DESCRIBING A PRINCIPAL’S WORK TOWARD RESILIENCY:

THE NATURE OF MINDFUL LEADING

By

BARBARA J. GILBERT

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

    The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of BARBARA J. GILBERT find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

___________________________________
Gordon Gates, Ph.D., Chair

___________________________________
Michele Acker-Hocevar, Ph.D.

___________________________________
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To Mike, the love of my life.

And to Gordon, thank you for your generosity.
DESCRIBING A PRINCIPAL’S WORK TOWARD RESILIENCY:
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Abstract

by BARBARA J. GILBERT, Ph.D.
Washington State University
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Chair: Gordon S. Gates

Heightened accountability has amplified a need for principals to transform schools into resilient organizations capable of sustaining the organizational learning essential to increasing school reliability and subsequent student learning outcomes. Increased pressure to reform schools has many school leaders implementing professional development practices like data-driven inquiry that they believe may have the potential to remediate individual and systemic failures revealed through accountability efforts and ongoing data collection. A similar process of inquiry is found in high reliability organizations (HROs) that manage change and cultivate resilience through implementing a process for collective mindfulness. Improving organizational reliability and increasing resilience is of paramount importance to educational leadership in general, and in particular to building principals. Understanding how such strategies as data-driven dialogue align with and afford principals a tool for nurturing organizational mindfulness presents a significant problem of practice. To date, however, insufficient work has been done to analyze the effects of such practice, particularly at the middle school level. This study seeks to understand how organizational resilience is conceptualized and implemented in schools using strategies such as data-driven inquiry.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Background for the Study

The guiding policy for educational reform, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, is premised on the idea that increasingly high “levels of scrutiny, interventions, and ultimately, sanctions” (Balfanz, Legters, & Weber, 2005, p. 7) provide the mechanisms and motivation school leaders need to improve teacher practice and concurrently, student learning. Proponents of the policy argue that through instituting various control strategies involved in simplifying, standardizing, and scoring student outcomes (Foster, 2004), educators will be better positioned to meet the needs of minority and low socioeconomic status students, the underserved students most at-risk of dropping out (Wood, 2004; Shoen & Fuserelli, 2008). Opponents, however, note evidence of continuing or deepening failure (Lee, 2006; Rumberger, 2005; Kieffer, Lesaux, & Snow, 2006). Researchers examine various contradictions, lapses, and flaws within or resulting from the policy (Kornhaber, 2006). In particular, accountability places limits on time, constrains the potential for significant reflection and discourse (Elmore, 2004), and encumbers opportunities for advancing individual and collective capacity for reform (Borko et al., 2003), which appear to impede development of practitioners’ comprehensive understanding about problems of practice (Elmore, 2004). Literature is replete with references to the vacillation of school leaders in implementing thoughtful, comprehensive organizational changes that might improve student learning through strengthened teaching or acting quickly and reactively to avoid sanctions. Schoen and Fusarelli (2008) note “many conscientious school leaders are trying to be simultaneously responsive to calls for innovation, critical thinking skills, adaptability, and
creativity (21st century skills), yet still meet the demands and adequate yearly progress (AYP) testing targets of NCLB” (p. 182). In short, accountability mandates being external, separate, and insensitive to contextual features of classrooms and schools are found to exacerbate challenges educational leaders face as well as encourage rather minor modifications to professional practice when assessing, planning, and instituting change (de Wolf & Janssen, 2007; Mintrop & Sunderman, 2009).

Recently, scholars in the field of organizational studies argue that the individual and organizational reliability desired by legislators and reformers, such as that expressed in no child being left to fail or drop out of school, emerges from a different set of principles than those present within NCLB’s top-down, sanctions-driven approach (Borko et al., 2003; Schoenfeld, 2002; Balfanz, Legters, & Weber, 2005; Hawley, 2005). Instead, organizations found to consistently achieve their desired goals—labeled as high reliability organizations (HROs)—operate without major setbacks through an iterative and sustained process of learning enabled by organizational mindfulness and concomitant capacity to enact novel solutions to arising problems (Weick & Roberts, 1993; Weick & Sutcliff, 2001). Weick posits, “The key difference between HROs and other organizations is the sensitivity or mindfulness with which people in most HROs react to even very weak signals that some kind of change or danger is approaching” (Coutu, 2003, p. 86). What is most noteworthy about HROs is the presence of collective mindfulness while what these organizations are applauded for is their subsequent resilience (Levinthal & Rerup, 2006; Weick & Sutcliff, 2001).

Research Problem

Heightened accountability has amplified a need for principals to transform schools into resilient organizations capable of sustaining the organizational learning essential to increasing
school reliability and subsequent student learning outcomes. Improved school reliability in operations requires principals to cultivate “a close synergy between the vision of the organization and individual staff members and a strong, supportive and caring culture that is capable of self-renewing over time” (Giles, 2008, p. 142). Concerns with resilience and corresponding need to improve school reliability also are evident in research on data-driven inquiry (Wellman & Lipton, 2004). A key component of data-driven inquiry, as set forth by advocates, is the use of data by practitioners to improve their teaching practice through a collective process of learning (a form of distributed leadership) in which principals and teachers work together to share, examine, analyze, and refine their skills and knowledge about student learning. The purpose of this collaborative work is to (a) identify when and where student failures occur, (b) question individuals’ preconceptions about student learning and practice, and (c) adapt teaching practice in ways that advance student learning. Data-driven inquiry capitalizes on one benefit of heightened accountability – improved access to disaggregated student performance data—which provides educators increased visibility to gaps in instruction, curriculum alignment, and resources needed to take school reform to scale (Zavadsky, 2009). Data-driven inquiry is built around the belief that “information becomes meaningful and prompts action when decision makers socially construct it—when they grapple with the meaning of the evidence and its implications for action” (Honig & Coburn, 2008, p. 592). And yet as a response to NCLB’s functionalism it potentially may constrain leadership to advance a narrow, rigid, and predetermined set of accountability oriented outcomes.

Wellman and Lipton (2004) suggest that when implemented well, the collaborative nature of data-driven inquiry challenges “the operating assumptions of the current organizing principles
in schools” (p. 1) that understands teaching as a finite and thus, limited form of private practice. This “thought leadership” uses data-driven dialogues as a disciplined form of discourse to teach individuals how to think about systemic change and build their “collective capacity to identify and frame questions, gather and evaluate information, organize and synthesize it, and, finally, present insights to inform and advise” (Davis & Somerville, 2006, p. 128). To date, however, insufficient work has been done to analyze the effects of such practice, particularly at the middle school level.

The middle school context is particularly exigent because it is the point at which students transition to being more independent in preparation for high school and beyond (Smith, Feldwisch, & Abell, 2006). The achievement scores of middle school students often drop significantly as compared to their previous performance, particularly for students in urban settings (Balfanz, Herzog, & MacIver, 2007). As middle school principals struggle to address the problem of lagging student achievement, they are increasingly at the nexus of state and national reforms focused on improving student growth, especially in mathematics and language arts. Increased pressure to reform schools has many school leaders implementing professional development practices like data-driven inquiry that they believe may have the potential to remediate individual and systemic failures revealed through ongoing data collection.

Improving organizational resilience and subsequent reliability is of paramount importance to these school leaders. The means to accomplish these goals, however, is not clear. While leadership has begun to explore emerging collaborative practices such as data-driven dialogues for their potential to reform practice, it is not certain if they are sufficiently robust to call into question conditioned ways of thinking and acting in schools (Borko et al., 2003). Two questions, therefore, can be asked: (a) How is organizational resilience conceptualized and
operationalized by middle school principals? and more specifically, (b) In what ways do middle school principals nurture organizational resilience using strategies such as data-driven inquiry?

Several scholars offer HROs as models of resilience that could provide direction for school principals seeking to address continuing problems in public schools including low student performance, the achievement gap, and a host of other measures of failure (Bellamy et al., 2005; Stringfield, 1997; Datnow & Stringfield, 2000). As stated previously, research on HROs suggests resilience is supported by mindfulness. Educational researchers interested in high reliability organizing in school improvement have included mindfulness as part of their analysis. For example, Bellamy et al. explain research on HROs as identifying the “need for mindfulness, for constant vigilance that recognizes that problems can occur at any time. A useful mindset that supports this vigilance is an assumption that every program, curriculum, instructional strategy, and teacher is fallible” (p. 401). Hoy, Gage, and Tarter (2006) surveyed 2600 faculty in 43 middle schools to find a strong correlation between trust and mindfulness, which were largely attributed by teachers to the words and deeds of their principals including those demarking honesty, benevolence, predictability, competence, and openness in solving problems and addressing failures. Findings such as these are part of growing recognition that trust and mindfulness “are inextricably related, and both create a climate for success” (Hoy et al., p. 252). Inquiry into mindfulness for educational practice is just beginning and Hoy et al., invite qualitative researchers, in particular, to describe examples of what mindfulness looks like and how it contributes to leadership involved with making schools better places for learning.

The concept of mindfulness investigated in HRO research and as forwarded in much of the literature in education borrows heavily from work by Langer (1989) and her colleagues—where mindfulness is defined as the process of drawing novel distinctions. It is a simple
definition with deep undertones “including (1) a greater sensitivity to one’s environment, (2) more openness to new information, (3) the creation of new categories for structuring perception, and (4) enhanced awareness of multiple perspectives in problem solving” (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000, p. 2). Weick and Sutcliffe (2006) note that the arguments advanced in this definition,

    echo a Western line of thinking. By Western we mean her ideas are essentially a variant of an information-processing system… Langer’s variant argues that routines induce mindless action…Langer is less concerned with practices that increase mindfulness than she is with practices that reduce mindlessness. (p. 516)

Bishop et al. (2004) agree that Langer’s construct is “quite different from mindfulness as described in the context of mindfulness-meditation techniques” (p. 235). They continue

“Langer’s mindfulness involves the active construction of new categories and meanings when one pays attention to the stimulus properties of primarily external situations” (p. 235). Clearly, the conceptualization of mindfulness remains an issue of some discussion and open debate.

Differences between Eastern and Western notions of mindfulness provide ammunition for the disagreement. Weick and Putnam (2006), however, maintain that Eastern mindfulness can enrich Western mindfulness and proposed the way forward as being through more careful examination of Buddhist psychology and teachings on mindful practice.

The above discussion can be framed as two additional questions as they pertain to the concerns of educational leadership raised within this study: (a) How is mindfulness evident in the practice of middle school principals? and (b) In what ways does mindfulness contribute to organizational resilience? In each question, the issue to be addressed involves description and analysis of mindfulness and mindlessness both at a general level of practice and within specific
strategies such as data-driven inquiry. Further, the applicability, appropriateness, and significance of Eastern notions of mindfulness are in need of exploration if research and theory on high reliability organizing is to advance understanding of the work of principals for school improvement.

Purposes of the Study

Recent literature on high reliability organizing may provide an operational framework for middle school leadership invested in bridging the bifurcation of educational theory and practice to overcome failure in student learning and performance. HROs manage change and cultivate resilience through implementing a mindful approach to the work of their members in that they “strive to maintain an underlying style of mental functioning that is distinguished by continuous updating and deepening of increasingly plausible interpretations of what the context is, what problems define it, and what remedies it contains” (Weick & Sutcliff, 2001, p. 3). The purpose of this study was to address four questions pertaining to resilience and mindfulness offered above in the statement of the problem. In answering these questions, the investigation undertaken for this dissertation focused on one middle school principal whose leadership had been recognized by her building faculty and district supervisors as instrumental to improving teacher practice and student performance. Specifically, the study sought to describe, analyze, and interpret how one principal conceptualized and operationalized organizational resilience given her efforts in leading and administering her middle school, the ways she nurtured organizational resilience in data-driven inquiry, how mindfulness was evident in her school leadership practice generally and guiding data-driven inquiry specifically, and the ways such mindfulness could be seen as contributing to the organization’s resilience.

Two caveats about the purposes of the study are necessary before proceeding. First, as
shared in the statement of the problem, some authors suggest that mindfulness as currently espoused in HRO theory may not be sufficient. Recent calls for clarification of theory focus on concerns with the Western definition of mindfulness and point to Eastern notions of mindfulness as offering guidance. Therefore, the above purposes as they pertain to mindfulness were undertaken using a framework that attended to both Western and Eastern mindfulness. Second, as also noted in the statement of the problem, weaknesses with Western mindfulness appear to be largely centered on how it handles mindlessness. More about the concerns and how mindlessness is presented in HRO literature will be provided in chapter two. What is necessary here to share is that in this study, both mindfulness and mindlessness receive respect and were given due attention in the investigation of processes concerned with how this principal interacted with her faculty to assess and modify their practice to improve student learning.

The Study and Researcher Positionality

To meet the goals of the dissertation, data collection focused on the activities of one middle school principal actively engaged with a group of teachers in an ongoing process of educational reform in a large, urban school district in Washington State. The selection of the school as the site for the study was both convenient and purposive. The selection was convenient because the principal and teachers were participants in an earlier pilot study that analyzed “what occurs when educational leaders and followers engage in focused professional learning” (WSU IRB File Number 9644-a). Video-based data from this study provided an extant and rich data source for the dissertation. An additional consideration for use of this data in the current study was the principal’s willingness to be videotaped while conducting professional learning sessions with teachers, during open-ended interviews, and observations throughout the school year. The principal allowed unlimited access to herself, administrative team, and teaching staff. In the
initial pilot study, every building administrator and teacher in the school consented to be videorecorded and interviewed (See Appendix A, Consent Form). If the principal was reluctant to allow cameras in the school, the video-based format of the study could have posed a problem of access. However, the principal’s ease with videorecording allowed the researcher unlimited access to the school context and as such, met an essential requirement of the research. Although the pilot study video was collected with a different purpose in mind, and thus could have posed a limitation to the study; the breadth and depth of extant data allowed for triangulation and further strengthened the rationale for situating the study in this manner.

Participant selection was also purposive, based on the principal’s qualifications and experience. In her role as principal, Kathy Rose was an experienced middle school educator with a district-wide reputation as a highly qualified, effective administrator. District office administrators frequently pointed out Kathy’s work and improved building-level scores on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) to other district principals as an exemplar for effective practice. At the time the initial video was filmed, the principal was in her late fifties and had worked in the district for more than thirty years.

I first met Kathy while working as a district administrator in the same urban school district. In my role as a Director in the Teaching and Learning Department, I was responsible for helping create exemplary videos of district principals as they worked with teachers to improve building practice. The series of videos were used to support professional learning of all district principals attending requisite monthly training sessions. Over the course of three years, I videotaped this principal on multiple occasions as she worked collaboratively with parents, teachers, coaches, assistant principals, and students to reform the school context. In my role as videographer, I was a non-participant observer. I had no building-level responsibilities, but rather
was charged with documenting building practices across the district for the purpose of advancing district administrators’ professional learning. During this period of time, I observed Kathy engage in a process of transforming the school context as she replaced those individuals who were not performing well and set high standards for both staff and students. She implemented a rigorous plan for teachers’ professional learning and worked to identify and support the growth of teacher-leaders in her building. The result of her leadership was evident as the school soon began meeting district and statewide goals for student achievement as measured by both district and state-mandated assessments.

Data for the study was collected as part of the earlier pilot study and included video of one fifty minute professional development session intended to increase a group of middle school science teachers’ understanding and implementation of “data-driven dialogue.” Gathered data also included a videorecorded, unscripted interview with the principal (see Appendix B). Data for the study was collected over the course of three years and as such, supported an in-depth view of one principal’s efforts to implement building-level reforms in one urban middle school.

The researcher was given unrestricted access to the principal, teachers, and staff, which facilitated videorecording in the live setting. The principal, administration team, and teachers were unusually open to having cameras in the building and allowed unlimited access to classrooms, staff meetings, and professional learning sessions. Although the principal and teachers consented to be videorecorded for the purpose of district-level trainings as well as this dissertation, all participants were coded for confidentiality. Administrators, teachers, and staff were treated with respect and great care was taken to cause no harm to participants in the study. Although students were present in the school context, they were not included in the data collection for this study. This dissertation study was subject to review by Washington State
University’s (WSU) Institutional Review Board (IRB), which determined the study satisfied the criteria for Exempt Research in May 2011. The WSU IRB reviewed and approved the study for human subject participation under IRB # 11984 and included use of extant data gathered under IRB File Number 9644-a.

Chapter Summary and Overview of the Dissertation

This dissertation study is focused on understanding the how educational leaders conceptualize and operationalize organizational resilience through the use of such strategies as data-driven inquiry. Building on extant HRO and mindfulness theory, the research examines the ways in which mindfulness is evident in the practice of middle school principals, as well as contributes to organizational resilience. To address this purpose, the study is organized in the following manner.

Chapter one presents the background for the study as it relates to the school reform movement and the issues surrounding heightened accountability. The purposes for the study are framed around this significant problem of practice. Chapter one describes the study as it is focused on one middle school principal and school, followed by an explanation of the study context.

Chapter two advances a conceptual framework to guide this dissertation study. As mentioned above, the study builds on extant high reliability organization (HRO) theory and considers HRO’s strategies for implementing a process to support collective mindfulness. The mindfulness construct is further examined through the lens of Western mindfulness theory and Buddhist ontology.

Chapter three outlines a methodological framework that supports the purposes and goals for the study. This qualitative study suggests an analytic framework that includes both discourse
analysis and a coding scheme extended from the conceptual framework.

Chapter four offers an analysis of the data. This chapter begins with a detailed descriptive analysis of the video-based data. This general analysis is followed with a microanalysis that incorporates the use of stanza analysis followed by a line by line examination of the data. The microanalysis is explicated in a form suitable for a microethnography.

Chapter five concludes the study with a discussion of the findings. The chapter considers potential limitations for the study, recommendations, and the significance of the findings. Chapter five concludes with a complete list of references and appendices that relate to the study.
CHAPTER TWO
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Heightened accountability encourages K-12 educators to assume a preventative mindset in order to improve organizational functioning and avoid sanctions. However, efforts at prevention rely on individuals’ preconceptions and as such, may be insufficient to reform educational practice and improve organizational resilience. Prevention is one route to high reliability posited in HRO literature (Reasons, 2000). Weick and Sutcliff (2006) argue that prevention strategies hold a secondary role to those of resilience as the control, anticipation, and avoidance thrust of prevention encourage and rely on prior conceptual understandings of organizational members, which leads to actions based on the familiar and generalizable rather than what can be underappreciated and unique. Prevention ignores what is novel in situations, which has been shown to be a key source of error. Prevention provides a shortcut for cognitive processing in ways that undermine mindfulness. The argument made from this point of view is that prevention creates the constraints that encourage participants to act mindlessly rather than mindfully. The treatment of mindfulness as presented in HRO literature specifically and Western literature on mindfulness generally is less about understanding ways to increase mindfulness than reduce mindlessness (Bishop et al., 2004; Langer, 1989; Weick & Sutcliff, 2006). While HROs’ strategies for reducing mindlessness have proved successful, researchers suggest looking to Eastern mindfulness theory’s holistic approach to inform and enhance the conceptual arguments about mindfulness offered in HRO literature specifically and Western literature generally. The proposed enriched mindfulness theory could prove useful to continued educational reform efforts.
The purpose of this chapter is to offer a close examination of both Western and Eastern mindfulness theories and to explicate of their affordances and limitations. The first section in the chapter proceeds with a discussion of HRO theory and mindful strategies that have proved to improve organizational resilience. Following this is an analysis of Eastern mindfulness theory. For the purposes of this dissertation study and since an exhaustive explication of Eastern mindfulness is not possible in this context, the scope of discussion on Eastern mindfulness is limited to Buddhist philosophy and teaching on meditation practice. The final section in the chapter is a summary that compares and integrates aspects of both Western and Eastern mindfulness theory for application to educational reform.

High Reliability Organizations

Organizations that operate continuously without error or failure—particularly in high risk environments or which employ hazardous technologies—over a long period of time are defined as achieving high reliability (LaPorte & Consolini, 1991). Those who have studied these organizations, known as high reliability organizations (HROs), suggest that HROs intentionally create the conditions that allow them to be “remarkably reliable in doing a few important things while avoiding ‘catastrophic failures’ in a few critical areas” (Datnow & Stringfield, 2000, p. 186). Prevention and resilience identify the two main approaches presented in HRO research to explain their success (Blatt et al., 2006). Anticipating problems, establishing procedures, and instituting training to prevent lapses in performance and avoid undesirable consequences outline prevention, which was the approach first delineated by researchers (Ramanujam & Goodman, 2003). More recently, scholarship has shifted in focus to that of resilience, which is described as the capacity of “bouncing back from errors, it is also about coping with surprises in the, moment…To be resilient also means to utilize the change that is absorbed” (Weick et al., 1999,
Weick and colleagues draw on Langer’s (1989) definition of mindfulness to support and explain their analysis of HROs. Studies by Langer and associates examine the effects of holding a flexible mindset, creating and refining categories of understanding, being open to new ways of knowing, and cultivating multiple perspectives. “Mindfulness theory encourages us to take a second look at the way our perceptual processes structure experience, in order to discover that they are more malleable and susceptible to individual control than may be apparent at first glance” (Brown & Langer, 1990, p. 312). Through remaining open to new information and sensitive to a changing context, individuals are viewed as gaining an “enhanced awareness of multiple perspectives in problem solving” (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000, p. 2). Accordingly, a mindful individual is guided by existing rules and routines rather than mindlessly governed by preconceptions or past distinctions. As such, mindfulness is “understood as the process of drawing novel distinctions” in a way that “keeps us situated in the present” (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000, pp. 1-2), and subsequently, avoids mental attitudes that sacrifice “flexibility for a sense of certainty” (Carson et al., 2006, p. 31).

The mental flexibility associated with such mindful practice is often contrasted to mindlessness, defined by Carson and Langer (2006), as a rigid mindset in which one “is oblivious to context or perspective” (p. 30). Mindlessness, according to Langer (1997) is “characterized by an entrapment in old categories; by automatic behavior that precludes attending to new signals; and by action that operates from a single perspective. Being mindless, colloquially speaking, is like being on automatic pilot” (p. 4). Western mindfulness theory generally and HRO literature specifically disdains mindlessness. Mindless behavior is cast in highly negative terms as researchers speak to the “deleterious effects of mindless information
processing” (Langer & Piper 1987, p. 280) and as contributing to reduced productivity, increased accidents, reductions in student learning (Langer, 1997; Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000). High reliability theory discusses mindlessness as the root cause of a lack of control, individual lapses, or catastrophic failure (e.g. Weick et al., 1999, Fiol & O’Connor, 2003; Bellamy et al., 2005).

Research by Weick and colleagues is appreciative of the beneficial aspects of mindfulness theory given their extensive examination of five major cognitive processes which in combination capture the essence of mindfulness in HROs: (a) preoccupation with failure, (b) resistance to simplify interpretations, (c) sensitivity to operations, (d) commitment to resilience, and (e) deference to expertise (Weick & Sutcliff, 2001; Weick et al., 1999). To further explicate the potential affordances of mindfulness, I examine HRO’s implementation of this conceptual model as evidenced in studies of resilience in health care facilities, nuclear power plants, and other organizations that respond quickly and appropriately to unexpected change. After each of these five processes are explained, the section ends with an analysis and summary of mindfulness as presented in this literature.

A Preoccupation with Failure

It is because HROs are aware of the potential for failure and concurrent need to ensure reliability that they work to operationalize mindfulness. People in HROs not only acknowledge that occasional failures, misperceptions, and errors are inevitable in fast-paced, complex organizational settings; but also, understand the importance of acting on this knowledge. For this reason, HROs purposely create and sustain an organizational belief that failures provide valuable signals that “a static world based on preconceived notions of how the world ‘is’” (Carson & Langer, 2006, pp. 35-36) has been compromised and requires attention. As such, individuals working within HROs candidly acknowledge failure and near failures when they occur so that
they are better able to refocus on present conditions and detect “possible weakness in other portions of the system” (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001, p. 56). This pragmatic mindset not only foreshadows the potential for failure and variance in the system, which facilitates corrective action, but also explains conditions for failure as present in taking a positive outlook and restricting responses to those which have been approved or prescribed previously. Commending success and ignoring near misses are viewed as encouraging complacency. In contrast to other organizations, management of HROs purposefully avoids error’s negative connotation and the tendency towards useless recriminations and self deprecation when lapses happen. Indeed, the literature offers many cases of individuals who self-reported mistakes and were rewarded for doing so. People in HROs are mindful of the lessons learned from “near-miss events” and carefully attend to “what could have happened, and why it didn’t happen” (Kaplan, 2002, p. 337) as a source of valuable organizational information.

Without forgetting that failure is a rare occurrence in HROs by definition, what high reliability theory suggests is that attention generated around the possibility of error opens to organizational learning and discriminating decisions. Fiol and O’Connor (2003), however, contend that it is not the search for failure alone that is important for mindfulness and improved decision making. They review literature to suggest that a focus on failure without success “may completely eliminate any sense of control [and] is likely to drive a firm into the ground as quickly as a singular focus on success” (p. 64). HROs’ preoccupation with failure causes them to simultaneously believe and doubt their knowledge of the system and the context (Weick et al., 2005), and subsequently, to organize so that they can see as much as possible. As individuals act collectively to maintain an active state of awareness of success and failure they develop an increasingly complex and discriminating understanding of their context. The fruit of such labor is
useful for revising practice. The preoccupation with failure facilitates “an underlying style of mental functioning that is distinguished by continuous updating and deepening of increasingly plausible interpretations of what the context is, what problems define it, and what remedies it contains” (Weick et al., 2001, p. 3) or what researchers note as the resistance to simplify.

**Resistance to Simplification**

HROs resist the urge to simplify or streamline processes, and instead, focus on developing a complex understanding of their work. People in HROs commit to complexity because their work is so important that they cannot afford failures (LaPorte & Consolini, 1991). Although complete failure is rare in HROs, individuals are well aware of the need to be cognizant of organizational “expectations, of the limited horizon of these expectations and of the need for ongoing corrections” (Czarniawska, 2005, p. 271). Expectations come in many forms including those present in organizational goals, role differentiation, standard procedures, strategic plans, etc. Expectations are short-cuts, abbreviations, or generalizations for describing, explaining, and influencing behavior in organizations. There is utility in such abstraction, including conservation of resources and advancement of predictability, however, it also entails a number of weaknesses that HROs seek to avoid. In particular, choices must be made about which details to include as well as exclude in order to simplify. Who decides is an issue that will be picked up later in the section on deference to expertise, since people in HROs appear to follow a set of practices that deviate from those found in other organizations. What is lost or not secured through greater generalizability is precision and accuracy. Variability is increased since by definition a larger number of cases are being represented when simplifying.

