established, the PLA label is lifted. No Child Left Behind, Senate Bill One, and KRS 160.346 allow some latitude in the methods that are used to reform schools. However, there are certain factors that are common among successfully transformed schools.

The support for placing the ER teams in a school for the turnaround process is grounded in research that suggests that teachers and schools fail to improve using the traditional professional development model built on one-time workshops (Guskey, 2000). Based on Guskey's findings, it seems that teachers seldom transfer the training that they received in workshops into their classroom instruction. Thus, the effectiveness of this type of professional development on student learning is practically non-existent (Garet, Berman, Porter, Desimone, & Herman, 1999; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Berman, & Yoon, 2001; Hawley & Villi, 1999; Joyce & Showers, 2002). In fact, less than 15% of teachers implement anything they gain from the workshops (Joyce & Showers, 2002).

The research does support the idea that teachers, and schools in general, can benefit from a coaching approach through which they are given the opportunity to collaborate with others, observe, reflect, try new instructional strategies, and receive feedback (Vaughn, 1999). The opportunity to work with others on a collaborative basis supports teachers as they develop their own instructional practices (Lave, 1996). Many studies have shown that school-wide coaching, as per the turnaround team approach, have had many positive effects. Some of these effects include improved lesson planning, differentiated instruction, the implementation of behavior management strategies, and generally improved student performance (Kohler, Ezell & Paluselli, 1999).

The research focusing on school-wide coaching forms the foundation of the coaching model, which is implemented by the Kentucky Department of Education in its use of the ER teams. Teachers in persistently low-achieving schools receive news skills and knowledge from the ER specialists that will help improve their instruction and

thereby increase student learning. The ER coaching team supports improvement in several ways, not the least of which is requiring change for the school. The turnaround leaders work with teachers and administrators to develop action plans for implementing policies and practices (Steiner, Ayscue Hassel, & Hassel, 2008; Fairchild & DeMary, 2011).

Effective turnaround leaders understand that they are the primary agents for helping to lead change and that overcoming the resistance to change will be a challenge (Ibarra & Hunter, 2007; Schein, 2006). Developing a common language and a systemic approach is the key for turnaround to be successful. A continuous process of improvement and learning at all levels is crucial (Fullan, 2006). Therefore, in Kentucky as in all turnaround schools, the ER team leads and champions transformative change; however, the compelling force lies within the school leader and the teachers themselves. The research on turnaround has defined certain conditions and leadership traits that are vital for successful school reform.

Prescription for Change

The literature on turnaround is not as robust as in other areas of educational administration and policy. The research indicates, however, that low-performing schools can be turned around given the correct approach. One of the characteristics of a successful turnaround school is that data is used consistently to guide instruction (Duncan, 2009). The curriculum is aligned with state and national standards (Eaker, DuFour, & Burnette, 2002). Principals who communicate objectives and student

achievement outcomes with families and community partners lead the successful schools. Finally, a systemic approach to school turnaround is critical (Kofman & Senge, 1993).

As Orr has found, most of the case studies of turnaround schools have focused on accomplishments of schools (that is, their ability to outperform peer schools), rather than a deeper analysis of the fundamental changes in practices, policies, and personnel that must accompany authentic turnaround (Orr, 2008). My study will fill this void in the research by examining the transformational changes that occurred during the turnaround process at Pleasant Valley High School. My research will draw upon the findings of others in the field. My study, drawing in part on Orr's research, will be based on the assumptions that 1) sustained school turnaround is possible; 2) strategic and systemic changes are crucial to school improvement; 3) schools need support, both technically and financially to achieve turnaround; 4) schools must have a culture in place that encourages change; and 5) schools must have leaders who have the capacity to convey a sense of urgency and pilot the change. With these assumptions guiding my study, I will examine the policies, practices, and procedures adopted by Pleasant Valley High School throughout the turnaround process. The literature indicates that school leaders make decisions in in five categories, according to Duke, and those decisions each initiate transformative change: performance, policy, program, process, and personnel (Duke & Salmonowicz, 2010). These five categories of decisions encompass everything from facilities to staffing issues. These decisions also provide insight into the school's culture and how it is evolving with the transformation. I will use these categories of decision making in my study.

The available research has described the trajectory taken by low-performing schools in ethnically diverse urban schools. Much of the research has been conducted from a top-down perspective, meaning that the decisions of the principal have been considered a primary ch ange agent. My study will consider administrative decisions, but it will also give attention to the collaborative nature of change that occurs between faculty members, departments, and between the principal and the staff. Student achievement will be investigated as an outgrowth of the willingness of the faculty, staff, and administration to change old practices and policies and experiment with new ones throughout the turnaround process. The primary focus of the study will be on how teacher and administrators perceive the turnaround process and how it has influenced school performance.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Most of what has been learned about the turnaround process, as stated previously, comes from the study of urban schools and primarily schools at the elementary level. The schools studied have been characterized as high-poverty schools with a somewhat diverse ethnic and racial population. The purpose of this study was to fill the gap in the literature by providing a case study of a rural Kentucky high school's approach to turnaround. This study assessed various dimensions of change and determined, when possible, the factors that had the most profound effect on student and staff performance, as well as how the changes were perceived by the faculty and administration. Since the mandate for improved student academic performance is likely to remain at the forefront of policy agendas, long after funding for education has disappeared, this study may have implications for similarly situated schools and for educational leadership for reform in general.

This chapter presents the methodology used in this study including the research design, research questions, a description of the subjects investigated, the methods of data collection and analysis, a discussion of how objectivity was be maintained throughout the study, and the limitations of the study.

This research was a qualitative and used phenomenological methods. Borrowing from the work of Duke (2012), whose research on the turnaround process has been foundational, I examined nine clusters of change that characterize successful turnaround:

1. Leadership

2. School and district policy changes
3. Changes in policies and programs
4. Changes in school procedures
5. Changes in personnel and staffing
6. Changes in classroom and instructional practices
7. Changes in the parent, stakeholder, and community involvement
8. Changes in school facility
9. Changes in student and staff perceptions

This research focused on the changes in educational practices and policies that occurred in one secondary school as a result of the turnaround process. Specifically, it focused on the perceptions of teachers (6 males and 9 females) and administrators about which changes have driven the turnaround process. Teachers were asked about the degree to which they feel empowered to make decisions concerning turnaround policies and if they feel empowered at all.

I chose a qualitative approach because of the nature of the subject of school turnaround. This is a subject that calls for further study and exploration. In dealing with variables such as educational policies and their impacts, the topic is best researched by allowing the individuals (teachers and administrators) to tell their story. As Creswell (2007) has noted, using the qualitative method allows participants in the event or phenomenon that may never be heard from otherwise to tell their stories and offer their insights.

The purpose of this study was to examine the changes in educational practices and policies that occurred in one secondary school as a result of the turnaround process. Specifically, it focused on the perceptions of teachers as compared to administrators about which changes have driven the turnaround process. Teachers were asked about their participation in decision-making during the turnaround process. They also were asked what changes they believe were made during the turnaround that most contributed to school improvement. I chose a qualitative approach because of the nature of the subject of school turnaround. This is a subject that calls for further study and exploration. In dealing with subjects such as educational policies and their impacts, the story is best researched by allowing the individuals (teachers and administrators) to tell their story. My descriptive study of teacher and administrator perceptions of the turnaround process fits the characteristics of the qualitative research that Creswell (2007) offered. These characteristics also can be considered rationales. In justifying a qualitative approach to my study, Creswell's characteristics helped guide me in my choice of methodology. Each characteristic is described as follows and includes a brief explanation of how my study conforms to that characteristic.

> *Natural setting: Natural setting:* Qualitative researchers tend to collect data in the field at the site where participants' experience the issue or problem under study (Creswell, 2007, p. 37).

The data for my study were collected at the school, Pleasant Valley High School, where turnaround occurred. The teachers and administrators were interviewed in their daily work environment.

> *Researchers as the key instrument:* The qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, and interviewing participants. They may use a protocol—an instrument for collecting data—but the researchers are the ones who actually gather the information (Creswell, 2007, p. 38).

I collected data through interviews and examining archival data such as school report cards, notes from committee meetings, the comprehensive school improvement plan, and results from surveys.

> *Multiple sources of data:* Qualitative researchers typically gather multiple forms of data, such as interviews, observations, and documents, rather than rely on a single data source. Then the researchers review all the data and make sense of them, organizing them into categories or themes that cut across all the data sources (Creswell, 2007, p. 38).

My research drew upon multiple sources of data, namely, interviews and documents.

> *Inductive data analysis:* Qualitative researchers build their patterns, categories, and themes, from the "bottom-up," by organizing the data into increasingly more abstract units of information. This inductive process involves researchers working back and forth between the themes and database until they establish a comprehensive set of themes. It also involved collaborating with the participants interactively, so that they could have a chance to shape the themes or abstractions that emerge from the process (Creswell, 2007, p. 38-39).

After conducting interviews and analyzing documents, I determined the major themes that emerged. I did so through the process of transcribing and coding the interviews. After I clarified the major themes, I constructed generalizations about the turnaround process as it relates to my study site.

> *Participant meaning:* The researcher keeps a focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researchers bring to the research or writers from the literature (Creswell, 2007, p. 39).

My study of a rural turnaround school was crafted from the perceptions, beliefs, and experiences of the participants at the school. I made an effort not to interject my own "meaning" or predispositions to the research.

> *Emergent design:* The research process for qualitative researchers is emergent. This means that the initial plan for research cannot be tightly prescribed, and that all phases of the process may change or shift after the researchers enter the field and begin to collect data (Creswell, 2007, pp. 39-40).

Although I had determined my primary research questions prior to data collection, I maintained enough flexibility to redesign my interview questions as the data revealed common themes and issues. The data guided the research process.

> *Theoretical lens: Theoretical lens:* Qualitative researchers often use a lens to view their studies, such as the concept of culture, central to ethnography, or gendered, racial, or class differences. . .. Sometimes, the study may be organized around

> identifying the social, political, or historical context of the problem under study (Creswell, 2007, p. 39).

My research was viewed and shaped by the concepts that are most relevant (namely, the historical, historical, and cultural contexts.) These contexts were identified, analyzed, and used to frame the study.

> *Interpretative inquiry:* Qualitative research is a form of inquiry in which researchers make an interpretation of what they see, hear, and understand. The researchers' interpretation cannot be separated from their own background, history, context, and prior understandings. After a research report is issued, the readers make an interpretation as well as the participants, offering yet other interpretations of the study (Creswell, 2007, p. 39).

In conducting this descriptive study of a turnaround school, I made interpretations of what I heard in the interviews and read in the documents. I rendered my conclusions in as objective a manner as possible. Even though I cannot completely separate my background as a teacher from the research, the results were presented without personal bias. The readers will make their own interpretation. It is my goal that my research can inform others who are studying turnaround schools.

> *Holistic account*: Qualitative researchers try to develop a complex picture of the problem or issue under study. This involves reporting multiple perspectives, identifying the many factors involved in a situation, and generally sketching the larger picture that emerges (Creswell, 2007, p. 39).

The phenomenon of turnaround cannot be easily reduced to simple cause and effect. As this study reveals, a successful school turnaround involves a complex interplay of factors. I identified several factors and determined how they operated separately and in combination to influence change.

Beginning with the George W. Bush administration and continuing through President Obama's second term in office, extraordinary amounts of resources have been spent on school improvement. The most recent efforts at bettering the nation's schools have come in the form of the *turnaround*. This concept has been around since the 1990s and was first employed by New York educators seeking to improve schools in New York City. In 2005, the Gates Foundation awarded a grant to the Mass Insight Education and Research Institute to design a framework for school improvement. From this grant, the concept of school turnaround was born (Duke, 2012). One of the hallmarks of the turnaround concept is building a school culture where teachers feel supported and empowered to try innovative instructional strategies and make decisions to affect student learning and achievement.

The following research question was used to guide this study:

- How did the turnaround process at one rural high school influence school improvement from the perceptions of teachers and the administration?

Other secondary questions included the following:

- Does the faculty think the implementation of turnaround has been successful?
- How does the faculty define successful turnaround?

Research Design

The *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* defines phenomenon as an "observable fact or event" or "a rare or significant fact or event" (Woolf, 1981). Given this definition, the process of school turnaround is a phenomenon and lends itself to a descriptive, phenomenological study. Creswell (2007) distinguishes a phenomenological study as one that "describes the meaning for several individuals of their experiences of a concept or phenomenon" (p. 72).

This approach to the study of one school's journey through the turnaround process provided me with a vehicle (for example, interviews) to allow the participants themselves to define the process as they have experienced it in their unique context. It also allowed the researcher to arrive at some conclusions about how the educational policy and practices of school turnaround have influenced the attitudes of teacher and administrations and shaped the school's culture.

Participants/Setting

A "purposeful selection" of a research setting and group of participants means that they were chosen because they can be reasonably expected to elucidate useful information about a subject or problem. In this study, the researcher chose Pleasant Valley High School because it met the Kentucky Department of Education's and the United States Department of Education's guidelines for a persistently low-performing school.

In the fall of 2011, Pleasant Valley High School failed to make its Adequate Yearly Progress for its second year and was not showing signs of improvement. As

defined by NCLB, Pleasant Valley High School was not a proficient school and hence qualified for intervention (U.S. Dept. of Ed, 2010). Pleasant Valley High School is a Title I school and is located in a predominantly rural area of Kentucky. Very little research has been done with turnaround schools in non-urban areas. The researcher chose this particular setting because it promises to offer insight into the phenomenon of a rural Kentucky high school's experience with the turnaround process.

