COMING TO KNOW A SCHOOL CULTURE

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(ABSTRACT)

The purpose of this study was to identify specific cultural elements within one elementary school to provide information about the school's identity and functioning. These elements included values, beliefs, play, rituals, ceremonies, and cultural objects. Schools are distinct and unique cultures. The culture of each school building drives the daily happenings. The culture either enhances or stifles growth. By creating an awareness of school culture, educators can better understand the meaning of their day to day activities and how their school evolves towards continuous improvement. The aim of interpreting a school culture is thus to understand meaning and symbols as they have been created by the members of the culture (Schultz, 1995).

This study uncovered evidence to demonstrate that the awareness of stakeholders of a school's culture influences how the culture works. Interviews, artifact collection, digital photographs, meeting analysis, and fieldnotes from observations comprise the data. The interviews were conducted with educators, staff, and parents to ascertain their perceptions of their culture. Artifacts include documents such as weekly bulletins and meeting agendas that reflect the cultural workings. These focus on personal and social aspects of the culture such a party invitation, which spoke of the members' personal and interpersonal connections. Digital photographs were taken of inanimate objects within the

building that visually depicted the values of the culture. Meetings play a key role in cultivating and representing a culture's values and beliefs. Meeting analysis helped to emphasize how this culture made decisions and how the culture structured its daily rhythm. Fieldnotes based on direct observations of meetings an   - 3 -d of key events within specific locations in and around the school building were taken. Data sources were analyzed across interconnected themes. These themes explain how the culture worked and why its members did the things they did. This study isolated specific cultural elements, specified the internal relationships among those elements, and then characterized the whole culture based on the current knowledge of the culture.

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Overview of the Study

<u>The journey to school culture</u>

While working as an itinerant special education teacher, I was always struck by the amazing phenomenon of walking through the front doors of schools to find distinct "personalities" within each school's walls. It may be called climate by some, but it always felt like more than that. The differences in each building were not just surface factors, rather something that I could not put my finger on. This feeling permeated everything about the school: the look of the building, the topic of conversations, the way students walked down hallways, and the way I was greeted, or not greeted, in the main office.

To handle the differences within each school where I worked, sometimes three to four schools in one day, I learned to personally adapt to the immediate environment that I was working in. I learned to speak their language, play by their rules, and carry out my tasks within their framework. It was survival for me while continuing to advocate for and assist in educating the students I was there to support.

In the fall of 1994, Castle Elementary opened its brand new doors for the first time as a school. I was part of the Castle staff as a special educator on a full-time basis. No more traveling! The majority of the teachers in the building came from Greenbrier Elementary, where the principal had been for five years before he was selected to be the new principal at Castle. I had been at Greenbrier as my home school for three years. I moved to Castle because the largest number of students that comprised my caseload lived in that attendance area. I attended all the pre-work meetings in June in preparation for the school's opening. There was an obvious feeling of excitement. The "new" faculty

members, who were transfers from other schools or newly hired, appeared to blend in fairly well with the "familiar" group.

For two years, Castle became my home away from home. I was excited to go to work each day and felt supported by fellow educators, parents, and the principal whom I considered to be a friend. I worked hard in supporting ten students with moderate to significant disabilities at all grade levels which meant working with ten different teachers and ten to twelve instructional assistants as well as therapists. My extra responsibilities included staff development committee, case consultation (otherwise known as child study), shared decision-making committee (later named C.I.T.E. Castle's Interactive Team for Education) and as representative for the county-wide calendar committee.

While on the "inside" at Castle, I fell into an overachiever role and was extremely accommodating to other people's wishes. The majority of my co-educators were equally accommodating to my needs. I did what I had to do to best support the children for whom I cared unconditionally. I advocated for myself, when needed, in what I called a school of "very strong personalities." Humor helped and was invited during stressful or tiring times. My daily life was spent with educators who tried their best to make children successful. At the end of the 1995-96 school year, I was approached about taking a job outside the school division, working as a project coordinator of a state-wide grant that offered training and technical assistance in special education to school divisions in the state. I accepted the position more for personal reasons than professional. The thought of leaving Castle was heartwrenching, yet I was excited by a new challenge.

For three years now, I have been working in training and technical assistance to school divisions. I have been a welcome visitor at Castle, but my official membership in the culture was severed the day I left. My current job is to work with identified school divisions in long range planning efforts. I spend time in schools that applied and were accepted to be part of the Long Range Planning (LRP) Initiative in attempting to work on goals they set for themselves within a particular area related to students with and without

special needs. With the philosophy of mainstreaming and inclusion just beginning to creep into school divisions, I work with just as many general educators and school administrators as I do special educators, if not more.

Still feeling a bit wet behind the ears in this position, but not new to teaching and schools, I have spent the three years figuring out what my role is and what it should really be. I see myself as a catalyst in assisting schools to examine themselves, what they are doing, and what they want to do differently. I help them get from point A to point B. I do not see myself as someone who superimposes change on others or tries to "fix" situations. My role in working with a variety of schools has opened my eyes to the realities of working as a consultant or technical advisor. I have walked into organizations that have histories. These groups have worked together on a daily basis focused on a common purpose. These organizations have memberships and I, as an outside consultant, do not have a membership card. I am an outsider looking in, although I have an invitation to be there.

After working in several schools for the first few months, my question was "What are these places all about, and how can I be of any assistance to these people?" The culture of each school was encompassing me. It took many months, many meetings, and a great deal of reflecting to see that my job was to assist these educators in becoming aware of who they were as a school, identifying what were they good at, their reasons for coming to their schools day after day, and figuring out what they do together to grow or enhance as a collective group. Schools do not need another staff development or reform package forced upon them. Schools need ideas regarding how they can internally strengthen themselves by studying what their purpose is, what they do best, and what can they do together to make improvements along the way.

In my long range planning sites, I have witnessed educators who, having never spoken to each other in the past, form relationships based around students they share. I have seen educators open up lines of communication and talk about "touchy" subjects that

were cluttering their relationships. I have also observed educators organize around a common purpose and work toward making changes simply by being given time to meet, a structure to work in, and assistance along the way.

I became interested in school culture because it is what schools and schooling are primarily about. The culture of each building shapes what happens from day to day. The culture has a dramatic influence in either enhancing or stifling growth. As an outside consultant, I am responsible for working with schools to assist in making something happen. If I do not address the culture that I work in, I am beating my head against a wall. Nothing can be dropped into place that does not "fit" the culture and its inhabitants. This would be like telling people who live in the Yucatan to stop having siestas. The siestas are part of their culture, not ours. We may not value them or we may even argue that they are contributing to their lack of productivity in the workplace, but it is a cultural element which is purely that, cultural. Schools are no different. They have distinct and unique cultures. They may share common elements like ringing bells between periods or feeding children via cafeteria lines, but the way these routines are carried out varies with each school based on culture.