Managers of HROs maintain and encourage complex representations in routine problem solving thought to strategic planning through a *controlled process of organizing* that focuses
awareness on “the realities of agency, flow, equivocality, transience, reaccomplishment, unfolding, and emergence” (Weick et al., 2005, p. 410). Such mindful organizing is an intentional effort to employ complex models that address the needs of complex situations. Weick et al. (2005) compare HROs’ process for organizational sensemaking to an act of storytelling, in which a group of individuals create a plausible storyline that suffices as an explanation for unexpected occurrences in the setting and which answers the question “now what?” (p. 413). The “ordering it involves is a complex and inherently ambiguous process of sensemaking rather than that of imposing the rules of rationality on a disorderly world” (Czarniawska, 2005, p. 270). As circumstances change over time and problems occur –as they inevitably do– individuals search to understand and interpret what is occurring around them, and may find it necessary to adapt organizational processes, actions, and roles in an effort to remain sensitive to contextual ambiguity and the potential for failure. How individuals interpret their environment throughout this process “influence[s] organizational outcomes such as strategy, structure, and decision making” (Daft & Weick, 1984, p. 286).

Sensitivity to Operations

As described above, HROs’ preferred methodology for addressing high-stakes problems of practice demands a commitment to ongoing inquiry and flexible problem solving. HRO’s “mindfulness is essentially a preoccupation with updating” (Weick et al., 2001, p. 44) that requires individuals remain sensitive to operations. HROs consider effective learning to be a key element for avoiding critical errors, and yet understand the “inherent difficulty of handling information in ill-structured or constantly changing situations” (Swuste, 2008, p. 442). Safety scholars, such as those that study HROs, suggest that when under stress, organizational sensemaking often is limited by individuals’ predisposition for “bounded rationality”–an
inclination to interpret data according to pre-existing knowledge, predictions, categories, or routines (Weick et al., 2001). The connection with HROs’ preference to implement and sustain organizational mindfulness is predicated on the belief that developing an individual’s ability to act expands the capacity to see the context more clearly and therefore, control potential outcomes (Weick, 2006). Weick provides a working example where a group of physicians consistently failed to identify cases of child abuse until social workers were added to the hospital’s interdisciplinary treatment teams. Adding social workers to the teams shifted the diagnostic discourse from the language of unexplained trauma to that of abuse, and therefore, improved the physicians’ ability to spot early signs of abuse and act on this knowledge. The salient point is that it was the physicians’ inability to act that precluded their willingness to see the problem of child abuse. A sensitivity to operations demonstrated in this case supported the physicians’ effort of rethinking their diagnoses, creating new labels, discarding old labels, enacting differently, forming new beliefs, and substantiating those beliefs.

Organizational preconceptions, labels and patterns evolve over time into a set of habitualized actions (Ford & Backoff, 1988) that ostensibly influence the ability to manage change quickly. Routinization sets up patterns for rapid problem solving that are helpful as organizational complexity increases. However, routines also function as confirming evidence for one’s expectations (Weick et al., 2001), and provide a rationale for moving away from “perceptually based knowing to categorically based knowing in the interest of coordination” (Weick, 2006, p. 1727). HROs distrust confirming evidence because they are aware of human tendencies to place reliance on preconceptions and subsequently, to dismiss small irregularities in routine work, a practice that effectively renders individuals blind to potential problems (Weick et al., 2001). HROs reinforce individuals’ capacity for perceptually based knowing by closely
monitoring organizational attention and alertness and pay less consideration to organizational behaviors such as automaticity, momentum, and inertia. Consequently, HROs emphasize behavior, its context, interpretation, and what may be learned from its outcome (Weick et al., 2001). Individuals within HROs are trained to continuously monitor for small breakdowns and apparent anomalies, knowing that seemingly “weak signals” are frequently the precursors to serious problems that require immediate attention and a strong response (Kaplan, 2002, p. 339).

**Commitment to Resilience**

HROs mindfully organize because the people in them are aware of their own limitations and therefore understand the need to be present and interpret the world as it unfolds. HRO leadership is cognizant of the need for strategic learning that exposes and remediates the gap between theory and practice (Thomas, Sussman, & Henderson, 2001). HROs value “conceptual slack” (Weick et al., 2001), members’ diverging opinions about organizational structures or processes, along with “a willingness to question what is happening, rather than feign understanding, and greater usage of respectful interaction to accelerate and enrich the exchange of information” (p. 70-71). The result is heightened “information consciousness” (Thomas et al., 2001), an aspect of organizational mindfulness, that transpires when individuals are aware of the limitations of their knowledge, expectations and plans, and are prepared to make adjustments to their thinking on a regular basis (Czarniawska, 2005). Throughout this iterative process of learning, HROs resist simplification, irrevocability, and reification of organizational processes and procedures that would hamper their understanding and ability to respond effectively to change. Such awareness ensures that the organizational learning and unlearning that occurs is *particular* (appropriately focused) and *present* so that organizational effort is directed at events and processes where it will do the most good.
Deference to Expertise

Supporting complexity, while remaining attentive to a rapidly changing and potentially dangerous environment requires the full participation of every individual within the organization as well as the ability to hold knowledge and individual roles loosely. This is particularly true for HROs. HROs operate as tightly coupled systems, in which many of the subsystems “are interdependent, with little or no slack between them” (Bierly, Gallagher, & Spender, 2008, p. 393). A potential negative consequence of such pronounced interdependence is that when one organizational component fails it has the potential to negatively impact the entire system, resulting in catastrophic, systemic losses. HROs meet this challenge by forming “informal networks” (Weick et al., 2001). “When events get outside normal operational boundaries, knowledgeable people quickly self-organize into ad hoc networks to provide expert problem solving. These networks have no formal status and dissolve as soon as a crisis is over” (p. 71). Fenema (2004) posits that the complicated and fluid relationships that exist within HRO’s informal networks are a unique form of teamwork, evidenced by a type of collaborative elasticity that allows team members to interact effectively and adapt well while under extreme pressure. Collaborative elasticity results when: (a) individual processing and improvisation (elasticity) contributes to group functions; (b) individuals communicate continuously and build supportive relationships; (c) teams generate a repertoire of open and flexible routines that can be adapted readily to changing circumstances; and (d) teams maintain stability by ensuring that individual roles within the team are well defined with built-in redundancy, and shared knowledge across the team (Fenema, 2004). HROs defer to expertise, regardless of existing hierarchical structures that guide the majority of organizational decisions; and it is their willingness to value flexibility over rank that enhances organizational resilience. The result of this mindful teamwork is that when
conditions require immediate and skillful problem-solving, decision-making is fluid and follows expertise. When things do go wrong, leadership remains attentive and available to suggestions from lower ranked individuals who are familiar with the context and have the necessary expertise to derive a solution quickly and effectively.

It is important to note that HROs’ preoccupation with failure and emphasis on reliability do not suggest a punitive approach to organizational work. HROs are successful in large part because they intentionally develop a supportive construct for how “good people” may understand and adapt to complex situations (LaPorte, 1996; Provera, Montefusco, & Canato, 2008), and therefore, place less emphasis on assigning blame when things go wrong. In fact, HROs exhibit an unusual willingness to reward the discovery and reporting of error, without at the same time peremptorily assigning blame from its commission. This degree of frankness pertains even for the reporting of one's own operational or procedural errors. The premise that guides such unusual organizational candor is that it is better and commendable for one to report an error immediately than to ignore or to cover it up. (LaPorte, 1996, p. 64). Through implementing this guiding principle, individuals take pride in their ability to solve complex, often highly technical problems, and are committed to developing high levels of individual and organizational expertise that support problem solving (La Porte & Consolini, 1991; LaPorte, 1996). Weick (1999) describes HRO’s finely developed conceptual awareness as “capability mindfulness” (p.88) focused on meeting organizational goals and ensuring reliability.

**HRO Mindfulness: An Analysis and Summary**

HROs are described as successfully creating a culture of reliability through their operationalization of mindfulness. HROs have developed “a cognitive infrastructure that enables simultaneous adaptive learning and reliable performance” (Weick et al., 1999, p. 82). Despite
implementing explicit measures intended to increase organizational mindfulness and subsequent resilience, HROs remain susceptible to failure. When failures do occur, however, individuals adapt patterns of behavior and organizational beliefs so as to quickly minimize the negative effect. Recognizing such strengths, the treatment of mindfulness in HRO literature reveals significant clues about the difficulties, weaknesses, or contradictions present or evident within HROs in carrying out these processes. Table 1 exposes the manner in which mindfulness can be seen as processes that are conceptualized as concerned with being less mindless.

Table 1
Mindfulness as a Response to Mindlessness

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<tr>
<td>Preoccupation with failure</td>
<td>Preoccupation with expectations</td>
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<td>Reluctance to simplify</td>
<td>Reluctance to maintain ambiguity</td>
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<td>Sensitivity to operations</td>
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<td>Commitment to resilience</td>
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<td>Deference to expertise</td>
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In particular, organizational vulnerability persists when individuals’ preconceptions and habituated patterns of behavior solidify understanding of who they are and how they are expected to respond to organizational needs. It is one’s fixed understanding of self—one’s identity and organizational role—that appears to limit the capacity for sensemaking to a set of predetermined cultural or organizational expectations. Having established a fixed identity that aligns with cultural expectations, individuals are challenged to reconcile emotions, relationships,
and behaviors that may run counter to organizational practice. This situation is particularly problematic in hierarchical or traditionally meritocratic organizations, whose boundaried relationships and organizational mores may trigger a sense of disequilibrium between one’s internal and external world.

Weick (2007) provides an example of this problem as it affects wildland forest fighters, who in several separate incidents “refused to drop their tools when ordered to do so, were overrun by fire, and died with their tools beside them within sight of safety zones” (p. 6). After each deadly incident, investigators struggled to understand why highly skilled individuals were seemingly unable to set aside the firefighter’s dictum to take care of your tools, even at the cost of their own lives. Weick notes that in the case of the firefighters who died, there were a number of reasons why individuals facing a potentially deadly situation failed to do what, in retrospect, seems to be an obvious course of action. Investigators suggested that as the fire intensified, individuals may have struggled “because of problems with hearing, trust, control, physical well-being, and calculation” (Weick, 2007, p. 7). They posited firefighters may have been unwilling to leave the tools of their trade behind because they are part of a can-do culture that does not accept fear or failure easily. Further, surviving an out of control fire requires a firefighter to abandon traditional firefighting practices and choose much riskier, untested solutions such as deploying a fire shelter. Weick ultimately concluded that several firefighters perished because these highly trained individuals narrowly associated their identity (subject) as firefighters with their tools (object). And firefighters never drop their tools. Accordingly, “it makes no more sense to drop one’s tools than it does to drop one’s pride or one’s sense of self” (Weick, 2007, p.8).

This example suggests a number of challenges to mindfulness which are maintained in HRO theory given its conceptualization. First, the treatment of mindfulness both in practice and
literature is externally focused and concerned with prevention and control. Second, the role of individual in achieving desired outcomes reinforces notions about identity. In the firefighters’ case, “tools and identities form a unity without seams or separable elements” (Weick, 2007, p. 8). Firefighters are trained to respond to the dangerous conditions that define wildland firefighting. However, their continued survival is dependent on their ability to quickly reconcile ambiguous conditions for which there may be no “absolute optimal standard response” (Brown et al., 1990). This situation is problematic if—as Brown and Langer (1990) suggest through their contributions to mindfulness theory— one’s response to a particular situation and sense of control is contextual and derives from one’s conceptual understanding of self. Accordingly, firefighters’ sense of personal control was interwoven in the “web” of personal experience. Their inability to apply perceptual processes to reconcile contextual ambiguity resulted in a disconcerting loss of “perceived control” (p. 317) and subsequent limited capacity for innovation and wise action. Brown and Langer posit that when faced with such contextual ambiguity, one does “not step out of the process of experience in order to identify a criterion for evaluating the correspondence between cognitive strategies and particular situations” (Ibid). As was the case with firefighters, an individual will revert to what is already known— even if it no longer makes sense.

To summarize the previous section, HROs operationalize mindfulness through five cognitive processes intended to maximize individuals’ ability to understand and respond appropriately to ambiguous circumstances that threaten organizational stability. As evidenced above, HROs’ conceptual processes allow for varied perspectives and heed contextual anomalies that serve as early indicators of a flawed understanding and the potential for failure. Such strategies are externally focused and implemented to classify and control the organizational context. However, as was the case for firefighters, HROs’ conceptual process breaks down when
an individual’s sense of identity is compromised; thereby exposing the illusion of control (Brown et al., 1990), which is a mechanism needed to validate experience and cope with uncertainty.

Weick and Putnam (2006) suggest this limitation is not addressed in early Western treatments of mindfulness, such as those practiced in HROs. “In Western thought, to be where you are with all your mind means to pay more attention to external events and to the content of mind, these contents including things such as past associations, concepts, reifications, and semblances of sensed objects” (p. 276). More recently, there is growing interest among some researchers to expand the existing constructs for mindfulness to incorporate elements of Eastern philosophy and a form of "contemplative" practice intended to challenge one’s preconceptions, understanding of self, and subsequently, one’s capacity for sensemaking. Weick and Putnam (2006) among others previously mentioned propose an enriched view of mindfulness (a blend of Western and Eastern thought) may broaden individuals’ capacity for mindful action and therefore, “improve organizational functioning” (p. 285). However, to date little work has been done to integrate Western and Eastern mindfulness theories into organizational practice.

Mindfulness in Buddhism

The second section in this chapter examines Buddhist teachings on mindfulness for the purpose of discerning how they may correlate to HROs’ conceptual practice. Buddhism is based on an ontological belief that (a) as a result of self-centeredness, individuals suffer from existential dissatisfaction and (b) there is a cure for this unhappiness. Both premises stem from the teachings of the Shakyamuni Buddha who first espoused the Four Noble Truths that explain the cause of human suffering and provide a methodology for overcoming it (Landaw & Bodian, 2003). “The four ennobling truths are not propositions to believe, they are challenges to act” (Batchelor, 1997, p. 7). The intent of Buddhist mindfulness training is to help practitioners
dismantle habituated, egocentric behaviors and "patterns that prevent us from knowing what we are" (McLeod, 2002, p. 30). Specifically, Buddhist teachings offer a methodology for mindful practice that helps cultivate an awareness of the present, ethical discipline, meditative stabilization, and wisdom. As detailed below, Buddhist mindfulness training is a process of exploration and systematic uncovering of one’s mental habits and conceptions (obstructions) that obscure one’s understanding of reality and provide the grounds for negative or harmful action.

Buddhism recognizes that unskillful actions that cause suffering —mindlessness— are “motivated by one of the three mental toxins —greed, hatred, or delusions (Weick & Putnam, 2006, p. 277). Buddhist teachings suggest that mindful attention to mindlessness, without judging it as good or bad, is the antidote to those toxins. More specifically, Zen Buddhism suggests that the path to mindfulness may be best understood through the cultivation of beginners’ mind.

In the Zen tradition, mindfulness is exemplified by beginner’s mind. “The mind of the beginner is empty, free of the habits of the expert, ready to accept, to doubt, and open to all the possibilities. It is the kind of mind which can see things as they are” (Suzuki, 1970, pp. 13-14). Richard Baker (Suzuki, 1970) applies the analogy of Zen calligraphy to describe a beginner’s consciousness. In Zen calligraphy, the writer inscribes each character in “the most straightforward, simple way not trying to make something skillful or beautiful, but simply writing with full attention as if you were discovering what you were writing for the first time” (p. 14). The resultant writing is at once simple and complex because it is an extension of the writer’s character. Accordingly, Buddhist mindfulness is holistic practice that begins with the existential question: What am I? The process of discovery that follows is based on an individual’s right or appropriate practice, attitude, and understanding, which roughly correspond to the conscientious development of body, feeling, and mind.
To facilitate understanding of how Buddhism’s mindful ontology presented above may be considered analogous to that of HROs, the following discussion is divided into five subsections similar to HROs’ five strategies for mindfulness. For the purposes of this discussion, Buddhist mindfulness strategies, include 1) being present, 2) non conceptual mindfulness, 3) attending to experience, 4) commitment to compassion, and 5) deference to wisdom. An explication of Buddhism’s five strategies for mindfulness is followed by a brief analysis and summary.

Being Present

The teaching of beginners’ mind centers on a practice of continual questioning so as to remain awake and authentic in the world. As such, daily life becomes “more about holding questions than finding answers” (Chodron, 2001, p. 10). This process of questioning helps one understand the root causes of dissatisfaction and apply a mindful, ethical filter to daily existence (Gyatso & van den Muyzenberg, 2009). Through connecting to experience as it unfolds, “the attitude that is being cultivated is one of being open to, accepting, and being present to whatever experience arises for us in the moment without having to fix it or trying to get rid of it; and being curious and attentive to it in a spirit of inquiry and investigation” (Nanda, 2009, p. 155). While holding questions, a conscious effort “to understand things from a range of perspectives” (Chodron, 2001, p. 10) is encouraged and in the process, to “realize ‘big mind,’ or the mind that is everything” (Suzuki, 1970, p. 33). Conscientious, mindful practice causes one to understand that simply being here “right now, is the ultimate fact” (Suzuki, 19970, p. 40).

Such practice is based on the ontological belief that the phenomenological world can be experienced, but not completely or accurately represented when understood as its separate parts. Buddhist tradition acknowledges an inherent problem with attempts to solidify knowledge and
establish control given the vastness and fluidity of the universe. Buddhism’s mindful practice
courages individuals to experience phenomena as constantly emerging and in a process of
becoming (or arising) as time and conditions allow. Thus, mindfulness is not about rejecting
conceptual knowledge; rather it attends to it loosely. In this way, an individual’s priority is on
experience, which leads to an increased emphasis on simply attending to the present.

What you can see is right now, a moment, the present time. But this present is not just the
present; it’s connected with the whole universe. This is how you can see the universe. If
you see this universe, you realize that you are part of a dynamic reality that is constantly
changing according to the conditions of every moment. (Katagiri, 2008, p. 230)

Through allowing the universe to unfold in the present moment, one is able “to put
everything under control in its widest sense” (Suzuki, 1970, p. 33). Kabat-Zinn (1994) identifies
this practice as a process of non-doing in which one is focused on being rather than busily doing.
Non-doing is a particularly difficult concept to understand by Westerners who often equate
progress with action directed at future goals. In contrast, Eastern mindfulness theory suggests
that a focus on doing reinforces a sense of an independent self and creates opposition that
separates individuals and limits possibilities (Carroll, 2004).

*Non Conceptual Mindfulness*

Eastern mindfulness theory is intensely interested in understanding how phenomena are
interconnected and constantly changing. Thus, Buddhist practice focuses attention on being. It
challenges one’s belief in a “solid, unchanging, independent ‘I’” (Chodron, 2001, p. 48) and
habitual tendency to see oneself as separate and alone. “By identifying with what we perceive
and experience, we solidify ourselves and the object of perception” (Batchelor, 2008, p. 174).
Suzuki (1970) cautions that this dualistic view of self-and-other is created by “relative mind ...
the mind which sets itself in relation to other things, thus limiting itself. It is this small mind which creates gaining ideas and leaves traces of itself” (p. 62). Relative mind begins with “making the smallest distinction” (Loori, 2008, p. 106) and systematically translates life into a litany of dualistic thinking that constrains understanding to sets of fixed categories such as love-hate, winners-losers, acceptance-rejection. Relative mind is particularly problematic because of how it filters one’s perceptions, guards against others, and limits one’s ability to interact freely with the world. Such dualistic thinking causes individuals to withdraw from others in a “one-pointed apprehension of some persons as friends and others as enemies” (Gyatso, 2006, p. 46). Over time, these negative reactions may turn into habituated, mindless behaviors. Relative mind creates these negative emotional responses in an attempt to reduce vulnerability and in an effort to solidify oneself and control others.

Buddhist practice emphasizes an awareness of relative mind because misconceptions about oneself (as subject) and phenomena (object) often set the conditions for negative thoughts and action and are a significant source of personal dissatisfaction. This point is illustrated by Ricard and Thuan (2001), who note that it is quite easy to become frightened if one mistakes a rope for a snake in a dimly lit forest. However, when a “light is cast on the rope and its true nature is revealed, then fear fades away” (p. 13). In similar fashion, individuals “project fantasized ways of existing onto ourselves and others, thinking that everyone and everything has some inherent nature and exists independently, in and of itself” (Chodron, 2001, p.15). Inferring inherent existence –that perception is reality and objects have intrinsic qualities– one misunderstands how individuals and phenomena truly exist. Such misconceptions occur when one “use[s] words to point to something –an object or concept—but they may or may not correspond to the ‘truth’ of that thing, which can only be known through a direct perception of its
reality” (Nh’ãat, 2006, p. 28). Buddhism’s mindful practice helps reveal mistruths. Through appropriate practice, one works to eradicate the conditions that support “distorted views, together with their habitual tendencies” (Gyatso, 2007, p. 63) that cause individuals to feel apprehensive and therefore, respond to phenomena and others inappropriately.

Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche (2008) advises that it is inherently harmful to view the world in this way, as though it were “real and solid” when in fact, it “is only a mere impression of something that occurs as a result of causes and conditions” (p. 15). Buddhism’s nonconceptual mindfulness reveals the negative effect that erroneous conceptions and resulting afflicting emotions have on human interactions. Understanding the cause and effect of such negative behaviors provides both motivation and method for modifying one’s actions. Meditation and self reflection are processes through which one is able to understand one’s responsibilities “as an individual living with other individuals” (Gunaratana, 2002); as one develops the capacity to “see who you are and how you are without illusion, judgment or resistance of any kind” (p. 14). Such insight is the result of individual experience that questions the nature of reality and one’s relationship with the world. Batchelor (1997) notes that meditation is a means for “translating thoughts into the language of feeling” in a way that allows one to explore the “relation between the way we think about and perceive things and the way we feel about them” (p. 32). Buddhist training actively questions one’s belief in a permanent self, guided by the foundational understanding that all phenomena change. People are born and die, relationships begin and end, and possessions come and go. Thus, an individual who is profoundly aware of impermanence – the nature of existence-- becomes increasingly capable of positive action.

**Attending to Experience**

Exhibiting and strengthening this perspective, meditation often uses concentration on the
simple mechanism of breathing in and out. Suzuki (1970) equates the focus on the breath to a
door that swings open and shut, allowing for discovery. “When your mind is pure and calm
enough to follow this movement, there is nothing: no ‘I,’ no world, no mind nor body: just a
swinging door” (p. 29). Through the discipline of daily meditation (zazen in the Zen Buddhist
tradition), one becomes aware of various constraints that color one’s perceptions. In this way,
zazen is somewhat paradoxical. Suzuki compares the practice of zazen to a dark sky.
“Sometimes a flashing will come through the dark sky…When we have emptiness [through the
practice of zazen] we are always prepared for watching the flashing” (p. 84). The possibility of
such awareness is the argument for daily, disciplined practice that readies the mind for what is
possible. Zazen demands one’s constant focus on posture and breath to calm what often is
referred to as monkey mind, a mind that jumps from one idea to another and rarely rests.
Importantly, however, the goal of zazen is not limited to achieving a technically correct
meditative position or simply calming the mind. Zazen is about being and an awareness of self in
a way that “is the direct expression of our true nature. Strictly speaking, for a human being, there
is no other practice that this practice; there is no other way of life than this way of life” (p. 23).

The intent of Buddhism’s meditative practice is to “observe things as they are, and to let
everything go as it goes” (Suzuki, 1970, p. 33). Because beginners’ mind practice concentrates on
the breath with no other purpose than to be, conscientious meditative practice readies the mind
for understanding. This readiness is Buddhist mindfulness and constitutes wisdom (Suzuki, 1970)
as one empties the mind of preconceptions and negative attitudes that may otherwise mask
understanding of the phenomenological world.

Before we understand the idea of emptiness, everything seems to exist substantially. But
after we realize the emptiness of things, everything we see is a part of emptiness, we can
have no attachment to any existence; we realize that everything is just a tentative form and color. Thus we realize the true meaning of each tentative existence. (p. 113)

Attending to experience offers freedom from the constraints of mindlessness and the distress it causes. It is analogous to “a general housecleaning of your mind” (Suzuki, 1970, p. 110), and is an important first step in helping one find a balance between body, feeling, and mind.

A Commitment to Compassion

This process of exploration is necessary because it is a belief in a permanent self that sets up the conditions for opposition, competition, meritocratic behavior, and other negative actions that have proven to be historically troublesome for humankind. Attachment to one’s beliefs “encourages people to reject or ignore concepts associated with negative and neutral feelings (e.g., uncertainty, absorption) and to develop misperceptions of themselves, their work, and their context” (Weick & Putnam, 2006, p. 281). Made uncomfortable by the fact “that all life is transient, constantly appearing and disappearing, constantly changing” (Katagiri, 2008, p. 4), individuals cultivate a belief in the existence of an independent and unchanging self across a linear progression of time. Although a belief in self provides one some measure of stability in an impermanent world, it also sets up the conditions for egocentricity and the need for control. Negative behaviors that have their basis in selfishness come “from a wish to make life—which is basically fluid— into something certain and fixed” (Chodron, 2001, p. 10).

Consider, for example, what occurs when an individual experiences something pleasant. There is an immediate desire to hold on and keep it for oneself. In the same way, unpleasant experiences may result in a feeling of aversion, and strong desire to rid oneself of an object or cut off disagreeable relationships. In A Heart Full of Peace, Goldstein (2008) demonstrates this
point with a Buddhist teaching story of a monkey who is trapped by his own greed. In Asian countries, hunters easily catch monkeys by cutting a hole in a coconut and placing a sweet in the hole. The hunter then ties the baited coconut to a tree and waits. The unsuspecting monkey is caught when he slides his hand into the hole and grasps onto the treat. Although he could easily free himself by relinquishing the sweet, he refuses to let go and is effectively trapped by his own greed. Human beings are similarly trapped by misconceptions, self-interest, and a desire for control. They are easily tricked into living an unawakened existence based on “habitual impulses” (Batchelor, 1997) that cause them to greedily seek out short term happiness. However, once one grasps the desired object, one is stuck and unable to use that hand for anything else. Batchelor (2009) advises that mindfulness practice allows one to loosen one’s grip and relinquish afflictive emotions such as desire, anger, jealously. As one develops appropriate attitude and becomes capable of holding negative thoughts and behaviors more loosely, there is increased “possibility of movement and freedom” (p. 174).