The following decision rules were used in the selection of participants (teachers and administrators) in this study:

1. Faculty members were chosen from each department (Math, Science, Social Studies, English, Arts & Humanities, Health & PE, and Vocational/Technical.)
2. Two building-level administrators, both of whom have been in their position during two years of the turnaround, were selected.
3. Each of the participants interviewed was employed at Pleasant Valley High School for at least two years of the turnaround process.
4. One of the three teachers interviewed from each department had a minimum of eight years of teaching experience.

Data Collection and Handling

The method for data collection included multiple interviews of each participant, survey responses, and an examination of archival material such as school report cards, minutes from faculty meetings, professional learning community meetings, and the like. Each of the participants was interviewed with no prior knowledge of the questions. None

of the participants were informed of the identity of the others and none of the participants had any advance knowledge of the questions.

The interviews were recorded and the responses were color-coded according to the themes that emerged as a result of the interviews. The themes were clustered around words or phrases that occurred frequently. The data were verified by a response-checking system. The questions that the interviewer asked the participants were repeated several times and paraphrased for clarity. As necessary, the interviewer repeated the responses, and attained verification that the participants understood the question and were confident in their answers. Each participant was asked at the end of the interview if he or she had anything else to add.

Because the purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of teachers in a priority school, the questions were designed to elicit opinions, feelings, and insights. This approach is in keeping with the techniques that are typically used in a phenomenological study. The participants were allowed to tell their own unique story. The teachers were asked questions primarily about a) how it felt to come to work daily in a turnaround school; b) how their attitude has changed since Pleasant Valley was identified as a turnaround school; c) changes in school culture; d) their views about how their instructional practices have changed; e) whether they believe they and their colleagues have become better leaders; and f) their feelings about their own efficacy. Within these categories, the interviewer asked probing questions to gain a deeper understanding of teacher perceptions and experiences.

All participant interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded. Participant responses were coded in categories that corresponded to the research questions. A concept map also was used to assist with organizing the data. Responses were subjected, as much as possible, to a peer audit or external audit to ensure that the researcher was drawing valid conclusions. Thus, the data were triangulated to assure trustworthiness.

Conclusion

Student achievement and school performance are at the forefront of educational policy. Federal and state scrutiny of schools has led to a mandate for proficiency. Low-performing schools that once took cover under the fact that they had high percentages of impoverished and disadvantaged students must now show improvement, regardless of these factors.

Turnaround school is a term that is now common in the parlance of education. This study examined the route that Pleasant Valley High School took on its path to proficiency. This study helps address the gap that currently exists in the research pertaining to turnaround schools. It also provides findings for other similarly situated turnaround schools.

Pleasant Valley as a Phenomenological Study

In choosing to research the turnaround process of Pleasant Valley High School, I had to select a methodology. My purpose was to examine the experiences and perceptions of teachers and administrators who worked in a school that had undergone the process of being identified as a priority school and the changes that ensued. Obviously, my research was narrative in nature; but, it did not meet the strict definition of a narrative which is to

tell the life story of an individual or small group of individuals using artifacts such as letters, diaries, photos and so. There was, in this study, an element of what Creswell describes as "restorying" or taking the various stories and putting them into a framework that makes sense (2007, p. 56). While, I did want to capture the stories of the individual teachers and administrators I interviewed, I was more interested in the common themes that emerged as the teachers shared their experience of undergoing the school's transformation. That is why I chose to conduct a phenomenological study. As Creswell defines it, such an approach takes the various stories of the individuals that have experienced a phenomenon (for example, a divorce, surgery, or changes within a school's culture and practices,…) and distills them down to their "essence" (2007, p.58.). This gives the research a breadth that is helpful in offering recommendations about school policy.

Merely stating that my study of Pleasant Valley is phenomenological is not adequate for readers. In order to fully understand the qualitative data I presented, the reader also must know the approach I took in handling the data. This also may be thought of as my philosophy toward the phenomenological study. In my attempt to present the experiences of teachers and administrators at Pleasant Valley High School, I adopted what Creswell (2007) and Moustakas (1994) refer to as a transcendental phenomenological approach where description is more important than the interpretation. This approach demands that the researcher put aside all personal experiences and preconceived ideas in order to treat the research findings with a new perspective. The attempt to separate oneself from the phenomenon one is researching is also known as

bracketing. This is accomplished when the researcher puts aside his or her own experiences related to the phenomenon. In conducting this study, I have attempted to set aside my personal views about how the turnaround process has impacted the students and teachers at Pleasant Valley. Issues involving rapport, reflexivity, and subjectivity relate to bracketing aka *subjectivity* and the overall credibility and validity of the research.

Rapport

Rapport is generally defined as an open, communicative relationship between individuals or a "meeting of the minds." Rapport is essential in all kinds of relationships, ranging from personal to business. Without rapport, a group or two individuals may accomplish a task, but the flow of information may not be as effective as if good rapport had existed. Glesne (2007) points out that rapport should not be confused with friendship. She delineates the two by stating that *friendship* connotes affinity or liking among individuals. She further distinguishes *rapport* from *friendship* in that friendships are based on equity; whereas, in a relationship characterized as having rapport one party has "authority over the other" (Glesne, 2007.) In order to have rapport, a certain level of mutual understanding is necessary; however, there is a tacit agreement that one party is seeking something from the other. It is a tenuous arrangement. Mitchell (1993) notes that rapport is can be established or broken depending upon the trust level between the interview and the subject.

I was able to establish rapport with the teachers I interviewed because I knew them and had worked with all of them. I explained the purpose for my interviews and the nature of my research. Because my research involved our mutual workplace, I was

careful to reassure them that they would remain anonymous and their responses would not be viewed outside the scope of my research. In the interview session, though, our roles did change. I was viewed as a researcher and someone who they were allowing to question them about their workplace experiences and perceptions.

I was able to maintain my rapport with the participating teachers. However, sometimes, I felt that they were self-conscious about discussing personal feelings about their job with a co-worker. I also felt that some of them may have been filtering their responses based on what they thought they should say as good teachers and employees. I was sensitive to this and tried, by my demeanor and verbal assurances, to convey to them that I was merely gathering data, not making evaluative judgments. I felt that my rapport was strengthened by the fact that my research was giving them a voice they might not have had otherwise. In this sense, my rapport was further strengthened by the benefit it offered the participants.

Subjectivity

We as humans are all shaped by our past. Our preferences, views, attitudes, and political philosophies have been influenced by our events that occurred in our past whether through training by or parents, educational experiences, association with others, or other experiences. In deciding to conduct qualitative research and particularly a phenomenological study, I realized I would have to deal with the issue of subjectivity and how it would be maintained in my research. I believe that the trustworthiness of my research, particularly since it involved a current educational issue and one that has significant implications for a community and a school system, depended on how I

explained my relationship to the topic—why it interested me and what I hope will be the impact of my research. In this way, I was able to, as Glesne suggests check for my own sources of subjectivity (Glesne, 2007.) and inform my readers about it.

My background and profession has, no doubt, impacted my research focus and my approach. First of all, I am the child of an educator. My mother was an elementary school teacher for more than 40 years. Most of my family also have been involved in public education. Most of them were teachers, but a few such as my maternal aunt and a first cousin have been administrators. In many families the conversations may revolve around politics or sports, in mine, the discussions usually centered on some issue in education. This certainly influenced my decision to become a special education teacher. I am naturally interested in issues and problems that affect teachers.

My subjectivity also is shaped by my tendency to want to analyze and investigate matters that affect me. This affinity is what drew me to doctoral studies initially. Because I am a teacher in a Priority School, I have an interest in the process of school turnaround/transformation, its success, and how teachers truly perceive it. I also see the perceptions of teachers from schools similar to mine as often being overlooked. Relatively small, rural schools like Pleasant Valley have not been involved in studies about school reform and particularly in turnaround/transformation model. Because I work at Pleasant Valley, I have a direct interest in the success of the school. I and my colleagues will benefit professionally and personally from putting systems in place that will help advance student achievement and growth. Working in a turnaround/priority school has created a feeling of collegiality and teamwork. This feeling carries over

toward the administration. With a few exceptions, the entire staff at Pleasant Valley has come together, seemingly, to pull the school out of the quagmire of low-performance. I was interested in conducting this study to determine how the staff perceived the process of turnaround/transformation and whether they were as supportive as they appeared. I also wanted to determine which practices and process were contributing to increased student achievement, if any. Finally, I wanted to offer the insights gained about Pleasant Valley to the body of research about the problems facing low-performing schools and the pathways to change.

Reflexivity

Closely related to the subjectivity is *reflexivity*. This is the idea that those who conduct qualitative research need not present themselves as oracles who separate themselves from their writing. The qualitative researcher may be presenting information in a narrative form, but the researcher need not deny that his or her experiences, background, and views are relevant. As Creswell observes, how researchers write is influenced by their experiences, culture, tastes, interests, gender, and personal biases (Creswell, 2007). We need not try to write in a vacuum. We do need to monitor our writing and constantly assess whether our "voice" is dominating the presentation of the research.

I have attempted to monitor my writing to prevent personal feelings, beliefs and views from slanting the presentation of my findings. Glesne (2007) believes reflexivity is essentially a way of "monitoring and using subjectivity" (p. 125). In order use my subjectivity constructively, I have constantly tried to determine if I have let my

participants tell their story in a way that has not been over-controlled by my questions, questioning techniques, or writing. Asking myself the following questions about my participants and my interpretation of their answers was helpful:

1. Have I chosen to interview this particular person because of their views on educational issues, or because their views match mine?
2. Have I asked questions that steer participants to a particular answer?
3. Is my questioning technique leading or open to an overly broad interpretation?
4. Have I presented data honestly or taken it out of context?

I attempted to check myself at each stage of the project using these questions. In using these questions, I became part of the research. I was both participant and observer. Hopefully, by admitting my subjectivity and allowing myself to see all sides of the research process, I presented a meaningful narrative of how teachers at one school perceived and dealt with a change and reform.

Positionality

As stated before, all writing has position. This, again, simply means that how we approach research and its presentation in writing is influenced by our personal beliefs, views, biases, and prejudices. Positionality is then a matter of the writer's worldview or paradigm. The research presented here reflects my approach to exploring issues and problems. It is relevant to explain to my readers which world view or *paradigm* has shaped my research and writing.

I began the study of school turnaround/transformation because as both a participant and observer I was eager to learn more about the current theories and models

that were driving the school reform movement. I wanted to understand the process and why other schools, as well as Pleasant Valley, were experiencing so many changes and building new systems and processes. I knew how I felt about the changes that were occurring. I was definitely on-board and positive about the entire process. I wanted the school to live up to its potential both for the students and community, and for my colleagues. However, I also realized that teachers will often voice support and endorsement of change, when, in reality, they are silently resistant. I wanted to conduct this research to see if I could get at their real story and hear their perceptions about school turnaround/transformation. In light of these guiding influences, my worldview and the paradigm that shaped this study is most closely aligned with *social constructivism*.

Social constructivists see the world subjectively. They see events and issues as being shaped by multiple meanings. This view does not define meanings narrowly but broadly. It takes into account the complexity of the meanings. Research that is driven by this paradigm seeks to allow the participants to tell their story and impose their meaning on the phenomena. In my case, I allowed the participants to share their perceptions and tell their individual stories about how school turnaround/transformation has affected them. Each of their stories has been influenced by their subjective experiences with others. Thus, as Creswell notes, meanings for the social constructivist researcher are "negotiated socially and historically" (Creswell, 2007, p.21). Each participant adds his or her own meanings to the ever-changing tide of events and circumstances.

Because social constructivists see the influence of multiple meanings on phenomena, they pose questions that are open-ended and that allow the interviewees to

apply their own meanings. In this way, social constructivists do not initiate their research with a big hypothesis or theory. This is one of the major differences between the social constructivists and the post-positivists. They work inductively from a specific idea or concept to a more generalized idea or set of constructs that will possibly later be expanded upon by other researchers (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). My study of Pleasant Valley has hopefully allowed the participants to tell their individual stories of their lived experiences and the meanings they constructed from their experiences. My study provides new understanding about the experience of turnaround/transformation schools upon which others can build.

My positionality, subjectivity, and social constructivist approach are significant factors in this research. My choice of this topic, methodology, and conclusions has been affected by these characteristics. I have chosen to address my position as a social constructivist and acknowledge its impact on my research. I believe by presenting how I chose to approach the research will further lend to its validity and trustworthiness.

Chapter 4: PLEASANT VALLEY'S STORY AS REVEALED IN INTERVIEWS

Introduction

In telling the story of Pleasant Valley's rise from its persistently low achieving (PLA) status, I believe it is important for the reader to gain a better understanding of the school's background and its place within the community. It also is important to understand how the school found itself floundering academically. The future of Pleasant Valley will be determined by the honest acknowledgement of where the school has come from, its challenges, failures, and the attitudes and behaviors that led to the turnaround. Pleasant Valley's story is certainly only one of many such stories of a school forced by federal and state mandates to reform its practices. Yet, the way that the faculty, staff, and students sought to deal with the dilemma is worth examining. The story is one worth telling and will, hopefully, serve as an example to similarly situated schools. The unfolding story of Pleasant Valley will reveal that practices, values, and attitudes transcend location and that the lessons learned by one rural school may have relevance for other schools.

