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**Making a good match: How schools and external service providers
negotiate needs and services in support of school improvement**

By

Mary Vixie Sandy

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in Charge:

Professor Judith Warren Little, Chair

Professor Heinrich Mintrop

Professor James Lincoln

Spring 2013

**Making a good match: How schools and external service providers
negotiate needs and services in support of school improvement**

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By Mary Vixie Sandy

Abstract

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Doctor of Education

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Judith Warren Little, Chair

This study investigated a problem facing policy makers, education leaders, and external providers of service that support or facilitate school-based change designed to improve teaching and learning: How to match school needs with providers' services in ways that maximize school improvement. A growing number of organizations provide service to schools, and considerable amounts of money set aside by state and national policy makers to facilitate school improvement. Despite escalating pressures for performance and the availability of both funding and external expertise, more and more schools and districts across the country are failing to meet expectations and experiencing an array of sanctions.

Although research on the role of intermediary organizations is growing in some areas, lack of attention to the match between partners during the formation of working relationships warranted this inquiry. A comparative case study focused on two partnerships that were at the beginning of the negotiation and contracting process, and drew from both the education and the management literature to frame the investigation. Each partnership was intended to focus on improving student performance on standardized tests.

The relationship most critical to the success or failure of a match existed between the principal and the external provider. Early congruence between these two key players overcame lack of teacher buy-in over time in one case, and lack of early congruence between these two undermined the match in the other. The communication strategy during early negotiations enabled or impeded the development congruent understanding about the nature of the work to be undertaken. The level of early congruence between principal and provider regarding the problem they were going to work on, and how they would assign and enact their different leadership roles, was associated with later-stage progress and perceived satisfaction with the match. Finally, school-level (versus district) control over school improvement decisions, efforts to place the initiative in the context of a coherent school improvement plan, and willingness to adapt the initiative to prevailing school conditions were the aspects of context most relevant to match formation. The findings have implications for school leaders and external providers seeking to foster more productive relationships in the service of school improvement.

Dedication

For Gary, the sun god, who puts wind in my sails and points me toward the horizon;
For Owen, Grayson and Bayley, my best teachers, and sources of endless delight;
For Jackie and Mimi, boon companions on the journey;
For my mother, whose belief in me never wavered;
For my father, who would have thought this very cool, indeed;
For Betty, who I miss; and
For Shirley and Paul, my bookends.

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Making a good match: How schools and service providers negotiate needs and services in support of school improvement

Chapter 1. Introduction

Educational Leadership Problem

A significant problem faces educational leaders and external service providers that support or facilitate school-based change in teaching and learning: how to match school needs and expectations with providers' programmatic designs, offerings and capacities in ways that maximize the potential for sustained improvement. There is a growing body of consultants that provide service to schools, and a considerable amount of money set aside by state and national policy makers to facilitate school improvement. Over a ten year period, the federally funded Improving Teacher Quality Grant Program, for example, distributed approximately \$2.5 billion in funding awards to states for distribution on a competitive basis to colleges and universities, in partnership with K-12 school districts (<http://www.ed.gov/programs/teacherqual/funding.html>). Between 2001 and 2010, California distributed these funds in support of more than 10,000 teachers serving 602,000 students statewide (<http://www.cpec.ca.gov/FederalPrograms/AboutITQ.asp>). For the better part of a decade, the federal government funded the Comprehensive School Reform program, initially in the amount of \$145 million annually, increasing to \$310 million in 2002 (<http://www.alliance.brown.edu/pubs/csr/>, downloaded 4/28/11 at 10:32 p.m.). These funds supported schools that imported "proven" school reform designs, many of which were developed based on private investments under the New American Schools program. Walter H. Annenberg was one private investor who provided \$500 million to support the development of school improvement designs across the country through the Annenberg Challenge Grant program. (<http://www.annenberginstitute.org/challenge/about/about.html>). Each of these initiatives was focused on the development and delivery of programs that brought external service providers into partnership with schools to support change and improve teaching and learning.

Despite the persistent belief in the viability of external funds and programs as change agents in schools and the availability of significant levels of funding and external expertise, more and more schools and school districts across the country failed to meet federal and state targets for student performance and consequently fell deeper into program improvement status and experienced an array of sanctions during the first decade of the 21st century. Beginning in the 1960's schools were utilizing available funding to hire external service providers to support reform efforts. Much of the reform work that was supported by external providers, however, did not lead to systemic or sustained change (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978; Datnow, 1999; Bodilly 2001). They were working together, but in too many cases it did not have the intended impact of improving school performance. Fifty years of school improvement research attributes failure to achieve improvement (in part) to inadequate negotiation between partners about the nature and scope of the work and failure to effectively match school needs with provider expertise and approach. (Berman and McLaughlin 1978; Hatch, 1998; Gulati, 1998; Datnow, 1999; Finnigan & O'Day, 2003; Berends, Bodilly and Kirby, 2006).

My own experience as the director of a university-based center that worked with schools to improve teaching and learning sustained this research finding. My center was the most

successful in our collaborative work when we shared with our partners a deep understanding of the outcomes we were working toward, the ways in which the work would be conducted, and our respective roles in bringing about the outcome. When we shared a set of core values and expectations with our partners, dedicated appropriate levels of resources (human, time and fiscal) to the work and had buy-in from participants in the change effort, we experienced higher levels of success in achieving the desired outcomes. In our negotiation with prospective partners, we invariably discussed desired outcomes and levels of resources. Rarely did we articulate or codify in a contract our basic philosophy about effectiveness in teaching and learning or our theory of action regarding school improvement. These issues go to the heart of whether we were a good fit for the work that needed to be done, but were not always systematically explored as we entered into partnerships.

The process through which relationships form and match develops between external service providers and schools is under-researched in education. In the absence of a common understanding of what constitutes a good match, school and district leaders and external providers rely on other signals, like the availability of funding or the reputation of a particular provider or the overwhelming and immediate need of a school, to drive the selection of partners in school reform efforts. Research in the management sciences has shed light on how relationships are formed between organizations seeking to do mutually beneficial work together in the business and industry sector (Aldrich, 1979; Warren, 1967; Ring and Van de Ven, 1994; Gulati, 1998). This knowledge is not widely applied in education. Though researchers in education agree with researchers in management that the success of a joint venture relies heavily on how the relationship is formed at the earliest stages (Berman and McLaughlin, 1978; Finnigan and O'Day, 2003; Berends, Bodilly and Kirby, 2006; Ring and Van de Ven, 1994; Jap and Anderson, 2007) very few researchers in education are studying this phenomenon or drawing on the management sciences to inform our understanding of the development of these relationships in the education sector.

My purpose in conducting this study was to better understand how schools and external service providers attend to the issue of match as they enter into collaborative work, to identify the key factors that impact the development of a good match, and to see how they emerge in the early negotiations between school personnel and external providers as they enter into work. For the purposes of this study, I defined a strong match as one in which (a) the services provided by an external organization were responsive to the needs of the school, (b) the school and the provider had a shared understanding about their roles and the nature of the work they would be doing together (c) school-based personnel (administrators, teachers) felt they were getting value out of the relationship, and (d) the provider felt that they were making a difference. I did not approach the concept of 'match' as if it was a static phenomenon, but rather as a relationship that began with initial compatibility and developed over time as the partners learned about one another and defined and refined their expectations for collaborative work.

In the next section, I review the education research literature that focuses on the work of external service providers in schools, with an eye toward key processes or factors that relate to matching needs and services. I then examine selected research from sociology and management to better understand the nature of relationship development in a more abstract and theoretical context. I use research from both fields to frame a case study examination of partnerships between external service providers and schools.

Literature Review

In this section, I examine the research literature on external service providers and their work with schools and districts on large and small reform efforts. My purpose is to better understand how relationships form between schools and external service providers in the initial stage, and how matching needs and services occurs, and to look for theories, models and empirical studies that may shed light on the relationship and guide my study design. I begin with definitions and an overview of the education research literature on external service providers. The educational research that I reviewed tells us much about the phenomenon of external service providers working with schools and districts on change endeavors, and factors that aid or impede successful implementation of a change initiative. It does not look systematically at the concept of match in the early formation of relationships. In order to better understand this phenomenon, I consult a small number of empirical studies and theoretical works from the management sciences related to the formation of cooperative inter-organizational relationships. I seek to help providers and school personnel to understand both the concept and the process of matching needs and services so that they can forge relationships that have a better chance to lead to successful outcomes.

Definitions and roles

The world of external service providers engaged in school reform is wide and varied, populated with charter management organizations, textbook publishers, colleges and universities, local education funds, private providers and myriad other types of entities. Some of these organizations step in and take over the management of schools, while others provide consultation and technical assistance and still others work with schools to develop and field test innovations in support of improved teaching and learning. Some of these services are designed to impact a whole school or district in support of restructuring or re-culturing, while others have a laser-like focus on building capacity in a particular area of need.

External providers are referenced by multiple names in the literature, reflecting the breadth of services offered and approaches taken to school support and reform. Figure 1.1 lists the most common names and definitions for these organizations. The array of names that capture these organizations is not capturing the same phenomenon in every case. External agents are made up of different types of organizations (universities, school management organizations, local community based organizations) with different visions and goals for their work. The *design teams* studied by Berends, Bodilly and Kirby and the *school support organizations* identified in the report by MASS Insight operate differently than the others on this list. Design teams under the New American Schools initiative built interventions and brought them to schools ready for implementation – turnkey models, for all intents and purposes. The school support organizations (SSOs) identified by MASS Insight actually take over the management of schools. These approaches represent one end of a continuum of external service providers, where the focus is on bringing ready-made programs and formal management systems into schools. At the other end of the continuum are consultants and organizations that work within the education system to build on and expand existing capacity in support of more effective practice.

The term *intermediary* is the most widely used name in the literature referencing external organizations who link the reform efforts in a school site with some overarching policy to be

Figure 1.1 External agents defined

Name	Definition
<i>External agents</i> (Resnick & Glennan, 2002)	External agents support educational leaders (reform leaders) work and learning by providing strategies, services, and tools that are intended to help leaders bring about reform in their site. External agents are not themselves reformers, nor do they directly produce reform efforts. Rather, they help to build a district’s capacity to bring about improvement in instructional practices and to engage in continuous learning. (p. 167)
<i>School support organizations</i> (MASS Insight, 2008)	Organizations that are involved in managing charter schools, which include school management organizations (SMOs), charter management organizations (CMOs) and education management organizations (EMOs). SMOs typically assume management responsibility for schools and include CMOs, which are regional and not for profit, and EMOs, which are national or regional for profit agencies.
<i>Nonsystem actors</i> (Coburn, 2005; McLaughlin, 2006)	Independent professional development providers, reform organizations, publishers and universities. Role: to promote, translate and transform policy ideas as they carry them to teachers (Coburn 2005, p. 23). “Non-system actors operate outside the formal education policy system. They shape political debate and influence the normative climate and accountability structures that effect how individuals respond to policy directives and goals.” (McLaughlin, 2006, p. 223)
<i>Intermediary organizations</i> (Cohen, 2000; Burch, 2002; Blank, Brand, Deich, Kazis, Politz & Trippe, 2003; Honig, 2004; Marsh Kerr Ikemoto, Darilek, Suttorp, & Zimmer, 2005; Marsh, Kerr, Ikemoto, & Danilek, 2006; McLaughlin 2008)	Intermediary groups or teacher support networks form a vital part of the infrastructure supporting teachers’ learning. These groups interpret district policies through their interactions with schools. (Burch, 2002, p. 111). Intermediaries are organizations that occupy the space in between at least two other parties. Intermediary organizations primarily function to mediate or to manage change in both those parties. (Honig 2004, p. 67) Independent bodies comprised of multiple stakeholders (school insiders and outsiders) to push systems to change both from within and without; they connect schools to district administration and schools and districts to the larger political context in which they function. (Cohen, 2000). A third-party organization, at once situated outside of schools and school districts but working intensively inside schools and districts to promote change (McLaughlin, 2008).
<i>Design teams</i> (Berends, Bodilly & Kirby, 2002)	As part of the New American Schools program, design teams were deliberately created organizations of experts tasked with creating coherent designs for school reform and working with schools to refine the model. Eleven teams were selected and funded under NAS, consisting mostly of private non-profit organizations connected to

	universities or research organizations.
<i>Reform support organizations</i> (Kronley & Handley, 2003)	Reform support organizations (RSOs) include a range of outside organizations – public, quasi-public, private for profit, and private nonprofit – that seek to engage or are engaged by school districts in efforts at systemic reform” (Kronley & Handley, 2003, p. 4). While the work of RSOs may include some level of mediation, Kronley and Handley argue that the work of RSOs serves “multiple roles that include, among other things, advocacy, technical assistance, fundraising, research and evaluation.” (p. 4). RSOs bridge gaps between schools and districts and are also focused on building the capacity of these organizations to “pursue, foster and sustain systemic reform.” (p. 4)
<i>University, community, school partnerships</i> (Goldring & Sims, 2005)	Cooperative inter-organizational relationship focused on professional development for school site leaders (in this study). (p. 225)
<i>Boundary spanners</i> (Firestone & Fisler, 2002)	Individuals employed by either the external organization or the local education agency whose job it is to mediate, or translate across organizations that are working together to effect change but operating with very different cultures, definitions and perspectives.
<i>Linking agents</i> (Rowan, Camburn & Barnes, 2004)	<u>External service providers</u> who work with school sites to support implementation of research-based models for school reform. Linking agents sit between the design teams that create models and schools that are implementing them.

implemented. For instance, if a school district adopts a new reading curriculum and an intermediary between the school district and the school working on implementation of policy. Mediation also highlights the communicative nature of the work. Honig’s (2004) definition of intermediaries situates these entities between policy adopters and policy implementers. “Intermediaries operate independently of the organizations they serve, but depend upon these organizations to fulfill their functions,” (Honig, 2004, p. 67). They are granted a temporary management status, insofar as they are managing a directing a change effort and are the “on-site” experts in that work. As non-system actors they have the ability to interrupt existing norms and introduce new ways of working within a school and district (Coburn, Bae and Turner, 2008).

In summary, the work of intermediaries represents a particular type of multi-directional, purposeful communication that supports change and growth, recognizing the organizational structure within which schools live and enact change. While the terms are not synonymous, the *external agents, reform support organizations, non-system actors* and *university, community school partnerships* identified in Figure 1.1 operate more like intermediary organizations than like design teams and SSOs.

External service providers in large-scale reform initiatives

For more than fifty years policy makers at the federal and state levels, as well as philanthropic organizations have held steadfast to the idea that change in schools can be brought

about by the infusion of resources and by bringing new “expertise” to bear in the form of external service providers. The RAND Change Agent Study (1970s), New American Schools project (1980s), and the Comprehensive School Reform program (1990s) each represented an approach to large-scale school reform. These efforts span several decades and were driven by different policy makers. Each represents a very public effort to improve schools by providing funding to support external service providers. These well-funded efforts shed light on the factors that support or work against change that is brought about via the engagement of external providers. Though very few studies focus on relationship formation, an investigation of factors contributing to the success or failure of reform efforts hints at aspects of the relationship that may have contributed to the outcome. I examined each of these efforts in order to capture the work of external service providers over a period of four decades and extract from this research a better understanding of how relationships form between providers and schools and the factors that make for a good match.

The RAND Change Agent Study. The RAND Change Agent Study took place from 1973-1978 and examined four large federal funding programs that were initiated in the 1960’s and intended to support the development of innovation in support of school improvement. The Change Agent study was the first of its kind, and had a major impact on the way policy makers, practitioners and researchers thought about school change. Their most enduring finding, that local context and mutual adaptation of innovation was more important than uniform implementation, continues to dominate research findings in the field of school improvement. The common purpose unifying these funding programs was to spread innovation in the schools. The common mechanism used to fulfill this goal was seed funding. These programs represented the first significant efforts by the federal government to change local education practice using categorical funding streams. Policymakers assumed there was a direct relationship between federal input (targeted funding), local response (implementation of innovations) and policy outputs (improved student and school performance). The idea behind this was that more money or better ideas would enable local educators to improve practice.

Over a five year period of study, the RAND team found that as a result of the investment of significant funding, many new innovations were adopted by schools, some were successfully implemented, but a very few were continued over a long period of time. The educational methods used in these programs were varied and found to have a limited determining effect on implementation and continuation of programs. While federal seed funding was essential to the support of local efforts, the level of project resources was not found to predict outcomes. In other words, the infusion of funding by itself was insufficient to bring about lasting change. The active commitment of district leadership was essential to project stability and long-term success, but success depended more on local factors than on federal guidelines and funding levels. The same strategies could be applied in different sites, but “what” was offered or tried as an innovation mattered less than “how” it was managed and integrated – adapted – to fit the particular context. Berman and McLaughlin (1978) found that project scope was an important consideration, insofar as the more ambitious efforts led to more teacher change than did modest efforts, but they also found that systemic change was difficult to implement all at once. The system itself took time to change, and ultimately, locally selected implementation strategies about how to put a project into practice dominated outcomes. Strategies that did not take into account local realities in the district and the motivations, needs and interests of teachers failed. Ineffective strategies failed to provide for the on-going and unpredictable support teachers needed, excluded teachers from project development, and signaled a mechanistic (rather than interactive) role for teachers.

Effective strategies, on the other hand, promoted mutual adaptation of an innovation by its designers and by the site in which it was implemented. The term “mutual adaptation”, coined by Berman and McLaughlin (1978), emerged as a pivotal concept from this study. Mutual adaptation carries with it a set of expectations regarding how an innovation is implemented that differ from other approaches that rely on fidelity to a strict protocol or more constructivist methods of enactment. Timely and consistent communication from partners and participants about how the project was working, identification and correction of errors during implementation, and the building of broad based commitment to the project were, key to effective implementation and institutionalization of an innovation. (Berman and McLaughlin, 1978).

At the time of the Rand Change Agent Study, not much was understood about how interventions were implemented and institutionalized (McLaughlin, 1987). The evolution of a change policy was thought about in terms of theories of diffusion or conceptions of planned change, which presume a rational approach, which Berman and McLaughlin found to be inaccurate: “Few school districts in our sample systematically searched for better educational treatments. Instead they used information or treatments that were either already known to local district personnel or were generally fashionable.” (p. 13). Many change agent projects were undertaken for opportunistic reasons, insofar as schools and districts selected interventions based on the availability of funding regardless of the particular needs of their school sites or overall organizational structure.

Berman and McLaughlin suggest that the mobilization stage of a reform effort, where the stakeholders become engaged and plans are formed may be the most significant aspect of the work. They found that (1) the motivations underlying initiation of a change agent project can have profound effects on the eventual outcomes of innovation, and (2) the activities preceding and following the selection or adoption decision can be more significant than the decision itself (Berman and McLaughlin, 1978, p. 14). Their report on four federal funding programs does not probe or report on this aspect of the work with much depth. But there is an inherent logic in this finding that was significant for my study of the process through which relationships are formed between providers and schools and the nature of the match or fit. If a site enters into work because funding is available, but has not really examined its needs or how it would use funding to substantially address its needs, and if these deliberations occur at the level of leadership without substantive involvement of the key players at the site, then the basis for the work will lack depth and the level of commitment necessary to engage in the difficult work of change. If, on the other hand, there is consensus at a site among leadership and teachers that change is needed, support from the central office, and willingness to come together and work with an external service provider collaboratively to change ineffective practice, then there will be a stronger basis for the work and the potential for widespread commitment that will carry participants through the challenges of a change process (Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2004; Deshler, Deshler & Biancarosa, 2007).

A decade after the RAND Change Agent Study was published, McLaughlin (1987; 1989) revisited the findings of that seminal study and reaffirmed, based on additional policy research, how difficult it is for policy to change practice. She asserts that the nature, amount and pace of change at the local level is a product of local factors that are largely beyond the control of higher level policy makers. Local factors change over time, creating substantively and strategically different settings for policy. Policy cannot “mandate what matters”, which McLaughlin (1987) sums up as local capacity and will. Local variability is the rule; uniformity is the exception. The

federal policy that funded innovation and the RAND change agent study presumed that fidelity of implementation over time equated with success. Variation in implementation, therefore, was considered bad in the change agent study because it signaled a lack of fidelity to program design. In retrospect, McLaughlin asserts that variation should be understood to demonstrate that a school is shaping and interpreting policy in ways that suit local context, which is essential for successful implementation and institutionalization. (McLaughlin, 1989).

The RAND Change Agent Study did not foreground the role of the external service provider in supporting the change effort, focusing instead on school and district factors. To the extent that they observed the work of external providers, Berman and McLaughlin were skeptical about their role and their ability to promote positive change in local practice. McLaughlin revised her earlier conclusions about the work of external organizations and suggested that their ineffectiveness had to do with a general lack of responsiveness to local context and an over-reliance on implementation of innovations with fidelity. When they approached their work from the perspective of implementation as a process of mutual adaptation, they were effective in supporting the institutionalization of innovative practice. Further, McLaughlin suggested that special projects or reforms with a narrow focus are likely to be disappointing because they fail to recognize the systemic nature of the problem. Such projects are inconsistent with the nature of schools, and often treat innovation as an end in itself, which distracts from the whole. Episodes of treatment are insufficient because they are not, typically, systemic. McLaughlin contends that special expertise is needed to manage change. In this way, McLaughlin identifies an important role for external service providers and bounds that role by context and an approach grounded in mutual adaptation. Interestingly, the RAND Change Agent study found that comprehensive, well-funded efforts that relied on fidelity of implementation could be effective; in other words, size, scope and funding contributed to success in some cases. They also found that when providers and sites collaborated and were willing to mutually adapt a reform design, they had even greater likelihood of long-term success. Despite these findings, the New American Schools initiative, launched more than a decade after the RAND Change Agent Study, built off of the large-scale, comprehensive design, implemented with fidelity idea, with less emphasis on mutual adaptation and more emphasis on the design itself (McLaughlin, 1987; 1989).

The New American Schools Project. The New American Schools Project (NAS) was established in 1991 with private funding to develop comprehensive designs for whole school reform. High poverty, low-performing schools were again the target of this national effort. Based on the failure of incremental, fragmented programs to achieve lasting change, the theory of change undergirding NAS was that if a school adopts a “proven” design that addresses all aspects of the system (curriculum, instruction, leadership, governance, professional development, content, assessment, parent involvement, etc.) in a comprehensive way, it can significantly improve student and therefore school performance (Berends, Bodilly and Kirby, 2006).

NAS partnered with school districts for implementation of change strategies at the school level. The models were developed initially by design teams selected competitively by NAS, but implementation required that they be adapted to local conditions. Design teams assisted school communities, on a fee for service basis, with professional development, materials, conferences, networks, curriculum and instruction packages and other forms of technical assistance. Because their work on implementation was funded by local districts, the level of assistance provided to schools varied significantly and was often inadequate (Berends, Bodilly and Kirby, 2006). The ability to communicate a design clearly and well to schools was a critical factor in

implementation, as was the ability to effectively market the project to the school district and gain the resources necessary for implementation. (Berends, Bodilly & Kirby, 2006, p. 106).

School districts played a significant role in the NAS initiative through the initial match and selection of design teams to work with schools. Among the factors that impede successful implementation of a change initiative, Berends and his colleagues found that forced matches between schools and external providers did not work well. Additionally, district failure to inform schools about (a) how to select a design team, (b) the level of resources that would be available to support implementation, and (c) expected timelines, also undermined implementation. (Berends, Bodilly & Kirby, 2006).

Design teams played a central role in the implementation of NAS, and Berends et.al., recognized the need to make a good match in order for an initiative to be successful. Two other studies focused on implementation of NAS in the city of Memphis, Tennessee shed additional light on the issue of matching design teams (and their reform models) to schools. The City of Memphis, Tennessee, was one of five scale-up jurisdictions across the country (Cincinnati, Philadelphia, Memphis, San Antonio and Miami-Dade) selected by NAS to pilot their process of bringing a menu of school restructuring models for examination, consideration and adoption by schools. Memphis held a multi-year education exposition, where approved models were showcased for schools. School site teams had the opportunity to examine models and select a model for implementation that met their needs. Datnow (1999) examined the approach taken by school-based teams, who were relatively unfamiliar with the NAS school reform designs, in selecting among them. Using a case study methodology, data were collected at six schools, each of which was using a different restructuring design. Interviews were held with principals and with 8 to 10 teachers in each school. Findings showed that schools seldom made well-informed, unencumbered choices about restructuring designs, even when opportunities to gather information were readily available. Instead, schools' reform choices were characterized by a desire for legitimacy and perceived pressure to select a particular design or approach (Datnow, 1999).

Another study, conducted by faculty at the University of Memphis found that schools tended to select known programs, whether they were a good fit or not (Ross, Henry, Phillipsen, Evans, Smith and Buggey, 1997). The availability of funding to support implementation was also an important factor, as was the research base supporting a particular design. The opportunity to expand in a key area of need and the perceived need at the school site for district buy-in also influenced selection of a design for adoption. While these factors do not pertain directly to the match between a design and the needs of a school, they could reflect what Berman and McLaughlin referred to as opportunistic and political reasons for making a selection. Schools in this study “appeared to select designs on the basis of interests other than establishing an exact fit between their goals and the design philosophies” (Ross, Henry, Phillipsen, Evans, Smith and Buggey, 1997, p. 70.) In the cognitive bias literature, this might be considered an application of the availability heuristic (Tversky and Kahneman, 1973) wherein a decision maker relies upon knowledge that is readily available or easily recalled rather than seeking other alternatives. From this perspective, a school administrator might select a provider that other respected colleagues have used effectively, or that has a good reputation for certain kinds of work, or is favored by higher-ups in the district leadership team, without engaging in a process of analysis of fit with the problems that might be presenting at a particular school.

Comprehensive School Reform. The next decade's approach to improving schools, entitled Comprehensive School Reform (CSR), represented an evolution of the work that began

under NAS, continuing with the idea that school change requires the import of fully developed designs, or systems, that are adopted and implemented with fidelity by a school staff. These systems were typically adopted by a school district as a top-down reform initiative to improve low performing schools (Rowan, Camburn and Barnes, 2004). Adaptation of the system to local conditions was limited to fine-tuning; the role of an external provider was to provide technical assistance to implementers and keep the focus on fidelity of implementation (Rowan, Camburn and Barnes, 2004).

Research on NAS and CSR describe efforts to match designs and schools and shed light on the factors that influenced the success or failure of partnerships in meeting the goals of systemic change. While forced matches between providers and schools were found to be problematic, when given the opportunity to make informed choices and the support necessary to sustain a change effort, schools often selected partners for opportunistic and political reasons, strategies that also failed to lead to sustained or systemic change (Datnow, 1999, Berends, Bodilly and Kirby, 2006; Bodilly, 1998).

The research on large-scale school change efforts highlights a critical tension in the formation of effective partnerships between schools and external providers. On the one hand, mutual adaptation of a change strategy, involving both the provider and the participants in fundamental adaptation of an innovation to the local context and prevailing conditions, is most often associated with sustained change in local practices. On the other hand, across multiple waves of externally funded reform movements, decision makers at the school and district levels consistently seem to rely on the availability heuristic to select external providers. They select the known, familiar, perhaps politically correct external provider without engaging in systematic evaluation of the prospective fit between needs and services. Meyer and Rowan would describe this phenomenon as the school or district attempting to establish legitimacy by adopting a set of institutional rules and rituals that have no direct relationship to or influence on the core technology effective teaching and learning (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). In this frame, the fundamental tension between mutual adaptation as the key to successful change at the local level and selection procedures that ignore local context can be understood in terms of schools and districts having a tendency to operate organizationally to seek legitimacy rather than effectiveness when undertaking a change initiative. The availability heuristic is a useful decision making strategy (bias) for school leaders operating in this way (Tversky and Kahneman, 1973).

The RAND Change Agent Study, and research on the New American Schools and Comprehensive School Reform programs were sweeping in their scope, examining the parameters of large-scale change efforts. This research identifies factors that accompany success and failure in change efforts that are supported by external providers, but does not illuminate the nature of the relationships that develop between the schools and their external partners. It has only been in the latest phase of implementation research that external service providers have been treated as salient. With the emergence of these organizations as an object of interest, there is a growing body of case study research focused specifically on their role. I turn now to a short examination of research that uses case study methodology to investigate some of the dynamics that occur between external providers and school districts when they come together to work on change initiatives.

External service providers in case study research

In this section, I examine three comparative case studies conducted between 2003 and 2008 focused on the relationships between external providers and the local education agencies

with which they partnered. Kronley and Handley (2003) studied partnerships in five school districts; Goldring and Sims (2005) studied university, school, and district partnerships in a large school district, and Coburn, Bae and Turner (2008) focus on an array of partnerships working within a single, large urban school districts.

In a study commissioned by a National Task Force on the Future of Urban Districts, funded and supported by the Annenberg foundation, Kronley and Handley (2003) examined the nature of the relationship between external service providers and school districts. The focus of their study was on why districts selected particular providers, the nature of the work that was undertaken, factors that impacted the development of an effective relationship, and the elements of these efforts that led to sustained improvement. Kronley and Handley were focused specifically on what school district leaders, especially Superintendents, did to promote school improvement within a school district.

One factor found to influence the relationship between external providers and district leadership was the theoretical approach taken up in the partnership. Kronley and Handley assert that every provider brings to the work a mix of theory and practice representing their particular brand. “Approaches range from a pragmatic willingness to address problems as they surface to an insistence that the district and the reform support organization agree not only on beliefs, but also on operating principles that arise out of the beliefs and on structures to support the implementation of the initiative.” (Kronley and Handley, 2003, p. 10).

Kronley and Handley found in their study that most partnerships between external providers and districts begin in response to some sort of crisis in the district. Under certain circumstances, especially when a district level crisis is highly charged and volatile in the community, they found that district need and provider capacity to meet the need were necessary but insufficient to support systemic change. They note,

“The successful relationship is based on a dynamic driven by trust – trust on the part of the district that surrendering some of the defensiveness that characterizes school systems will lead to positive outcomes and trust on the part of the reform support organization that its capacity building efforts will be seen as a central element in a process of experimentation and learning that are part of a continuing journey to reform.” (p. 11)

In the context of a trusting relationship, each partner is willing to take risks to enact reform. The Kronley and Handley (2003) study did not shed light on *the process* through which districts determine the appropriateness of the match or the ways in which trust develops, but the researchers found that there must be a connection between the provider and the district in order for the change initiative to succeed.

Two case studies get us closer to the identification of issues and processes that impact relationship formation. Coburn, Bae and Turner (2008) shed light on the relationship between intermediary organizations and the districts that employ them in their study of a large urban school district and the external organizations that were brought in to support and facilitate change. The Coburn et al., study does not focus on the early formation of the relationship, but rather on roles, power and authority within the relationship. Coburn, Bae and Turner argue that the nature of communication around authority and status in school districts plays a significant role in the success of a reform effort. School and district “insiders” have authority, non-system actors (external providers) have status and while these dimensions are dynamic and develop over

time, Coburn, Bae and Turner (2008) argue that once they are established, they shape the “microprocesses of negotiation between insiders and outsiders” (p. 365). Coburn, Bae and Turner (2008) draw from frame analysis in order to understand how power and status dynamics shape the relationship. They describe the difficulty of establishing productive relationships due to the different agendas that motivate providers and districts, and suggest that differences in status lead to tension, as did unfamiliarity of roles in the context of a partnership. The organizational structure of the partnership or of the respective partners (the school and the intermediary) plays a role in shaping relationships, and clarity around lines of authority, more than who had authority, turned out to be important to establishing a productive relationship.

Coburn, Bae and Turner identify three mechanisms through which authority relations are established: contracts; authorized (granted) authority; and authority that emerges through interaction. Contracts, in this context, represent the formal agreements between schools and providers about scope of work, roles and outcomes. Authorized or granted authority represents a sort of informal delegation from school leaders which communicates to a school community that leadership supports the work. External providers are granted temporary management status (Honig, 2004) in this way, which enables them to move freely within the organization to achieve their goals. Authority through interaction is granted by the participants in a school change effort, based on the ability of the provider to establish credibility and earn their respect. Each of these levels of authority reflect on the nature of the relationship and the quality of the match.

Goldring and Sims (2005) used the tenets of cooperative inter-organizational relationship theory to understand and explain the ways in which university-community-district partnerships develop as successful cooperative endeavors. Ring and Van de Ven (1994) posit that interorganizational relationships go through recursive cycles of negotiation, commitment and execution of collaborative work until they reach a level of completion or dissatisfaction that leads to the end of the partnership. These relationships are evaluated in terms of equity and efficiency, according to Ring and Van de Ven (1994), where equity is defined as the balance of effort applied by both partners and the expectation that each entity’s efforts are appropriate and equitable. Efficiency in this model refers to the ability of partners to accomplish their work with minimal resources while maximizing desired outcomes. What made the Goldring and Sims study particularly interesting for my purposes was the focus of the Ring and Van de Ven (1994) framework on the process through which the relationship was formed and the match cultivated.

These studies (Kronley and Handley, 2003; Coburn, Bae and Turner, 2008; and Goldring and Sims, 2005) focus primarily on the work of school districts, not schools, partnering with external providers to enact systemic change. Shifting from the perspective of the school to the district as the focal partnering organization introduces significant complexity to the web of relationships supporting change, which was not a primary focus of my study. A strong and consistent theme across the research on intermediary organizations as change agents is the need for a common vision and theory of action to guide the work. Outside of Coburn, Bae and Turner (2008) and Goldring and Sims (2005), these studies do not focus directly on the relationships that form at the site level with providers who are brought in to support change.

The Ring and Van de Ven (1994) model can be used to illuminate the process of relationship formation and development of an effective match in an educational setting. I examine this framework next.

Review of relevant frameworks in the management sciences

My purpose in examining a small sample of the research in management and organizational theory was to see how the formation of relationships is studied outside of education. I focused particularly on the issue of match and the development of a match between organizations seeking to do collaborative work. I examined several frameworks prevalent in the management research literature focused on the development of interorganizational relationships between firms. Specifically, I looked at seminal works on the development of strategic alliances (Gulati, 1995), exchange theory (Levine and White, 1961), social network theory (Granovetter, 1985; Gulati, 1998), resource dependence (Levine and White, 1961; Hasenfield, 1972) and research on the development of cooperative interorganizational relationships (Ring and Van de Ven, 1994). My goal in reviewing a sampling of this literature was to identify processes that all organizations go through as they enter into relationships that involve some form of exchange. Where the education research I reviewed provides substantial context and nuance for understanding the nature of the work that schools and external providers undertake in pursuit of school improvement, the management literature enabled me to identify the more general form of exchange relationships, and the normative ways in which match unfolds and might be understood by both parties as relationships develop.

Levine and White (1961) examine exchange as a conceptual framework for studying inter-organizational relationships. They define organizational exchange as any voluntary activity between two organizations which has consequences, actual or anticipated, for the realization of their respective goals. Organizations tend to move into exchange relationships during times of scarcity in order to more economically or strategically attain their goals. Levine and White suggest that organizations have need for three main elements: (1) clients who buy their goods or services, (2) a labor force that produces goods or services to be sold, and (3) resources other than labor services. According to the Levine and White study of interdependence in the health care field (1961), interdependence between agencies is a function of (1) each organization having access to something it needs that exists outside its control, (2) compatibility between the objectives of each organization, and (3) agreement around basic definitions and processes. Resource dependence theory argues, further, that organizations need resources by definition, and that those resources emerge from within the larger environment or community of organizations in which the organization lives. From this theoretical frame, the holder of resources needed by another organization has power over that organization. As they navigate the waters in which they have needs or hold the resources needed by other organizations, organizations behave strategically to enhance their position, decrease their own dependence, and increase their power over other organizations. (Levine and White, 1961; Hasenfield, 1972; Pfeffer, 1982).

In my study, I looked at the relationship between a school and an external service provider. The context for this examination was school improvement; it can be argued that a school seeking an external provider of services is lacking in some area of expertise, which impacts its overall performance, and the provider has that expertise. In exchange for compensation the provider supports the development of capacity within the school in that area of expertise toward improved performance. What is exchanged? The school receives needed assistance in order to develop and expand its capacity to support student learning. The provider receives compensation for services rendered, the opportunity to refine its program design, and the opportunity to increase exposure, expand its base and grow its reputation. That is the kind of

mutually beneficial exchange that occurs here. Exchange theory represents a broad umbrella under which reside the kinds of relationships I studied.

Like exchange theory, resource dependence theory supports the concept that schools and external providers exist in a relationship that is shaped by needs and resources. However, the larger culture of school improvement promotes the idea that external support is needed for a specified period of time, not in perpetuity, that in fact, the role of the provider is to build capacity in a school and then depart. The proliferation of external service providers and their lack of stellar performance over a period of decades suggests that there may be a problem with the idea that external providers are important resources in school improvement, but this was not the focus of my study.

Social network theory can also shed light on the formation of relationships between schools and external providers of services. A social network approach to inter-organizational relationships would foreground the formal and informal ties between organizations that exist within a larger network. In the larger context of social network theory, Granovetter (1973) introduces the concept of embeddedness and defines it as the degree to which individuals or firms are enmeshed in a social network. Within this frame, one factor that influences the behavior of organizations seeking interorganizational relationships is the extent to which they have participated in long-standing or recurring partnerships and other relationships outside of their immediate work. Gulati identifies two broad analytical approaches for examining the influence of social networks: relational embeddedness and structural embeddedness.

“Relational embeddedness typically suggests that actors who are strongly tied to each other are likely to develop a shared understanding of the utility of certain behavior as a result of discussing opinions in strong, socializing relations, which in turn influence their actions. Cohesively tied actors are likely to emulate each other’s behavior. Cohesion can also be viewed as the capacity for social ties to carry information that diminishes uncertainty and promotes trust between actors. Thus cohesive ties can become a unique source of information about the partner’s capabilities and reliability.” (Gulati, 1998, p. 296).

Structural embeddedness...

“...focuses on the informational role of the position an organization occupies in the overall structure of the network. Scholars have frequently linked the position actors occupy to the notion of ‘status’ and suggested that actors occupying similar positions reflect distinct status groups. In sociological terms, status evokes a series of observable characteristics associated with a particular position, or ‘role’ in a social structure, that entails a relatively defined set of expected behaviors toward other actors.” (Gulati, 1998, p. 296).

Of interest in my study was the ways in which the concept of embeddedness, as defined by Gulati (1998) impacts the development of a match between these entities. I specifically looked for the kinds of relationships that exist between and around the partnering organizations, and the extent to which their participation in a social network of providers or regional organizations that have a history of working together on different projects was associated with the quality of the match. Datnow (1999) would suggest that schools with a history of working

with a provider may select that provider to work with them regardless of the fit. Providers with a reputation for a particular program also find themselves invited in to schools because of the position they play in the larger network of providers, and not necessarily because of the quality of the match between needs and services.

Ring and Van de Ven (1994) provide a theoretical framework that explains the emergence, evolution and termination of cooperative inter-organizational relationships. Their approach focuses on the processes through which relationships are formed rather than their structure or the conditions that enable or constrain their work. The process is important, they argue, because it is essential to the management of cooperative IORs. “The way agents negotiate, execute and modify the terms of an IOR strongly influences the degree to which parties judge it to be equitable and efficient” (Ring and Van de Ven, 1994, p. 91). Citing Friedman (1991), they assert that understanding the relationship formation process is important because it influences motivation to continue or terminate relationships over time. Further, the process through which IORs are formed casts a positive, neutral or negative tone to the relationship, which influences the ways in which parties execute their commitments and settle conflicts as they arise.

Ring and Van de Ven (1994) define cooperative interorganizational relationships as “socially constructed mechanisms for collective action” that are continually shaped and restructured by actions and interpretations by equal and autonomous parties who each make investments and stand to gain from the relationship. (Ring and Van de Ven, 1994, p. 96). In the business sector, cooperative IORs take the form of strategic alliances, partnerships, coalitions, joint ventures, research consortia and network organizations. Motives for forming IORs include gaining access to new technologies, markets, scale economies and complementary skills, as well as sharing of risk for new innovations.

Applied to the education sector, it can be argued that when schools seek external providers to support change efforts, or when external providers seek a buyer for their services, an interorganizational relationship is about to be formed. Schools may be motivated to seek external assistance because of a lack of capacity or expertise to lead a change effort, a need to interrupt patterns of ineffective practice, or by a need to be seen as responsive to external authorities. Schools need a match that fundamentally supports achievement of the objective. Providers may be motivated by the opportunity to grow their business, increase their reputation or develop innovative technologies. External providers need a match that makes them look effective, in order to maintain their presence in the school reform marketplace.

Ring and Van de Ven posit that cooperative IORs are initiated through initial structures – i.e., contracts, legal agreements – which act as safeguards to protect each party’s investment and create a context for action. Through ongoing interaction, structures evolve, allowing informal structures to emerge that balance the formal, contractual aspects of the relationship. Cooperative IORs are developmental, evolving through a repetitive sequence of negotiation, commitment and execution stages that are moderated and evaluated in terms of their efficiency and the level of equity (fair dealing) in the relationship. These stages overlap and can be simultaneous. Their duration varies according to the uncertainty of issues involved in their work, reliance on trust, and role relationships. (Ring and Van de Ven, 1994).