Through the practice of beginners’ mind one becomes increasingly attentive to the mechanics of selfishness as “meditation changes your character by a process of sensitization, by making you deeply aware of your own thoughts and deeds” (Gunaratana, 2002, p. 16). As such, mindfulness is a commitment to compassion. Buddhist practice frankly acknowledges the potential harm that results from undisciplined self-interest, as well as the desire that human beings have to be happy. Batchelor (1997) suggests that under the former circumstances, one’s life devolves into something “ignoble and undignified. Instead of a natural and noncoercive authority, we impose our will on others either through manipulation and intimidation or by appealing to the opinions of those more powerful than ourselves” (p. 6). However, through sustained meditative practice, one begins to recognize phenomena as dependently existent “on
causes and conditions, on the parts which compose them, and on the mind which conceives them and gives them a name” (Chodron, 2001, p. 47). In particular, the practice of insight (contemplative) meditation, nurtures the ability to see how dualistic thinking and subjective interpretations restrict understanding and harm oneself and others. Through mindfulness, one glimpses “a world where all living things are united by their yearning to survive and be unharmed” and in the process, realizes “the anguish of others not as theirs but as ours” (Batchelor, 1997, p. 87).

Deference to Wisdom

This compassionate ideal creates a humanist ontology that irrevocably links Buddhist theory and practice, and is the responsibility of leadership. In the Buddhist tradition, it is the role of a leader to cultivate “vulnerable openness,” which in Tibetan, is understood as jinpa or “complete honesty” (Carroll, 2009, p. 212). Although vulnerable openness is antithetical for most competitive, top-down organizations, it is the mark of astute leadership in Buddhist culture. Practitioners of jinpa intentionally create an intelligent, compassionate workplace in which leadership sincerely listens to workers and genuinely encourages candor. In this way, individuals within the organization are able to be present and authentic in their shared learning and work and thus, avoid the power struggles that occur when individuals misconstrue another’s intentions (Nh’aat, 2007). It is important to note that power, “its proper legal use, and the legitimacy and behavior of those who control it” (Nh’aat, p. x) is the subject of much debate in the Western tradition. In contrast, Buddhism considers power to be “contingent on the condition and quality of our mind” (ibid.). Therefore, genuine power and true leadership can only derive from an ethical and altruistic intention. Buddhist power is selfless, compassionate, and directed at improving the lives of every individual in the community (Nh’aat, p. 71).
Wisdom requires an appropriate mindset and effort. Buddhist mindfulness is sustained over the course of a lifetime so that one is able to be “present in the real stream of time and looking directly at life itself” (Katagiri, 2008, p. 11). Through the practice of insight meditation, one learns to relate to the world with a heightened sense of compassion and unselfish intent. Rather than responding to conditions and circumstances mindlessly, a mindful individual peels back the layers of preconceptions and emotional responses that obscure the ability to remain open and engaged in the world. In the process, life becomes increasingly nuanced and less fixed and certain.

One realizes that things are at once complex and ambiguous. They are not only defined by philosophy, science, and religion: they are evoked through the play of allusions, paradoxes, and jokes. They cannot be pinned down with certainty: they trigger perplexity, amazement, and doubt. (Batchelor, 1997, p. 77-78)

Through intensive practice, one reaches a “more profound understanding of complex concepts or situations” (Gyatso et al., 2009, p. 65), and the principle of causality for which “nothing exists without a cause and nothing changes of its own accord” (p. 20). As one confronts dualistic thinking and one’s understanding of reality, it becomes possible to let go of negative actions and emotions in order to cultivate more constructive viewpoints that bolster one’s feelings of equanimity, compassion, and joy. Ricard and Thuan (2001) note that one begins to understand that “the individual ego and the external phenomena of our world are not separated” (p. 13), but rather human consciousness is a part of “global reality” (p. 20).

Buddhist Mindfulness: An Analysis and Summary

Eastern mindfulness practice fosters one’s sense of interdependence because it is based on the experiential knowledge that all life is interconnected and thus, empty of independent
existence. “Things do not exist under their own power, from their own side, independent of all other things” (Chodron, 2001, p. 48). The Dalai Lama observes that for something to exist independently, it “would have to be unalterable” (Gyatso, 2007, p. 32). It is readily apparent, however, that phenomena, including oneself, do not exist this way. Life is not “solid” and unchanging, rather it is “transparent and fluid” (Batchelor, 1997, p. 78). Accordingly, phenomena are interdependent and change in accordance with all other phenomena.

Demonstrating this point, Batchelor (1997) compares human beings and the construct of self “to the complex and ambiguous characters that emerge, develop, and suffer across the pages of a novel” (p. 82). Within a novel, the self does not exist as a fixed character, but as a result of the unfolding narrative and the causes and conditions it creates. Life is a continuous state of flux (Wallace, 2001). According to Buddhist logic, since life is not fixed and permanent, there can be no independent, existent self. “To understand this is to realize emptiness” (Chodron, 2001, p. 48) and to recognize that “from moment to moment your life is dynamically arising from the source of existence” (Katagiri, 2008, p. 52) in conjunction with all other phenomena. This realization sets up the conditions for a compassionate understanding of one’s relationship to others. It also provides something of the foundation for Buddhist understanding of mindlessness. Buddhist meditation is about observing the mind and noting how and what surfaces in the mind. Catching the mind wondering off and bringing it back to the present reveals the interdependence of mindfulness and mindlessness. Both constructs are empty of any inherent quality per se. Meditation is a process concerned with strengthening awareness and appreciation for the interplay of the two which is the human experience. Table 2 offers the qualities of meditation as aligned with nurturing mindfulness and mindlessness.
Buddhist tradition proposes and actualizes the need to develop one’s individual capacity for compassion as a necessary element of individual and social reform. A fundamental characteristic of nonconceptual mindfulness is a compassionate, ethical outlook that leads to constructive action enacted for the good of all living beings. The Dalai Lama (2009) notes that “compassion brings inner strength, and compassion also brings truth” (p. 2); two essential qualities for solving twenty-first century problems. According to the law of karma, the accumulation of one’s thoughts and actions, both positive and negative, identify an individual. Although a detailed explication of the law of karma is well beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is a foundational belief in karma (the understanding that one’s thoughts and actions are impactful both to oneself and to humanity) that is a guiding tenet of Buddhism. As one learns to comprehend human existence as a “single unit” and an “irreducible whole of interrelationship” (Gunaratana, 2002, p. 14), competition, selfishness and greed are irrelevant. One understands that there is nothing to grasp and nothing to gain. It is this understanding that provides a powerful motivating force for individuals to be mindfully present and cultivate ethical attitudes and behaviors that serve humanity and avoid the causation of harm.
To summarize, Buddhist mindfulness provides individuals a systematic methodology for understanding how one exists, regardless of conditions. Mindfulness counteracts “a combination of habituation, mindlessness, laxity, and scattered attention” (Weick & Putnam, 2009, p. 277) that causes undisciplined awareness. Buddhism’s nonconceptual mindfulness encourages one to question the composition of causes, and closely examine one’s motivations and “the consciousness that observes and labels it” (Watts, 1989, p. 51). Through appropriate practice, attitude, and understanding one learns to question this relative mind as it draws distinctions in an effort to solidify one’s sense of self and control circumstances. A meditative process helps one refocus and question awareness, and invest in understanding and nurturing the connections between self and other. Through mindful practice, one becomes increasingly resilient when faced with ambiguity and complex conditions that, under less mindful circumstances, would result in a disorienting disequilibrium and need to re-establish a sense of control. Buddhism’s disciplined practice provides a necessary sense of balance that reduces the need for control, enhances individual resilience, and subsequently, increases the possibility for innovation. Creating the conditions for mindful practice is particularly important for Buddhist leadership that has an ethical responsibility to support individual development and ensure the organizations’ altruistic goals align with pragmatic practice.

Discussion of Western and Eastern Theories of Mindfulness

To briefly review the flow of discussion, this chapter began by considering the potential for high reliability organizations to serve as models of organizational resilience that may inform educational theory and practice. In particular, the first section discussed the role of mindfulness as it is conceptualized and operationalized in HROs. HROs create a culture of reliability through implementation of a conceptual process that is preoccupied with failure, resistant to simplified
interpretations, concentrated on operations, committed to resilience, and which defers to expertise. By definition, HROs are largely successful in their implementation of this process. However, there remains a significant vulnerability when exogenous factors force individuals in HROs to quickly adapt well established expectations and behaviors that may no longer match an unstable context.

The second section examined Eastern philosophy’s mindful practice as a possible means to augment HRO theory and expand individual and organizational capacity for mindful behavior. Buddhism’s contemplative practice was examined in parallel with HROs’ strategies for mindfulness. Eastern mindfulness theory advances the notions that being present, practicing nonconceptual mindfulness, attending to experience, committing to compassion, and deferring to wisdom are practices that encourage mindfulness regardless of conditions.

The third and final section that follows this brief summary provides further analysis of HROs conceptual mindfulness and posits the affordances Buddhism may infer for Western organizational practice as well as educational leadership engaged in school reform. The section

Table 3
Comparison of Western and Eastern Mindfulness Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HRO Theory</th>
<th>Buddhist Mindfulness</th>
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<tr>
<td>Preoccupation with failure</td>
<td>Being present</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reluctance to simplify</td>
<td>Non conceptual mindfulness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to operations</td>
<td>Attending to experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commitment to resilience</td>
<td>Commitment to compassion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deference to expertise</td>
<td>Deference to wisdom</td>
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proceeds with a discussion of a possible correspondence between each of the strategies found in Western and Eastern mindfulness theories and affordances and limitations found in each. Table 3 (above) illustrates the framework that guides this discussion and proposed association between HROs and Buddhism’s mindful practice.

*Focusing Concentration on Mindless Behaviors*

Western and Eastern mindfulness strategies are similarly useful for questioning the boundaries of conceptual understanding through focusing one’s attention. In each case, mindfulness strategies concentrate individual attention on a process of inquiry that calls into question what is generally understood to be true. While HROs are preoccupied with failure, Buddhist mindfulness posits one must be present in every moment to fully experience phenomena. Both strategies create the conditions—a baseline if you will—for seeing as much as possible. Whether one is attentive to anomalies that are the precursors to failure or one’s breath, focused awareness makes the object of attention more vivid and potential problems are highlighted. This heightened level of attentiveness is useful to organizations that wish to quickly identify and resolve potential problems. Inherent in this mindful process is the knowledge that the object of attention is changing from moment-to-moment. Accordingly, HRO’s method for simultaneously believing and doubting contextual knowledge (sensitivity to operations) creates a basis for ongoing contextual analysis that questions *what* is being seen and *why or how* the observer believes this understanding to be true. Eastern mindfulness is similarly based on an understanding that conceptual knowledge emerges as conditions and time allow. Therefore Buddhist practice causes one to be present and attend to experience and ready the mind for sensemaking through continuous examination of one’s conceptual understanding.
Both Western and Eastern mindfulness theories endeavor to focus individual or organizational attention. However, the salient point in this discussion is to consider further how mindfulness strategies facilitate this process. To avoid dangerous misconceptions, HROs resist simplification and keep individual and organizational attention concentrated on operations. Increasing individuals’ capacity to see what is occurring within the organization helps support a more complex understanding of the context. Yet, as discussed earlier, there are limitations to this process. HROs understand that through seeing more, individuals have increased capacity for action. However, while HROs are successful in their efforts to increase the overall quality of organizational attention, individuals within them are challenged to maintain mindfulness when faced with contextual ambiguity and extreme emotional duress. Recall the example of the firefighters who struggled when rapidly deteriorating conditions indicated the need for action that fell outside the boundaries of their self-identity as firefighters. Such relative mindfulness was activated when firefighters’ customary ability to act was sharply constrained by a bounded view of circumstances and perceived loss of control. Firefighters’ inability to reconcile the ambiguity of what they were seeing with what they understood to be their role as firefighters resulted in tragedy.

This tragic example draws attention to a serious limitation in Western mindfulness theory. Mindfulness strategies, such as those practiced in HROs help concentrate attention in an effort to avert mindlessness. However, Buddhism concentrates attention on mindlessness as a means to see through the “greed, anger, and ignorance of human delusion” (Katagiri, 2007, p.58). Gunaratana (2002) defines concentration as unwavering, single-pointed focus on an object of attention. Such concentration is useful for intensifying one’s ability to intensify attention. However, concentration alone is not sufficiently useful for helping individuals fully deconstruct...
how they understand phenomena and then associate and interact with that same phenomena. To illustrate the limits of concentration Gunaratana applies the analogy of light filtered through a lens:

Parallel waves of sunlight falling on a piece of paper will do no more than warm the surface. But if that same amount of light, when focused through a lens, falls on a single point, the paper bursts into flames. Concentration is the lens. It produces the burning intensity necessary to see into the deeper reaches of the mind. *Mindfulness* [emphasis added] selects the object that the lens will focus on and looks through the lens to see what is there. (Gunaratana, 2002, p. 150)

This distinction is key to understanding the correspondence between Western and Eastern mindfulness theories. HROs’ mindfulness strategies help individuals concentrate on a series of events and spot potentially negative indicators in organizational processes. However, “concentration alone will not give you a perspective on yourself” (Ibid). Concentration without mindful self reflection is insufficient to expose and remediate a potential disconnect between one’s 1) conceptual understanding, 2) relationship to that knowledge, and 3) subsequent capacity for astute action.

*Deconstructing Experience as Both Object and Subject*

Deconstructing mental boundaries that limit understanding and one’s capacity for compassion and wisdom is an important aspect of Eastern mindfulness. Like HROs, Buddhist practice is concentrated on seeing (being present) and interpreting concepts as they unfold in real time (attending to experience). Eastern mindfulness strategies also help one maintain conceptual slack and better connect to experience as it unfolds. Through insight meditation, one systematically deconstructs understanding. However, this is a point at which Western and
Eastern mindfulness strategies diverge. As noted earlier, while Western mindfulness is focused on sensemaking for the purpose of *doing* (identifying and solving problems), Buddhist practice is experiential and concentrates the individual’s attention on *being*. This distinction for *how* attention is focused is quite significant for what it infers for sensemaking. HROs concentrate attention on conceptual understanding (object), while Buddhist practice sets out to deconstruct one’s understanding of both object and subject—the nature of the concept being observed and its *relationship to the observer* (nonconceptual mindfulness). Through the practice of nonconceptual mindfulness one analyzes not only the object within a changing context, but also the related emotional response the observer has towards that object—an exploration of both object and subject. In the process, sensemaking shifts from an action orientation (What do I need to do?) to an existential discovery of the concept and one’s connection to it. Thus, Eastern mindfulness attempts to conceptualize phenomena in their entirety. There is benefit in viewing phenomena holistically, particularly under rapidly changing conditions when one’s sense of control begins to break down (such as experienced by the firefighters). With extensive practice and through expanding one’s outlook and subsequent understanding of conceptual reality (relationship between object and subject) and within the ebb and flow of conditions, an individual becomes increasingly capable of interpreting events and what Buddhism considers to be wise or appropriate action. Concentration—single-pointed mindfulness—focuses attention. However, mindfulness and systematic deconstruction of object and subject inform sensemaking. In this way, *how concentration is focused* becomes an important factor in the efficacy of mindful practice.

*A Commitment to Understanding Mind*

The preceding section illustrates an important distinction between Western and Eastern
mindfulness processes. HRO strategies direct organizational attention to events and the possibility of organizational failure. HROs commit to resilience because individuals acknowledge the limitations of their knowledge and so hold themselves open to adjusting their thinking. Individuals within the organization commit to an ongoing process of learning and unlearning. Included in this process is a willingness to set aside organizational hierarchies when needed to gather information and redirect organizational behavior in the most effective way possible (deference to expertise). Committing to resilience sets up a rationale for effective problem-solving through maximizing visibility to operations and expert decision-making. As such, Western mindfulness commits to resilience in order to maximize control through heightened adaptability to changing conditions. Although HROs mindful strategies heighten organizational effectiveness and increase resilience, it is important to recognize inherent limitations within this conceptual process.

Eastern mindfulness theory is also committed to seeing more. However, Buddhist strategies for mindfulness take into account a greater potential for error in how one understands phenomena including the very nature of mind. Misconstruing mind is the root of much confusion. For this reason, Buddhist practice forefronts the importance of deconstructing mind. The Dhammapada, one of the earliest collections of Buddhist verses, advises “All things are proceeded by mind, Mind is their master, they are produced by mind” (Fronsdal, 2005). For that reason, insight meditation helps still the mind so that one can see and understand more (Batchelor, 1997). The paradox in this seeing is that “as mindful awareness becomes stiller and clearer, experience becomes not only more vivid but simultaneously more baffling” (p. 97). For this reason, Eastern practice advances nonconceptual mindfulness—a holistic examination of phenomena (both object and subject) to enhance one’s capacity for deeper understanding and
astute action. Fronsdal (2005) posits Buddhist practice emphasizes “the power of the human mind in shaping our lives, and the importance and effectiveness of a person’s own actions and choices” (p. xx). Increased sensitization to the workings of mind underscores one’s interdependence with all phenomena as well as the potential harm a lack of perspicacity and compassion for others engenders. As such, the need to understand mind concentrates Buddhist practice as a commitment to compassion, ethical action and principled choices.

Creating the Conditions for Ethical Behavior

Eastern Mindfulness’ commitment to compassion is a core belief that focuses concentration in an effort to comprehend the phenomenological world inclusively (both object and one’s relationship to it). Thus, the process for Buddhist mindfulness is a systematic internal examination of one’s beliefs in order to remove barriers to comprehending the nature of phenomena while maximizing possibilities for reconceptualizing understanding and choices for action. Weick and Putnam (2006) argue “Eastern mental development proceeds from an emphasis on virtue to concentration to mindfulness; from grosser to more subtle levels of mind” (p. 278). Buddhist practice nurtures individuals’ capacity for sensemaking in conjunction with the realization that all phenomena are interdependent. Therefore, virtue—in the form of a compassionate mindset—concentrates attention and moderates one’s state of mind to skillful thoughts and actions that acknowledge an interdependent reality. This compassionate mindset is the basis of Buddhist practice. It causes one to defer to wisdom over self interest and with practice, to set aside habituated behaviors and erroneous assumptions that otherwise mask one’s relationship to the phenomenological world. Eastern mindfulness extends HROs’ singular goal of resilience through a commitment to compassion and choosing to defer to wisdom. And thus, advancing individual and organizational resilience is inherent to Buddhist practice.
Inferences for Leadership

Similar to the organizational imperatives that compel HROs, establishing and maintaining the conditions for Buddhist mindfulness is both an individual and organizational responsibility. However, as Buddhist leadership defers to wisdom, it has a moral and ethical responsibility to engage individuals in cultivating authentic understanding and capacity for wise action. Buddhist mindfulness commits leadership to the conscientious development of body, feeling, and mind through advancing individuals’ capacity for appropriate practice, attitude, and understanding. In short, through concentrating and furthering individuals’ ability to be—authentic and engaged with the world—leadership creates the conditions for organizational reliability and resilience.

Summary

In thinking about the scope and complexity of Eastern mindfulness theory, one begins to understand the limitations of HRO theory and potential affordances of Buddhist mindfulness. Recall that a need for heightened awareness (to avoid the potential for failure) provides impetus for HROs to commit to resilience. It is this commitment that serves as the rationale for constant vigilance and motivation for individuals within the organization to defer to expertise as needed. Thus, HROs’ foster capability mindfulness that seeks out information and questions organizational practice at all levels. Individuals cultivate a capacity for learning to ensure organizational fluidity and reliability and set aside hierarchical or meritocratic thinking. Accordingly, learning is focused on seeing as much as possible in order to redirect organizational action when necessary. In making this commitment, individual and organizational attention is directed externally at organizational phenomena (Weick & Putnam, 2006) and thus, is boundaried by organizational knowledge and traditions and vulnerable to changing conditions.
HRO mindfulness strategies are limited in their ability to overcome challenges to individuals’ erroneous beliefs. As conceptualized, Western mindfulness theory is not directed at helping individuals concentrate attention internally or reconstitute phenomenological understanding under rapidly changing conditions. Importantly, this disparity in process is an affordance of Eastern mindfulness theory and could prove beneficial to Western mindfulness theory. Arguably, concentrating organizational attention on both internal and external phenomena might be a first step to developing an enriched theory for Western mindfulness. An inclusive (holistic) approach to Western mindfulness practice that incorporates the beneficial aspects of mindlessness could improve individuals’ capacity for developing conceptual understanding and sense of balance that extends from an understanding of mind and one’s relationship to the phenomenological world. Although HROs are proficient at directing organizational attention to minimize the possibility for failures, a significant benefit to advancing individuals’ equilibrium is the increased possibility for organizational learning and resilience regardless of circumstances. I respectfully submit that concentrating organizational attention in this way could begin to resolve limitations in Western mindfulness practice and further advance capacity for individual and organizational resilience.
CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

Educational leadership is challenged to address the problems defined through heightened accountability. The need to rapidly improve student learning in every American public school has concentrated leadership’s attention on the potential for school failure. As a result, many educators are focused on prevention, a limiting mindset which tends to reduce the potential for cognitive processing. Understanding mindfulness, as a process for concentrating individual and organizational attention, could prove useful for school leadership invested in improving educational practice. Therefore the purpose of this study was to examine how resilience and mindfulness were conceptualized and implemented for achieving school reform.

This chapter is organized in the following manner. The first section provides a rationale for the site selection and introduces the principal as the primary focus for the study. Following this is a detailed description of the district and Pacifica Middle School. Next, a procedure for data collection is discussed, including the timeframe, use of extant data from the pilot study, and considerations for this dissertation study. A process for data analysis is outlined in the following section. The chapter closes with a brief discussion of research ethics.

Site Selection

As noted in chapter one, site selection for the dissertation was both convenient and purposive. The study was situated at Pacifica Middle School. To preserve participant confidentiality, Pacifica is a pseudonym as are the names of all study participants. As discussed earlier, the choice to concentrate the study at Pacifica was convenient because the researcher had access to a collection of extant data and had been permitted an unusual degree of access to
school and staff. The sample selection was also purposive because it centered on the reform efforts of a highly regarded school leader, Kathy Rose.

The district’s executive administrative team was openly appreciative of Kathy’s efforts to work with teachers and parents to turn around a historically underachieving school and hoped her success could serve as a model for other district principals. Therefore, it was not surprising when the Executive Director of Teaching and Learning made a point of introducing Kathy to me at the October Principals’ Conference in 2005. The Executive Director, Linda Arroyo, was impressed with the positive school improvements occurring at Pacifica and suggested I document Kathy’s reform efforts on video throughout the remainder of the school year as part of my work as a Director in Teaching and Learning. Linda hoped to use videorecordings of Kathy’s work with her teachers in future Principals’ Conferences, as a model for professional development. Linda commented that Kathy’s site-based professional learning plan paralleled the district’s emphasis on advancing teachers’ practice through implementing formative assessment strategies and data-driven dialogues. As such, successful implementation of the plan at Pacifica would serve as a positive example for other building leaders.

Kathy was amenable to Linda’s suggestion that we document her professional learning plan and process for implementation. At the end of our conversation, Kathy and I agreed to meet later in October and discuss options for videorecording professional learning sessions through the remainder of the school year. When we met again later that month, Kathy suggested that in addition to videorecording in classrooms, I attended all of the scheduled professional learning days and as many teacher-led team meetings as possible. With Kathy’s permission and full agreement from her administrative team and staff, I visited Pacifica on numerous occasions between November 2005 and February 2007 to attend and videorecord various building-level
meetings, professional learning activities, and classroom observations.

Intrigued by the closely knit community that appeared to be developing at Pacifica, I contacted Kathy in January 2007 to ask if she would allow me also to gather footage for a pilot, video-based ethnographic study of principals and teachers engaged in creating a professional learning community. The purpose of the pilot study was to examine the role of leadership in the middle school setting through the theoretical perspective of Buddhist leadership. Kathy immediately agreed to this request and I subsequently submitted a proposal for the study to WSU’s Institutional Review Board. Meanwhile, Kathy discussed the proposal for the ethnographic study with her administrative team and teachers in January. As noted earlier, every administrator and teacher in the school consented to participate in the study, which allowed the researcher an unusual degree of access to teachers’ classrooms and building professional learning activities. When we met again later that month, Kathy and I sketched out a calendar of professional learning activities appropriate to the study, including data-driven dialogue training sessions for the language arts and science teachers. Kathy provided a school calendar and suggested I attend several administrative team meetings, school-wide team meetings focused on various school functions (e.g., parent relations, student support, etc.), as well as visiting individual classrooms to observe teacher practice. IRB approval (WSU IRB File Number 9644-a) for the pilot study was granted in March 2007 and I began formal data collection shortly after. Selected extant data from the pilot study makes up the data set for the current study.

Description of Pacifica Middle School

Pacifica Middle School is situated on the north central edge of a city with a population of approximately 200,000 (http://www.city-data.com, 2012). At the time of the study, district enrollment was just over 30,000 students, making it one of the largest districts in the state of
Washington. Pacifica had a total student count of 669 seventh and seventh grade students. A breakdown by race and ethnicity obtained through the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (2010) reveals white students made up the majority of students 70.4% (See Appendix C, Table 1). Pacifica is located in the heart of a low socioeconomic neighborhood, with 81.3% of students participating in the free and reduced lunch program. As such, Pacifica is designated a high poverty school by the state of Washington.