Pleasant Valley's Story

Pleasant Valley is located in a relatively small rural school district in south-central Kentucky. It is the largest school in the county and the only high school in the school district. The school was constructed in the early 1970's when the smaller community high schools consolidated. Located on a rolling hillside beside the main north-south highway, the school is surrounded by farms, small businesses, churches, and businesses. The

school is situated mid-way between a larger city to both the north and south. Because the school serves approximately 1,200 students, the school is a focal point in the community.

The students who attend Pleasant Valley are from mostly working class families. Professionals in the county are mainly doctors, lawyers, teachers, and other roles in the health care industry. The parents of most of the students at Pleasant Valley work at a factory, business or hospital in the community or drive to a surrounding city to work. Many families in the community still reside on family farms. The community is tight-knit, and teachers at Pleasant Valley know their students and their families. Many teachers at Pleasant Valley are former alumni. As with other small rural communities, the high school sports teams are a source of pride, and Friday nights find local fans at the Pleasant Valley gymnasium or football field cheering on their team. The basketball program has been a particular source of pride because in the last few years both the boys' and girls' teams have gone to the state tournament.

While the community has many positive things occurring, it is not without the problems that rural communities are experiencing now. The area has suffered as a result of the economic downturn of the last decade. Industries and businesses have been forced to downsize, and almost every family has been affected in some way. There also is present in the county a persistence of poverty that is characteristic of much of Appalachia. Poverty is aggravated by the instability of the family unit and drug use. These factors have posed a problem for both the community at large and the schools. As a teacher of special needs students, I have seen firsthand the challenges that many students at Pleasant Valley High School experience. Students often lack the support they

need to be successful. In a many of the households, both parents are working to pay the bills and seldom have time to attend parent-teacher conferences, help their child with homework, or even verify that homework and other projects are being completed. Attempts to contact some parents, whenever there are discipline issues with their children, are futile, and if contact is made, the response is apathetic. Such factors have posed a challenge for all the schools in the county and particularly for Pleasant Valley High School. It was with these conditions already present that Pleasant Valley had to face the challenge of being identified as a "Priority" school by the state.

Identifying the Problem

The School Report Card from the 2011-12 school year showed the discouraging results for Pleasant Valley's accountability measures. Pleasant Valley's total accountability score was 57.6, which placed it at the 67th percentile state-wide (School Report Card 2011-12, Kentucky Department of Education). Pleasant Valley needed a gain of only 1.0 to give it a score of 58.6 in order to make AYP. In terms of the ACT, Pleasant Valley's average student score was 19. 236. All Juniors took the ACT. Of these students, 58.6% met the benchmark for English, 47.9% met the benchmark in Reading, and 37.3 % in Math. The graduation rate the year before in 2010-11 was 69.93 percent. Based on these results, the school entered Priority status, and a team of three educational recovery specialists was assigned to the school in October 2011.

The principal, Mr. Wright, who had been at the school, was aware of the problems facing the school and had already begun to take measures to "turn the school around." Some systemic problems leading up to Priority status were a lack of common planning

among departments, instruction that was not aligned to the curriculum standards, a lack of instructional focus, and generally a feeling of low self-esteem among the students and faculty. One of the greatest challenges the school had faced was frequent turnover in school leadership. The graduating class of 2009 had experienced four different principals in four years. With the return of Mr. Wright in 2010, (he had been employed in a private school after leaving Pleasant Valley for a short time.) policies and procedures were being put into place that would begin the school's transformation. This is notable because these changes were being made prior to the arrival of the Educational Recovery Specialists in 2011. In fact, one teacher acknowledged that the "turnaround" of the school was well on its way well before the school was deemed to be in Priority status. In discussing her perceptions of the school's turnaround, she stated:

> We were doing this before the ER team came in. We turned this school around before they came in and a lot of people need to realize that it looks like the state came in and worked wonders, but when we got that news, when that news came down, even though we were devastated, we had already started the process of turning this school around even though nobody realized that.

Collective Goals and Strategies

The staff and administration at Pleasant Valley rallied their forces and began the work of rebuilding the school's culture and improving student achievement. One of the first actions associated with positive change was crafting a new vision and mission that expressed what the school hoped to accomplish. Both statements called for every student to be college and/or career ready upon graduation, for every stakeholder (faculty, staff,

and the community) to be responsible for student success and for every classroom to offer a quality instructional experience (Comprehensive School Improvement Plan, 2011-12). Although revising the mission and vision statements were tangible signs of the school's resolve to improve, the future of the school would depend on following through with actions.

One of the most serious matters to be addressed was the seemingly apathetic attitude of the students about their achievement i.e. ACT scores, performance on End of Course exams, and college and career readiness. Even though affecting student attitudes was difficult, Mr. Wright, with the help of the Educational Recovery Specialist and a committee of faculty members known as the Turnaround Team, began tackling the job of putting in place processes and structures that would help improve instruction. Wright and the administration intended to convey a sense of urgency about the matter of school improvement to both faculty and staff. As stated in the Comprehensive School Improvement Plans and the Pleasant Valley Plan for Progress, the following structures and processes were put into place that began to foster success:

1. The implementation of a professional development system that included walkthroughs and individual feedback sessions;
2. The initiation of weekly common planning meetings by all departments and all teachers and the formation of professional learning communities;
3. Analysis of assessment data (KPREP, PLAN, PAS, etc.) by all departments;
4. The alignment of the curriculum to state and Quality Core standards;
5. Intensive preparation of students for End of Course Examinations;

6. Implementation of computer-based programs such as ALEKS, ILP ACT Method Test Prep, Study Island, and Discovery Ed. to supplement instruction and provide remediation;
7. Formation of a Gap Closure Initiative Team to review the implementation and effectiveness of special education/regular education collaboration;
8. The implementation of monthly instructional coaching sessions for all faculty;
9. The implementation of high-yield instructional strategies in all classroom as monitored by daily lesson plans;
10. The establishment of an intervention/enrichment period in Reading, Math, At-Risk, and Gifted/Talented to include all students on a weekly basis;
11. The creation of a new College and Career Readiness System including monitoring and a watch list of students at risk for failure;
12. The formation of a Positive Behavior Intervention System Committee to monitor behaviors school-wide and refer individual students for intervention and support;
13. Increased community outreach through the implementation of a Communication Plan including parent visits, notification of upcoming events through School Messenger, visits to civic organizations, and regular parent-teacher conferences; and
14. Involvement of all stakeholders in the Pleasant Valley mission and vision statement, Comprehensive School Improvement Plans, and Plans for Progress, (2012-13).

Deciding how to approach the turnaround is a problem faced by principals of low performing schools. Duke and Salmonowicz (2010) described the types of decisions that first year turnaround principals have to make to improve instruction. These decisions typically include altering policies and determining the root cause of poor student performance. When asked about how he believed similarly situated schools might proceed, Mr. Wright, said without hesitation:

> My best advice would be; you've got to get into the data. If you're going to turn it around, you've got to know where you are, know firmly where you are. Then you've got to work with the people in your building to figure out why you're there. You've got to work with those same people to come up with solutions to how you got there and how to get out . . . It is a collective effort. (Interview with Mr. Wright)

Success of Collective Efforts

Mr. Wright's assessment of how to approach school turnaround and the steps taken in the school's improvement and progress plans proved to be effective for Pleasant Valley. The accountability data released in February of 2013 revealed that the school made great gains. The 2011-12 ACT composite score rose from 17.8 to 19.0. College and career readiness, an area that was of concern, experienced an increase of 15%. Pleasant Valley's overall accountability score moved the school from the 15th percentile to the 67th percentile. The school, amazingly, moved up in the rankings from 201st out of 236 to 77th (School Report Card, 2012-13, Kentucky Department of Education).

The work that had actually begun before the arrival of the Educational Recovery

Specialists had paid high dividends. Pleasant Valley was on the path followed by successful schools. The processes and practices that Pleasant Valley had outlined earlier align exactly with the characteristics of high-performing schools. Table 4.1 compares the characteristic with practices at Pleasant Valley.

Effective Schools and Sustainability

Table 4.1

Characteristics of an Effective School Compared to Pleasant Valley

Characteristics of an Effective School	**Pleasant Valley Practices & Characteristics**
Clear and Shared Focus	Mission and Vision Statement
High Standards and expectations for all students	Mission and Vision Statement, PBIS Committee, Red Zone intervention groups
Effective School Leadership	Principal as instructional leader and initiator of innovative approaches
High levels of collaboration and communication	Weekly common planning meeting, PLCs, and communication with stakeholders
Curriculum, instruction and assessments aligned with state standards	The alignment of the curriculum with state standards and Quality Core
Frequent monitoring of learning & teaching	Monitoring through lesson plans, data analysis, walkthroughs, PLCs

Characteristics of an Effective School	**Pleasant Valley Practices & Characteristics**
Table 4.1 (continued)	
Supportive learning environment	Establishment of interventions, PBIS activities
High level of family and community involvement	Implementation of a Communication Plan, home-visits, parent-teacher conference, outreach to civic organizations

Although the structures and practices put in place to move a school toward proficiency are crucial, it is the acknowledgement and support from the faculty that are the most important if the progress is to be sustainable. As I interviewed the staff, it was evident in their responses that they had embraced the work associated with becoming a high-performing school. Their responses indicated that Pleasant Valley is on the way to demonstrating the characteristics of a highly effective school as noted above. Nearly all the respondents reported having an increased work load, but stated that the outcome was positive for their practice and the students. One of the veteran math teachers discussed the initiatives and his personal assessment of the way his teaching was becoming better. In discussing the impact of the turnaround process on his feelings of efficacy, he said that he felt like that he is a much more intentional in his teaching than he was three years ago.

> I think for me it made me become more intentional. As a teacher, it kind of made things real, that we weren't probably doing some of the things that we were supposed to be doing and a lot of the initiatives that we've undertaken up until this point or at this point. I think it strengthened me as a teacher. As far as my attitude toward that, I'm really all about trying to improve. I don't want to say I've enjoyed the process because it has been a lot of work, and there's been a lot thing I think may have been unnecessary. But it has; there's a lot of things that have really, strengthened me as a teacher and our staff collectively.

At another point in my interview with Mr. Carter, he admitted that there are aspects about being a Priority School that are perfunctory, but most of the requirements have been beneficial.

A member of the business department stated similarly that his teaching had improved, but he was not positive that it was due entirely to the turnaround process. He said:

> "I don't know that it's necessarily because of the turnaround process. I think I'm a better teacher than I was 5 years ago when I started. A lot of that is through PLC's that we have, working with colleagues, you know, professional development" (Interview with Mr. Winters).

Not every teacher agreed that the amount of work or the focus on improving teaching and learning was consistent over the three years of the turnaround process. Some teachers expressed the feeling that during the first year of the process the teaching staff was highly focused and had a direction for improving student learning; however, after the

first year of priority status, the teachers were not given as much direction and did not work as hard. Mrs. Baker, a Family Resource and Consumer Science Teacher reflected this sentiment about teacher focus and direction.

> I feel like the first year we were a turn-around team we worked really, really hard and really, really made progress. I just don't feel like we're working as hard now to make progress. But, still maybe- I know we're making it. But I don't think we have as much exact directions we were given then (Interview with Mrs. Baker).

The statement that the faculty had not been given as much direction in the last two years of turnaround by the ERS team was echoed by another member of the English faculty. When asked how the support of the team had affected her practice, Mrs. Williams revealed that she shared Mrs. Baker's sentiment.

> In the very beginning of this process, they [ERS team] were very instrumental in coming in and observing, letting me know things that could have gone better, something I could have elaborated on or something I should just omit all together. As we've gone through this process and they've kind of faded out, those practices have stayed. What they have shared with me, what knowledge they have shared with me that I didn't get before [have stayed], and so I'm very thankful for them coming in and letting me know what I'm doing wrong and right. (Interview with Mrs. Williams)

A member of the Social Studies department offered a somewhat different and skeptical viewpoint when discussing how the turnaround process had affected instructional practices and student achievement. Mrs. Miller stated that while she

believed Pleasant Valley is more progressive than many surrounding schools and that the staff is competent, she also found herself thinking that Pleasant Valley has learned how to teach students to perform well on high-stakes testing. She stated:

> In some ways, I feel more competent because I feel like we're doing so much here that we're head and shoulders above other schools and we know what we're doing. But then again sometimes I feel like we're just playing the game. I feel like we're just playing the … What would you call that? The assessment game, and we have learned not to teach. We're not cheating, but we've learned what we need to do to make our kids excel at what they need to excel at to perform and jump through the hoops and do what they need to do to show the state that they're college and career ready. I don't know if that's the best thing for the kids. Does that make sense? (Interview with Mrs. Miller)

The faculty statements that the turnaround process along with the support and guidance of the ERS team positively affected instructional practices are consistent with the literature about successful school reform. While not all respondents agreed about the extent to which turnaround initiatives had always accounted for improving their teaching, there was a definite consensus that instructional practices and student achievement improved over the course of the three years. The fact that the ERS team faded their support over time indicates the school was moving in the right direction and that the teachers did not need a high level of support. In a sense, the teachers earned their independence again. However, the teachers who noted the declining support of the ERS team, at no point, made any conjectures as to why they thought the support had been

faded. They did not make a connection between greater efficacy and the gradual withdrawal of assistance and oversight.