Guiding questions

I wanted to understand how a school's culture can influence a school towards continual growth or evolvement. It was the intent of this study to answer the following exploratory research questions.

- How are key elements in the culture at Castle Elementary school implicitly and explicitly conveyed?

- Does a school's self-awareness of its culture influence how it's culture functions?

- What evidence exists that being aware of a school's culture will assist educators in influencing their own growth?

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to identify specific cultural elements within one elementary school that will provide information about the school's identity and functioning. By creating an awareness of school culture, educators can better understand the meaning of their day-to-day activities and how their school evolves and changes towards continuous improvement. Thus the aim of interpreting a school culture is to understand meaning and symbols as they have been created by the members of the culture. (Schultz, 1995)

Limitations of the study

The primary limitation of this study is the lack of generalization potential. Yin (1994) states that case studies can provide little basis for scientific generalization. The goal is to do a "generalizing" and not a "particularizing." This case study contains elements that can be found in all elementary schools, but are highly specific to this one site.

Organization of the study

Chapter one helps to clarify my personal journey into the selection of school culture as my dissertation topic. It addresses research questions, purpose, significance, limitation of the study, and organization of the study. Chapter two presents a review of the literature and research related to this study. Chapter three describes the cultural methodology and analysis used to uncover the answers to the research questions. Chapters four through eight are dedicated to the six cultural elements and their findings within the Castle culture. Rituals and ceremonies are combined in chapter seven. Chapter nine contains the discussion, concluding remarks and recommendations for future research.

Chapter II

Literature Review

The definition of culture

Building an awareness of culture within school buildings can activate educators to engage in activities to promote growth. Educators within a school are the main component of what comprise the organization. Schools are organizations. Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers (1996) have studied the "humanness" of organizations. They feel that organizations seek meaning as a purposeful, collective unit. People within the culture of an organization are "...intelligent, creative, adaptive, self-organizing, and meaning-seeking" (p. 3). The authors discuss self-organizing systems as "...creating their own structures, patterns of behavior and processes for accomplishing. They design what is necessary to do the work. They agree on behaviors and relationships that make sense to them." Self-organizing systems are collective units; cohesive cultures that support one another and create conditions for both stability and personal discovery. "We need places to nurture our passions, places where we can become more. Work is one of those places" (p. 63).

Studying schools' cultural components, their level of self- awareness and their purpose is an avenue for change and innovation that begins at the grass roots level; one school at a time. I am interested in further study into the culture of schools. In order to present a full picture of the study of school culture, I discuss the study of culture from different fields: anthropology, sociology, organizational development, corporate culture and education. I examine how school culture may affect the school as an organization and compelling reasons for future study in this area.

Each school is thought to have its own unique culture, with no two schools alike. The combination of characteristics that comprise a school's culture range from the staff personalities to the principal's leadership style. Culture has been studied for years by

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experts in the fields of psychology, anthropology, sociology and organizational development. Discussions within these fields contain common themes such as values, beliefs and rituals. Historically, anthropology has been most closely associated with the study of culture.

Culture and anthropology

Within anthropology culture is defined as the customs of a group of people. "Culture has been treated as a thing, separate from individuals but with power, influence, and even rights over people. It is outside people and does something to them" (Musgrove, p. 113). Musgrove presents us with a historical review of how culture has been defined and comes to the conclusion that, although there is great debate within the field of the precise definition of culture, the earlier work is barely different from the work of contemporary anthropologists. For example, in 1947, Linton stated, "...every society has a culture, no matter how simple this culture may be, and every human being is cultured" (p. 48). Musgrove quotes Radcliffe-Brown regarding the impact of culture on humans; "The presentation of culture is a mighty, independent thing, external to individuals but impinging powerfully upon them. All culture patterns act upon individuals" (p. 119).

The information that Musgrove sites from anthropologists supports the notion that individual schools have their own culture supported by their history, folkways, constraints, and rituals. A culture can exist anywhere a group of people are together for extended periods of time working towards a common purpose. To understand how a school can possess a distinct culture, one can look into the field of anthropology and discover how and why culture is typically studied.

Culture and sociology

Differing from the science of anthropology, the field of sociology usually focuses on cultures that are ethnically or geographically defined. However, the study of any culture

is referred to as "a group of people who work (or play) together and journey towards a shared meaning and assumption" (Griswold, p.133).

Griswold (1994) also shares that "culture" is one of those words that people use all the time but have trouble defining. Peterson (1979) states that when sociologists talk about culture, they usually mean one of four things: norms, values, beliefs, or expressive symbols. Norms are the way people behave in a given society; values are what people hold dear; beliefs are how people think the universe operates and expressive symbols are representations of the culture. In schools, educators behave in specific ways (norms), such as asking students to conform to specified expectations or by sharing materials with fellow teachers. School values, or what educators hold dear, may be the appreciation of the hard work that students demonstrate or the care for all children regardless of their background. Educators' beliefs may be how they see themselves fitting into the school and school system, or how the school fits into the surrounding community. Finally, expressive symbols are artifacts that represent the daily occurrences within a school such as children's colorful murals or baby shower invitations in each teachers' mailbox.

According to Griswold, American schools engage in certain symbolic rituals, such as the preparation of report cards (a cultural object), because the institutional context in which schools find themselves expect an outcome, regardless of the difficulty inherent in measuring learning and educational progress. Schools form building-specific cultures to establish a collective identity and unite together to fend off predators and critics.

Lincoln and Kalleberg (1990) hold that "the quality of relationships between workers and their co-workers is positively associated with commitment and satisfaction." If the people within a school do not connect and work together toward a common goal or passion, the culture is said to be stagnant or unproductive.

Lincoln and Kalleberg provide three models of organizations. The consensus model holds shared goals and values within an organization that are the norm and dissidence is a problem requiring correction. The cleavage model has distinct groups

within an organization that have different interests, especially fault lines that exist between job levels. The fragmentation model shows organizations that are riddled with ambiguity where people hold multiple perspectives. It is plausible that schools can fall under all three models or have factions of each model within one school.

Culture and organizational development

Within the field of organizational development, Schneider, Brief, and Guzzo (1996) state that the "feel of an organization" reflects both its climate and culture. "Literally thousands of elements define a climate, and climate changes only when many of these everyday policies, practices, procedures, and routines change" (p. 9). Climate is made up of the beliefs and values that constitute an organization's culture. Schneider, et. al. differentiate culture as what the people in the organization worship. "Do they worship routine? Innovation? Quality? Risk-taking?"(p. 9). These authors believe that climate and culture are interconnected. An organization's values and beliefs (part of culture) influence their interpretations of organizational policies, procedures and practices (organizational climate).

Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers (1996) propose the unique view that all organizations have the predisposition to self-organize based on life's natural tendency to organize. "Life organizes into greater levels of complexity to support more diversity and greater sustainability" (p. 3). Schools are similar in this aspect. As budgets get tighter, kids more needy and conditions more stressful, the school as an organization will adapt and organize to sustain their day-to-day mission of educating children.

Eight basic principles are set forth by Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers. (1.) Play is what keeps organizations alive, attractive, and working. "When play disappears, creativity ceases. Only fear and struggle persist" (p. 15). (2.) Experimentation and the freedom to be creative is called "organizing as play." Organizations must explore and welcome the messy work that leads to solutions and new ways of working. (3.) Organization will

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instantly emerge without directive leaders, policies or ultimatums. Life requires that we change and provide space for our explorations. (4.) Organizations can organize around a change in beliefs, making creative connections, and nourishing new information. (5.) New information is vital to all members of a culture. "A self that fails to create itself as a contribution of others is irrelevant in a systems-seeking world" (p. 52). (6.) Selves organize because they have a love for their organizations and seek to improve them. (7.) All cultures can have emergence; "...the surprising capacity we discover only when we join together". (8.) Organizations understand change as continuous, creative energy and go about redesigning original designs. "A healthy system uses its freedom to explore its identity. If we seek our own effectiveness, we cannot help but embrace more and more of those who are connected to us in ways we refused to see" (p. 101).

This framework can be used to study schools as organizations and organizations as cultures. Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers present a novel way of looking at how organizations can either celebrate or squelch creativity and have the freedom to continuously explore or stagnate.

Culture and corporations

Bolman and Deal (1991) researched corporate cultures within the United States. They looked at each business as a separate and distinct culture. "Every organization has a culture. Culture has a powerful influence throughout an organization" (p.4). They observed that the elements of a culture consist of the environment, values, rites and rituals, networks and specific "players" that carried on jobs other than their formally assigned tasks.

After spending years in top corporations such as General Electric and IBM, Bolman and Deal realized the importance of understanding a culture. It can actually make or break the success of an organization. A strong culture is a system of informal rules that spells out how people are to behave most of the time. It enables people to feel better about their jobs,

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so they are more likely to work harder and happier. Culture can shape employees responses in strong, yet subtle ways. Bolman and Deal believe that in culture, there is strength.

Finally, Bolman and Deal expanded the definition of culture as beliefs based on an organization's rituals, symbols, myths, stories, and values. This is similar to Deal's definition with the addition of the elements of stories and myths. ' Newcomers in a culture must be initiated and taught the ways of "how we do things around here"'(p. 252).

Deal and Kennedy (1982) studied corporate organizations' success or failure based on their cultures. Their findings were applicable to all organizations where a group of people worked together daily toward a common goal. They recognized that culture ties people together and gives meaning and purpose to their day-to- day lives. In order to avoid culture shock, change initiated within a culture must be organized to fit the rituals, informal rules and values of the environment. It must also value all of the individuals within the culture so they are enthused. This enthusiasm ensures that they will work towards meaningful change.

Deal and Kennedy defined the ingredients for successful change within a culture. These are listed in seven steps: (1) Position a hero in charge of the process, (2) recognize a real threat from the outside, (3) make transition rituals the pivotal elements of change, (4) provide transition training in new values and behavior patterns, (5) bring in outside shamans, (6) build tangible symbols in new directions, and (7) insist on the importance of security in transitions. They felt that culture can be changed if the managers who are empowered to change them are sensitive enough to the key cultural attributes- heroes, values, rituals- that must be affected if change is to succeed.

Culture and education

Definitions are varied in the literature on school culture. Merriam-Webster's Dictionary (1994) defines culture as: (1) the growing of a particular crop, (2) the act of

developing by education and training, (3) refinement of intellectual and artistic taste, (4) a particular form or stage of civilization (5) expert care and training , and (6) the customary beliefs, social forms, and materials traits of a racial, religious, or social group. When you apply some of these definitions to a school building, the parameters that define a culture as a "group" and that as a culture "developed by education and training" are key. The culture of a school is a composite of the conditions that are specific to the students, teachers, administrators, and parents of a school building. Although there may be people from many cultural groups within a building, the day-to-day interactions of the people who live and breath there embody that distinct culture.

Hargreaves (1997) focuses on successful school cultures. Characteristics of its members are composed of: openness, informality, care, attentiveness, lateral working relationships, reciprocal collaboration, candid and vibrant dialogue, and a willingness to face uncertainty together. He asserts that the emotional climate of a building is directly tied to the school's culture. Researchers such as Fullan (1991), Rosenholtz (1989) are looking at the culture of schools to determine why some schools are progressive, welcoming, effective, and reform minded while others are not. They also correlate the culture of a school with the leadership of the building administrator(s). Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) use the concept of "culture" to refer to the guiding beliefs and expectations evident in the way a school operates, particularly in reference to how people relate (or fail to relate) to each other. In simple terms, culture is "the way we do things around here" (p. 37).

Cunningham and Gresso (1993) dedicated an entire book to the recognition of school culture and the impact school leaders have on these cultures. They defined effective school cultures as those that accomplished achievements through a collective vision. " All schools have cultures; strong or weak, functional or dysfunctional. Successful schools seem to have strong and functional cultures aligned with a vision of excellence in schooling....strong, functional cultures must be nourished, nurtured and supported through the correlates of cultural development" (p. 50).

So much of what is written about school culture is linked to how these cultures deal with change. Fullan hints at the link in *The New Meaning of Educational Reform* (1991). He looks to find meaning in change: " if reforms are to be successful, individuals and groups must find meaning concerning what should change as well as how to go about it." (p. xi) He makes a direct relationship between change and culture; "Reform is not putting into place the latest policy. It means changing the cultures of the classrooms, schools, districts, universities, and so on" (p. xii).

Shaw and Reyes (1992) saw no single "...comprehensive organizational theory that fully explains the complexity of the school as a social organization." (p. 295). Their study looked at the organizational values and commitments of educators at both the elementary and secondary levels. They sought to examine the aspects of the complexity of the school organization from a cultural perspective. Kroeber and Kluckhorn (1968) were anthropologists who cited 164 different definitions of culture. The definitions ranged from simple to complex. Shaw and Reyes found differences in culture across schools based on levels of commitment, value orientation, and the relationship between the two.