The management research cited here places a premium on understanding the processes involved in relationship formation. Applications of the Ring and Van de Ven (1994) theoretical framework are almost non-existent in education. Goldring and Sims (1995) used it to organize their study of the formation of relationships between a university, a school district and the

community. This framework shaped their focus on aspects of the early conversations and negotiations that led to a common understanding for their work, their roles in the work, and their shared culture, which turned out to be important to the success of the endeavor. Use of this framework is warranted for the further study of these kinds of relationships in education, and may help us illuminate some of the critical issues that are present during the mobilization of a reform effort, the phase or aspect of school change that Berman and McLaughlin (1978) and others have pointed to as critical to achieving desired short- and long-term outcomes.

Summary and synthesis

Forty years of research on school improvement has surfaced many factors that turn out to be important to the success of school reform efforts. The role of external providers is still emerging as an object of study and to date, the research on this role is thin. The process of negotiation between schools and providers varies significantly from project to project, and little is known, in research or practice, about how to pick the right partner based on a strong conception of match. The management research on the formation of inter-organizational relationships focuses on processes, motives that drive organizations to partner, and the ways in which organizations maintain a balance of power as they protect their space in the marketplace. Education as a field of endeavor is different in some important ways than the business sector, especially with regard to motivation, incentive structures, and power relationships. Taken together, however, the education and management research reviewed identify (1) a natural cycle of partnership formation that involves negotiation, commitment, execution and review; and (2) structural factors and internal dynamics that shape the development of a successful match.

In this study, I used the Ring and Van de Ven framework on the development of cooperative inter-organizational relationships to examine the process of making a good match at the point of entry into work in two partnerships. I selected the Ring and Van de Ven framework because it honed in on the cycles of relationship formation in a cooperative endeavor where goods and services are exchanged. This framework focuses directly on the communication strategies and processes that mark each of the phases of relationship formation, which was the subject I was seeking to illuminate in the examination of two partnerships in education. I examined the role both structural factors and internal dynamics played during the initial stages relationship formation using a comparative case study approach.

Chapter 2. Conceptual Model

The purpose of this study was to shed light on how a school's need for external support can be effectively matched with an external provider's expertise and approach during the early formation of the relationship. While research on the role of external service providers is growing in some areas, the lack of focus on matching partners during the formation of working relationships warrants this inquiry. This study examined the development of two partnerships, guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent do early-stage processes foster the development of a congruent understanding between partners about the nature of the work to be undertaken? What features are associated with variations in congruence? To what extent are the cases similar or different with regard to the development of early congruence?
2. What is the evidence that the level of congruence reached at the early stage of relationship formation is associated with later-stage progress and perceived satisfaction with the match? What processes enable or constrain the development of congruence over time? To what extent are the cases similar or different with regard to the development of later congruence?
3. What aspects of context appear to enable or impede effective match formation? How do issues like the scope of the project, locus of decision making and implementation expectations shape the attitude and mindset of participants? How do internal dynamics at the site level shape participant willingness to commit to the work?

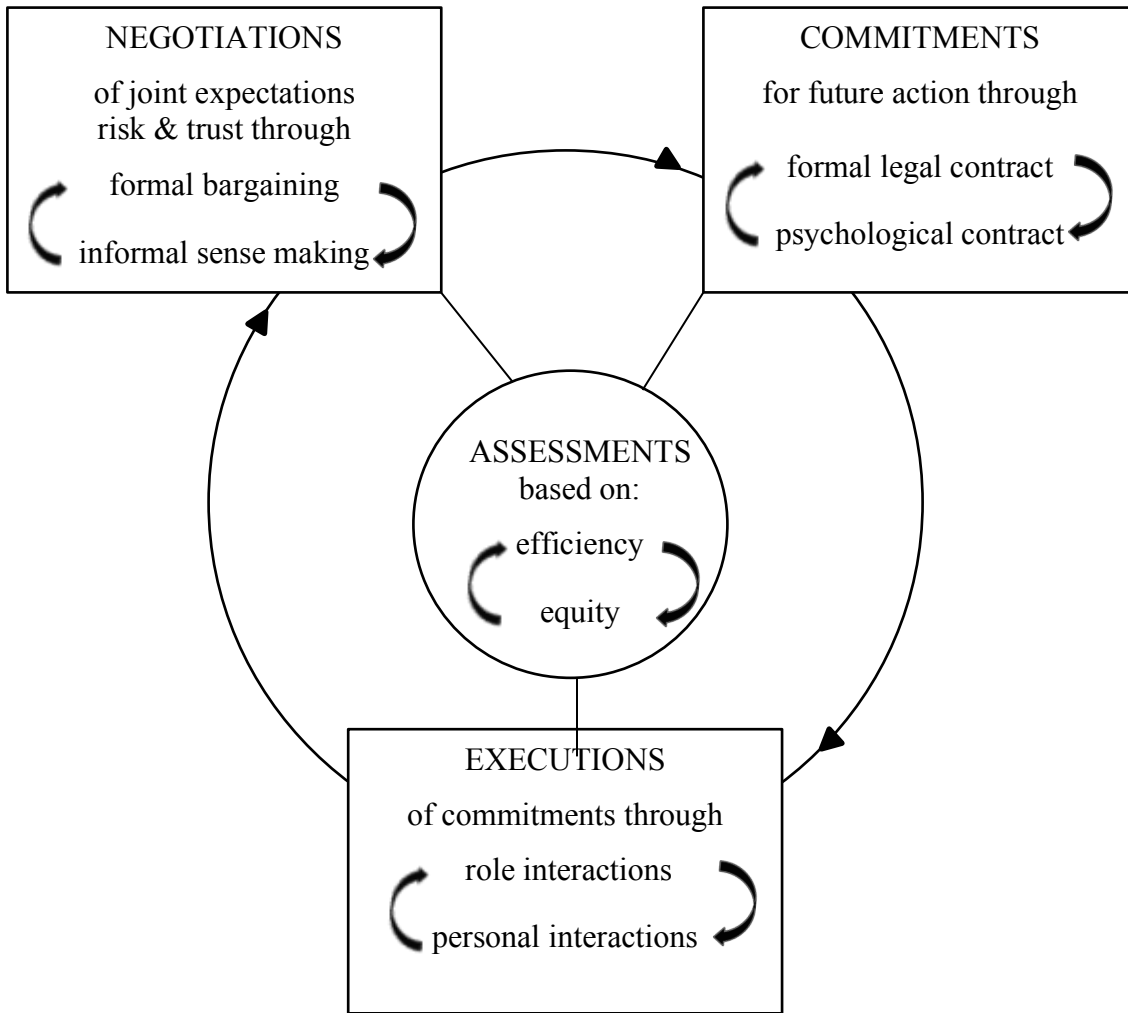
Conceptual model

The framework for this study rests on the conception that the formation of cooperative relationships between schools and providers during early negotiations and contracting processes lays the groundwork for the future success or failure of the partnership. It is during this period of negotiation, preceding entry into work, that goals, methods, and expected outcomes are typically discussed. There is a general consensus in both the education and management research literature that clarity and congruence regarding the problem or need that brings them together, the nature of the work to be done, respective roles and responsibilities, and expected outcomes, improves the chances that the partnership will be successful over time (Ring and Van de Ven (1994); Kronley and Handley, 2003; Berman and McLaughlin, 1978; Datnow, 1999; Coburn, Bae and Turner, 2008). The research literature also finds that failure to achieve congruence between parties will undermine the quality of the relationship and the work. A good match is one in which there is a high degree of congruence about the nature and scope of the work to be done, mutual capacity to engage in the work, and solutions that are responsive to real and perceived needs for both the provider and the school community. So attention to the processes that lead to a successful match in the early development of the relationship contributes to a successful outcome. (Berman and McLaughlin, 1978; Finnigan and O'Day, 2003).

Figure 2.1 depicts the Ring and Van de Ven (1994) process framework for the development of cooperative inter-organizational relationships. In the negotiation stage of relationship formation, parties develop joint expectations about their motivations, possible investments, and perceived uncertainties relative to the joint undertaking on which they are preparing to embark. In the commitment stage, the parties reach agreement on obligations and

rules for future action. Terms and governance structures are established and either codified in a formal contract or informally understood in a psychological contract. It often requires several interactions to reach this stage, depending on the levels of risk and trust and reliance on informal contracts.

Figure 2.1. Process framework of the development of cooperative IORs



(Ring and Van de Ven, 1994)

In the execution stage of relationship formation, commitments and rules of action are carried out, and staff is activated to carry out the plan. Initially, formal role behavior reduces uncertainty, making interaction between parties predictable. Through a series of role interactions, parties become more individually familiar with each other and increasingly rely on interpersonal vs. inter role relationships (Ring and Van de Ven, 1994). Invariably, over time, issues arise that require parties to rethink and renegotiate. Termination occurs when the terms of an agreement have been met or breached. “If parties can negotiate minimal, congruent

expectations for a cooperative IOR, they will make commitments to an initial course of action. If executed in an efficient and equitable way, they will continue and expand. If not, they will renegotiate or reduce commitments.” (Ring and Van de Ven, 1994, p. 99). This cycle of negotiation, commitment and execution frames the formation of cooperative interorganizational relationships in the Ring and Van de Ven (RV) framework. These relationships emerge as cooperative when parties share congruent values, expectations and purposes (Goldring and Sims, 2005; Ring and Van de Ven, 1994).

The focus during the negotiation phase is on formal bargaining, and what Ring and Van de Ven call choice behavior, as parties select an approach and engage around possible terms and procedures of a potential relationship. Underlying formal bargaining are social psychological processes of sensemaking or enactment that lead independent parties through negotiations. In other words, as parties negotiate the formal components of a contract, they interpret what the other means, and even perhaps make assumptions about what the other is proposing based on their shared history, or reputation, or feelings that emerge in the moment. Repeated efforts at negotiation are often necessary in order for parties to assess uncertainties, each other’s role, the other’s trustworthiness, their rights and duties, and aspects of efficiency and equity. In the Ring and Van de Ven model, efficiency refers to the most time and resource saving means to achieving a desired outcome, and equity refers to fair dealing between the partners. Equity in their framework is about balance and fairness. It does not rely on “equivalence” as a measure of fairness, but on appropriate, balanced levels of investment (time, resources, effort).

Ring and Van de Ven propose a simple theory of action for the development of these relationships that relies on the establishment of congruence between parties:

If parties can negotiate minimal, congruent expectations for a cooperative IOR, they will make commitments to an initial course of action. If these commitments are executed in an efficient and equitable manner, they will continue with or expand their mutual commitments. If these commitments are not executed in an efficient and equitable manner, the parties will initiate corrective measures by either negotiating or reducing their commitments to the cooperative IOR. (Ring and Van de Ven, 1994, p. 99).

Congruence in their definition means that partners hold an identical view of the purposes, goals, roles, and expectations of a joint venture, developed through ongoing communication and interaction over time. “Congruency is a cumulative product of numerous interactions; through these interactions emerge trust in the goodwill of others and an understanding of constraints on the relationship that may be imposed by a person’s organizational role.” (Ring and Van de Ven, 1994, p. 100). Congruence is understood and acted upon through formal, written contracts as well as informal, psychological contracts, which are understood to a greater or lesser extent by partners.

Psychological contracts, as opposed to most legal contracts, consist of unwritten and largely non-verbalized sets of congruent expectations and assumptions held by transacting parties about each other’s prerogatives and obligations. These expectations of what each party will give to, and receive from, the relationship vary in their degree of explicitness; the parties often are only marginally aware of the exact nature of these expectations (Kotter, 1973). Congruent expectations include areas such as common agreement on norms... work roles, ... the nature of the work itself, social relationships,

or security needs. Individual parties' expectations are shaped by past experiences (many of which may predate the relational contract), personal values, professional specialization, and the role of the party in the hierarchy. (Ring and Van de Ven, 1994, p. 100)

Applied to a school context, the process begins with the emergence of some need at the school level, which leads the principal or some other actor within the school environment to engage in some level of scanning behavior in search of an appropriate solution or remedy. Identification of potential external support providers is the result of this initial scan. Decisions are made by key leaders in the school that narrow the search, which is followed up by contact, at which point initial framing of needs and services occurs. An initial perception about the level of "fit" or match between the school and the provider is developed at this stage for both parties. Presuming that both parties see potential in their work together, they enter formal negotiations, during which goals, outcomes, expectations, roles, timelines, costs and theories of action are discussed. The level and depth of what is negotiated varies considerably, depending on reputation, past experience, and the norms of the individuals doing the negotiating. Successful negotiation leads to a formal contract.

The management literature suggests that the informal, or what Ring and Van de Ven (1994) call the psychological contract is impacted significantly by emerging personal relationships between primary actors on both sides of the contracting table. Gulati (1995a) suggests that contracts play a role in making the behavior of each entity predictable. In the absence of knowledge of the other, a more detailed contract may be necessary in order to predict behavior. With the emergence of inter-firm trust, which occurs according to Gulati through repeated exposure to the same partner over time, there is less reliance on the formal contract and greater reliance on the relationship itself to predict behavior. Ring and Van de Ven (1994) agree with this finding. Dyer and Chu (2003) in their study of the relationship between supplier trust and buyer transaction costs in the automobile industry, found that high levels of trust between partners ultimately lowered the costs of transactions and increased the competitive advantage of the partners. While contracts represent an important governance mechanism in partnerships, and protect the partners against opportunism, they are costly to develop. The more detailed the contract, the greater the costs for development and oversight of its provisions. The management literature suggests that the role of trust is therefore significant in the formation of effective partnerships. Ultimately, I found that the quality of communication during the early formation of a partnership was impacted by trust, openness and commitment to common goals, and was key to the emergence of a strong match.

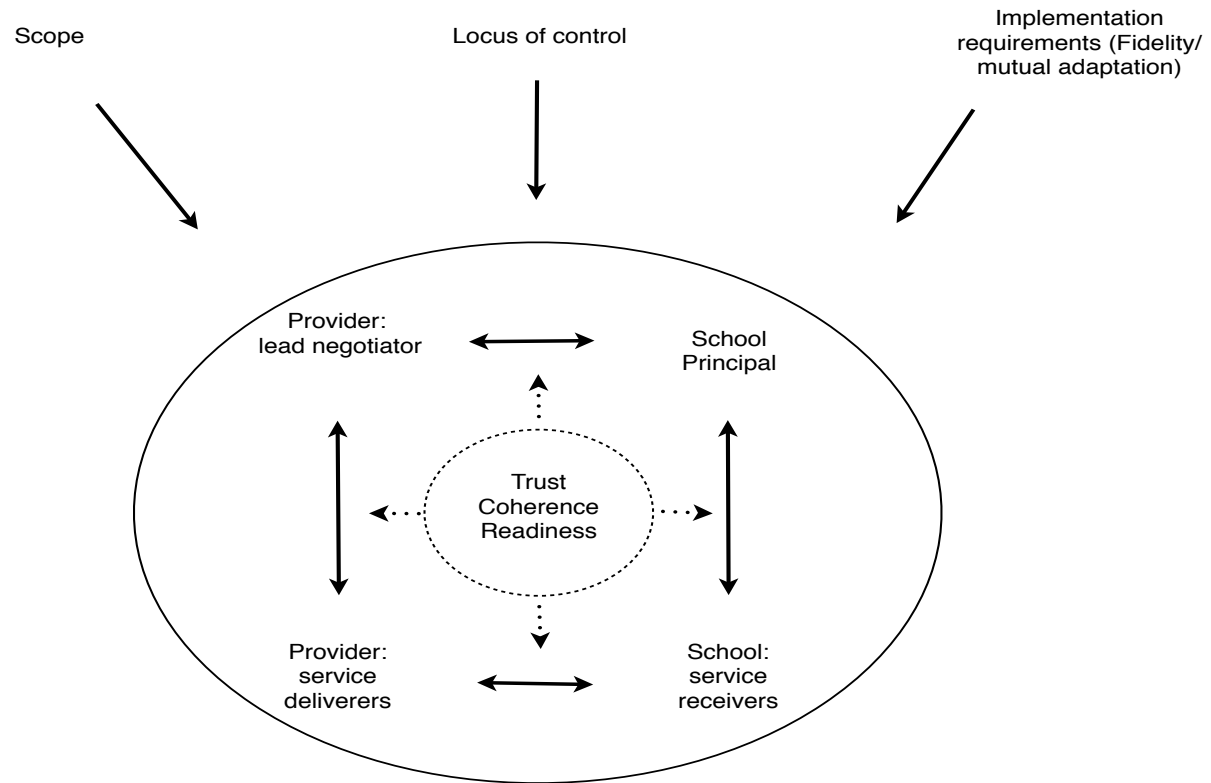
The success of projects involving external providers and schools working together is driven by many factors. This study focused on the issue of match, and the Ring and Van de Ven model provided a lens through which to examine the process of match formation. It does not capture some of the contextual factors that may impact the quality of the match, however, so my study also looks specifically at the ways in which structural factors, (locus of control over a school reform endeavor, its scope, and the extent to which it relies on fidelity or mutual adaptation as an implementation strategy), and internal dynamics at the school (trust, coherence and change readiness) are associated with match formation. Figure 2.2 depicts the manner in which I hypothesized these contextual issues interacted during the formation of a working relationship.

Scope of endeavor. The scope of a project has to do with the object of change, and whether it is about introducing discrete strategies that focus exclusively on improving test performance, for example, or about changing the culture of the school around approaches to teaching, dialogue with each other, and view of students. Complex change initiatives (changing school culture, for example) require greater levels of commitment and participation from site personnel than initiatives that are targeting a specific issue or need within a school. The questions I asked about scope had to do with the whether the principal, provider, and teachers had a congruent understanding of the scope of the effort they were undertaking, and were willing to commit themselves and their resources (time and energy) to it. I expected to see, during the negotiation stage of relationship development, conversations between the principal, provider and teachers that name and come to agreement with the degree of complexity involved in the work they are undertaking together.

Locus of control. Reform initiatives driven (or funded) by an external policy body, governing board, or central office are received differently by those engaged in a change process than initiatives that are more organically derived, at the site level (Bodilly, 1998). I posit that the quality of match between a school and a provider is impacted, in part, by levels of trust, organizational coherence, and change readiness within a school site. When a decision to launch a change initiative is made outside the school, the faculty and staff at the school level sometimes feel “done to”, anxious, and misunderstood, which undermines their trust in the leadership and the process, and their commitment to participate. Often these kinds of external (to the school) decisions compete with site based efforts to identify and remedy areas of need, leading to multiple, competing reform efforts and an overall lack of coherence in programming designed to lead to improvements.

Fidelity vs. mutual adaptation in implementation. Some external providers require the schools in which they work to implement their programs with a strict attention to procedural fidelity. Other providers expect that programs or innovations will be adapted by both designers and users during implementation. The nature of the change that is being undertaken often drives specificity of implementation requirements. For example, schools implementing the *Explicit Direct Instruction* (EDI) program require all teachers to use lesson design templates and specific pedagogical strategies in a systematic manner. These kinds of templates and systems are imported into teaching practice as is, without adjustment or adaptation to a particular context or teachers’ practice. Often this is by design: by implementing a particular strategy with strict fidelity, the teacher learns the practice and minimizes variation, which can undermine the impact of a design and change predicted results. Other programs work with teachers to develop their knowledge and skill and rely on teacher judgment and decision making regarding how and when to implement new strategies. For example, teachers working with a provider on lesson study, a professional development strategy that brings teachers together to design high quality lessons, observe one another in teaching, and collect and analyze evidence of student learning as a way of developing their understanding of the impact of good teaching on student learning. This sort of strategy is adapted by teachers as they seek to improve their practice. Reform strategies that rely on mutual adaptation have been associated with successful implementation of change initiatives (Berman and McLaughlin, 1978), where success is understood as the extent to which changes in practice are sustained over time. Other research focused on implementation of specific strategies with fidelity have been found to have a positive impact on student achievement (Rowan, et.al), but rely more heavily on curriculum materials and external supervision in order to be sustained in teacher practice.

Figure 2.2. Contextual factors that interact with match formation



Rowan (1990) analyzed two strategies of the organizational design of schools, one based on bureaucratic control and the other on increasing the commitment and expertise of teachers in the context of teacher autonomy and participation.

One theory holds that teaching is a routine technology and that a control-based strategy of organization design can enhance school effectiveness. The strategy associated with this approach involves the development of a standardized system of input, behavior, and output controls that constrain teachers' methods and content decisions, thereby controlling student access to academic content and assuring student exposure to a standardized quality of instruction... An alternative approach to school design has begun to emerge. This approach is grounded in a view of teaching as a complex and nonroutine technology; it assumes that organic patterns of school management they rely on network structures of coordination and control and the expansion of teacher authority can enhance teachers' commitment and improve instruction (Rosenholtz, 1987). In short, this approach relies on teachers' expertise and problem solving, rather than elaborate control systems for the improvement of teaching. (Rowan, 1990, p. 358)

Rowan found evidence that both strategies could be effective in improving outcomes for students, but that they were driven by fundamentally different, and mutually exclusive, theories regarding the role of the teacher and the effective organization of schools.

In the 1992 Handbook of Research on Curriculum Snyder, Bolikn and Zumwalt identify three approaches to curriculum implementation which have a broader applicability to the implementation of other kinds of innovations and reform strategies as well (Datnow, 1999, Datnow and Mehan, etc. McLaughlin, 2006; Berman and McLaughlin 1978). Their framework is a useful analytical tool that can help us understand whether external providers and their prospective partners share a common vision and set of beliefs.

The first approach to implementation identified by Snyder, et al. (1992) focuses on fidelity of implementation, where an innovation is implemented as intended by its designers. The second approach focuses on the ways in which an innovation is adapted by its designers and users during implementation and the third focuses on the process of design and implementation as enacted (co-constructed) by teachers and students. Snyder, et.al, refer to this third approach as "curriculum enactment".

Snyder, et. al. argue that these three approaches differ on three key dimensions: how they view knowledge (whether it resides inside schools or outside schools), how they view the change process, and how they view the role of the teacher. Each of these approaches to implementation is summarized in Figure 2.3 below across these three dimensions. It is my belief that external providers and their prospective partners need to come to agreement on these three dimensions in order to engage in productive work. I am not suggesting that they must begin their negotiations on the same page, but I think the outcome of the partnership will be substantially impacted by the extent to which there is agreement across these dimensions. The fidelity vs. mutual adaptation variable represents a theory of change and overall philosophical approach to the work of school improvement and holds very different views regarding the work of teachers and leaders. Agreement between partners at this level is critical for match, according to both the education and management literatures.

Figure 2.3. Curriculum Implementation Framework

	Fidelity perspective	Mutual adaptation perspective	Enactment perspective
Knowledge	Created outside the classroom by experts, implemented by teachers with fidelity to design and intent	Resides outside but is adapted by teachers during implementation. Adaptation is guided	Not a product, rather an ongoing process. External expertise is a resource; the teacher is the actor/co-creator with students
Change:	Rational systematic linear process which is better managed when we know what factors influence implementation	Sometimes follows a predictable pattern, often unpredictable and non-linear process that depends on and interacts significantly with local context. The teacher is an active consumer and implementation impacts both the outcome and the product	Process of growth for teachers and students. Change in thinking and practice. Involves genuine construction and reconstruction
Role of Teacher	Consumer who follows directions and receives training in how to do so	The teacher shapes the curriculum to meet the demands of local context. Role of teacher central; their input is critical to successful implementation	Teachers and students create / co-construct the curriculum

Adapted from Snyder, Bolikn and Zumwalt (1992)

Trust. Trust within and between organizations is an important factor in the development of a successful match. Ring and Van de Ven (1994) describe trust as confidence in the goodwill of the other, and suggest it develops through repeated exposure and interaction between parties. In their process model, they focus on the willingness of participants to rely on trust to deal with uncertainty, and how personal relationships develop and shape the evolving structure of the partnership (p. 5). Their model does not, however, provide a strong metric for understanding how trust develops and shapes the formation of a match. Jeffries and Reed (2000) cite Boon and Holmes who define trust as “a state involving confident positive expectations about another’s motives with respect to one’s self in situations entailing risk” (1991: 194) and McAllister who explains trust as “the extent to which a person is confident in, and willing to act on the basis of the words, actions, and decisions of another” (1995: 25). McAllister identifies cognitive- and affect-based trust as separate constructs where *cognitive-based trust* [sic] is focused on the technical competence of a prospective partner and based on rational evaluation informed by prior

experience, reputation and predictability; and *affect-based trust* relies on emotional attachment and a care and concern for the other's welfare (Lewis and Weigert, 1985), and the relationship itself is valued by both partners. Jeffries and Reed studied the interaction between these two types of trust on negotiators' motivation to solve problems of adaptation in relational contracting and found that too much trust was as bad as too little trust for the development of sustainable partnerships that maximized benefits for both partners. In essence, they concluded that solutions to problems that brought partners together were furthest from optimal when both organizational and interpersonal trust were high or both were low. Two propositions emerged from their theoretical analysis which have a bearing on my study:

Proposition 1: Under conditions of high organizational trust, solutions to problems of adaptation will be closer to Pareto optimal when interpersonal trust is low than when it is mixed, and in turn, those solutions will be closer to Pareto optimal than when interpersonal trust is high.

Proposition 2: Under conditions of low organizational trust, solutions to problems of adaptation will be closer to Pareto optimal when interpersonal trust is high than when it is mixed, and, in turn, those solutions will be closer to Pareto optimal than when interpersonal trust is low. (Jeffries and Reed, 2000, pp. 878, 880).

Coherence. Newmann, Smith, Allensworth and Bryk (2001) define instructional program coherence as "a set of interrelated programs for students and staff that are guided by a common framework for curriculum, instruction, assessment and learning climate and that are pursued over a sustained period." (p. 297). In a study of elementary schools in Chicago, Newmann et al., found that schools with more coherent instructional programs experienced greater student achievement gains than schools with multiple, competing programs in play. They identify three conditions that coincide with strong program coherence:

1. Use of a common instructional framework that guides curriculum, instruction, assessment and learning climate. Specific expectations for student learning are combined with focused strategies and materials, used by teachers to guide instruction and assessment of learning outcomes. Coordination of curriculum, instruction and assessment occurs within and across grade levels. Movement from one grade level to the next is characterized by a progression of increasingly complex subject matter, without repetition of fundamental material. Student support programs are also focused on the common instructional framework. In short, the primary vehicles for teaching, learning, student support and assessment are all drawing from the same set of expectations about the curriculum and student progress.
2. Staff working conditions support implementation of the framework. Teachers and school leaders hold each other mutually accountable for implementation of the framework; commitment and competence in teaching to the framework is a criterion in recruitment, hiring and evaluation of staff; professional development focuses on increasing capacity to execute the common instructional framework, and is sustained as needed in order to achieve a high level of competence.
3. Resources – funding, materials, time and staff assignments – are allocated in a manner that moves the common instructional framework forward and guards against "diffuse, scattered improvement efforts" (Newmann et al., 2001, p. 300). As a consequence of dedicating and focusing resources in support of the common framework, the curriculum, assessments and

teacher assignments remain stable over time, enabling teachers to develop a higher level of skill in their particular roles.

An essential attribute of this approach to coherence is an emphasis on coordination of activities underway within a school in a manner that is guided by the common framework. Newmann et al., (2001) distinguish between a coordinated, coherent approach to school change and whole school change efforts or implementation of models that require fidelity to a particular program, suggesting that both of these strategies can be implemented in a manner that promotes incoherence by implementing too many programs at once that are not coordinated with the framework, or failing to provide adequate time for staff to develop the knowledge and skills to implement effectively.

Newmann et al., (2001) conclude, based on a review of the research on learning and cognition, that instructional program coherence has a positive effect on student performance because students “are more likely to learn when their experiences connect with and build on one another. To the extent that experiences are disconnected, it is more difficult for students to incorporate new understandings into prior knowledge when necessary.” (p. 300). Their research also suggests that students who experience a coherent approach in curriculum, teaching and assessment are more motivated to learn: “Coherent instruction develops competence more effectively than incoherent instruction. When children see themselves developing competence, they are more motivated to work, because fulfilling the basic human need for mastery builds confidence that exerting effort will bring success.” (p. 301). These findings hold true in the research conducted by Newmann et al. (2001) for teacher performance as well: “teachers who participate in coherent professional development experiences, as opposed to short-term, unrelated activities, are more likely to learn from those experiences and to integrate that new knowledge into their teaching.” (p. 301). Citing research on organizations and effective management, Newmann et.al find that:

Professionals who work together on integrated activities aimed at clear goals produce higher quality goods and services. (Lawler, 1990; Wohlstetter, Smyer and Mohrman, 1994). One reason for that is that coordination of activities amplifies (teachers’) access to and use of technical resources and expertise. . . . Another reason is that connecting the work of various teachers to common purposes and practices that are pursued over an extended period gives teachers’ work more meaning, thereby increasing their motivation and commitment to reach goals. In contrast, when teachers know from prior experience that initiatives are introduced and abandoned before they are substantially incorporated, it makes little sense to expend much effort to change one’s practice. (p. 301)

Change readiness. Research in the management sciences on change readiness sheds light on internal conditions and dynamics that impact the development of congruence during the formation of a partnership, and was one of the dynamics I examined in this study.

Ring and Van de Ven (1994) do not address the issue of change readiness in their model, possibly because it is presumed in business that the motivation to partner may be more focused on obvious need and less reliant on developing buy-in to a change initiative. Armenakis, Harris & Mossholder define change readiness as “an individual’s beliefs, attitudes and intentions regarding the extent to which changes are needed and the organization’s capacity to successfully undertake those changes.” (1993: 681). In their review of the change readiness literature,

Rafferty, Jimmieson and Armenakis (2013) argue for a multi-level perspective on change readiness that takes into account the beliefs and attitudes of the individual, the work group and the organization, and call attention to both the cognitive and affective components of attitude. In their multilevel framework of change readiness, Rafferty et al., posit that we cannot assess organizational readiness for change without first understanding readiness at the individual and workgroup levels. But the most fundamental building blocks for assessing change readiness are at the level of the individual. Cognitively, an individual is ready for change when they believe that change is needed, that the proposed change is appropriate, that they are capable of implementing, that the organization, including supervisors and peers, will provide tangible support for change, and that engaging in the change will be of benefit to their job or role in the organization. Affectively, an individual is ready for change if their emotions regarding the prospect of change invoke pleasure, anticipatory excitement, optimism, confidence, and relaxation (Rafferty et al., 2013).

At the work group level, change readiness relies on interaction, where a group within an organization is experiencing similar events and developing a common understanding of them in the workplace over time. “The meaning of any change event is negotiated and ultimately determined by individual and group sensemaking efforts.” (Rafferty et al., 2013:117). The collective emotional reaction to a change endeavor is driven by what Rafferty et al. call “emotional comparison and contagion”. In emotional comparison, individuals in a work group seek cues from others in like positions to label and define their thoughts and feelings about a change event, while contagion is a more active state of trying to influence the emotions or behaviors of others (2013).

Finally, at the organizational level, Rafferty et al. suggest that organizations go through recruitment, selection, attrition and socialization processes which over time lead to a reduction “in variability of perceptions in an organization and facilitate common interpretations of the workplace and of events.” (2013: 119). These researchers argue that “an organization’s leadership, identity, and culture are likely to contribute to the development of consistent collective affective responses to organizational change events.” (Rafferty et al., 2013: 120). With regard to leadership, they posit that leaders shape a positive emotional reaction to change for individuals by establishing a clear vision of the future in a manner that inspires hope and optimism. Further, “employees who strongly identify with their organization are likely to experience emotions similar to each other’s when faced with changes that enhance or threaten the organization’s identity.” Finally, organizations regulate emotion in the workplace through the establishment of norms, compartmentalization of emotional and rational activities, and through socialization processes that lead employees to hide emotions that may disrupt task performance. (Rafferty et al., 2013: 119-120).

Summary. The issue of match is not well studied in the school change literature. It gets some attention as a subset of larger research themes in the management literature focused on contracting, but is not a central focus of study in this domain either. Absent a robust research literature in this area, I did not have strong conceptual anchors to draw from in approaching this study. As a result, I constructed a conceptual framework that drew from my own experiences as an external provider of services to schools as well as a cross-section of research that I thought would help me identify the phenomenon of match, and begin to understand the conditions under which it thrived. Ring and Van de Ven (1994) provided a strong conceptual framework that helped me to identify the essential processes in which partners engaged as they went through the cycle of negotiation, commitment, and execution of a contract.

I drew from my own experience as the director of a university-based teacher development center to define the issues around scope of a project and locus of control that I thought would have an impact on the development of match. I drew from Berman and McLaughlin (1978), Rowan (1990), and Snyder, Bolikin, & Zumwalt (1992) to help me understand how expectations for fidelity or mutual adaptation in the implementation of a change initiative would shape the development of a match, and from Newman, Smith, Allensworth & Bryk (2001) to define the elements of coherence that I thought would have an impact. Finally, I drew from the management literature (Jeffries and Reed, 2000; McAllister, 1995; Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993 and Rafferty, Jimmieson, & Armenakis, 2013) to better understand the role of trust and change readiness in the development of cooperative interorganizational relationships.

Chapter 3. Research Design

I employed a qualitative cross-case study design to investigate match development in two school/external provider relationships in which the external service provider was hired to provide services to the school in order to improve some aspect of the academic program. Case study research can be an effective tool for understanding the “how” of a contemporary phenomenon (Yin, 2003). The phenomenon under investigation here, how school level decision makers and external providers of service match their needs and services, is well suited to a case study design. I employed a cross-case design because analytical conclusions arising across multiple cases are more powerful than those coming from an individual case and a cross-case study will provide insight into how the phenomenon occurs in different settings (Yin, 2003; Stake, 2006).

This study was descriptive and exploratory in nature since so little is known about the initial formation of relationships between schools and external providers. I carefully explored and documented the approach taken by decision makers at the school and provider level as they negotiated entry into work and identified and categorized the factors that seemed to be associated with the development and quality of the match. I did not seek to establish causality or to be predictive, which would call for other research methodologies (Yin, 2003). I endeavored to enhance the transferability of the findings by providing a rich and thorough description of the research context and the assumptions central to the study so that readers can assess their relevance to other contexts (Creswell, 2009; Stake, 2006).

Case Selection

Cases were purposefully selected to allow for close examination of issues of interest in this study (Creswell, 2009). I selected two partnerships for inclusion in this study. Each partnership included a school and an external provider of services. In both cases I was looking for a partnership that was at the earliest stages of communication about the possibility of working together. I selected one partnership (Case A) by contacting the principal of Murphys High School (MHS), who had just received a small learning communities grant and was looking for an external consultant to provide professional development services to her teachers. I met with the principal (Hannah) to see how she was planning to select a provider to work on the grant, and determined, with her, that the approach she was taking and the timing, being just at the beginning of negotiation the work, would be suitable for the purposes of my study. She ultimately decided to work with Better Schools, Incorporated (BSI).

I selected the partners for Case B by reaching out to Collaborators for School Change (CSC), a non-profit organization that provides support services to schools and school districts. I had previously done some research on their process of entering into relationships with schools, and found their process to be highly developed with respect to the attention they give to the contracting, or entry process. I was interested in learning more about how their process worked for schools, and this was the impetus for my study. I had an initial meeting with the Chief Program officer for CSC, to describe my study, and we created a short list of schools in which they were planning to commence work. I attended an introductory training session delivered by CSC in which several school site leadership teams from most of the schools in a district were present. Several of the school sites were continuing their work with CSC, but a few were in the exploratory stage of determining if this was a program they wanted to pursue. I observed these teams as they experienced the training, spoke with the principals, and asked Alma, the Principal

of Riverdale Elementary School (RES), who was considering work with CSC in the coming year, if she would be willing to participate in my study. Case A and Case B participants are profiled in Chapter 4.

Selecting partnership sites that were this early in negotiation of entry was ideal for capturing the unfolding or emerging issues and perceptions that shape how the work is understood and organized prior to commitment and execution, which provided an authentic context for data collection that was responsive to my research questions.

One trade off for selecting partnerships that were this fresh in their formation was that lead negotiators for the school and the provider and other key participants in the negotiation process lacked perspective on the relationship under study. Lack of perspective on the particular relationship may have lead them to draw from their broader experiences as they responded to my questions in an interview setting. Data collection strategies were designed with an eye toward addressing this concern.

Examining multiple cases increased the likelihood that themes emerging from the data were the result of documentable dimensions of the relationship. Two cases are sufficient to get the benefits of cross-case analysis, allowing for enough similarity and variation to identify issues and factors that may be important for understanding the development of match (Yin, 2003). In order to limit the extraneous factors that could interfere with cross-case analysis, I selected cases that involved external providers working with a single school.

Data Collection

A key component of a robust case study is the collection of data from multiple sources (Yin, 2003). Through interviews and document review, I collected data on how school leaders and external providers of services approach the issue of match as they enter into collaborative work. Interviews are one of the most important sources of case study information. Interview protocols were structured to ask questions and dialogue with study participants in an unbiased, discursive rather than rigid manner, fashion (Mishler, 1986; Yin, 2003). Documents are also a useful data source in case study research. Even though they are not always accurate and may include biases, documents can be useful for corroborating, contradicting and or augmenting other evidence; verifying terms, titles, and or organization names; and can be used to make inferences about the intended implementation of the program which can lead to areas for further investigation (Yin, 2003). Written artifacts examined in this study included contracts, guides, training materials and protocols used by providers, and reports on prior efforts. I used these artifacts as a primary data source for understanding the approach to partnership work that was taken by each partner. Interviews with (a) providers and staff who directed or engaged in the framing and contracting processes; and (b) site administrators and teachers who had information/perspective on the formation of the relationship, served as another primary source of data.

The unit of analysis for this study was the provider/school relationship. Of interest were the processes and interactions the provider and school-based contacts utilized and experienced as they worked toward a congruent understanding of the problem or issue that brought them together, a shared vision and understanding of the goals and objectives of the partnership, and agreement regarding roles and services to be provided, a theory of action and expected outcomes.

Initial data collection involved a review and analysis of pertinent documents related to each case. I began by developing an interview protocol that drew from my conceptual framework

and laid the foundation for exploring all aspects of my research questions. I conducted three rounds of interviews with each partner in each case. My interview protocol is included in Appendix A. The first round of interviews with lead negotiators for the provider and the school site focused on their general approach to entering into work and forming a relationship with a new partner focused on a change initiative. In these interviews, I sought to gain a general understanding of their individual approaches to this kind of work, the conditions that typically lead to a contract for service, and the range of experiences they have each had in this arena. I employed a narrative interview strategy that enabled me to capture their approach and come to a better understanding of their values and priorities when contracting for school improvement (Mishler, 1986). Six interviews were conducted in this round.

The second round of interviews occurred with lead negotiators and key participants from both the site and the provider in both cases. Key participants from the provider group were staff who worked on aspects of the client enrollment process. Key participants at the site level involved, in addition to the site administrator, lead teachers and other administrators who participated in the framing of issues and strategies for engagement with the external provider or received services. In these interviews, I sought to uncover perceptions about the nature and quality of the match and factors that seemed to enable or constrain the development of a strong match.

Interviews with site-based leaders focused on why they elected to partner with this particular provider, their needs, the decision making process that led to the selection of this provider and perceptions about the provider. Interviews with the provider focused on their interest in working with this site, their perceptions of the site, and their expertise to respond to the needs of the site.

To determine the extent of congruence between school participants and the external provider around needs, theory of action, roles, expectations and intended outcomes, interviews with the lead negotiator and key participants from both the provider and the site addressed how they each saw the problem or the opportunity that they were working on; what each of them thought were the goals and expected outcomes for the work; what they thought their role was in the work, and what they thought the other's role was.

To explore the nature and extent to which trust was emerging in the relationship, interviews with the lead negotiator from both the provider and the site addressed how they knew they could trust one another to fulfill commitments, what they knew about the reputation and track record of the other, and how this knowledge informed their approach to negotiating and entering into work.

In order to better understand the factors that shaped quality of the match, I pursued the question of how they were making particular decisions or taking up particular issues. I also asked them directly what factors they thought shaped the formation of this particular partnership, contract, scope of work, etc. For elaboration, I also reviewed pertinent documents that the provider and school made available, including email exchanges, draft scopes of work, meeting minutes and other items that related to the formation of the relationship.

My third round of interviews occurred after a period of six months had elapsed. I used these interviews to (a) follow up on issues that emerged from my analysis of the data collected through the first rounds of interviews and document review, and (b) examine the extent to which early conceptions of match had evolved. In these revisits, I sought clarification and confirmation or disconfirmation of findings that emerged during the first sets of interviews. Questions derived from data analysis were augmented by questions that focused on shifts in the level of buy-in and

participation over time; shifts in goals, outcomes and methods; shifts in perceptions of the other; and changes in levels of trust over time.