Throughout the interview process, I discovered that the respondents' answers reflected the characteristics of a school successfully undergoing the transformation/turnaround process and those of a high-performing school. Developing a common language and a systematic approach among teachers has been regarded as a key to a successful turnaround (Ibarra & Hunter, 2007; Schein, 2006). Mr. Wright and the administration have been clear about the work that has to be done to bring about change. Moreover, the focus has been embedded in the daily routines whether it involved providing quality lesson plans or including ACT-like questions in daily lessons. Mr. Jones, another member of the math department, described the focus and the unity among the faculty in working toward a common goal:

> I started here the fall that we were labeled a PLA school, and just those first couple months before being labeled, there wasn't a lot of focus in the building as a whole. There was focus in individual classrooms here and there, but as a building, I don't think anyone was really united on any front. Whereas now, everybody knows the benchmarks. Everybody understands what it takes to get a student there. If nothing else, I would just say that we're all much more focused on where we stand in the state, where our students stand, and what we need to do in order to improve those standings.

Not only has the focus been made clear among the teaching staff, students also are made aware of the high standards and expectations that are held for them. The mission

and vision statements as well as goals for assessment are posted in practically every classroom throughout the building. Periodically, teachers are urged to remind students of the benchmarks and goals. In this case and others, the culture has definitely changed. Addressing a dysfunctional school culture is a step that successful turnaround schools have taken (Duke, et. al, 2007). Mr. Jones described the practice that occurs every year of informing the students about what is before them:

> I think just the culture of high expectations. At the beginning of every year, the administration does a really good job of communicating with each class about the level of high expectations here at the high school and what they need each class to do to keep that up.

A member of the English department, Mrs. West, echoed the emphasis that is being placed on academic performance. When asked about whether she believed the school has been transformed, she answered emphatically:

> I do feel as far as the faculty and staff go that they have transformed. I feel that again that they are intentionally teaching, intentionally instructing, intentionally taking an interest in students. Has the school [been transformed] overall? I would have to say yes. Right now, those students that have gone through this process with us are seniors I can see a huge change in just their overall work ethic. Our new students coming in, it's still a new learning process for them. But they knew straight off the bat that we were serious, and that this is what we do. There are no exceptions, non-negotiables and things like that. They're coming in with these expectations held, making them accountable.

Mrs. Miller shared similar comments about the high academic expectations and demands on students at LCHS. She described a school culture marked by pride in hard work and success. She emphasized:

> I think the rigor here has increased tremendously. I think the seriousness of students in education here has increased. The culture of academics has changed here a lot. I don't see kids making fun of this place like they used to. It used to be a place where kids would make fun of themselves because of the reputation that we had. We don't have that reputation any more. It's serious. Kids are proud to be here. It's a place they want to go. It's a place that we don't have that reputation. People can't really say that about us anymore because we don't act that way here. … but like I said earlier, I'm worried that at one level we are too concerned about performance on a state level; how we compare to other schools.

Prior to this comment, Miller had stated that the teachers had been devastated when the school first received the PLA status. She also stated that the students often denigrated the school. During the first months of the turnaround, many of the staff had felt unsure of their ability to teach. As Mrs. Bell commented:

> We found out in October of 2011 [about the PLA status], but it really didn't sink in to the point that we really had to do something major until August of 2012. The 2012-2013 school year was horrible. I didn't want to be here, didn't know what I was doing. It seemed like nothing that we did do was appreciated, that nothing that we had done in the past was effective; so it was like you were learning to teach all over again. We went through that for a year and now we're back to

> teaching the way that we know we can teach. I don't know whether that's going to be effective or not. We're so up in the air. (Interview with Mrs. Bell).

The struggles of being a low-achieving school and the crisis of confidence that came with PLA status forged a new culture at Pleasant Valley. Through emulating the habits and mindset of effective schools, Pleasant Valley was able to implement practices that ultimately led to success. As Bell indicated, the path out of PLA status was not straight and often things was "up in the air," but as the interview results showed, with a concerted effort on the part of the faculty, Pleasant Valley was able to become a successful school. Moreover, both students and staff could feel a sense of ownership and pride in their accomplishments.

An integral part of the school's rise from PLA status was unquestionably due to the leadership at Pleasant Valley. The respondents were unanimous in their acknowledgement that the principal's vision and guidance had been a major factor in their journey to success.

Effective School Leadership

Effective school leadership is pivotal to the success of a school and especially a school that is experiencing the kind of top-to bottom transformation that Pleasant Valley has experienced over the past three years (Koffman &Senge, 1993). Mr. Wright has not only managed to help build a new culture for the school where both students and staff are proud of their achievements, he also has become an instructional leader. Since assuming the job as principal, he has worked with the ERS team and the staff to try innovative strategies and approaches. He has, along with the rest of the administrative staff,

established a reputation for Pleasant Valley as a school where instruction is taken seriously and everyone is expected to give their best. In describing the leadership provided, Social Studies teacher, Mrs. Miller made the following statement:

> I think we're more focused. I think leadership is key. I think we have somebody that knows how to focus on what needs to be focused on. They [school leaders] know what's important. They know how to motivate people. They know how to get good people in here. They don't accept shoddy work. They don't accept people who come in here that don't put in as much time as other . . . If you're not going to come in here and work, I don't think they're going to accept that, and I like that because I don't think it's fair for me to come in here and put in a full day's work and somebody just to come in here and put in time.

Mrs. Oakes, from the Social Studies department expressed her confidence in administration in different terms. She stated that school leadership, and Mr. Wright in particular, had been leading the school in the right direction prior to PLA status. Since Pleasant Valley became a priority school, the administration has become more focused. In describing where she thought Pleasant Valley was in terms of turnaround and the role of administration, she noted,

> "I think we've come a long way. I think Mr. Wright was doing a lot of good things before we were identified as a turnaround school; so that helped just accelerate our progress. I don't think we're, obviously, anywhere near perfect, but I do think that the culture's changing. And like I said, the kids are coming on board. I think we're on a good path." (Interview with Mrs. Oakes)

While the leadership of the principal is an important factor in school turnaround, it is also important to note that the role of teacher-leaders is also crucial. As Principal Wright noted earlier, the job of getting a failing school back on track requires teamwork and particularly the kind of distributive leadership that calls upon skilled teachers to help lead change. The collaborative work of the principal and teacher-leaders can definitely increase student learning and move a PLA school toward success (McDonald, Romer, & Suescun, M., 2012). In discussing Pleasant Valley's journey to proficiency, the principal of the technology center, Mrs. Rogers, described the process whereby teacher-leaders were transitioned into taking a central role. Rogers stated:

> Principals are a good resource for those teacher leaders, but I think developing that teacher leaders is a process. Maybe the first year of this process was the administrator at the beginning of the year started leading those PLCs, and then it started transpiring over more into the, at that point in time, department chairs. Then the following year, they moved it over to where it was a content lead, and they would just touch base periodically with the principal in charge of that content to make sure that they're doing the necessities for that meeting and then focusing on the data during that time and leading that discussion. I don't think a lot of teachers are used to leading discussions on data. I think that that's been one of those (changes brought about by the turnaround process) (Interview with Mrs. Rogers.).

Mr. Maples voiced a similar opinion about the work of teacher leaders within the school and primarily those involved in serving as liaisons to the various departments as members of the turnaround team.

> I think with the turn-around team having every department represented on the turn-around team, that I feel more willing and more able to go talk to those people who will share whatever ideas or concerns with the administration through that. I have kind of always felt like I've had, we've had an open door policy with our administration… (Interview with Mr. Maples).

Mr. Jones also stated that the Pleasant Valley's administration had delegated more responsibilities to teachers. He linked greater distributive leadership and the desired result of impacting students in stating:

> I think we've all had to develop those leadership roles over the last couple years. I guess one of the effective things that the administration has done has kind of divided up that decision making power and given a lot of opportunities to the departments themselves to determine what practices are best for their departments and their students. Being given that responsibility has made those of us that are in that position look more carefully at decisions we do and things we do in the department and make sure that they're impacting students in a positive way. Now it's not just something the administration has told us to do. It's something that we have chosen to do, so we have a lot more invested in things we're doing in our classes.

Despite the above attributions, not all faculty members felt that teachers were more involved in leadership or were becoming better leaders at all. When asked if she believed her colleagues were becoming better leaders as a result of the distributive approach of turnaround, Mrs. Baker contended:

> I think the ones [teachers] that are involved like on the turn-around team have become better leaders. I think the other ones have probably slacked because if you're not in that particular role, you're not really given a lot of opportunities for leadership since we don't have committees and things like that-like we used to. (Interview with Mrs. Baker).

Baker did not elaborate on her comments about other aspects of leadership besides involvement on committees. A follow-up question to Baker about other opportunities for leadership such as sharing instructional strategies, mentoring… may have provided more insight into her perceptions about leadership.

Romer, McDonald, and Suescun (Year and add to References) note that the task of teacher-leaders is more than just aggrandizing their own leadership or that of their colleagues. It also is to increase student learning. Mr. Hill's reflection indicated that he believed some teachers had been given more avenues to develop as leaders and share their skills and knowledge.

> … particularly with our coaching sessions, They've [administrators] given a lot of opportunities to people in different departments and different curriculum to come and share things that they do or have learned, which is something we've never

> really done before. I think that's been good for them to be able to do that. (Interview with Mr. Hill).

He did not elaborate as to whether he believed the teacher-leaders had affected student achievement. Later in the interview when asked about whether the school had been turned around, he stated that it was a matter of perception:

> I think part of it's a matter of perception. Part of it is we are targeting the things that the state will say is a good school, which might be college and career readiness. Those titles and those situations change every so many years, every time we get a new director of the Department of Education. We're directing our teaching more specifically to those so we're able to fulfill those requirements. Whether that means that our students are going to be more successful, I can't say that just because they end up being college and career ready. They fulfill that check mark, but I don't know if that's going to make them more successful. By the state requirements, yes we're turning it around. By students' success rate, are we turning it around? I don't know. We might not know for ten years. (Interview with Mr. Hill)

Communication and Collaboration

Two of the related themes often repeated throughout the interviews were collaboration and communication. The importance of teachers working together collaboratively as they develop their instructional practices is noted in the literature (Lave, 1996). Most of the respondents either overtly mentioned the high levels of collaboration that are occurring at Pleasant Valley or alluded to it in some indirect way.

Teachers are working closely together on the curriculum and teaching strategies in the weekly PLCs, the common planning meetings, and instructional coaching sessions. Everyone is sharing ideas and, in the process, becoming better leaders. Mr. Patterson, a Special Education collaboration teacher, shared his perspective about the collaboration and communication that are occurring within the math department:

> I know in our department, everybody, when we have our PLCs meeting, everybody speaks up. We don't really have anybody who just sits there and is just getting their time in to just get out of the PLC meetings. I think most people have really stepped up, and everybody has a role. Even in our sub-departments when we break out, whether it's doing a key for an interim assessment or creating a project or an assignment for a certain unit. Everybody gets assigned their certain things, and everybody pretty much pulls their weight in the math department. (Interview with Mr. Patterson)

Patterson also stated that he believes that the communication that is occurring across the school has directly led to the improvement that has been evident. He described how his working relationship with his colleagues has improved since the turnaround process began:

> I think it's [communication] become better. I think there's been more conversations. We've been [more communicative] since we started PLA, PLC meetings, and since starting our department meetings during planning once a week. And I think our communication has become much better between the teachers, and therefore, I think that's why we've seen some improvement. We've

> seen a lot of improvement in our academic areas just because of those conversations now that really have to happen because of our PLC meetings and sub meetings once a week.

Mr. Maples also stated that he felt that the staff at Pleasant Valley had increased communication and collaboration since becoming a Priority School. He further referenced the fact that teachers were crossing departmental lines to work with each other by stating:

> One of the big differences since we were identified as a priority school is just the amount of time that we spend working with colleagues. In our PLC meetings and sub-PLC meetings, we just have a lot more time we spend working with people within our department and cross-curricular. (Interview with Mr. Maples)

Mr. Patterson's and Mr. Maples' comments reflect the practices that are understood to facilitate teacher growth that will ultimately lead to increased student achievement. The literature on successful school turnaround is conclusive on the necessity of teacher-leaders working to implement strategies and structures whereby teachers collaborate with each other. According to the School Turnaround Field Guide, the process of teachers communicating with each other and working collaboratively builds "human capital". According to the Field Guide, "School leaders must create and sustain professional learning communities for teachers that allow for mutually supportive, cross-content area dialogue" (www.wallacefoundation.org. The Turnaround School Field Guide).

Curriculum Alignment and Instructional Monitoring

Perhaps one of the most important tasks that a school can do to improve performance is to take on the task of aligning the curriculum, instruction, and assessments to state standards. The literature about school improvement is replete with references on the necessity of having an academic program that is focused and intentional. One of the most important practices is the alignment of the curriculum to state and national standards (Turnaround Principle # 4, Curriculum, Assessment, & Intervention, www.doe.in.gov. Retrieved May 27, 2015; Duke & Landahl, 2011). The process of aligning the curriculum began in earnest at Pleasant Valley shortly after the school began the transformation process.

The work of alignment occurred mostly during PLC meetings. Mr. Fisher, expressed that this process initially increased the workload but ultimately was a time-saver in the end:

> Well, I think it's increased it [workload] for everybody, just because with our PLC meetings and things it's just . . . getting people more organized and more doing the same things in their classroom, which means you have to work with the other teachers in your department and to get the same materials … Getting together your unit plans and then your lesson plans all together where everybody's on the same page and teaching towards the standards more. Aligning everything to the standards. It's been a big push, but again this past year, some of that stuff has lessened, because that first year everybody was hustling to get that done. And it was a lot of work outside of school. Now those things are kind of in place.