Barth (1990) sees change and the concept of school improvement as an endless list of characteristics that attempt to make an "effective principal", "effective teacher" and an "effective school". He believes true school improvement occurs when children and adults are put in situations to learn simultaneously, think critically, solve problems important to them, and become a true community of learners where learning is endemic and mutually visible. Change or improvement must be sought and achieved collectively.

Barth touches on school culture via building communities of learners in schools. He holds four assumptions: (1) Schools have the capacity to improve themselves, if the conditions are right, (2) Adults and students alike learn and each energizes and contributes to the learning of the other, (3) What needs to be improved about schools is their culture, the quality of interpersonal relationships, and the nature and quality of learning experiences, and (4) School improvement is an effort to determine and provide conditions

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under which the adults and students will promote and sustain growth among themselves. "Taking these assumptions seriously leads to some fresh thinking about the culture of schools and about what people do in them" (p. 45).

Related literature and research on school culture

School culture has always existed within individual schools; however, the recent interest in the area focuses on how school culture and change are interdependent. With the age of school reform upon us, many researchers are realizing that the success or failure of school reform and staff development projects are directly tied to the social norms within a school. Without addressing school culture, true reform will be just another futile exercise without any results. For example, Hughes and Andreas (1995) discuss how all educators within a school must be involved in the change process at their comfort level and as a unified group. If a strong culture exists, they are more likely to withstand the "...questions, struggles, and hurdles that comes with the implementation of anything new." (p.30) Ineffective change strategies are those that are done to people, not with them. A culture has to want to enhance itself and the "...impetus for change must come from those who will have to deal with the changes on a daily basis" (p. 29) and wish to incorporate change into their culture. Hughes and Andreas quote Heider from the Tao of Leadership, "Whatever is flexible and flowing will tend to grow. Whatever is rigid and blocked will atrophy and die."

The media continues to display public education as "failing" its students. Berliner and Biddle's *Manufactured Crisis* (1995) provided us with examples of how the media distorts facts regarding the so-called "failure" of public schools. In September, 1993, the New York Times reported that half of the adults in the U.S. were deficient in literacy skills. This was based on a press conference held by the U.S. Department of Education; however, actual report findings were not mentioned. The facts did not paint such a grim picture and were not substantial enough to be released publicly for the purpose of demeaning U.S.

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public education. Due to the political arena calling for reforms and higher standards within our schools, the area of change and reform is at its peak.

Researchers such as Hughes and Andreas (1995) and Licklider (1997) are studying how to implement effective change without the use of forced or "canned" staff development programs. Hopkins (1990) wrote about integrating staff development and school improvement by studying school climate. He feels that by working with both teacher development and school improvement, new developments will be sustained "It is a utopian dream until we reconceptualize the school on the dynamics and functioning at two levels--the structural and psychological" (p. 42). "From a school improvement perspective, the most exciting aspect of research into school climate is that these characteristics are related to the school's social system and are not dependent on external factors" (p. 45) such as staff development programs.

Sarason (1996) , a central authority in the field of psychology, has focused his efforts on studying how change and school culture are interwoven. He first took on this controversial topic in 1971 with *The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change.* His recent book revisits this same topic and remains a welcoming instrument in understanding that schools are complicated places where teachers often have little time for new ideas, and that innovative ideas must be worked on through a system of relationships between educators. He feels that changing a culture is tough work and must be done in a comprehensive way if it is to occur with any lasting significance.

Hamilton and Richardson (1995) studied the connections between school culture and the outcomes of staff development. Their qualitative research compared two schools. They analyzed which elements of each school's culture affected change after staff development activities were implemented. They hypothesized that the culture of a school can strongly affect the process and results of a staff development program. In looking at the interactions between teachers when they met in a group, the differences in the processes in the two schools and whether these could be attributed to differences in school culture,

Hamilton and Richardson concluded that the elements of school culture and the expectations for participation within the staff development process strongly affected progress toward group collaboration and teacher empowerment. Their results suggested that the traditional staff development approach may not be a useful guide for the development of a school district-wide program due to the uniqueness of culture within each individual school.

Englert and Tarrant (1995) studied the aspects of a collaborative culture and school change. They focused on involving teachers in the educational change process as informed agents, problem solvers, and collaborators. They also looked at collaborative partnerships between universities and schools in conducting side-by-side inquiry. The researchers studied the culture as a collaborative community by setting up the collaborative partnership community with help from university facilitators. Teachers were provided with the time for implementing new mechanisms for describing, interpreting, and analyzing problems of curriculum and literacy instruction. These were based on the sharing of concrete experiences. The researchers discovered that to call a culture truly collaborative, there must be shared vision, shared language, and mechanisms for problem solving.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) discuss two types of school culture, individualistic and collaborative, with very different implications for change and improvement. The culture of individualism is formed after years of teaching in isolation and having a school full of teachers who are professionally estranged from one another. This sustains conservative views that generally oppose change and innovations. The collaborative culture believes that teaching is inherently difficult and good teachers never stop learning to teach. Giving and receiving help is seen as positive. The collaborative culture embraces change that enhances continuous improvement and career-long learning. Fullan and Hargreaves identify the teachers' and students' workplace as the key to any reform. If the school culture supports teacher growth and school improvement, true change can occur.

Rosenholtz (1989) studied the school culture of 78 elementary schools in Tennessee to determine which ones were "stuck" (learning impoverished) and which ones were "moving" (learning enriched). She found that stuck schools were not supportive of change or improvement and were embedded in uncertainty and isolation. In "moving" schools, teachers worked together and the belief existed that teachers never stopped learning, especially from each other. Open support and communication gave the teachers more confidence, more certainty, and more achievement thus enabling their students to achieve more.

Culture exists where people reside. The amount of time that students, educators, and community members spend in schools creates cultural elements that directly influence their actions and functioning. This study helps to uncover one school's cultural elements.

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Chapter III

Cultural Methodology and Analysis

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<u>Studying culture</u>

The study of culture is an interpretive one in search of meaning. It is an elaborate venture into "thick description." Culture is a reality with forces and purposes of its own. (Geetz, 1973). To begin my inquiry into the culture of a school, I needed to use methods to discern what the members of the culture do, what they think they do, and then systematize the information using a variety of data sources. Geetz suggests treating the study of culture as a purely symbolic one, by isolating its elements, specifying the internal relationships among those elements, then characterizing the whole system in some general way. Along with artifacts, he recommends looking at core symbols, underlying structures, principles, exact behaviors, and social actions. Cultural analysis is guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses. Geetz states that it is difficult to form a "culture theory" since knowledge of the culture is endless and evolving. However, in studying key cultural elements, I generalized my findings within the culture and could draw large conclusions from small using densely textured facts.