Assessment results taken across multiple years indicate Kathy had appreciable success at implementing the district’s stated reform goals, and by accountability measures adopted in the state of Washington was deemed a highly effective principal (See Appendix C, Table 1). It is important to mention that few district principals were similarly effective in spite of a concentrated effort by the district administration to create the conditions for improved student achievement. A lack of comparable growth in other district middle schools is all the more compelling considering the number of resources and effort the district placed on school reform. For example, the district implemented a coherent, albeit top-down approach, to school reform, referred to by district insiders as the written-taught-tested curriculum model (see Figure 1 below). This model was ubiquitous across district trainings at all levels, signifying the administration’s expectation for compliance with district performance standards. In particular, district administrators mandated implementation of a K-12 curriculum aligned to district and state content standards and paid considerable attention to the need for ongoing formative and summative assessment to guide continued reforms. To aid compliance with this model for school reform, principals were expected to attend monthly principal conferences intended to advance their understanding and practice of district supported strategies. However, despite this focused effort, few principals were successful in their efforts to improve organizational reliability as
Administration of the district curriculum was a top-down arrangement. As previously mentioned, the district mandated a time-bound, common core curriculum be taught. Under the direction of the Executive Director of Teaching and Learning, district content coordinators and content area specialists worked to align district standards, curriculum, and summative assessments to the state’s Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) and Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). Curriculum coordinators were responsible for providing coaches and teachers with curriculum guides, program guides, and end-of-unit assessments. Curriculum coordinators then trained building coaches to oversee implementation of the district curriculum in classrooms. Coaches were required to attend monthly district training sessions and were responsible for holding similar inservice trainings for building-level teachers as well as communicating modifications to district or state curricula and assessments when they occurred. In their support role, coaches also provided teachers one-on-one teaching assistance as needed. Pacifica Middle School had three content area coaches: Sam Jeffries (mathematics), Beth
Peterson (science), and Iris James (language arts). These three individuals were recruited to the coaching role because they were considered to be experienced, highly knowledgeable teachers in their respective content areas and were generally well regarded by building teachers.

District-level executive directors, also known as school directors, worked with principals to oversee building-level implementation of the district curriculum. As Pacifica’s principal, Kathy also had two assistant principals to aid in this work. The leadership team along with coaches and other building support staff were responsible for ensuring the district curriculum was implemented with fidelity in individual teachers’ classrooms. Ultimately, however, teachers were the final arbiters for how the curriculum was interpreted and taught to students. According to OSPI (2010), Pacifica had a total of forty-four teachers on staff with an average of 12.1 years experience. Of this total number of teachers, 77.3% had at least a Master’s Degree and 100% were deemed NCLB Highly Qualified (HQ) for teaching. Under the HQ label, teachers were required to be certified by the state and have a “demonstrated knowledge of subject matter and skill in the area assigned to teach” (OSPI, 2010).

Data Collection and Procedures

As noted earlier, selected data from the pilot study are the basis for this dissertation study. Pilot study data collection commenced in March 2007 and continued through a complete school year, ending in March 2008. This period of formal data collection allowed the researcher to follow professional learning activities across two school years, beginning in the spring of one year and ending in the winter of the following year. Extant data from the pilot study included: (a) intensive, semi-structured interview with the building principal, (b) approximately sixty-three hours of videorecordings of collaborative, professional learning sessions and classroom instruction, (c) videorecorded post-lesson debriefs, and (d) principal artifacts in the form of
correspondence, meeting minutes and other documents comprising district and building communications. All interviews were conducted by the researcher and varied in length between forty-five and ninety minutes (depending on the number of participants and depth of their responses). Throughout the course of data collection, an analytic log was maintained, which facilitated revisiting and reflecting on events as the pilot study progressed.

The ability to draw on an extensive bank of extant data was beneficial to developing a complex understanding of the setting, a necessary consideration when the researcher is challenged to develop models that “account for how patterns at one level yield outcomes at another” (LeBaron, 2009, p. 56). For example, while this study was focused on the principal and collaborative work that occurred at the building level, it was also situated within the broader context of district and national mandates that set the parameters for school reform. And though the principal may have been focused on improving teacher practice in the classroom, her motivation to do so may have been in large part linked to district pressures to improve student results on the state assessment. Unpacking these types of complex contextual connections is necessary to present an accurate representation of leadership’s work in the natural school setting.

The choice to use video-based ethnography, sometimes referred to as microethnography (LeBaron, 2009), for the pilot study made it possible to preserve a complete record of the setting, to view events from multiple points of view, and incorporate these varied perspectives into the description, analysis, and interpretation for the study. Having gathered a repository of video-based and other data for the pilot study, I was then able to carefully review the data and consider how it informed the research question for the dissertation study. Three videos stood out for what they revealed about the school context and development of a collaborative professional learning community.
The first video was a ninety minute interview with the Kathy conducted early in the fall of 2008 (see Appendix B) was useful to the study because of what it revealed about the school context and the principalship as “a social world we are continuously in the process of constructing” (Wolcott, 1994, p. 368). The semi-structured format for the interview allowed additional questioning each time Kathy advanced a new topic and supported the breadth of description essential to an in-depth ethnographic study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Diefenbach, 2009). To provide a multifaceted view of the context (Grady, 2008), the principal’s interview was triangulated to two other videorecordings, including a forty-five minute open-ended, post-lesson interview with Kathy and a language arts teacher, and a seventy-five minute data-driven dialogue (professional learning session) with Kathy and seventh grade science team. Use of multiple sources of data (intensive semi-structured interview, open-ended interview, and observation) across varied participant roles (teacher, coach, principal) supported “converging lines of inquiry” (Yin, 1994, p. 92) in an effort to corroborate study findings.

For the purposes of the dissertation study, the videorecorded interview with the principal, post-lesson interview, and data-driven dialogue session were transcribed in their entirety. Transcriptions and videorecordings were saved in electronic form on an encrypted hard drive on the researcher’s computer. Backup files for the study were created to ensure against loss or damage and stored on an encrypted portable hard drive in a password-protected file and stored in the researcher’s home. Hardcopy notes and principal artifacts from the pilot study were initially maintained in a locked file cabinet and later transferred to electronic form and stored on the encrypted hard drive on the researcher’s computer. Upon conversion, the original hardcopy notes and memos were destroyed.
Data Analysis

Transcription and Coding

As noted earlier, the analytic data for the study were comprised of videorecordings of a principal’s interview, post-lesson interview with Kathy and a seventh grade language arts teacher, and data-driven dialogue session with Kathy and the seventh grade science team. The videorecordings were selected to serve an essential purpose of microethnography, to reveal “how people create and understand their daily lives – their method of accomplishing everyday life” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 29). The principal’s interview and post-lesson interview showed how Kathy conceptualized her practice. These two videos were triangulated to the data-driven dialogue to support an examination of Kathy’s process for implementing mindfulness into building practice. The three videorecordings were transcribed in full and coded.

The analysis involved a series of phases. As a first step in deconstructing the data, each video was transcribed applying Gee’s (2010) suggested stanza format for discourse analysis. Accordingly, speech was transcribed in “tone units or idea units” (p. 75) that generally, are one clause in length. Groups of idea units make up a stanza, which when strung together comprise a narrative or discourse. Use of the stanza format was helpful “to situate and contextualize the main action of the story that follows” (Gee, 2011, p. 137).

Borrowing from Gee’s (2011) toolkit for discourse analysis, the researcher then re-examined each transcribed video while asking two questions: 1) “Based on what was said and the context in which it was said, what needs to be filled in here to achieve clarity?” and 2) What would the reader “find strange here (unclear, confusing, worth questioning) if that person did not share the knowledge and assumptions and make the inferences that render the communication so
natural and take-for-granted by insiders?” (p. 12). The answers to these questions were captured in the form of analytic notes. Re-evaluating the interview through this contextual filter, helped ensure the underlying meaning of the discourse—or what was left unsaid—was incorporated into the analysis.

The analytic notes were then examined, in a second phase, using the conceptual framework as guide. In a direct application of the HRO theoretical framework, I coded each of the notes from the transcripts to identify: 1) preoccupation with failure, 2) reluctance to simplify, 3) sensitivity to operations, 4) commitment to resilience, and 5) deference to expertise. The parallel characteristics of mindlessness for these processes were also coded. The initial coding scheme was then expanded to incorporate aspects of Eastern mindfulness. The following Eastern mindfulness concepts were incorporated into the scheme and the notes of the transcripts were re-examined for: 1) being present, 2) non conceptual mindfulness, 3) attending to experience, 4) commitment to compassion, and 5) deference to wisdom (See Appendix D for an example of the coding scheme with definitions).

In the third phase of the analysis, the notes and codes using the conceptual framework were examined for associations between instances of mindfulness and mindlessness, as well as an investigation of the nature of relationship between mindfulness and resilience as present in the text. The analysis then focused on framing a coherent story to explain the findings.

When the analysis was complete, the raw data were transformed into a set of two descriptive narratives. The first narrative included excerpts from the principal’s interview and the post-lesson interview. The resulting chronology told the story of Kathy’s principalship provided an intriguing glimpse into the ways in which Kathy conceptualize her role and work as a school leader. The second descriptive narrative was comprised of excerpts from the data-driven
dialogue and illustrated an example of Kathy’s process for implementing data-driven inquiry at Pacifica. Upon completion, the narratives were re-examined for evidence of mindfulness as defined through HRO and Eastern mindfulness theories.

Protocol for the Analysis

To meet the goals of the study, the coded transcripts were described, analyzed, and interpreted. As suggested by Wolcott (1994), the descriptive narratives resulting from the discourse analysis and the coded transcripts were the foundation for the microethnography. The narratives attempted to answer thoroughly the question, “What is going on here?” (p. 13). For example, the data-driven dialogue was studied as a specific example of how one middle school principal and group of teachers conceptualized and implemented a dialogic process to examine and refine their teaching practice in an effort to improve organizational resilience. The narratives detailed the group’s conversation as the team identified student and teacher failures, problems, mistakes, and misunderstandings. The descriptive analysis served to situate the micro analysis that followed. Such “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) depicted individual behaviors and the context in which they occurred, and set the ground for the analysis and interpretation that followed.

Analysis of the data-driven dialogue session was based on understanding “how things work” (Wolcott, 1994, p. 13) through identifying important characteristics of the discourse and a description of how those conversational elements were interrelated. For example, analysis of the data-driven dialogue considered how individuals understood and spoke to: (a) source of data as evidence of failure (b) assumptions about students and their potential for learning (c) gaps in individuals’ professional knowledge, and (d) strategies to mediate failure. A critical component of the analysis was an examination of the strategies for mindfulness that emerged through the
discourse contained within the data-driven dialogue.

*Interpretation* of the analytic data was iterative and ongoing, rather than a linear process of description-analysis-interpretation. The purpose of this iterative process was to allow for continual questioning on the part of the researcher that sought to uncover what more could be learned from the context as layers of discourse and cultural understandings were peeled away to reveal, “what else is there?” Comparison of the data to the HRO and Eastern mindfulness coding scheme that emerged from the conceptual framework was foundational to interpreting the data.

Ethical Considerations

All participants, including those who were only peripherally involved in the study, were provided an informed consent form (Appendix A). Participants were provided a concise description of the study, told they could withdraw at any time. Assurances included a statement that participant responses would be held confidential and that there were no expectations of harm as a result of their participation. All participants signed a consent form indicating they understood the conditions for the study and no one chose to withdraw from the study. Pseudonyms were used on all transcripts and write-ups for the study, including the final dissertation. The only crosswalk to participant identifiers existed on the videorecordings stored on an encrypted drive. This dissertation study was subject to review by Washington State University’s (WSU) Institutional Review Board (IRB), which determined the study met the conditions for Exempt Research, including use of extant data gathered under IRB File Number 9644-a. The WSU IRB reviewed and approved the study for human subject participation under IRB #11984 effective May, 2011.

It is important to acknowledge the potential for bias in this study resulting from my role as an observer within a school. At the time of data collection, the researcher held a district-level
administrative position with some influence over district decision-making. As such, I acknowledge the existence of what Erickson (2006) identifies as power relations that are “asymmetrical between the observer and the observed” that require the researcher to attend not only to the “object” of attention, but also to the “mentality/subjectivity of the fieldwork as a perceiving subject” (p. 237). It was necessary to remain aware of the subjective lenses that could potentially color my perceptions and interpretations of the school context. However, I was fortunate over the course of three years to have had an opportunity to “study side by side” (Erickson, 2006) with the principal as the object of study and a colleague invested in understanding school reform. This collaborative approach to ethnography helped mediate subjectivity as it encouraged an intentional effort to make my “own (implicit) assumptions, interest, and objectives concerning the research and social practice as explicit as possible” (Deifenbach, 2008, p. 877).
CHAPTER FOUR
ANALYSIS

Heightened accountability has focused the attention of school leaders on prevention and need to avoid student failure. Concentrating organizational attention in this way has tended to narrow individual focus and limit conceptual understanding and organizational resilience. In contrast to such effort, some school leaders have turned to data-driven inquiry as a strategy to improve reliability through cultivating resilience. Literature on high reliability organizations supports a focus on resilience as an alternative response to accountability that better promises school improvement. As evidenced in HROs, implementation of mindfulness strategies heightens intellectual capacity and strengthens individuals’ ability to set and meet organizational goals and increase resilience. However, a limitation in the conceptualization of Western mindfulness theory suggests an enhanced model for mindfulness that incorporates Buddhism’s teachings on mindfulness might better support this effort. Therefore, this dissertation study sought to address four questions pertaining to resilience and mindfulness. An investigation was undertaken with one middle school principal, Kathy Rose, whose leadership had been recognized by her building faculty and district supervisors as instrumental to improving teacher practice and student performance. The study sought to describe, analyze, and interpret how Kathy conceptualized and operationalized organizational resilience given her efforts in leading and administering her building, the ways she nurtured organizational resilience in data-driven inquiry, how mindfulness was evident in her school leadership practice generally and guided data-driven inquiry specifically, and the ways such mindfulness could be seen to contribute to her organization’s resilience.
The findings of the study are presented in two parts. Section one is a descriptive analysis focused on a Kathy’s philosophy and practice of school leadership. The section offers data gathered from an interview and post-lesson observation. The resulting narrative is then triangulated using data gathered from a data-driven dialogue (DDD). The analytical shift from general to specific attempts to provide a view of the “everyday life of persons” (Wolcott, 1994, p. 113) engaged in a process of school improvement that together tells a “story that is ‘specific and circumstantial’ while ‘its relevance in a broader context [is] apparent’” (Wolcott, 2005, p. 166). In particular, the description presents the general to specific case for how Kathy conceptualized and nurtured organizational resilience within her work of school reform. Following the descriptive narrative, the second section employs a microethnographic analysis to examine more precisely gathered data pertaining to data-driven inquiry. Discourse analysis protocols were followed for coding the theoretical constructs of mindfulness from HRO theory and Buddhism. The section focuses on how mindfulness was evident in Kathy’s leadership of a data-driven inquiry session and the ways such mindfulness could be seen to contribute to her organization’s resilience.

Descriptive Analysis

A Principal’s Story

As principal of Pacifica Middle School, Kathy Rose was challenged to respond to state and local pressure to improve student learning and concomitantly, heightened district-level accountability for student assessment results and associated teacher practice. In an effort to advance the organization’s collective learning, Kathy applied a form of distributed leadership and implemented among other strategies lesson walkthroughs and data-driven inquiry. The following section begins broadly by presenting how Kathy reported conceptualizing her
leadership in an interview and narrows to examining her interactions with teachers in two situations: a post-lesson interview and a data driven inquiry session.

Thinking about the work

Kathy began her administrative career as an assistant principal at East Mountain High School. As assistant principal, she “did discipline for three years and curriculum for six.” Kathy’s background as a language arts teacher was helpful in her new role as a high school curriculum administrator. In spite of her success as a junior administrator, when the principal’s position opened up at East Mountain, Kathy was not selected as a viable candidate to fill the position. Kathy attributed this oversight to the fact that she had not understood the “politicking and promoting pieces” that might have advanced her candidacy for the position. “People hadn’t done it [promotion] on my behalf or didn’t know that they needed to do. So, it was a learning experience.” Without this promotional piece in place, Kathy was relatively unknown to the hiring team and did not make it past the first round of interviews. Instead, an external candidate with a somewhat more impressive resume was chosen to be the new East Mountain principal.

Soon after, a district office position for a Special Programs Director was announced. A longtime mentor, who had been recently promoted to an Executive Director’s position, encouraged Kathy to apply for the opening. Kathy put in an application for the Special Programs Director and also for an opening for Director of Teaching and Learning (T&L). Kathy was intrigued by the T&L Director’s role, which was to ensure the district curriculum and assessments were implemented with fidelity in all district schools. This task had proved to be particularly challenging at the secondary level where administrators and teachers had been allowed significant discretion in implementing site-based reforms. Secondary principals were used to much less district oversight than were elementary principals and consequently, resisted
Kathy was excited by the opportunity to lead this reform effort, and “challenged to think that an elementary person could do high school work.” Her background in language arts and experience implementing the district curriculum at the high school level encouraged this confidence. On the other hand, Kathy had followed the district leadership team’s efforts to create and implement a district curriculum aligned to the state-mandated assessment and was aware there were pockets of resistance to the idea.

At that point [in time], we had schools opting not to do the adopted curriculum. And as an assistant principal, whose role was to watch the curriculum, I was appalled that our district hadn’t done something about it.

Kathy was highly motivated to apply for the position and take on a key leadership role in the district. She considered the T&L Director’s job and curriculum alignment work as having the potential to improve teaching practice and subsequent student learning significantly.

Kathy interviewed for both the Special Programs and T&L positions. Although Kathy was openly enthusiastic for implementing the work, Linda Arroyo, a district elementary principal, was eventually selected as the new T&L Director. Shortly after this decision was announced, Kathy was offered and accepted the Special Program Director’s position. While Kathy had coveted the T&L job, upon reflection she acknowledged Linda, who was offered the position, had the qualities needed to establish and push through the district’s aggressive reform agenda.

I ah don’t have the … I didn’t at the time, have the tenacity that Linda had. She had a better vision than I had. She was a better fit for that role, in all honesty. And I was a good fit for the Title role.
Although disappointed, Kathy accepted she had much to learn about how to define and implement district-wide reforms. Over the course of the next two years, Kathy participated in a number of professional learning opportunities and received the executive leadership team’s praise for her work in special programs.

As Kathy began her third year as Director of Special Programs, the superintendent implemented a plan wherein individual school directors would be assigned to work with specific building principals. Each school director had responsibility for ensuring their assigned principals were implementing the district’s “written, taught, and tested curriculum” and making measureable progress on the district goal to improve student learning. School directors met weekly to discuss building work and problem-solve specific challenges as they arose. As a result of this heightened visibility, a few principals, who had previously ignored district mandates, began paying more attention to implementing the district curriculum and end of unit assessments. However, the school directors remained concerned with Pacifica Middle School’s lack of progress and voiced their apprehension to the rest of the administrative team. Not only was there a marked absence of any measureable improvement in student performance, Pacifica’s principal had yet to submit an acceptable school improvement plan (a requirement for all district principals). The intent of the school plan was to define specific strategies for improving student learning. The school plans were a site-based approach to leadership that allowed building administrators the freedom to define their work within the context of each school and then held them accountable for doing so. Kathy recalled, “We saw the Pacifica plan. We sent it back. We saw it again. –No, I think we sent it back twice.” Unfortunately, Pacifica’s principal appeared either unwilling or incapable of developing a suitable building plan.

Three months into the school year, the school directors were increasingly alarmed that
Pacifica’s principal lacked the essential qualities needed to lead a school improvement effort at the struggling middle school. After several failed attempts at remediation, the school directors came to the conclusion their only remaining option was to remove Pacifica’s principal and replace him with someone better qualified to lead the school. The superintendent and executive leadership team agreed that circumstances warranted replacing the principal at midyear. They decided to focus the search for a replacement on an internal candidate who would be capable of stepping into the principal’s role quickly. Soon after, Kathy was approached by a member of the school directors’ team to see if she would be interested in the position. When she confirmed her interest, the district superintendent called Kathy into his office a few days before the winter break.

And he offered the position to me. And-and I said a couple of things. I said I will go if it’s my position. I’m not going until the end of the year. –I’m not interested in doing that. If it’s my position to have and you’re not going to re-post it, and rehire, and make me go through all that stuff. I-I’m not interested in doing that. If I go, you want me to be there and I know I’m going to have some continuity year after year, I will consider going.

Kathy accepted the position after the superintendent assured her that he had no intention of reposting the position at the end of the year. While Kathy understood accepting the position at mid-year would test her ability to win the staff over, she also knew many of the building teachers through her work in special programs and was confident many of them would be willing to work with her.

I knew, probably –I knew half of the staff because of my work years before in the program. So I worked in Title II and I worked in Title VII and I worked in Title I and LAAP. So, I knew probably half the staff or so here. So, when I came in, y’know, I was
just welcome. Because everyone who knew me was glad to see me. And they told the others, this is going to be a good thing for us.

Kathy also knew that some staff had grown comfortable with the lassaiz faire attitude of the old principal and would likely resist a mid-year, administrative change.

**Year one: Getting to know the school context**

Kathy accepted the challenge of replacing a failing principal in mid-year. At the start, she focused her efforts on the staff and thought about how to create the conditions for improved student learning. Unfortunately, the district superintendent initially handicapped Kathy by allowing the outgoing principal to remain in the building through the spring. Kathy was able work through the negative aspects of having her predecessor on site by remaining focused on her organization goal to improve student learning. She turned her attention to meeting immediate building needs rather than allowing herself to get caught up in past or future building dramas that might otherwise cloud her capacity to build a positive work environment. “There’s so much drama amongst the children, we don’t need it amongst the adults. So it’s just a philosophy of not going there.” Kathy concentrated on just being present, getting to know the building, her staff and their individual strengths and weaknesses.

I just did unofficial walk-throughs. I didn’t take any piece of paper; I didn’t take a pen.

I just went from classroom, to classroom, to classroom. And I just walked through. –

Walked through, watched people teach, listened to them, learned their names.

While attending to day-to-day operations, Kathy considered the question: What are we doing as individuals and as an organization? With this in mind, she tried to remain open to events as they were unfolding, to ask questions, and learn about individuals’ daily routines and practices. She focused on developing a complex understanding of organizational work.
Kathy spent the remainder of the spring getting to know the staff and cueing into cultural norms and building operations. In a series of individual and group conversations with teachers, she gradually began articulating her goals for the building and framing the work through the filter of the “written, taught, and tested” curriculum. Continued walk-throughs were the forum for Kathy to get to know teachers and gain their trust. Some teachers were initially nervous when Kathy began her practice of walk-throughs. One teacher in particular, was concerned after Kathy visited her classroom on three separate occasions. Uncomfortable with the scrutiny, the teacher asked one of the coaches, “Aren’t I a good teacher?” When the coach shared the teacher’s concern, Kathy was surprised to learn the unusually dynamic teacher was concerned about being perceived as ineffective.

She had this ELL [English Language Learner] partnership with another teacher and so I just. –I am a language arts person, and so I probably went into more of the literacy classes more often. So, that was just their –they were afraid. They were afraid because they didn’t –they didn’t know me well enough to know. I just –I actually went to her myself. So. And I said, “Marsha, let me know that you were concerned. And let me tell you why [I’ve been visiting your room]. Because I’ve seen this and I’m really excited. And I’ve seen this and I thought it was really cool. And so I’m just going to places that make me feel comfortable.

Kathy’s open admiration for the teacher and frank admission that she was somewhat ill at ease and still learning about the building helped secure the teacher’s trust. Kathy’s approach –as curious and attentive to building operations– was a radical departure from the leadership style of the previous principal who had visited classrooms only when members of the executive leadership team were on site.
Kathy continued a regular practice of walkthroughs as a method of diagnostic practice to guide her work as an instructional leader. For the first several months, she concentrated on getting to know the teachers and characteristics of their practice. Over time, she began to unpack the school context and conditions that influenced student learning; and subsequently, intensified conversations with staff. “So-so I just walked and kind of gathered some information about who was teaching what. And then, we started our collaborations more intensely and intentionally.”

Over time, the tenor of building professional learning conversations was changing as teachers slowly began—many for the first time—to discuss the goals and practices associated with the district curriculum. Seeing this, Kathy began to lay out a plan for staff to advance their understanding through continuous professional learning.

_A need for heightened accountability_

Kathy’s beliefs about the potential for improving student learning caused some teachers to face a critical decision, whether to remain at Pacifica and modify previously understood teaching practices or leave. Early on, Kathy had a conversation with a teacher who was thinking seriously about leaving Pacifica. Kathy asked the veteran teacher, “So, why are you here?” During the ensuing conversation, Kathy was pleased to learn of the teacher’s deep commitment to children. They talked about the challenges he faced in teaching to a variety of student skill levels and options for improving his practice. “And when he chose to stay, because he wanted to be here, his teaching began to change.”

While many teachers willingly engaged with Kathy’s proposed plan for advancing professional learning, not everyone was amenable to the need for change. By the end of Kathy’s first half-year, it was clear there were teachers who lacked the competencies needed to do the building work at an appropriate professional level and yet were unwilling to change. Having
identified a few struggling staff, Kathy took on the crucial task of counseling some teachers out, focusing her efforts on those teachers who either were unable or unwilling to meet the building’s new, heightened expectations.

The next fall the first person retired. Because we had the conversation about the written, taught and tested [curriculum]. We would be teaching the district curriculum and we would be doing professional development.

The first individual to leave was a thirty-year veteran teacher, who, according to Kathy, “hadn’t left her classroom for PD [professional development] in thirty years.” After learning the teacher was overwhelmed with the recent death of a sister and her parents’ failing health, Kathy and the struggling teacher agreed the stress of the job was too much and “she needed to move on.” Soon after, another teacher requested a one-year leave of absence and then later chose not to return to the school. In May, a third teacher decided to retire after thirty-eight years at Pacifica.

Many of the teachers who decided to leave Pacifica that spring were eligible for retirement and left at the end of the school year. However, one individual challenged Kathy’s leadership early in the fall of her second year at Pacifica.

I had another teacher who had –it was the second –the first full year I was here. [He] was really insubordinate in a staff meeting when we were talking about teaming and just said very unprofessional things to me in front of all of the staff.