Mrs. Miller referenced the push in the Social Studies department to include power standards (Quality Core Standards) in their units. Miller emphasized that the department received assistance from the ERS team in this process and that it was in part of the preparation for standards-based grading. (Interview with Mrs. Miller). Other respondents mentioned the emphasis that was placed on creating lesson plans and units as a consequence of Priority School status. The respondents were positive about this change as was Mrs. Craig in the Business department. “Before, we never had to do the lesson plans. I think that's wonderful [we do now]. I think they made us all do unit plans. I don't have a problem with that” (Interview with Mrs. Craig). Mrs. Oakes also alluded to the requirements that lesson plans and units be aligned to standards. Oakes discussed this in conjunction with the broader changes in the school culture. She linked this to a positive climate and culture change:

> Well, obviously the changes in how we do our units, how we do our lesson plans, how we test, all of that, like within the classroom stuff; all that's changed. Even now, going into the standards-based grading, how we grade is changing. I think the culture of the kids is starting to change. I was reluctant to see that at first. I don't think I saw it as much as I do now; now that we've been in it a couple of years. The kids are coming in now with those new expectations, with the pride, the PBIS [Positive Behavior Intervention System] team. The behavior expectations, and the academic expectations, I feel like the culture is changing. The kids are seeing how important it is.

Monitoring of Teaching and Learning

Along with the curriculum alignment, the monitoring of learning and teaching is another important hallmark of a successful school (Duke & Salmonowicz, 2012; Duke, 2007; Vaughn, 1999). Observations and interviews with the staff at Pleasant Valley indicate that it was one of the most important keys to the schools' remarkable change in course. Many of the respondents referenced the intentionality of what is being taught. They tended to mention this aspect more in terms of what teachers are doing in their classroom, in common planning sessions and PLC meetings rather than administrative oversight. Monitoring of teaching and learning links back to many of the other characteristics of effective schools such as communication and collaboration, high standards and expectations, and a clear and shared focus on academics. I asked the respondents if the turnaround had affected their feeling of efficacy. The media specialist responded to this question and in so doing mentioned the emphasis on teaching and learning. She discussed her observations of the efficacy of her colleagues at Pleasant Valley:

> In some ways, yes [the teachers have higher efficacy]. They [the teachers] are more effective. In some ways, not. I say that because some of them have lots of preps, like four or more, and it's hard to be very effective when you've got that many preps and you've got that much paperwork that you're dealing with. You may not necessarily do a good job teaching. Overall, I think the teachers are becoming more and more intentional, and they're looking at their curriculum a

> whole lot closer and looking to see that they are teaching what they need to be teaching.

Mrs. Rogers spoke directly to the issue of monitoring of teaching and learning that has occurred at Pleasant Valley as a result of the school's transformation over the previous two years:

> There's been a lot more intentionality towards instruction. There's been a lot more monitoring towards instruction as far as the planning process and the reflective process, and I've seen that. There's a larger focus on CTE [Career and Technical Education], and part of that maybe is because of the turnaround. But part of that is because the accountability model changed in the middle of it, so I'm not sure where that, if it falls because of PLA or if it falls because of accountability [accountability changed from CATS testing to End of Course test scores, graduation rates and college and career readiness].

Mr. Carter's comment about increased monitoring of teaching and learning through intentional practices was similar:

> One of the things, I think we're making a push towards standards base grading, which I think will help all of our students. Our department has been doing it for a long time, and we've seen some success with it. I am excited that that's branching out to some other departments.

Additional comments about PLCs by Mrs. Rogers also reflected the attention placed on the monitoring of teaching and learning at Pleasant Valley. When asked about how the

changes at Pleasant Valley, since the onset of PLA status, had empowered teacher, Rogers said:

> I think it gives them more of an opportunity through those PLCs to look at the data. Here's my kids. What do I need to do to get from point A to point B? My point A may be at this level, and your point A may be at this level, and that means you've got to figure out how to get, differentiate that instruction a little more. It gives them a time to sit down and talk about it, and if they're students in common, to discuss those. I know in the content areas, Biology is going to meet together, and Algebra II is going to meet together, and Algebra I is going to meet together. In CTE, it doesn't work that way.

Support for Teachers

In order to bring about positive change in a school, teachers must have the necessary support in terms of professional development and access to technology. The body of literature concerning PLA schools, such as Pleasant Valley, indicates that teachers benefit most from ongoing professional development rather than one-time workshops. Meaningful effective change comes from ongoing support and in-house, job-embedded professional development (Garet, Berman, Porter, Desimone, & Herman, 1999; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Berman, & Yoon, 2001; Hawley & Villi, 1999; Joyce & Showers, 2002). When I asked teachers about the kinds of support in terms of technology and professional development they had received as a result of being in a Priority School status, I received various responses. Mr. Patterson spoke at length about the professional development opportunities and his particular approach to his own needs. He noted that

the school provides many ways for teachers and staff to receiving training in areas of need and interest to them. He began his response by talking about GradeCam (a software program that allows teacher to use their document cameras to grade exams, share results, and scan test bank, documents, and so on:

> We just recently started with GradeCam, and that thing is wonderful. I don't know how much you've used it, but we use it in the math department, and it's . . . that's been a good technology. They started using it last year, just kind of a few teachers seeing what it was like, and pretty much the whole math department has converted over to using that for their test and things. Our professional development . . . That may be something I need to improve in. Most of the time, I just attend the school-sponsored ones to get my professional development in. I don't do a lot of seeking outside of school, which again, that may be something I need to improve in is seeking professional development outside of what the school offers. The school does a good job, I think, of making sure everybody gets their professional development hours and trying to get them in areas . . . Of course, the board offers a slew of professional developments that you can do once a week on different subjects and areas.

Support from the ERS Team

One type of support that PLA schools receive is from the ERS Teams. The research about the effectiveness of the ERS team support indicates that teachers benefit from the coaching model that the Kentucky Department of Education implements with the ERS teams (Lave, 1996; Kohler & Ezell, 1999). Interestingly, most of the teachers at

Pleasant Valley expressed entirely positive feelings about the coaching they had received from the ERS team. Two teachers, though, were direct in stating that in the first year of the priority status/turnaround, the ERS team provided so much information that it was not always helpful:

> The first ER team that we had was throwing paperwork after paperwork after paperwork after packet after packet after packet telling us to use what we wanted to and toss what we didn't. None of us ever knew what was effective, what wasn't, but now I think we all have a concrete pathway because now if we ask for something specific, we get that specific thing. We don't have people handing us stuff and saying use this and use this and use this, but only use what you think's effective.

A second faculty member who had been in the district for many years and had held administrative positions prior to coming to the high school also had a negative view of the support offered by the ERS team. He shared that he had asked questions of the ERS team but was reluctant for fear that he might have to do extra work:

> Personally, I think we would have been able to do just as well or better without them. I've not seen any benefit to having them other than creating more things for us to do. As far as being able to help us achieve our goals, they may have helped the administration in getting some of that stuff together or planning things or doing some trainings or those kinds of things. As far as helping me personally, I've not seen any true benefits to it. I could have done it just as well with nobody

> here, saving the state a couple hundred thousand dollars a year. We could have hired four or five more teachers.

Learning Environment

A supportive learning environment is essential to improving academic performance (Orr, 2008; Duke & Salmonowicz, 2010). It is obvious from interviewing the teachers at Pleasant Valley that they do provide classrooms where students are given quality instruction. The teachers also are heavily invested in seeing that the students graduate college and career ready. The concept of a "supportive learning environment" is somewhat subjective. I believe though that the evidence of a rich supportive learning environment is a change in culture wherein the students care about their own success and have goals. In discussing the change in culture, Mr. Fisher described what he has observed as an attitudinal change among the student body:

> I think our culture has gotten better as far as students wanting to be college and career-ready, being intentional about what we do to get kids college and career-ready, and kids seeing that it's something that . . .as a goal that they want to reach to become college and career-ready. Kids talk about it in the hallways. They talk about their ACT scores. They talk about wanting to do better on some of those tests, so I think the culture has really improved over the last couple of years. (Interview with Mr. Fisher)

Statements about the change in the school culture ran through almost all of the interview responses. All of the teachers referred in some way to the fact that the students are taking

more pride in their achievements. They are also taking the learning environment more seriously. These changes, I believe reflect a supportive learning environment.

Finally, one of the hallmarks of a successful school is a high level of family and community involvement. The teachers did not address this subject. The principal, Mr. Wright, did discuss this at some length. He stated that one of ways that families are involved is through the parent-teacher conferences that are held regularly. He also mentioned a community service club that has been established at Pleasant Valley.

Summary

In this chapter, I have attempted to tell Pleasant Valley's story through the perspectives of its teachers and administrators. I have attempted to let the voices of the teachers describe the journey they took from being identified as a persistently-low performing school in priority school status to becoming a successful school where excellence in teaching and learning is an expectation.

The results of the study supported the following findings to the research question: *How did the turnaround process at one successful rural high school influence school improvement from the perception of teachers and administrators?* The responses indicated that the turnaround process influenced school improvement through changing teacher and administrator attitudes and approaches to instruction and teamwork. The staff perceived that they have become more focused and intentional about working together to identify problems and create solutions. The staff perceived student achievement as increasing. This, they believe, has been caused by the desire of the students to become college- and career-ready. The culture of achievement has been established through the

conversations that faculty are now having with students and the greater emphasis being placed on post-secondary readiness. The emphasis on producing students who are prepared for college and/or a career was a result of the turnaround process. While it is true that test scores have not increased dramatically, other measures of student success, such as graduation rates are on the rise. The faculty's decision to focus on factors that they could control (namely, preparing students for the ACT, and college and career readiness) points to a strategic approach to turning the school around.

The data from the results of the other research question (*How did teachers perceive the effects of being identified as a "priority school"?*) indicate that the majority of teachers perceived turnaround as an experience that has been stressful and demanding. Ultimately, it has been a process that, more than producing scores for accountability, has created a new culture of pride and achievement among the teachers and students. New systems for collaborative work, such as the professional learning communities, have been created and departments are working together to craft instruction based on standards. Most of the teachers perceive turnaround as a process that has made them more focused, data driven, and intentional. Teacher responses point to the fact that teachers at Pleasant Valley High School have all taken the initiative to be involved in committees and other positions of responsibility and become better leaders. From the teacher perspective, turnaround has not been just a top-down initiative directed by the administration. Rather, the turnaround of Pleasant Valley High School has been the work of teachers and administrators working together. Distributive leadership, a reliance on data, and a

willingness to do whatever is necessary to achieve success appear to be the hallmarks of Pleasant Valley High School's success.

In chapter five, I will review key findings in terms of how teachers perceive the school transformation /turnaround process and how this has affected them personally and professionally, and relate these findings to previous research on turnaround schools. I also will discuss how teacher perceptions may have impacted the school's path to success. Finally, I will highlight recommendations for practice and policy, as well as future research on turnaround schools.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This chapter contains three parts: 1) an integrated review and discussion of the results from the study of the turnaround process of one rural Kentucky high school from the perspectives of teachers and administration; and 2) a recommendation for further research, educational practices, and how similarly situated schools might approach the process of turnaround. The first part of the discussion includes a review of the purpose of this study and the research findings in relation to the two research questions: *How did the turnaround process at one successful rural high school influence school improvement from the perspectives of teachers and one administrator?* And *how did teachers perceive the effects of being identified as a "priority school?"* All quotes included in this chapter were presented initially in chapter four and are used again as a reminder of evidence supporting themes and or to emphasize implications emphasized in this chapter. The second part of the chapter consists of a discussion of how the study might inform future research and how other schools that are similar to the one in this study might learn from the findings.

Findings: Teacher Perceptions, Practices and Success

In chapter IV, I presented Pleasant Valley's story including an overview of the demographics and culture. I also included an account of the school's struggle from failing to meet its AYP and being labeled as a "persistently low- achieving school" to its climb back up to a "progressing school" status. In telling the story of the school's comeback from the bottom, I looked specifically at the characteristics of successful schools and compared Pleasant Valley's practices and policies to those indicators. I used the

responses I obtained through the interview process to give further credibility to Pleasant Valley's success. This chapter presents the interview data in an integrated form as it relates to the teachers' perceptions of the experience of working in a turnaround/priority school. The teachers told their stories and in so doing revealed what they believed have been the practices that have led to the school's improvement. They also revealed their feelings about being part of the turnaround process and how it has affected them personally and their practice.

I have arranged the presentation of the interview data around the major themes that emerged. These themes relate to work habits, attitudes, and practices. These themes correlate to the characteristics of successful schools discussed in the literature and delineated in chapter four. The intent of this organization is to make it clear how practices and policies adopted from the Transformation Model and carried out with direction from Pleasant Valley's administration and the ERS team lead to instructional changes and greater collaboration.

Intentionality

I asked the teachers to describe the changes they had observed occurring at the school since the turnaround began. Of the sixteen teachers interviewed, the vast majority mentioned that they or their colleagues had become more intentional in planning and instruction. They also either directly or inferentially linked the intentionality to greater student achievement and/or an improved learning environment. One of the teachers in the Career and Technical Education department, described the changes she has observed this way:

> There's been a lot more intentionality towards instruction. There's been a lot more monitoring towards instruction as far as the planning process and the reflective process, and I've seen that.