My purpose in conducting this final round of interviews was to capture a slightly more mature perspective from lead negotiators regarding their developing relationship. This strategy was intended to mitigate the lack of perspective that may have been present during the initial meetings and interviews, when participants may have been less able to articulate the factors informing development of the relationship and the quality of match between the provider and the school.

Ring and Van de Ven identify three phases of relationship development: negotiation, commitment, and execution. Their theory posits that relationships spiral through these three phases multiple times as the work gets underway and partners get to know each other and develop a more informed sense of what is needed. The six month period of data collection spanned one turn through this cycle.

Data Analysis

Miles and Huberman (1994) identify four aspects of qualitative data analysis: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusions. The process is continual, interactive and spiraled in a manner that makes sense to the researcher (Creswell, 1998). Data analysis for this research was ongoing throughout the data collection process. Following the first round of interviews, I read the interview transcripts in search of themes and patterns. I used these early analyses to identify codes that were not already captured by my conceptual framework.

Completion of data analysis occurred after the final round of interviews were conducted and transcribed. The full analysis included data collected from both rounds of interviews. Throughout the data collection process, I read the transcripts, my observation notes, and drafted reflective memos. I approached the full analysis in layers. First, I analyzed the attitude and experiences of each participant with regard to working collaboratively with an external partner or a school community on a change endeavor. I sorted school based participants and focused on their attitudes toward external providers, and then sorted the provider's responses, focusing on their attitudes about forming partnerships with schools. Then I analyzed the participants' responses to this particular partnership. Next I analyzed the development of participants' perspectives on match after six months of working together. Finally, I drew conclusions based on models and data summary charts.

All data was analyzed at different points for emerging patterns or themes, which guided the development of codes. A hybrid coding system employing both deductive and inductive techniques was used. I used the Dedoose software program to code the transcripts. During the initial analysis, I had twenty-two codes which I applied to all interviews. I ultimately narrowed the number of codes to fifteen, to capture broader categories for the full analysis. For example, I initially had five codes related to the selection of a partner: the principal's criteria; the provider's criteria; the impetus to pursue a partnership; the process they went through to come to a decision; and the extent to which the provider's expertise was an important criterion. Parsing "selection" this finely helped me to understand each participant's thinking and approach to this important decision, but in the final analysis, I created a broad code for selection that captured these nuances. It was important to bring the discrete pieces of data back together so that I could understand and unpack the story as a whole.

Within-case analysis included counting the frequency of codes as well as the creation and

use of several matrices. Since part of what I was trying to get at involved a process, I developed a time ordered matrix to capture the flow of events during early negotiation in each case (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 119). I found that I also needed to have a better understanding of which actors in the partnership were contributing to events during early entry and execution of the contract, so I also created a role ordered matrix (p. 123) and then a role by time matrix (p. 126). These analyses enabled me to discern whether the relationship was headed toward a productive match, and which aspects of the early formation of the relationships seemed to enable or impede the development of a match in each case.

The final step in data analysis involved cross-case analysis. My goal was not to increase generalizability, since the number of cases in my study was so small. Rather, since this was an exploratory study, my goal in cross case analysis was to deepen my understanding of the phenomenon of match and the conditions that enabled and impeded its development. I created a content analytic summary table to capture and compare within-case data from each case, organized around key factors like communication strategy, definition of the problem, and assignment of leadership roles (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 183).

Validity and Reliability

In case study research it is important that the researcher document the procedures of their study carefully (Yin, 2003). Qualitative validity refers to the procedural steps taken to ensure the accuracy of the findings (Creswell, 2009). The formation of a productive relationship requires effort from both parties. As such, my findings were informed and triangulated by three sources that confirmed and extended my findings. Relationships exist in the space between partners, so each partner was interviewed to identify and elaborate upon their own perspectives on the process of relationship formation. I interviewed key participants three times in order to eliminate – to the extent possible – ambiguity and conflict in the record. Documents represent a stable source of information, and in this study the documents I reviewed captured espoused approaches to negotiation and relationship formation and demonstrated the development of congruence and mutual understanding around the goals and outcomes of the work. Interviews with key participants in each program and the school site provided an opportunity for participants to inform, confirm, disconfirm, correct or extend that record. A third source of validity is the theory undergirding the formation of cooperative interorganizational relationships and my conceptual framework for this study.

One limitation of this study was a lack of time to collect data over the life of the partnerships I studied. By design, I examined perceptions that developed prior to and during the early negotiation between providers and schools and the factors that shaped the development of their relationship. With a six-month data collection window, the most I could do was identify issues, factors and events that seem to matter for the overall outcome. This study did not enable me to follow each relationship as it developed or to evaluate their overall success. The study enabled me to document how relationships developed during one cycle of negotiation, commitment and execution of a contract, the factors that seemed to be associated with the quality of the match, and how the quality of the match evolved during entry and the early execution of work in these particular relationships.

Qualitative reliability requires that the researcher's approach is consistent across different cases (Creswell, 2009). To increase the reliability of this study I developed protocols for data collection. Case study protocols significantly increase the reliability of case study research and

are particularly important in cross-case studies (Yin, 2003). Second, transcripts were checked to make sure they did not contain obvious mistakes made during transcription (Creswell, 2009). Finally, codes were clearly defined so that as data were sorted, they could be readily compared with the code definitions to ensure that the definitions accurately captured the data and to ensure that there was minimal unintentional drift or change in the definition of the codes (Creswell, 2009).

Role of researcher

During the time I conducted this study, I served as the director of a teacher development center located in a school of education in a major research university. My center provided services to teachers, schools and school districts throughout the region. As the director of the center, the subject of this study was of vital interest to me, insofar as it would give me insight about how to more successfully engage with partners on change projects. In the course of my work, I had crossed paths with both the principal in Case A and the provider in Case B.

In the following four chapters, I detail the findings of the analysis. Chapter 4 profiles each of the partners studied. Chapter 5 provides a summary of Case A, Chapter 6 focuses on Case B, and Chapter 7 provides my cross case analysis.

Chapter 4. Introduction to Cases

The focus of this study is on the processes prospective partners go through to reach agreement when entering into a contract for work, and the factors that shape that agreement. My initial point of entry into this topic of study came from two suppositions emerging from the Rand Change Agent Study (Berman and McLaughlin, 1978): first, that motivations underlying the initiation of a change initiative can have a profound impact on the eventual outcome, and second, that the activities preceding and following selection or adoption of a change agent can be more significant than the decision itself. What are the activities that precede and follow selection of a change initiative? And why are they consequential?

Ring and Van de Ven (1994) provided a strong conceptual framework that helped me to identify the essential processes in which partners engaged as they went through the cycle of negotiation, commitment, and execution of a contract. They propose a simple theory of action for the development of these relationships that relies on the establishment of congruence between parties: “If parties can negotiate minimal, congruent expectations for a cooperative IOR, they will make commitments to an initial course of action.” (Ring and Van de Ven, 1994, p. 99). Congruence in their definition means that partners hold an identical view of the purposes, goals, roles, and expectations of a joint venture, and is developed through ongoing communication and interaction over time. “Congruency is a cumulative product of numerous interactions; through these interactions emerge trust in the goodwill of others and an understanding of constraints on the relationship that may be imposed by a person’s organizational role.” (Ring and Van de Ven, 1994, p. 100).

In this study, I investigated two cases of partnership between a school and an external provider of services focused on school improvement. In this chapter, I detail salient features of each partnership and the individuals who served as study participants. To preserve anonymity, all school, district, provider and participant names are pseudonyms. Figures 4.1 and 4.3 list study participants by name and role.

Partnership A: Murphys High School and Better Schools Incorporated

Murphys High School. In 2011-12, Murphys High School (MHS) was a comprehensive high school in Jamestown Unified School District (JUSD) serving 1,685 students in grades 9-12. Close to sixty percent of the student population were Hispanic or Latino and almost 50% of students qualified for free or reduced lunch. Sixteen percent were considered English learners. Only fifty-three percent (53%) of students tested as proficient in English/language arts and 49% in math (2011). The school district was in its third year of program improvement¹ during the 2011-12 school year for failure to meet annual student performance and growth targets, and MHS student academic performance contributed to this situation.

Located in semi-rural central California, JUSD enrolled 10,578 students in 12 elementary schools, 2 middle schools, 2 comprehensive high schools, a continuation high school and an adult education center in 2011-12. JUSD’s student population was 57.8% Hispanic, 30.4% white, 4.6% Asian, 1 % African American, and 7% other. The district employed 535 teachers, of whom 71% were white, 21% were Hispanic, 3.4% were Asian, 1.1% was American Indian, and

¹ All schools and local education agencies that do not make Annual Yearly Progress based on student standardized

.9% were African American. Thirty-one percent (31%) of JUSD students were designated English language learners, and 55% were on free or reduced lunch.

As JUSD entered its second year of program improvement in 2010-11, the State Board of Education directed the district to partner with a state-approved District Assistance and Intervention Team (DAIT) to work with each school to improve student performance. Although schools throughout the district experienced modest gains, the district moved into year three of program improvement in 2011-12 for failure to meet required student proficiency targets in mathematics and English-language arts. MHS met its overall growth target, but failed to meet expected levels of student proficiency on standardized tests and high school graduation rates. Federal policy governing Title 1 funding, which is used to support schools serving low income and academically at risk students, dictates specific activities for school districts and schools designated as underperforming. Since JUSD did not move out of program improvement status for 2011-12, the State Board of Education assigned new corrective action, the district developed and submitted a plan to remedy, and continued to require all schools in the district to work with the DAIT provider in an ever-tightening focus on improving student performance. At MHS, the DAIT provider worked with teachers and leaders to implement a program called *Explicit Direct Instruction* beginning in 2010-11. This program had been ongoing at MHS and teachers were held accountable for implementation by administrators who looked for specific practices during observations and classroom visits.

The principal of MHS, Hannah, started her third year as Principal during the 2011-12 academic year when I collected data. Hannah is the fifth principal this high school has had since it opened its doors in 2004. She served as an assistant principal for one year prior to becoming principal, and had been a district office curriculum specialist and an elementary school principal in the district prior to joining the MHS staff. Turnover in leadership had been significant, at the principal and assistant principal levels, and at the district office. Annie, a new Assistant Principal at MHS in 2011-12, previously served for many years as a special education teacher in the district. Annie was instrumental in writing a successful grant proposal to reorganize the school around small learning communities. This grant brought significant resources with it for three years, beginning in 2010-11, to support intensive staff development and teacher release time to organize the curriculum. Annie led a group of teachers in planning for small learning communities (SLC) during the 2010-11 academic year, an initiative that was launched in 2011-12, the year that I collected data. The grant provided for significant restructuring of courses at the 9th and 10th grade levels, and allowed the school to hire an external provider to deliver professional development to teachers as part of the SLC effort. The other comprehensive high school in the district had been working with a provider organization called Better Schools, Incorporated (BSI), and reported good results with teacher implementation and student performance. Annie and Hannah attended an orientation session provided by Charles, the lead consultant for BSI, and were impressed by the results he reported from other schools in which BSI has worked, and by his overall demeanor. Believing he would connect with the teachers at MHS, and that his program would fit well with the other initiatives underway at the site, they laid plans for their leadership team and a few other faculty leaders to participate in a full day training and retreat with BSI.

“With (Better Schools, Incorporated), just knowing who my teacher leaders are and what they’re looking for, and going to BSI’s initial training and listening to (Charles) and his passion and vision... I was wowed by him and what they are about... So for me, I have

no idea how much they are gonna cost, nor do I care. Its one of those things where if you find it, its worth it, and you do whatever you can to get them there.” (Hannah, 8/16/11, lines 56-60)

The MHS leadership team included teachers and administrators who served as a sounding board and planning group with the school principal. Kelly was a member of the leadership team who was popular with students, well regarded by her colleagues and seen as a leader within the teaching ranks by the site administrators. Eric was also a veteran teacher in the district but had only recently joined the leadership team. He described himself as having been detached for most of his teaching career, focused on his own students and practice, reticent – until the 2011-12 year -- to get involved in school improvement or group efforts.

“Whatever we want to think about the CSTs, the pluses and minuses to them, the fact of the matter is our school is not progressing, our students are getting worse. . . . And then I realized, oh my gosh, I work in a failing district. We have a few lights here and there where it’s going on, but overall as a district, we’re on the downswing, we’re not on the upswing. And then I realized, but I teach here. . . . I’ve never actually taught in a school that was actually growing. So I started thinking about myself, and then I found myself . . . being critical about administrators and other teachers’ practices. . . . And then I decided . . . if I don’t like this situation then it’s time to come out of my cave and . . . help with change. And then once the change occurs, if I’m happy then I can go back.” (Eric, Int. 2/24/12, lines 22-30).

Norman and Catherine were relatively new teachers in their second and fifth years, respectively, at MHS when I interviewed them. They were not members of the leadership team, but were part of the group of faculty implementing the SLC grant. They were recruited by Annie and Hannah to be part of the team of teachers who participated in the initial orientation retreat with BSI and engaged with the leadership team in discussions about whether and how to incorporate this work into their overall school-wide improvement endeavors beginning in 2011-12.

In addition to the mandated implementation of Explicit Direct Instruction with their DAIT provider, the small learning communities restructuring grant, and the new work with Better Schools, Inc., MHS has had a long term relationship with a youth development project that both teachers and students were enthusiastic about, as well as a district imposed project (*A Look at Learning – ALL*) that is intended to be a teacher driven program where teachers look together at learning and make decisions about best practices and how they can support each other. In addition, teachers in English and Math had been involved the prior year in the development of pacing guides and formative assessments (initiated by the district office), which were also expected to be implemented in 2011-12. During the academic year I studied, all six of these initiatives were underway simultaneously, and the school was also transitioning from a block-schedule back to a traditional schedule.

Better Schools, Incorporated. By 2011-12, Better Schools, Incorporated (BSI) had been providing services to California schools for approximately 10 years. BSI delivered professional development in the form of presentations to school staff, retreats at their facility, demonstration lessons, facilitation of grade level or departmental collaborative meetings, coaching for teachers

or teams of teachers, and development of materials to support standards-based teaching and data analysis. The focus was on incorporating strategies into teaching practice designed to support students in taking standardized tests and raising their overall performance on these measures. BSI promoted their program and materials as impactful, research-based, standards-based and easy to use and integrate with current teaching practices. Phase one of their three-phase program occurred during the first year and involves implementing what they call simple “bread and butter” strategies. Phase two focused on deeper classroom strategic practices beginning in year 2 and phase three involved more complex, systemic classroom work in years 3 and 4. BSI’s approach utilized a training of trainers model, which they said enabled them to work with multiple schools simultaneously. Charles, the lead trainer typically provided training to administrators, teacher leaders and grade level and department chairs who then provided support and guidance to their colleagues as they implemented. The program offered by BSI was specifically tied to California’s curriculum standards and standardized testing program for students. In addition to a set of core activities to improve classroom practice and student performance, Charles had an intentional strategy he used to engage teachers and leaders, build relationships, and secure commitment.

“I . . . do . . . three things with a new group. I try to chat them up, I try to get them to do something for me, and then I try to give them some voice and choice so they’ll engage with me. . . Now if those things work, then people should like me and respect me and should engage with me. . . . The second thing you’ve got to have is a package that’s tolerable, so . . . there’s key things in my package. First of all I try to get people connected to a higher order purpose. I try to talk to them about where this reform stuff is situated in a larger state and national picture. Not just in education, but in the economy or society. . . . My third trick is that . . . I try to make people understand you don’t have to work harder, you’re just going to work smarter. . . . Most of the things I offer you will cause achievement to go up with little or no preparation on your part, with little or no training, just explanation. I don’t even have to tinker with your teaching at all - we’ll pretend your teaching’s fine. (Charles, Int. 10/16/11, lines 110-132).

Charles was the founder, designer and lead trainer for BSI. Geneva was the business manager who managed the schedule and facilitated logistics for training that occurs at the BSI facility in central California and at schools that contract with BSI. She also occasionally served as a participating trainer, under the guidance and direction of Charles. Carlos was a high school principal who was implementing the BSI program and worked with BSI in three ways: he participated in training programs at the BSI facility, he visited other high schools and provided advice and insight about implementation of the BSI program, and he hosted visits from other high school leadership teams who wanted a closer look and an opportunity to discuss the program with teachers who were using it. Better Schools, Incorporated was hired by the district office to work with the other comprehensive high school in JUSD in 2010-11. A year later, with enthusiastic agreement from Hannah, JUSD entered into a two-year contract with BSI to work with MHS, supported by funds received in the SLC grant.

Figure 4.1. Case A study participants

MURPHYS HIGH SCHOOL		BETTER SCHOOLS, INCORPORATED	
NAME	ROLE	NAME	ROLE
Hannah	Principal	Charles	Owner, lead provider
Annie	Assistant Principal; SLC lead	Geneva	Associate; business manager
Kelly	Teacher	Carlos	High School Principal; trainer
Eric	Teacher		
Catherine	Teacher		
Norman	Teacher		

Partnership B: Riverdale Elementary School and Collaborators for School Change

Riverdale Elementary School. Located in semi-urban central California, Rivers End Elementary School District (REESD) enrolled 13,060 students in 17 elementary schools, 5 middle schools, and 5 alternative schools in 2011-12. REESD’s student population was 78% Hispanic, 11.4% Asian, 5.1% Filipino, 2.1% white, 1.8 % African American, and 2% other. The district employed 674 teachers, of whom 52% were white, 27% were Hispanic, 11.4% were Asian, 4.3% were Filipino and 3% were African American. Fifty-one percent (51%) of REESD students were designated English language learners, and 82% were on free or reduced lunch.

Riverdale Elementary School served 486 students in grades K-5. There were 27 teachers and one administrator on the instructional staff. Close to eighty percent of the student population was Hispanic or Latino, and almost 93% of students qualified for free or reduced lunch. Sixty-one percent were considered English learners. Forty-eight percent of students tested as proficient in English/language arts and 70% in math (2011). While the school district was in its third year of program improvement for failure to meet annual yearly progress expectations, Riverdale Elementary had consistently met its growth targets and was not designated as a program improvement school. Riverdale was widely considered (by the district office and teachers) to be one of the highest performing schools in the district and reopened at its current location following a significant upgrade in facilities in 2011-12, the year I collected data.

Alma was appointed to be the principal at Riverdale Elementary School in the Summer of 2011. She had served as a principal and a teacher in the district for many years. She also served as a teacher previously at Riverdale elementary, with teachers who are still on the faculty there, including Cecelia. Cecelia had been teaching at Riverdale elementary for 12 years when I interviewed her. She was teaching 4th grade in 2011-12. Sarah had been teaching at Riverdale for seven years, and knew the school very well since she had been a student there from Kindergarten through sixth grade and did her student teaching there while she was in her credential program. Janice had been teaching for thirteen years, and taught second grade in 2011-12. Jim was the Director of School Transformation for Rivers End Elementary School District. This was a relatively new position at the district during the year that I conducted interviews, and Jim was the first person ever appointed to this role. He was assigned to work with the district’s lowest performing schools. In this capacity, he coordinated school reform initiatives across the schools and evaluated principals.

Riverdale Elementary was the recipient of a large technology grant, which put significant new technology in the hands of all teachers and students and provided a full time coordinator at the site beginning in 2011-12 when the school reopened. In addition to bringing Collaborators for School Change (CSC) with her to Riverdale, Alma worked with teachers to implement

Explicit Direct Instruction (EDI) as a school-wide instructional strategy. CSC, EDI and teacher development around the effective uses of technology to support teaching and learning were the only initiatives operating at Riverdale during the year that I conducted research.

Collaborators for School Change. With roots in the Americorps program, Collaborators for School Change was a twenty-year old organization in the San Francisco Bay area serving low-performing schools in the region as of 2011-12. CSC partnered with school districts and schools and supported leaders and teachers in improving student performance. The focus of CSC was on building leadership skills, inculcating an inquiry approach grounded in a commitment to equity, and strengthening systems for collaboration, teaching and learning within a school and district.

CSC placed a high premium on the contracting process with schools leaders. As a result, this process was carefully staged, with data analysis, goal setting and agreements about how the work would unfold established over a period of several weeks prior to client enrollment. CSC's coaching model was embedded in the contracting process and primarily process oriented, pushing a cycle of reflection with teachers and school leaders intended to build their capacity for "results oriented" teaching, leadership and learning.

A comprehensive needs assessment, led and collaboratively conducted by CSC staff and their prospective partners, drove delivery of services. The CSC approach involved six stages of entry that guided initial relationship building with their clients. During the entry phase CSC Partnership Directors and School Improvement Partners (PDs and SIPs) collected information and worked closely with site staff to determine an appropriate focus for their collaborative activities over the year ahead. The entry process culminated in the development of School and District Contracts that framed the work and defined the roles and responsibilities of CSC, the site and the district. CSC's six elements of entry included:

- *Setting up the process.* All site staff were expected to understand what CSC would be doing and why; staff input into process was solicited; staff were reminded about the purpose of each activity and the progress being made.
- *Data collection.* CSC staff worked with site staff to collect and review student data (CST, CELDT, diagnostic assessments, benchmark assessments); information about teacher practice based on classroom observation and interviews with principals and mid-level leaders; and information about school-wide systems and structures.
- *Setting student learning goals.* CSC worked with the principal and others the principal brought into the process, to set school-wide, grade level, goals.
- *Theory of action.* CSC worked with site based team to co-construct a theory of action that captured both the site leadership and CSC approaches to change work.
- *Set goals.* CSC worked with site teams to set 2-3 *school capacity goals*, using a rubric, to guide work for the year
- *Finalizing the agreement,* which included securing permission for ways of working together.

CSC and their clients agreed during contracting about the nature, scope and outcomes of the work. Improvement of student performance for all students was a primary outcome in every case. The district and school partnership contracts identified in detail the elements of the work,

the theory of action guiding the work and an instructional plan with specific objectives. Contracts were negotiated over a period of 6-8 weeks and were then signed by district and site leadership and CSC. Principals, teachers, and district office administrators were expected to retain control of their program from design through evaluation, while CSC coached them through an organizational change process.

The CSC School Transformation Framework and rubric were used for the initial orientation to the school and its current practices and as a tool that guided an annual check on progress. Using the rubric, CSC visited every classroom, conducted observations, met with focus groups of teachers and interviewed the principal. The rubric included 76 specific indicators that were scored by CSC staff, in the following categories:

Figure 4.2. CSC school transformation framework: categories and scoring scale

I. Results Oriented Leadership	
Vision	The vision paints a picture of what a school aspires to be and serves as inspiration for school leaders, teachers, students and other community members in their day-to-day work.
Plan	Effective plans specify rigorous goals aligned to a larger vision, name specific strategies that all members of the school community believe will help them to reach and exceed their goals, and outlines how time, resources, and responsibilities will be focused on the school's top priorities
Act	School leaders stay focused on their priorities and work relentlessly to develop their own skill to effectively implement their plans.
Assess, Reflect, Adjust	School leaders monitor the implementation of their plans by regularly looking at impact on teacher practice and student learning results. They identify successful practices, problem-solve challenges, and make adjustments to ensure goals are achieved.
II. Systems for Professional Learning	
Teacher Collaboration	Teachers work together in pursuit of shared goals for teaching and learning. They are supported to develop a professional learning community in which they share best practices, plan meaningful instruction, and use data to guide them in adjusting to student needs.
Instructional Coaching	Instructional coaching ensures that each teachers have the individualized support they need to continuously improve their instruction in alignment with the school's vision and goals.
Professional Development	High-quality professional development sessions provide relevant and timely opportunities for teachers to develop knowledge and skills necessary to fulfill school-wide expectations and effectively meet the needs of their students.
III. Core Instructional Program	
Curriculum	A rigorous curriculum is standards-based and includes units designed for students to achieve mastery of essential grade level skills and knowledge. The curriculum is customized to create a rich learning experience to deeply engage and challenge students while meeting the needs of diverse learners.

Instruction	The instructional strategies used to create an equitable learning environment, design effective lessons, provide differentiation and invest students in the learning process must celebrate students' learning styles, backgrounds, and primary languages and provide students with equitable access to new knowledge and skills.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Environment • Effective Lesson Design • Differentiation • Student Investment • Support for English Learners
Assessment	Teachers use a comprehensive set of assessments and regularly analyze student learning data to inform decisions about instruction and intervention plans.
<i>Scale:</i>	<p>1 <i>No evidence</i>: Essential practice is not implemented (0% implementation) or not true</p> <p>2 <i>Readiness</i>: Implementation of essential practice is rare and sporadic (1-25% implementation) or minimally/infrequently true</p> <p>3 <i>Emerging</i>: Implementation of essential practice is occurring in some areas, but is neither systematic, nor consistent (26-50% implementation) or partially/sometimes true</p> <p>4 <i>Implementing</i>: Implementation of essential practice is systematic, but is not consistent (51-75% implementation) or partially/often true</p> <p>5 <i>Transforming</i>: Implementation of essential practice is systematic and consistent (76-100% implementation) or mostly/almost always true</p>

As part of the entry process, CSC scored the school on all 76 indicators on the rubric, reviewed the school's data and demographics, and provided the Principal with a report. The walk-throughs, observations, and focus group sessions were conducted by CSC Partnership Directors (PDs) and School Improvement Partners (SIPs), individuals who worked directly with schools and school districts on reform efforts.

CSC employed a professional staff that included *Regional Directors*, who worked at the district office level within particular regions in the CSC service area; *District Partnership Directors* who served as intermediaries between the district office and the school site and provided direct support to principals; and *School Improvement Partners* who provided specific support services to schools. Riki was the Chief Program Officer for CSC, Sondra was the Regional Director assigned to Rivers End Elementary School District, and Luciana was the District Partnership Director working with Riverdale Elementary School. Riki was my initial point of contact with CSC and a source of information about the scope of work and theoretical approach taken by CSC in their work on school reform. Both Sondra and Luciana had been working in this district for the prior year. Luciana was working with Alma during the year preceding her assignment to Riverdale Elementary.

Figure 4.3. Case B study participants

RIVERDALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL		COLLABORATORS FOR SCHOOL CHANGE	
NAME	ROLE	NAME	ROLE
Alma	Principal	Riki	Chief Program Officer
Sarah	Teacher	Sondra	Regional Director
Cecelia	Teacher	Luciana	District Partnership Director
Janice	Teacher		
Jim	Director of School Transformation for Rivers End Elementary School District.		

In summary, each of these partnerships was intended by the principals to focus on improving student performance. BSI brought a ready-made product to MHS designed to be implemented with relative ease by teachers, while CSC brought to Riverdale Elementary a collaborative process for defining an area of need, articulating goals and developing a plan of action. MHS was a high school facing its third consecutive year of not meeting expected annual goals for student performance. RES was an elementary school that was consistently meeting performance targets set by the state, but on closer examination, failing to address the needs of all students. Both schools served a high percentage of students in poverty, and English learners. The central office was involved with both schools, though to varying degrees. At MHS, the district office supported the selection of BSI as a partner, but was simultaneously directing the site to work with other partners and other initiatives. At RES, the district office worked with schools to establish goals and make partnership choices that were clearly driving toward those goals, and to eliminate partnerships that distracted or undermined working toward those goals.

I turn now to my findings regarding the development of agreement between the participants as they entered into work together.

Chapter 5. Reaching Agreement between Murphys High School and Better Schools, Incorporated

In this chapter, I summarize my findings from an analysis of the developing partnership between Murphys High School and Better Schools, Incorporated. I begin with a summary of my findings regarding the development of congruence in this partnership. I organize this section around four necessary areas of congruence in strong partnerships drawn from Ring and Van de Ven (1994): (1) the problem they would be working on, (2) the theory of action that would drive the work, (3) their expectations about who would play what role in carrying out the work, and (4) their anticipated outcomes. I describe the initial perceptions of participants about entry into this contract, and their deeper understandings after an initial period of interaction and working together. I close this chapter with an analysis of the role that contextual factors and internal dynamics played in the development of a congruent understanding between partners.

Overview of Findings

The development of the partnership between Murphys High School (MHS) and Better Schools, Incorporated (BSI) was characterized by the lack of any definable, systematic process designed to surface each partner's needs and expectations regarding their work together. The problem that brought them together was understood on a very surface level by school leaders, teachers and the external provider: the school needed to improve student performance on standardized test scores. The provider held to this simplistic view of the problem, which was a match for the product they were selling. The principal and teachers wanted to believe that a simple solution could work, but also knew that the larger problem at MHS was far more complex than simple. The principal needed a coherent leadership plan and strategy, and sought a partner who could coach her, engage her teachers, and help her manage a change in culture that would alter the experience and performance of both teachers and students. She and the provider were not on the same page, at the beginning, middle or end of their contract, about what was really needed and how they would work together to address the need. There was no significant communication between the principal and the provider about the underlying issues at MHS, and no structured process of negotiation around how the services provided by BSI would address the needs of the school. The principal accepted the BSI assurances of probable success at face value and agreed to buy their services in the hope that this partnership would yield what she and the school needed.

In the first part of this chapter, I substantiate these findings and chronicle efforts undertaken to reach agreement between partners.

Efforts to Reach Agreement

I now turn to a description of the processes the partners went through as they decided to work together. I include their initial perceptions and frameworks regarding this type of work in general and capture their level of evolving agreement around the problem, plan for action, roles and outcomes.

1. The problem that brought the partners together: colliding, conflicting perceptions. At the earliest stages of the formation of this partnership, there existed agreement that one problem that needed to be addressed was low student achievement. But the parties differed substantively

regarding the complexity of that problem and the issues that created it, and therefore had different perceptions about how to resolve the problem. These differences did not surface during contract negotiation, but became increasingly apparent once the work got underway. The process in which the partners engaged as they considered working together did not involve deep or substantive conversations about the problems or needs MHS was experiencing. To the extent that there was a “process” for reaching agreement on the problem, it involved a series of meetings at which BSI presented their approach to improving student test scores.

The MHS principal and assistant principal had their first encounter with BSI when they attended the organization’s annual principal summit. They listened to Charles, the head of BSI, and other principals from schools that had been working with BSI, describe the approach to school improvement and the successes they had enjoyed as a result of this work, and were convinced that this program could work at MHS. Next they invited Charles and his BSI colleagues to meet at MHS for further conversation and classroom visits. The leadership team attended a day-long retreat, at which a group of teachers from the other comprehensive high school in JUSD was also present, since both schools were participating in a grant that was funding their work with BSI. The retreat served as an opportunity for BSI to provide a comprehensive training in the use of their twelve “bread and butter strategies” for improving test performance, and for each school’s leadership team to begin planning for implementation at their sites. These sessions served as the primary opportunities to identify and express their needs, services, and approaches to work. As such, these points of contact were not well suited to the level of negotiation needed to secure a congruent understanding of the problem they would be working on together, other than the problem of low test scores.

Early impressions. During my initial interviews, I had the opportunity to explore with Hannah, the principal, and Charles, the lead provider for BSI, how their earliest impressions about each other were formed, and what their decision-making was like as they negotiated a contract. MHS was under some pressure to improve the performance of its students in order to help the district get out of program improvement status. There were multiple initiatives underway at the site, each launched in an effort to improve teacher effectiveness and student performance, most of them brought to the school by the district. The small learning communities grant represented an opportunity to infuse significant new fiscal resources into the site, buying teacher release time to construct a plan for restructuring the delivery of instruction to students in the 9th and 10th grade. It brought with it professional development monies as well, and the principal’s first task was to determine how best to focus the PD funds, given all of the other initiatives and changes underway at her site. Her general approach to bringing in external providers included several levels of analysis:

“...Identifying . . . the problems, looking at data, having conversations with teachers, doing the qualitative and quantitative analysis of where we are at, how much can we handle, what exactly is it that we’re looking for, the purpose, the why’s. And then for me, its about relationships. . . . When I look for a provider, I’m looking for people with the same kind of passion that I have, where its not all about ‘For this amount of money’ . . . I’m looking for people where its more about developing a partnership and not, ‘well, you only paid for me for 10 hours, so I’m only gonna do 10 hours.’ I look for people who I know can connect with my staff. I feel very strongly that the experts are on this campus, a lot of times. So it’s tough to bring in external folks, but sometimes its necessary. Hearing it from the people closest to you sometimes . . . its like marriage. You

can tell your husband something a hundred times, but when someone else says it, he says they're a genius. And so its kind of similar here. Sometimes its necessary for someone else to bring the message in order for them to hear it." (Hannah, Int. 8/16/11, lines 41-56).

After attending the BSI Principals Institute, Hannah's initial sense was that a partnership with BSI would be "all about looking at data, analyzing, setting goals with students, making them a part of the process, identifying simple, best practices they could do to get the most bang for the buck out of students, out of teachers." (Hannah, Int. 8/16/11, lines 61-64). She was attracted by the simplicity of their approach, and the way they "wrap it in a message . . . about belief in all kids, because you're always looking for the underlying stuff too. How they present and connect with the people around them – I was sold the first time I saw them." (Hannah, lines 66-68). Annie was also attracted by the relative simplicity of the strategies promoted by BSI, believing that MHS teachers would be motivated to implement.

"We went to this conference in the summer and . . .(BSI) went through this whole handbook of strategies on how to improve student achievement through looking at data, test scores, etc. And it's very practical, so the stuff in the handbook, like these (*points to the handbook*), you can make copies of and use with your staff. So we decided that we were in love, it was love at first sight, we were like 'wow, we need to do this'. Our teachers are very proud because our test scores rose 48 points last year, so they're feeling like they're amazing and they're motivated to make changes to be even more amazing because they feel like our students can do it and they're proud of themselves and like they can do it now . . . I think before they were feeling very bad about themselves and like they weren't doing a good job when really I think they were doing a lot of things right. . . . One of the things that BSI really focuses on is the fact that you can teach all the standards, but if you don't teach it in the way that it's presented on the test using that vocabulary the kids are still going to get the answers wrong and it appears then like they don't know what they've been taught when that's not the case." (Annie, Int. 9/29/12, lines 68-82).

Typically, when enrolling a prospective client, BSI invited the principal to participate in a leadership summit, free of charge, at their facility. If they were "sold", and wanted to pursue a contract, then BSI met with the leadership team to begin training them in their model. In the case of working with MHS, BSI went to the school following the summit to meet with the principal and assistant principal, and members of the leadership team, and did some classroom observations. This day was followed up with a retreat at the BSI facility with the site leadership team. The next layer of work in the BSI protocol involved meeting with department chairs and possibly whole departments to fully orient faculty, faculty leaders and administrators to the program (*Bread and Butter Strategies*), and seek their willingness to give the program a try. During a day-long visit to MHS, the BSI team (Charles, Geneva and Carlos) met with administrators and teachers and, at the principal's request, engaged in classroom walkthroughs. Hannah's focus was on building the partnership, and for her that required that BSI have a better sense of who the teachers were and what was really going on at the site level. She also wanted her teachers and department chairs to have an opportunity to meet Carlos, the principal on the BSI team, and hear about how this program had worked in other similar schools. Annie reported

that BSI saw “glimpses of greatness and . . . a lot of things we needed to work on.” (Annie, Int. 9/29/11, line 65)

So, one of the things they really thought was amazing was our new freshman seminar class. And they thought the activities were very engaging and age appropriate and developmentally appropriate for the time of year. . . . They thought there was a lot of inconsistency in our classrooms in terms of some teachers allowing kids not to follow the school rules, for example, seeing hats or . . . students sleeping, or . . . kids . . . not doing anything with no work out. That’s a huge cultural problem here, the low expectations, which is bad, and so it’s just something we need to work on. . . . It’s not consistent throughout all classrooms, in a lot of them there’s great stuff going on, but they definitely saw the inconsistencies in terms of discipline stuff and following school rules as well as teachers not requiring students to be working and engaged in the lesson. (Annie, Int. 9/29, lines 101-103, 108-116)

When I asked him what he saw as the problem or need at MHS, Charles did not share any of the observations relayed by Annie. Instead he suggested that MHS suffered from what he perceived to be the same malady that all schools suffer from: the need to articulate achievable goals, use data in ways that identify high leverage areas where a little bit of effort will yield significant gains, improve instructional knowledge, and ensure that the school context functions effectively and is not distracting.

So already the context has been distracting a little because the district is part of the context and the district is trying to . . . implement a formative assessment system, which they need. . . but they’re limping along and it’s completely unorganized, there’s no leadership, there’s no coordination, and it’s just kind of happening just by accident in a way. I mean they are involved in it, but they don’t – they don’t provide any guidance to people. (Charles, Int. 10/15/11, lines 430-435)

At this earliest stage, the differences in understanding about the scope of this project were beginning to surface. Hannah had a high level of cognitive trust (McAllister, 1995) for BSI because of what she had seen and heard about their work and their commitment to equity. She also had a desire to build and deepen the relationship with Charles, reflecting the desire to build affect-based trust with this partner. She wanted him to see what was happening in classrooms and talk to teachers so that he could be better informed by the MHS context and players, and thereby adapt the BSI model to this context. Charles’ feedback on the classroom visits, as reported by Annie, suggested that he was looking at this context strictly through the lens of his program. Annie identified a “huge cultural problem” with low expectations, and Charles’ answer to that was that the leadership needed to provide stronger direction to teachers and standardize teacher practice around the kinds of work reflected in the BSI strategies. Charles visited classrooms, developed perspective about how much was going on with the school, and expressed concern about how that might interfere with the BSI implementation, and about what he perceived to be an overall lack of organization in the leadership.

Both Hannah and Annie saw the work with BSI as complementing, even organizing the other initiatives that were underway at MHS. They were sensitive to the overload teachers were feeling as a result of changes in the class schedule, implementing EDI, SLC, ALL, the youth

development initiative, pacing guides and formative assessments. The worksheets and simple strategies presented by BSI were attractive because they did not seem like they would overload the teachers. The sense of moral purpose captured in BSI's rhetoric around having high expectations for low performing students, Charles' charisma, and Carlos' (the BSI principal) track record of success in a high school with similar demographics to MHS were convincing for both Hannah and Annie, and they thought these features would hook their teachers, lead to improved student performance, and help with what they perceived to be a culture of low expectations for students. Conversations about all of this occurred with regularity between Hannah and Annie, which was a natural outcome of working together daily in close proximity. These conversations did not include Charles or other members of the BSI team, however. Conversations between scheduled sessions were limited to discussions about logistics, and there were virtually no "check in" calls coming from either direction to discuss progress or refine implementation plans and activities.

The teachers on the leadership team who were more closely involved in the work with BSI portrayed other teachers as being in agreement that there was a need to improve student test scores at MHS. One teacher member of the leadership team (Kelly) said she did not appreciate the lack of autonomy that comes with low performance. "Although I have a problem with all the focus on test scores, I feel like if we get our test scores up, people will back away." (Kelly, Int. 10/18/11, lines 57-58). She had been frustrated with the numerous interventions brought to the school by the district without much choice. The multiple providers that had come into MHS in this way invariably started from a deficit approach, according to Kelly, making the teachers feel they did not have the knowledge and skills to help students learn. Based on initial interactions, Kelly had a different reaction to Charles than Hannah and Annie:

"The thing I liked about Charles is that he started out talking about the relationships (with students), he combined relationships and data and sometimes they're separate and so he won me over in that, I mean that was sort of. . . I heard something that I liked. So I think we need to learn how to really look at the data without taking it personally. . . that's an issue because it's painful, like most meetings we sit down and look at data and we're like 'oh my gosh, we're terrible!' . . . It's so demoralizing sometimes. So we need to learn to look at the data for sure and figure out how to make decisions based on that and not just emotional reaction decisions and I think we do need interventions. . . I think we have a lot of things in place but we're just not using them appropriately. So I think it's making better use of the resources we already have and using the strategies that we already have but using them purposefully and not just haphazardly." (Kelly, Int. 10/18/11, lines 168-159).

Kelly bought into the need to improve test scores and initially appreciated the approach taken by Charles and BSI, which seemed to be less critical than other providers' messages have been. Her sense that the change required of teachers was small, more of a shift and an accommodation than a whole-sale change in strategy, was consistent with the perceptions of Hannah and Annie, and the pitch made by Charles. This was important as they considered bringing another initiative on board for the 2011-12 year, given how overwhelmed the teachers were feeling at the beginning of the year. Kelly was in sync with the leadership and provider view that this project was fairly simple in its scope. She hinted at the larger problem of leadership, however, when she talked about making better use of the resources they had in place,

but did not suggest that BSI was there to help with that problem. The other teachers interviewed, including a relatively new math teacher, a veteran social sciences teacher, and a ninth grade study strategies teacher, teachers recognized the need to improve test scores, but did not feel that this was the most pressing need at the school, nor did they appreciate what they felt was a press to teach to the test. Norman, for instance, thought there were deeper issues driving low student performance, and did not think a singular focus on strategies to improve student performance on standardized tests would succeed.

The ideal outcome, which I think is gonna be the hardest thing to achieve is a change in our school culture. Its gonna be really hard to get our kids to buy in when a lot of them, even rewarding them, doesn't really faze them. We have a lot of kids that could care less about passing a class or not. We had a discussion yesterday about these types of kids whose family life is not what it should be, they've got bigger issues. BSI likes to reward them by showing the gainers as well as the high achievers. I think its gonna take more than showing a kid he's a gainer. Its gonna take some other kind of incentive to get these kids to buy in. It would be great if we had 100 dollars to give a kid who improved their test score, cause I guarantee they'd do it. Our school culture is gonna have to change to get these kids to buy in to what we're telling them." (Norman, Int. 10/18/11, lines 160-169).