Immediately after the occurrence, Kathy contacted the Executive Director of Human Resources who arranged a meeting with the union. They met with union officials twice and “by November, he had his package deal and he was gone.” While going through a formal process of separation, Kathy negotiated the individual’s separation with little or no additional drama. She avoided a potential power struggle with a teacher who was upset that he was being asked to change his
routine and what had proved to be ineffective teaching practices. In the process, Kathy
neutralized a potentially ugly situation and helped a disgruntled teacher exit the building and
profession. Kathy’s pragmatic approach diffused the teacher’s hostility to the extent that even
after leaving his teaching position, he felt comfortable coming back to the building and visiting
his former colleagues.

Building professional relationships

Kathy attributed her capacity for building positive relationships to training she took at
Glasser Institute in Choice Theory (http://wglasser.com, 2010) where she learned the importance
of “understanding how people make decisions.” Through the Glasser training and later,
Affective Skills Training with Constance Dembrowski (http://www.self-esteem-
nase.org/edu.php, 2010), Kathy learned how “to invite ...and not just run over” others. “For the
most part, the invitation –the continuous invitation to learn more, to think about it more, to
reflect more, problem-solve more works a lot better.” Kathy later incorporated these same
strategies into professional development training that she delivered to teaching faculty at a local
university. She had hoped the course might become an inherent part of the mentoring program
for new teaching faculty. To date, however, that has not occurred.

At Pacifica, district pressure to move the work forward quickly and improve conditions
for student learning at times challenged Kathy’s equilibrium and ability to build collegial
relationships with the staff. Kathy occasionally lost patience and was overly aggressive when
confronting low performing staff.

I mean if I could redo a couple of things this year –I was pretty upset with a couple of
people for not doing their jobs. And I dealt with them a little more aggressively than-than
I probably should have. Because it-it gets pretty intense. So-so I really need --I have a
couple of critical friends who I can have a reflective dialogue with. I sometimes need those things before I jump in and kind of take the bull by the horns. Sometimes you can-you can rope them a little bit easier without jerking them around.

Despite a few failed interactions with staff, Kathy’s capacity for self-reflection and measured response to failure gained many teachers’ respect and encouraged their trust. For the most part, Kathy worked hard to understand her staff’s point of view and was not afraid to solicit outside opinions or question her own thinking and practice.

Kathy won some teachers’ loyalty when she began doing formal teacher evaluations in the spring and found ways to balance instructional accountability against the need to provide teachers opportunities for growth. In one case, supporting teacher development meant not writing up a poor evaluation for a novice teacher whose lesson “went to Hell in a handbasket.” The problem occurred when the young teacher deviated from his normal pattern of instruction and attempted a lesson intended to impress his principal-evaluator.

The kids weren’t with him and they were going like, “What are you doing?” This was because it wasn’t in the process of what he had taught them. And I said, “I’m throwing this away. I’ll be back tomorrow and we’ll try again.”

When they met the following day, Kathy coached the young teacher to worry less about trying to impress the principal and focus on just being himself. Kathy and the novice teacher talked about how the facade he had put on for the principal’s benefit had confused students and caused them to misbehave during the lesson. “So I do that. I’ve done that more often. [Rather] than just say, “What were you thinking?” When the young teacher admitted, “Well, I’m wanting to impress you.” Kathy’s response was,

Well then, just be yourself. I think you’re pretty awesome the way you are. But-but when
you try to do something that you don’t normally do with kids, to impress, they don’t always play along. Much as they love you, they didn’t play that day. They were confused.”

Kathy opted not to write up the disastrous lesson as a formal observation and instead, encouraged the teacher to reteach the lesson in his usual manner. Kathy’s frank appraisal of the failed lesson allowed her to have a positive discussion with the teacher and turned the incident into an act of formative evaluation intended to inform and improve practice. Instead of punishing the individual for teaching a poor lesson, she identified the failure as an opportunity to discuss aspects of teaching practice with a novice who went on eventually to become a highly effective teacher and one of Kathy’s most ardent supporters.

Kathy attributed her facility for leadership to the fact that she had been fortunate to have “good models” when she worked as an assistant high school principal and later, as a district administrator. She cultivated a pragmatic approach to leadership that integrated a commitment to inquiry and capacity for flexible problem-solving. Teachers responded positively to the fact that while Kathy continually—and at times, forcefully—questioned building practices, she also respected teachers’ expertise and professionalism. Kathy understood the need to build teacher teams with the capacity to interact successfully and adapt as needed—a form of collaborative elasticity—all the while responding to heightened state and district student learning expectations. Kathy’s regard for building expertise was particularly evident as she began to set up professional learning teams. As she prepared for her second year at Pacifica, Kathy asked teachers,

…to fill out a card that talked about all that they could teach [and] what they were eligible to teach in that highly qualified kind of world. And if they wanted to choose three or four people that they would love to work with. –And if they had one person that they
would really rather choose not to work with.

Kathy was surprised by the candid responses she received from teachers as they identified teams of individuals they felt they could work with effectively to better meet students’ needs. Kathy deferred to teachers’ knowledge of peers and sense of professionalism while they trusted her assurances of confidentiality and willingness to honor their requests for potential team members. “Really only living six months with them when they gave me that information, that – I thought that was pretty significant.” Having compiled teachers’ preferences, Kathy created grade-level teams of teachers into small professional learning communities and asked each team to concentrate on student learning.

Changing building culture and deepening organizational capacity

As Kathy’s second year at Pacifica began, increased numbers of teachers were focused on students and in it for “the long haul.” Staff knew they were going to have to work hard to keep up with the rapid learning. Kathy’s stated expectation was that the entire staff would participate in professional learning throughout the year to ensure all students continued to progress, particularly those in the special education and English language learner (ELL) programs. Kathy pressed teachers to reflect on practice and unpack the underlying reasons for student failures. Accordingly, building attention remained focused on the unfolding work with students and the potential effect that work might have on continuing operations.

There were few remaining resistant teachers, most notably among a small group of traditional special education teachers. Kathy had little tolerance for allowing students to struggle because a handful of teachers were reluctant to change traditional beliefs and practices; and was passionate in her defense of low achieving and special education students, “Don’t beat them up because they’re learning disabled. They’re already beat up plenty enough for that.”
Kathy progressively challenged her staff to consider what it meant to be disabled or have limited English proficiency and to rethink what were appropriate student outcomes under these circumstances. Over time, the discourse surrounding high need students began to change in the building.

We don’t hear very much, “They’re your kids.” It’s been pretty much through the teaming, that you own the challenges and the strengths of all of your children. And you use all of the resources accordingly.

Kathy’s high expectations for staff and support for struggling students was fueled in part, by her own granddaughter, who was learning disabled. Kathy acknowledged much of her thinking was shaped through watching her granddaughter struggle in school.

You can’t teach kids out of a disability. As much as I would love to wave a-a magic wand with Patti [Kathy’s granddaughter] and have her be normal intellectually, it isn’t going to happen. It doesn’t go away. She learns how to acquiesce. She learns how to deal with society. She learns how to do what she needs to do. So she’s successful as a contributing member of society. But she’s not going to not be LD [learning disabled] ever.

Kathy was hopeful the changes they were making at Pacifica would help staff be more successful in meeting the needs of all students and was committed to doing so. Yet, Kathy understood that for this to be the case, she would have to continue applying pressure where necessary and to push teachers to think beyond the narrow affordances of the state’s accountability standards and district limitations and innovate creative solutions to the problem.

Anticipating when and how to apply an appropriate level of pressure caused Kathy to resort to her knowledge of choice theory. Rather than forcing teachers to change, she extended
an invitation to change. “The continuous invitation to learn more, to think about it more, to reflect more, problem-solve more works a lot better.” At the same time, Kathy appreciated the need to be caring and authentic in her relationship with teachers.

So, it’s just those constant conversations sometimes about the work, and sometimes about who they are, sometimes about their families. Caring about them like you want them to care about their kids goes a long ways. And it’s not phony, it’s—it’s who I am, to care about the human beings I work with.

An interest in staff encouraged candor in Kathy’s conversations with teachers as they were able to openly discuss problems of practice without fear of reprisal. “Sometimes you win some over on the cusp who need to make a decision, whether or not they need to be teachers. And if they do, they need to change how they do some of their work.” Kathy took on the critical task of analyzing teaching practice and building operations. While Kathy was unflinching in her demand for continuous improvement, she also understood the need to find a balance between heightened accountability and providing opportunities for growth. Through offering individuals options and ongoing support, Kathy won the cooperation of the majority of Pacifica’s teachers. Teachers were invited to think deeply about the type of work they wanted to do and allowed to choose between remaining at Pacifica and joining a highly collaborative group of teacher-learners or leaving. In the end, almost all chose to stay.

Kathy wanted her teachers to own the work of reform and be willing to engage in sometimes difficult conversations about what that work should be and how it should unfold over time. As building leader, Kathy set up the conditions to provide individuals opportunities and resources to support continuous professional growth. She encouraged teacher teams to use data-driven conversations to guide professional learning choices.
My job with adults is really about building capacity. So, how can I do that with the buck? Although the final vote rests with me, as the building principal. But how do I empower them, enable them if I—I can’t micromanage them. I’m not a good micromanager.

Developing teachers’ professional knowledge was essential to the improvements being enacted at Pacifica. As a result of Kathy’s leadership, the study teams began to question their own practice and consider what more was needed to help improve the teaching context.

*Collaborative learning as a basis for change*

Kathy challenged the newly formed professional learning teams to identify a problem of practice to help the teachers develop a complex understanding of their work and focus their learning. The teams agreed to focus on a critical need to understand how best to differentiate instruction across the full range of student competencies. “Working at that differentiation. So that became our first big umbrella of learning.” To focus the discussion on the problem, Kathy asked teachers to examine specific classroom practices and school processes as they were unfolding over the course of the year. To begin, the teams began by looking at the students who were doing well on the state assessment in an effort to understand what was working.

Because really, we figured that what we knew—and Linda [Arroyo] has reiterated this to us too— that when we raise the top everything’s gonna go up. Because you examine your practice more thoroughly.

The underlying premise guiding the professional learning teams’ work was that if they focused on how to meet the needs of high ability students, the resulting improvements to teaching practice could be extended to meet the needs of all students.

As the building-wide study moved forward, staff began to flirt with the idea of creating an honors program. Interestingly, Pacifica had not had an honors track for several years and the
staff was not initially predisposed towards developing an honors strand. “The staff’s perception was that the honors teams were the-principal’s pets. And they got all the good kids and everybody else got everything else.” In response to this idea, Kathy opened this question of practice up “to the entire staff.” In response, twenty-five teachers (out of forty-five total) participated in a year-long study to determine how to better meet the needs of students. After completing a multiple-book study on formative assessment and student learning strategies over the course of the summer and evaluating current building practices, the team determined there was a problem with the master schedule that caused students participating in advanced band and choir to be grouped in all of their classes. Since few course offerings existed for higher-level students, students traditionally were identified by ability level and tracked through available courses.

Having closely examined the existing master schedule, the study team determined they could solve the problem of tracking students by spreading advanced music courses throughout the day.

So every team could have high-level kids. So the schedule’s really set up for integrated honors. And that’s what we’re launching next year. Is every kid in language arts, social studies and science will have an honors option.

Once the master schedule was changed to support integrated honors-level courses throughout the day, the team was able to schedule classes for mixed ability levels. “Cause in a class of twenty-nine kids or twenty-seven kids, four or five will be special ed., and then regular kids, and honors kids will all be in the same class.” Having done so, the team needed to support teachers’ ability to differentiate instruction across these varied ability levels, and to develop a deeper understanding of formative assessment strategies and strategies for “teaching, and assessing, and
grading to standard.”

With this goal in mind, an important question for the study team to consider was: What was “standard” for each of the content areas? To support teachers’ ability to answer this question, Kathy brought in the advice of both internal and external experts. She consulted with district curriculum coordinators in math and language arts and was able to arrange for all but three staff members to attend an intensive, three-day formative assessment training with an external assessment specialist. After working to understand the content standards defined in the State’s grade level expectations (GLEs) and mirrored in the district curriculum, the now-expanded study teams worked with the assessment specialist to understand how to teach the content and formatively assess student learning.

At this point, Kathy realized a serious flaw in their approach to advancing teachers’ professional learning. Because not all building teachers attended the training, a significant gap in understanding developed between the teachers who participated in the formative assessment training and those who did not.

What we didn’t do – y’know in reflective dialogue-- what we didn’t do with the honors work this year, was to loop back out. So when we finally rolled it out to everyone involved in language arts, social studies, and science, there were three people who didn’t go. And so, they started over with the same questions we were grappling with in October that we’d gotten beyond.

As a result of this oversight, active participants in the building’s professional learning were moving forward in their understanding while non-participants were lagging seriously behind. As building teachers advanced their understanding of the curriculum and ability to measure student growth against standard , Kathy was finding it progressively more difficult to ensure the entire
staff was keeping up with the increasingly, fast-paced professional learning.

Kathy realized it was not sufficient to rely on only a few “shooting stars” (early adopters) to move building learning forward.

They can go as fast and furious as they want. But that’s what we didn’t do with honors that we’ve learned. We need to bring everybody in to keep the whole building moving in the same direction.

The whole school reform that they were attempting was complex and needed the cooperation and effort of the entire staff. When Kathy discussed this problem with her staff, they voted to rearrange the learning improvement days (staff training days scheduled the week prior to school opening and throughout the school year) so that the entire staff would have an opportunity to participate in the content collaboration sessions.

By the end of year two, professional learning was ubiquitous throughout the building in the form of data-driven dialogues, grade-level team meetings, book studies, and external training sessions. The results of that learning were slowly becoming evident as student scores on district and state assessments began to trend upward. For instance, an analysis of seventh grade student academic growth (Appendix C, Table 1) from 2001 to 2009 based on data from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (2010) demonstrates a growth trend at Pacifica increased by 3.55% (Reading), 4.02% (Math), and 2.13% (Writing) over nine years, significantly raising the overall level of student achievement. Between the years 2002-2009, Pacifica met its AYP goals in all areas. When these growth indicators are compared to those of two other middle schools in the same district, the study school outperformed both low and high socioeconomic (SES) schools. The study school demonstrates a similarly impressive growth trend when compared to overall district growth in all areas (see Appendix C, Table 1). Improving teacher effectiveness
seemed to be having a positive effect on student learning.

As the school year moved to a close and Kathy worked to replace staff who had retired or left the building, she realized it was increasingly important to incorporate the building’s new, heightened expectations into hiring and training procedures for all new hires.

The people who are new are supported by the coaches. And by real – this is what we’re doing. Some of it is – this is sharing during the interview. This is what we’re working on. And it’s exciting work, but it’s also a great deal of work. Setting the stage to let them [newcomers] know that it’s not an easy place to work.

Accepting a position at Pacifica entailed a willingness to work collaboratively and confront difficult problems of practice. Kathy’s leadership’s role in this endeavor included making sure that everyone on staff kept on pace with every aspect of the ongoing professional learning.

A safe place to learn

Pacifica’s context for learning was improving for students and staff, a circumstance that was beginning to draw district attention. Alice, a third year teacher, had attended several out-of-district professional learning sessions directed at working with high risk learners, and had begun to earn a district-wide reputation for doing so effectively. Kathy pointed out that

Alice’s class is a place where a number of initiatives we’ve grappled with in the building come to fruition. So, she was one of our Love and Logic trainers. So she uses Love and Logic pretty effectively with not making judgments about kids.

Kathy introduced Alice during the post-lesson interview and described the context for her class.

This is a brand new class. This is our first looping class in middle school. So our philosophy is by keeping this large group of kids with the teachers two years in a row is going to eliminate a lot of those transitions.
Alice and one other seventh grade teacher had requested the opportunity to loop with their shared group of students. Looping meant that both teachers would follow their seventh grade students to the seventh grade. Students had an opportunity to continue with the same teacher or opt out of looping to the seventh grade class. Kathy allowed the change in practice after the two teacher-partners successfully presented their rationale and plan to Kathy and the seventh grade team. Kathy’s decision to support the teachers was consistent with her stated intention to build individuals’ capacity to research school-based problems and innovate solutions. Kathy noted that Alice had developed a close working relationship with this group of students the prior year. “So they opted to stay with her for the second year, for the beginning of this pilot. Not really a pilot project, for this new practice.” The teachers’ carefully researched plan met the staff’s agreed upon goal of strengthening student-teacher relationships at Pacifica. The two teachers were given the go-ahead to pilot a two-year looping cycle with students and then report back to the grade-level team for further review.

Kathy praised Alice’s ability to work with students in a clear and concise manner. “That’s part of the clarity that we’re looking for. Being clear about what we want kids to know and be able to do and see those connections.” Kathy asked Alice about one student who “was being a little bit onery” during the lesson. Alice remarked the student had “had a ‘bad night’ and was a great kid, who’s brilliant and carries a heavy load” to school. Even though the student had initially refused to do the task, Kathy noted Alice was able to look past the student’s negative attitude and had found a way to engage her in the work. Kathy praised Alice for “keeping her connected, and letting her grapple a little bit.” Kathy called attention to the point at which the student told Alice

“I don’t care,” another kid came on the other side and just sat with her. And that’s part of
the looping too. Is just creating that learning community inside, within that team. That kids aren’t going to let other kids push away.

During the lesson, there were several examples of students helping each other. Kathy suggested that Alice’s “management style,” invited students to work in ways that encouraged engagement “which is our goal.” Finding ways to support student engagement and building in strong supports for learners were well-articulated goals at Pacifica and were evidenced through Alice’s work with students.

The learning community Alice was nurturing in her mixed ability class seemed to mirror the professional learning communities Kathy was in the process of developing with teachers. Collegiality and a commitment to the work of learning seemed to extend from an emerging building culture that invited individuals to learn—at whatever level they might be. Creating a culture of that encouraged this type of continuous learning and experimentation needed an unusual level of trust between students, teachers, and building administrators. Kathy encouraged teachers to read and explore teaching strategies that helped them to re-imagine traditional forms of practice. Alice spoke to the challenges associated with realizing that organizational goal and need for support from leadership. She discussed the importance of “knowing that it’s ok” to risk and try different teaching strategies.

I struggled for a lot of time having it be ok to walk into my classroom and having it be like that. Like I know it’s loud and I’ve struggled with that a lot. Just thinking that—I mean when people walk in they want them [students] to be orderly and quiet. So, having that bit—just that freedom from you [speaking to Kathy] knowing that that’s ok is one help.

Secure in Kathy’s support and with access to continuous professional learning in the form of
conferences, building-level book clubs, and collaborative study sessions Alice seemed invested in continuing to improve teaching practice.

I think that always being challenged—not in a bad way—but challenged to be better, I think keeps me challenged and wanting to do better. And I think our building—it’s just part of our culture. Its learning and being ok to learn it, and try it, and then succeed or not succeed. It’s ok that it’s a trial process that we’re all doing it.

A combination of high expectations, support, and trust seemed to be a catalyst for organizational learning that had begun to affect change in teachers’ thinking and practice. Individuals at Pacifica were encouraged to ask the question: How do I understand and improve my own practice and support my students’ learning? Kathy encouraged teachers to test their presumptions about students and how they learn best; and then to think about improved forms of practice.

Alice took this learning a step further and made the connection that just as Kathy’s faith in her judgment and practice as a teacher had allowed her to grow as a teacher, a similar approach with students might advance their learning. Accordingly, Alice began to bring students into her confidence, often telling them when she was trying something new. She worked at winning students’ trust and increasing their level of engagement in her classroom.

I think that’s the same thing I ask of my students. I wouldn’t tell them they couldn’t practice or couldn’t ever fail it or ever fail at something and then expect them to be risk takers. That y’know—that’s not safe.

Based on this emerging understanding, Alice initiated outcome-based grading practices (emphasizing an end product rather than steps-along-the-way) and allowed students to redo work that failed to meet her stated classroom expectations. She began to redefine the process of
learning in her classroom and to build in stronger supports for students.

To this purpose, Alice, along with several other building teachers, was invested in a process of unpacking the purpose of grading and assessments. Several teacher-participants in the honors study group had stopped averaging zero scores into students’ grades. Instead they allowed students to work for mastery and to redo unsatisfactory work whenever possible. Alice recounted an example of one student who had scored low on a district reading assessment.

Last year I did one of the district’s reading assessments. And one student —I don’t count their practice either— and this kid was just so distraught. The district readings aren’t the most enthralling pieces of text to read. And she’s like [Alice threw her hands up in the air in exasperation]. And so we [Alice and students] did a data-driven dialogue about it. And we had this great conversation and she raised her hand and she said, “Mrs. B., I did horrible on this. Can I please redo this?”

And I said, “What? You want to redo a district reading assessment?” [Alice pumped her arm up and down] Yes! That’s what I want! I want you to say, “I didn’t get what I was supposed to out of this. I didn’t learn this right. Can I try it again?” It was just like —at that moment I realized that they kind of understood the idea behind learning. Not grading, not assignments, but-but learning.

Alice and her students had begun to reconceptualize learning and how it could be improved with the right supports in place. Alice arrived at this point in her understanding and practice as a result of ongoing professional learning and through data-driven dialogues with her team. (Specific strategies will be discussed more thoroughly in the data-driven dialogue section that follows.) Alice, an early adopter, had incorporated similar strategies for collaborative learning into her own classroom practice.
A commitment to learning

Kathy was invested in transforming a traditionally failing middle school into a school with a strong sense of professional community with a commitment to creating the conditions necessary to support student learning. As a result of Kathy’s leadership student learning at Pacifica was slowly improving. Kathy accomplished this act of leadership through increased attention to organizational goals and practices and encouraging individuals to be critical practitioners. Evidencing increased collective mindfulness of the staff to concentrate on understanding the results of their own professional practice. Professional learning teams were increasingly forthright in their conversations about practice and subsequently, better situated to attend to the work of engaging students in an iterative process of learning.

With Kathy’s support, there was heightened interest among teachers to assume responsibility for their work and building outcomes. This positive outcome of Kathy’s leadership was perhaps most evident when Alice was asked if the building work would continue should Kathy ever decide to leave Pacifica. “If she left, we would say we’re going to focus on student learning. And we’re still gonna do it. I think, she’s empowered us to know how to do it ourselves. We’re not dependent on Kathy to keep learning.” Kathy added that the newly-revised site plan for Pacifica reflected the staff’s growing commitment to the work. “It is in there that we are committed as a learning community, that we’re committed to work with our coaches, that we’re committed to have teams, that we’re committed to do these things.” Kathy had provided teachers a process for how they might question and improve professional practice. As evidenced through Alice’s comments, teachers were confident in their ability to make this shared purpose a reality – with or without Kathy’s continued presence.

Data-Driven Dialogue
As described above, Kathy had instituted an ongoing process of change at Pacifica concentrated on developing teachers’ professional learning and capacity for reflection. Building on teachers’ commitment to organizational improvement, Kathy implemented data-driven dialogues as one-such process to advance individuals’ collective learning. The strategy was intended to focus organizational attention on student learning, when and where failures occur, and associated need to modify teaching practice. As discussed earlier, the potential advantage of implementing data-driven conversations in a reform context is the potential to shift organizational attention away from a focus on student failure and subsequent need to address a narrowly defined and rigid set of accountability goals to an emphasis on a collegial process, in which administrators and teachers would iteratively evaluate and refine their practice.

The data-driven dialogue (DDD) explicated below was videorecorded for the purpose of demonstrating the DDD protocol and how it could be effectively implemented in a professional learning setting. The DDD took place late in the spring of Kathy’s second year at Pacifica. Participating in the session, were three seventh grade science teachers (Peter, Andy, and Deborah), science coach (Beth) and principal (Kathy), all seated around a large, round conference table in the science workroom. At this point in the school year, the science teachers were very familiar with the DDD protocol and had been using it as an analytic tool since early in the fall.

As the video began, Andy and Kathy were gently teasing Peter about his obvious discomfiture when one of his students had begun referring to him as “Bro.” As they laughed about students’ use of overly familiar appellations, Linda Arroyo, the district administrator who had arranged to have the DDD videorecorded, broke in on their conversation. Linda introduced the goals for the videorecorded session.
Linda: Just to let you know—that there are two purposes—aside from the learning that you’re going to be involved with here. We want to—What we’re trying to do is zone in on Kathy because she’s a model for her peers.

Kathy: I put lipstick on just for that!

Linda: Especially on her lipstick and what she’s going to do is to model for other principals what this kind of collaboration might look like.

Linda sat down on the side of the room outside of camera range, while Kathy leaned slightly forward in her seat and began facilitating the data-driven dialogue. Kathy reminded the group that “What we’re doing today is what we’ve done before.” She suggested she didn’t need to teach the group the DDD protocol since they had done it before.

Kathy: So it’s just an opportunity for me to help—help me to get inside your heads and see what your thinking is. And um, to really look at the data to help us figure out what we need to do with the next set of learning time.

The purpose of the session was an investigation of the most recent Powerful Classroom Assessment (PCA). The regularly scheduled DDDs encouraged teachers to analyze student results against a set of indicators (PCAs) and adapt teacher practice as warranted. Kathy noted that the DDDs deepened teachers’ awareness of their own teaching practice and potential challenges to student learning.

Making predictions about the data

As was the norm for DDD sessions at Pacifica, participating teachers had been given an opportunity to review their individual classroom results prior to meeting. As the DDD began, Kathy asked teachers to make a prediction about how their students did in relation to the entire building. To aid in this conversation, Kathy provided teachers copies of their classroom results...
for the first extended-response question on the assessment, *How do different amounts of salt in the water affect how fast a nail rusts?* The item asked students to apply their knowledge of the scientific process and write a conclusive statement based on a given experimental data set.

Kathy: Using your own information about your own classes, predict how you think the whole school did in the conclusive statement, and supporting data, and the explanatory language.

While teachers looked at their classroom results, Kathy added that she would like them to “throw the big score” and predict the range of scores and how many zeros, ones, and twos there were on the four-point rubric.

After a brief wait, Kathy leaned over, looked at Peter’s paper, and asked him if he would like to begin the discussion. Peter was quick to point out the limitations of the PCA rubric that in his opinion, magnified student errors.

Peter: I had ten percent of kids.

Kathy: OK.

Peter: And the main reason’s because it doesn’t –there’s really no wiggle room at all in that because it’s either you get all the credit, or you get –or you– if you don’t get that –if you miss one point, then you drop down to a one.

Kathy: Right.