LeCompte and Priessle (1993) discuss the role of the researcher in ethnographic studies. They feel that the best research comes from those who have "lived and worked" for long periods of time in the culture that they are studying. It is much more difficult to do fieldwork when you are in an alien culture. They recommend that the researcher become part of the community and experience life as the "natives" do. I have been part of the Castle community, and I have also had the unique experience of being a visitor to the school while providing training and technical assistance. This was critical to my role as a researcher in a cultural study.

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Data collection

When I first started to formulate my ideas of how to capture the essence of the entire culture of one elementary school, I had grand ideas of being a full-time anthropologist, living among the members, day in and day out. Not having the luxury of being a full-time dissertation student, I attempted to visit Castle several times a week. My visits became more and more difficult to schedule due to working full-time and attempting to nurture a family life. Having lived and worked in the culture for two years, I had easy access to nearly every part of the building and could sit and type fieldnotes at meetings or events without much notice. This convenience compensated for only being able to visit once a week. I had to fight the nostalgia of no longer being part of the "inside" working culture; a culture that lives and works together day by day. Although I was greeted as a friend and warmly welcomed upon each arrival with hugs and kind words, I knew that I was an outsider looking in. The benefits of this to my data collection was a deeper reflection into a group of people who had a purpose and a story to be told.

For almost a year now, I have been reading a book about the Mayoruna Indians, a primitive tribe, referred to as the Cat People, who live deep in the Colombian rainforest. During my year of data collection, I would read about the tribe and the anthropologist who lived among them for several months. I wanted to be able to describe the culture at Castle elementary as vividly as I saw the tribe in my mind upon reading the author's words.

My data collection methods were massive. I often felt like I had too much data and too many notes. Yet, after a day of fieldnotes or an interview, I knew I was on the right track to collecting the deep description I would need to provide my readers with visual images of this school and its people.

Case study research

A single case study approach portrays the school as a cultural phenomenon within a real-life context. Since my research questions tend to be "what" questions, my study is exploratory in nature. I chose case study research due to its ability to deal with a variety of evidence such as artifacts, interviews and field observations. Yin (1994) refers to case study research as a strategy that comprises an all-encompassing method, with the logic of design incorporating specific approaches to data collection and to data analysis. Castle Elementary is a rare case within the public school arena. At the onset of my data collection, it was just beginning its fourth year and had the opportunity to build its culture from the ground up. This is a unique event that is best described in a case study.

I was able to explore, illustrate, explain and describe the culture of this elementary school using many facets of data collection and analysis. I have attempted to link relevant data back to the theoretical propositions. In my attempt to generalize findings based on the developed theories within the fields of anthropology, sociology, organizational development, corporate and education cultures, I remained focused on core cultural elements based on researchers' previous work within these fields. Yin (1994) states that an analyst should always try to generalize findings back to theory, analogous to the way a scientist generalizes from experimental results to theory. He suggests making all steps within the research clear and concise and to conduct research as if someone were always looking over your shoulder.

Cultural elements to be studied

Six cultural elements were the points of convergence throughout my study. They are values, beliefs, play, rituals, ceremonies, and cultural objects. These elements were not only of interest to me, but have also been cited by the researchers who have studied culture in various organizations and environments.

Values and beliefs

      Values and beliefs are the glue that hold members together in all cultures. Values within an organization verify that an organization stands for something. Values are recognized by all members. Values provide a sense of identity to an organization.

      Cunningham and Gresso (1993), Bolman and Deal (1991), Griswold (1994) and Shaw and Reyes (1992) all mention the strong existence of values within individual cultures. Shaw and Reyes provide an example of an educator's values as his or her autonomy in making grading decisions or "covering" the curriculum. I attempted to identify the values of the members of Castle Elementary through verbal and nonverbal words, actions and objects. Values can be spoken but are more implicitly evident in the day-to-day actions of the cultural members.

      Deal and Kennedy (1982) assert that beliefs are more visible than values. They affect daily business and tend to characterize the performance of the organization. Beliefs appeared explicitly, or, in the surface behavior of the educators I observed as opposed to their verbal perceptions of the values they cited. Beliefs are what a culture defends and view as the guiding forces in their actions.

Play

      Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers (1996) state that "images of play have been with us for thousands of years, but modern Western thought makes it difficult to approach life as play" (p. 12). Play, within their writings, emphasizes experimentation, risk-taking, creation, discovery, and "tinkering" with ideas to open up what's possible at the moment. Deal and Kennedy (1982) found that corporate members who played together, during and after work, assisted in strengthening their culture. This could be as simple as meeting for Happy Hour every Friday after work or playing on the company softball team. Finally, Griswold (1994) cites that groups of people within a culture who play together develop a strong cultural creation of informal interaction. I examined how the adults within

Castle"played" during and after the school day, how play was generally expressed within classrooms and how play was woven throughout the school among both adults and children.

Rituals and ceremonies

Rituals and ceremonies make up the systematic and programmed routines within cultures. They represent significant symbols of belonging to a culture. Deal and Kennedy (1992) found that rituals bring meaning to daily actions and bring order to chaos. Ceremonies within organizations celebrate the culture and its memorable experiences. Ceremonies are seen as sacred symbols of milestones. Deal and Kennedy feel that in the absence of expressive events like ceremonies, the culture will die and important values will have no impact.

In Musgrove's (1982) discussion of cultural symbols, he sees rituals such as registration for new classes and the reviewing and revising of schedules as symbols of order and power in many schools. By emphasizing these events at particular times within the school year, they come to symbolize important milestones and serve as a reminder of the deep structure that exists (p. 157-58). I find rituals and ceremonies fascinating. These acts reflect the humanness and celebration of the relationships and events within schools.

Cultural objects

I incorporated into my study what Griswold (1994) calls cultural objects. Cultural objects are symbols that tell us about the culture through actions, words, objects, events, or behaviors. These are an entity that is audible, tangible or that can be articulated. A cultural object helps tell a story. "Specifying these is a way of grasping some part of the broader system we refer to as culture and holding up that part for analysis" (p. 12).

(p. 12). Cultural objects are made by human beings. More importantly, the people within the culture have had some part in creating them. I attempted to make logical linkages to the key cultural elements through the interpretation of cultural objects.

Data collection design description

Five types of data collection were employed throughout my study. Each method was necessary to attempt to record data that illustrated the chosen elements of study within Castle Elementary's culture. Data were cross-analyzed to find connections within themes. Yin (1994) suggests that multiple sources of evidence should converge on the same set of facts or findings. He also recommends checking these against a chain of evidence which are explicit links between the questions asked, the data collected and the conclusions drawn.