Another teacher (Catherine) agreed that scores had to improve. "For years our scores were consistently declining. As long as you have low scores, you are going to need to do something to redress the problem." (Catherine, Int. 10/18/11, lines 68-70). When asked if other teachers at the high school shared this understanding and were bought into the BSI program as a way to turn things around, Catherine drew a distinction between understanding and acceptance:

Understanding and accepting are very different things at this school. People understand that its very logical, if you have low scores you have to put up with things like (BSI). But I think they see it as we are putting up with and enduring this stuff. I don't think a lot of teachers jump on the bandwagon or get enthusiastic about these kinds of things. I'm sure you saw it yourself when we all sat in the circle at the ranch, and the overwhelming feelings were that its too much, we can't do this as well. We already have so much on our plate, this is too much. I think they understand it, I don't think they like it and I don't think most of the teachers want to be held to implementing a lot of those things, or be held accountable. (Catherine, Int. 10/18/11, lines 79-87)

The negative reaction of teachers during their first training retreat at the BSI facility gave Hannah pause, simultaneously strengthening her need to have Charles work with teachers directly, and weakening her resolve to press for implementation in the 2011-12 year. She was, in effect, adapting her expectations in the moment, based on the context that was unfolding in the first session. Some of the teachers I interviewed saw the need for leadership to pull back and slowly transition to the work with BSI. Others saw the need for her to take an authoritative stance around implementing the BSI work or risk failure.

Catherine's perceptions about the work with BSI and how it fit into the larger array of activity underway at MHS hinted at a more complex set of issues that needed to be dealt with, and a skepticism that this set of simple strategies would penetrate the deeper issues. Catherine

said she believed that the BSI effort would not take hold because as of mid-October, there were still no systems in place to make it a school-wide focus. She thought that some teachers would take up the strategies and implement them, but that most would not. Unless leadership forced the issue in a top-down manner, a large number of teachers would just shut their doors and do what they wanted to do. According to Catherine, many of her colleagues did not believe these or any of the other strategies that had been brought in to improve performance would work unless the student culture changes. “A lot of teachers are waiting on the students to change, or the community to change. But it’s all a part of it, and the teachers are part of the community too. It’s a big shift that needs to take place.” (Catherine, Int. 10/18/11, lines 124-126).

In sum, the school leaders, teachers and members of the provider’s team each saw the need at MHS differently. The provider steadfastly maintained a commitment to framing the problem as low performance driven by low expectations, which could be turned around by using, with strict fidelity, BSIs simple teach-to-the-test strategies. All of the teachers I interviewed were willing to try it to see if they could stimulate improvement in test scores. Only a couple of teachers, in the early interviews, expressed skepticism about the application of a simple strategy to the more complex problem of turning around school culture. As Hannah’s understanding of the context deepened in response to teacher frustration expressed during the early training with BSI, her sense of the problem at MHS grew and became more complex. There was a strong desire to believe the assertions of the provider and the testimonials of other principals that the BSI model could be the pivot point in turning around performance *and* culture at MHS. Nothing in the process of negotiation or commitment to a contract led to clarity about the true scope of the project.

2. Reaching agreement on a theory of action: a case of irreconcilable differences. In this section, I examine participants thinking about the espoused and enacted theories of action that drove this partnership, and the processes that aided or impeded the development of a congruent understanding between the provider and the school.

The espoused theory of action for BSI involved strengthening efforts to teach effectively to the test. All members of the MHS community rejected teaching to the test as a legitimate goal in teaching. So there was an inherent conflict with regard to the BSI theory of action right from the start that stood in the way of reaching agreement. BSI accommodated the resistance to teaching to the test by anchoring their model to an equity agenda: asserting that all students could learn, that the simple strategies provided stepping stones that would help all student achieve at higher levels, that building relationships with students would motivate them to perform; these messages spoke to a mission-driven approach to teaching that the MHS community resonated with, which helped balance, to some extent, their resistance to teach to the test.

A second conflict emerged with regard to the enacted theory of change: the BSI model required critical mass of teachers to implement the majority of strategies with fidelity over a sustained period of time in order to have the desired impact on student test performance. Charles worked to obtain teacher buy-in by asking them how many strategies they would be willing to try, making them think they had “voice and choice” in implementation. His expectation, however, was that school leaders would require widespread implementation and hold teachers accountable for using the strategies. Hannah initially agreed with this approach. She understood it would be challenging, but was herself compelled by the way Charles presented the work, and with the notion that it would be fairly easy to implement. Teacher resistance at the first training, however, shifted her thinking about how to integrate BSI into the rest of what was going on at

MHS. Concerned about bringing one more initiative to her teachers that year, Hannah did not set a firm expectation with her teachers. In the process of negotiating a contract, the principal and the provider came to agreement that they were going to bring the program to MHS. There were several scheduled events, but no larger plan defining expectations was developed or communicated with all participants. Their work together did not include informal conversations to debrief and plan together, and Hannah’s need to adapt this work to the MHS context ultimately conflicted with BSI’s need for widespread implementation with fidelity.

Early actions. On October 3, 2011, Hannah, Annie, the rest of the MHS leadership team and several hand-picked (by Hannah and Annie) teachers attended a full day retreat at the BSI facility. This was a first orientation to the BSI program for all of the MHS participants except for Hannah and Annie. The purpose of this session was to introduce the team to the BSI program. Members of the leadership team knew that the principal was moving forward with BSI, but other teacher leaders who attended the session did not know why they were invited to participate or what plans were being developed by the administration for the year.

The BSI model, as a theory of action, was presented to the MHS leadership team during the retreat and included three interacting aspects: (1) establishing targets for student achievement and for the teaching of content; (2) collecting and providing feedback through data and examples of student work related to targets; (3) developing teacher, student and parent knowledge about how to apply organizational, classroom and personal expertise to hit the targets. Targets in this case were tied to specific knowledge and skill that would be measured on standardized tests. The espoused theory of action was based in optimal human performance theory, which when applied by BSI to education suggested that:

If you set clear, ambitious, public targets; if you get frequent visual and verbal feedback; if you apply a modification of existing know-how or develop new know-how from an outside source and apply it to the target based on the feedback; and if all this occurs in a context that supports rather than derails your efforts, you will achieve optimal human performance.” (Karnes & McGee, p. 28).

Figure 5.1 summarizes the general approach and specific strategies BSI worked with schools to undertake over three phases and multiple years of work.

Figure 5.1. Better schools, incorporated strategies for improving student performance

Phase 1	The Twelve Bread and Butter Strategies (Year 1)
	1. Align taught curriculum with the tested curriculum
	2. Do test preparation weekly, focus on vocabulary in test questions and deconstructing right and wrong answers
	3. Choose one important standard in each subject monthly and teach in mini-lesson format daily with a quiz at the end of the month
	4. Choose 2-3 students per month (2-3 per period in secondary) who are close to proficient to whom to give extra social and academic attention; discuss and report on them monthly
	5. Provide before, after, Saturday and summer school opportunities to lowest performing students directly related to the standards they are failing
	6. Provide each student with a test chat based on past year’s data
	7. Have an awards assembly in which students are recognized for scoring high or

	making significant gains on the CST
	8. Establish data walls that include a track record over time and new targets
	9. Improve student engagement: every student answers every question asked by the teacher every time
	10. Improve visual support every 60-90 seconds of direct instruction
	11. Improve student-teacher relationships and classroom management
	12. Hold “sacred talk time” teacher collaboration meetings at least twice a month; focus 80% of time on discussion of target content, target strategies and activities, target students, related data or student work; focus 20% on other things of interest.
Phase 2	Refine Phase 1 strategies, incorporate new research-based curricular campaigns designed to help struggling students catch up. (Year 2)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Pleasure reading campaign</u>: one million or more words/student, 20-30 minutes per day with monitoring, incentives, rewards, discussions, personal and group targets
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Vocabulary campaign</u>: Use of student-generated “grow lists” of structural and semantic families, tiered vocabulary, cognates, idioms, games, etc.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Writing campaign</u>: One piece of published, informative writing per month per student produced through a writers’ workshop model
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Comprehension campaign</u>: systematic, explicit instruction of literal and inferential comprehension skill through multiple strategies (picture walks, chapter walks, strategic textbook handling, etc.)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Classroom walk throughs by teachers</u>: groups of teachers visit each others’ classes to steal one good idea to implement within 48 hours; look for specific teaching characteristics designed to improve student performance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Verbal feedback campaign</u>: provide students both positive and negative verbal feedback in class; include support with negative feedback
Phase 3	Higher order, more complex campaigns (Year 3 or 4)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project based learning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom engagement: higher order questioning strategies, statement strategies; use of Bloom’s Taxonomy

As Charles explained this theory to the MHS participants, he spoke about the need to provide underperforming students with the tools they need to understand and succeed within a standards and accountability-driven classroom environment. Developing their test vocabulary by doing weekly test preparation and deconstructing right and wrong answers, teaching mini-lessons daily focused on one important standard per month, having test-chats with students based on their last year’s CST scores to help them better understand their strengths and weaknesses, posting vocabulary words and data walls that show progress made toward established targets – these were some of the specific strategies Charles oriented the MHS team to during the retreat. These strategies simultaneously de-mystified the test, according to Charles, and provided rich opportunities to build relationships with students, which he said was key to optimizing their performance. “If you can get them to do anything, you can get them to do anything.” (Charles, presentation 10/3/11).

During the session with MHS, Charles emphasized the importance of building relationships with students as the key to overcoming their lack of engagement and motivation to try. “If the students feel that the work they are required to do in school is too much, too hard and not interesting, why would they do it? One reason is that they like you and don’t want to disappoint you.” (Charles, presentation 10/3/11). To secure buy-in from teachers and increase their willingness to use the BSI strategies in their practice, Charles presented a flexible stance regarding implementation.

I want to give people latitude, I say ‘hey I’ve got these strategies, I want you to look ‘em over . . . I’d like you to tell me what you think about these once you hear them.’ What am I asking for? Voice and choice, right? That causes people to engage with me because I’m asking for their opinion. ‘So do you think this stuff will work, do you think it’ll be too hard for you? You know if there’s too much on your plate then your plate’s too full and we just can’t do it.’ We end up adopting more things than I recommend. I suggest that maybe they’ll only wanna do 3 or 4 of these strategies and they’ll say, ‘no, no I think we can do 6 or 7.’ It’s because I’m not shoving it down their throat, I’m giving them some voice in this and I’m asking their opinion. (Charles, 10/15/11, lines 146-156)

At the same time, Charles said he impressed upon the leadership team that widespread implementation would be necessary to achieve gains.

I tell folks, ‘now when we implement, you gotta really hold hands and do this across the school because kids need to get this 3 or 4 years in a row. When you use weak strategies everybody’s gotta do it, use very complex strategies maybe you could get by with 50 or 80 percent of the faculty, but my strategies are relatively weak. That means everybody has to do it.’ But even in that, there’s latitude. . . . Its not that they don’t have to do it. If they decide to do it then everyone’s gotta do it, but they can have some latitude to do it their way, in fact, we’ll even let them warm up to it over a couple, 2 or 3 months if they can’t quite get it done right away. . . I want their opinion on this, I want them to grow things and make it better than what I share. ‘Add your voice to this, add your creativity to this.’ Well people buy in! These are basic fundamental things. Now this evolved over 10 years, these messages, but I give these messages very explicitly and deliberately. (Charles, 10/15/11, lines 161-174)

BSI’s basic strategy for the first year of work was to teach teachers and leaders twelve strategies that could be worked into their daily, weekly, monthly routines without a lot of extra effort. The strategies were tied to particular test vocabulary and norms intended to build students metacognitive awareness, and were intended to help them take what they were learning in school and apply it strategically on their standardized tests. In presenting these strategies to the MHS leadership team during the retreat, Charles shared results from other high schools that had worked with BSI who attributed their turnaround in student performance to the teachers implementing BSI strategies school-wide over a period of 3-5 years. Carlos, the principal member of the BSI team, confirmed these results at his site during the orientation session for MHS. Feedback from other principals had an impact on Hannah and Annie as they evaluated the BSI model as a change strategy for use in their school.

One of the things that enticed me about (Charles) was that he had testimonials. At the summit, there were several principals that had worked with BSI for several years who could show their data and describe their implementation. Again, its like show me in practice so that I can take that, make the necessary modifications so it works at my school, cause you certainly can't just cut and paste. . . . (Hannah, Int. 8/16/11, lines 396-401)

They were convinced by the other principals they listened to that the approach advocated by BSI could have the desired effect, and they were also convinced that BSI's approach to securing teacher buy-in would work with their teachers. In her statement above, however, Hannah indicated her expectation from the very start that the work would need to be adapted to the MHS setting, an expectation that ultimately was not shared in any depth with the BSI team, and an area where congruence failed to emerge over time. Kelly, one of the teacher members of the leadership team, was convinced by what she heard during the initial retreat that BSI had a high level of skill in looking at student data and extracting valuable information to direct teaching. She thought that would help teachers at the departmental level in setting academic targets and having better conversations about how their students were doing, which she believed would help them all focus their instruction. As a teacher, she was also in agreement with the focus of BSI on using test prep strategies to build stronger relationships between teachers and students, "looking at how important the relationships are and using that relationship to motivate the kids." (Kelly, Int. 10/18/11, lines 332-333). She viewed the test preparation tools as vehicles for her and her colleagues to use to focus and increase the number of conversations they had with students. Taking the time to have those conversations, for Kelly, communicated to each student that they were important to the teacher and that the teacher believed in their ability to do better academically.

Like Kelly, Norman, one of the teachers who attended the retreat with BSI, believed that establishing caring relationships with students was important, and found that the test chats and data walls he implemented in the weeks following the BSI orientation had a positive effect:

I've definitely seen some change in attitude. Cause if you spend five minutes with each kid letting them know you care about them, read about them, know where they're at, letting them know you're gonna help them get to where they need to be, you see your classroom behavior change a little bit. The kids believe in themselves, even though they find out they are *Far Below Basic* (on the California Standards Test), you tell them, 'hey, its not that hard to get up, you just take little steps at a time.' I'm seeing kids start to do a little more, turning in more homework. Hopefully that shows up on their test scores. (Norman, Int. 10/18/11, lines 150-155).

Norman was skeptical, however, about the size or impact this effect could truly have, given the student needs at MHS.

A lot of what BSI is telling us isn't changing our practice or how we teach a specific problem, its changing our attitude towards the kids. . . . As a math teacher, its hard to buy into just believing your kids are gonna be successful. We know a lot of our kids are coming in below grade level, even 3-5 years below grade level. When they are placed in a

class they shouldn't be in, its hard to believe that just by telling them they're gonna be successful, they're gonna be successful. (BSI) gave an example of a fourth grade teacher who told all her students that it's a GATE (gifted) class, and they all miraculously scored proficient. That's really hard to believe. And that's kind of the whole foundation of what they're telling us. If you tell the kids and believe in them, they're gonna be successful. (Norman, Int. 10/18/11, lines 115-124).

Norman believed, to a point, that if he built relationships with his students, they would want to do well on the test for him. "But do I believe that's the most effective way? No. And you're not gonna be able to build a positive relationship right off the bat with every kid, regardless of what you do, because as I said, some of these kids have bigger issues. We can only do the best we can." (Norman, Int. 10/18/11, lines 197-200). Norman's perspective early on suggests that he thought the problem they needed to work on was complex, and not susceptible to the simple strategies supplied by BSI.

There was some level of agreement across the principal, provider and teachers about the value of building relationships with students as a way to motivate them to increase their academic effort. Although the teachers found the idea of teaching to the test distasteful, they were willing to use BSI test support materials as a way of engaging with students, and some of them, Eric in particular, believed that building students knowledge of their test performance on statewide tests as well as classroom based assessments would increase their sense of control: "If you provide a person with information on what something is, the importance of it, and how it works, it's enlightening to the person." (Eric, Int. 2/24/12, lines 60-63).

Norman tried the strategies out and found that student attitudes were shifting in a positive direction, though he remained skeptical about the extent to which this would make a difference in their math performance given how far behind many of them were. Another teacher trying out BSI strategies, Catherine, believed in the theory as espoused, but was very skeptical about how the theory would be enacted at MHS.

The process for developing a congruent understanding of and commitment to the espoused theory of action was episodic, and involved, primarily, listening to presentations from BSI and testimonials from principals who had used their system and improved their scores. Conversations as a leadership team provided a venue for teachers to share their thinking and feelings about teaching to the test, but were not facilitated by the provider or the school leadership in such a way that agreement was sought or built. In the few sessions during which the leadership team discussed this work, the focus was more on how they would get it done than whether it was a good idea to do it at all. Individual teachers chose whether or not to use the strategies in their teaching, and if they discussed their perceptions based on that use with anyone else it was a random occurrence, rather than part of an overarching implementation plan.

Four types of activities provided the context and direction for this work at PHS: (1) a delegation of teachers went to visit the school where Carlos, a member of the BSI team, served as principal, to meet with and observe teachers there; (2) Carlos spent two days at MHS so that department chairs and teacher leaders could meet with him and discuss specific strategies for implementation in the classroom and ways to reinforce and spread the work to more teachers; (3) Charles and Geneva, the BSI trainers, spent several days on campus over the course of the year, meeting during regularly scheduled department meetings to develop teacher knowledge of how to integrate the BSI strategies into their coursework; and (4) the original delegation of teachers attended a follow-up retreat mid-year at the BSI facility. Each of these planned activities were

intended to expand teacher and leader knowledge of the program and how to implement it. An overall project plan, detailing expectations for teacher implementation, was never put in writing or shared with the teachers, however, and as a result, they were not sure what to expect.

I don't know what our next contact with Charles is going to be, or what kind of training, workshop, interaction, whatever, I know they're sending a group of teachers down (to Carlos' school), that'll get our group motivated I think. And so I'm not sure who all is going. I'm not going, but some department chairs are . . . (Kelly, Int. 10/18/11, lines 272-275).

Another teacher added a note of skepticism about whether the work with BSI would actually take at MHS:

I personally see right now (BSI) fizzling out and dying, or being used only by a certain a teacher in a certain type of program. Like only by the actual teachers in strategic classes. Because that type of thing has happened before. I don't see any system in place, and I didn't hear from our meeting any system being set up to make it a school wide thing, to try and disseminate the info to all the other teachers. If it doesn't happen quickly, I don't see it happening. (Catherine, Int. 10/18/11, lines 99-104)

Members of the original team that attended the first BSI training agreed with Catherine regarding the extent to which they expected the BSI work to be implemented on campus in the 11-12 year. Lack of clarity regarding a plan of implementation, and the lateness of their introduction to these strategies left teachers feeling some confusion about what they were expected to do. With regard to the espoused theory of action, all parties believed that talking individually with students about their performance and opportunities to improve performance on standardized tests would be somewhat effective in improving student performance, as would increasing their overall test literacy.

The administration, based on testimonials from other principals, started out with very high hopes about the potential of this initiative to change teacher expectations and student outcomes. Teachers latched on to the increased communication portion of the strategy, and agreed with the belief that such action would have some impact on students. Charles and his team believed that critical mass of teacher participation in these strategies over a sustained period of years would be necessary to turn student performance around; the principal clearly had a different idea. She was not willing to implement this project in a prescriptive way given how overwhelmed her teachers were. Her preference was to work with Charles to adapt his strategies into a meta-strategy that would organize the other initiatives underway at MHS and support teachers in a deeper change effort. In short, they were not in agreement about an enacted theory of action, and there was no direct communication between them to check in, clarify, or work toward agreement.

Each of the teachers interviewed had a different idea about the probable outcome of the BSI project, and each implemented the strategies in their own particular ways in the days and weeks following the orientation retreat. Direction from the administration was minimal during the early implementation, which added to a lack of clarity among teachers regarding expectations.

In summary, there was some agreement about the theory of action propelling the model,

which relied on increasing engagement in the classroom between teachers and students about the test. I would not characterize this agreement as “congruent” at the earliest stages, in part because of the skepticism of the teachers and their need to work with the strategies in order to deepen their confidence in the approach. There were no structured opportunities to discuss their experiences and build a collective understanding about the approach, other than attending another large meeting with BSI. While the teachers and administration tentatively agreed with the theory undergirding the model, none of the participants had the same set of expectations about an implementation strategy. Teachers were unclear about what they were expected to do, beyond trying the BSI strategies out, which fed their skepticism about whether the approach would be effective. The most fundamental problem in this area, however, was the lack of agreement between the principal and the provider regarding whether they were implementing with strict fidelity or seeking to adapt the work to the MHS context. Lack of agreement on a theory of action regarding implementation led to confusion and fed skepticism about the overall approach.

3. Expectations and roles: lack of communication creates uncertainty and frustration. The principal and the provider had expectations regarding the roles they would each play that were not made explicit at any point in the negotiation, commitment or execution of this project. The negotiation stage of this process focused on costs and specific days and hours of service, which were codified in the contract. The provider projected and did not specify his expectations about the role of the principal in leading the effort and marshaling teacher support and participation; the principal projected and did not specify her need for the provider to be more of a high level strategic thought-partner and coach that would help her get a handle on managing improvement in her school. Lack of communication between the partners exacerbated this conflict. There were no regular check-ins between the principal and the provider to discuss progress, and no other mechanisms for sharing feedback that might have shaped the outcome. Further, lack of clarity or agreement about who would lead the effort led to a leadership vacuum that frustrated all participants and undermined the quality of the match. In this section, I capture the expectations that each of the players had for each other, and illustrate the disconnect that appeared to emerge right at the beginning of the relationship.

Early actions. Initial negotiations and interactions between Hannah and Charles led to a formal contract that focused primarily on hours of contact that would be provided by BSI, based on an expectation that MHS would lay the groundwork for department meetings during which members of the BSI team would work with teachers on integrating BSI strategies into their instruction. Neither conversations occurring during negotiation nor the contract itself captured what each of the lead negotiators (Hannah and Charles) hoped would occur. Hannah readily acknowledged that there were too many programs and changes underway in the 2011-12 year, and worried that BSI would be experienced by MHS teachers as another add-on. In order to help teachers make sense of the partnership with BSI, Hannah and Annie framed the work with BSI as an umbrella that would pull the other initiatives underway at MHS together:

(BSI) in and of itself will not be an initiative. Its intended to be a way for us to bring all of our initiatives together and make sense of all of them as they relate to what the professional learning community says are the most essential questions: what do we want our kids to learn? How are we going to know if they learned it? What do we do if they don't learn it? And what do we do if they already know it? . . . (BSI) is not a program, but its how we are structuring collaboration and . . . the focus on learning to really get at

answering those questions effectively.” (Hanna, 8/24/11, lines 143-147, 152-154)

Despite the heavy focus of BSI on use of pre-packaged handouts to facilitate test-chats, vocabulary walls and other test prep drills, Hannah and Annie did not see BSI as a program that would come in with a canned script, but rather as a consulting/coaching relationship that would launch and support a change in culture. Hannah expected Charles and his team to approach teachers at MHS as if they had the answers already, collectively, and to build teachers’ habitual use of good, data driven practice:

[I expect BSI to] support teachers in finding the answers within themselves and their departments, to not . . . come in and say ‘you should do this and this’, but really to facilitate the conversations, provide research that will help guide them down the path to best practices, and away from where we’re at right now. [I also expect BSI to] support me with setting up systems to do that without them, and to help focus my professional development, teacher collaboration time, and make sure I’m on the right track and focusing on the right areas. (Hannah, 8/24/11, lines 232-241).

As a teacher member of the leadership team, Kelly understood how Hannah and Annie were conceptualizing the role of BSI as an organizer for all of the other school-wide initiatives. She expected Charles to have the big picture regarding how a school changes its culture when focused on student data, and she shared Hannah’s belief that Charles had an important role to play as an intermediary as well:

So he’s kind of a cheerleader and someone who has experience, so you know that feels good, like ‘ok, this can happen’. He understands data clearly . . . knows how to look at data and . . . use it to inform what you’re doing. We need leadership, which [Hannah] provides, but I mean on this specific initiative I think the more leadership we have, you know Hannah can’t do everything. . . . Having someone who has the big picture and keeps us focused on that, because it’s really easy to get bogged down with ‘yeah but I have 175 students’, or ‘yeah I spend all Sunday grading papers’. I think it’s good to have someone . . . outside that’s not so caught up in all the politics and all the other stuff, like ‘no we can’t do that because of this’. And he’s telling us, ‘you can do this and it’ll be ok’ so I think that’s part of it. (Kelly, 10/18/11, lines 188-198).

The leadership role in communicating expectations to other teachers, from Kelly’s perspective, was critical to securing buy-in and participation from teachers. “Hannah’s gonna have to make it seem easy and not burdensome. . . . She’s gonna have to spin it right, I think, and that really is up to her, and maybe the leadership team too.” (Kelly, 10/18/11, lines 630-633).

Even though frustrated by a lack of clarity, some of the teachers moved forward with the strategies in their teaching, simply because they were asked to. Norman, for instance, believed his role was to increase student test scores and go along with the program willingly. Like Kelly, he expected the school administration to take the lead and be explicit in their expectations for implementation, and not to make the decision making process democratic and participatory.

I want to be told what to do by my administrators. I’ll buy into anything they tell me to do...I don’t want it to be ‘ok guys, let’s get together and decide what we’re gonna do’.

Cause as we found out, not everyone is gonna be on board given a choice. So if our admin can tell us ‘you’re gonna go, listen to these people and do what they tell you’, that’s what we need in order for it to be as efficient as it can be. (Norman, 10/18/11, lines 72-75).

Catherine shared the other teachers’ belief that strong leadership would be necessary to get the program really rolling, and they expected the administration to set that tone and provide clear direction regarding implementation. “At our school, the administration, whatever they decide to implement, they need to implement with a strong hand or else the teachers won’t really do it.” (Catherine, 10/18/11, lines 113-114). Like Norman, she did not have a clear sense of her role in implementation, other than to implement as directed by the administration. She was invited to participate in the first orientation at the BSI facility but was not provided with any context to help her understand why she was there, which she found disorienting.

I was kind of figuring throughout the day, does this apply to my strategic classes? Is that why I’m here? Is Kelly next to me cause she’s the ELD teacher and can apply these strategies there? It wasn’t till the end of the day when we got together with our faculty and admin, I then learned that we were supposed to make all of these things school wide some how. I didn’t know that till the end of the day. (Catherine, 10/18/11, lines 236-241).

Catherine was skeptical about the program taking off in 2011-12, given the lateness of the training and the lack of a clear, systematic implementation plan. She thought a slow implementation with willing teachers in 2011-12 leading to more widespread implementation in 12-13 would be a superior strategy. With regard to Charles and the BSI team, she had a strong sense that the provider needed to be present and willing to adapt his program to the needs of the site:

If they are education consultants being paid to implement something on a school campus, its absolutely their responsibility to make sure its implemented well for that specific campus. Not just responsible for presenting it and stepping back, especially if they are gonna take credit for improvement. (Catherine, 10/18/11, lines 393-395).

Neither Catherine nor Norman indicated that they thought the BSI program would or could serve as an umbrella that organized teacher collaboration in support of implementation of the other initiatives underway at MHS. They were willing to do what they were asked to do by their administration, but remained skeptical about the potential of the BSI program to lead to sustained change. All members of the MHS team that I interviewed expected the BSI team to be a strong presence on campus, an expectation that was largely unfulfilled.

Charles expected the school leadership to communicate with teachers their expectations about participation, to organize several meetings with academic departments at which BSI would be present over the course of the year, and to provide strong leadership in support of widespread implementation. Charles’ time was significantly impacted, and he was struggling to provide all of the days each of his client schools were asking for. His team was small, and he did not want to grow it. As a result, he expected the sites in which he worked to be very organized in setting up the meetings at which the BSI team would be present. During the orientation session attended

by MHS, the leadership team from the other comprehensive high school in town was also present, and due to an impacted calendar, he was interested in having joint sessions with faculty from each academic department in order to cover more ground in both sites. The first such session after the orientation retreat was set for early October 2011, and the MHS faculty and administrators did not show up, having been diverted by other meetings arranged by the District Office, which frustrated Charles. MHS wanted him to provide what he referred to as “the Cadillac model” where he and his team would do the actual work with teachers preparing them to implement BSI strategies. He more often worked with a leadership team on a “trainer of trainers” model, setting a small group of teachers and leaders up to move the work school wide, and his time constraints made it difficult to be as present as the MHS team wanted him to be.

Charles did not see the BSI program as a unifying umbrella that would organize and make sense of and connect all of the initiatives underway at MHS. In fact, he found the other initiatives distracting, and blamed the district, which was pressing for implementation of several other initiatives, for not knowing what the school really needed. He expected the principal to be the intermediary between the district and the school site, protecting the site from over-involvement from the district office:

The principal has to be the buffer. The principal is the one who has to filter all this stuff. The principal has to take it in the shorts and kind of stonewall some things from the district and pretend that they're doing stuff when they're really not, protect their staff from initiatives that will distract them. So principals often are, or become a bit of a problem to the district office, at least the principals I work with, because they see that what we're doing, they begin to see more clearly than ever before. . . . Their principal meetings downtown and their trainings that they have and the initiatives in the district, they start saying, 'oh my god, this is a waste of my time, oh no, this is a distraction, oh no this is way different than what I see Charles offering us and we better do this (BSI) because I think this will get us a gain and this (other) stuff is just a distraction.' So principals end up . . . their anxiety goes up quite a bit when they start working with me if the district's got a lot of initiatives going on. (Charles, 10/15/11, lines 257-268).

In summary, Hannah wanted BSI to serve as a leadership coach, helping her to devise and manage a larger school improvement strategy. She believed the simple strategies proffered by BSI would be useful for teachers in their teaching practice, but also useful as organizers for teacher dialogue about students and ways to improve performance. She had hopes that the infusion of this work and dialogue would begin to shift the teaching culture. None of these hopes and expectations were shared with the provider, however, who had a competing view regarding the roles they should each play. Charles expected Hannah to manage the site and district expectations in a manner that enabled him to meet a specified number of times with teachers in their academic departments without having to compete for time and space with other initiatives. He also expected leadership to set a firm expectation about participation.

This set of expectations around the roles each would play represents a fundamental disconnect between the principal and the provider. During interviews, they each seemed certain that their perspective was the agreed up on perspective, and as each failed to meet the other's expectations, they grew frustrated and angry. It is not clear how these misperceptions were formed. Ring and Van de Ven (1994) posit that agreements for collaborative work include both legal and psychological contracts, with the latter consisting of unwritten and unspoken sets of

expectations and assumptions held about the other party's "prerogatives and obligations" (p. 100). Each partner's expectations are shaped in part by prior experience, values, and the roles they play within their organization.

The principal and assistant principal seemed to have created one half of a psychological contract that carried their expectations and assumptions about how BSI would fit into the array of programs and strategies underway at MHS. Given their past successful experiences with other external providers, their need for a successful school turnaround, and their professional values around collaboration, Hannah and Annie projected this set of expectations onto the partnership. Similarly, Charles expected the school leaders to push back on the district office, reduce distraction for teachers, and enforce implementation of the BSI model. This perspective, which formed Charles' half of a psychological contract can only have been informed by his prior experiences in different settings, where school principals had and exercised greater control over their school sites than Hannah could. His expectations reflected the conditions that he considered optimal for implementation, but were not responsive to the realities and context experienced by MHS.

The teachers, other than Kelly who served on the leadership team and had the benefit of understanding the approach the principal and assistant principal were taking, were very unclear about the role the BSI program was intended to play in their work. Their knowledge of the broader population of MHS teachers' state of mind with regard to overwhelm and just general resistance to new initiatives bred skepticism and supported their belief that if leadership wanted the program to take off in the 2011-12 year, they would have to take a very strong stance. The fact that Hannah had not taken that stance as of mid October 2011 fed their skepticism. At the earliest stages of entry into work, there was a lack of congruent understanding about the roles that each participant would play and their expectations about implementation.

4. Outcomes: Closer to principal and provider congruence. Hannah's hope and expectation was that this work with BSI would help her put systems in place that (a) supported highly effective teacher collaboration focused on student data, (b) changed the nature of the dialogue teachers were having with each other about students, and (c) moved forward with new, ingrained practice that the teachers themselves owned. She believed that this change effort would lead to improved test scores, but she wanted more than that, and measured her own success as a leader in terms of teacher attitude and school climate:

I will not really know my success as a leader until I leave. [I want them to be able to move] forward in the right direction because it's the right thing to do, not because I told them to or because it was my purpose, but that they truly have brought on themselves that this is the right thing to do for kids and this is why we do it We're going to see an increase in our API scores . . . we're gonna see an increase in the number of students who are going off to college and are prepared to do that and all the things that go with that. But I also want, on the personal side, [to] see teachers excited to come to work everyday, because you know when they're excited the kids are excited about school. (Hannah, 8/24/11, lines 323-328 and 336-340).

Annie, the Assistant Principal, shared Hannah's expectation that they were working toward a level of sustained implementation that the leadership and teachers would be able to manage without an external consultant. The cultural shift she sought was that teachers would have a comfort level with looking at data and feel empowered, not self-critical, about what their

student data indicated about their teaching and student learning. The teachers all believed the outcome of the project with BSI had to be improved test scores, but none of them articulated the sense of empowered, data driven practice that school leadership spoke of as a possible outcome of this partnership. Norman thought the ideal outcome would be a change in school culture, and that it was going to be very hard to achieve because of the students and what they bring to school. Eric was more optimistic about the potential of BSI to help change the culture at MHS:

I think we'll see a more cohesive culture. A culture of, instead of school is a joke, that school is actually important. A value change for our students. I think we'll see students who are wanting to achieve more instead of trying to run away from it. I think we'll see a culture of teachers who are engaged more instead of feeling disengaged. I guess an overall sense of hope within the whole community of the school. On a smaller level, I think this will help prepare our students better. (Eric, 2/24/12, lines 355-360).

In terms of expected outcomes, Catherine stayed focused on implementation, and believed that the outcome of trying to implement BSI in 2011-12 would be best understood by what happened with test scores, and whether there was adequate time to plan for a more cohesive and systematic implementation in 2012-13.

Ideally, I would like to see it become integrated with some of the other things we've been doing . . . so it doesn't seem like one additional thing or one separate new thing . . . so that we could see that in the context of all the other things we're doing in the school, this is the approach that we would like to take. . . . I would like to see it being implemented that way so it makes sense to the teachers. I would like to have a very clear picture of specifically what we are expected to do in our own classrooms, and by when, and I would like to see all of the teachers getting adequate training so that we know how to do it, so it's done in the same way across the board. . . so all of our students are getting the same experience. . . . I would like to see how they're [measuring our success] so I know what they are looking for in our school. That's what we should be focusing on. (Catherine, 10/18/11, lines 251-266).

BSI leaders also focused almost exclusively on implementation in describing a successful outcome:

I couldn't ask for any better administrators: [they] get it. It's just now we have to do it in the normal world, [we] just have to work [our] way through the vagaries of the normal operating world and get the best we can at the end. So it's never efficient and it's never clean, it's messy. I have to have a clean approach in my head and I just try to get the cleanest version that I can this year . . . it's always messy, so if I don't have a big picture, . . . then I'm embroiled in the mess. Somebody has to walk in with the big picture. (Charles, Int. 10/15/11, lines 486-492)

Charles' big picture captured elements of each of the MHS participants' vision: improved student performance, improved teacher culture and collaboration around student performance, and empowerment for students and teachers. To get there, he, like the teachers, was looking for systematic messaging around expectations for implementation and widespread participation. He

understood that Hannah and Annie wanted the “Cadillac” version of engagement with BSI, where he and his team would be on campus a lot (more than the specified number of days in the contract, with informal communication in between visits), working directly with teachers to convince them to participate and change their attitude about their work and their student’s academic prospects. He was constrained in terms of his calendar, however, and not as available for in-depth work at the school as Hannah and the rest of her team expected, and he was frustrated with what he perceived to be too much interference from the district office and a lack of organization and leadership at the site level.

Summary of early efforts to reach agreement. There was a project leadership role that existed between Hannah and Charles having to do with leading the charge, and they each expected the other to step in and fill that role. Their formal contract did not speak to this expectation, but their particular needs going into the project did. Hannah needed an intermediary to inspire her teachers and coax them to get on board, and to help her establish systems and her own approach to leadership of the effort long term. Charles needed the school leaders to bring the teachers along through clear direction and some level of accountability so that he could come in and teach them his method. The teachers were concerned about a lack of leadership in the project, and at the earliest stages of implementation were unclear about what was expected of them and what would be unfolding in the coming year. It is not clear whether they expected this leadership to come from Hannah and Annie or Charles and his team. They liked and respected Hannah, and did not seem to want to blame her for the absence of a systematic plan, and at least half of them expected the hired contractor to be driving the initiative “for” the administration. Lack of clarity bred skepticism for some teachers (Norman and Catherine, primarily), and seemed to have minimal impact on others (Kelly and Eric). Kelly and Eric were taking what they had received from BSI somewhat on face value, implementing it at a level that suited them, and waiting to see what happened next. All four of the teachers I interviewed were willing to implement the BSI strategies in their work simply because they had been asked to by their administration. But their attitudes about that implementation and their expectations for the future, at least at the beginning, were very different. Ring and Van de Ven anticipate this discrepancy in their theory regarding the development of cooperative inter-organizational relationships, and suggest that communications and interactions among participants over time produce a shared interpretation, and that reaching a congruent understanding can be gradual and incremental. (Ring and Van de Ven, 1994).

I turn next to the manner in which congruence around the key aspects of the project developed over time with each of the participants.

Evolution of Agreements Over Time

Ring and Van de Ven (1994) do not expect that a developing relationship begins with a high level of congruence. Rather, they posit that agreement develops over time through a series of interactions that allow partners build trust as they build knowledge of and gain experience with each other. In this case, initial perceptions about the problem, theory of action, roles and outcomes did not evolve to a state of congruent understanding among participants during the first six months of the project. Hannah expected that a relationship with Charles would grow and deepen over time, and that she would learn how to lead the effort with her team based on both formal and informal sessions with the BSI team. Their exposure to each other was limited to the

days and hours specified in the contract, however, and neither made the effort to increase their contact time during early implementation.

Six months into the contract with BSI, Hannah did not believe the school's needs were being met, and was rethinking whether it was ever worth it to hire an external provider. Despite her expectation that Charles would get to know the school and its teachers and work with them in a mutually adaptive way to bring the BSI strategies into full implementation, she and her team experienced the work with BSI as rigid and somewhat canned.

They kind of have their blanket, like 'this is what you need to do.' . . . They've . . . made assumptions . . . about where we're at [like] 'well, your students are resistant to this' or 'your teachers aren't willing to do this', and that's not the case at all. We're hashing out these issues and here's where we're at and here are the things we're dealing with that are not excuses, but it's where we're at. They're approach is black or white, like 'this is what you need to do, so do it.' [They don't] take into account some of the uniqueness that we have. So yeah, I would say it hasn't been as great as we initially thought it would be. (Hannah, 2/24/12, lines 31-38).

One example of the non-adaptive approach taken by BSI that all study participants from MHS commented on occurred during the second day the team spent at the BSI facility in early February 2012. The MHS administration and participating teachers went to this training expecting to go to some next level of understanding about implementing the BSI strategies. The other comprehensive high school sent a team to this event as well, just as they had the prior summer, except that the MHS team had the same membership and the other high school sent a completely different team. As reported by all MHS study participants, Charles, Carlos and Geneva presented the exact same training in February that they had presented previously.

It was basically a carbon copy of the first [session] with different food. I mean, it was the same agenda, the same information, the same examples. . . . I don't feel like we learned anything new or progressed even a little bit between the first one and the second one. They gave us about an hour and a half for conversation at the end to come up with next steps. But our school used that time to gripe about department problems. And that's as far as it got. And then we were told, okay, well, we'll figure it out later, and that's where it ended. We honestly haven't, as far as I've seen from my teacher's perspective, made any progress from the last time I talked to you. (Catherine, 2/24/12, lines 30-39).

Annie, as the point person for the SLC grant that was supporting this work, said she had been explicit with Charles about their need to move to the next level of discussion, and following the second session with BSI, she, Hannah and the teachers were angry and discouraged about this partnership. Norman valued what he had learned already from BSI and was using the strategies in his teaching to good effect, but he continued to resist the idea of teaching to the test, and the repeat performance of BSI in February fed his lack of confidence in BSI as an external provider. His greatest frustration, however, continued to be the lack of consistent leadership around the implementation of this program.

There's not a system in place between the school and the BSI and the teachers to actually get things done. Its more just ideas being thrown out there and 'oh let's meet this day

and talk about this,' rather than having a system in place that enables things to actually begin in the classroom and get down to where its effecting students. (Norman, 2/24/12, lines 39-44).