Kathy acknowledged Peter’s point about the limiting factors inherent in the rubric that made a two “a difficult score to get.” However, she did not allow Peter sufficient time to fully develop his thinking, and instead quickly moved the conversation forward and asked Deborah her prediction “for twos?”

Deborah acknowledged her prediction may have been “very optimistic in saying twenty
percent” of students might score a two. Deborah attributed the low scores to “that explanatory language” and last bullet in the question. Pointing to the responses from the final question on the PCA, Deborah suggested, “If you didn’t get that fourth point, then you don’t get a two and I’m pretty sure a lot of the kids didn’t get that last bullet for a variety of reasons.”

Kathy immediately moved on to Andy, who had anticipated ten percent of students would score a two. Andy explained, “I said ten percent because I believe there’s a lack of clear purpose in making the connection between the responding variable and the manipulated variable.” Kathy and Beth, the science coach, each nodded “Yes.” in response to Andy’s comment.

Without directly responding to Andy’s comments, Kathy paused to clarify Beth’s role as coach in the data-driven dialogue process. She emphasized Beth had prepared the classroom and building-wide data for the DDD and so was unable to add her prediction to the group discussion. In addition to preparing the data, Beth also had facilitated earlier DDD sessions with the team. What Kathy left unsaid was that facilitation of the data-driven dialogues required a unique skill set and ability to win and hold participants’ trust. Kathy deferred to Beth’s expertise in science and trusted in her ability to assume the role of facilitator. Effective facilitation was a complex matter, in large part because the conversations occurred in the highly charged context of heightened accountability. As increasing numbers of schools failed to meet the state’s mandated Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets, district administrators put increasing pressure on building principals to monitor and improve student scores on the district’s end-of-unit assessments correlated to the annual Washington State Assessment for Learning (WASL). Teachers were aware that their student scores were both public and a topic of concern for the district administration and parents. In an attempt to mediate the potentially negative effects this external pressure might have on building teachers, Kathy worked to create a building culture that
avoided putting building teachers up for evaluation in front of their peers and instead, focused attention on continuous learning. Kathy used the DDD protocol to direct teachers’ attention to student learning and not on individual teacher’s failure to implement the written-taught-tested curriculum. Effective implementation of the protocol could create the conditions for grade-level teams to discuss classroom results for each PCA in a safe and constructive manner.

Assumptions about the data

As Kathy advanced the conversation, she had the team compare the building-level data to the number of students they predicted had received a two on the PCA. Andy responded by saying, “I-I guessed seventy.” He made particular note of the fact that prior to teaching the unit, the seventh grade team had worked as a cohort to determine an appropriate pedagogical approach that would maximize student learning.

Andy: As a team we talked about how we were going to teach that –that we were all doing direct teaching around these conclusions. I felt very confident the kids understood they had to have the high and the low of the variable.

Andy was puzzled by the results and concentrated his attention on trying to understand why this approach had not been more successful.

Peter’s building-wide predictions were similar to Andy’s. Peter suggested,

The biggest area for –that we stressed lately was in that supporting data. And I think that-that correlates pretty well with where we put a lot of stress. And so it makes sense that without that last stress point, –that last point– that’s where we have a large majority of the students.

Peter added that because the PCA rubric placed more emphasis on the supporting data than the teachers expected, many students’ conclusive statements failed to meet standard. Peter’s
comment alluded to the challenge the teachers faced when preparing lessons aligned to summative assessments; and the importance of deciding what content elements were essential and what that inferred for instructional delivery.

Although both Andy and Peter began to move to an analysis of results from the PCA, Kathy stopped them from doing so. As Kathy facilitated the unfolding conversation, she held the group to the DDD protocol. The protocol was a three stage process. In Phase I, participants were asked to make predictions about the data in an effort to surface hidden assumptions or questions. During Phase II, they would analyze the data for surprises or results that stood out as unusual. Phase III was the point at which individuals were encouraged to make inferences about the data and suggest possible changes to practice. When Andy and Peter began to deconstruct what had caused the drop in student scores, Kathy repeatedly pulled the group back to their predictions; suggesting the challenge to predicting building-wide scores was the fact the team was unable to foresee how other seventh grade science teachers—who did not participate in the pre-assessment lesson planning—would teach the lesson. Kathy emphasized the team could not control for this situation. Having made this point, Kathy then asked each individual in turn to comment on their assumptions about the remaining building-level data.

Kathy: Based on your initial predictions, what were your—some of you started to share those. So just write a few of them down. We talked about the focus on the explanatory language. We talked about how you agreed to teach it. So those would be your assumptions.

Kathy turned to Deborah who pointed out a problem with how the data were represented. The data only showed student scores for zero, one, and two. However, the PCA rubric was scored on a four point scale.
Deborah: And that makes me wish we had the data zero through four
Kathy: Broken down.
Deborah: Because then we could really see where they missed those points.
Beth: We need to do that next time.
Kathy: [looking at Beth] So we want to disaggregate …
Beth: By the scoring.
Peter: The value. –Is it valid? By the value points. Right.
Kathy: By the value points.
Beth: By the value points.
Deborah: The value points. Because like –we don’t know which. If they got a two, it could have been a –well.
Peter: They could’ve –what they could’ve. Yeah.
Deborah: Two points or three points.
Peter: We don’t know specifically, which part they’ve missed on this.
Kathy: Which will be really critical for what we do next.
Peter: Absolutely. Right.

The team appreciated the importance of Deborah’s point and that they needed to see the disaggregated data to understand where student errors were occurring. Beth, who prepared the data for dissemination to teachers, was quick to see the affordance of disaggregating the data in this manner. Although Andy didn’t verbalize his thinking, he nodded in agreement throughout the discussion. Kathy agreed to address the issue with the rest of the staff “post this conference.”

Deborah’s second assumption was that students “would do well with conclusive statements.” However she was less confident that they would use appropriate explanatory
language in their conclusions. “I knew that would be a weak spot. [Kathy nodded, “Yes.”] But I thought they would definitely do better with data.

Peter immediately concurred with Deborah and added, “In a prior meeting, we all talked about the data—the supporting data—and the crucial importance of that supporting data. So, that’s something that we’ve all put a little bit more stress into in our classrooms.” Peter stated that in doing so, everyone on the team thought student scores would improve. In particular because they believed writing the concluding statement was “the easiest part of the question.” Peter added that the last part of the question (which asked students to summarize their findings) may have appeared to students to be redundant and could have been the reason many students failed to respond appropriately. “It very—it very much looks like a redundant question. So it was hard to get the students to differentiate between what they’re really asking for.”

Peter raised an interesting pedagogical point about the use of language on the PCA. Once again, however, Kathy did not stop to develop Peter’s thinking, but moved the discussion forward and asked Andy to share his assumption. Speaking slowly, Andy added that for the portion of the question requiring explanatory language, the problem may have been with his instruction.

Andy: Because I didn’t really understand how—what that really meant until recently. And I think it’s—it’s a critical thinking skill to make the comparison between the variables in the data table. And I’ve not taught it that way. And it was just an “Ah ha” that I’ve had now. –that if we’re –If I’m going to use that language all year long—controlled-manipulated— in responding, then that conclusion—that explanatory language needs to have the variable language used in it so they can make the connection.

Andy articulated his understanding of the difficulty students experienced when trying to evaluate
information using two of three variables. He added, “So I can be more intentional now. I-I just think I didn’t teach it right.

After studying the data, Andy questioned his own preconceptions about what was important to teach. Having identified what he believed to be a significant instructional gap, he then talked about a needed change to his teaching practice.

Andy: I think I taught redundancy and really isn’t from my perspective now.

Peter: Right.

Andy: But me thinking that led to …

Kathy: What d’you?

Andy: …a misconception in my teaching.

Peter: Absolutely.

Deborah: I think so too.

Kathy immediately responded, “Wow, that’s pretty powerful.” However, she seemed to struggle with Andy’s use of the word “redundancy” and the idea that the way he had taught the lesson may have caused students to misunderstand the purpose of the conclusion.

In an effort to make sense of Andy's concern, Kathy attempted to connect to her own experience as a language arts teacher.

Kathy: So I’m thinking. I’m an English teacher by trade y’know. So I’m thinking teaching a five paragraph essay. The first paragraph is, you’re going to tell us what you’re going to tell us. The next three, you tell us what you’re going to tell us and support that with a lot of supporting detail. And then, the fifth paragraph is tell us what you told us. So-but, it can never be the same in that paragraph. So I’m trying to make a connection with what I know as far as my strategies from my content.
The team listened to Kathy’s description of the role a summary plays in a five paragraph essay, but did not respond immediately. Looking around the table, Kathy continued, “But what you’re saying, is it’s not just redundant, it’s more *summative*. More?"

Deborah: It’s analysis

Andy: It’s *scientific* analysis.

Kathy: More analysis.

Deborah: You have to use the numbers and *do* something with them. To come up with a new piece of information. So if they didn’t take the extra step to analyze.

Beth: Yes.

Kathy: So is it a *therefore*?

Beth: Yes.

Peter: It kind of is.

Deborah: Kind of.

Beth: Yes.

The teachers were quick to correct Kathy’s misconception of the purpose of a summary in scientific analysis.

Going back to the point he had tried to make earlier, Peter noted the challenge for students may have occurred when they read the question and it appeared to them to be redundant.

Peter: The students look at it and they have to answer this question, but they have to answer it differently again. And they have to take the information that they’ve applied, and then reapply it and show a difference.

Kathy: Umkay.

Peter: And so it’s very difficult. The students look at that –the very first time they look at
it, they’re completely lost. “So like how do I even *answer* that again?” Because I think they’ve now answered it like three times in the space of *one* paragraph.

Peter noted it was problematic for the science teachers to not know how they might best help students understand how to approach the question. Although Kathy had suggested a potential connection to language arts, Peter and the others rejected the notion that the process for writing an analytic statement in science was comparable to writing conclusion for a five-paragraph essay. He emphasized how he and Andy had struggled to come up with a solution for what they understood to be a complex pedagogical problem. It was only after they “talked about it enough” that Peter felt, “we finally have a real grasp of how we need to teach that.”

Once again, Kathy did not press Peter to explain his thinking; but alternatively, suggested the group continue to look at “the rest of the building data.” She had the teachers include data from the *Cars and Ramps* question in their analysis of the PCA and describe “What’s the data telling us?” Before the group continued to analyze the data, Beth pointed out a potential problem with language and a significant difference between the fifth and seventh grade PCAs and how students were asked to use the word “hypothesis.” Although important, Beth’s interjection was somewhat off point and slowed the discussion. After a long pause, Peter asked Kathy to clarify what they were supposed to be doing. Kathy responded that after looking at data from the previous assessment, they might have predicted that scores “would have improved significantly across the board.” However, she pointed out that there was no improvement and asked the group to analyze the data and come up with “a causal hypothesis” for what might have occurred.

*What does the data infer for practice?*

Having looked at the data for a couple of minutes, Andy noted that the number of “twos” on the *Cars and Ramps* question actually dropped from thirty-three percent to fourteen percent...
on _Rusty Nail_. He attributed the drop in scores to the fact that he had a much better idea of how to score the assessment than he did in the past. Kathy nodded “Yes” enthusiastically as Andy suggested this. Andy quickly reminded the group of the epiphany he had experienced earlier in the discussion and realization that he simply needed to teach the lesson differently. He noted, “I’m not one hundred percent sure I’ll get where I want to go, but I-I think I have a better idea of what the target is.” Kathy did not comment on this statement, but instead turned to Deborah and asked what she had noticed in the data.

Deborah suggested that as the teachers had worked with students to do a better job of supporting their responses to questions on the PCA, there were fewer zeros.

Deborah: The kids quoted the numbers this time. So they’re at least getting the one and that-that enough carried them up to a one [overall]. But to second that they didn’t get the two because I did not give that last point if it wasn’t dead on as far as the explanatory language.

Beth quickly agreed and suggested that declining scores (number of twos) on the assessment was likely an indicator of the group’s “growth as scorers.”

Kathy turned to Peter, who seemed to be thinking about the data. Peter mentioned that the experimental data given on the PCA had actually been taken from when his students had done the experiment in class.

Peter: One of the things that I keep looking at is that my students actually did that experiment. And so what I was thinking. –I don’t know if it’s right or wrong really– it lets them interpret the graphs how they want to or how the data looks.

What Peter was suggesting was that having done the experiment, “Sometimes we _see_ what we _want_ to see.” His point was that his students may have adjusted their responses to the PCA to
correspond more closely to their actual experience when they completed the Cars and Ramps experiment in class.

Kathy seemed puzzled by Peter’s explanation and asked him to clarify his comment. Peter reiterated that as students tried to connect the question with their classroom experience, doing so might have caused them to amend their response to match their classroom results. Kathy worked to understand Peter’s thinking

Kathy: So you’re saying that doing the experiment before the assessment didn’t necessarily help them. It might have given them information that might have gotten in their way?

Peter: It could have misled them if they didn’t have the resolution at the end to understand really what happened in the experiment when they did it. If their data supported what their thought was versus what happened and what should have happened.

Kathy: So –So, does that have implications for teaching? [Kathy looked around the table at the rest of the group.]

Andy: It does for me.

Beth: Oh yeah.

Andy: Cause when I look at this data to me, the good news is I’m glad that the data looks the way it does on the Rusty Nail because what it tells me is –as the teacher– the kids got beyond that. They actually now are looking at data and trying to make interpretations of data on things they have never seen before.

While Peter concurred with Andy’s statement, he added that they should not understate the degree to which their “…grading has become so much better” after having graded over one hundred and fifty to two hundred of similarly focused questions. He reiterated that in the
beginning, they may have been giving students higher scores than they deserved.

Kathy mentioned she had visited Peter’s classroom the day of the assessment and again on the day he taught students how to score it. She asked Peter, “What are the implications for the kids? Do we take that back to them again? Kathy’s suggestion—to share the teachers’ emerging understanding of the assessment and what it inferred for student learning with students—was strongly endorsed by Peter.

Peter: Absolutely. I don’t think that we can-- uh-uh I think holding it back from them, the grading rubric, and teaching them how to answer questions –not necessarily just the content– Because even if we have the content, if we don’t have the correct format or structure they’re gonna –The grader, first of all, is going to be struggling to find the answers. And so, if we can give them the correct format to answer the questions, we now are putting everybody on a level playing field. So now, it’s going truly on knowledge versus format.

Kathy and Peter both nodded and agreed that they needed to “teach them to play the game.” Peter emphasized that otherwise, even if students knew the concept they still might struggle to know how to respond to the question correctly.

Going back to the point she had tried to made earlier, Kathy reminded the teachers of what they had learned through a book study of *How People Learn* (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000) that emphasized the importance of helping students make connections to prior knowledge.

Kathy: I’m the English teacher trying to make my connection with the writing rubric to a five paragraph essay. I mean so-so that’s how we learn. We attach to what we already know. So what are your thoughts about how we take the-what we know
about the rubric and what we’re learning about the rubric other than just to continue to go through it? What connections, d’you think we can make with them about what they’re already learning in either math or language arts?

Andy responded, saying that not having taught other subjects, he couldn’t directly respond to her question, but he hoped “that the state has such-something set up so that a kid can learn to write a conclusion” regardless of the subject area. “A conclusion is a conclusion based upon data that they have.”

Kathy pushed back on Andy’s statement, noting, “I think this is more specific language than I see. Although I recognize that some of the supporting detail is certainly language.”

Beth: Can you back it up with –and you make your claim and support it with numeric evidence or quotes from the text. Or you support it with the ways you solved the problem again. I think –I think we’re asking kids to do the same kind of thinking. This format might be a little more rigid for science that they would see in other places, but it’s the same kind of thinking. You make a claim and you support it in some way. and then you establish why. –Why you support your claim.

Kathy paused a moment before responding to the group.

Kathy: As we look towards recommendations and we’ve talked about the final –when we first started doing the data-driven dialogue it was about the task, about the rubric, about what kids were doing. But what we’ve really done –is done a funnel. And that funnel filters the teacher. What the teacher does, makes the primary difference. And people who’ve gone through the data-driven dialogue in every content agree with that. [Touching Andy’s elbow] I just appreciate your language so much because it’s what I need to do differently –and that’s true for this whole team. So what –where do we go
from here?

Kathy appeared to value the group’s willingness to try to unpack the results of the data and potential impact on teacher practice.

Beth returned to the problem of how best to disaggregate the data so that the team would have the best possible view of student understanding. They agreed it would be helpful to have a small rubric that broke out the composite score after each question. Kathy then returned the conversation to Andy’s earlier point.

Kathy: So, Andy talked a lot about the hypothesis and relating it back to the question.

–And then the language that you were using about the control and variable. What do you do to teach kids that language? Though you’re talking about what you’re doing, as far as using the language consistently. What d’you do with kids so that it’s in their repertoire?

Andy: I have to teach it differently. I-I wasn’t doing that before. I haven’t even done it yet, quite honestly. Cause I just thought about this last night. Crazy, I don’t even know when I was thinking about it, but I thought, “Why am I not using respond?” I was looking at the grading rubric. I don’t see anything in there about responding variable, control variable, manipulated variable. I need to start using that language because if I’m going to teach kids to identify those in a question then I need to help them better understand why. If I teach it that way, it validates the investigation. Now they can figure out why do I have to have a responding variable and a manipulated variable other than you keep telling me about it. Well, when you write a conclusion, a scientist takes data, pulls it apart, evaluates it, and analyzes it, and now you know why you have to have the variables. –It’s in that table. So, I need to be more intentional in my teaching of those words and connect it.
Beth agreed with Andy’s idea and added that whenever they create a data table, they should have the manipulated and responding variables in the same places so that students get used to seeing them represented that way.

Kathy agreed that establishing that “brain pattern” would be helpful to students. She turned to Peter and reminded the group that they had been talking about the “question, and the hypothesis, to really work on having them [students] go back to the question. –And working on that conclusive statement differently.” Deborah jumped in to say she frequently told students to go back, look at their hypothesis and see if it was “right or wrong.” She told them to do that in the conclusion –to revisit the question and ask themselves what they thought would happen and whether or not it did occur. Kathy nodded and said,

Again, I may be more of a language arts person, but when you –when you have the question –you have a question first. And then, don’t you generate a hypothesis? So, would that be helpful to go back even beyond the hypothesis to –y’know our conclusion is about the big ideas, is about the question. What are we trying to resolve? So, it really isn’t about a hypothesis –a summary in any kind of research—is about the question that we’re trying to answer. That would be helpful in making a schema of that somehow.

Kathy turned again to Peter and asked him his thoughts. Peter, who up to this point, had been somewhat quiet, shook his head slowly and said,

I-I’m trying to figure out how-why it’s taking me so long to figure out how I need to be teaching this. And, it’s taking-well, this is the first half of the year. We went almost a third of the year before we started actually breaking down and rewriting rubrics so they’re kid-friendly. So we’re looking behind the curtain. We’re not showing –we’re not hiding anything from the kids anymore. Because I think it’s really a disservice to them to
The group nodded in agreement with Peter. Kathy asked Beth when the next assessment would be given. They talked briefly about scheduling the next assessment so that it didn’t overload their students and they agreed they had a month to prepare students.

Kathy then turned the conversation back to the conclusion for the *Rusty Nail* question. She asked Andy for the scoring guide and the group laughed when Kathy shook her head upon seeing the three-page guide.

Beth: And I think one of the reasons that it’s taken us so long to get there is because it’s a three-page scoring guide for a conclusion! We’re learning. Every time I look at it, I find something new.

Peter: It’s—It’s a constant re-evaluation of what we’re doing and-then we have to give it to the kids and have them test on it and then we have to go back and re-assess what we did. And it’s—it’s always nice to sit down together and talk about because we never have the same ideas.

Peter added how much he valued working with the others because teaching in this way is “an endurance issue” as they needed to keep going back to the assessments and adjusting their practice in order to get “where we need to be.” Kathy was appreciative of Peter’s concern and said,

Part of it was from the beginning of the year, looking at—y’know we have an eight percent increase in our science scores. You-I don’t know that I could ask you to work much harder. [looking at Peter] So we're trying to explore those ways to make sense of our world. And the PCA came to us through Beth and some of the connections that she has. And I said in the PCA workshop at OSPI [Office of the Superintendent of Public
Instruction], it’s so complex. And trust me, you’re about one out of how many thousands of science teachers who --probably steps ahead—are having these conversations. By working together and learning from one another, we can launch forward. Cause if you just do it by yourself, boy, that’d be tough.

Peter mentioned how far they had come. They had begun by creating their own questions. And in looking back at them, they were “just off the board crazy!” But over the course of the last three years, they had begun to get “more uniform, good quality questions” that they were able to deconstruct and which supported this type of rich discussion.

Kathy asked Deborah if she had any closing thoughts.

Deborah: I think this process has been very, very helpful for me and seeing especially from where we were and throughout the last few years, before we did the PCAs and data-driven dialogue. Absolutely, it’s working smarter because this is a huge gain. You can nail down –it’s this tiny piece that’s holding us up.

Peter: Exactly.

Deborah: and key in on that and the kids jump on it. I mean they are very excited to get an easy little thing that they can implement and double their score. I mean, they’re all over that. And speaking with Beth, about how specific our language is getting.

Deborah noted there was little guess work in their process. Having the data caused them to know with some surety where their students were in their learning.

Kathy: It just that continuous improvement, Peter. Don’t beat yourself up because it’s a learning cycle. You’ve gotta just keep on going with continuing to learn because if there were a magic bullet, we would have found it by now. [Peter smiled and the others chuckled] So, it’s just continuing to learn together.
As the data-driven dialogue wrapped up, Kathy turned to the group and asked them how they felt about having the conversation on camera. They all mentioned that their biggest concern had been that they wouldn’t have anything new to say because they had met earlier and had continued the conversation off and on all week. Beth remarked, “But this is the nature of the conversations that we have in passing.” The team had built a process for continuous reflection into their practice. As Kathy noted earlier, they were not dependent on Kathy to guide them through this process.

As the group began picking up the materials from the data-driven dialogue, Kathy walked over to speak with Carol. While the science teachers continued talking about the problem with students thinking the conclusion was “redundant.”

Peter: Andy and I just came up with an idea. I think in the last-last. He comes up to me and says, “Y’know I’ve been thinking about that.” And I go, I have to – I want to tell you what I’m thinking first! [everyone laughs!] And so, cause we have the exact same … We have the exact same ideas. It’s like, wait a second. I mean my-my thought was what d’we do? We tell—and tell me the difference. Tell me the difference of what we’re looking at there. If you just tell me there’s a difference of 29.5 [everyone nods “yes”] that’s what the answer was in this one. You just show me that difference or tell me that, I can give you credit for it. …But if you don’t put a number in there, I can’t give you credit for it.

Listening to the conversation, Kathy walked over and rejoined the group.

Kathy: I had a thought about that because my question is about transfer. It’s about how we can help because in science you help each other. Because you’re very good at conversing and learning from one another. What—what can the English and math teachers do with you in your core teams to have kids writing like this more often? I’m
telling you this is not far-fetched from good writing. Regardless. I mean, I can remember
in high school. –True confessions, place switcher. [Kathy’s] English teacher
extraordinaire said, “Where d’you find this crap?” …He wrote that on my paper! [Beth
laughs] We were supposed to support, y’know “according to William Shakespeare.” We
had to go back to say where we got it. In this light, it’s still, “Where’d ya get that?” And
the numbers? So there’s gotta be some correlations that make sense about this writing
that we can spread across, y’know. I want to look now-now after going through this with
you. I want to look at the assessment for writing, and or reading, or math and look at that
writing part. And say, “How’s this different?” “How’s this the same?” Can kids learn
one scoring system and get the points they need without changing the language all the
time?

As the group disbanded, the teachers slowly left the meeting room still engaged in an animated
discussion on the language of variables and difficulty of helping students draw correlations
between the content areas.

Summary of Descriptive Analysis

The description exposes various features of organizational resilience as present within
professional practice of these educators. Taken together, the analysis of the three sources of data
provides a multilayered view of Kathy Rose’s understanding of the principalship and nature of
her work to bring about school improvement.

As a pragmatic leader, Kathy understood that “no system is perfect” (Weick & Sutcliffe,
2001, p. 67) and therefore, failure to one degree or another is inevitable. However, Kathy was
emphatic in her belief that the district could have avoided the school-wide failure that occurred at
Pacifica had they paid better attention to early signs of trouble and actively supported the work at
the building level. A commitment to resilience was the impetus for why Kathy felt “so profoundly about …they [the district staff] just need to pay attention when things aren’t well.” Kathy’s belief that failure could have been averted had the district paid attention, parallels HRO’s theory’s notion that heightened mindfulness helps limit the potential and scope of incipient failures and allows the organization to bounce back quickly when failure does occur. Kathy was similarly invested in the need to improve organizational reliability through increased attention to practice. Kathy accepted the principalship at Pacifica, “knowing what the challenges [were]” and that district pressure to turn the school around quickly would be significant. In response, Kathy immediately focused her attention on monitoring operations so that she could be more responsive to the potential for failure.

Kathy also understood the difficulty of engaging individuals in a process of whole school reform in which multiple players interact around a set of dynamic conditions. To address this problem, Kathy worked to develop a complex understanding of the day-to-day operations at the school. She avoided the temptation to opt for overly simplistic or too-quick solutions, and instead devoted critical energy to unpacking the causes and conditions that contributed to failure. Weick and Sutcliffe (2001) suggest the ability to resist simplification in an organizational setting stems from a “reliance on constant interaction” in which individuals have opportunities to question each other’s interpretations of events and plan accordingly. To this purpose, Kathy employed a labor-intensive process of continuous walk-throughs and conversations with building staff as a method for examining organizational practice and assessing individual capacity. She dedicated significant time to “understanding how people make decisions” and then translated that learning into helping staff learn how best to improve classroom practice and “help kids make sound decisions.”
As Kathy described her first year at Pacifica, it was clear she had little tolerance for staff who were either incapable or unwilling to invest the necessary effort to improve building operations. Kathy did encourage some individuals to leave Pacifica and negotiated the termination of one insubordinate teacher. Kathy’s actions were not antithetical to HRO theory. As noted in the conceptual framework, HROs are tightly coupled systems that rely on every individual in the organization to remain attentive and fully participate in ensuring organizational reliability. One might recall that while tight coupling allows for rapid response to failure, it also sets up the potential for catastrophic failure when the system breaks down. Therefore, HROs depend on individuals to have the capability to do their assigned job and to take pride in their ability to solve challenging problems and meet organizational goals. It is important to note that each of the individuals who were encouraged to leave Pacifica either lacked the competency and/or intent to support the capacity for mindfulness essential to resilience. Kathy offered individuals a choice and the opportunity to advance the skills needed to do their work effectively and ensure organizational reliability. Having done so, Kathy’s choice to release those individuals who elected to not participate in an ongoing process of learning is understandable and aligns with HRO theoretical practice.