Ellen (1984) states that text is only one kind of information. It is an account of something rather than a descriptor of the event itself. Interviews, meeting notes, and field notes were several text forms of data collection that I used to help talk about the actions, behaviors, events and processes within the Castle elementary culture. "You can produce an important body of information when you integrate observation and other forms of evidence and convert them into text" (Ellen, p. 74).

Meetings play a key role in cultivating and representing a culture's values and beliefs. Schultz (1995) feels that meetings constitute essential and visible behaviors in a culture. They contribute toward structuring the organization's daily rhythm. Frequent meeting attendance can indicate either the culture's hierarchy or structural framework. Meetings are significant expressions of an organization's culture, especially those that occur on a regular basis. They are a symbolic interpretation of an organization's culture.

In studying meetings, I took fieldnotes at the most frequently occurring meetings at Castle to look at the traditions and rituals that existed, the common language used, the overall structure of the meeting and how the communication and physical environment

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affected the meeting and its outcomes. I took fieldnotes at faculty meetings, C.I.T.E.

meetings (shared-decision making committee), and family meetings. I analyzed the

meeting fieldnotes based on the six themes seen in Schultz's (1995) model. These include:

(1) the physical environment; the seating arrangement and location, (2) the traditions and

rituals; always providing a written agenda, (3) the common language used in meetings by

members, (4) the structure of the meeting; time, agendas, questions and answers, and

presentations, (5) communication; who speaks, when and for how long, and (6) any extra

activity; side remarks or socializing. Using this framework assisted me in determining the

formality or informality of the culture, the political issues that drive the culture, the values

and beliefs held by the culture and the visible messages that the meetings represented within

the culture. In poring over my meeting notes, I attempted to look for meeting organization,

the decision making process or processes, interaction of members and to what degree

meetings interact with other events in the culture.

Interviews

Through the use of interviews, I learned about the culture at Castle Elementary from

a random sampling of the members who became my cultural experts. I wanted to hear

their perceptions of the school community and its cultural elements. The accounts of their

experiences were important stories that added to the cultural literature. I interviewed each

informant to gain a descriptive or "grand tour" of the culture. Lofland and Lofland (1984)

said both intensive and unstructured interviewing leads to guided conversations whose

goals are to elicit from the interviews rich, detailed material.

The first group of informants included the building administrator, the secretary,

the head custodian, and four teachers (one primary, one elementary, one specialty and one

special educator). The teachers were selected on a random basis. I put the names of all of

the primary teachers into one envelope and the elementary teachers into another and pulled

several out. Once the subjects were selected, I provided a brief written description of my

study and my interest in their thoughts with an option for them to say "yes" or "no". The teachers who said "yes" were interviewed.

I purposely did not include the interview participants from the two Basic School research studies that was being conducted at Castle concurrent with mine. One study consisted of parent involvement activities within a specified community whose children attended Castle. Approximately five staff members from Castle were interviewed by the graduate student conducting that particular study. The other study focused on the implementation of key components from the Basic School philosophy. This graduate student interviewed only the four family representatives, who were teachers at Castle. These were the same educators interviewed for the parent involvement study.

Parents to be interviewed were selected via recommendation of the fifth-grade teachers. Basically, I asked for parents who were involved in the school and familiar with the classrooms. I asked for each of the four fifth grade teachers to recommend two parents who had children at Castle since it opened and two who were new to Castle that year. Eight parents participated in interviews. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed into text.

Fieldnotes

Fieldnotes were the primary data source in this study. Fieldnotes were based on recording what was said, what was happening at the time, and what I thought about it during specific time periods or at specific locations or events. Approximately halfway through the school year, the fieldnotes appeared to get a bit repetitive, which others assured me was a good sign that themes were emerging. My fieldnotes reflected locations, classrooms in action, and meetings. Observations of specific environments in and around the school building were completed with fieldnotes taken on a laptop computer. Fieldnotes were taken in classrooms, at meetings, in the faculty lounge, in the main office, in hallways and at staff development events. These observations helped to provide an understanding about the visual representations of the culture such as the architecture, environments,

information, behavior, events, actions and the cultural objects and the rituals that were systematically carried out and linked to specific situations.

In attempting to capture the true essence of what I was observing while pounding away at my keyboard, I tried to follow several rules from the field of ethnography. First, I tried to stay "detached" from the situation and observe as much of the environment as possible, without focusing on my personal interests. Second, I tried to "seek generalization rather than anecdote in an attempt to remain faithful to validity within surroundings" (Ellen, 1984).

Finally, I kept in mind that I would be making judgments about the culture based on what I observed. Fieldnotes were easy to gather since I was well known within the culture and had the trust of the educators I was observing. Ellen (1984) notes that the more intimate the researcher is, the more intimate information can be collected. Informants within a culture will tell him/her things which they normally would not tell an outsider.

Digital photographs

Visual representations assist in adequately describing a culture by providing details and images to the narrative. All cultures possess objects that are symbols. These speak to the culture and its identity. Digital photographs were taken of objects in the school that were representative of the elements being studied. Due to the difficulty in obtaining releases for photographs of students or teachers, especially in an electronic dissertation that is public domain, my photographs contained only inanimate objects. These photographs supported the findings of the key cultural elements.

Artifacts and documents

Artifacts are usually associated with the field of archeology in which the study of an ancient culture is conducted through the discovery and analysis of physical artifacts found in the ground. Ethnoarchaeology, a branch of archaeology that investigates artifacts in

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modern cultures, provides insight into the life experiences of more contemporary societies. Artifacts from any culture allow researchers to make informed speculations upon the items collected along with other relevant sources of information.

Goodman (1996) shares that each school has its own distinctive characteristics, patterns of activity, physical structure, myths, rituals, and people. He feels that researchers in the area of school culture and reform can act as archaeologists by piecing together the cultural story of a particular school by using various artifacts. The artifacts that I collected were samples that supported the key elements within the Castle culture. For example, agendas from meetings were important to review what topics were discussed, what decisions were expected to be made and how other cultural elements were woven into a more formalized ritual. Artifacts, in addition to meeting agendas, included a wide variety of Castle documents such as school-wide memos, announcements, mission and vision statements, and school newsletters. Goodman feels that using artifacts as devices for understanding the nature of schools provides opportunities to understand the phenomena at hand.

Artifacts in the form of students' writing samples in response to several prescribed journal topics were used as additional data sources. These were generated by four classes of fifth graders. Samples were photocopied by the teachers and the names removed for total anonymity of the students. The writing prompts (Appendix A) asked the students to describe how they felt about Castle Elementary and to reflect on particular aspects they liked or disliked.