Kelly thought the lack of pressure from administration regarding consistent implementation reflected Hannah's understanding that teachers were overwhelmed, and thought that Hannah was effectively and appropriately picking and choosing areas of focus. "You know, we still want to move forward and do initiatives but we can't do everything. So I think she got that message pretty clearly, because we had more department time allocated for things and less time taken up by pointless things." (Kelly, 2/24/12, lines 21-26). She believed she was both receiving and seeing value from using some of the BSI strategies in the form of students becoming more goal oriented and responding to the numbers associated with their performance. Implementation, however, was not following the path she thought it would based on the early conversations about what would happen and when. For instance, she thought the roll out would occur primarily through department meetings, but said that had been inconsistent. She too was disappointed by the repeat performance experienced during the second BSI meeting: "I'm a little less optimistic now as far as their level of support. I think they got us going. I think we need to stay on track, and I don't see that happening yet." (Kelly, 2/24/12, lines 90-91).

Hannah was experiencing increasing frustration with Charles. Her expectation that he would step in and lead the effort, at least initially, had not born fruit. It was not clear that she communicated this expectation explicitly in her early negotiations with Charles, though their discussion of a "Cadillac" approach (a phrase they both used when describing the nature of their collaborative work), wherein Charles and his team would work directly with teachers, seems to be a proxy for that expectation. By February 2012, Charles was also disappointed in the project, insofar as he did not think that Hannah had created the space for this work in the school or provided consistent, directive leadership to teachers regarding expected levels of participation. Hannah was willing to bear some responsibility for their mutual lack of satisfaction, but not all of it:

There's not a lot of [communication] between [scheduled meetings]. . . . And some of that could be our own fault because [if] we're . . . not reaching out and asking them for help or suggestions or whatever, then they may not know to offer it. But on the flipside, they're not reaching out and saying 'how's it going? What do you need?' [They only contact] us to [discuss] logistics for the next piece. (Hannah, 2/24/12, lines 83-91)

Hannah contrasted this level of engagement with an external provider with other experiences she has had, and noted one stand-out experience with a group that she characterized as a true partnership:

They were truly invested in us . . . as people. They believed in us as leaders, and therefore started to believe in the school and then got to know the people here, and now its like, they're invested. I don't feel like Charles has done as good a job of building some of those relationships as he could have, nor has Geneva. . . . They don't seem as interested in really knowing. They want to see the results so they can say 'look this is a school that we work with and they made gains'. (Hannah, 2/24/12, lines 91-101).
In summary, Figure5.2 provides a summary of the evolution of congruence over time.

Figure 5.2. Evolution of congruence between Murphys High School and Better Schools Incorporated

	Strong Early Congruence	Strong Late Congruence
Problem	Student performance on state tests	Student performance on state tests School culture
Theory of Action	Simple strategies would lead to improvement in student performance	Simple strategies might lead to some improvement, but not without leadership and a systematic approach
Roles	No congruence	Principal and provider each believed the other failed to execute their leadership role
Expected Outcome	Improved test scores if strategies implemented widely; empowered, data driven practice	This was a bad match
	Lack of Early Congruence	Lack of Late Congruence
Problem	School culture: teachers believed culture was the root of the performance problem; strategies not focused on changing culture	All parties believed culture was part of the larger problem; no congruence about utility of BSI as a way to address
Theory of Action	Simple strategies would lead to changes in school culture BSI program as an organizer for all other ongoing initiatives Amount of training and ongoing interaction needed to support the work	Simple strategies would lead to changes in school culture BSI program as an organizer for all other ongoing initiatives Amount of training and ongoing interaction needed to support the work
Roles	Levels of leadership needed from the principal and the provider Levels of coaching that would be provided	High levels of disillusionment for all participants; no one performed roles as expected by others
Expected outcomes	Value of teaching to the test; BSI as an organizer for all initiatives	All participants lost faith in each other.

The level of congruence reached about the problem or need they would be working on remained pretty stable over the first six months of engagement in this project. At the beginning and mid point of the year, all parties were clear that (1) student performance needed to improve; (2) the student culture was a significant factor in student performance; and (3) that the teaching culture was resistant to the infusion of yet one more innovation designed to improve practice and performance. Leaders from MHS and BSI were largely congruent in their initial optimism regarding the potential of the BSI approach to effectively address all three of these issues. This level of congruence, early on, regarding the use of “simple strategies” to address the complex problem of culture change represents some level of wishful thinking on the part of the leadership. Hannah’s thinking about how the work should unfold began to shift as she became clearer about the scope of the problem facing MHS. Charles’ thinking did not shift, however. He persisted in a belief that the principal should clear the way for BSI work, and that widespread use of BSI strategies would change the culture of teaching and learning at MHS. All four teachers interviewed were willing to try the strategies, but were evenly divided at the beginning of the

year in their belief that this approach would make a difference. By the midpoint of the year, optimism had slipped regarding whether the BSI work would be sustained or whether the school would receive the kind of support they felt they needed in order to address their needs.

With regard to the espoused theory of action undergirding the BSI strategies, the school leadership and BSI team remained in a congruent state over the first six months regarding their belief that teachers engaging students in conversations about their individual performance, and building those relationships as a means of increasing student engagement could be effective. The teachers started out skeptical about test-preparation strategies and while they continued to resist the idea of teaching to the test, all four of the teachers I interviewed found over time that the BSI strategies they were using were having a positive impact on student engagement. With regard to the enacted theory of action tied to implementation and expectations regarding roles, participants were not in congruence at the beginning of the project, and did not achieve congruence over the first six months. The principal expected more from the provider than he delivered, and the provider expected a stronger leadership stance from the principal than she delivered. As a result, over time, their confidence in each other eroded rather than strengthening. For the teachers, confidence in the leadership of the school and in the provider eroded over time as well. Perceived lack of clarity from school administrators regarding expected participation in the BSI work led to inconsistencies in implementation. Perceived mixed messages from the provider, who invited teachers to do as much as they felt comfortable with, while expecting the site administration to provide clear direction regarding widespread implementation across all academic departments, led to mutual frustration. The early meetings of the year got off to a rocky start, and the mid-year retreat at the BSI facility during which the provider and his team delivered the same training as they had in early October marked a significant break for the MHS team in their attitude about the partnership. The MHS team thought they had provided the BSI team with a clear sense of what they needed at this second day-long session, and found Charles and his team to be non-responsive. As a result, the MHS team lost confidence in the ability of BSI to provide the support and assistance they thought they needed to make progress.

With regard to expected outcomes, the early vision held by Hannah and Annie, that using BSI as an organizing strategy for all other initiatives underway at the school and as a way to shape departmental conversations about student performance and teaching practice remained fairly stable between them over the course of the first six months. This understanding was never articulated by any member of the BSI team, and cannot therefore be understood to be a common or congruent idea about the expected outcome. Over time, the MHS leadership's belief that they needed an external consultant to carry the work forward eroded. Two of the four teachers participating in this study started out the year fairly skeptical about the extent to which the BSI work would make a sustainable difference in their practice or impact wider teaching practices in the school. The other two were more optimistic about the prospects for change. For three of them who attended both sessions at the BSI facility, their confidence was shaken by the lack of responsiveness from the provider, and the lack of administrative push regarding more widespread implementation left them believing, as of the mid point of the year, that the project would probably die.

In a final conversation with the school principal in July 2012, she had made a 180-degree shift in her thinking about BSI since summer of 2011. "I believe in a lot of what Charles has said. I just don't believe in Charles." (Hannah, Int. July 2012). BSI had suffered in Hannah's estimation by comparison with a youth development initiative that had been ongoing at MHS, where there was a contract for a number of days and specified services, but the provider had been

a constant and consistent and fully engaged partner for several years. All MHS study participants identified the youth development project as a very good match for MHS. Hannah said “I believe in the people in YDN. It makes me a better leader when I believe in something whole-heartedly.” (Hannah, July 2012). BSI limited their presence at MHS to the contracted number of days. When they were on campus, they either met with departments or sat in an office and invited teachers to come and visit them to discuss implementation of the BSI strategies. When asked whether she was planning to proceed with the second year of work with BSI, Hannah indicated that she could not pull out of the contract because the district office was committed to expanding the work with BSI district wide. Her plan for the 2012-13 year was to use the dates that had been previously set up in the contract and finish it out.

I turn now to an analysis of the negotiation and early entry into work, examined through the lens of my conceptual framework.

Analysis

In this section I consider how the scope of this project, the locus of decision-making and control over it and the level of fidelity or mutual adaptation required for implementation may have shaped participants’ perspective on the development of their relationship. In my conceptual framework, I define these as structural factors that act as givens, external to the space created by partners as they enter a collaborative endeavor, but around which perceptions are formed. Reactions to these givens, I argue, shape the thinking and willingness of partners to engage. My conceptual framework also identified internal dynamics – trust, coherence, readiness for change – that have an impact on teacher willingness to commit to doing new work. I take up each of these aspects individually next.

Scope of the project. There was a significant disconnect between the provider, the principal and the teachers regarding the scope of this effort, which undermined the ability of the partners to reach a congruent understanding of the problem they were trying to address. The provider had a product he was selling that seemed to match what teacher Kelly said was needed: something easy and not burdensome. What the principal needed was to get test scores moving upward, and teachers collaborating around student performance. What she felt she most needed, however, was a school management strategy and coach to help organize the array of resources and solutions they had on hand. This need was not consistent with the services offered by BSI.

Each of the key participants had a very different sense of the scope of the work they needed to do together, and their understandings had implications for the level of resources and commitment that would be necessary to implement. If the program was easy and not burdensome, as simple as copying worksheets to use in class with students, then the level of investment of time and resources would be minimal. If the worksheets and simple strategies were a front, however, for a more systemic effort to change teacher dialogue about students and focus them more on objective performance measures and strategies to increase performance, then a different level of investment would be necessary.

All partners, including the leadership team, the teachers and the provider understood that the scope of this project encompassed more than the improvement of test scores through use of simple strategies. All agreed that the larger problems with MHS were cultural. Teachers located the problem of culture with the students, who had larger issues than school that impeded their performance. With this view of the problem, teachers saw a limit to how far they could go with their teaching alone as a strategy to change culture. As appealing as a simple strategy may have

been, they did not see that as a comprehensive solution, which undermined their willingness to commit.

The provider saw the problem in terms of leadership: there was too much going on at the school, leadership messages and directives to the teachers and the district office were nonexistent or ineffective, and there was a need to simplify and focus. His solution was to standardize teaching to a large extent through the use of twelve strategies. The BSI model as designed required minimal support from the provider, and maximal support from school leadership in order to implement. With this view of the problem, he could blame school leaders if the project failed to achieve the desired outcome.

The principal experienced the problem in a way that resonated with aspects of both the provider's and the teachers' views, having to do with leadership. She acknowledged that there was too much going on at the school. Her early impression of Charles, as the lead spokesperson for BSI, was that he had a handle on leadership, and on how leaders establish a culture of teaching and learning that is focused on student performance. The solution she sought was to work with Charles as her mentor, using the BSI strategies to bring some consistency to teaching practice focused on improving test scores, and using data generated from the strategies and test scores to focus teacher dialogue on teaching and learning in new ways.

The pressure to improve student performance as measured on standardized test scores was felt by the MHS leadership and teachers. The lack of agreement between the principal and the provider about the sources of and solutions to low performance undermined the quality of their relationship. The absence of any structured process or expectations focused on checking in with each other and developing a deeper understanding of the work they were trying to do together impeded effective match formation.

Locus of control. In early interviews with the principal, she seemed to think that she had the authority to determine whether BSI would be invited to work at MHS and to determine the nature and scope of that work. Over time, however, she found that BSI was not as responsive as she wanted them to be to the particular needs of the site or her specific needs for coaching and a strategic entry into work, and that the locus of control over the use of this contractor really resided with the district office. The Small Learning Communities grant provided funding to support professional development for the teachers, and led to the hiring of BSI to serve as a provider of this development. The school district office supported the use of BSI in this grant, as they had with the other comprehensive high school in the district. What was not clear to me when I first interviewed Hannah and Annie about their selection of BSI as a provider was the extent to which they had control over that choice. In my final follow up interview with Hannah in the Summer of 2012, it became clear that even though she did not feel that the relationship was a good match for MHS, the district was committed and would not let her terminate the contract with BSI.

This endeavor, as with several other initiatives underway at the school, was understood by faculty to be part of a continuing stream of reform efforts launched by the district office. Teachers felt under siege, to a large extent, and their frustration with the district office was high. Their willingness to engage was driven in part by a hope that the direct test-preparation strategy brought by BSI would improve the overall performance of the school and get them out from under the scrutiny and interference of the district office. Hannah's statement that her leadership is improved when she whole-heartedly believes in something sheds light on the evolution of her thinking and commitment to the relationship over the course of the year. She began 2011-12 with a high degree of optimism and a strong vision for the ways in which BSI could help

organize and focus teacher work and dialogue about student performance, and help her establish systems that would be sustainable in support of improved student outcomes. Over the course of the year, she learned that Charles and the BSI team would only deliver services on their scheduled days, that there would be no deeper communication between their scheduled services, and that the district office commitment to BSI did not allow her the flexibility to renegotiate or cancel the contract. So her belief early on that she was in the drivers seat was not supported by the unfolding of events, and her belief in the partnership with BSI was significantly compromised by the manner in which their collaborative work unfolded.

Despite the commitment of the district office to maintaining and expanding the work of BSI to other schools, Charles was not in strong support of the role the district office played in this project. He expected Hannah, as the principal, to stand up to the district office, redirect or resist their efforts to determine what programs would be implemented at the site, and clear the path for his team to work at MHS. Hannah's approach to mediating these competing expectations from the district and the provider was to frame the work of BSI as an umbrella strategy, intended by the leadership team to bring coherence to the array of initiatives underway at the site by focusing teacher dialogue on student performance, which is the strong point of BSI. If she and Charles had a high level of congruent understanding about this approach, they might have had a stronger outcome in terms of the developing match.

It is not clear that Charles understood or appreciated the challenging position Hannah found herself in, given that the locus of control over decisions about the grant and the initiatives underway at the site resided with the district office. Her limited ability to influence district office decisions and the work of the BSI undermined her ability to lead the work effectively with her teachers, who were overwhelmed by the intensity and variety of reform strategies, and fractious about the load and what they experienced as competing expectations. The one choice that seemed to be hers was to set expectations for implementation of BSI in the 2011-12 year, and in deference to her faculty, she elected to promote a soft implementation that year and lay plans for a stronger, more widespread implementation in 2012-13. Some of her teachers understood and were on board with this strategy, while others were frustrated by what they interpreted to be a partial commitment to do the work, led in an uncommunicative and inconsistent manner. Hannah and Charles did not seem to share a deep understanding of the situation, and Charles seemed unwilling to acknowledge or help to mediate the particular and unique pressures Hannah was facing, which undermined the quality of the match.

Fidelity or mutual adaptation: implementation expectations. BSI promoted a very structured program, with a handbook of instructions and test preparation worksheets, which they described as simple, shallow strategies that would need widespread implementation in order to be effective in changing student performance. They expected the site leadership to set clear expectations with teachers about implementation of some number of those strategies in the first year and to hold teachers accountable for implementation. On one hand, the expectation that teachers, who were significantly overwhelmed with the changes and initiatives underway at their school in 2011-12, would pick worksheets from the handbook and use them without having to put a lot of thought or effort into integrating new practices into their teaching, was appealing to the administration and teachers at MHS. There was, however, an inherent conflict in the messages coming from BSI regarding implementation, where on the one hand they supported teachers' use of their own "voice and choice", and on the other hand they expected leadership to circumscribe that choice by requiring some demonstrable level of implementation, with fidelity, of the BSI model. In valuing teacher voice and choice, BSI sought to gain teachers' trust and

buy in. The program depends, however, upon widespread implementation with fidelity, and despite Hannah's need for him to serve as an intermediary with her teachers, setting expectations and creating conditions for willing participation, Charles left that role to her. The two more experienced teachers were selective with regard to the strategies they imported into their practice, and the two less experienced teachers floundered somewhat with the invitation to choose which and how many of the strategies to implement. They instinctively knew that the program would not work unless there was consistent implementation with fidelity, but there was no clear leadership voice driving them to implement.

Both control and commitment strategies can be effective in improving outcomes for students, but these strategies are driven by fundamentally different, and mutually exclusive, theories regarding the work of teachers and the effective organization of schools (Rowan, 1990). The BSI model might require a tightly controlled, fidelity oriented school setting in order to achieve its intended outcomes. Hannah's approach to leadership and her expectations of teachers relied more on the development of commitment than on control as an implementation strategy. Rowan's (1990) findings suggest that school change can be effectively accomplished through either a control or a commitment strategy, but in either case, strong, consistent leadership messages seem to be important to achieve overall effectiveness. In this case, the leadership team and the provider relied on competing theories of implementation, and the teachers were evenly divided in their expectations and preferences, which undermined the development of a congruent understanding regarding the work.

Trust, coherence and readiness for change: How internal dynamics shaped commitment.

Internal dynamics within each school site also played a role in the development of participant willingness to commit to the work. Issues that interacted with the ability to achieve a "meeting of the minds" among participants included trust between participants and between partners, the extent to which participants felt the new initiative cohered with their personal beliefs about teaching and other reform initiatives underway in the school, and their perceived capacity to engage in new work. I take up each of these aspects individually next.

Trust. When considering the role of trust in the development of the relationship between MHS and BSI, it is difficult to consider the collectively held trust of the MHS community toward BSI without first considering the level and extent of interpersonal trust within the MHS community itself. The school and the district had experienced more leadership turnover in recent years than stability, and the teachers each shared their concern about whether and for how long Hannah was going to stay at the school. Their collective experience of reform was that initiatives came and went in rhythm with the changing of the guard at the site and the district office. When asked if he and his departmental colleagues were willing to buy-in to the work with BSI, Eric – who was personally very enthusiastic about the initiative and was implementing it systematically in his classroom – said they were buying into Hannah, and reserving judgment about BSI.

There are so many teachers who still are just like, "Oh, she's pregnant now. She's going to be gone. She's going to go have her baby and never come back again." It's that fear, you know. If you're in a relationship and you're abused for a number of years, even when you get in a new relationship you're just waiting for that person to abuse you. After eight years of just going through principal after principal, some of these teachers, that's all they

know. They've never worked in an environment where you don't switch principals every two years. (Eric, Int. 2/24/12, lines 81-89).

Lacking trust that the leadership would remain stable to see this project through, they were not eager to commit to a new initiative.

In addition to low levels of interpersonal trust at the school site, there was a very low level of organizational trust between the school and the district office, represented by the continuing efforts of the district office to manage instructional change at the site level. In the 2011-12 year, six separate initiatives were underway at MHS, most of them initiated by the district office, and both teachers and administrators were frustrated by what they thought was a lack of understanding of their context and needs and an over-commitment to change initiatives. The BSI team shared in this frustration and also lacked trust – both cognitive and affect-based trust – for the district office.

At the beginning of the year, as Hannah and Charles were negotiating the contract for work at MHS, Hannah had a high level of confidence in the competence of BSI and their approach (cognitive trust), based on her early interactions with Charles and the experiences of other principals who had worked with the organization. She also had high hopes regarding the development of a committed relationship with BSI that went beyond the days and hours included in the contract for service (affect-based trust), consistent with her prior experience with an external provider who showed a high level of care and concern for the relationship they were developing. In a situation where there is high cognition- and low affect-based trust, Jeffries and Reed (2000) suggest that the negotiators have the greatest opportunity to explore the full array of options for their collaborative work and to land on a solution that is maximally beneficial to both partners. In this situation, negotiators are more likely to be aggressive in stating their needs and parameters for work. When both high cognition- and high affect-based trust are present, they suggest that negotiators are more likely to identify a solution quickly so as to minimize conflict and focus on the relationship itself. Hannah's belief in the competence of BSI and hope that the relationship would develop in a particular way may have led her to accept the solution being offered by BSI without making explicit her expectations regarding contact hours, engagement with teachers, and coaching support for the leadership team. Charles' seemed to have a high level of cognitive trust that Hannah and her team were preparing the teachers for implementation of the BSI initiative, which may have been the extent of his need for technical competence on the part of the principal. He did not seem to place as high a value on the relationship itself.

Within the first six months, it became clear to both partners that their early negotiations and execution of the contract failed to capture their true expectations of one another. The view of the BSI model for change held by the MHS team did not change substantially over this period of time, but their confidence in the BSI providers did shift from optimistic, or cautiously optimistic at the earliest stages, to disappointed in the nature of their collaborative work. The view held by BSI of MHS as a fruitful site for implementation of their change model shifted over time as well. Their confidence in the leadership capacity to manage, organize and direct change eroded, as did their optimism about the long-term effect they might have on student performance at MHS.

Coherence. Coherence has two aspects that are important for understanding how the relationship between MHS and BSI developed. The first aspect relates to the extent to which this particular initiative for school change fit into, complemented, and supported a larger strategy that united all efforts underway at the school. The second aspect has to do with the extent to which

teachers felt that the initiative cohered with their personal philosophy of good teaching.

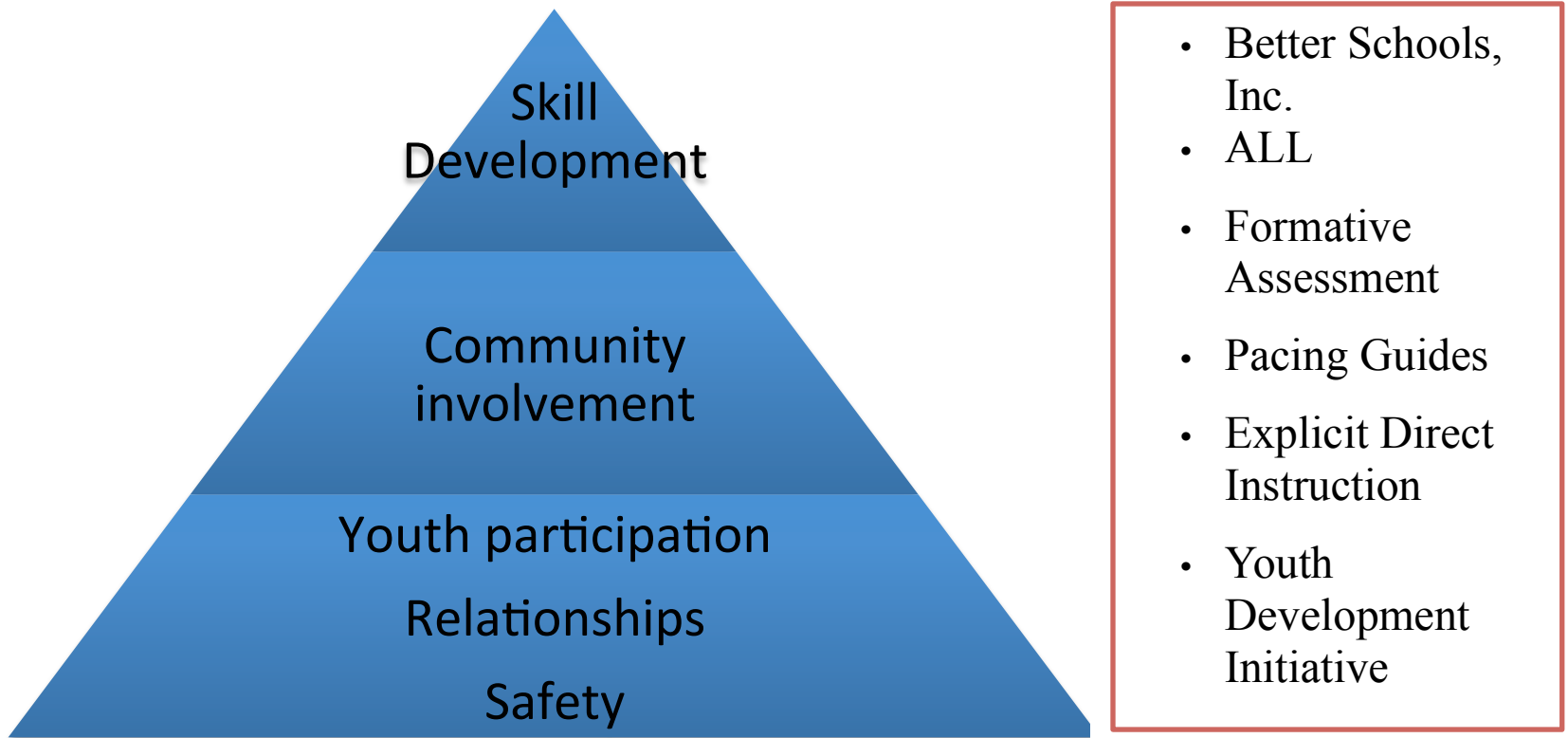
Teachers are more effective when they are able to work together on well coordinated activities aimed at clear goals (Newmann, Smith, Allensworth and Bryk, 2001). Newmann, et al., suggest that coordinated activities in school improvement increase teacher access to and use of resources and expertise that can enhance their teaching and give it greater meaning, which increases their motivation and commitment to reach goals. When teachers work in a culture where new initiatives are introduced and abandoned prior to full implementation and mastery, they become more reticent and their commitment to change is undermined. Instructional program coherence (IPC), relies on the existence of a unifying framework that guides curricular choices; instructional strategies; assessment; and teacher recruitment, hiring, evaluation and development. Site administrators typically set the stage for instructional program coherence by the choices they make and the priorities they set. External providers have been found to significantly help schools achieve stronger IPC, leading to stronger achievement outcomes for students. The use of a model itself, without external support or internal capacity, has not been found to be as effective in cultivating greater coordination and coherence in schools, absent strong leadership (Newman, et al., 2001). School leaders or project consultants typically have to convince teachers to participate and collaborate around implementation and execution of a common instructional framework and establish norms of collaborative practice and accountability in order for coherence to emerge.

Hannah and Annie had a conception in mind that knit BSI into the whole of their other efforts in 2011-12. They shared this conception with teachers during staff meetings and with their leadership team. They saw the BSI strategies as a way to systematically collect and discuss data around student performance, and to evaluate and shape their instruction in response to these data. Linking each of the change initiatives underway at MHS under a “data driven instruction” umbrella made sense to school leaders, but was not well understood by teachers outside the leadership team, who thought of the BSI work as one more disconnected set of activities adding to their feelings of overwhelm and a lack of coherent understanding among the instructional staff about the overall approach to change. Annie, the assistant principal shared a picture with me (Figure 5.3) in which she tried to capture the inter-relatedness of the various initiatives underway at MHS, with BSI as a unifying framework that put the analysis of data around student performance right at the center of teacher collaboration.

While there seemed to be a logic that explained the relationship between initiatives underway at MHS, Annie said the teachers themselves did not see the connections, and perhaps did not want to see the connections given how frustrated they were with the press to implement so much change simultaneously. Newmann et al. found that leadership plays a key role in establishing instructional program coherence, and that the leadership can come from the site administrator or the external provider, but it must be present in a sustained, supported effort that continuously reinforces a common instructional framework. Neither the MHS leadership team nor the BSI partners brought a strong message to bear about the role of the BSI strategies as an organizing framework for the change efforts underway at MHS. Other than a theoretical understanding of the ways in which the activities underway at MHS fit together, and a belief on the part of the leaders that BSI could serve as the organizing framework that made sense of the rest, there did not appear to be any strong effort to coordinate programs with this theory in mind at the beginning or middle of the first year of implementation.

The other aspect of coherence that played a role in shaping the internal dynamic at MHS was the extent to which teachers felt the BSI approach cohered with their own philosophy of

Figure 5.3: Nested relationship of initiatives underway at Murphys High School



teaching. The teachers who participated in this study resisted the idea of teaching to the test. That central theme of the BSI approach was jarring to teachers, but they did not feel as though they had a choice or would have a choice about teaching to the test until their test scores improved. The relational aspects of the BSI approach, where teaching to the test is grounded in an approach that requires teachers to engage with students one on one, show interest in their progress, and express optimism about their ability to improve, resonated more strongly with the teachers. These two seemingly competing ideas undergirding the BSI approach created them and exercise of discretion about the extent to which they would implement for others. To the extent that teachers did not experience BSI as part of a coherent change strategy that was consistent with their deepest beliefs and values about teaching, the potential for developing a strong match was undermined.

Ultimately, the lack of leadership in establishing a coherent, well understood framework that organized change initiatives underway at the school undermined the development of a strong match between MHS and BSI.

Readiness for change. The teachers at MHS were overwhelmed by the variety and intensity of initiatives they were expected to implement in the 2011-12 year. The administration was aware of this, and as a result, attempted to frame the BSI work as an organizer for the change strategies underway, and set a “soft” expectation with regard to implementation of BSI specific practices in the first year. Some teachers appreciated this strategic approach, while others were frustrated by what they felt was a lack of clarity or systematic leadership around implementation.

The teachers and leaders at MHS met some of the cognitive criteria for individual change readiness at the beginning of the year (Rafferty, Jimmieson and Armenakis, 2013). All agreed that change was needed, and for a variety of reasons, believed that the change proposed by BSI was appropriate. With regard to their own sense of efficacy, the teachers reported that they had the capability to implement the BSI strategies, which meant utilizing the BSI strategies and worksheets in their daily or weekly teaching practice. They were not uniform, coordinated or systematic in their use, however, as a group, largely because neither the site leadership nor the external provider of services had established or developed a clear plan and set of expectations for implementation.

Initially, based on the early orientation sessions with BSI, the teachers believed that they would be provided with the resources and information they needed in order to implement, a belief that eroded over time. All four teachers in my study understood that participation in the BSI project was intended to support improvement in student performance, which would benefit the whole school, if not their jobs and roles in the school. On the affective side, the teachers did not have a very positive perception about this change endeavor, and did not hold out much hope that it would have the desired impact. In part, their lack of excitement and confidence can be attributed to the presence of multiple change initiatives, launched by the central office and not perceived to be responsive to their needs or context, a situation that fractured their focus and fed feelings of anger and lack of excitement about any change effort they might undertake.

The Rafferty et al. framework for change readiness identifies the individual as well as workgroups within an organization. In a high school, the typical “workgroup” unit would be an academic department and/or the school leadership team. Building organizational readiness for change requires that both individuals and workgroups achieve a level of change readiness that is impacted by their individual and collective thoughts, beliefs and feelings about the proposed change. In the case of the MHS-BSI partnership, an augmented leadership team with

representatives from all academic departments was the initial workgroup that experienced and then engaged in collective sensemaking as they considered how to bring the initiative to full implementation in the school. The plan that emerged identified the academic departments as the work-group units that would need to coalesce around implementation of the BSI change effort. Lack of a systematic and well-communicated plan and expectations for implementation at the department level left the teachers who had participated in the initial training unsure about what was expected of them with regard to their departments. BSI met with each department to review their strategies and answer questions, but the departments, according to the teachers in my study, did not take this initiative up or understand it as a change effort they would be participating in fully in the 2011-12 academic year. The expanded leadership team met sporadically and did not serve as a workgroup that engaged in collective sensemaking around this change effort.

Rafferty et al. posit that organizational change readiness builds from individual and workgroup readiness, and is tied to the role of leadership in establishing a clear vision for change, inspiring hope and optimism, and managing employee's emotional response to change through focused organizational norms and socialization processes. Hannah was relatively new to MHS and filling a role as principal that had historically undergone a great deal of turnover. The faculty population, on the other hand, had remained fairly stable. Their shared understanding of leadership and change was fairly negative, though they had respect and some regard for Hannah as an individual and a leader. The culture of MHS was resistant to change and resistant to leadership around change, which presented a challenge.

My study only focused on the first six months of a change initiative, and the conditions that were prevalent during that crucial period of negotiation, commitment and early execution of a collaborative project. In examining the internal dynamics related to change readiness, it seems that initially it could be argued that the organization was not ready to undertake a new change initiative. The Rafferty et al. framework calls for strong, transformational leadership to establish a clear vision for change and establish organizational identity and cultural norms that will facilitate and support change readiness at the individual and workgroup levels. While these conditions may have been emerging at MHS, at the earliest stages of the partnership with BSI, they were in a nascent stage of development.

Summary

The partnership between Murphys High School and Better Schools, Incorporated followed a pattern that many school improvement initiatives experience. The partners entered the work with unspoken expectations, the principal had a high level of cognitive trust and a desire to increase her affective trust for the provider, which led to a less demanding process of negotiation and description of her needs and expectations prior to contracting (Jeffries and Reed, 2000). The scope of the problem was larger and more complex than either the principal or the provider acknowledged at the point of entry in to work, and the busyness of managing the many competing demands of a school and a statewide business worked against clarifying and shaping this particular partnership in a way that would benefit both partners and lead to a good match. There was a lack of focused leadership around the project itself, and a lack of agreement about where that leadership should reside. Ultimately, there was a lack of any kind of structured communication strategy that would have accommodated the bumps on the road to a congruent understanding between partners and the possibility of a good match.

Chapter 6. Reaching Agreement between Riverdale Elementary School and Collaborators for School Change

In this chapter, I summarize my findings from an analysis of the developing partnership between Riverdale Elementary School (RES) and Collaborators for School Change (CSC). I begin with a summary of findings regarding the development of congruence in this partnership. Next, I describe the initial perceptions of participants about entry into this contract, and their deeper understandings after an initial period of interaction and working together. I organize this section around four necessary areas of congruence in strong partnerships drawn from Ring and Van de Ven (1994): (1) the problem they would be working on, (2) the theory of action that would drive the work, (3) their expectations about who would play what role in carrying out the work, and (4) their anticipated outcomes. I close this chapter with an analysis of the role that contextual factors and internal dynamics played in the development of a congruent understanding between partners.

Overview of Findings

The development of a partnership between Riverdale Elementary School and Collaborators for School Change was characterized by a well-defined, systematic process designed to surface each partner's needs and expectations regarding their work together. The principal and the provider entered Riverdale Elementary together with a congruent understanding of what it meant to work together in support of school improvement. They had worked together previously and enjoyed a high level of mutual cognitive and affective trust (Jeffries and Reed, 2000). The teachers were skeptical at first, and the challenge the principal faced was to gain their trust as a new administrator and secure their buy-in to the work with CSC. She had the some level of support from the school district regarding the partnership with CSC, and a well understood and mutually reinforcing commitment to coherence in the school improvement enterprise. Identification of the problem, theory of action, roles and expected outcomes were part of CSC's formal client enrollment process and designed to achieve congruence in the earliest phases of work together.

In the next section, I focus on the manner in which, and extent to which, agreements were reached between the leaders and teachers at Riverdale Elementary and the Collaborators for School Change team.

Reaching Agreement

I now turn to a description of the processes the partners went through as they decided to work together. I include their initial perceptions and frameworks regarding this type of work in general and capture their level of evolving agreement around the problem, plan for action, roles and outcomes.

1. The problem that brought them together: improving teacher collaboration in support of all students. In this section I report on work that the district office was doing in support of school improvement district wide; the steps the principal took as she transitioned into Riverdale Elementary; her efforts to establish trust with the teachers; the principal's early observations about the school community and teacher perceptions about her; and the first steps taken with the external provider and leadership team to develop a needs assessment and report on the school

and identify a problem that would focus their work together.

The process of reaching agreement between CSC, the Principal and the teachers at Riverdale Elementary School on the problem or need that would organize their collaborative work was driven by CSC's standard-operating-procedures for contracting with schools and by a process facilitated by the district office and intended to coordinate the work of external providers and schools throughout the district. As a result of these structured activities, the principal, the provider and the teachers developed a common understanding of what they would be working on together fairly early in the process of entry into work.

Rivers End Elementary School District was in a multi-year contract with CSC during the year that I collected data. In collaboration with CSC, the District's Director of School Transformation had launched a process for the 2011-12 school year in which he convened representatives from all organizations providing services to schools in the district to learn more about each of them and what they do. A second meeting was convened with district office staff and all of the principals to debrief the first meeting and discuss the district office provision of instructional support services to schools. The third and final meeting convened in the fall of 2011 brought district office staff, principals and providers together to discuss what coordination and collaboration around school improvement could look like in the district. CSC played a role in planning with and supporting the district in this effort to establish stronger coordination and greater coherence at the district and site levels focused on improving opportunities for students. It was in this larger context that the specific work with Riverdale Elementary School was negotiated.

CSC had been working in several schools in the district already, including the school in which the principal, Alma, had been previously serving. Alma was asked to move to Riverdale Elementary School beginning in the 2011-12 academic year, an assignment she accepted on condition that the district would continue to support her work with CSC. "I said, I'd be willing to go to Riverdale, but CSC needs to go with me. Not because I thought Riverdale needed a provider, it was my need. I see them as a coach, I need them along my side so that I can be successful." (Alma, 9/7/11, lines 147-151). Although she portrayed CSC as meeting her need, she was also convinced, as will become clear in later findings, that despite the perception of Riverdale as a high performing school, that there were problems with low expectations and inadequate attention to the performance of chronically low performing students. Securing the willing participation of the teachers and the district under these conditions proved to be somewhat challenging, more so with the district over time than with the teachers.

Alma and the teachers at Riverdale Elementary learned that she would be moving there in early June 2011, with an effective starting date of August 1, 2011. One of her first actions once the announcement was made was to reach out to her teachers, introduce them to the idea that CSC would be a presence on campus, and reestablish a leadership team. Her goal was to cultivate their trust and give them an early frame about her goals as the new leader in the school.

My goal was to meet with all of my teachers within two weeks. I mean, I was to begin work on August 1st, so I sent them a letter and invited them to meet with me with 3 questions so that I would get to know them at a personal level and build that relationship. At that point my goal was to talk to them about my partnership with CSC and my learning experience, that I had invited them to come with me (to RES), and what kind of work they've done, etc. ... My letter said that I needed to form a leadership team fast because there was going to be a training for the schools that were part of CSC...focused

on building the skills of the school and their leadership team. I really wanted to offer the opportunity for my leadership to take part in this training and so I said, “It’s on Thursday and it’s critical that you respond to me if you’re interested in being part of a leadership team this year”.... I explained to them that the leadership team might not be what it used to be, that this is different, this is an instructional leadership team, if you are interested in it, if you want to really be a leader that really looks at data, that is really a forward thinker, someone who wants to transform, someone who wants to pioneer, then you’re that person so please volunteer and if you’re willing to spend two days learning more about this please let me know. (Alma, 9/7/11.)

In August, 2011 just prior to all teachers resuming work for the fall semester, CSC held a two day training for leadership teams from each of the schools they would be working with in the coming year. Luciana was the CSC school improvement partner working with Alma, and they spent the two-day training with a newly appointed leadership team getting oriented to the ways in which CSC works with schools to support improvement in student performance. During the two days, the team was introduced to CSC’s School Transformation Framework, and began thinking about what the school might need to do in order to improve outcomes for students.

Alma’s goal in bringing CSC with her to Riverdale Elementary was to maintain the leadership coaching relationship she had developed during the previous year, which she found to be a critical factor in her leadership and her school success. As she got to know the teachers better at Riverdale, she began to form an idea about issues that CSC could help the teachers address. She saw much potential in the teachers at Riverdale, but a lack of focus on meeting the needs of all students and a culture of low expectations.

These teachers have so much passion. They are leaders, but in their mind leadership means getting things done and so they look to me for answers and I don’t have the answers and they come back and they’re looking at each other for answers. They are very compliance driven and they’re very good at saying this is what we need to do and they’re very good at, “Tell me what to do and I’ll do it” and so this has been a shift in their way of being, and their way of seeing things, and it is exciting to see as it unfolds. (Alma, 9/7/11, lines 206-212).

Following the two-day training with CSC, Luciana conducted a series of site visits at Riverdale during which she engaged in data collection with Alma and the teachers on the leadership team. Based on analysis of test scores, teacher input, classroom observations, interviews with the principal and review of self-assessments conducted by the leadership team, a report was developed and shared with the principal. The School Transformation Rubric (STR) served as an organizer for data collection, reporting, and a conversation with the principal about what was going on with Riverdale Elementary School. Luciana presented her findings to Alma and the leadership team, reminded everyone that their findings are based on limited exposure, and then asked the teachers on the leadership team if they agreed or disagreed with her observations and findings. Members of the leadership team were cautiously agreeable early on. Luciana and Alma used this conversation with the leadership team to identify areas where teachers felt they needed core support, and CSC determination of what kinds of support they would be able to provide based on those needs.

The work this year is all about how we get teachers to collaborate in a meaningful and systematic way so there's consistency across the school, and the way in which they are talking about their practice as teachers, specifically focusing on the needs of English language learners because that's the subgroup at the school whose needs year after year are not being met. (Luciana, 10/21/11, lines 176-180).

Alma was committed bringing the CSC approach to collaborative inquiry to Riverdale, and the first steps involved restructuring and focusing teacher collaboration during common planning time. Despite an early impression that the school might not need an intervention, a perception held by the district office and the teachers based on test scores, Alma knew that things were not going as well at Riverdale as it seemed. Because of the very strong perception that Riverdale was a high performing school in the district, she knew she would need CSC as a coach to guide her in her leadership, and as an intervening agent to help break open teacher and district thinking about student performance in the school.