Mr. Matthews mentioned a greater emphasis on teacher accountability when he referred to intentionality. He also noted that this was a change from when he started teaching at Pleasant Valley:

> There's been much more accountability placed on teachers in the classroom. When I first started here, for example, lesson plans weren't even required to be turned in, which was kind of a shock. That's one change. They're due weekly now. Again, kind of the intentionality of making sure that students are placed in the classes at the levels that they need instruction at. Things like that.

Mrs. West, was emphatic in stating that her teaching had been impacted as a result of the school's PLA status and the turnaround. Like Jones, West stated that her instructional practices had changed. She responded to the question about how her attitude about her work had changed as a result of the turnaround:

> It has made me become more aware of my teaching styles, made me become more aware of intentionally teaching, other than just instructing. It has forced me to be a better teacher.

When asked about the impact on her practice she said.

> I want to say that prior to becoming a Priority School, I think I was just going through the motions with the students and now I am intentionally, one on one, making sure they understand the concepts, making sure they understand the

> standards and holding myself more accountable. I want to say that prior to becoming a Priority School, I think I was just going through the motions with the students and now I am intentionally, one on one, making sure they understand the concepts, making sure they understand the standards and holding myself more accountable.

At another point in the interview, Mrs. West related the intentionality to the overall culture of the school and the heightened awareness of the students about what is expected of them:

> I feel overall the culture of the school has become one of intention. I feel through the three years that we have been in this status that students are becoming aware of what they are being taught, what they are being tested on. I feel that the students are beginning to understand what is important and what is not important. I do feel that our culture overall is more intentionality.

Mr. Patterson also referred to being intentional about how instruction is now being delivered at Pleasant Valley. In answering how his practice had changed over the past two years, he referenced several high-yield strategies and intentionality:

> It's more being intentional with what you do in a class. I know I've said that word a lot, but being more intentional with what you do in class as far as are you doing what you're supposed to be doing? Your bell ringers to getting through your lesson plans, formative assessments, your summative assessments. Are your formative assessments, are you doing it every day, and how are you doing it?

> Making you think about, well, I need better questioning here, higher-level question here, or things that you need to change in class.

These quotes highlight three key findings. First, a shared understanding around the term intentional has emerged in this school around the term intentional. This language likely emerged from its use by the principal and Education Recovery Team members. Second, this intentionality is being emphasized in practice and viewed as a healthy outcome of accountability and a sense of urgency to improve. Finally, and most importantly, teachers attribute improved instruction, a more positive school culture, and greater responsibility for student learning to this intentionality.

Focus

Focus may be loosely defined as concentrating on a point or area, or the area or point that is being drawn closely into view or concentration. Many of the teachers used the words *focus* or *focused* in describing how they approached their work during the school turnaround. Focus was described as a part of intentionality but exclusively in terms of what students need to know and be able to do, most often to be college or career ready. The respondents spoke of "focus" in terms of daily procedures and instruction. One of the members of the Family and Consumer Science department stated that although she considered herself to be a good teacher, she feels that that she is now concerned with what her students are learning on a daily basis. When I asked her what it is like to come to work every day in a priority school, she replied: "It's much more focused now than the way we used to be. I always feel like I've been a good teacher. But, now I'm more intent, this is what I want my students to learn today." She further stated

that her instructional practices have changed over the past two and a half years in that she no longer wastes time with anything that does not relate to the curriculum standards. She stated, “If it's not related to a standard-a learning target- I'm not going to do that anymore.”

Teachers spoke of focus positively. It provided them with clarity of purpose. They did not speak of it as something that comes at the expense of their professional autonomy. In other words, they equated focus with standards (a positive) and not with standardization (a negative.) This focus was relevant at the individual, department, PLC and school levels. It leads to greater goal congruence among faculty and students.

Collaboration

One of the themes that is prominent in the literature about school improvement is that collaboration between teachers and with administration promotes success (Duke, 2011). Colleagues working together has been a prominent feature of Pleasant Valley’s success. Routines and structures such as weekly common planning sessions and PLCs have become institutionalized. More importantly, the teachers readily articulate the benefits of this culture of collaboration and communication that has been fashioned at Pleasant Valley. Mrs. West described how her relationship with her co-workers has changed in the last two and a half years. She stated that she had come to rely on her colleagues more since the turnaround began:

> I definitely rely on them more. Rather than creating and inventing myself, we all work collaboratively together, bounce ideas off what's good, what's not good,

> what's going to be best for the students and then I really just . . . If I didn't have them, it would make it even more difficult.

Mr. Patterson, a Special Education collaborator, had this to say about the connection he sees between communication and academic performance:

> Actually, I think it's become better. I think there's been more conversations. … since we started PLA, PLC meetings, and our department meetings during planning once a week, I think our communication has become much better between the teachers and that, therefore, I think that's why we've seen some improvement. We've seen a lot of improvement in our academic areas just because of that conversations now that really have to happen because of our PLC meetings and sub meetings once a week.

Collectively, this collaboration was critical to school turnaround for several reasons. First, it gave the opportunity for teachers to learn from one another and to develop teacher leadership capacity. Teachers learn best from other teachers. Second, it prevented feeling of isolations and generated supported for one another that enabled them to progress through the difficult times. Finally, collaboration between teachers and administrators resulted in the teachers viewing their administrators as supportive and aware of what improvements really needed to be made.

Feelings of Efficacy

Duke is one of many researchers who has identified greater feelings of efficacy as being a hallmark of a successful school (Duke, 2011). The overwhelming majority of the teachers stated they felt like they were more effective teachers than they had been prior to

the turnaround process. The teachers attributed this efficacy to a variety of reasons i.e. receiving more support from administration, being placed in positions of leadership in their departments, receiving feedback on instructional strategies and lesson plans, a cultural change that included students taking greater responsibility for their learning and pride in their school. The teachers also tended to link feelings of efficacy with the increased opportunities for communication and collaboration occurring at Pleasant Valley.

The Speech and Debate teacher, Mrs. Bell, stated that she initially had felt like a failure, but those feelings changed after the ERS team arrived and began showing teachers test data. She made this statement:

> At first I felt like I was a complete and total failure. I really did. What I really liked about the turnaround- no, the ER team was that they came in with statistics based on each teacher to see our growth as far as test scores of our students, and when they put that data in front of you, it totally changes how you see yourself as a teacher. A lot of us were doing a whole lot better than we thought we were.

Mrs. Oakes, a Social Studies teacher, responded that since the turnaround, she feels more confident in herself. She did state that her confidence might be in part due to experience. She said that her instructional style had changed. Specifically, she noted that rather than lecturing, she and her colleagues are now placing greater responsibility back on the students:

> We were forced as a department to reevaluate how we do things within the classroom. We did a lot of stand and deliver type stuff. I think we've changed, in

> that we've put a lot of the work back on the kids. Not to say that I don't lecture. I do, but it's not power point notes, power point notes, power point notes. It's them getting in groups or them working on their on something. It's not necessarily me just standing up and talking for fifteen minutes. So that's probably, at least for Sharon and I, that's what's changed the most; the way we teach.

The school media specialist, Mrs. Upton, was less certain about the relationship between efficacy and the turnaround. She made the following statement about how she perceived teacher efficacy as a result of the turnaround process:

> They are more effective. In some ways, not. I say that because some of them have lots of [preps], like four or more and it's hard to be very effective when you've got that many preps and you've got that much paperwork that you're dealing with. You may not necessarily do a good job teaching. Overall, I think the teachers are becoming more, and more intentional and they're looking at their curriculum a whole lot closer and looking to see that they are teaching what they need to be teaching.

Thus, while the majority of the respondents reported that the turnaround process enhanced teacher efficacy, a smaller number implied that turnaround is necessary but not sufficient for increased teacher efficacy. They noted the importance of structural changes such as the number of preps taught and those enabling teachers to learn from one another must be in place as well.

Teacher Free Time

One of the most important issues for teachers in terms of school turnaround was how they perceived their personal life i.e. free time as being affected. I included a question about how working at Pleasant Valley High School had affected their personal life in terms of free time for hobbies, time with family, etc. This issue is important because teachers who are over-worked and have little time for hobbies and free time may not be as effective and more importantly may not be as positive about their job and the turnaround process in general. Interestingly, I found that a majority of the teachers interviewed said that their workload had definitely increased as a result of the priority status. Surprisingly few of them expressed concern or negativity about their workload and having less free time. The teachers all seemed willing to accept the increased work and responsibilities as just part of the price to improve Pleasant Valley. Teachers do a cost-benefit analysis of how they spend their time. In this case, rather than leading to increased burnout among teachers, the increased time was worth investing by most teachers because it enabled them to see their students learning improve and the culture of their school improve. In other words, the increased time investment lead to validating outcomes that lead them to feel more efficacious and proud of their school.

Mrs. Baker stated that she was working longer hours but that she manages to do what she wants in terms of her free time. She stated, “I work longer hours. I don't get as much done at home. But, I do all the other things that I want to do, but I just don't get as much done at home I guess”

Despite the positive sentiments held by most teachers around the increased workload, a small minority expressed that the workload was a source of stress not only

for them but had affected their family life. Mrs. Smith described how the work has impacted her family:

> Interviewer: How has working in a turnaround school affected your personal life in terms of free time for hobbies, time with the family, etcetera?
>
> Respondent: Tremendously. It's taken a lot of my time. Right now, I don't have any free time. It's been a burden on my husband because he's having to pick up … My kids are having to pick up my slack at home. He's having to attend to my kids' homework because I don't have time to do that with them, so he does a lot more of that because I'm always burdened down with things for here and that's straining. It's straining. (Interview with Mrs. Smith).

Mrs. Craig response about her workload and the impact on her personal time was similar to Mrs. Smith. When asked the question about her workload and family time, hobbies, etc., she answered:

> It's cut it back. My husband has really told me, "Hey you've got to put down your school work. You've got to spend time with me and your child." This year I've taken my email off my phone because before I just answered emails every night for an hour coming through.

Taken together, these differing views regarding workload in turnaround schools highlight two key findings. First, work in such schools is complex and demanding. Second, the additional time required of teachers in such schools can have vastly different effects. On one hand, it can be energizing as students become more successful. On the other hand, it can be overwhelming and impact entire families. These findings emphasize

the challenge teachers in turnaround schools face to find a balance between work and home, as well as the need for such teachers to have the intrapersonal awareness to make sure that they meet their own needs. Otherwise, they are more likely to burnout, and thus become unable to effectively serve the students that need them the most.

School Turnaround

One of the last questions I asked the teacher was whether they believed Pleasant Valley had truly been turned around. All of the teachers interviewed stated without reservation that the school had truly been transformed. A few added that it still had worked to do. These teachers understood that turnaround is a process and not event that ends at a given point in time. As evidence of the school's turnaround, respondents pointed generally to factors like improved culture, more intentional teaching, collaboration, and a clear focus on academics. One of the most straightforward answers to the question came from Mr. Hall. He believed the school has undergone positive changes. However, he stated that the true test of the turnaround will not be seen until it is evident whether or not the students are successful after they graduate. He stated that the success of the turnaround is a matter of perception:

> I think part of it's a matter of perception. Part of it is we are targeting the things that the state will say is a good school, which might be college and career. Those titles and those situations change every so many years, every time we get a new director of the Department of Education. We're directing our teaching more specifically to those so we're able to fulfill those requirements. Whether that means that our students are going to be more successful, I can't say that. Just

> because they end up being college and career ready—they fulfill that check mark, I don't know if that's going to make them more successful. By the state requirements, yes we're turning it around. By students' success rate, are we turning it around? I don't know. We might not know for 10 years.

Summary of Findings by Question

The perceptions derived from these interviews led me back to my research questions. Regarding the first research question (*How did the turnaround process at one successful rural high school influence school improvement from the perspectives of teachers and one administrator?*), the teachers' and principal's responses show that the turnaround process brought many changes and improvements to Pleasant Valley High School. The most significant change was in terms of student achievement, and the one most frequently noted was that the students are now more aware of being college- and career-ready and want to achieve this readiness. Many of the teacher participants spoke of buy-in on the part of students, meaning that students realize that the faculty and administration are serious about instruction and student achievement. The implications are that the faculty and administration have communicated their commitment to achievement in some way that has effected not only themselves but the students as well, ultimately transforming the perception of the schools as one from failing to one of pride.

Teacher responses further indicated that the turnaround process has drastically changed their instructional practices. The teachers stated that the most significant way that turnaround has impacted them was the amount of time they spend on lesson planning and in working with colleagues in professional learning communities. The majority of

teachers said that the time that they spend on all work-related tasks has drastically increased, with some spending three to four additional hours on school work every day. The majority of teachers reflected that, as a result of turnaround, they are now more focused and intentional in all aspects of their instruction. The teachers also point to the fact that in their professional learning communities they are deeply involved in aligning their instruction to content standards and that they are examining student assessment data. The principal stated that one of the biggest instructional changes he has noticed is the intentional focus on the content standards. He also made statements that were very similar to his teachers with regards to professional learning communities and collaboration, and a greater reliance on data to guide instructional decisions. These responses reflect the kinds of changes made by successful turnaround schools (Duke & Salmonowicz, 2010).