Changing the context for learning at Pacifica and strengthening resilience was labor intensive work. The significant modifications needed to improve student learning required a deep commitment on the part of leadership and the building staff to dedicate the time and effort needed to reflect on daily practice, try out new strategies, and make continuous adaptations where needed. Having ensured the remaining staff at Pacifica were committed to do the work, Kathy deferred a measure of control to teachers; thus allowing them freedom to innovate as well as the opportunity to occasionally fail. The rare failures that resulted from teacher
experimentation were understood as a necessary risk and part of the improvement process. During the post-observation reflection, Alice corroborated teachers’ ability to research and try new teaching practices, “knowing that it’s ok that—that even if it’s an observation that Kathy came in and something horrible happened –that we could call it again, and [in unison with Kathy] we could do a ‘do-over.’” Making a film “stop camera” motion with her hands, Alice laughed and said, “Lesson 1, take 2.” While Kathy understood the negative aspects of failure, she allowed the possibility as long as individuals were thoughtful in their learning process and demonstrated continuous growth. In this way, Kathy “loosened hierarchical constraints” that often exist in schools in order to encourage innovation and “the attentiveness necessary to link expertise with problems, solutions, and decisions in the moment” (Weick et al., 2001, p. 76) Through her actions, Kathy showed staff that she respected their expertise and at the same time held them responsible for moving the work forward.

The data-driven dialogue could also be mapped back onto HRO’s mindful strategies. Just as HROs look for that which is novel and unique in an effort to remain actively mindful as events are unfolding, Kathy implemented data-driven inquiry into building practice as a method to keep individuals’ attention focused on the dynamics of student learning. The data-driven inquiry process directed individuals’ contextual awareness and ability to see problems of practice early in the course of instruction. Data-driven dialogues provided a means to look deeply at the artifacts of student learning (PCA results) and anomalies in the data. The DDDs helped teachers build a complex understanding of student learning and to reflect on the preconceptions they had when designing and teaching the instructional unit and reasons for student success or failure. Although in general, the DDD served the above purposes, there was a somewhat unexpected anomaly in the data. There were instances throughout the DDD during which Kathy abruptly cut
off teacher comments as she followed the protocol. The fact that use of the protocol appeared to support this seemingly mindless action raised a concern about the efficacy of DDDs to elicit and sustain collective mindfulness.

The purpose of descriptive analysis was to explore how Kathy Rose, as one middle school principal, conceptualized and enacted a process to improve organizational resilience. More specifically, the descriptive analysis considered the question, “What is going on here?” (Wolcott, 1994); and illustrated the emerging student learning context at Pacifica Middle School after Kathy assumed the principalship and initiated a process of whole school reform. The narratives evidenced Kathy’s conceptual understanding of leadership and method for operationalizing resilience as defined through HRO theory. Specific instances of HRO’s five processes for mindfulness were seen throughout Kathy’s discourse as she described her first years at Pacifica, in the post-observation, and during the data-driven inquiry. Somewhat surprisingly, however, there also were clear manifestations of mindlessness in the data-driven dialogue as Kathy allowed the protocol to take precedence and interrupt the teachers’ process of inquiry into practice. It also was problematic to realize that the descriptive analysis appeared insensitive to Eastern mindfulness. Those examples of Eastern mindfulness that were coded arose as part of the post-observation and data driven inquiry, which suggested a more focused examination of the data as necessary.

Microethnographic Analysis

A discourse analysis was undertaken to clarify issues about of how mindfulness was present in the data driven inquiry as well as the ways mindfulness could be seen as contributing to resilience in teacher practice for student learning. As discussed in chapter three, Gee’s (2011) discourse analysis toolkit, including use of stanza analysis facilitated interpretation of the
situated meaning of the recorded language and interaction between participants. Once transcribed according to the guideline, the line by line text was coded applying a scheme developed from Weick’s HROs theory and Buddhism’s ontology for mindfulness. Table 4 offers the codes used in the analysis as representative of HRO and Eastern mindfulness (EM).

Table 4

Coding Scheme Combining HRO and Eastern Mindfulness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mindful</th>
<th>Mindless</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HRO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PF - Preoccupation with failure</td>
<td>NPF - Preoccupation with expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RS - Reluctance to simplify</td>
<td>NRS - Reluctance to maintain ambiguity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SO - Sensitivity to operations</td>
<td>NSO - Sensitivity to outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR - Commitment to resilience</td>
<td>NCR - Commitment to control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE - Deference to Expertise</td>
<td>NDE - Deference to tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BP - Being present</td>
<td>NBP - Not present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC - Nonconceptual mindfulness</td>
<td>NRM - Relative mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AE - Attending to experience</td>
<td>NAE - Not attending to experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC - Commitment to compassion</td>
<td>NCC - Lack of compassion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DW - Deference to Wisdom</td>
<td>NDW - Non deference to wisdom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examination of the coded session transcript revealed 63 specific examples of HRO concepts (i.e., 43 mindful and 20 mindless) as represented in the narrative. Counting the number of passages coded as characterizing Eastern notions resulted in a total of 65 cases (i.e., 41 mindful and 24 mindless), which was surprisingly similar to those observed for HRO categories. Although the number of instances classified as Eastern was slightly larger, the presentation of the analysis begins with excerpted text that was interpreted as demonstrating HRO concepts.
The narrative shown on Table 5 occurred as the data-driven dialogue began. As Kathy introduced the DDD, there were multiple instances of HRO mindfulness. Kathy began by calling attention to the fact that they were using data-driven inquiry as a means to gauge student learning on the seventh grade end of unit assessment (PCA). The results from the most recent PCA were to help teachers measure the effectiveness of their instruction (PF). Kathy later mentioned that they would “really look at the data” as a means to “get inside your heads” and to help the team unpack the relationship between the assessment data and how the teachers planned and executed the lesson in their classrooms (SO).

Table 5

Sequence 1 – Simple HRO Mindfulness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker/Line</th>
<th>Excerpts from the DDD</th>
<th>HRO Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>what we’re doing today,</td>
<td>PF- Continuous measurement against an indicator (student learning) in order to monitor failure and improve effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>is what we’ve done before (...)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>It’s just having a data-driven dialogue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>about (...) your recent PCA? (...)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Your Powerful Classroom Assessment, (...)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>which is a tool</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>that we’ve chosen to use in this building,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>to really gauge our kids against grade-level expectations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>And so (...) it’s not a new dialogue—a new kind of dialogue (...)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>I don’t have to teach you .hhh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>the protocol</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>since we’ve done it before. (.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>So it’s just an opportunity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>for me? (.) to help (.) help me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>to get inside your heads</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>and see what your thinking is. (...)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>And um (...) ([loud laughter from the hallway outside the teacher room])</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanza</td>
<td>Break</td>
<td>Kathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>to really look at the data</td>
<td>SO· Encouraging the group to focus their attention so that they can adapt practice appropriately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>to help us figure out</td>
<td>PF· Monitoring potential for student failure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>what we need to do with the next (..)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>um (.) set of learning time,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>which is really (.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>starts tomorrow (.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>which is (..) what happens ((she leans back))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>as far as taking information away. (..)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>♦ (End of the introduction to the data-driven dialogue session)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>((Pointing to the documents in front of each participant))</td>
<td>SO· Looking at building-wide practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>What you’ve been given so far (.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>is your own data. hhh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>so you (..)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>we’re not going</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>to have you make predictions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>about your own data. hhh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>So what we’d like you to do (.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>to follow the format. (.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>is to make predictions about (.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>y’know (.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>how your kids did (..)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>so let’s figure out (..)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>let’s predict</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>how you think the entire building did.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>((Kathy passes out sheets of paper to each of the teachers and the coach))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>u:m (..) so I’ll give you these (.) forms</td>
<td>SO· Becoming aware of the building results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>that you’re accustomed to seeing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>and (.) so (..) and the question (..)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>((reading from the form))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>“How do different amounts of salt in the water affect how (.) um (.) rust (.) how fast a nail rusts?”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Further, evidence of Kathy’s sensitivity to building operations was present. Kathy noted that the timing of this meeting was important as the team was getting ready for the next seventh grade science unit, “which begins tomorrow” (PF). This passage highlighted her *preoccupation with failure* as the PCAs were administered as a non-stop stream of assessments. To affect change in practice, the team deconstructed the results of one PCA as they were planning to deliver the next instructional unit. The DDD protocol helped Kathy direct the team’s attention to the data and the building-wide results as they first considered their own classroom scores and then looked at the building-wide data (SO).

The excerpted transcripts coded for HRO mindlessness looked similar to previously shared text that was categorized using mindfulness. Table 6 occurs early in the DDD, as Kathy asked the teachers to interpret building scores in the data they have been given. As the passage begins, Kathy pressed the team to look at their scores and share their thinking. Kathy allowed very little wait time and pushed for a quick response to her question. Although Kathy may have been thinking that the teachers were familiar with the protocol and so ‘know the drill,’ she moved the conversation forward very quickly and allowed little time for the teachers to consider their responses (NRS). Although Kathy opened the conversation with an example of mindlessness, Peter responded mindfully (SO) to her question and noted the potential for student scores to “drop down to a one” (RS). While Peter’s response evidenced mindfulness, Kathy did not give Peter an opportunity to expand on this thinking, but instead interrupted the conversation by adhering to the protocol (NRS). More about this pattern of exchange will be discussed later in the analysis.
### Table 6

**Sequence 2 - Simple HRO Mindlessness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker/Line</th>
<th>Excerpts from the DDD</th>
<th>HRO Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>How d’you think the kids do? (.)</td>
<td>NRS K. is following a DDD protocol, but she jumps right into it …in part because they've done it before. At question though is if the process of DDD dialogue supports that complexity or does adhering to the protocol over simplify the conversation and limit participants' capacity for innovative thinking?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>what d’you have,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>for (.) um (.) making a two ?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>which is (.) meeting standard.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“D’you want [ ] to start?” (as she leans over and looks at Peter’s paper)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>[[ I had:d 10 % of [[ kids</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>[[ OK =</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>=and the main reason’s</td>
<td>SO-Looking at PCA outcomes and limitations of the rubric that tend to magnify student failures. Peter notes &quot;it's a difficult score to get&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>because it doesn’t (.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>there’s really no wiggle room</td>
<td>RS P. resists oversimplifying his understanding of what a &quot;2&quot; means.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>at all in that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>because it’s either you get all the credit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>or you get (...)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>or you (.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>if you don’t get that (.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>if you miss one point (.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>then you drop down to a [ ] one.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>[[ Right ((nodding her head yes))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>So I think</td>
<td>NRS-Kathy simplifies the discussion by adhering to the protocol (Although done to meet the DDD purpose, it limits teacher understanding.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>it’s a difficult score to get (.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>especially with one specific part</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of the [ ] question</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>[[ Right (.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We’re (.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I think we’re going</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to spend some time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>talking about the rubric</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and how that impacts ((Andy nods “Yes”))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>what we’re doing in the classroom.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How ‘bout you Deborah?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What’d you think for twos? (…)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As evident in both examples, the coded HRO examples fit well or reflected the nature of language associated with instructional accountability and the work of school reform. HRO mindfulness codes were appropriate for the discourse Kathy and the teachers used, particularly when they were focused on the potential for student failure and subsequent inferences for change in their practice. The team’s discussion afforded a way for its members to develop their skills and catch mistakes, thus demonstrating key characteristics of resilience as presented in HRO literature. In fact, throughout the opening passage those excerpts that were primarily coded for HRO mindfulness, are quite narrowly focused on accountability and student scores. There appeared to be little overlap into the dynamics of team or student relationships. Conversation between teachers and principal could be seen as centered on issues of management and control.

Eastern Coded Text

The tenor of the conversation was notably difference where Eastern mindfulness was coded in the data driven inquiry session. Specifically, the conversation moves the participants to focus on issues beyond the realm of management and incorporated a humanist element. For example, in Sequence 3 (see Table 7), Kathy shared her experience from an earlier visit to Peter’s classroom (AE). During the visit, Kathy had watched Peter show his students how to score the most recent PCA (see Table 7). As Kathy explained her observations with the science team, she asked Peter to consider how that classroom lesson connected to the science team’s experience in learning how to score the PCAs (AE). Kathy makes a point of highlighting what Peter was doing in his classroom as an example for the team. In doing so, Kathy acknowledged Peter’s role as an instructional leader within the building (DW). While it could be argued that this is deference to Peter’s expertise (i.e., a process included with HRO mindfulness), Kathy’s language was more than giving heed to this teacher’s view. Kathy reinforced specific actions and
in so doing prompted Peter to think about the lesson through the filter of the team’s learning which caused Peter to reconsider the purpose of the assessment (NC) and in turn, triggered an equally mindful response to Kathy’s question (AE). The passage also contained Peter’s expressed concern for students as he contemplated how learning to score the assessment might help students understand the “correct format to answer the questions” (CC).

Table 7

Sequence 3 – Simple Eastern *Mindfulness*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker/Line</th>
<th>Excerpts from the DDD</th>
<th>EM Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>= um hum?</td>
<td>AE: Kathy listens to Peter describe how the teachers have improved as scorers. Kathy presses him to think about what this infers for students. As Kathy attends to her experience in P's classroom, she defers to P's expertise as a classroom teacher and P. responds mindfully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>936</td>
<td>Well,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>937</td>
<td>I had an opportunity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>938</td>
<td>to actually observe P</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>939</td>
<td>the day he was actually GIVING the assessment,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>940</td>
<td>and the day,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>941</td>
<td>he was teaching the students how to score it. (..)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>942</td>
<td>So I had some working knowledge there</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>943</td>
<td>that actually fits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>944</td>
<td>into this conversation very well.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>945</td>
<td>((looking at Peter))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>946</td>
<td>So,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>947</td>
<td>what are the implications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>948</td>
<td>for YOUR learning how to score better? (.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>949</td>
<td>What are the implications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>950</td>
<td>for the KIDS?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>951</td>
<td>Do we take that back to them AGAIN?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>ABSOLUTELY.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>952</td>
<td>I don’t think</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>953</td>
<td>that we can (.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>954</td>
<td>uh-uh I think</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>955</td>
<td>holding it back from them,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>956</td>
<td>the grading rubric,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>957</td>
<td>and teaching them, HOW</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>958</td>
<td>to answer questions,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>959</td>
<td>not necessarily just the content.(..)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>960</td>
<td></td>
<td>NC: Evidence of how P. has begun to question what he needs to teach students -- the purpose of that instruction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7 Continued

rubric helps them make sense of the content.
Because even if we have the CONTENT, if we don’t have the correct (. ) format, or structure, ( .. ) they’re gonna.
the grader, first of all, is going to be struggling to find the answers. ( .. ) and so,( ) if we can give them the correct format to answer the questions, we NOW ( . ) are putting everybody on the level playing field.
So now, ( . ) it’s going truly on knowledge. ( . ) versus( . ) format. = okay. ( (nodding) ) =

Earlier in the DDD, a case demonstrating Eastern mindlessness was coded. In Sequence 4, Kathy asked Deborah to share her prediction for the number of ones and twos in the building scores. As Deborah began speaking, Kathy physically turned her head away from Deborah and began to write notes on her data score sheet. Deborah’s voice trailed off as she glanced over at Kathy. It was apparent to all that Kathy was not attending (NBP) to Deborah’s response. As Deborah responded to Kathy’s question in muted tones, she started to discuss a potential explanation for the numbers of zeros and twos in her prediction. Kathy cut Deborah off abruptly and put forth her own thinking about the results they were seeing in the data. In this case, Kathy imposed her thinking on Deborah. Nor did Kathy allow Deborah sufficient time to offer an alternative reason for the drop in scores (NRM). Although Kathy may have been correct in her opinion, her rapid response was based on a preconception of what the data meant and limited the
potential for Deborah to come up with an alternative possibility. Table 8 presents this excepted interaction.

Table 8

Sequence 4 – Simple Eastern Mindlessness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker/Line</th>
<th>Excerpts from the DDD</th>
<th>EM Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>((looking at Deborah))</td>
<td>NBP- Kathy is looking down at her paper and not attending to Deborah. She’s moving through the DDD protocol quickly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>253</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>254</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deborah</td>
<td>((nodding slightly)) (.5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>256</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deborah</td>
<td>257</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>= With the 1’s (. ) I get 60% with that (. ) so (. )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>258</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“there were more 0’s than I predicted”. (. )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>259</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and fewer 2’s. (. ) [[] so</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>260</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deborah</td>
<td>261</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[[ yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>262</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deborah</td>
<td>263</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and 0’s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>264</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>we have a 31%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>265</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>so ( . ) you guessed high on the 1’s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>266</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>then your 0 score’s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>267</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>probably going to be a little bit low</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>268</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>also =</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deborah</td>
<td>269</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>= um hum =</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deborah</td>
<td>270</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>= “so that makes sense mathematically”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>271</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and those aren’t real critical (. )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The examples selected and shared thus far provided fairly clear alignment with either HRO or Eastern mindfulness codes. The possible exemption of coded narrative being exclusive to either HRO or Eastern mindfulness was presented on Table 7 when Kathy’s prompt included reference to Peter’s instructional leadership. Examination of the analyzed transcript revealed 52% of the codes cases as demonstrating this quality. There were a large percentage of cases, however that were not unique. Specifically, 21 cases were found to be coded as demonstrating
both HRO and Eastern mindfulness, 9 examples that evidenced mindlessness (i.e., both HRO or Eastern), and 1 example was coded as HRO mindfulness and Eastern mindlessness. In this single case, the speaker was coded for being sensitive to operations followed by an example of relative mindfulness, which appeared to have been associated with the individual’s fixed interpretation or a preconception of a teaching practice. There were no observed instances where HRO mindlessness was coded as also exhibiting Eastern mindfulness. The section that follows displays and explains examples for the first two kinds of cases as well as begins to look at the interaction or exchanges that took place between the participants as made evident through the coded discourse analysis.

_HRO and Eastern Mindfulness Coded Text_

Sequence 5 (see Table 9) offered an example Kathy’s deep concern for teachers and purposeful support for organizational work that she was engaged in. In Sequence 5, Peter had just commented on the difficulty and pace of the work as the teachers moved through an iterative teaching cycle of planning→instruction→assessment→reflection→revision that has become the hallmark of school reform efforts (AE). While individuals on the team seemed to be committed to doing the difficult work of school reform (CR), Peter noted that it was “nice to sit down together and talk about it because we never have the same ideas.” All of the teachers on the seventh grade science team were viewed as teacher-leaders within the school, however, Peter’s hard work and leadership stood out from the rest as the discourse proceeds. Peter’s contributed much to lesson planning sessions for each new unit and he shared his insights about the lessons post-instruction. The large amount of time he dedicates to working with students before and after school and showed him to be highly invested in helping students be successful in his class.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker/Line</th>
<th>Excerpts from the DDD</th>
<th>HRO Codes</th>
<th>EM Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>You get kind of tired</td>
<td></td>
<td>AE: Peter thinks through the challenges in the work and how far the team has come. He is feeling the difficulty of the work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It’s ah (.)</td>
<td>CR- P. is focused on continual improvement even though it’s frustrating work at times.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>an endurance issue.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>So. .hhh</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Getting it back</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and going back</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and doing again,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>it’s just pounding through it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and getting where we need to be.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>Part of it was</td>
<td>SO-Monitoring the change in student results over time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>from the beginning of the year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>looking at</td>
<td></td>
<td>BP: K. hears what P. is saying. She acknowledges the difficulty of the work. She reminds him of the progress the team has made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>y’know we have</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>an 8% increase in our science scores.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You-I don’t know</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>that I could ask you</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to work much HARDER. (looking at Peter))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>So we’re trying to explore those ways</td>
<td>RS-Making sense of complexity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to make sense of our world,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and the PCA came to us,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>through Beth</td>
<td></td>
<td>CC: This is a compassionate moment as Kathy supports Peter in particular, and also the work the teacher team is doing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and some of the (. ) connections</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>that she has.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>And I said,</td>
<td>DE-As coach, Beth brings a level of expertise to the work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in the PCA workshop at OSPI,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>it’s SO complex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and trust me,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>you’re about one</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>out of how many thousands of science teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>who probably-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>steps ahead</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in having these conversations.</td>
<td>CR-Committing to the work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By working together</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

124
Throughout the DDD, Kathy and the other members of the team seemed to defer to Peter’s expertise when he had something to add to the conversation. It was apparent that the difficulty of the work was beginning to wear on him and Peter noted that “it’s an endurance issue.” Kathy’s concern for Peter was evident throughout this sequence as she frequently turned to him, looked him directly in the eyes and voiced her support (CC). Kathy was very “present” (BP) throughout this sequence as she listened carefully to Peter and then reminded him of the progress they were making (SO, RS). Kathy was aware of the pressures district and state accountability was having on her teachers and was careful to let them know they had her support (CC). As the sequence progressed, Kathy mentioned Beth’s involvement in a State of Washington PCA workshop and reminded the group that “many thousands of science teachers” were having similar conversations.

Kathy was authentic in how she discussed the work as a process of shared learning and building accountability (DW). She reminded Peter that he is not alone in the work, but instead he has the support of the school team, the coaches, and the state-wide teams. Kathy’s compassionate response to Peter’s concern avoided displaying power that could otherwise have diminished her teacher’s sense of responsibility for the work. In this regard, Kathy deferred to wisdom over
authority for the work. She evidenced an understanding that genuine leadership is derived from an ethical and altruistic intention. Throughout the DDD, Kathy continually referred to the work as a collective process of learning. In response to Kathy’s mindful comments, Peter acknowledged that it was not just about “working harder,” but instead they were “working smarter” (AE). This HRO and EM pattern was repeated through this sequence as each speaker evidenced a commitment to building work (CR) that accompanied an EM response. The resulting mindful-mindful pattern could be seen to nurture individual’s investment in working together to strength learning and resilience concerned with student learning.

In another example (Table 10) begins with a case that demonstrated both HRO and Eastern mindfulness but was then followed by complex case coded as both HRO mindless and Eastern mindless. Andy had just had an epiphany that he had inadvertently added to students’ misconception that a scientific conclusion was redundant (SO and AE). Andy’s realization was followed an extended conversation by team has been having about the difficulties students were experiencing when writing a scientific conclusion. As Andy shared his “Ah ha!” moment, Kathy acknowledged Andy’s realization that he “taught redundancy” (DE), but then immediately superimposed an example from her experience as a language arts teacher. In the process, Kathy pulled the DDD away from the instructional point Andy was making. Kathy’s mindless response was an oversimplification as she tried to make sense of the instructional problem in terms of her own experience (NRS and NAE). In the process, Kathy did not defer to Andy (NDE). When the teachers’ thinking, did not seem to coincide with Kathy’s language arts example, Kathy reiterated Andy’s point (AE). The teachers then tried to clarify their thinking and persisted (CR) in their efforts to build a more complex understanding of what constituted a scientific conclusion (RS). Kathy attended to the teachers’ explanation (SO), although she returned to her
point later in the conversation.

Table 10

Sequence 6 - Complex HRO and Eastern Mindlessness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker/Line</th>
<th>Excerpts from the DDD</th>
<th>HRO Codes</th>
<th>EM Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andy</td>
<td>((looking at Kathy))</td>
<td>SO A. is being reflective about his own practice and where the misconception arose.</td>
<td>AE-Questions preconceptions tied to practice &quot;It led to a misconception&quot; (on the part of students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>467</td>
<td>I think,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>468</td>
<td>I taught redundancy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>469</td>
<td>and it really isn’t</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>470</td>
<td>[[ from my perspective now.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>[[ right</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andy</td>
<td>but-but me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>473</td>
<td>thinking that [[ (. ) led to (.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>[[ what d’you ][</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andy</td>
<td>[[ a misconception</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>476</td>
<td>in my teaching [[</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>[[ Absolutely [[</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deborah</td>
<td>[[ I think so too</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>Wow.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>480</td>
<td>That’s pretty powerful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>481</td>
<td>so (.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>482</td>
<td>but you just said redundancy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>483</td>
<td>so I’m thinking (.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>484</td>
<td>I’m an English teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>by trade y’know (.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>486</td>
<td>so I’m thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>487</td>
<td>teaching a 5 paragraph essay (.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>488</td>
<td>the first paragraph is (.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>489</td>
<td>You’re going to tell us</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>490</td>
<td>what you’re going to tell us (.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>491</td>
<td>The next three,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>492</td>
<td>you tell us what you’re going to tell us (.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>493</td>
<td>and support that</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>494</td>
<td>with a lot of supporting detail, (.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>495</td>
<td>And then,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>496</td>
<td>the fifth paragraph</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The resulting mindful→mindless→mindful sequence evident in narrative above identifies a pattern of interaction that is even more complex than the cases coded using both HRO and
Eastern mindfulness. In this sequence, Kathy’s mindless response was seen to trigger a series of mindful responses from the teachers.

The next section takes up this pattern as its focus of interpretation. Before proceeding to this examination of the coded data, it can be argued that while the qualities or characteristics that demark mindfulness (i.e., HRO and Eastern) possess unique attributes, there is also an argument that they do not necessarily arise independently of each other. In other words, the nature of HRO mindfulness processes share qualities that are discussed as attributed to Eastern mindfulness. Although the two types of mindfulness are not necessarily the same, for the purposes of the analysis of the exchange between participants in the data driven inquiry below, HRO and Eastern mindfulness will be remain undifferentiated.

Interaction Patterns within the Data

The data were examined using exchanges between participants to explore patterns and possible combinations of mindfulness and mindlessness (See Table 11 below). Across person combinations included: mindless to mindful, mindless to mindless, mindful to mindless, and mindful to mindful. Table 11 presents the number of interactions per type using principal to teacher initiated exchanges and vice versa, teacher to principal initiated dialogue.