You know CSC has an intense level of support, a strategic level of support and a very minimum level of support. And it all depends on the district. If the district had it their way they would say we don't need any support... when I came in to assist this school... never never, never get fooled about a statement that a school is great because of their scores. If you look at Riverdale Elementary School, the district will say, you don't need any support from any external providers, look at that school, that school is doing great, based on scores... On the surface it looks good, but when you un-peel the onion and you get to the core, we're not that good. So we need a level of support here at Riverdale greater than what the district is willing to provide and the reason for that is ... my teachers have never collaborated, never collaborated. And they will tell you, "oh we do collaborate, we do get together and we exchange", copy this, copy that, but really for them to cognitively sit together in a very systematic way, looking at data in a systematic way, student by student, cluster them by needs, really unpacking that onion, they've never done it. ... For them, collaborating means we are following a curriculum-based pacing guide, so we're following the curriculum, we give the test and we look at the test scores - for them that's data analysis. We look at the test scores and then we end up with 26 kids that we need to retain, who end up with after-school interventions all year long at a cost of \$76k for extended duty. So we are going to give these kids a dose of something new, after a whole 6 hours of failure, to see if we can recuperate and close that gap? Even with interventions our kids still are not achieving, so either we need to refer them for special ed or we need to retain them. Because we don't collaborate in a systematic way to really see who's not responding. They're not there, this is a foreign concept for them, so yesterday, they asked for a staff development about ROCI. (Alma, 9/7/11, 222-262)

While Alma and Luciana had a high level of understanding about the need to work on systematic collaboration practices at Riverdale Elementary, the teachers were a little reticent at first. Alma was new at Riverdale and had been successful with lower performing schools in the district, but Riverdale was considered one of the higher performing schools in the district, so teachers were not sure what Alma's vision or agenda would be. Cecelia was one of the teachers who responded to Alma's letter of invitation and became a new member of the leadership team.

She understood that CSC was there to provide more structure to teacher collaboration. She was a little puzzled, however, because Riverdale was one of the more successful schools in the district, and she was not sure how to interpret Alma's intent to bring CSC into the school given that both Alma and CSC had a reputation of working, typically, with underperforming schools.

We've come a long way from the bottom up to 795 API which is amazing, you know, compared to other low achieving schools and all of it had to do with us as a staff. We didn't depend on any program to come in and tell us what to do, we depended on each other to help us collaborate. And now there's Collaborators for School Change and I think it's a more professional way of having to work with each other and to really understand what collaboration is." (Cecelia, 9/7/11, lines 307-309)

Reflecting over the previous 5 years, Cecelia recalled looking at student performance data, but it was usually focused on how to move students scoring at the "basic" level up to the "proficient level". The "below basic" and "far below basic" scoring students were not prioritized by former leadership at the school.² She understood that Alma and CSC would be promoting a focus on every student, not just the students most likely to improve the school's Academic Performance Index (API). Sarah, another teacher member of the leadership team agreed with Cecelia that over the last five years, the teachers were pretty much on their own in terms of data analysis, and expected to focus their attention on students who were close to scoring at the proficient level on standardized tests. She seemed eager to engage with Alma and CSC, but aware that improving collaboration as a first step was going to present its own challenges.

My goal is to be able to collaborate with both groups at the 4th and 5th grade levels and really look at data and really sit and analyze. I think that's gonna be the tough part because we tend to be very superficial. 'Well I'm doing this and this worked for my kids' instead of saying, 'how do you present it, how did the kids respond to this activity?' Things like that are more important than to just try an activity, that worked for one teacher and her kids on the assumption it should work for mine. It's more how to do... how did you reach all of the kids? (Sarah, 9/7/11, lines 130-135)

The understanding that CSC was there to professionalize their collaboration and analysis of student performance and help them analyze and surface strategies that moved all students forward in their achievement was pervasive with the leadership team members. Some teachers, like Sarah, were welcoming of the change.

For the past 5 years with the other administrator we were pretty much left alone, so we were just kind of moving along ... we were pretty good about meeting, but I can't say that for everybody. It was left up to us. Now I'm getting the feeling that ... even though we're at different grade levels, we're all one community and we all should be working together ... so that it benefits all of the children. It's very inspiring, we really do like that

² A common strategy in metric-driven accountability systems is to focus on the performance of "bubble kids" (Booher-Jennings, 2005), those students who are easiest to move from one performance level to the next, without serving the needs of the lowest performing students.

because it's no more "Well, she doesn't want to collaborate with us and he doesn't want to collaborate with me", now it's like ok, we're gonna teach you how to collaborate so you can collaborate together." (Sarah, 9/7/11, lines 72-80)

Other teachers seemed defensive and perhaps a little threatened by the changes in leadership and teacher collaboration Alma wanted to enact with the staff and CSC.

Our staff is a very cohesive staff, we're veterans, more seasoned teachers, we've been together for a long time, we haven't had the same turn over as Alma's previous schools, so some of us are feeling that we're being treated like the past school, you know which was a very PI school and so that kind of relationship I'm finding some resistance from teachers. They're thinking that, "Why are we being treated like a school improvement school when we haven't really been an improvement school?" and so we want to be valued for the professional teachers that we have been and we have proven ourselves to be, so there's been some resistance because of that and some animosity because of the way we're made to be feel. I'm tired of having arguments. It's really about teaching kids and making them feel successful. (Cecelia, 9/7/11, 333-342).

In summary, through the coordinative work of the district and the structured protocol for identifying areas for potential improvement facilitated by CSC, the leadership team came to an early understanding that the problems they would be working on together included (1) moving from isolated and episodic collaboration around student performance to more systematic and "professional" school-wide collaboration that included analysis of student performance and collective problem solving around instructional effectiveness; and (2) shifting from a focus on the one group of low-performing students who could most easily be moved from "below basic" performance to "proficient" performance to a focus on moving all students forward. The defensiveness of some of the teachers was noted by both Alma and Luciana, who agreed to approach the work from the perspective that the teachers were competent, and their work together was intended to strengthen their overall capacity to problem solve and improve outcomes for all students.

The principal and the provider knew that Alma's intent was to begin re-culturing the school using CSC's intensive collaboration and inquiry model as their primary tool. They began their planning for this as Alma made the transition out of her former school and into Riverdale Elementary. On one level, it may have been a foregone conclusion that improving teacher collaboration would end up being the problem they were working on in their first year, because that was central to adoption of the CSC model. The set of strategies embodied in that model were intended by Alma to standardize teacher dialogue about student work in a manner that put student performance in the center of the conversation. Alma was also concerned, as were several teachers, about the historic focus primarily on students who were close to scoring proficient. Raising expectations among teachers about the ability of all students to learn was an essential component of the culture Alma was trying to inculcate at Riverdale. Both Alma and Luciana, her CSC partner, understood this problem to be complex and not simple. Their strategy was to systematically alter teacher collaboration around student work and engage as a community of practice in the problem of school improvement. Teachers were cautious at first, but because Alma and Luciana turned to them to tell the story of Riverdale and its students, to identify the issues and prevailing needs, the teachers felt they were brought along in the definition of the

problem they would be working on together. One critical aspect of the process involved writing everything down. The rubric used to conduct a school-wide diagnostic generated a written report. Minutes from meetings, and agreements were consistently written down and revisited by the partners. This aspect of the process proved essential to the development of congruence across participants.

2. Toward a theory of action: highly structured protocols lead to congruence. In this section, I describe CSC's theory of action and process for developing a theory of action with a leadership team; report on CSC's expectations for the roll-out of work at Riverdale; present teachers' early concerns about why this partnership was brought to Riverdale; and report on the early efforts to teach the CSC model for collaborative inquiry to teacher leaders.

The CSC model and approach to enrolling clients relied heavily on the co-construction of a theory of action that built from collaborative analysis of school needs based on their School Transformation Framework. Within this process, CSC assisted the school leader with identification of a school-wide student achievement goal, and articulation of specific actions they would take in their core instructional program, systems for professional learning, and leadership to meet the achievement goal. In short, their operating theory of action was this: if the principal, leadership team and teachers engage in a process of developing specific goals and action plans around their instructional core, professional learning and leadership systems, and participate in systematic, reflective dialogue focused on implementation progress and student outcomes, they would improve student academic achievement.

What really facilitates them shifting from one way of working together to this way is the very structured, intentional guidance of the leaders as facilitators, and not as the experts. We'll be working with the principal and the resource teacher and possibly the leadership team members themselves in how to help your team go through in this process, in a way where you're drawing out from them, where you're having them think and you're probing and not telling them how to do it. (Luciana, 10/21/11, lines 175-179)

Alma, having worked with CSC previously, was both knowledgeable and very supportive of this approach to improving student performance. An effective match with an external provider supporting school change would have the following characteristics for Alma, characteristics that, in essence, define CSC's approach to school change:

The external consultant would have to come in and learn what's in place and study us and see what it is that we have that is great, so that we can go from where we are to the next level. The external consultant would help us analyze ourselves to really identify what it is that is great, will help us see the next steps to grow and will allow us to develop our plan of action, as partners in this process, so that as we go taking one step at a time we're reflecting on it...was it a solid step, was it not? So lots of reflection and lots of looking back and looking forward, what were the results and then what is the next step that we're going to take together. (Alma, 9/7/11, lines 81-89)

One key strategy for CSC had to do with the recruitment, selection and training of their staff. CSC made an effort to take a coaching/supportive/facilitative role, rather than a "provider of answers and directions" role. As a result, they expected their support providers to bring some level of humility and a strong orientation to inquiry into the work with schools.

One of the primary things we look for is somebody who can actually build relationships very quickly, that has interpersonal skills that can be humble, that can be respectful, but look for opportunities to build bridges and ask questions... When you hire people with those skills and you put them in a school and you put them with people, staff and the kids in the school, relationships start building and so then when the get work gets more clear the people are ready to begin faster. (Sondra, 8/29/11, lines 97-104)

Luciana served as CSC's primary point of contact for Alma, and as such did a lot of the ground-work at Riverdale. I interviewed her just as she was finishing her analysis and report and getting ready to present it to the Principal and leadership team. She had very clear expectations about how the work would unfold in the coming weeks and months, reflecting CSC's theory of action for the roll-out of this work at Riverdale elementary.

So team teachers will be articulating their vision for collaboration. Leadership Team (LT) members from every grade level will be bringing back their team's thoughts and ideas to the LT to synthesize and integrate all staff visions into the end goal. The LT along with the principal and resource teacher will draft the plan for providing support to grade levels around collaboration. All staff will identify agreements in terms of their roles in carrying out that collaboration. All teachers will try it out and provide feedback so the leadership team, the principal and the resource teacher can adjust when needed. So during the actual week to week collaboration, what it might look like is that grades get together with their team mates and bring in their formative assessment data to look at, to identify which standards and skills were mastered by which students, which students mastered the standard which didn't. From that they'll identify how they'll reteach standards and skills to students who haven't yet mastered that, then we'll look ahead at which standards are coming up for the week, revisit our end goal for the week, backwards map and teach daily objectives to get to that goal. So they'll plan their instruction together and then use the formative assessment data related to that plan to frame the next team meeting. Then they repeat that cycle. Its constant looking, back looking forward on the standards as a team. (Luciana, int. 10/21/11, lines 106-120)

Being familiar with the ways in which CSC approached collaborative work with teachers, Alma both knew what to expect and was on board with it. The teachers were initially uncertain about why collaborating with one another around teaching and learning was such a big deal. They felt they were collaborating already, and were not sure how CSC would alter their working relationships. They speculated that the CSC approach would be more professional than what they were accustomed to, but early on they were not clear about what that would mean as it rolled out. They expected that CSC would be on hand for their leadership team meetings, for meetings with the principal, and possibly for work with each grade level team over the course of the year. Alma's view on collaboration practices among teachers was that it was significantly under-developed:

Yesterday at the leadership team ... my teachers had never collaborated, never collaborated. And they will tell you, oh we do collaborate, we do get together and we exchange, copy this, copy that, but really, for them to cognitively sit together in a very systematic way, looking at data in a systematic way, student by student, clustering them

by needs, really unpacking that onion, they've never done it. (Alma, 9/7/11, lines 236-241)

Sarah confirmed Alma's perception:

Yesterday was our first day, it was a faculty meeting so we were all present and the administrator was presenting, "This is what ROCI³ is and this is what it looks like" and... the majority of us were excited. People were saying, "We kinda do that when we meet, but not all the time". And there was a little resistance... some people said, "Well you know Thursdays... we release the kids early, but that doesn't necessarily mean we have to meet as grade level. Yes we have to plan, but it doesn't necessarily mean we have to work all together. I can make my copies, I can do other things". That's that little resistance and again because that's the way we were allowed to do for the last 5 years that now it's like, uh oh, wait a minute, something totally new, something totally different, but I think those people who resist a little bit will feel the energy from the rest of us. It's for the kids, everything is for the kids, not for us the teacher. (Sarah, 9/7/11, lines 84-96)

Alma believed the resistance she was sensing was a result of teachers not knowing her and not having had experience with the type of in-depth instructional analysis and reflection they would be doing with CSC's Results Oriented Cycle of Inquiry (ROCI) process. "And so for me it's how much of the process do I direct and teach, how much of the process do we learn together, step by step." (Alma, 9/7/11, lines 363-364) The previous day she held a professional development session for the whole faculty and ended up using the ROCI process to teach the ROCI process. She shared with me the feedback forms she had teachers complete, wherein she asked them to reflect on what they felt confident in, steps they would like to work on, identification of next steps, and areas where they might need support. The teachers affirmed some aspects of the process they were learning as areas where they felt confident, and identified areas where they wanted to go deeper and might need some support.

In summary, the CSC process for engaging principals, leadership teams and teachers put the development of targeted goals and a theory of action to guide the work front and center. There was complete agreement between the provider and the principal about this approach at the beginning of the project at Riverdale, and a willingness among the leadership team to participate in this process. There was also some resistance at first from teachers who thought CSC and Alma were resources intended to help failing schools improve, and who did not think that was a fit for Riverdale Elementary, the district's flagship elementary school. Their dissonance around that perception, coupled with the fact that both Alma and CSC were new to the Riverdale community of teachers seemed to feed some resistance initially to the espoused theory of action. The enacted theory of action involved using the systematic collaboration protocols developed by CSC to take the teachers to a new level of depth in their collaboration. Again, the veteran perspective on the faculty was that they did collaborate, they were the highest performing school in the district, and they were not sure they needed help in this area. So there were small instances of resistance within the larger faculty at first, and a lack of complete understanding of or buy in to the theory of action.

³ Results Oriented Cycle of Inquiry

The approach taken by CSC to school entry was very prescriptive and protocol driven. Alma led with a steady hand as she set expectations for use of the CSC method. Teacher concern about Alma and CSC, however, centered more on perceptions than substance: they chafed at the idea that they were perceived to be a low performing school and that was why CSC was there. They warmed to the inquiry method, however, which was structured in the questions it asked, but unstructured about the substance of the ideas and issues that surfaced, or the plans that were laid as a result of those issues. Structured in the expectation that teacher collaboration around student learning drove teacher actions, but open and non-specific in the content of those actions. The teachers populated the form; the external provider and the principal provided the form. In many ways, CSC offered the principal a leadership strategy for managing school improvement at Riverdale Elementary. The strategy was grounded in participatory norms of engagement with the whole community, and thus secured the buy-in and commitment of the teachers.

3. Roles and expectations: under construction, to be articulated in detailed contract. In this section, I report on Alma's hope that the CSC would be funded at a level that allowed them to serve as an intermediary between her and her teachers and to serve as her leadership coach. I also detail CSC's expectations about their stance with Riverdale teachers and describe the careful mapping they facilitated between CSC and the Riverdale teachers with respect to goals and action plans. Finally, I report on the teachers' developing understanding of their role in the project.

Alma was experienced with CSC and knew how they worked. She expected them to engage in structured analysis of the school with the leadership team and to co-construct the plan for work. The goal for the year was to develop every teacher's ability to participate effectively in the ROCI process and for every grade level team to be using this process to organize their collaborative time by the end of the year. CSC had a very clear set of protocols for entry and "enrollment" of clients, and had the buy in of the principal prior to commencing work. Within this context of prior understanding and experience, Luciana expected the principal to be inquiry oriented and to drive an inquiry process with teachers, which CSC would facilitate and support.

As much as Alma wanted to coach her faculty in this work, she recognized that she needed CSC to serve as an intermediary between her and the faculty in order for ROCI to get off the ground and into the daily routines of teachers at Riverdale.

In order for us to get there, I can't coach them, you see because as much as I want to coach them they still see me as the evaluator. Whether I like it or not, I'm still the evaluator, they need a coach that is going to, I don't wanna say hold their hand all the way, but a coach that is going to support them along the way. (Alma, 9/7/11, lines 277-280)

Alma also needed CSC to work directly with her to guide her leadership and expectations around implementation of the work. Acknowledging that she was both enthusiastic and ambitious, she did not want to undermine the work by overwhelming the staff. So another role she expected CSC to play was to help her understand when to push with support and when to "hold back and let it saturate a little." (Alma, 9/7/11, lines 296-297)

Luciana understood Alma's needs, which fit well into the larger role she saw CSC playing at Riverdale, which included maintaining a strong process of engagement with the principal and leadership team designed to build consensus and draw from the leadership a plan of

action for the work that they would own. In conducting their work, Luciana reiterated the need for CSC staff to be humble, to immerse themselves in the culture of the school and to not impose a lot of their own observations.

At a minimum my role will be engaging in reflection each week with the principal and the resource teacher. We've already begun to backwards map from their vision of where they want collaboration to be at the end of the year. We are preparing a map for getting there. They've identified that by end of year they want all grade levels collaboration using the ROCI. So then we broke that down: what does that mean for cycle 1? In order for us to get at the end of year goal, what do we need to do in November? Where do we need to be by the end of February? Then we backwards map every week. How will you use each staff meeting to build toward end of cycle goal? We've created the plan, now we check in every week on it. How did the collaboration meeting go? What came up? What objectives were met? What adjustments are needed in the calendar? I have them do something with their leadership – identify their role in the meeting, how they will push teachers. At a minimum, I will be engaging with the principal and resource teacher on their guidance for staff. And so depending on whether we allocate more support, if we do, a next level might be working with the leadership team and the principal and resource teacher thinking about each leadership team members role in collaboration, helping them become effective facilitators for collaboration. At a more intensive level, it might mean taking one or two grade levels and working alongside the resource teacher to really have a lot more guidance and facilitation of grade levels during their collaboration time. (Luciana, 10/21/11, lines 87-103).

My first interview with Cecelia and Sarah, two of the teacher members of the leadership team, came one day after a professional development session with Alma on the use of the ROCI process for collaboration, and three weeks after their initial orientation with CSC. So their understanding of the role that CSC would play and their own role in implementing new collaboration procedures and systems was in a very early state of development. Cecelia, for instance, held a general and non-specific view regarding what might be expected of her: to help students succeed. But the particulars of the work with CSC were still emerging for her.

Their role? Probably their professionalism, their knowledge, definitely their knowledge because they know what's best. We know what's best too. So, it's the creative ideas. They have more ideas because we're so busy in the classroom with the ideas that we provide to each other. So my role is to enable kids to become more successful. I think we know what's best, but if we actually see someone else come in and model for us, with our own class, I think we can become more powerful in the classroom. So their role would be to help empower us to become better at what we do. (Cecelia, 9/7/11, lines 141-147)

Sarah thought that her role as a member of the leadership team was to keep the teachers in her grade level group informed, and to help bring them up to speed on the things the leadership team was learning from working with CSC. She had more questions than answers about expected roles at the earliest stages of entry into work, but expressed hope that she and her colleagues on the leadership team would receive support from CSC if needed.

I'm hoping, I'm assuming, if I need support in a certain area maybe they will be there to support us. If our grade level is still not meeting collaboratively, maybe they'll be there to see if they can help. That's my understanding, I don't know for sure, but I have a feeling that it's more, because I know she did say we do need some support in conducting grade level meetings because every grade level conducts their grade level meetings differently. That was why we met yesterday and it was a really quick meeting, but it came through Alma as principal, so I'm wondering if CSC is going to eventually start coming in and kind of training us. I'm hoping they are. (Sarah, 9/7/11, lines 185-193).

In sum, at this point in the formation of a working relationship, I was able to capture their earliest impressions about the work they would be doing with CSC and the manner in which that would play out over time. CSC was still in the process of working out the details with Alma about how much of a presence they would be over the course of the year and what level of depth they would reach in their engagement with teachers around use of the ROCI process to guide their collaboration. CSC typically took up to six weeks to collect information about the school, talk with teachers and leaders, and negotiate a contract for work. During and within that process, a goal was set, a theory of action developed with specific plans around the instructional core, professional development, and leadership, and a partnership agreement focused on the ways in which they will work together was developed and signed by CSC, the site administrator, and any other key personnel deemed necessary. CSC commitments to the site, school commitments to CSC, and norms for working together were all explicitly documented as part of this agreement. At the point of my first interviews with participants, this process had not yet been completed, and the principal and CSC Partnership Director were the only two participants who had a clear sense of roles and expectations.

Congruence between partners develops iteratively through a series of interactions over time (Ring and Van de Ven, 1994). The early state of congruence among the partners was not complete with respect to the teachers, who at the earliest point of entry into work with CSC did not have a clear understanding of what to expect or what might be expected of them. The process of building agreement around expectations in this partnership involved regular, ongoing meetings that were in mid process at the point of my first interviews.

4. Agreement on outcomes: a process of co-construction. In this section, I discuss the agreed upon goal that the CSC inquiry model would be in widespread use at Riverdale by the end of the year and report on the manner in which teachers rallied around an equity agenda.

Both the principal and the provider saw the desired outcome of their work as improved student performance and improved teacher collaboration to drive student performance. The teachers were on board with the goal of improving all student performance, willing (for the most part) to use collaboration as a strategy to get there, but not sure about how this strategy would contribute to the larger goal for students.

The goal that all participants agreed to for the year was for every grade level team to be effectively utilizing the Results Oriented Cycle of Inquiry process in their collaboration by the end of the year. Luciana's ideal outcome for the work was "that by the end of the year, all staff members believe and have identified that the purpose of their collaboration is for them to come together as teams to reflect on their practice, and for them to have a really clear process for doing that." (Luciana, 10/21/11, lines 151-153). Alma's description of the ideal outcome included Luciana's vision: "I foresee this year really building the capacity of my leadership team ... centered around collaboration. ... so that next year they're very, very solid in building

(collaboration and coaching) capacity within their own grade levels.” (Alma, 9/7/11, lines 299-301, 309-311). Alma also articulated a hoped for outcome of the work with CSC that encompassed the whole district:

It’s not just about Riverdale, to me it’s about our district. It’s about transforming the mindset, transforming the way of doing the work at the organizational level, you know from the top all the way to the classroom. So it’s transformative and I just hope CSC doesn’t go away until we have built the capacity of all the principals to do that, to see things in that way, to operate in that systematic way. (Alma, 9/7/11, lines 474-479)

One teacher, Sarah’s ideal outcome for this work included being able to analyze data, talk effectively with other teachers about how they will move all kids forward academically, and internalize this way of working together so that it would be sustainable even after CSC leaves and even if the principal leaves. Another teacher, Cecelia was less focused on developing teacher skill and normative practices of collaboration than with making a significant change in expectations around meeting the learning needs of all students.

My personal goal is to see how I can better help these kids that have been overlooked and have not been given the proper systems to be successful. I’m tired of having 7 kids in the class who have been in the red and have never been given any services. They just get passed on. Every year we look at them and you can see they’ve been red for 5 years and why? Why are they still red in 5th grade? Why haven’t we given them the proper services? Why do we have to wait until the 5th grade to create miracles, you know? And so I’m tired of seeing over half my class are red and I think it’s wrong. It’s wrong to have kids just get passed over. (Cecelia, 9/7/11, lines 116-123).

Luciana and Alma shared this commitment with Cecelia to change the mindset that seemed to be prevalent at the school around whether all students could learn and move up in terms of academic performance.

What we are asking some of them to do is shift their mindset. What we’re really gonna push some of them on is the belief that some of them might have about students who year after year don’t meet grade level proficiency. The approach we are bringing, which may seem technical, actually requires the person to come in with a specific mindset that says “I believe all kids can learn, if I engage in this process”. (Luciana, 10/21/11, lines 186-192)

In sum, the consultative process employed by CSC seemed to facilitate reaching early agreement that deepening their collaborative work around student needs and performance was an important outcome for the faculty and leadership at Riverdale Elementary. While the teachers were less knowledgeable about how this could work than Alma and Luciana, they were sufficiently convinced of the potential of this strategy to list this as a hoped for goal. Improved collaboration was understood by all to be an outcome in service to a more important goal, which was to better serve all students in the school and to refocus teaching around the belief that all students could be supported to achieve academically.

The teachers at Riverdale were committed to their students, committed to helping them

achieve their potential. They learned, however, as they engaged over time with CSC and Alma, that they had not been serving all students in a manner that helped each one reach their full potential. As this awareness penetrated their thinking some teachers moved from skeptical to a state of readiness to take on a change effort. I explore this more fully in the next section, which focuses on how congruence in these four areas (problem, theory of action, roles, outcomes) developed over time with each of the participants.

Evolution of agreements over time

As depicted in Figure 5.1, initial perceptions about the problem, theory of action, roles, and outcomes evolved to a congruent state of understanding among participants during the first six months of the project. At the earliest stages of participants getting to know one another, the principal and the provider had a very clear agreement about the need to improve and deepen teacher collaboration around student learning in order to improve student performance and begin to shift to a culture of belief that all students in the school could be moved forward academically. Alma came into the school with knowledge of the particular ways in which CSC worked to systematize teacher collaboration, and knew that she wanted to bring that culture to bear at Riverdale. As she got to know the teachers and the existing norms within the school, it became clear to her that previous leaders had promoted a focus on improving the performance of some, not all, students. She found teachers who objected to that stance but who were responsive to the directives of leadership. As she and Luciana began collecting and analyzing student data and teacher perceptions about the strengths and areas of need at Riverdale, improving and systematizing collaboration and changing teachers' mindsets about the ability of all students to succeed academically became the focal issues and for the project.

The teacher leadership team members were open, but lacked clarity about the nature of these issues as perceived by Alma and Luciana initially. The Results Oriented Cycle of Inquiry process promoted by CSC and Alma represented a structured approach to teacher collaboration that involved setting goals, planning, taking action, assessing progress, reflecting and adjusting plans as necessary to better achieve the goal. The teachers were introduced to this method of structuring their collaborative work time in August during a two day CSC led district wide retreat, and then were provided training by Alma in the process. Early on, they were not convinced that collaborating in this way would make a difference in their teaching or student learning, but with each of their weekly staff meetings, Alma modeled the process, provided additional training for the team, and reported on her weekly sessions with Luciana. Six months into the year, the teachers understood the ROCI process and were very committed to it. It's so beyond my belief of what could happen in a school in terms of collaboration with grade level teams and a school-wide vision, and all the support you get to really unpack the data and to begin courageous conversations about equity traps. It's just amazing what we've gone through, the transformation we've gone through to really become more conscientious of ensuring that the students are the number one priority. And for us to leave any kind of traps aside and really focus on what is important.... I've been very, very fortunate to have gone through this process. It's the first time our school has gone through it; first time that many of us has gone through it. And I'm glad Mrs. R brought us Collaborators for School Change. (Cecelia, 3/9/12, lines 10-20)

Figure 6.1. Evolution of congruence between Riverdale Elementary School and collaborators for school change

	Strong Early Congruence	Strong Late Congruence
Problem	The principal and the provider had a high level of agreement that the school had a culture of low expectations and inadequate teacher collaboration	Teachers came to understand both of these issues within the first six months, leading to a strong congruence between the principal, provider and teachers about the problem they were working on
Theory of Action	The principal and the provider agreed on the need to collectively define the problem they would be working on and to develop a theory of action to address it; believed that through structured inquiry teachers could change practice and attitudes about students and improve performance	Through exposure and use of the CSC protocols (their TOA), teachers came to appreciate and buy into the theory of action and the inquiry model. Teachers interviewed acknowledged the change in attitude regarding all students ability to learn
Roles	The principal and the provider were in strong agreement about the desirability of CSC providing direct support and coaching to teachers	Teacher leadership team members wished they had greater access to CSC; understood their role in leading the inquiry effort in grade levels
Expected Outcome	All agreed that improved student performance and more professional collaboration was the expected outcome	All agreed that improved student performance and more professional collaboration was the expected outcome
	Weak Early Congruence	Weak Late Congruence
Problem	Teacher did not initially believe that there were issues with school culture and need for better collaboration	
Theory of Action	Teacher buy in was hindered by lack of clarity re: why CSC, a program used in low performing schools, was there and by a belief that they were already collaborating effectively	
Roles	District office decision to fund at a lower level was not congruent with the principal’s desire and teacher expectations for deeper engagement with CSC. Teachers did not understand their roles, initially, in the inquiry process	Principal believed that much progress was made in the first six months, but that if CSC was brought in more fully to work with the teachers on site, greater progress would have been achieved.
Outcomes	Teachers did not buy in, initially, to the need to change school culture or teacher practice or beliefs around student learning	

Janice, another teacher on the leadership team, echoed Cecelia's sentiments:

The whole way that we plan now is different. It's so great to have this kind of format. Like the ROCI cycle – looking back, looking forward, reflecting and adjusting. It's starting to—I mean, it pretty much is, since the beginning of the year, it's become ingrained, and it just feels like part of the way that we collaborate now. (Janice, 3/9/12, lines 148-152).

Their movement toward support for and commitment to the ROCI process suggests that they came to understand, adapt and commit to CSC's espoused theory of action, that through this kind of systematic collaborative effort, focused on students, a group of teachers would be able to significantly improve outcomes for all students. Their early hopes and expectations regarding the enacted theory of action, however, did not play out exactly the way any of the participant's thought it might. The district did not support a high level of CSC implementation at Riverdale. Alma continued to meet with Luciana weekly, but there were no resources to support CSC working with the leadership team or teachers. Alma ended up facilitating the process and coaching her leadership team, reporting to them on her work with CSC. Rather than CSC serving as an intermediary between Alma and the teachers, Alma ended up serving as an intermediary between CSC and the leadership team, who in turn facilitated the work in their grade level teams. Teachers had also been expecting more direct engagement with CSC.

I actually thought they were going to be here weekly. I mean, I knew it was going to be a positive support. I knew they were going to be more of not telling us what to do, but kind of walking us through. But I thought, actually, that CSC were going to be more in the classrooms versus being more on the outskirts of kind of guiding us in general. So that was one of the differences. When I meet, even as part of the leadership team, with Alma I hear her say things like, 'I met with CSC' or 'I met with Luciana and this is what we developed...' But then she'll still say, 'What do you guys think? Do you guys agree? Do you disagree? Should we make any changes?' And so that support that they're giving her, then she's bringing the support to us -- even though it's like a third party kind of thing, it's working really well. I really think it's a very positive aspect that was brought into our school this year. (Sarah, 3/9/12, lines 17-26)

Under Alma's leadership and facilitation, each of the grade level teams developed a Charter for the year that captured their specific grade level goals, the activities in which they planned to engage, and the ways in which they would work together and with other grade level teams. Through this chartering process, roles were articulated and the enacted theory of action for the school took form. Over time, through these structured activities, the early lack of understanding about how their work with CSC would play out was clarified and the teachers moved into a congruent understanding with Alma and Luciana.

Alma was pleased with the level of progress they had made when I spoke with her six months into the work.

The teachers have said to me that they've learned so much. The year went by so fast they can't believe that it's March and we're already preparing for testing. The time went by

like this (snap), and they've been really busy. It has been a lot of learning for them, a lot of learning about collaborating in a new systematic way. A lot of learning for them in taking ownership and facilitating that in their own grade level teams. A lot of learning in terms of looking at the data and doing something about it versus looking at the data, and saying 'Okay, that's what the data says' and continuing to do the same thing in the classroom expecting to get something else in return. (Alma, 3/9/12, lines 63-70)

Initially, some of the members of the Leadership Team and other faculty members who were not on the leadership team were resistant. Alma chalked that up to lack of experience with CSC. However, six months in, there were still pockets of resistance among some of the teachers.

Not all of my teachers have bought in. I can tell you that in Kinder, I don't think that I have 100%.... They've come a long way. They've developed their own agendas, they have backwards mapping, they focus on specific standards, they have a systematic way of collecting data, they come to the table with data, they set goals. They do it once a month, so it's not the same as the other grade levels that meet once a week; however, they're doing it. Now, are they doing it because they love to do it and they buy into it? No, they do it because it's something that is expected. They have not internalized the value of it yet. (Alma, 3/9/12, lines 81-82, 85-91)

Alma said that if she had been able to bring a CSC coach in to work with her leadership team and teachers, they would have made more progress. One of the three teachers I interviewed agreed that a stronger presence from CSC might have secured greater buy-in with the full teaching force. In terms of the expected outcome of the work, Alma acknowledged that she was ambitious, but satisfied with the progress made in this first year, which would serve as a base for more significant collective and collaborative work in subsequent years. The teachers were on board with this outcome, and believed their colleagues outside the leadership team would be as well.

I turn now to an analysis of the negotiation and early entry into work, examined through the lens of my conceptual framework.

Analysis

In this section I consider how the scope of this project, the locus of decision-making and control over it and the level of fidelity or mutual adaptation required for implementation may have shaped participants' perspective on the development of their relationship. In my conceptual framework, I define these as structural factors that act as givens, external to the space created by partners as they enter a collaborative endeavor, but around which perceptions are formed. Reactions to these givens, I argue, shape the thinking and willingness of partners to engage. I take up each of these aspects individually next.

Scope of the project. The scope of the project envisioned by Alma was comprehensive, and reflected her leadership style and priorities as a new principal coming into a well established, fairly stable school where the teachers had been there for many years. For Alma, the goal was to fundamentally alter the nature of the conversations teachers were having with each other about their students and their students' performance and learning capacity. Her work with CSC led her to believe that the protocols, rubrics and manner of engaging teachers in change would be an

effective catalyst to begin changing the culture of caring individuals who did not expect all students to make demonstrable academic progress in response to their teaching.

When I asked Sondra whether she thought of CSC as a comprehensive school change effort or a targeted skill development project, she described their approach as drawing from both ends of that continuum.

When you say comprehensive, I think of systemic and systematic. ... Whether we're working intensively or in a targeted or strategic relationship with the school, there's always going to be those few things that we're ... focused on and it's going to look targeted, but ... we would never focus in on only the professional development system or helping teachers learn the x strategy or collaboration outside of our framework for transformation, which is a comprehensive thing. We have a framework that describes a bunch of systems that need to be working together in alignment (in order to) actually reach student achievement goals. ... We don't work across everything all at once, so ... it's about scope and sequence and syncopation. You know the initial scope is decided for certain reasons, the sequence is also important, but then it's about how you do those things, that is the syncopation piece... All of that needs to be targeted, but at the same time addressing a systemic transformation strategy. (Sondra, 8/29/11, lines 400-414)

Luciana and Alma shared a congruent understanding about the needed scope of the effort. All teachers would need to participate in a structured cycle of dialogue and reflection that encompassed planning, implementing, and evaluating their efforts and impact on student learning in order to enact the desired changes in culture and performance.

This is a pretty big change. In fact some of the work we're gonna be doing, what I'll be helping the principal and resource teacher to think through is change, and what change theory says about how to help people go through a change. This isn't just a second order change. What we are asking some of them to do is shift their mindset. What we're really gonna push some of them on is the belief that some of them might have about students who year after year don't meet grade level proficiency. The approach we are bringing, which may seem technical, actually requires the person to come in with a specific mindset that says "I believe all kids can learn, if I engage in this process". (Luciana, 10/21/11, lines 161-168)

The teachers were somewhat guarded in their early response to the opportunity to work with CSC, and as reported by study participants, not all teachers had bought in even at the mid-point of the year when the study participants had a much clearer understanding of and commitment to what they were doing. They did understand that the scope of the work with CSC was comprehensive, however.

This is the first one where I'm like, "well ok! t's gonna be school-wide!" In the past ... we had training in (specific) strategies to work with our English language learners, a majority (of our students), but it works with everybody, but it was more if you volunteered, you got that assistance. We've had more of that (approach). (Sarah, 9/7/11, lines 35-38)

The intended scope of the endeavor led the principal and provider to develop a plan for implementation that involved working with the leadership team to develop their skill with the ROCI process and supporting their use of that process in their weekly grade-level meetings with all teachers. Due to lack of resources to support CSC in a more intensive role, working directly with the leadership team and going into classrooms and grade level meetings to facilitate implementation, that critical role fell to Alma. Alma had reservations about what she saw as a potential conflict if she were to serve as the coach in support of her teachers as they developed their skill in this approach and also serve in her role as their supervisor and evaluator. She wanted her teachers to have access to Luciana directly, as a neutral but supportive coach, and felt that this approach would have solidified teacher support for the work they were doing. The nature of the change they were trying to enact might have been challenging and perhaps threatening to some number of teachers. It is a delicate matter to help teachers understand that their practices are disenfranchising some students and, recognizing that, move them forward toward a belief that all children can learn. The communication strategy needed to be carefully crafted and enacted in order to not put teachers too deeply on the defensive. For the principal to be the lead on implementation of this strategy, for some number of teachers, might have triggered a tension around labor-management relations, with some teachers falling back on their rights under their employment contract and the principal trying to urge more willing engagement. Clearly the scope of the project required consistent press from some quarter, and with limited participation from CSC on the ground, that work fell to Alma and the leadership team.

Locus of control. Rivers End Elementary School District was in its second year of an effort to bring greater coordination and coherence to their school improvement efforts across the district. CSC was a partner to the district in that effort, perhaps even an instigator of the effort. CSC's model involves working at the district and school levels. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was typically developed between CSC and a district, with sign off from key personnel at the district office, including the Superintendent, committing to a scope of work and a manner of working. This formed an important backdrop for their work at the school level, where school partnership agreements were also written and signed by key personnel, including the principal and members of the leadership team. These documents represented the contract for work and were intended by CSC to capture the essential agreements that would be necessary to achieve an outcome.

Alma's opportunity to work with CSC at Riverdale Elementary was driven by two things: first her acceptance of the position of principal at Riverdale was conditioned upon her ability to bring CSC with her; and second, agreement from the school district that Riverdale would be part of a district wide improvement effort supported by CSC. Funding for the work of CSC at Riverdale was controlled by the district office, and had an impact on the level of engagement they could have with CSC. Alma's supervisor at the district office, Jim, had a view of her role and the role of CSC that aligned with both Alma's and Luciana's expectations to a large extent, and shaped the decision about whether to allow CSC to work at Riverdale in 2011-12 and at what level of intensity.

The principal is really the key to the school. The actual work of the school, of course, is the very personal relationship between the student and the teacher, and the teacher, in partnership with the family, is the most important factor in the child's education. However, the principal is the most important factor in the culture of the school, the ability

of the teacher to do her/his job, and the relationship between the school and the community... The external support provider must not only develop a relationship with the principal, but be able to articulate both the services provided and what is needed to effectively provide them. Given the principal's constraints on time, facilities, people and money, it falls to the external support provider to provide the principal with the information that allows her/him to put the service and external support provider staff high enough on the priority list to get anything done. (District Memorandum on External Support Providers and Public Schools, March 6, 2012).

All final decisions about the work with CSC at Riverdale, other than the funding level, were with Alma, the principal. Jim's notion, that it falls to the external provider to provide the principal with the information that allows her to appropriately prioritize the work, revealed his understanding that the locus of decision making about the actual work had to occur at the site level, under the guidance of CSC. It also revealed his sense that the provider is an advisor to the principal, who in this case he expected would lead the effort. Alma would have preferred to have a greater level of involvement between teachers and CSC coaches, but settled for weekly one-on-one coaching with Luciana as a planning, reflecting, and evaluating space for the work that she then directed and facilitated with teachers. She used these sessions to shape and direct the roll-out of school wide engagement in the ROCI process as a new organizer for teachers' collaborative work.

Unfortunately, the district decides what level of support a school should get. If I had gotten the support at the next level - with one coach here on site - we would be in a very different place, because the teachers were ready for the support. These are high professionals who were never given the opportunity to shine. They were just left alone to do whatever they needed to do and they were doing a good job, a decent job. Now you take them out of their comfort zone and they're professionals and they embrace the change, and then you give them a coach on the side so that they can go and observe each other and do all those things... we would be in a very different place. (Alma, 3/9/12, lines 172-182)

In summary, the locus of control over the project with CSC was shared, in a hierarchical manner, by the district leadership and the site leadership. The district office overseer of the work and the principal had a common understanding of what CSC would be doing, and while the principal would have liked greater involvement with this provider, she acted within the scope of her authority, with the support of the district office, to engage with CSC as fully as possible. The alignment of expectations between the principal and the district office may have had an impact on the openness of the Riverdale teachers toward this project. As the leadership team deepened in their understanding of what Alma and CSC were trying to help them accomplish, a congruent understanding between participants emerged that supported a strong match.