One of the most interesting revelations to come out of the interview process was the perception that the teachers have of the educational recovery specialists (ERs or ER team). When asked if the ER team had assisted them in improving their instruction or lesson planning, the participants stated that the ER team had given them more work to do. None of the interviewed faculty said that they saw a connection between increased student achievement and the presence of the ER team. One teacher stated that during the first two years of the school's turnaround, the ER team was highly visible and took a hands-on approach to assisting the school. The teacher stated that during the third year of turnaround, the ER team was seldom visible and that she didn't know what they are doing. This response is notable because of the participant's perceptions of the ER team's

purpose. Rather than viewing the decreased involvement of the ER team as a tacit expression of confidence in the teachers and a step toward allowing them greater independence, the teacher viewed it somewhat negatively.

The tone of the interviews indicated that most of the teachers had a neutral opinion of the ER team. This finding is similar to Burns' (2013) research on teacher efficacy. She found that among the persistently low-achieving schools that she studied in eastern Kentucky, the assistance of the ER team had little effect on teacher efficacy (Burns, 2013). Perhaps the teachers at Pleasant Valley High School believe that they were already putting new systems and practices into place by the time the ER team was assigned and that the ER team was superfluous. More research is needed in the field to examine these issues, especially given the costs of having ER teams and the power they are afforded. These teachers' perceptions also merit continued investigation of the impact of turning around schools by using external experts versus focus on improving schools from within.

Regarding the second research question (*How did teachers perceive the effects of being identified as a turnaround/ priority school?*), the participants were asked how it felt for them to come to school daily in a turnaround school and if their personal lives had been affected by the turnaround process. All of the participant responses were surprisingly similar. The majority of the participants described the experience of the turnaround as being stressful. They stated that their workload increased and that the amount of time they spent in professional learning community meetings, lesson planning, and program reviews was responsible for the increase. A small number of teachers said

that they had not experienced a significant increase in their workload. Either these teachers already spent an inordinate amount of time with tasks that they can control or they ignore some of the mandates of the turnaround.

When asked if devoting extra time to work-related activities had affected the time they spent with their family, hobbies, or other activities, the majority stated that, since their school entered turnaround, they have less personal time. A few of the participants responded negatively about this, and most tended to believe that this was just a part of the school improvement. One respondent reported that she has less free time and that she spends more time on mandated paperwork than she does planning work for students. Another teacher stated that she refused to let the demands of teaching detract from the time she spends with her family. She said that she works hard at school but leaves the work at school when the day is over. A veteran leader teacher noted that she felt that the workload brought about by turnaround was tremendous and that the time she spent on work-related activities had at least doubled. When the interview ended, she shared her distress about her situation.

Collectively, the perceptions of teachers regarding their time and workload paint a complex picture. Not surprisingly, almost all of the teachers reported that working in a turnaround school requires significantly more time. Further, most described the additional time has stressful. However, a majority of teachers also communicated that the additional time was just part of the requirements of working in a turnaround school and worth it because it paid off in school in improvement that would not have emerged if less time had been committed. It was clear that some teachers felt tremendous levels of stress while

others reported no negative impact. Studies on how and why teachers react differently to the demands of working in a turnaround schools would clearly be beneficial.

Implications of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how teachers perceived the effect of the turnaround process on their work and student achievement in one rural Kentucky school. The turnaround or transformation model for low-achieving schools is relatively new in school policy and law. According to the literature, its success is dependent upon several factors, among them, leadership and teacher attitudes (Duke & Salmonowicz, 2010). These two factors seem to play a more important role than student demographics, which is consistent with the way the turnaround is structured and even funded. This study only focused on teacher perceptions over a two-year period.

The work of Duke and others who have worked in conjunction with the Darden School of Business and the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia have drawn similar conclusions to this study in terms of the factors that contribute to successful school turnaround (Duke, et al., 2005).The factors that are crucial include: a) leadership (administrators) who can instill a vision for change; b) collaboration between faculty and between faculty and administration; c) program changes that are supported by data; and d) a willingness to experiment with different approaches until solutions to problems are found. The interviews of the staff and the lead principal at Pleasant Valley High School indicate that these conditions do indeed exist. The implications of the study then are that regardless of school size, resources, or demographics, positive change can occur if the leadership at the school level not only has a vision for change but can also

articulate that vision in such a way as to motivate the faculty to join in the work. The impact of district leadership was not investigated in this study, however. Future research might examine the role of leadership at the district level and how building level administrators and teachers perceive it.

One of the most intriguing results to come out of this study was the lack of consensus among the staff at Pleasant Valley about the effectiveness of the educational recovery teams (ERS) that had worked in the school. As noted, the faculty agreed that the ERS team was somewhat helpful during the first year of turnaround. However, many of faculty were not quite clear about the team's purpose or role during the second and third years of the turnaround process. The staff, as indicated by their responses, willingly participated in the process of improvement. They reexamined professional practices and procedures that were unproductive and replaced them with high-yield, data driven practices. The interviews indicate that the staff at Pleasant Valley began the turnaround process before the ERS team ever arrived. The end result was the kind of indigenous success that Burns referenced as being a characteristic of an effective school (Burns, 2013). One might speculate that under the strong leadership of Mr. Wright, Pleasant Valley might have continued on the successful trajectory that it was on without the assistance of the ERS. This is significant given the cost of placing a three-person team in a priority school.

According to a Kentucky Department of Education representative Jason Radford, who is with the Office of Educational Recovery, the average annual salary for an educational recovery specialist is approximately $85,000-90,000 (Telephone

conversation, June 16, 2015). The exact formula is based on 235 days of employment using the local district's pay grade, plus a stipend. Considering the fact that a three-member team costs approximately $270,000 for one year, the implications are tremendous. More staff, including experienced teachers, could be hired using this amount of money in addition to providing intensive professional development for the staff and instructional programs and resources for students. The crucial question is, then, are the ERS teams an efficient, cost-effective use of money? Is it possible that priority schools could utilize funds to build capacity from within? This study supports Burn's (2013) conclusion that the improvement of priority schools is impacted by many factors including the presence of the ERS team. More studies of priority schools, similar to this study, should be completed in order to draw more definitive conclusions. Also, researchers should look at the specific academic interventions utilized by the ERS teams and the priority schools as a whole. It also would be helpful to examine the progress of a priority school over time after the "turnaround" process is finished to determine if the academic achievement gains and positive changes are sustained.

The present study of Pleasant Valley has led me to make the following recommendations for similarly situated schools: 1) the leader of a priority school must have a vision of where he/she wants to take the school over a three-year period and specifically how academic success will be achieved; 2) the leader's vision must be informed by having a grasp of the school's data i.e. the leader/principal must know how and why the school became labeled "persistently low-achieving" and how to use the data to chart a course to success; 3) the road to improvement must be a collaborative effort of

all stakeholders i.e. the school administration, the teachers, staff, students, parents and the community; 4) the school must focus on two or three areas of greatest need e.g. college and career readiness, graduation rates, ACT scores… etc. until success is achieved before moving to other areas; 5) a climate of communication and collaboration must be maintained in order for success to occur); the vision and mission of the school must be shared by all stakeholders; and 6) success will come through consistent, intentional efforts practiced on a daily basis. The fact that the school in this study is located in Appalachia and is confronted with many challenges as a result but was still able to transform itself should provide hope to those working in turnaround schools in all contexts.

REFERENCES

Borman, G. D., & D'Agostino, J. V. (1996). Title student and I achievement: A meta-analysis of federal evaluation results. *Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *18*(4), 309-326.

Borman, G. D., Hewes, G., Overman, L., & Brown, S. (2002). Comprehensive school reform and student achievement: A meta-analysis. *Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk*. Retrieved from http://www.elschools.orgsites/default /files/CRESPAR-Borman-2002.pdf

Burns, A. (2013). *The effects of education recovery teams on collective teacher efficacy and student achievement in priority schools* (Doctoral dissertation). Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, KY.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Duke, D. (2012). Tinkering and turnarounds: Understanding the contemporary campaign to improve low-performing schools. *Journal of Education for Students Placed At-Risk*, *1*(1/2), 9-24.

Duke, D., & Landahl, M. (2011). International studies in educational administration. *Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration & Management (CCEAM)*, *39*(3), 91-114.

Duke, D., &. Salmonowicz, M. (2010). Key decisions of a first-year turnaround principal. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *38*, 33-58.

Duke, D. L. (2011). Raising tests scores was the easy part: A case study of the third year of school turnaround. *International Studies of Educational Administration*, *39*, 91-114.

Duke, D. L., Tucker, P. D., Belcher, M., Crews, D., Harrison-Coleman, J., Higgins, J., . . . West, J. (2005). *Lift-off: Launching the school turnaround process in 10 Virginia schools.* Charlotte, VA: Darden-Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education, University of Virginia.

Duke, D. L., Tucker, P. D., Salmonowicz, M. J., & Levy, M. K. (2007). How comparable are the perceived challenges facing principals of low-performing schools. *International Studies in Educational Administration*, *35*, 3-21.

Duncan, A. (2009). *Turning around the bottom five percent*. National Alliance for Public Charter Schools: Washington, D.C.

Eaker, R., Dufour, R., & Burnette, R. (2002). *Getting started: Re-culturing schools to become professional learning communities.* Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

Fairchild, T. T., & DeMary, J. L. (2011). *The turnaround mindset: Aligning leadership for student success*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Fullan, M. (2006). *Turnaround leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Garet, M. S., Berman, B. F., Porter, A. C., Desimone, L., & Herman, R. (1999). Designing effective professional development: Lessons from the Eisenhower program and technical appendices. *American Educational Research Journal*, *38*(4), 915-945.

Garet, M. S., Porter, A. C., Desimone, L., Berman, B. F., & Yoon, K. S. (2001). What makes professional development effective? Results from a national sample of teachers. *American Educational Research Journal*, *38*(4), 615-645.

Glesne, C. (2007). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction.* Boston, MA: Pearson.

Guskey, T. R. (2000). *Evaluating professional development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Haretos, C. (2005). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001: Is the definition of "adequate yearly progress" adequate? *Kennedy School Review*, *6*, 29-46.

Hess, F. M. (2013). School turnarounds. *National Affairs*, *17*, 19-35.

Ibarra, H., & Hunter, M. (2007). How leaders create and use networks. *Harvard Business Review*, *85*(1), 40.

Joyce, B. R., & Showers, B. (2002). *Student achievement through staff development*. Arlington, VA: Association of Supervision & Curriculum Development.

Khadaroo, S. T. (2013, April 26). A nation at risk: How much of "apocalyptic" education report still applies? *Christian Science Monitor*. Retrieved from http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Education/2013/0426/A-Nation-at-Risk-How-much-of-apocalyptic-education-report-still-applies?nav=666849-csm_article-leftColRelated

Kentucky Statute 160.346. (2014). *"Persistently low-achieving school" and "school intervention" defined*. Retrieved from http://www.lrc.ky.gov/Statutes/statute.aspx?id=40246

Kofman, F., & Senge, P. M. (1993). Communities of commitment: The heart of learning organizations. *Organizational Dynamics*, *22*(2), 5-23.

Kohler, F. W, Ezell, H. K., & Paluselli, M. (1999). Promoting changes in teacher conduct of student pair activities: An examination of reciprocal peer coaching. *The Journal of Special Education*, *33*(3), 154-165.

Lave, J. (1996). Teaching as learning in practice. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, *3*(3), 149-164.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2000). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp.163-188), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mass Insight Education and Research Institute. (2010). *School turnaround models: Emerging turnaround strategies and results*. Retrieved from http://www.massinsight.org/publications/stg-resources/112/file/1/pubs/2010/07/20/Turnaround_Models_7_19_10.pdf

McDonald, E., Romer, T., & Suescun, M. (2012). Buoyed on all sides: a network of support and guides teacher-leaders in high-need schools. *Journal of Staff Development, 33*(6), 35-36.

McNeil, M. (2009). New rules set for 3.5 billion in turnaround aid. *Education Week*, *29*(14), 4.

Mitchell, R. J. (1993). *Secrecy and fieldwork*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Moustaka, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Orr, M. T. (2008). Putting the pieces together: Leadership for change in low-performing urban schools. *Education and Urban Society*, *40*(6), 670-693.

Sanders, M. G., & Jordan, W. J. (Eds.) (2000). *Schooling students placed at risk: Research policy and practice in the education of poor and minority adolescents*. New York: Routledge.

Schein, E. H. (2006). *Organizational culture and leadership*. New York: Wiley & Sons.

Steiner, L., Ayscue Hassel, E., & Hassel, B. (2008). *School turnaround leaders: Selection toolkit*. Chapel Hill, NC: Public Impact.

Vaughn, D. (1999). The dark side of organizations: Mistake, misconduct, and disaster. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 271-305.

U.S. Department of Education. (2009). *School improvement grant* [Press release]. Retrieved from http://www2ed.gov/news/pressrelease

U.S. Department of Education. (2010). *Kentucky to receive nearly $56 million to turn around its persistently lowest achieving schools* [Press release]. Retrieved from http://www.2.ed.gov/newsreleases/2010/04/04212010

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development. (2010). ESEA. Blueprint for Reform. Washington, D.C. U.S. Department of Education.

Wallace Foundation.org (2010). *Part II Shaping the future of Turnaround- The School Turnaround Field Guide.* Retrieved from http://www.wallacefoundation.org/pages/federal-funding-school-turnaround-field-guide.aspx

Woolf, H. B. (Ed). (1981). *Webster's new collegiate dictionary*. Springfield, MA: Merriam Webster.