Table 11
Across Person Exchanges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Principal to Teacher</th>
<th>Teacher to Principal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mindless to mindful</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindless to mindless</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindful to mindless</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindful to mindful</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perhaps not unexpected are the number exchanges in which a statement coded as mindful are followed by another coded as mindful, which seemed to confirm that mindful comments often trigger mindful responses. By the same token, mindless comments appeared to generate mindless responses. What does appear to be somewhat counterintuitive in the across person exchanges, are the number of mindless to mindful interactions along with the number of mindful to mindless responses. In the mindless to mindful exchanges, Kathy’s comments were coded as mindless on ten occasions with teachers responding mindfully. In addition, there are nine instances of teachers acting mindfully followed by a mindless response from Kathy.

Summary of the Microanalysis

The purpose of this microanalysis was to examine specific case of data-driven dialogue to determine: (a) how mindfulness was evident in the practice of a middle school principal and (b) the ways in which mindfulness could be seen as contributing to organizational resilience. As described earlier, the microanalysis extended the findings from the descriptive analysis. While there was evidence of HRO mindfulness in the descriptive analysis, the narratives did not expose the presence of Eastern mindfulness. After coding the DDD using the combined HRO and Eastern mindfulness coding scheme the nature, contribution, and relationship of HRO and Eastern mindfulness were made manifest.

The microanalysis of the DDD presented quite a conundrum when it revealed various instances of mindlessness in Kathy’s discourse. In fact, throughout the DDD, Kathy was mindless almost as often as she was mindful! While it would be easy to dismiss this evidence of mindlessness as a flaw in Kathy’s leadership, I interpret these manifestations of mindlessness somewhat differently. First, it is necessary to review the distinction between how mindfulness is interpreted through HRO and Eastern mindfulness lenses. Researchers often discuss mindful-
mindlessness in terms of a good-bad or success-failure dichotomy. Defining mindfulness in this way has tended to focus attention on the negative aspects of mindlessness and need for prevention and greater control. Thus, mindfulness is elevated in standing and often viewed as a remedy for mindlessness. The inherent problem in this conceptualization is that it may result in attention being concentrated in ways that are limiting, such as a focus on failure without success (Fiol & O’Connor, 2003) or prevention without trust (Hoe et al., 2006). Thus, how mindfulness is conceived and implemented is an important question. Eastern mindfulness teachings suggest an alternative conception. In Buddhist philosophy, mindfulness is neither good nor bad; it is simply about being. Mindfulness readies the mind for understanding so that one is capable of experiencing the unfolding world and coping with ambiguity and negative emotions such as desire, anger, or jealousy. Buddhist ontology suggests the path to this state of readiness is through meditation and increased sensitivity to one’s thoughts and actions (Gunaratana, 2002). Mediation supports a “special mode of perception” that helps one “see reality exactly as it is” (p. 32). When understood in this way, mindlessness is equally as valuable a tool as mindfulness as a means for understanding the world.

Eastern meditative practice acknowledges the potential for mindlessness to inform understanding. For example, during periods of mediation, practitioners often notice the mind wanders. Novice practices may perceive a nomadic mind as an obstacle. However, this same obstacle can afford an opportunity to gently bring the mind to bear on a point of concentration. In this way, mindlessness is akin to a bell, a device often used during meditation to refocus concentration. When one’s mind wanders the bell triggers a moment of clarity that helps one to see the point of concentration anew and where one is wandering or being stuck. When understood in this way, mindlessness can be viewed as a powerful tool that reveals how the mind
works and as such how to proceed in ways that less vulnerable to error or mistaken understanding.

Kathy’s periodic mindlessness may serve a similar role during the DDD. Often, when Kathy’s mind wandered and its effect could be heard, it could be seen as serving as a bell that caused teachers to refocus on their discussion. In fact the mindless to mindful pattern was seen almost as often as a mindful to mindful pattern. For example, as Andy attempted to make sense of the reason for students’ confusion over the conclusion, Kathy made a mindless comparison that could have caused the conversation to wander. However, this instance of mindfulness caused the teachers to hone in on how they understood the purpose for a scientific conclusion. Kathy’s mindlessness triggered a series of clarifying statements as the teachers gradually began to tighten their definition until they reach consensus when Kathy asks, “Is it a therefore?” and they each affirmed their understanding.

Western mindfulness theory argues that mindlessness is a state of mind that should be avoided at all costs. However, an analysis of mindfulness and mindlessness as it is enacted through a DDD would seem to infer that one affordance of mindlessness is the manner in which it may cause individuals to refocus and question their understanding. In this specific case of data-driven inquiry, mindfulness and mindlessness both served as a useful strategy for concentrating teacher discourse on issues of educational practice. The findings suggest that mindlessness may play an equally valuable role in focusing attention and heightening organizational resilience as does the current emphasis on mindfulness.

Chapter Summary

Description, analysis, and interpretation of the coded transcripts (including the principal’s interview, post-lesson interview, and data-driven dialogue) suggests a possible explanation for
the apparent lack of evidence of Eastern mindfulness in the general analysis. In the principal’s interview, Kathy discussed leadership in operational terms. She shared her story using language that conveyed her capability for the role of the principalship. For example, Kathy talked about the need to pay attention to building operations in order to improve teacher effectiveness and mediate poor student achievement. Leadership in this case was discussed in management terms that included *problem-solving, hiring practices, professionalism, and continuous improvement*, all terms that could be associated with HRO practices and strategies. As a result Western mindfulness was apparent throughout the principal’s interview. However, HRO management language breaks down somewhat in the data-driven dialogue and Eastern mindfulness become more apparent. While there was language within the DDD related to accountability and school reform (a management perspective), this management language was replaced with discourse more reflective of Eastern mindfulness’ humanist language and holistic approach to lived experience. In passages within the DDD coded for both HRO and Eastern mindfulness strategies, Kathy talked about “the implications for the kids” as teachers shared scoring information. In another passage, Kathy pressed teachers for their predictions and then acknowledged she did not believe that she “could ask you [teachers] to work much harder.” She reassured the team that she appreciated the complexity of the work and the need to have “these conversations” and that “by working together and learning from one another we can launch forward.” She reminded the team of the importance of collegiality and suggested to them that “if you just do it by yourself—boy—that’d be tough.” In these and other passages, the combined HRO-EM coding scheme reflect the fact that the discourse contained within the DDD reflects *lived experience*. As such, the DDD discourse was quite different than the language Kathy used in the principal’s interview to discuss her theoretical understanding of leadership and to promote her success as an emerging principal.
In this specific case of the DDD, Kathy evidenced HRO mindfulness when describing her conceptualization and theoretical application of leadership. However, the DDD is both a pragmatic and holistic view into the work of Kathy’s principalship. Thus, the DDD evidenced Kathy’s leadership as lived experience. When viewed from within the experiential process of the data-driven dialogue, there was evidence of both HRO and Eastern mindfulness. Importantly, Kathy’s practice also revealed manifestations of both mindfulness and mindlessness.
CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION

As outside sources seek to reform schools through heightened accountability, middle school principals are increasingly pressured to improve student achievement. Doing so, however, involves a complex process of addressing federal and state requirements for adequate yearly progress while keeping organizational attention focused on strategies that support increased reliability. High reliability organizations were advanced as one model that advances strategies to heighten organizational mindfulness in ways that improve reliability and increase organizational resilience. In response to this problem, this study seeks to understand how middle school principals conceptualize and operationalize organizational resilience.

A similar concern with school reliability is found in research on data-driven inquiry, which suggests a method to teach individuals how to engage around a process of change, to formulate questions, analyze data, and infer and operationalize necessary changes to practice. The process of data-driven inquiry is thought to encourage a form of collective mindfulness focused on school improvement. The benefit of data-driven dialogues to school leadership is that it exploits the current focus on accountability data and districts’ increased access to school level data. At question, however, is if data-driven dialogues afford a sufficiently robust process to support middle school principals’ efforts to inculcate organizational mindfulness into the work of school reform?

Chapter one described the problem and purpose for the study. Chapter two defined a conceptual framework for mindfulness to serve as the analytic basis for the study. Mindfulness strategies seen in high reliability organization theory and Eastern mindfulness theory were
examined for potential application to the organization context of schools. An enhanced theory of mindfulness combining elements of HRO and Eastern mindfulness theories was proposed as a theoretical model for mindfulness to that could be applied to educational reform. To test the efficacy of this model, the revised typology was used as a means to examine one principal’s method for conceptualizing and operationalizing organizational mindfulness in the school setting.

Chapter three detailed the research methods applied to this qualitative study. One school principal served as the focus for the study. Extant data were used for the study and included video-based interview with the principal, post-observation interview with the principal and seventh grade teacher, and data-driven dialogue session with the principal and the seventh grade science team. The videorecorded interviews and data-driven dialogue were transcribed in their entirety. Data collection began in March 2007 and continued through a complete school year, ending in March 2008. Data were coded and emergent themes analyzed as appropriate to the purposes of the study.

Chapter four provided in-depth description, interpretation, and analysis of the data. Descriptive narratives for each of the three videos included excerpts from the videos and provided a richly layered understanding of the principal’s conceptual process for whole school reform. A summary analysis followed the descriptive narratives. To further identify specific instances of mindfulness and the relationship between HRO and Eastern mindfulness, microanalytic strategies were used. In particular, the data were examined, first applying a process for discourse analysis and then coding the video-based data using a coding scheme developed from the combined HRO and Eastern typology for mindfulness. The microanalysis was followed by a discussion of the findings. An examination of mindfulness and implications for use of data-
driven inquiry in school reform was discussed.

The remainder of the current chapter is the conclusion for the study and includes a review of the findings. More specifically, the section offers interpretation of the findings and inferences for leadership. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the study’s significance.

Discussion

As I began this study, I was curious to understand how leadership might better engage individuals around the work of school reform. Heightened accountability has focused national, state, and district attention on a narrow construct of avoidance strategies that while focused on raising student achievement scores, largely ignore the potential to improve professional learning and associated organizational resilience. When I began videorecording at Pacifica in 2008, the types of strategies thought to advance school reform included focusing organizational attention on identifying and measuring student failure, standardizing the curriculum, and consolidating a district-wide response to failure when it was spotted. A district administrator at the time, I felt that this hierarchical, top-down approach to school reform had failed to take into account the interconnected nature of schools and the potential for teachers, administrators, and students to learn and grow together. Since then, researchers and policy-makers at a national and state level have continued to refine the ability to measure and predict student failure. However, limited advances have been made in the matter of whole school reform, particularly in the area of collegial learning as a means to bolster organizational resilience. In fact, recent studies suggest the types of reform strategies that have been historically advocated for professional learning have had little effect on improving teacher practice and subsequent student learning (Garet et al., 2008; Garet et al., 2010, Santagata, Kersting, Givven & Stigler, 2011). This circumstance makes the improvement I observed at Pacifica Middle School, seem all the more remarkable.
As principal of Pacifica, Kathy Rose found a way to move beyond accountability mandates found to narrow building focus (Mintrop & Sunderman, 2009) and instead, instituted changes that challenged individuals within the organization to engage around questions of practice and research-based strategies and to participate in a process of continuous learning. Kathy implemented data-driven inquiry as one strategy to help improve school reliability and increase organizational resilience.

Data-driven Inquiry as a Mindful Process for School Reform

As the study began, I identified a potential connection between the data-driven inquiry Kathy had implemented at Pacifica and Weick’s high reliability organization theory. HRO strategies suggest a means to discipline and direct organizational attention in order to mediate the potential for failure. Unlike avoidance strategies that tend to normalize behaviors and shortcut solutions through routinization, HROs look for that which is original and unique in an attempt to remain actively mindful as events within the organization are unfolding. Further, HROs allow for organizational attention to rest on where the work is done so that individuals can be immediately responsive to problems. The analysis provided further insights into the nature of this possible connection.

Findings from the Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive analysis was useful for general purpose of understanding how Kathy conceptualized and operationalized the need for organizational resilience. Throughout the analysis, there was clear linkage to HRO strategies intended to improve organizational reliability. Kathy focused her efforts on developing a complex view of building operations so that she could continuously monitor the potential for organizational lapses or failures. She worked diligently to advance a process for collegial learning and improve the potential for collective mindfulness.
Kathy cultivated building expertise and leveraged individuals’ capacity to launch organizational work.

The descriptive analysis also confirmed an initial impression that data-driven inquiry paralleled the mindful strategies enacted in HRO theory. This confirming evidence showed how DDD could help focus teachers’ attention on student learning in order to improve organizational reliability. Kathy implemented data-driven inquiry into building practice to reinforce similar strategies for mindfulness as those found in HRO theory. Doing so, ensured that organizational attention remained focused on the dynamics of student learning. In this regard, the data-driven dialogue protocol was a means to evaluate the artifacts of student learning (PCA results) and anomalies in the data. The affordances of the DDD’s disciplined inquiry helped teachers reflect on the manner in which they had conceptualized the design and instructional components for the instructional unit as well reasons for student success or failure on the assessment. The DDD’s disciplined inquiry process directed individuals’ contextual awareness and ability to see problems of practice early in the course of instruction.

While there was general evidence of HRO mindfulness present in the descriptive analysis, there were also instances when Kathy exhibited mindlessness in ways that seemed to subvert the intent of the data inquiry process. This anomaly, raised concerns about the efficacy of the protocol to elicit and sustain mindfulness. A microanalysis was completed in order to clarify the disposition of specific instances of mindfulness and mindlessness as well as instances of Eastern mindfulness. A detailed view of the interactions contained within the DDD and as seen through the microanalysis suggests a different interpretation of Kathy’s actions may be warranted.

*Findings from the Microanalysis*
A discourse analysis was completed as described in the methodology and illustrated through the excerpts and discussion given in chapter four. The typology for the coding scheme was developed from the conceptual framework in an effort to show potential weaknesses in HRO theory’s conceptualization of mindlessness. The resulting enhanced typology for mindfulness was a significant product of the study for its ability to isolate instances of mindfulness and mindlessness in the discourse. The detailed transcripts that were the product of the discourse analysis exposed participant interactions and the applied coding scheme made interpretable both HRO and Eastern strategies for mindfulness and mindlessness.

More specifically, application of the typology to the data contained within the DDD evidenced a difference in how mindfulness and mindlessness are conceived in HRO and Eastern mindfulness theory. An analysis of the data highlighted numerous manifestations of mindlessness throughout the DDD. Instances of mindlessness reflected in the coding of the transcript revealed a recurrent mindless→mindful pattern. The repeated pattern suggests that Kathy’s mindlessness served to trigger a mindful response on the part of teachers. Buddhist philosophy suggests that mindlessness can be a tool that is equally as valuable as mindfulness. The finding concur with that notion and suggest that mindlessness may serve a beneficial purpose as it is the “bell” that calls one’s attention back to mindfulness. As such, I respectfully submit that mindlessness complements mindfulness and should be considered for inclusion in the HRO theoretical construct.

Limitations

The limitations in this study extend from the choice to situate the study in the district where I was employed as a district administer and had some responsibility for district decision-making. While there is the potential for bias, my responsibilities did not include oversight of
building administrators or building decision-making processes. I have made every effort to remain aware of my own subjectivity and to make my assumptions about the data as well as the purposes for the study as evident as possible.

A further limitation may exist in the video-based data-driven dialogue that should be exposed. The video extant data was originally recorded for the purpose of modeling data-driven inquiry for building administrators attending the monthly Principals’ Conference. Knowing this, Kathy may have felt some pressure to adhere to the DDD protocol to a greater degree than if the session were not being recorded. It is, however, important to note that in post-session conversations, the science teachers who participated in the DDD confirmed that the videorecorded session was a “typical” representation of their previous experience with data-driven inquiry. Further, after watching other DDDs in the building in which Kathy was the facilitator and that were not videoed, I would concur that there was little difference between the sessions. However, this concern should remain as a potential limitation.

Recommendations

In consideration of the challenges involved in sustaining organizational resilience in the educational setting, this study has unpacked a novel approach, as seen through one principal’s efforts to institute a change in school culture and to ultimately, facilitate changes in practice to improve student learning. The research focus of this study was an examination of the germination of organizational resilience through the establishment and maintenance of professional relationships.

It needs to be emphasized that the data-driven inquiry strategies employed at Pacifica were not necessarily novel in structure. What was unique was the manner in which these mindful strategies were implemented to foster individual and organizational commitment to resilience.
Kathy’s implementation of data-driven inquiry did provide a means to inculcate a strong sense of professional community and commitment to improving student learning in the school. The team’s resistance to jump to simplistic, shallow solutions pressed individuals to unpack the underlying causes of student failure and to collaboratively discuss and reflect on needed changes to practice. Improved reliability and organizational resilience at Pacifica stemmed in part, from Kathy’s active support and implementation of a process for collective mindfulness and inquiry. The study makes clear that avoiding failure should not be the focus of a principal’s efforts, but rather, leadership should attend to early signs of trouble and proactively support building level work directed at understanding the causes of poor student achievement and factors that contribute to improving organizational resilience.

Significance

This study sought to show how mindfulness was present in data-driven inquiry as one strategy to increase organizational resilience in general and more specifically, mindful practice in schools. The development of a typology for a combined HRO and Eastern mindfulness model facilitated an in-depth analysis of DDD as it was implemented at Pacifica Middle School. The findings showed strong evidence of both HRO and Eastern mindfulness throughout the DDD session. Further study of this or similar typologies is suggested as a means to further unpack the relationship of mindfulness as it pertains to organizational theory and in particular, to educational leadership.

This research has particular significance for HRO and Eastern mindfulness theory, both for how it informs the field of study and for what it suggests for organizational leadership. The study questions the limitations of an external-only orientation to mindfulness and suggests that Eastern philosophy’s internal orientation directs mindfulness in ways that are useful to HRO
theory. In Buddhist thought, mindfulness through meditation fosters concentration directed inwardly that does not wobble. In so doing, it brings one face-to-face with the phenomenological world (object) as well as causing one to reflect one’s relationship to that world (subject). Eastern mindfulness fosters awareness without attachment, a personalized version, or self identification with an object. As suggested by Goldstein (2012), true mindfulness is always wholesome. Buddhist thought considers mindfulness to be the root of wisdom, in which one sees that the phenomenological world is constantly changing and reality is not fixed. Thus, wisdom is realizing a misperception of self and how one identifies with objects. Buddhist mindfulness is an effort to see past this fundamental misconception in order to see the world more clearly. When understood in this way, mindfulness sets up a process for heightened consciousness—a method for *simply knowing* that helps one see as much as possible. In contrast, HROs interpretation of mindfulness may or may not be mindful depending on how one chooses to orient attention. This study suggests a typology for an mindful model that incorporates aspects of both HRO and Eastern mindfulness—and mindlessness-- and which suggests a process for understanding the world that opens the possibility for wisdom. Wisdom is a laudable goal for leadership invested in whole school reform.

This study also points out the importance of mindlessness and its relationship to mindful practice. Arguably, resilience stems from mindful practice that sees the world as it is. As such, mindlessness is just one half of a mindful-mindless dichotomy. To acknowledge mindlessness—to understand one’s relationship to mindlessness strengthens one’s relationship with the real world. In contrast, to favor mindfulness over mindlessness ignores the potential of mindlessness to serve as a tool to improve organizational reliability and resilience. I respectfully that mindlessness as an aspect of mindful practice needs further study.
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Appendix A

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

CONSENT FORM

Interpreting Educational Leadership through the Comparative Lens of Eastern and Western Philosophy: A Micro-Ethnography

Researcher: Barb Gilbert  Contact information: XXX-XXXXX, Email:

Researchers’ statement: I am asking you to be in a research study. The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study or not. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what I will ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When I have answered all your questions, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called ‘informed consent.’ I will give you a copy of this form for your records.

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS

Interpreting educational leadership through the comparative lens of Eastern and Western philosophy may serve to emphasize the need for organizational changes that better serve students. Within this context, the purpose of this study is to examine what occurs when educational leaders and followers engage in focused professional learning.

The research design also includes the use of the video trace model as a means to develop the potential for reflective practice that results in improved student learning.

Participants will benefit from their own reflection and deconstruction of practice in the collaborative setting. The benefit to the educational community could be significant if the technical arrangement of studying practice through video traces proves effective. The potential is for the further development of a mechanism that would allow the intentional study of leadership strategies and practice in the educational setting. The long term benefit is in the potential for participants to intentionally shift their practice as a result of deep reflection and increased understanding of collaborative practice.

PROCEDURES

I propose to base this study in the professional learning environment that exists within the Spokane Public Schools setting. I will videotape selected collaborative, data-driven dialogue sessions, focusing on both the leadership process and the coach/teacher responses to questions. After the collaborative session, I will interview the principal and selected participants and may ask you to deconstruct the session as you are watching it unfold on video.

Having previously viewed the video, I will ask guiding questions of you in order to elicit your thinking. Participants in the study consent to: 1) be videotaped during the initial collaborative session, 2) reflect and comment on the setting, the session goals, and process, and outcomes, and 3) allow the reflective session with commentary to be videotaped as a secondary record of their thinking. You may refuse to answer any question throughout the interview.
RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

You may feel minor emotional discomfort as a result of viewing your own practice in a “live” setting. However, the video trace session will focus on the setting, the session goals, and process, and outcomes in order to minimize any potential discomfort. You may opt out of the video trace session at any time.

OTHER INFORMATION

All data will be confidential. Only the researcher and university advisors will have access to the original data. Data files will be destroyed upon completion of the resulting dissertation study.

Barb Gilbert

Printed name of researcher                    Signature of researcher                    Date

Subject’s statement: This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have general questions about the research, I can ask one of the researchers listed above. If I have questions regarding my rights as a participant, I can call the WSU Institutional Review Board at XXX-XXXX. This project has been reviewed and approved for human participation by the WSU IRB. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

Printed name of subject                    Signature of subject                    Date
Appendix B

Introductory Interview with Principal

Date:

Describe the path that led you to the principal’s position at Pacifica.

What were your immediate goals when you assumed this position?

How have those goals evolved over time?

How might you describe your role as a principal for XXXX Public Schools?

How does your work fit within the work of the district?

Describe the honors initiative that has evolved from the work this year.

How do you support the work of your administrative team?

How do you support the work of your teachers?

How do you change teacher practice over time?

What challenges do you have now and do you foresee in the future?
## Table 1

### Seventh Grade Growth Trend Summary from 2001 to 2009

(The figures represent average growth per year.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Study School</th>
<th>High SES Comparison</th>
<th>Low SES Comparison</th>
<th>District Comparison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
<td>3.55%</td>
<td>1.60%</td>
<td>3.08%</td>
<td>2.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Math</strong></td>
<td>4.02%</td>
<td>3.14%</td>
<td>3.22%</td>
<td>3.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
<td>2.13%</td>
<td>0.94%</td>
<td>0.97%</td>
<td>1.62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Demographic Data (2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Study School</th>
<th>High SES Comparison</th>
<th>Low SES Comparison</th>
<th>District Comparison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Free or Reduced-Price Meals</td>
<td>81.30%</td>
<td>34.10%</td>
<td>43.60%</td>
<td>53.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan Native</td>
<td>6.70%</td>
<td>1.60%</td>
<td>2.50%</td>
<td>3.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>4.20%</td>
<td>3.00%</td>
<td>1.60%</td>
<td>2.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1.60%</td>
<td>0.80%</td>
<td>1.10%</td>
<td>1.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>5.90%</td>
<td>3.80%</td>
<td>2.70%</td>
<td>4.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>4.40%</td>
<td>4.70%</td>
<td>2.10%</td>
<td>3.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>4.70%</td>
<td>2.20%</td>
<td>2.40%</td>
<td>4.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>70.40%</td>
<td>82.00%</td>
<td>83.50%</td>
<td>75.70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us](http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us)
Appendix D

**Coding Scheme: with examples**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HROS</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PF</strong> - Preoccupation with failure</td>
<td>- What is the context?</td>
<td><strong>NPF</strong> - Apparent lack of interest in failure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RS</strong> - Reluctance to simplify interpretations</td>
<td>HROs resist the urge to simplify or streamline processes, and instead, focus on developing a complex understanding of their work.</td>
<td><strong>NRS</strong> - Over-simplification of interpretations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SO</strong> - Sensitivity to operations</td>
<td>(What are we doing as individuals and as an organization?)</td>
<td><strong>NSO</strong> - Lack of sensitivity to operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CR</strong> - Commitment to resilience</td>
<td>(conceptual slack) HROs are aware of their own limitations and therefore understand the need to be present and interpret the world as it unfolds.</td>
<td><strong>NCR</strong> - Failure to commit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DE</strong> - Deferece to Expertise</td>
<td>- Supports a form of collaborative elasticity that allows team members to interact effectively and adapt well under extreme pressure.</td>
<td><strong>NDE</strong> - Hierarchical thinking or lack of deference to expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BP</strong> - Being present</td>
<td>- connecting to experience as it unfolds,</td>
<td><strong>NBP</strong> - Dwelling on the past or future, while missing what is occurring in the present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NC</strong> - Non conceptual mindfulness</td>
<td>(Precision of thought - Seeing the world as fluid and constantly changing - a result of causes)</td>
<td><strong>NRM</strong> - Relative mind – Based on preconceptions, habituated understanding, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AE</strong> - Attending to experience</td>
<td>Mental readiness as one empties the mind of preconceptions and negative attitudes that may otherwise mask understanding.</td>
<td><strong>NAE</strong> - A sense that everything seems to exist substantially.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CC</strong> - Commitment to compassion</td>
<td>- Mindfulness practice allows one to loosen one’s grip and relinquish afflictive emotions such as desire, anger, jealousy. Appropriate attitude helps one be capable of holding negative thoughts and behaviors more loosely.</td>
<td><strong>NCC</strong> - Although a belief in self provides one some measure of stability in an impermanent world, it also sets up the conditions for egocentricity and the need for control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DW</strong> - Deferring to Wisdom</td>
<td>Leaders cultivate “vulnerable openness,” jinpa or “complete honesty” - An intelligent, compassionate workplace (sense of community), listen to workers &amp; genuinely encourage candor.</td>
<td><strong>NDW</strong> - Power - Genuine power and true leadership can only derive from an ethical and altruistic intention.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>