Fidelity or mutual adaptation: implementation expectations. The process in which CSC engages is driven and shaped by the use of highly structured protocols, which are non-negotiable. Their six phases of entry into work with schools include setting up initial expectations about roles; collecting data with site staff about student performance; setting learning goals for students with the leadership; co-constructing a theory of action that will guide the work; setting school capacity goals with the leadership, and finalizing an agreement that all participants sign. Once

the work commences, CSC brings their Results Oriented Cycle of Inquiry protocol to bear as a central organizing framework that guides teacher dialogue and collaboration in working to achieve the goals they set together. All of this protocol driven work is expected to be implemented with fidelity to the processes and agreements that have been reached. Within this structured framework, goals and strategies for meeting goals are driven by the site based leadership team in a manner that is intentionally contextualized.

At the beginning of a partnership we have conversations with the principals at the school. We share with them the organizational process we use. The questions involve meeting with the principal to get a sense of the school and setting up days when we come in to visit the site, classrooms, talk with teachers, interview school leaders. We use a rubric. We ask the school if they would like to self assess on the same rubric. The team that goes on the school visit comes together. We triangulate all the data we can possibly gather: teacher input, leader interviews, data from our visits or from any of the school self assessments. We come up with a baseline score for each process on our rubric. We then come back and share a report with the principal and that becomes the basis for talking about what the partnership will be all about. During that meeting, we have a succession of questions: we ask if they agree, and if there are any disagreements. We really talk through it. We try to be really humble about one day not giving us a full picture of the school, but rather a basis for a conversation. From there we identify where the school feels they need core support. That then leads to well how can we provide support for them in that area. We identify some areas to focus on together. Once we do that, or simultaneously, what we get clear on is how the school and our organization will work together. (Luciana, 10/21/11, lines 6-21)

CSC's approach is very controlling of those aspects of a change initiative having to do with framing the work and developing a contract. But the nature of the collaborative work they will do with a school involves co-collection and co-analysis of data and co-construction of goals and a theory of action that will become the actual plan for reaching the goals. The very controlling process, then, is tied to a strategy designed to secure and build teacher commitment to a change effort.

It is difficult to categorize the work of CSC as either control oriented or commitment oriented, as it seems to be driven by both at different points in the process (Rowan, 1990). Snyder, Bolikn and Zumwalt (1992) identify three approaches to the implementation of a change initiative, approaches differ in how they view knowledge (whether it resides inside schools or outside schools), how they view the change process, and how they view the role of the teacher.

Looked at through this lens, the CSC entry processes and inquiry protocols fall clearly within the fidelity perspective, insofar as knowledge of the process of developing a contract for change work in a school resided primarily with the external provider and followed a structured and linear progression managed by the provider. The teacher's role in the process was to engage in the process as it unfolded, not to shape the process itself. Reaching agreement about the goals of their work together and the manner in which the work would be carried out, and the work itself, is better categorized as falling within the mutual adaptation or even enactment perspectives defined by Snyder, et al., (1992). In other words, as the work unfolded over the course of the year, the inquiry process brought by CSC required teachers to adapt and in some cases construct their practice in response to their collective analysis of student needs. The change process itself

depended upon how well strategic efforts to improve outcomes for students were working, so it was very contextual, often unpredictable and non-linear, and could even call upon teachers to engage in co-construction – with each other and/or with their students – of strategies that supported student learning. The role of teachers was not to simply follow directions, but to determine what direction in which to go, collaboratively, with the site leadership, and in some cases, with the students themselves.

Alma, as a principal, intentionally used the work with CSC to move the Riverdale teachers to a more active role in defining and refining their teaching.

It's a bit frustrating at times because it's really easy when you have someone with a track record, someone with the knowledge, someone with the tools, that comes at you with, "give me the tools, tell me what to do". It is really easy when someone tells you what to do because you do it and if it doesn't work then you say, "I was told do it this way". So, the responsibility lies on the person that is telling you what to do. CSC doesn't tell you what to do. CSC really becomes a partner in this journey, and they're so strategic in the way that they do this that they're like my conscience. They're asking me all these questions and I arrive at the answer through all of those probing questions, and I say "Wait a minute, I'm doing all the work, what are you guys doing?!" and they laugh, but work like that takes time too. It's very easy for me to tell you "Do this, this is recipe" and then you have a product, you have a cake, but when you come in, are listening and asking questions to either understand or make a person reflect on their work, you're really engaging in that dialogue to unpack and get to the root of the problem without even telling them "this is the problem, and this is what you need to do". So it is in the process of engaging in that conversation that you get a deeper understanding and an appreciation of the process itself. (Alma, 9/7/11, lines 55-71)

In summary, it seems that CSC and Riverdale Elementary School may have found a balance point between prescription and adaptation in the enactment of a change initiative. The prescriptive, procedural work seems to have helped the leaders and teachers at Riverdale create the space for examining student needs and performance and developing more effective instructional practice. The principal and the provider understood this dynamic going into the relationship at Riverdale. The teachers came to value the structured protocols, what they referred to as a more professional way to collaborate, and could see the impact their working together in new ways was having on their thinking about student learning and their own practice.

I turn now to a consideration of the internal dynamics within the school culture that may have played a role in the development of the match.

Trust, Coherence and Readiness for Change: How Internal Dynamics Shaped Commitment.

Internal dynamics within each school site played a role in the development of participant willingness to commit to the work. Issues that interacted with the ability to achieve a "meeting of the minds" among participants included trust between participants and between partners, the extent to which participants felt the new initiative cohered with their personal beliefs about teaching and other reform initiatives underway in the school, and their perceived capacity to engage in new work. I take up each of these aspects individually next.

Trust. In the case of the relationship between CSC and Riverdale Elementary school,

there was limited contact initially and over time between the teachers and the CSC provider. Due to lack of resource commitment, the model of engagement involved the CSC consultant providing weekly support to the principal, who in turn delivered the services to teachers and supported their implementation, primarily through her direct work with the grade level teachers who served on the leadership team.

The principal and the provider had a relationship coming in to the school, and had a high degree of both cognitive-based trust [*sic*] and affect-based trust for one another (McAllister, 1995).

I've worked with the principal at her prior school last year. She and I have a really good working relationship as well as personal relationship. After we collect data, at many of our schools we talk through the different leadership styles that are present, the way the principal works and use that to identify which of us will be best to meet the needs of the school. In terms of San Antonio, much of the fact that I had previously worked with the principal herself, and we had a very positive successful relationship factored into having me assigned to the school. (Luciana, 10/21/11, lines 39-45)

Alma knew she needed to establish a trusting relationship with the teachers at Riverdale, and made efforts to do so, first with the letter she wrote before she actually took over as principal, and then in the way she framed the work with CSC, she made an effort to secure teacher buy in to the work, rather than coming on board and telling her teachers what they needed to do in order to improve their practice.

They don't see themselves as experts and becoming experts before they can share their ideas. They see themselves as someone who's going to be supported as they go forward together in practice, so that is very healthy, and very humbling because the buy in comes when you're not here to fix me or tell me what to do or to judge me. The buy in comes (when you say) "there is this promising practice that neither one of us is very proficient in engaging, but it looks promising and looks exciting, let's give it a try." So no one's an expert, we're learning together as we go because it appears to be a good practice that would inform our practice and lead us to go further. (Alma, 9/7/11, lines 347-354)

Alma was concerned that her role as a new principal, with the responsibility to supervise and evaluate teachers, would interfere with teachers learning how to collaborate using the CSC materials and processes. Since she could not afford to bring CSC in to work directly with her teachers, she made efforts to build trust as a leader and facilitator of collaborative practices, serving as both an intermediary between the external provider and the teachers and as the new principal on site. Early on and regularly she sought teacher feedback about what they were learning and what they felt then needed in order to progress. During one of our early interviews, Alma shared with me some of the written feedback she had received from the faculty regarding their collaborative work in grade level teams:

When you read those, this morning they were in my box because I told them, in order for me to support you I need you to be honest with me so that the leadership team and I can really find ways to support you as we grow together in practice. So when I read them I sent (the teachers) an email thanking them for taking the time to really genuinely reflect.

It looks like there is a willingness to learn about this practice and with the right support, they will experience a powerful... I think we are in the forming stage. We're trying to test each other, to see what are we about. There's no storming, nothing that is striking... But they're also apprehensive because they don't know much about all of this and ... so there's lots of questions. (Alma, 9/7/11, lines 373-384)

Her task, as a new principal and as the leader and the face of a school change effort, was to develop her teachers' trust, on both a cognitive and affective level, for her and for the work that CSC was bringing forward. The teachers were initially wary, as individuals and as a collective body. Alma's reputation, and the reputation of CSC, was that they were considered effective in turning around low performing schools, and the teachers did not believe they were low performing at Riverdale, so they were concerned, at least initially, and there was low interpersonal and organizational trust for Alma or any initiative she might be bringing with her.

Well there is a sense of that connection with her working only with a low-performance school. She has no other experience working with high-achieving schools and for the last two years, I know that part of the staff, when we met with the Superintendent about why he made that choice to bring her and remove our old principal and send her some place else, we were very concerned. Very concerned because Alma only had that experience working at a low-achieving school and she had not brought up that school to a distinguished school and because of that we were very concerned that she might not be the right person for our staff and we were so used to having high-quality administrators. (Cecelia, 9/7/11, lines 336-343)

Over the first six months of the project, the teachers on the leadership team used the ROCI process in their grade level meetings with other teachers and in their leadership team meetings, and the members of that group moved from wary and skeptical to supportive and enthusiastic.

So right in the beginning when it started, for us, I think there was some apprehension just because it was a new program. So we didn't really know. You know, with any new program, we're like what's going on? But once we understood that it's really just a support system, they presented us a way to collaborate, a way to work together as a team, and we've really just seen so many benefits from it. (Janice, 3/21/12, lines 61-65)

The teachers did not have the opportunity to build a relationship with CSC over the first six months, so their affect-based trust for CSC remained under developed, which frustrated some of the teachers the leadership team was working with. Their cognitive-based trust [*sic*] in CSC increased, however, due to their satisfaction with and enthusiasm for the work they were doing collaboratively, and their respect for Alma increased as well.

We're really talking about night and day in terms of administrators... For five years, we were pretty much left alone in our classrooms and we were visited maybe twice the whole year. And now we have someone who wants to support us and is constantly in our classrooms. And I don't mean constant like every day. But I mean, especially at the beginning, regularly would come into our classrooms to observe, visit, made herself

visible, was out... That's what I'm saying, literally night to day. So I think that the people who have only had one style (of leadership) are the ones that are having a tough time. Those of us who have been here or have dealt with other administrators similar to Alma were like, oh, perfect, we're back to normal again. I think the lack of presence of the CSC people – (they have become) this entity that's supposedly helping us, but we don't see them. Those in the leadership team know that we're working very close with them still. (Sarah, 3/21/12, lines 74-84).

In the case of CSC and Riverdale, there existed both high cognitive- [*sic*] and high affect-based trust between the principal and the provider, but initially low levels of both kinds of trust with the teachers. The conditions of implementation, which limited teacher exposure to CSC, nevertheless enabled both types of trust to grow between the principal, the provider and the leadership team. The other teachers on site were further removed from the work with CSC, and received their direction from colleagues on the leadership team and visits in their classroom from the principal. Teachers outside the leadership team may have been orienting to Alma in her role as instructional leader and their evaluator, which may have, in some cases, led to lower levels of buy in to CSC initiative. Where members of the leadership team had some direct access to the external provider, the teachers at large did not, therefore their levels of trust in the initiative, (buy in) were not uniformly high, as reported by teachers in this study.

Jeffries and Reed (2000) found that too much trust was as bad as too little trust for the development of sustainable partnerships that maximized benefits for both partners. In essence, they concluded that solutions to problems that brought partners together were furthest from optimal when both organizational and interpersonal trust were high or both were low. The problem that these partners came together to work on was a culture of low expectations for all students and a lack of knowledge, skill or practice in the art of deep collaboration designed to focus instructional practice on moving all students forward academically. The solution in this case came in the form of a new principal and the consulting firm she brought with her. Both organizational and interpersonal trust between the new team (Alma and CSC) and the teachers was low at the earliest point of entry into work. For the teachers who worked most closely with the principal and CSC, namely the leadership team, trust shifted from low to high over time. For the remaining teachers, affect-based trust was slower to develop, and may have been hindered by the dual role the principal played as their supervisor/evaluator and the defacto leader of the CSC initiative.

Coherence. In this study, I am looking at two aspects of coherence, the first having to do with the extent to which a school change initiative fits with and complements the larger instructional framework of the school, and the second having to do with whether teachers felt the initiative cohered with their personal philosophy of good teaching. In the case of CSC and Riverdale Elementary, the district office played a unique role in attempting to bring coherence to all of the work being done by external providers in all of the schools in the district. During the three meetings held early in the 2011-12 school year, involving principals, providers and district office staff, instructional goals were surfaced and established, and providers were expected to align their “offerings” with these instructional goals.

As our work with the district this year we've been working with the superintendent and the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction on bringing together all of their external support providers in the district. There are so many – 20 or more –

supporting the district, as well as their principals. We wanted to make sure we were all in alignment towards the district's goals. We've had three meetings: the first one was just support providers. The district shared its vision and plan for getting to the vision and wanted to hear some thoughts from the providers themselves about how they thought they aligned to the vision and how they could better align. The second meeting was the principals by themselves. The goal was to assess their perspective on how aligned the different providers are to their work at the site. So we had them rate each provider at their site. The first two meetings involved trying to get a sense of both sides. Our third and last meeting was this morning, bringing us all together, identifying norms for a strong partnership. We engaged in a process, in mixed groups, where we discussed what makes a partnership strong, what are potential pitfalls that weaken them. Out of all of that we identified the top 5-7 characteristics of a strong partnership and established some norms for how principals and support providers interact. (The work with) Riverdale Elementary is taking place in the context of this larger work. (Luciana, 10/21/11, lines 247-263).

CSC served as a primary support for the district office in organizing this endeavor, demonstrating their focus on instructional program coherence (Newmann, Smith, Allensworth and Bryk, 2001) which carried over into their work with the school. The analysis that CSC conducted with the school as part of the enrollment process involved taking an inventory of other initiatives underway at the site and working with the teachers and principal on alignment.

We just ...jump in and start working on things. One of the things that we start to notice is where there are alignments and mis-alignments with various people in the school. It could be as simple as, 'you know there's already multiple support providers, but teachers across the board don't really understand who's working where and the principal may be not (very) transparent (about choices she's making)... So they hear about these things, but they don't see the big picture, so we may start to identify them and determine if they will cross our path... Typically we (make) explicit these things we're noticing to the principal and ask lots of questions (like) 'what would ... an aligned system of external support providers look like? What would your teachers say is the map of at the school and why is it different than yours? What would the value be if it were the same?' (Sondra, 8/29/11, lines 447-461)

The inquiry process itself became a mechanism for examining practice and aligning it with the vision and goals of the school. The only other initiatives underway at Riverdale were focused on implementing and integrating all of the new technology that came with a significant technology grant for the school and implementing Explicit Direct Instruction in daily teaching.

With respect to personal coherence, all of the teachers in my study felt comfortable with and empowered by the inquiry model supported by CSC. They appreciated that they were not being told what to do, but rather had the opportunity to ask each other penetrating questions about student learning and instructional approaches that might be more effective. The expertise that CSC brought was in how to make an inquiry process meaningful and focused; but the expertise needed to actually enact the inquiry process, analyze student learning, and develop effective instructional practice was expected, by the principal and the provider, to lie with the teachers. This stance resonated with the teachers, and none of the teachers I interviewed described this process as outside their philosophy of good teaching. They reported that some of

their colleagues resisted the inquiry process taking shape in grade level meetings, and attributed that resistance to having worked comfortably and for many years in a more isolated practice.

In summary, the district and school wide focus on aligning all work with a consistent instructional framework supported programmatic coherence, and did not interfere with teacher beliefs about good practice. This goal of the partnership supported teacher buy in and commitment to change their practice, as indicated by study participants who reported that the inquiry process had become a normalized way of thinking and working together in just a few short months. This approach was the organizing framework for Alma as a leader, which served to reinforce expectations for and of all teachers at the school.

Readiness for change. The teachers at Riverdale Elementary School were a stable workforce with many years of experience. All of the teachers I interviewed could remember the last several principals that had served at Riverdale, and reported that leadership changed there about every five years. Alma coming on board signaled a change, and the teachers felt concerned, initially, and sufficiently so that a group of them went to meet with the Superintendent to express their concerns. They liked the administrator who was being moved out of Riverdale, and were not sure that Alma was the right fit for the school.

Initially, the only member of the Riverdale school community who met all of the cognitive and affective criteria for change readiness was Alma, the principal (Rafferty, Jimmieson and Armenakes, 2013). The teachers did not believe they needed to change their practice or that a change in leadership was needed. They were unclear about how CSC would help them or how engaging with CSC would benefit them. Emotionally, they were more concerned than optimistic about the arrival of a new principal. Changes in leadership are catalyzing events for a school, however. Rarely, if ever, do teachers have control over changes in leadership; higher ups in the organization make a decision, or a leader retires, and the staff begin to organize their thinking in anticipation that change is on the way. So while the individual teachers at Riverdale may not have been ready for a change, they knew and accepted that it was coming.

Rafferty, et al. (2013) assert that change readiness at the workgroup level relies on interaction, where a group within an organization is experiencing similar events and developing a common understanding of them in the workplace over time. Alma's early outreach to the school community, before she even arrived on campus, was intended to revitalize (and repopulate as necessary) the leadership team. As a workgroup, this team of teachers had the opportunity to participate in the CSC two day training offered by the district and to begin working with Alma, Luciana and Sondra on the enrollment process with CSC. Building organizational readiness for change requires that both individuals and workgroups achieve a level of change readiness that is impacted by their individual and collective thoughts, beliefs and feelings about the proposed change. In addition to the shared experience during the initial training with CSC, Alma invited a panel of teachers who had worked with CSC to come to Riverdale, share their experiences, and answer questions from teachers about how CSC works and what value it brings.

So Thursday a panel of teachers... who've participated in CSC are coming to answer any questions or doubts we have. I think in order for us to buy in we really have to build trust from other people who have gone through the same process that we're about to embark on and this is an opportunity to hear firsthand experience what it's like. If I didn't know anybody that's gone through that process, I'd wanna stay in my classroom, but eventually no one can get away because the whole school has to buy in. (Soledad, 9/7/11, lines 406-412)

Through these interactions, orchestrated by Alma and Luciana, teachers had the opportunity to engage in emotional comparison and the visiting team attempted to influence teachers' thinking about working with CSC, (Rafferty, et al., 2013). Teachers at Riverdale began to come on board and open a willingness to work with Alma, to learn from Luciana and each other, and to follow the inquiry process laid out for them. The leadership team as a workgroup sent emissaries to each of the grade level instructional teams, and those workgroups began, through contagion, to come on board. Not all teachers embraced the work and the methods set forth by Alma and CSC, but significant inroads were made, and workgroups, in fairly short order, moved into a level of change readiness that would support implementation of the CSC work. Artifacts of this process included grade level charters that established goals and methods of working together, moved the workgroups forward in readiness.

Rafferty, et al., (2013) assert that organizational readiness builds from individual and workgroup readiness, and is tied to the role of leadership in establishing a clear vision for change, inspiring hope and optimism, and managing employee's emotional response to change through focused organizational norms and socialization processes. The process used by CSC, and by Alma in the case of Riverdale Elementary, involved systematically recruiting teachers to a deeper level of buy in. Participation in the analysis of the school, development of a theory of action for the school, development of grade level charters – each of these tools used by CSC and enacted by Alma were intended to educate teachers about what would be involved in their partnership and to support teacher buy in and commitment to do the work.

In summary, shared understanding of the theory of action driving the work had a calming effect on teachers who were experiencing uncertainty with a new protocol delivered by a new provider in partnership with a new principal. The provider's "program" fit into the established rhythms of the school: the leadership team meetings were reorganized to use the language and inquiry model brought by the provider; leadership team members were provided guidance on how to take the inquiry model into their grade level meetings with colleagues; the principal knew the model well and reinforced it in her conversations with teachers one on one, in the leadership team meetings, and in school wide meetings. The teachers started out with uncertainty about the new principal, the provider, and the new "program". The inquiry nature of the work made them feel they were in the driver's seat. Within six months, through focused effort, Alma, the leadership team and CSC had brought critical mass of teachers, workgroups and the organization as a collective whole, to a high level of readiness for change. Through their work in the CSC processes of inquiry and analysis, teachers came to understand that they did need to improve their collaboration, that the particular model and approach advocated by CSC was appropriate, that they were capable of implementing, that the organization would provide adequate support, and that change would benefit the students first and foremost, but that they would become a more effective teaching force in the process. Affectively, more and more teachers were using the collaborative norms and processes of CSC as if they were natural extensions of their own thinking and approach; they became more optimistic, more confident, and more relaxed about what they were doing. Not all teachers reached this level of readiness in the first six months, but the teachers who did were fairly confident that the rest of the teaching force would come on board or leave by the next academic year.

Summary

The partnership between Riverdale Elementary School and Collaborators for School Change was fueled by effective communication. Each meeting between the partners was purposeful, had an agenda, and a record was developed capturing the reflections, issues and action steps that would carry the team forward until the next meeting. The overt processes and structures brought to bear by CSC provided Alma with substantial leadership support. Although she had to serve as the lead representative and trainer for the work as well as the school principal, Alma and the leadership team were able to make significant progress with the goal of spreading the structured inquiry process to widespread use within the first year. In short, the early stage processes employed by the partners in this case fostered the development of a congruent understanding between all participants in the study. Although there was a lack of early congruence with the teachers, through regular interactions with the principal, and semi-regular interactions with the provider, both cognitive and affective trust was cultivated and the teachers came fairly quickly to a state of congruence with the principal and the provider about the problem they were working on, the theory of action, their role in the work and the intended outcome. The district office also played a key role in terms of establishing coherent expectations for principals and providers operating throughout the district.

Chapter 7. Cross Case Analysis

Summary of Findings

Three questions guided this study:

- (1) To what extent do early stage processes foster the development of a congruent understanding between partners about the nature of the work to be undertaken?
- (2) What is the evidence that the level of congruence reached at the early stage of relationship formation is associated with later-stage progress and perceived satisfaction with the match?
- (3) What aspects of context appear to enable or impede effective match formation?

Looking at the web of relationships that formed in the partnerships I studied, I found that the most critical relationship existed between the principal and the external provider in each case. Early congruence between these two key players overcame lack of teacher buy-in over time in one case, and lack of early congruence between these two undermined the match in the other. With regard to the first question, I found that what the principals and providers talked about, what they didn't talk about, what they wrote down, and who they involved in discussions of the work – what I refer to as their basic communication strategy - during their earliest negotiations either enabled or impeded the development of a congruent understanding about the nature of the work to be undertaken.

With regard to the second question, I found that the level of early congruence reached about (1) the problem they were going to work on, and (2) how they would assign and enact their different leadership roles, was associated with later-stage progress and perceived satisfaction with the match. Finally, I found that the locus of control over school improvement decisions, efforts to place the initiative in the context of a coherent school improvement plan, and willingness to adapt the initiative to the prevailing school conditions were the aspects of context most relevant to match formation.

In this chapter, I examine how these processes and dynamics unfolded across the two cases, providing examples and identifying commonalities and differences.

Successes and failures in communication

The nature and extent of communication between the principal and the provider about needs, expectations and methods of implementation shaped the quality of the match that emerged in both cases, and represented a primary difference between the weak match that developed in Case A and the strong match that developed in Case B.

The provider in Case B brought a structured, systematic approach to developing agreement with the site and district level leadership which involved multiple meetings with leadership and teachers over a period of 6-8 weeks and led ultimately to a contract for work. Written artifacts were created over this period and led CSC, the school principal, the district office and the teachers to agreement about the nature, scope and outcomes of the partnership. Improvement of student performance for all students was a primary goal/outcome for this project. Systematic, protocol driven collaboration across the grade level teams was the primary vehicle identified by the partners to reach this outcome. The communication strategy employed

Figure 7.1. Summary of cross case findings

	Case A: Low level of Congruence	Case B: High level of congruence
Processes that fostered congruence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provider presented model in various orientation sessions; - Contract focused on logistics and costs; - Site visits disconnected from a well-understood implementation plan - Episodic communications between provider and site leaders 	Provider protocols for enrollment of clients involved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - site analysis - collective planning - substantive contract (more than logistics) - grade level charters - scheduled meetings
Features associated with variations in congruence	Loose agreement based more on projections of need and desirable conditions for doing the work than on real conversation about the work and the conditions that would have to be surmounted in order to get there	Tight agreement between principal and provider about what needed to happen and how it would unfold Involvement of teachers and district office in planning, decision making and contracting
Evidence that level of early congruence is associated with later progress and satisfaction	Low level of congruence regarding problem, theory of action, roles at the beginning; lack of focus on roll-out in a manner that met expectations; lack of effective corrective action; early predictions that the work would falter came true; respect between partners eroded completely	High level of congruence between principal and provider early on, coupled with very explicit agreements about the problem, theory of action and roles brought teachers along, led to changes in practice, emerging changes in culture, and high level of satisfaction
What aspects of context appear to enable or impede effective match formation?	Role of district office: Prescribing solutions without adequate check in with site Lack of a coherent plan for school improvement Focus on de-contextualized fidelity of implementation undermined match	Role of district office: Engaged principals and providers in planning; controlled access Focus on developing a coherent instructional framework to guide school improvement Balance between structured enrollment and adaptive implementation

in this partnership was managed by CSC and had multiple levels, including:

1. Development of an analytic report on the school that included contributions from all participants. On the basis of this report, agreements were made collectively about where to focus the attention in the coming year and a contract for service was generated that included these details.
2. Weekly meetings between the provider and the principal weekly to debrief and lay plans for the coming week.
3. District and school partnership contracts identified in detail the elements of the work, the theory of action guiding the work and an instructional plan with specific objectives.
4. Grade level charters specified goals and action steps that would be taken at each grade level to achieve those goals were developed next. Teacher members of the leadership team were trained by Alma to facilitate the development and management of grade level charters, which were intended to guide weekly grade level teacher meetings during which the past week was debriefed and action plans refined based on progress made and new insights gleaned.

Though initially skeptical about whether they needed to work with CSC and what it meant to have them there, the teachers on the leadership team came around as they engaged in these activities, and became leaders of this work in their grade level teams. They felt they had meaningful opportunities to contribute to and shape the scope of work. Ultimately, these communication strategies strengthened teacher knowledge of the collaborative inquiry model, their sense of control over it, and their commitment to carrying it through.

In sum, one of the primary roles that CSC played in working with the school and district office was to facilitate deep, specific communication between parties about what was needed and what they were going to do to meet that need. CSC also had a relationship with the principal that predated their work with Riverdale Elementary School, which went a long way toward establishing a match with the school. As a result, within the first six months, a high level of congruence emerged between the teachers, school and district leadership and the provider about the nature and scope of the work they were undertaking.

In contrast, communication between the partners in Case A was episodic, focused on logistics, and did not include all participants in the development of a site-specific plan. Further, the partners never reached a congruent understanding about the nature of the work that needed to be done. The communication process followed a very different pattern than Case B, and included the following elements:

1. Principal's Summit. The principal and assistant principal attended BSI's annual (free) summit for school and district leaders to learn about the program. Participants from across the state were in attendance. Hannah and Annie liked what they saw and heard; the other high school in the district was working with BSI, so they decided to pursue a contract.
2. The contract was the only portion of their agreement to work together that was put into writing. Other written artifacts included the training materials and worksheets for use with BSI's *Bread and Butter Strategies*. The formal contract addressed the financial aspects of their agreement. Services were defined in terms of numbers of days and contact hours and payments to be made for services. The partners' deeper expectations

about the development of the relationship between the school and the provider were never codified in the contract, and were not agreed to orally or in writing.

3. Orientation Session. The principal and the leadership team attended an orientation at the BSI facility with the other high school; teams oriented to the BSI model and strategies and discussed among themselves how they would roll the work out in the coming year. The provider did not engage in these site-based conversations, and did not ask them to codify or report out on their planning discussions.
4. School visit. Members of the leadership team were invited to go to a school that was several years into a contract with BSI to learn more from other teachers about how the work with BSI unfolds.
5. Provider services at the school site. Charles and the BSI team came to MHS periodically over the course of the year to visit classrooms, meet with departments, and hold open office hours for teachers to come meet with them to ask questions and learn more about how to use the strategies in their teaching.
6. Faculty meetings. At the beginning of the school year, the whole faculty was introduced to the BSI model by the members of the Leadership Team. Expectations for implementation in the 2011-12 school year were vague and not well understood by the teachers. At subsequent faculty meetings, teachers who were implementing the BSI strategies were invited to share their work with the faculty at large.
7. Second meeting at BSI facility. The leadership team went back to the BSI facility with the intent to discuss their progress to date and learn more about how to deepen engagement and move to the next level. The provider delivered an exact repeat of the first orientation session, and did not engage with the leadership team around their questions and issues.

There were no follow-up or regular meetings between the principal and the provider to debrief how the project was going and plan for next steps. The only conversations between school leadership and the provider between scheduled contract days focused on logistics. Unlike Case B, the provider in Case A did not conduct a site-based analysis of strengths, weaknesses, or areas of challenge and opportunity with the leadership or the faculty. This may be due, in part, to the very different substantive foci of these two approaches. It could be argued that implementation of the model in Case A did not require the provider to know much about the teachers or their context, while the model in Case B required a deeper level of knowledge of the site and participants. During the *Principals Summit* participants were invited to share in table talks with other participants what site-based improvement strategies they had used in the past and how they had worked out. The provider used this as a launch pad for selling his strategies as “proven”, and guaranteed to lead to improved test scores if implemented with fidelity by a critical mass of teachers. He did not ask Hannah and Annie at any point about what was going on at MHS and how they wanted to work with his team. He framed the model as easy to implement and embedded in an equity agenda and suggested that widespread adherence to the model would be key to turning around the school’s low performance. These selling points resonated with the principal and assistant principal, as well as some of the teacher members of the leadership team. As a result, there was an initial openness on the part of some school participants to use the model, but subsequent actions on the part of school leaders and the provider did not lead to a congruent understanding of the nature of the project they would be undertaking as a school.

The principal and assistant principal had a vision of what they were trying to accomplish, and had a belief, early on, that this provider could help them fine tune and implement their vision. In the context of multiple initiatives competing for teacher time and attention, the school leaders had a very focused expectation about the role that BSI would play and how they wanted that to play out. There is no evidence that this set of expectations was communicated with or understood by the provider, who had a very different sense of what he was there to do and how he was going to do it. While there was early agreement that the need to improve student performance brought them together, the lead negotiators for the high school and the external provider framed the work very differently from the very beginning. Early negotiations failed to achieve congruence, and the formal contract that was signed did not speak to the ways in which either the provider or the principal wanted the work to unfold. There were no regular meetings between the provider and the principal or assistant principal during which planning, discussion of needs and context, or debriefing occurred. The teachers did not have clarity about what was expected of them in implementation. Both the provider and the principal expected that the model and expectations about implementation would be distributed and managed through department level meetings, but this did not occur in any systematic way. The teachers I interviewed felt the lack of clarity about implementation and did not expect the initiative to take off, given the lack of attention to systematic planning, direction, and execution.

In summary, Case B was characterized by a high level of congruence between the provider and the principal from the very start of the partnership. Systematic, ongoing communication fostered the development of congruence with the teachers. Midway through the year, all study participants reported satisfaction with the work and with the quality of the match. In case A, episodic communication undermined the development of congruence between all participants. The provider and the principal formed their expectations about the project based on a projection of what they needed and wanted from each other, interpretations of what they were hearing, and prior experiences. There was no significant effort to confirm their interpretations and projections and adjust their work to better meet each other's needs. Midway through the year, all participants reported dis-satisfaction with the work and with the quality of the match. If the partners in Case A had used the kind of communication protocols and structures used by Case B to define expectations, the partnership might have still failed, for any number of reasons, but the partners might have had a better set of articulated expectations to hold one another to. Alternatively, by framing their expectations clearly early on, they may have decided that they were not a good fit, or they might have engaged in some level of mutual adaptation in order to create the fit they were looking for.

Figure 7.2 summarizes the content and manner of communication between the providers and principals in each partnership I studied.

The need for clarity about the problem

Both partnerships I studied were ultimately seeking to improve student performance. On a surface level, that was the problem the providers were brought in to address. In both cases, there were deeper, cultural issues prevalent in the schools that would need to be addressed in order to improve teaching and learning. In both cases, these issues included low expectations for students and lack of meaningful collaboration between teachers. In Case A, school culture was also shaped by almost annual turnover in the principal and assistant principal roles. Leadership churn, at the site and district office levels, reinforced teacher isolation and simultaneously led to

Figure 7.2. Communication strategies employed across cases

	Case A	Case B
What was discussed by the principal and provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bread and butter strategies - Days and hours of service, costs - Logistics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - needs analysis - roles and expectations - theory of action, co-constructed - weekly plans - what worked, what did not work, what was next
How they engaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Orientation sessions - School visits to present strategies to teachers, discuss implementation, answer questions - Occasional phone conversations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leadership training and orientation - CSC visits to classrooms, focus groups, to develop school report - Scheduled in-person meetings between principal and provider
Frequency of conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Episodic conversations between assistant principal and provider, focused on logistics - Occasional classroom visits by Assistant Principal - Periodic updates and sharing at regular meetings of faculty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - weekly meetings between principal and provider - weekly leadership team meetings - weekly grade level team meetings
What was written down	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training materials - Handbook detailing the three phases of the model, including worksheets for teachers - Formal contract, with days and hours of service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School transformation framework and rubric - Report on school - Partnership agreement detailing goals, theory of action, roles, and manner of working together - Grade level charters detailing grade level goals, activities, collaboration across grade levels
How they planned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - During orientation sessions, leadership team heard the presentation from BSI and then worked together as a school team without provider engagement on a plan for implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - weekly sessions between provider and principal evaluated the prior week and laid plans for the next - weekly sessions between principal and leadership team followed same pattern, shaped by CSC collaboration protocols - weekly sessions in grade level teams followed same pattern
How plans were executed and debriefed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual teachers used the BSI strategies in their teaching - Some department meetings included discussion of BSI work - Assistant principal did walk-throughs and had informal conversations with leadership team members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - weekly “looking-back, looking forward” structured conversations between the principal and the provider, the principal and the leadership team, and the grade level leads and their colleagues

the annual introduction of new interventions intended to address low student test scores, which led to teacher overwhelm, resistance to change, and fed their distrust of leadership. The school in Case B did not have the problem of chronic leadership turnover, but was experiencing the introduction of a new leader who challenged prevailing beliefs about what students could achieve and how teachers could come together to improve overall student and school performance. The underlying problem of school improvement that both schools needed to address was how to unify the teaching community around a coherent framework for improvement, with clear expectations regarding student outcomes, teacher engagement with each other and with leadership about how to move students forward, and with a unified belief that all students in the school could learn and perform at high levels.

In Case A, it was relatively easy to reach agreement on immediate presenting issues like low test scores. BSI, it could be argued, had an interest in maintaining this view of the problem, because their product was, in theory, tailored to this problem. BSI's theory of change was that if the majority of teachers consistently implemented a set of simple teach-to-the-test strategies for a sustained period, student performance would improve, and teacher dialogue about student performance would also improve. The BSI tool kit did not include tools that would help them probe more deeply into the causes of low performance, or to focus on improving teacher collaboration around student engagement and performance. The tools they did bring to the work skimmed along the surface of the deeper, cultural issues driving student performance. The principal simultaneously believed the provider's assertions that this approach would be effective if implemented widely and with fidelity, and felt that she needed more. She believed BSI in part because of the testimonials shared by other principals about their successful turnarounds, and in part because Charles, the lead trainer for BSI, had a convincing and charismatic delivery. In her interviews with me, Hannah expressed a need for the provider to coax her teachers into willing participation, to guide and coach her in leading this change, and to use teacher dialogue around the simple strategies to fundamentally change the nature of teacher collaboration. These are indicators of the deeper cultural issues she knew needed to be addressed at the school, and hoped BSI could help her tackle.

The teachers saw different aspects of school culture that needed to be addressed, for instance, profound student apathy around performance, driven, they thought, by family and other issues outside the purview of the school. The provider offered his strategies and the suggestion that engaging with students around their performance and building relationships between teachers and students would make students want to perform in order to please their teachers, and therefore try harder, which would simultaneously address the deeper problem of student apathy and lead to actual improvement on state tests. The provider was not willing or able to provide the kind of support the principal needed to address the leadership challenge and the task of knitting the school community together around a coherent strategy for school improvement. These cultural issues, however, represented the fundamental problem that needed to be addressed. Student test scores were a symptom, and the strategies offered by BSI, without the deeper, ongoing leadership coaching and support, were non-responsive to the larger problem of school improvement at Murphys High School. The presence of multiple, competing school improvement initiatives, brought by the district office and the numerous leaders rotating through the principal and assistant principal ranks, also worked against clarity about the fundamental issues at MHS and the need for a coherent strategy for school improvement.

The principal in Case B entered into service at Riverdale Elementary knowing that the school was among the highest performing in the district, but with the belief that their

performance was static because the teachers, though passionate and committed, did not believe all students could improve their performance. Having worked with CSC previously, she knew that whatever the specific issues might be at Riverdale, they would help her define the problem and work to build teacher collaborative skills and behaviors as a way of reaching a solution. The theory of change driving the provider in Case B was that if the teachers and leaders in a school engaged in systematic analysis of their students and teaching strategies, and organized teachers' collaborative planning time around a results-oriented-cycle-of-inquiry, teaching practice would improve and as a result, student performance would improve.

Unlike the BSI model, which focused exclusively on discrete practices teachers could use to stimulate student performance on tests, the CSC model focused on developing an understanding of the school and its context and working with staff to identify an area of work that they thought they could tackle. In the case of Riverdale Elementary School, the problem they decided to work on was improving teacher collaboration using CSC inquiry protocols. This is also a case of the problem, as defined, being a fit for the particular tools brought by the provider. In this case, however, the provider had a basic set of tools that, in theory, would get teachers working together more effectively, establishing a base from which other particular problems – like reading scores, or math performance – could be more effectively taken up.

In summary, lack of congruence about the problem of school improvement between the principal and provider fed teacher skepticism in one case, and congruence between the principal and provider, coupled with clear, focused implementation expectations, overcame teacher resistance in the other. The partners in Case A only had agreement on the problem of low test scores, and their work with the simple BSI strategies was more or less successful depending on whether they thought the approach was responsive to the deeper issues that were driving student performance. The provider was frustrated by the lack of widespread use of the strategies by teachers. The principal was frustrated by the lack of leadership coaching and overall engagement offered by the provider. The teachers were frustrated by the lack of attention to student culture and issues that they thought preceded test performance, and were non responsive to the simple strategies. Teachers were also frustrated by the lack of clarity or systematic attention to rolling out the work. The longer they worked together, with these fundamentally different understandings of the problem, the more frustrated and disaffected each became with the others. Lack of congruence around the problem led to dissatisfaction with the match.

In Case B, on the other hand, the principal and provider were on the same page from the beginning, and through systematic application of an inquiry process, they brought the initially skeptical teachers to agreement that the problems of poor collaboration and low expectations of students were pervasive and needed to be taken on in order to lift student performance. The longer these partners worked together, the closer their individual understanding of the problem came to congruence, deepening their satisfaction with the match.

The challenge of leading change

The principals in both of the partnerships I studied were facing leadership challenges and wanted the external provider to play an intermediary role, occupying the space between themselves and the teachers, mediating or managing change in both directions (Honig, 2004).

Hannah, the Principal at Murphys High School, knew she had more going on in 2011 than the teachers could manage well. She was in her second year as the school principal and felt she needed help developing a leadership strategy that could bring the teachers at her school

together, manage district office and parent expectations, and improve student performance. She had a leadership team that she respected and who respected her, but she was hungry for a thought partner and coach who could strategize with her and help her make sense of and define a coherent instructional framework for her school. The teachers were frustrated with the array of initiatives competing for their time, with their students, with the district office, and with the seemingly constant churn of leadership. Hannah had high hopes that BSI could help her craft a leadership strategy and translate the BSI model into an organizer that would help teachers make sense of the other initiatives underway in their school. BSI had a different, less involved manner of working with schools and Charles had neither the time nor the inclination to partner with Hannah in this way. His business model in essence was to provide one day of training to teachers and leaders in the use of the BSI strategies, provide them with support materials, and check in periodically to make sure the project was on track. He supplemented his initial training with site visits, but was not advertising or providing a deeper leadership coaching model. In the early months of their partnership, each expected the other to be setting the tone with teachers: Hannah expected Charles to convince the teachers of the value of working together on this project and to work with her on leadership development. Charles expected Hannah to direct teachers to engage with the BSI strategies and to reduce involvement of the district office at the school site. The teachers expected someone to present a systematic plan for their work with BSI. All parties were disappointed with regard to these expectations, and there was no clear leader knitting the disparate views together into a consensus charge to move forward together.