APPENDIX A:

Teacher Interview Questions

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE TURNAROUND PROCESS ON A RURAL KENTUCKY HIGH SCHOOL

Title of Project: The Implications of the Turnaround Process on a Rural Kentucky High School: Teacher and Administrator Perspectives

Researcher: Sonya Anglin

Interview Questions- Teachers

Demographic Questions

1. What subject do you currently teach?

2. How long have you been teaching at Lincoln County High School?

3. What is your highest rank/degree?

4. Do you hold a position of leadership in your department?

Instructional Coaching/Practices

1. Specifically, how has the turnaround process changed your instructional practices i.e. time spent in preparing lesson plans and other curriculum documents, methods of presenting materials…Etc?

2. Do you think your classroom instructional practices have improved as a result of the support you have received from the educational recovery team during the turnaround process?

3. Over the past two years, explain how the turnaround process has changed the instructional focus of your department. If not, why?

4. As a result of the turnaround process, do you think the emphasis on daily instructional practices has increased or decreased? Explain.

Development of Positive School Culture/ Collaboration

1. How has the school culture changed at LCHS as a result of the turnaround process?

2. Do you spend more time in collaboration with your departmental colleagues and others as a result of turnaround process?

3. How would you define a Professional Learning Community (PLC)?

4. What kinds of activities should occur in a PLC?

5. As a result of the turnaround process, how has the implementation of PLCs been affected at LCHS?

6. Has participation in the PLCs, in your opinion, translated into increased student achievement? Why? Why not?

7. Do you believe your colleagues in your department, and across the school, support and believe in the efficacy of PLCs?

8. How many hours a week do you spend in PLCs?

9. After the turnaround process ends, do you expect the PLC s to continue? Why? Why not?

Development of Teacher Leadership Capacity

1. One of the hallmarks of the school turnaround process is greater distributive leadership. Do you believe you have more opportunities for leadership in your department and in the school as a result of school turnaround?
2. Do you observe your colleagues becoming better leaders as a result of the turnaround process?
3. Over the past two years how has the administration helped you to grow as a leader? How about your colleagues?
4. Do you believe that teachers truly share in the leadership of the school?

Working with Families and Outside Agencies

1. During the turnaround process has the school become more involved with families, outside agencies, and the community at large to assist students and communicate stakeholder information?
2. Have you been personally involved with families or other outside agencies in the past two years.
3. Has the turnaround process at LCHS changed the way you communicate with certain student populations i.e. special needs learners, English- language learners, homeless students…. Etc.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE TURNAROUND PROCESS ON A RURAL KENTUCKY HIGH SCHOOL

Principal /Administrator Leadership

1. What distinctive qualities does the Principal possess that ha**ve facilitated LCHS's** turnaround?
2. How would you describe the Principal's leadership style? Transformation? Dynamic? Distributive?
3. Do you believe the turnaround process has affected the Principal's leadership style or has his style affected the success of the turnaround?

Student Achievement

1. Do you expect the trend in student achievement to continue after the turnaround process has ended?
2. What cultural changes in the school do you think will contribute most to sustained student achievement?

APPENDIX B:

Administrator Interview Questions

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE TURNAROUND PROCESS ON A RURAL KENTUCKY HIGH SCHOOL

Title of Project: The Implications of the Turnaround Process on a Rural Kentucky High School: Teacher and Administrator Perspectives

Researcher: Sonya Anglin

Interview Questions- Administrator

Demographic Questions

1. What is your title?
2. How long have you been working at Lincoln County High School?
3. What is your highest rank/degree?
4. What are your primary responsibilities/roles?

Instructional Coaching/Practices

1. Specifically, how has the turnaround process changed instructional practices i.e. time spent in preparing lesson plans and other curriculum documents, methods of presenting materials…Etc?
2. Do you think classroom instructional practices have improved as a result of the support the teachers have received from the educational recovery team during the turnaround process?
3. Over the past two years, explain how the turnaround process has changed the instructional focus of the department. If not, why?

4. As a result of the turnaround process, do you think the emphasis on daily instructional practices has increased or decreased? Explain.

Development of Positive School Culture/ Collaboration

1. How has the school culture changed at LCHS as a result of the turnaround process?
2. Do you spend more time in collaboration with the faculty and others as a result of turnaround process?
3. How would you define a Professional Learning Community (PLC)?
4. What kinds of activities should occur in a PLC?
5. As a result of the turnaround process, how has the implementation of PLCs been affected at LCHS?
6. Has participation in the PLCs, in your opinion, translated into increased student achievement? Why? Why not?
7. Do you believe the faculty supports and believe in the efficacy of PLCs?
8. How many hours a week do you spend in PLCs?
9. After the turnaround process ends, do you expect the PLC s to continue? Why? Why not?

Development of Teacher Leadership Capacity

1. One of the hallmarks of the school turnaround process is greater distributive leadership. Do you believe teachers more opportunities for leadership in their department and in the school as a result of school turnaround?

2. Do you observe your colleagues becoming better leaders as a result of the turnaround process?
3. Over the past two years how has the turnaround team and the state department helped you to grow as a leader? How about your colleagues?
4. Do you believe that teachers truly share in the leadership of the school?

Working with Families and Outside Agencies

1. During the turnaround process has the school become more involved with families, outside agencies, and the community at large to assist students and communicate stakeholder information?
2. Have you been personally involved with families or other outside agencies in the past two years.
3. Has the turnaround process at LCHS changed the way you communicate with certain student populations i.e. special needs learners, English- language learners, homeless students…. Etc.

Principal /Administrator Leadership

1. What distinctive qualities do you the Principal possess that have facilitated LCHS's turnaround?
2. How would you describe your leadership style? Transformation? Dynamic? Distributive?

3. Do you believe the turnaround process has affected your leadership style or has his style affected the success of the turnaround?
4. Do you expect the trend in student achievement to continue after the turnaround process has ended?
5. What cultural changes in the school do you think will contribute most to sustained student achievement?

APPENDIX C:

Informed Consent

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE TURNAROUND PROCESS ON A RURAL KENTUCKY HIGH SCHOOL

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

TITLE OF STUDY

Why am I being asked to participate in this research?

You are being invited to take part in a research study about __Teacher perceptions of school turnaround at ___High School._____. You are being invited to participate in this research study because _____. (If there is a condition or circumstance that makes them eligible for the study specify this information, however, this may not be applicable for some social science studies.) If you take part in this study, you will be one of about __30_____ people to do so.

Who is doing the study?

The person in charge of this study is __Sonya Anglin_____(PI) at __Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, KY. She is being guided in this research by _Dr. Charles Hausman at EKU_ [Advisor]).

What is the purpose of the study?

By doing this study, we hope to learn how teachers and administrators perceive the school turnaround process and its impact on student achievement and school improvement. LCHS was chosen as a study site because is currently undergoing the turnaround process. Also, there have been few studies of similarly situated turnaround schools.

Where is the study going to take place and how long will it last?

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE TURNAROUND PROCESS ON A RURAL KENTUCKY HIGH SCHOOL

The research procedures will be conducted at _____ Co High School. You will need to come to an interview location 2 times during the study. Each of those visits will take about 60 minutes. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is 120 minutes over the next 4-5 months.

What will I be asked to do?

Tell the subject what to expect. Describe all procedures in lay language, using simple terms and short sentences. If the study involves numerous procedures and/or visits, give a time-line description of the procedures that will be performed.

Answer the following questions for the subject: What is being performed as part of the research? If applicable, what is being performed as part of the care the subject would normally receive?

Prepare a time line chart or schema to accompany descriptions of procedures and tests for studies that require more than 1 or 2 steps/visits.

Provide a lay description of the randomization procedures, if applicable, and describe the chances of being assigned to any one group.

Are there reasons why I should not take part in this study?

State in basic lay language reasons a subject could be excluded from volunteering such as being a smoker, being under the age of 18, or being pregnant. Include only those

events/conditions that would not be pre-determined by a review of records or by a medical/physical examination.

What are the possible risks and discomforts?

You may, however, experience a previously unknown risk or side effect.

Will I benefit from taking part in this study?

There is no guarantee that you will get any benefit from taking part in this study.

However, some people have experienced _____ when _____. We cannot and do not guarantee that you will receive any benefits from this study.

(OR)

You will not get any personal benefit from taking part in this study.

Do I have to take part in this study?

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer.

You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

If I don't take part in this study, are there other choices?

If you do not want to take part in the study, there are other choices such as _____. (Describe whether there are any procedures in which the subject could participate to receive the same level of benefit.)

(OR)

If you do not want to be in the study, there are no other choices except to not take part in the study.

What will it cost me to participate?

There are no costs associated with taking part in this study.

(OR)

(Describe any costs the subject may incur as result of participating in the study. For example: You may have to pay for the cost of getting to the study site and a parking fee.)

Will I receive any payment or rewards for taking part in the study?

You will receive _____ for taking part in this study. If you should have to quit before the study is finished, the payment you receive will be based on the amount of time you were in the study.

(OR)

You will receive _____ for taking part in this study. If you should have to quit before the study is finished, you will still receive the full amount, the gift certificate, etc.

(OR)

You will not receive any payment or reward for taking part in this study.

Who will see the information I give?

Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write up the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about this combined information. You will not be identified in these written materials.

[IF THE STUDY IS ANONYMOUS:]

This study is anonymous. That means that no one, not even members of the research team, will know that the information you give came from you.

[IF THE STUDY IS NOT ANONYMOUS:]

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. For example, your name will be kept separate from the information you give, and these two things will be stored in different places under lock and key.

However, there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to a court (IF APPLICABLE: or to tell authorities if we believe you have abused a child or are a danger to yourself or someone else). Also, we may be required to show information that identifies you to people who need to be sure we have done the research correctly; these would be people from such organizations as Eastern Kentucky University (LIST ANY OTHER AGENCIES SUCH AS THE FUNDING AGENCY OR STATE/FEDERAL DEPT).

Can my taking part in the study end early?

If you decide to take part in the study, you still have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to participate. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study.

The individuals conducting the study may need to end your participation in the study. They may do this if you are not able to follow the directions they give you, if they find that your being in the study is more risk than benefit to you, or if the agency funding the study decides to stop the study early for a variety of scientific reasons.

What happens if I get hurt or sick during the study?

If you believe you are hurt or if you get sick because of something that is done during the study, you should call _____ (PI's name) at _____ immediately. It is important for you to understand that Eastern Kentucky University will not pay for the cost of any care or treatment that might be necessary because you get hurt or sick while taking part in this study. That cost will be your responsibility. Also, Eastern Kentucky University will not pay for any wages you may lose if you are harmed by this study.

Usually, medical costs that result from research-related harm cannot be included as regular medical costs. Therefore, the costs related to your child's care and treatment because of something that is done during the study will be your responsibility. You should ask your insurer if you have any questions about your insurer's willingness to pay under these circumstances.

What if I have questions?

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE TURNAROUND PROCESS ON A RURAL KENTUCKY HIGH SCHOOL

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, _____ at _____. If you have any questions about your rights as a research volunteer, contact the staff in the Division of Sponsored Programs at Eastern Kentucky University at 859-622-3636. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

What else do I need to know?

If applicable, disclose what institutions or companies are involved in the study through funding, cooperative research, or by providing supplies or equipment.

You will be told if any new information is learned which may affect your condition or influence your willingness to continue taking part in this study.

I have thoroughly read this document, understand its contents, have been given an opportunity to have my questions answered, and agree to participate in this research project.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE TURNAROUND PROCESS ON A RURAL KENTUCKY HIGH SCHOOL

_____

_____

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study Date

_____

Printed name of person taking part in the study

_____

Name of person providing information to subject

VITA

Sonya Edwina Anglin

Education

Doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, awarded 06/2015, Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, KY

Graduate Studies in Special Education Policy and Administration, 2010-12, Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, KY

Masters in Special Education, Learning & Behavioral Disorders K-12, 2004, Campbellsville University, Campbellsville, KY

Masters in History, 1989, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY

Bachelors of Art, History, 1984, Berea College, Berea, KY

Credentials

Professional Certificate for Director of Special Education, Level 1

Professional Certificate for Teaching Exceptional Children, K-12 (LBD)

National Board Certification- Exceptional Child, Birth through Young Adulthood

Research Interests

Gap Reduction

Use of Data to Drive Instruction

Student Achievement

School Improvement

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE TURNAROUND PROCESS ON A RURAL KENTUCKY HIGH SCHOOL

Issues in Special Education

School Law

School Finance

Current Research

My dissertation focuses on the implication of school turnaround on a rural Kentucky high and teacher perceptions of the effects of the turnaround process.

Teaching Interests

Secondary School Social Studies

Secondary School Science

Special Education Principles of Learning and Teaching, college level

Teacher Leadership

Co-Teaching Inclusion

Qualitative Research

Quantitative Research

Professional Experience

Post-Secondary Experience

Spring 2015- Campbellsville University, adjunct faculty

Taught Special Education (FMD) principles of teaching for elementary and secondary Teachers

Summer 2007-2008- Campbellsville University, adjunct faculty

Taught Summer Immersion Course in Special Education (LBD) for students seeking Certification.

1990- 1998- Somerset Community College, adjunct faculty

Taught U.S. History Survey courses to undergraduates

1986-1989- University of Kentucky Department of History

K-12 Experience

2001-11- Highland Elementary, Waynesburg, KY, Lincoln Co. Schools

Taught K-4 Special Needs Students

Fall 2011- present – Special Education, collaborative teachers 9-12

Contact Information-

Mailing Address: 195 Shirley Street, Mount Vernon, KY 40456; email:

sonya.anglin@lincoln.kyschools.us; seanglin@windstream.net