It is important to note that many of the documents in the appendices were recreated from the original documents due to their lengthy text. Their format and presentation remain the same. The two documents in Appendix J are originals and were scanned in.

Data analysis

Deal and Kennedy (1982) devote an entire chapter on learning how to read cultures. Culture is a human phenomenon. They contend the only way to pinpoint cultural elements is to spend time in a culture and observe how the people spend their time. Immersing myself back into a friendly culture while only having to observe (not work!) was enjoyable. The difficulty that arose for me, and for many anthropologists, was, once I had a vast amount of data in several different formats, what should be done with it to make it into a meaningful and accurate description of the culture?

In analyzing the various data sources, I began by looking for themes that supported the identification of the specific cultural elements: values, beliefs, play rituals, ceremonies, and cultural objects. Miles and Huberman (1994) discuss developing a contact summary sheet for immediate use after site visits. This single sheet is supposed to assist in narrowing the questions to ask, guide planning for the next contact, reorient the researcher to the contact when returning to the write-up, and help with further data analysis. This approach initially allowed me to reflect on the main concepts, themes and issues, however, its use became too forced and unnatural. A more logical approach that worked for me was, after I printed out the fieldnotes, I scribbled notes in the margins. This satisfied my need to highlight personal thoughts about the contact within twenty-four hours after the fieldnotes were taken.

Coding

"Coding is analysis. Codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study" (Miles and Huberman, p.56). To organize my data into meaningful chunks, I used descriptive codes. These allowed me to translate text by attributing a class or theme to segments based on their content. Coding at different levels of analysis can take on varied forms (i.e. descriptive vs. inferential); however, all coding assists in pulling together the material for analysis. I

studied the coding systems of Lofland (1984) and Bogdan and Biklen (1982) for coding ideas to assist in my analysis. Originally, I was interested in using a software program to assist in creating conceptual webs and patterns for data analysis for easier coding and visual displays. Unfortunately, I could not find anyone familiar with the program to instruct me in its use and I lacked the time to teach it to myself.

A general rule of thumb I tried to stick to was to color code, based on the six cultural elements, each set of notes or transcripts before I returned to Castle to take another set of fieldnotes. This system allowed me to reflect on my observations and the cultural themes that were emerging. When things at work became very busy in March, my coding fell by the wayside and I spent many nights in May and June finishing the coding of my fieldnotes. I took fieldnotes until the last teacher workday of the school year.

After I arranged all of my fieldnotes, interview texts, meeting notes, and children's writing samples in chronological order into a notebook, I used a large sketch pad to systematically sift through each data source and record all of the examples within each of the six cultural elements. The sketchpad was easy to access with my newborn daughter, who spent many hours on my lap or beside me on the couch, as I spread out the notebook and worked. The most important step in this process was "chunking" the information into logical themes based on the reoccurrence of repetitive information.

Analysis of meetings

As mentioned previously, all fieldnotes of meetings were analyzed using Schultz's (1994) six component framework. This allowed me to pull out information from the meeting notes, categorize, and analyze how this information meshed with the key cultural elements, thus, assisting in describing the culture.

Writing

Writing about the patterns and themes, and building logical chains of evidence was another vital analysis technique I employed. Mills (1959) points out that "Writing begins in the context of discovery and then must turn to the context of presentation. Writing does not come after analysis; it is analysis, happening as the writer thinks through the meaning of data in the matrix displays. Writing is thinking, not the report of thought." (p.79)

Chapter IV

Values

In an attempt to grasp the values of the members of the Castle culture, I searched for key words, phrases and themes that I observed to accurately describe what the Castle culture valued. Values are what drive any culture. Values may be unspoken and are more readily seen through action or demonstration. Table 1 represents the core values and sub-categories within each of the values at Castle.

Table 1

Values and sub-values

Decision-making	Help	Diversity	Calendar & Time
• Kids decision-making • Teachers decision-making • Parents input on decision-making • Types of decisions	• Personal relationships • Help for community, parents, children and teachers/staff	• Diversity among children • Acceptance and tolerance of diversity • Types of diversity	• Communication modes • Importance • Meetings

<u>Decision-making</u>

Values are inferred from the way decisions are made within a culture. I questioned how decisions were made at Castle Elementary and observed decision-making processes in action. One of the most obvious values at Castle was evidenced in the way decisions were typically made in groups via consensus. Decisions were made with either input from the entire faculty or by specific segments of the culture like a committee. Parents were often sought out to join in the decision-making process regarding specific issues and

representatives from the community were also asked for input. The students' decision-making powers depended on their individual teacher and the level of autonomy that the students were provided.

The findings from my data indicated that decision making was a strong value that was integral to the culture and everyday life at Castle. Contained under the decision making umbrella were several sub-categories: (1) participating in groups that made decisions, (2) valuing different opinions and input when making decisions, (3) parent, student, teacher, and administrative involvement in decision making, (4) the type of decisions being made, and (5) coming to consensus on decisions that effected the whole school.

Groups that made decisions

One group that made decisions were the families within the Basic School network at Castle. These four families represented Boyer's themes of School as Community, Curriculum with Coherence, Climate for Learning, and Commitment to Character. The make-up of the Basic School families illustrated the importance of decisions being made across grade levels and across roles. One family meeting early in the school year (10/15/97) was attended by representatives from grades three through five, first grade, student teachers, special educators, the speech therapist, and the music teacher. People at Castle valued equal representation across faculty members in their decision-making processes. The principal attended part of this meeting as a quiet observer. It was not unusual for the Basic School families to make five to ten decisions in one forty-five minute meeting. The teachers appeared to be accustomed to providing input and determining results rather quickly or they designated a specified amount of time to study the issue and respond back to their family.

At the October family meeting, the decisions revolved around coordinating calendars for an upcoming planning day, organizing groups for field day and creative arts

day, and making arrangements for planning school-wide Halloween activities along with the agenda for the next meeting. At a family meeting in December (12/8/97), most of the forty-five minutes was spent deciding how they, as a group, would explore their different options for upcoming events. This particular family generated a long list of ideas for possible future action in a short amount of time. I recall being amazed at how productive the group was. Members listened to each other's ideas and opinions and hitchhiked off of one another in a truly proactive manner. Their list of possibilities to explore was impressive, yet they ended up making only one decision, a date for their Valentine event. The meeting ended with the group leader saying, "Wow, that's a lot to think about." It was implied that when the group met again, after having reviewed their copies of the notes from this meeting, that some final decisions would have to be made regarding the other issues of discussion.