Like Hannah, Alma wanted CSC to serve in an intermediary role at Riverdale Elementary. As an experienced administrator in her first year with this group of teachers, Alma was cognizant of her role as their supervisor and evaluator, and also cognizant of the manner in which CSC would facilitate teacher development. She was concerned that she could not play both of those roles well, simultaneously. She wanted CSC to engage with teachers, and to gently overcome their resistance to change by giving them a supportive environment in which to learn the new collaborative inquiry approach. She also wanted CSC to coach and support her leadership efforts as she transitioned into Riverdale, and to serve as her thought partner as she worked with teachers to develop a school improvement strategy. Alma was able to get part of what she needed from CSC, insofar as the District put enough money into the partnership to support regular consultation between Alma and Luciana, her CSC consultant. Lack of funding required that Alma serve as the primary driver of the work, and so she systematically trained her leadership team in the ROCI approach, laid clear expectations with them about the use of this inquiry strategy for grade level collaboration, engaged in regular classroom visits, and did whatever else was necessary to get the work going in her school. She regretted that the teachers and the leadership team did not have contact with CSC, but was grateful that she did have that access. She speculated that her teachers did not make as much progress as they might have if she had been able to place CSC in the intermediary role she was seeking, but in the absence of CSC leading the effort, she stepped in and led it.

While the sites I studied varied significantly in terms of the leadership that managed the change initiative, some of this difference may be attributable to school type. MHS was a comprehensive high school with 80 teachers and 1,600 students, organized by departments, primarily, and with the implementation of the small learning communities grant, they were also organized in the 9th grade as a grade level team. Hannah had three assistant principals who were assigned to grade levels and who split responsibilities for classroom visits and teacher evaluations. Riverdale Elementary School, on the other hand, was a K-5 elementary school with

27 teachers and just under 500 students. Alma evaluated all of the teachers and conducted classroom visits herself.

Despite these differences in complexity, it is interesting and perhaps an important finding that both principals were looking for an external provider to serve as an intermediary. For Alma, at Riverdale, having the intermediary would have enabled her to enter her role as the new principal with more clarity. Having to be the driver of this professional development for her teachers expanded her role to include facilitation of teacher learning, perhaps creating tensions when she needed to change roles and become the evaluator and supervisor of the teachers she was training. Negotiating these roles simultaneously was admittedly a challenge that she felt slowed the progress of the change effort. Lack of resources led the district to fund a lower level of engagement for CSC at Riverdale.

Resources were less of an issue at MHS than agreement about needs and roles between the principal and the provider. Hannah's need for an intermediary paralleled Alma's to some extent, but it also related to the specific challenges she was facing at her school. The need for an organizing framework to pull the disparate reform initiatives together was strong for Hannah. She and her assistant principal, Annie, understood the need and heard something in the presentations from BSI that led them to believe that Charles had the voice, or charisma, or experience they needed to turn teacher frustration and overwhelm into some greater understanding about how everything they were doing fit together. Unfortunately, the principal and provider were not on the same page about this goal, which may have been more of a hope than a reasonable expectation.

In summary, it was clear in both of these cases of partnership that the intermediary role of an external provider was of value and use to principals. That was the leadership role that both principals needed their external providers to play. In the absence of funding to support this level of involvement in Partnership B, provider involvement was scaled back and principal involvement in leading the initiative was scaled up. As a result, there was no leadership void in this partnership. It was more challenging for the principal to play the various roles she had to play, which may have slowed progress, but the school made progress in implementing this initiative as a result of these problem-solving decisions. In Partnership A, there was sufficient funding to pay for the increased involvement of the provider to serve as an intermediary. The provider did not see his role as encompassing this level of project leadership, however. The principal did not have the wherewithal to scale up her own direct leadership of the project either. The assistant principal attempted to work with the provider to provide leadership for the project, but was unsuccessful. As a result, there was a leadership void in this partnership, and the project was ultimately unsuccessful in launching during the 2011-12 year.

The role of context

In this study, I examined six aspects of context and internal dynamics within the school to determine what factors seemed to either enable or impede effective match formation. Figure 7.3 provides a summary of findings from each partnership in these areas. Looking across both cases in this study, three aspects of context seemed to be the most relevant to match formation: the locus of control over decisions about school improvement; whether the initiative required implementation with strict fidelity or relied on mutual adaptation; and the extent to which the initiative was part of a coherent strategy for school improvement. In this section, I examine the similarities and differences between the cases on these dimensions.

Locus of control. The relationship with the district office was a key factor shaping the expectations, attitudes and mindsets of participants in both cases. In Case A, the principal was relatively new in a position that had seen a lot of turn over. This was her first job as a secondary school principal. The school had an experienced faculty and a low performing student body, which meant turning performance around might require her to challenge some of the deeply held beliefs and practices that formed the teaching culture in the school. As an experienced educator and coach, but a novice secondary principal, Hannah felt she needed to prove herself with the teachers and the district leadership. The district leadership was managing around her to some extent, requiring her faculty to participate in the development of pacing guides and formative assessments, and introducing other improvement initiatives that she did not select, which presented a different set of leadership challenges. She thought she had selection authority regarding the provider that would be funded through the small learning communities grant, and was initially eager to bring BSI in for this work. When it became clear that this was not going to be a productive relationship, she was told by the district office that she could not pull out of the contract, that in fact the district leadership was planning to expand their work with BSI district-wide. The teachers were overwhelmed by the number and variety of initiatives they were required to enact, which fed resentment and feelings that the district did not have a good understanding of what was needed and already underway at the school. The principal had her hands full trying to manage all aspects of this challenging situation, with a partner (BSI) that pressed her from the other side, expecting that she would push back on the district's initiatives and clear the path for this work.

The principal in Case B, though new to the particular school, came in with experience as an elementary school principal, and negotiated her acceptance of the position so that she was able to bring CSC with her. Like Case A, the district office retained control over decisions to hire external providers, but this district embarked on a new strategy in the year I collected data. The strategy involved establishing a district-wide framework for school improvement and working with principals and providers to make sure their work at the school sites was consistent with this framework and supported by district office staff as necessary. Alma retained control over decisions about how the work played out at her school, but the support she received from the district included both encouragement and accountability with regard to making sure the work with CSC stayed on track and fit with a larger set of district goals. Alma faced some of the same challenges that Hannah faced in Case A with regard to working with a veteran staff in ways that might challenge some of their deep-seated beliefs about students and effective teaching practice. What Alma did not have to contend with, however, was the district second-guessing her and running parallel improvement strategies that distracted, exhausted and frustrated her teachers.

Principals are the ultimate middle managers. As such, they are answerable to their "higher ups" at the district office for their productivity, or lack thereof. They are also answerable to the faculty and staff who work under their leadership, and held accountable for managing the instructional environment in a manner that supports productive work. Hannah, the principal in Case A, did not have the kind of strong, clear support for her work that Alma enjoyed. She was the instructional leader in an arguably more complex secondary school environment, and her efforts to lead in that context were impeded by a competitive leadership strategy emanating from the district office, and a lack of authority to manage the change initiatives underway at her site.

Table 7.3. How contextual factors enable or impede effective match formation

	Case A	Case B
Scope	Scope needed to be school wide to have the desired impact on teacher practice, student outcomes, school culture; was not rolled out in a manner that would lead to widespread change in teaching practice or culture of teaching as informed by student outcome data	Scope needed to be school wide to have the desired impact on teacher collaboration and school culture; leadership maintained focus and press; utilized training of trainers model, reinforced through classroom visits, to initiate and sustain
Locus of control	Lack of clarity; principal believed she had decision authority; provider wanted her to exercise decision authority; district office made impactful decisions around principal; teachers frustrated by mixed messages and overwhelm	Clarity about who had what decision authority; DO decided whether RES could work with CSC; Principal had authority over how the work played out at the site. Alignment with DO may have shaped teacher buy in
Fidelity v. mutual adaptation	Competing theories of implementation between the principal, the provider and the teachers undermined development of congruence	Balance between prescriptive procedures for contracting, needs assessment and organizing collaborative dialogue; adaptive expectations regarding teaching practice
Trust	High expectations and cognitive trust early on were not discussed during entry and eroded over time between the principal and provider. Teachers initially open and willing lost faith. Principal wanted relationship early on, provider disinterested	High expectations, cognitive and affect based trust between principal and provider early on, congruent understanding, led to teacher buy in, feelings of mutual benefit, and increased trust for provider and principal.
Coherence	Lack of coherence at an organizational level undermined teacher willingness to buy in to the work; too many initiatives, not enough clarity about role and fit of each; on a personal level, teachers did not support teaching to the test as a strategy.	High level of coherence sought by the DO required principal to make the case for all initiatives underway at the school site; CSC protocols identified scope of all efforts and facilitated discussion about alignment; teachers initially reserved found CSC process to be of value
Readiness for change	Principal and teachers met most criteria for individual change readiness on a cognitive level, less so on an affective level. At the department level, there was a lack of readiness to engage in this change effort, and at the organizational level, too much was going on without adequate leadership to make sense of it all, set and lead from clear expectations.	Teachers initially did not meet criteria for change readiness. As the year unfolded and they learned more about what was expected of them, teachers came to understand that the proposed change was needed, appropriate, they were capable of implementing, and that it would be beneficial. The LT was ready for change; their charge in the first year was to take the program to the grade level teams and build it out.

The impediments to effective implementation faced by Alma, on the other hand, were centered on resources: the district office controlled the funding that determined the scope of CSC's involvement in her school, and she did not have the level of financial support she sought. The district did allow her to maintain her connection with CSC, however, and supported her in a more limited way as she pushed the work forward.

The most significant difference between these two settings that relates to locus of control was the extent to which the district relied on Alma's insights to determine what was needed at her site. The district in which Hannah worked did not seem to have the same level of regard for her perspective regarding what was needed. In Case A, the principal had a great deal of responsibility, with very little authority, representing, perhaps, a fairly serious dysfunction in her relationship with the district office. In Case B, the principal shared responsibility with the district regarding the use of external providers, and had greater authority over what actually happened under her leadership at the site level.

Fidelity vs. mutual adaptation. One of the most enduring findings in the research on school change was the finding of Berman and McLaughlin (1978) that change efforts involving mutual adaptation on the part of school personnel and external consultants tend to have a sustained and positive impact. This study does not challenge that finding. The provider in Case A was selling a school improvement product which they characterized as a weak set of strategies that when applied universally, with fidelity, would theoretically improve student performance. The BSI strategy relied on teachers folding these strategies into their every day practice and maintaining implementation for a sustained period of time. The principal in Case A found this pitch to be compelling, but wanted BSI to come to understand her teachers, her students, and the culture in her school, to adapt the model to fit their needs and context, and to coach her in leading a more substantial effort to change the culture of teaching and learning at the site. The teachers had an innate resistance to engaging with strategies that so overtly drove them to teach to the test, and the principal wanted both the ease of implementation BSI was selling and their engaged presence at the school to help teachers understand that there was more to it than teaching to the test. I would argue that the principal was seeking an elusive and perhaps impossible solution to the problem of school improvement at MHS, which was complicated by the competing initiatives simultaneously underway. Beyond implementing simple "proven" strategies to stimulate growth in student performance, Hannah needed help developing a coherent plan for school improvement and adapting this work so that it fit into that plan. In essence, these partners had competing theories of change, which was a significant impediment to the development of a good match.

In Case B, the partners employed a mixture of highly prescriptive procedures for developing a contract and highly adaptive expectations regarding execution of that contract. The provider in this case held firm on the application of a very structured process of client enrollment, but in the process engaged all partners in expressing their views and priorities in such a way that they contributed to the analysis of school needs and the decision about where to focus on improvement. The reason Berman and McLaughlin (1978) found mutual adaptation of a change strategy to work was that the process of adaptation involved participants in shaping it to fit their context and needs, and secured their ownership. The principals in both cases in this study needed and wanted that type of engagement with a partner in school change. Both knew that their teachers would not commit to doing the work unless they owned it in some way. In Case A, Hannah was managing a situation with so much change underway that the thing she

needed most in a partner was a strategy that helped teachers and leaders make sense of it all. That would have required a different kind of service than BSI was selling. Under different school circumstances, the BSI strategy is reported to support improvements in student performance. At MHS, the context demanded a different kind of partnership, and school personnel could not adapt their context to fit the BSI strategy. In Case B, Alma knew from experience that the work with CSC would engage and empower her teachers, and believed that this effort would bring them together in ways that would improve teaching and learning. In short, the blend of prescriptive and adaptive practice that characterized CSC's work with schools served to enable the development of a good match in this case.

Coherence. The principals in both cases were seeking partners who could support them in establishing a coherent plan for improving student outcomes, teaching practice, and the overall culture in their schools. Both providers would say they approached their work with a similar goal in this regard. The similarities between cases in terms of coherence end here. Newman, Smith, Allensworth and Bryk (2001) identify three dimensions of coherence. The first has to do with the use of a common framework for instruction that guides curriculum, instruction, assessment and learning climate. Specific expectations for student learning are combined with focused strategies and materials, used by teachers to guide instruction and assessment of learning outcomes, and these activities are coordinated across grade levels. The principal in Case A did not have a common instructional framework in play, but wanted to develop one, and she wanted Better Schools Incorporated to help her do so. The principal in Case B was working in a district that was committed to having a common instructional framework and working with all principals to develop and use one. Her work with Collaborators for School Change was about building practice around a common instructional framework.

The second aspect of coherence that Newman, et al. (2001) call out focuses on working conditions, and the third focuses on resources. One essential theme in this framework is the coordination of efforts. Newman and his colleagues suggest that the use of a common instructional framework guards against diffuse, scattered improvement efforts through coordination and leadership. This study highlights the importance of this point, insofar as one of the central problems in Case A was a lack of coordination and the presence of multiple, competing reforms. Lack of coherence at an organizational level undermined teacher willingness to buy in to the work. There were too many initiatives underway and not enough clarity about the role and fit of each, and on a personal level, teachers did not support teaching to the test as a strategy. Case B presents an example of how drawing from a common framework and organizing working conditions and resources in support of that framework provides for the possibility of an effective match. The high level of coherence sought by the district office required the principal to make the case for all initiatives underway at the school site. The CSC protocols identified the scope of all efforts underway, and facilitated discussion about alignment of these efforts. The teachers were initially reserved in their willingness to get on board with this effort, but over time found the CSC process to be of value.

Summary

The strength or weakness of congruence between the principal and the provider around the work that needed to be done, the manner in which they would proceed, and their respective roles in carrying it out, was perhaps the most important variable in the success of one match and the failure of the other in this study. The teachers and the district office were also key players in

each partnership, but perhaps less central to the effort it took to ignite and propel a strong match in the given circumstances. The teachers in both cases started out skeptical regarding the partnership. In Case A, where congruence between the principal and provider was never achieved, early skepticism was not overcome, and trust eroded as the project failed to launch. In Case B, where early congruence existed between the principal and provider, early teacher skepticism was replaced by engaged participation over time as the project took hold. The efforts of the principal and provider, working together in one case and at cross-purposes in the other, were the primary drivers of progress, or the lack thereof. The district office played a supportive role in Case B, establishing clear expectations with the principal regarding the work that would be done and focusing on a coherent school improvement plan. In Case A, the district office played a disruptive role, allowing the principal to bring in interventions that she thought would lead to improvement but also second-guessing her by launching competing interventions that did not cohere around a clear theory of school improvement.

Chapter 8. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand how a school's need for external support can be effectively matched with an external provider's expertise and approach during the early formation of the relationship. While research on the role of intermediary organizations is growing in some areas, lack of attention to the match between partners during the formation of working relationships warranted this inquiry. I conducted a comparative case study focused on two partnerships that were at the very beginning of their negotiation and contracting process, and drew from both the education and the management research literature to frame the investigation. The education literature provided context for schools and the school change movement, and the management literature enabled me to identify specific cycles, practices and dynamics involved in contracting and relationship formation.

Each partnership that I studied was intended by its respective school administrators to focus on improving student performance on standardized tests. One external provider brought a ready-made product focused on improving student test-taking skills, and the other brought a collaborative process for defining an area of need, articulating goals and developing a plan of action with teachers and school leaders. One school was in its third consecutive year of not meeting expected annual goals for student performance, and the other was consistently meeting performance targets set by the state, but failing to address the needs of all students. Both schools served a high percentage of students in poverty, and English learners.

Three questions guided this study:

1. To what extent do early stage processes foster the development of a congruent understanding between partners about the nature of the work to be undertaken?
2. What is the evidence that the level of congruence reached at the early stage of relationship formation is associated with later-stage progress and perceived satisfaction with the match?
3. What aspects of context appear to enable or impede effective match formation?

Overview of findings

The most critical relationship existed between the principal and the external provider in each case I studied. Early congruence between these two key players overcame lack of teacher buy-in over time in one case, and lack of early congruence between these two undermined the match in the other. With regard to my first research question, I found that what the principals and providers talked about, what they didn't talk about, what they wrote down, and who they involved in discussions of the work – what I refer to as their basic communication strategy - during their earliest negotiations either enabled or impeded the development of a congruent understanding about the nature of the work to be undertaken.

Case B was characterized by a high level of congruence between the provider and the principal from the very start of the partnership. Systematic, ongoing communication fostered the development of congruence with the teachers. Midway through the year, all study participants reported satisfaction with the work and with the quality of the match. In case A, episodic communication undermined the development of congruence between all participants. The provider and the principal formed their expectations about the project based on a projection of

what they needed and wanted from each other, interpretations of what they were hearing, and prior experiences. There was no significant effort to confirm their interpretations and projections and adjust their work to better meet each other's needs. Midway through the year, all participants reported dis-satisfaction with the work and with the quality of the match. If the partners in Case A had used the kind of communication protocols and structures used by Case B to define expectations, the partnership might have still failed, for any number of reasons, but the partners might have had a better set of articulated expectations to hold one another to. Alternatively, by framing their expectations clearly early on, they may have decided that they were not a good fit, or they might have engaged in some level of mutual adaptation in order to create the fit they were looking for.

With regard to my second research question, I found that the level of early congruence reached about (1) the problem they were going to work on, and (2) how they would assign and enact their different leadership roles, was associated with later-stage progress and perceived satisfaction with the match. Lack of congruence about the problem of school improvement between the principal and provider fed teacher skepticism in one case, and congruence between the principal and provider, coupled with clear, focused implementation expectations, overcame teacher resistance in the other. The partners in Case A only had agreement on the problem of low test scores, and their work with the simple BSI strategies was more or less successful depending on whether they thought the approach was responsive to the deeper issues that were driving student performance. The provider was frustrated by the lack of widespread use of the strategies by teachers. The principal was frustrated by the lack of leadership coaching and overall engagement offered by the provider. The teachers were frustrated by the lack of attention to student culture and issues that they thought preceded test performance, and were non responsive to the simple strategies. Teachers were also frustrated by the lack of clarity or systematic attention to rolling out the work. The longer they worked together, with these fundamentally different understandings of the problem, the more frustrated and disaffected each became with the others. Lack of congruence around the problem led to dissatisfaction with the match.

In Case B, on the other hand, the principal and provider were on the same page from the beginning, and through systematic application of an inquiry process, they brought the initially skeptical teachers to agreement that the problems of poor collaboration and low expectations of students were pervasive and needed to be taken on in order to lift student performance. The longer these partners worked together, the closer their individual understanding of the problem came to congruence, deepening their satisfaction with the match.

It was clear in both of these cases of partnership that the intermediary role of an external provider was of value and use to principals. That was the leadership role that both principals needed their external providers to play. In the absence of funding to support this level of involvement in Partnership B, provider involvement was scaled back and principal involvement in leading the initiative was scaled up. As a result, there was no leadership void in this partnership. It was more challenging for the principal to play the various roles she had to play, which may have slowed progress, but the school made progress in implementing this initiative as a result of these problem-solving decisions. In Partnership A, there was sufficient funding to pay for the increased involvement of the provider to serve as an intermediary. The provider did not see his role as encompassing this level of project leadership, however. The principal did not have the wherewithal to scale up her own direct leadership of the project either. The assistant principal attempted to work with the provider to provide leadership for the project, but was

unsuccessful. As a result, there was a leadership void in this partnership, and the project was ultimately unsuccessful in launching during the 2011-12 year.

Finally, I found that the locus of control over school improvement decisions, efforts to place the initiative in the context of a coherent school improvement plan, and willingness to adapt the initiative to the prevailing school conditions were the aspects of context most relevant to match formation.

Limitations

This study was descriptive and exploratory in nature since so little is known about the initial formation of relationships between schools and external providers. I carefully mapped and documented this process with two partnerships to identify and categorize the factors that shaped the quality of the match between partners. I did not seek to establish causality or to be predictive, which would have required other research methodologies.

One limitation of this study was a lack of time to collect data over the life of the partnerships I was studying. By design, I observed and documented the early negotiation between providers and schools and the factors that shaped the development of their relationship. With a six-month data collection window, I was only able to identify issues, factors and events that seemed to matter for the overall outcome. The study did not enable me to follow the relationship as it developed or to evaluate its overall success. The study enabled me to document how the relationship developed during the first cycle of negotiation, commitment and execution (Ring and Van de Ven, 1994), and how factors that have been found to matter in partnerships played out in these particular relationships.

Another limitation relates to the significant differences between the two schools that participated in this study. Elementary schools typically have a very different culture that drives and animates teacher relationships and collaboration compared with high schools. The departmentalized nature of high schools, where faculty are divided by their content areas and often do not discuss students across content areas calls for a very different kind of leadership strategy than that required in elementary schools. My study surfaced some of these differences, but the small number of cases and the differences in context make any sort of generalization challenging.

Implications for Practice

There is every reason to believe that the accountability systems driving reform activities in schools will continue to create the conditions under which school and district office leaders seek external support from a large and varied provider community. In addition to believing they need external expertise to develop teaching practice in new and innovative ways, the intermediary role that an external provider can play between a school principal and teachers was identified by both principals in this study as helpful to them in securing teacher commitment to the work and in providing them with room to maneuver as a leader of change, and supervisor of personnel. While both principals in this study wanted this level and type of support, neither received it: one because the provider was unwilling to serve in this way, and the other because the district was unwilling to fund that level of service to the school. In both cases, the district office seemed to lack a sufficient appreciation for this aspect of the work, perhaps because the urgency to improve student performance on standardized tests tends to focus attention on what

needs to be done, but not how it can best be accomplished.

This study was not sufficiently robust to identify best practices or provide a comprehensive set of recommendations to schools and school districts as they consider partnering on this kind of work, but it does highlight some areas where greater attention on the part of school leaders could make a difference in the quality of the match that develops over time, which is tied to the effectiveness and sustainability of a change endeavor. Overall, my study suggests that school leaders must lead this work in schools, and should pay attention to five things.

First, school and district leaders must develop and enforce a culture of coherence in their improvement and leadership strategies. Chaotic, multi-faceted, disconnected efforts to improve schools are just ineffective. Schools and districts that establish a clear instructional framework that drives decision-making, from recruitment and hiring to evaluation and professional development, have a much stronger likelihood of making performance gains (Newmann, et al., 2001). The district office should be focused on supporting school leaders as they develop, with their instructional teams, a coherent instructional plan for their schools, and should hold principals accountable for implementing, improving and refining these plans over time. External providers should be selected for partnership work based on the extent to which they fit within the adopted plan, and principals should spend time at the earliest points in negotiation discussing their respective roles in this regard.

Second, school leaders must become more adept at analyzing a school community's readiness for change, with attention to the individuals, the groups within the organization and the organization itself. A lack of readiness to engage in a change effort does not mean that a leader should not move forward with a change initiative: rather, understanding readiness assists the leader in adapting the work to the needs of the site. In my study of Case B, there was a lack of change readiness on the part of the individual teachers at the beginning of the work, characterized by a lack of recognition that there was a problem that needed to be attended to in their school. The principal and the provider focused their initial work on engaging the teachers in an inquiry process that brought the problem of low expectations for students and lack of ability to collaborate effectively as a community of educators into clear focus. Through their early work together, they moved the teachers to a state of readiness to begin the work.

Third, leaders must work to establish clarity at the earliest possible moment in negotiations about what the partnership will focus on, and how each partner will define and enact their roles. The process of negotiation between the school leader and the provider should include joint identification and analysis of the school and district context, the needs that are presenting, and the cultural issues that may be driving the problem they are coming together to work on. Site administrators and district office administrators should resist the temptation to oversimplify the problem, and understand that there is always a deeper, cultural set of norms and behaviors operating in the school and district that enable a particular problem with school effectiveness to flourish. Acknowledging this complexity is necessary to the development of a strategy that will lead, effectively, to change.

Fourth, one of the most enduring findings in the research on school change is the finding of Berman and McLaughlin (1978) that change efforts involving mutual adaptation on the part of school personnel and external consultants are more likely to have a sustained and positive impact than efforts that rely on a complete fidelity model of implementation. Most if not all principals expect that an external provider will tailor their services and offerings to the specific needs of a site. Quite often, this does not occur. In this study, one principal presumed, based on prior

successful experiences with an external provider, that the external provider would work collaboratively to develop and adapt the strategy to best fit the needs of the school. The provider expected the principal to lead her teachers in a manner that adapted to the strategy he was offering. They only discovered this disconnect after they were well into execution of the contract, which had a deleterious effect on the match. Expectations about implementation must be the subject of early conversations, and are best included in the contract for service. The provider in the other partnership in my study brought an extensive, analytic approach to identifying, recording and securing explicit commitments to the work they would do together, which was fundamentally grafted into the context of the school in which they were working. Rigid attention to the process of developing agreement, followed by an adaptive approach to executing the plan was the outcome. The satisfaction of all partners in this case was tied to the extent to which the work they did together met their explicit, joint expectations and was relevant and adapted to the particularities of their situation. This was true in both cases studied: the participants in Case A grew increasingly disaffected over the early months of the project, while the participants in Case B grew increasingly committed.

Finally, the locus of control over the selection of external partners and productive management of the relationship cannot lie with only one of the partners. The principal, the provider, and the central office need to hold a mutual understanding of the rhythms of school change and the role of external partners, as well as the deeper cultural issues that shape instructional practice within a school. With this common understanding, they need to hold themselves and each other accountable to work empathetically and in support of one another as the change initiative unfolds. Case B, the partnership between Riverdale Elementary School and Collaborators for School Change, was characterized by this level of engagement from the district, the principal and the provider. Case A, the partnership between Murphys High School and Better Schools, Incorporated, sheds light on what happens when mutual responsibility and accountability and empathy are absent. The district office and the school principal were driving competing reform efforts intended to improve the performance of the school, and the provider was focused only on the time and space he needed to deliver his work. There was no overarching, collectively held understanding of what was needed or what would be helpful, in a strategic way, to improving the overall culture of low expectations and low performance at the school.

Implications for Research

The issue of match is not well studied in the school change literature. It gets some attention as a subset of larger research themes in the management literature focused on contracting, but is not a central focus of study in this domain either. Absent a robust research literature in this area, I did not have strong conceptual anchors to draw from in approaching this study. As a result, I constructed a conceptual framework that drew from my own experiences as an external provider of services to schools as well as a cross-section of research that I thought would help me identify the phenomenon of match, and begin to understand the conditions under which it thrived.

Ring and Van de Ven (1994) provided a strong conceptual framework that helped me to identify the essential processes in which partners engaged as they went through the cycle of negotiation, commitment, and execution of a contract. I drew from my own experience as the director of a university-based teacher development center to define the issues around scope of a

project and locus of control that I thought would have an impact on the development of match. I drew from Berman and McLaughlin (1978), Rowan (1990), and Snyder, Bolikin, & Zumwalt (1992) to help me understand how expectations for fidelity or mutual adaptation in the implementation of a school change initiative would shape the development of a match, and from Newman, Smith, Allensworth & Bryk (2001) to define the elements of instructional program coherence that I thought would have an impact. Finally, I drew from the management literature (Jeffries and Reed, 2000; McAllister, 1995; Amrenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993 and Rafferty, Jimmieson, & Armenakis, 2013) to better understand the role of trust and change readiness in the development of cooperative interorganizational relationships.

In conducting this study, drawing from multiple research strands, I found that partnerships in education are often formed without adequate attention to school context. The change readiness literature provided insight into the conditions of individual, group and organizational readiness that need to be understood in order to adapt a change initiative to meet the particular needs of a group, and I drew from that research to help me identify and analyze the factors impacting the development of a match.

I recommend three types of studies that could further our understanding of match formation. First, a study that followed the full life cycle of a contract in multiple sites would shed light on the recursive nature of the negotiation-commitment-execution-repeat cycle of relationship formation theorized by Ring and Van de Ven (1994). These authors describe a definite life cycle for cooperative inter-organizational relationships, driven by a dynamic of refinement and improvement over time, leading ultimately to a conclusion that reflects either the successful completion of a project, or the determination to end a project that is not productive. The cases included in my study appeared to be moving down each of these pathways, and a longer period of study with a greater number of partnerships would help us understand how school change projects involving external providers of service can be shaped to high levels of effectiveness over time.

A second area for future research could draw further from the management sciences to focus on the absorptive capacity of schools engaged in change work. Cohen and Levinthal (1990) argue that the ability of a firm (school) to recognize the value of new, external information, assimilate it and apply it to productive ends is critical to its innovative capabilities. They call this a firm's absorptive capacity and suggest that it is largely a function of the firm's level of prior related knowledge. Zahra and George (2005) build from Cohen and Levinthal (1990) and focus on a firm's *potential* absorptive capacity, which they define as its ability to acquire and assimilate knowledge, and its *realized* absorptive capacity, which they define as its ability to transform and exploit new knowledge. Zahra and George (2005) propose a model for examining an organization's absorptive capacity that could provide a much deeper understanding of the dynamics of a school's culture and enable school administrators to be far more strategic in their management of change. Marrying theories of absorptive capacity with the research on coherence and mutual adaptation of change initiatives could shed important light on how we think about schools as organizations and support their development toward higher levels of effectiveness.

Finally, I think more research on the role of the central office in supporting school change is warranted. Although my study only looked at two sites, the district office structures and procedures in support of school change were vastly different, in ways that were consequential to the goal of school improvement. In my own experience working as an external provider supporting school change, I found that the district office was often too far removed from and

driven by very different imperatives than the school site. Identifying norms of effective management between the central office and the school site in support of continuous improvement could help inform leaders across both settings in ways that would improve their functionality as a team, focused on the same goal.

Conclusion

In this study I investigated a significant problem facing policy makers, educational leaders, and external providers of service that support or facilitate school-based change designed to improve teaching and learning: How to match school needs and expectations with providers' programmatic designs, offerings and capacities in ways that maximize the potential for sustained improvement. There is a growing body of consultants that provide service to schools, and a considerable amount of money set aside by state and national policy makers to facilitate school improvement. Despite the availability of both funding and external expertise, more and more schools and school districts across the country are failing to meet performance expectations and are experiencing an array of sanctions. It is not that schools are not utilizing available funding to hire external consultants to support reform efforts: many school districts have multiple projects underway simultaneously, funded by a variety of sources, that are designed to improve practice and outcomes at some level of the system. Rather, the problem is that much of the reform work that is supported by external providers does not lead to systemic or sustained change (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978; Datnow, 1999; Bodilly 2001). They are working together, but in too many cases it's just not having the long-term, intended impact.

The process through which relationships are formed between providers and schools is under-researched in education. Empirical and theoretical research in the management sciences has shed light on how relationships are formed between organizations seeking to do mutually beneficial work together in the business and industry sector (Aldrich, 1979; Warren, 1967; Ring and Van de Ven, 1994). Application of that research in the education sector is sparse. Though researchers in education agree with researchers in management that the success of a joint venture relies heavily on how the relationship is formed at the earliest stages (Berman and McLaughlin, 1978; Finnigan and O'Day, 2003; Berends, Bodilly and Kirby, 2006; Ring and Van de Ven, 1994; Jap and Anderson, 2007) very few researchers in education are studying this phenomenon or drawing on the management sciences to inform our understanding of the formation of relationships between external change agents and schools.

My contribution to the research on intermediary organizations was to isolate the phenomenon of match, and to use conceptual models from the management sciences to bound and document the development of a match between partners in an educational enterprise. My study suggests that match, as a construct, is dynamic, and impacted by a variety of contextual givens and relational dynamics. The most important factor in match development that emerged from my comparative case study was the engagement of the principal and the lead provider in coming to very clear agreement about the work they would be doing together, their roles in carrying it out, and their collaboration around adapting the work to fit the needs of the school. On the surface, this finding may seem trivial and obvious: any contract for services should be expected to meet this requirement, on some level. What my study highlighted, however, was that the surface level agreements reached in one partnership failed, utterly, to capture the complexity of the work that needed to be done and the context in which it would unfold. This lack of attention to the specific issues of problem identification, theory of action, roles and

expectations, and desired outcomes doomed the project to failure from the start. The partners in my second case had a significantly different experience and outcome. The contract for service attended to much more than days of service and payment schedules. Utilization of a structured contract development process that involved participants in needs identification, development of a theory of action, description of roles, and identification of desired outcomes, yielded a much more comprehensive contract for services, and played a significant role in the perceived effectiveness of the partnership.

This study traced the process of reaching agreement between partners in a school change initiative and the contextual and internal dynamics that shape the formation of a productive relationship. A deeper understanding of the concept of match and the factors that enable or constrain its development may assist school leaders as they continue to grapple with the need for external support services to improve schools.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Major Research Questions:

1. To what extent do clearly stage processes foster the development of a congruent understanding between partners about the nature of the work to be undertaken?
2. What is the evidence that the level of congruence reached at the early stage of relationship formation is associated with later-stage progress and perceived satisfaction with the match?
3. What aspects of context appear to enable or impede effective match formation?

Interview 1 with lead negotiators from each partner site focused on their general approach as they entered into work and began relationship formation with a new partner focused on a change initiative. In these interviews, I sought a general understanding of their individual approaches to this kind of work, the conditions that typically lead to a contract for service, and the range of experiences they have each had in this arena.

General	1. Describe your experience in working with external consultants/school based change initiatives. Who have you worked with before? What kinds of projects?
	2a. Describe process, if any, that you go through when considering a provider? What do you look for? 2b. Describe process, if any, that you go through when considering a school to work with on a change initiative. What do you look for?
	3. Can you think of a prior experience that was a particularly good match? How about an example of a bad match: why didn't it work out? What constitutes a good or bad match for you?
	4. To what extent is your current process for hiring a provider/selecting a school to work in informed by these prior experiences? What do you look for now in a partner as a result of prior experience?
	5. Outline a typical contract for me. What aspects of the work does the formal contract typically include?
	6. Think about a relationship that worked out really well. What did you put in writing? What did you assume was going to happen and what actually happened?
	7. What are your red flags when you consider working with schools? Or working with external providers?

Interview 2 with lead negotiators and 1-2 key participants from both the site and the provider focused on a particular project that was focal to the development of their relationship. Key participants from the provider group included staff who work on aspects of the client enrollment process. Key participants at the site level involved, in addition to the site administrator, other administrators and lead teachers who participated in the framing of issues and strategies for engagement. In these interviews, I sought information about the context in which this partnership was being pursued, perceptions regarding provider capacity and school buy in, congruence around goals and outcomes for the project, and levels of trust between the provider and school participants.

Initial codes	Site Questions	Provider Questions
LOCUS OF CONTROL (LC) TYPE OF PROVIDER (TP) MUTUAL ADAPTATION V. FIDELITY (MAF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What led you to pursue a partnership with xxx? • Who else did you consider? Why didn't you pursue them? • Who decides? • Who influences the decision? • Do you feel completely free to make the decision? • What does the district office want? • What else did you consider in making this decision? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you worked with xxx before? • What did you know about them prior to deciding to work with them? • Why did you say yes? • Under what conditions would you say no? • Do you have any reservations? • What factors do you evaluate? • Who did you negotiate with as the work or the contract was being framed?
VISION, GOALS, EXPECTATIONS (VGE) SCOPE (SC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the nature of the work to be done? • What is the scope? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the nature of the work to be done? • What is the scope?
COMMITMENT (CO) MUTUAL ADAPTATION V. FIDELITY (MAF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the current level of buy in from teachers, administrators, and the district office for this project? • Do teachers, other administrators, the district office know about this work? • Who is excited? Reticent? Not involved? How do you know? • Do you expect this level of engagement to change over time? Why or why not? • What level of support is necessary, in your opinion, in order to have a successful outcome? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you gauge the level of buy in from teachers, administrators, and the district office for this project? • Do you expect this level to change over time? Why or why not? • What level of support is necessary, in your opinion/experience to have a successful outcome?

<p>PERCEPTIONS about Fit (PF)</p> <p>View of external provider (VEP)</p> <p>Provider capacity (PC)</p> <p>Theory of Change (TC)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you expect the provider to bring to the table? • What do you know of this provider’s reputation and expertise? • What is the ideal outcome of this work? • How do you get there? • What will it take to bring about the change you want to see? • What do you imagine or envision will occur as you undertake this project? • How complex is this project? Is it comprehensive? • How many parts of the school will be effected? • Who will have to do something different? (everyone? 2 teachers?_ • How do you see the work unfolding? • What expertise does the provider bring that is important to achieve your goals? • How does this expertise meet your needs? • Is there a lack of expertise that needs to be addressed? If so, how will it be addressed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you come to be partners in this work? • What do you think they think you bring to the table? • What is the ideal outcome of this work? • How do you get there? • What will it take to bring about the change you want to see? • What do you imagine or envision will occur as you undertake this project? • How complex is this project? Is it comprehensive? • How many parts of the school will be effected? • Who will have to do something different? (everyone? 2 teachers?_ • How do you see the work unfolding? • What is the particular need as you see it that will be the focus of your work with this site? • How does your expertise respond to this need? • Is there a lack of expertise that needs to be addressed? If so, how will it be addressed?
<p>CX Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What resources (time, money and human) have you identified to support this effort? Are they sufficient? • If yes, what do you think it will take in terms of time, money and human resources to accomplish the goal? • If not, what is your strategy for accomplishing the goals of this work? • What are you expecting from the provider in terms of services, hours, etc.? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What resources (time, money and human) have you identified to support this effort? Are they sufficient? • If yes, what do you think it will take in terms of time, money and human resources to accomplish the goal? • If not, what is your strategy for accomplishing the goals of this work? • What are you expecting from the school in terms of participation, buy in, time commitment, etc.?

EXTERNAL PROVIDER CAPACITY (PC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have prior experience with this provider? • What do you know about their capacity as an external provider to support the kind of work you need them to do? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What motivated you to pursue work with this site? • What do you know about the site? The leadership? The teaching corps? The students? The families?
PC Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What level of resources do you expect from the provider? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How busy are you? • How will you staff this work? • How does this project relate to other work you are doing? • Will there be synergies across your projects? • Do you think you have sufficient capacity to meet the needs of the site? Why or why not?
VISION, GOALS EXPECTATIONS (VGE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe for me how you see the problem or opportunity that you will be working with xxx on? • What are your goals for this project? • What is your role in the work? What is the provider's role? • What will others from the site be doing to achieve the goals of this work? • What is it going to take (in terms of effort, time, etc.) in order to achieve the expected outcomes? From the site and the provider? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe for me how you see the problem or opportunity that you will be working with xxx on? • What are your goals for this project? • What is your role in the work? What role will key players at the site level (administrator, teachers) play? • What will your team be doing to achieve the goals of this work? • What is it going to take (in terms of effort, time, etc.) in order to achieve the expected outcomes? From the site and the provider?
TRUST (TR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you know you can trust the provider to fulfill their commitments? • What do you know about the reputation and track record of the provider? • How does this knowledge inform your approach to entry and contracting? • OPENNESS? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you know you can trust the site to fulfill their commitments? • What do you know about the reputation and track record of the site? • How does this knowledge inform your approach to entry and contracting?

Interview 3: My third round of interviews occurred after a period of a few months has elapsed. I used these interviews to follow up on issues that emerge from my analysis of the data collected through the first rounds of interviews, document review and observation. My purpose in conducting this final round of interviews was to capture a slightly more mature perspective from lead negotiators regarding their developing relationship. This strategy was intended to mitigate the lack of perspective that may have been present during the initial meetings and interviews, when participants may have been less able to articulate the factors informing development of the relationship and the quality of match between the provider and the school.

COMMITMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has there been a shift in the levels of commitment from key stakeholders? Why or why not? • To what extent is this an issue as the work unfolds? • Is it still in transition? • How would you characterize the level of philosophical alignment between school personnel and the provider at this stage of the work? To what extent is this an issue as the work unfolds? • Was the initial framing of work accurate?
VISION, GOALS EXPECTATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the goals, desired/expected outcomes and methods of accomplishing the work shifted? • If so, how have they shifted? • If not, is there a perceived need to adjust expectations?
CAPACITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has your perception of the other (their readiness, capacity, adequacy of committed resources) shifted over time?
TRUST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has your understanding of the other's trustworthiness (willingness or ability to fulfill commitments) shifted over time? • To what extent did the contract you signed capture the nuances of the work? • Have you or do you expect to adjust the contract? • To what extent are you able to adjust the expectations around the work without adjusting the formal contract document?