When making decisions at Castle, time was usually provided for the teachers to give input after an issue had been raised. It was a school that valued its teachers' contributions by taking the time needed for almost everyone to have a say. Decision-making in this manner, which usually leads to consensus, took a great amount of time. For example, at a January faculty meeting (1/7/98), when the group was asked a question regarding whether they wanted one long faculty meeting a month or two shorter ones, each family brought back their feedback via their family leaders. The principal stated that three of the four families wanted two faculty meetings. He clearly stated aloud "This was a consensus folks, not a vote." Teachers continued to speak up with comments about how this decision was or was not important and how it would impact them both personally and professionally. Although the decision had been made, it was still valuable to the faculty members to reflect upon how they came to their decision by rehashing the pros and cons of changing the faculty meeting schedule and granting each other the time for expressing their opinions and concerns.

At this same January meeting, a pattern continued. After a topic was raised by the principal or another member on the agenda, there was time for open input and discussion for approximately five to ten minutes. Some of the topics included: collaborative planning days and how to enhance the use of time, a visit by the superintendent, and the utilization of upcoming staff development days. At one point in the meeting, the principal stated, "Please, you know we need lots of opinions about this." This further emphasized that opinions of the faculty were not only highly valued but also eagerly sought out.

The interviews of several teachers strongly supported the notion that decision-making was central to the workings of the school and that they were actively involved in the process. The secretary at Castle had a good grasp on how decisions were made and how this varied by topic. The money decisions were made through representatives from each grade level on the shared decision-making committee (C.I.T.E). Parents and a business partner from the community also sat on this committee.

- Financially, it's really the decision of the teachers of the grade levels and they cooperate in that. Decisions on schedules...I'm sure teachers make the master schedule. They are also on a committee for this. Not everyone is going to be happy but they know that maybe next year they will get a little more priority on the scheduling decision. I think the principal really asks for the teacher's opinions at faculty meetings. I know the people in the building who handle things so it's just delegating it to the right place which isn't making the decision just getting someone to handle it....The day to day stuff is done by the principal with input from whoever the teachers are that might be involved in that particular thing. I think some decisions are made in the hall between the principal and whoever he goes to for advice on that particular issue. Families are making decisions now about events and activities. The problem at the beginning of the year was just being told by the (Basic School) families this is what was going to happen, whereas, that met with a lot of upheaval so it's now being brought to faculty meetings and saying "Is this okay?" (RT, secretary, 2/4/98)

The clear values within the decision-making arena were: very few decisions were made that impacted the faculty without their input; at faculty, family, and shared decision making committees, time was taken to talk about issues before decisions were reached;

opinions were listened to; and the teachers would fight for the right to make decisions if it was ever taken away from them.

Parents were involved in decision-making in some areas of the Castle culture; however, they knew the weighty issues like budget, curriculum and instruction were in the teachers' and administrator's ballcourt the majority of the time. The existence of the shared decision-making team made some parents feel that there was a forum for their "voice". The issues in which parents felt they had some input were afterschool programs, recreational programs, school safety and individualizing instruction for their own children. One parent felt that since she had been at the school for only two years, the decision-making process was still vague to her. She did cite an example of how her input was valued.

- The one experience with my son--he came home and said he was in the wrong math class. He needed something harder and we were able to provide some input into it and we found a solution. I didn't feel like it was them telling what they were going to do. (MY, parent, 4/9/98).

  Another parent knew the realities of how decisions were made, but was comfortable with the amount of input into these decisions that parents actually had.

- I think they're (the faculty and administration) open to it, but I do not think of any big decisions that have had to be made that they've called parents in. But, then I haven't been on the group that comes (CITE). Part of the good thing about this school, it seems to me, is that they really have a good mix of working families and stay-at-home moms. And the fact you have some folks who are there and available and know the community is just a great asset to the school and those folks help make some decisions about fund-raising and other things that they can make decisions on. (LG, parent, 4/9/98)

  Yet another parent saw the decision-making abilities of parents being controlled by the county school division.

- In theory, you know, the county sets the curriculum and the teachers implement it maybe in individualized ways but making sure the students basically learn the same stuff. The placement of

students is pretty lock step of where they're going to be. And then as far as the classroom you're in, I've heard that, for certain students the teachers will recommend. The fourth grade teacher will recommend which fifth grade teacher to get. (DQ, parent, 4/14/98)

The existence of the CITE team helped assure some parents that they had input in decision-making because there were parent representatives on the team. Parents who were interviewed thought they were included in the school decision-making and input for their own children's education at Castle. Furthermore, these parents were comfortable that the daily decisions were made by the Castle faculty.

Children's decision-making

Children's decisions were valued by individual teachers and staff at Castle. In several classroom observations, students were encouraged to make decisions about the order in which they completed assignments, the pace at which they chose to work, and the collaboration with peers. When I observed kindergartners (11/14/97) they were encouraged to make decisions about the center activities they would complete, which materials they would use, and what kind of verbal information they would share with each other and their teacher about the activities they participated in.

In two grade one classrooms that function as one classroom with team teachers, (12/12/97), students decided which activities to complete and the order of completion. They also decided on materials they would use for an art project and whether they wished to work alone or with their classmates. The tone of this classroom was "you are your own boss, you are capable of making your own decisions, and adults are here for help and guidance when needed".

In a fourth grade classroom (3/10/98), the students made decisions about the material they had read by participating in peer and adult directed discussions. They also made decisions about what tasks to complete upon finishing a quiz. Adult direction in these three particular classrooms was subtle and frequent. Obviously, through

demonstration and adult facilitation, students had mastered a certain autonomy in making decisions about their own learning and use of their time.

Cunningham and Gresso (1993) clearly point out that a culture must be willing to invest the time and energy needed to co-adapt any innovation if it is to be successful. Decision-making was valued at Castle. It took time and energy. The members of the Castle culture gave the time for individuals, both individually and collectively, to provide input into decision making to develop their culture and the innovations they set out to tackle.

Help

Help was the second value that the culture of Castle embraced. Helping came naturally to this culture in a variety of ways. The member's personal relationships appeared to be interwoven into their teaching and learning. It was a culture that stressed helping each other. Those being helped or offering help included teachers, parents, students and community members, along with the building administrator. The helping that I observed was genuine and instantaneous. It never appeared to be staged or artificially contrived to make certain members of the culture look good. Helping and assisting each other were expressions of love, caring and concern within the culture.

One way that the teachers and staff helped each other was to continually share written information. Cunningham and Gresso (1993) found that within a healthy culture, extensive sharing of knowledge is modeled by all those within the organization. Consequently, it becomes a custom of the work culture. This sharing of personal and professional experiences with fellow educators within the organization develops collegiality and enhances culture, while bringing a sense of importance and value to development. Open communication and being apprised of upcoming events is a very helpful gesture within a culture. It demonstrates a desire to communicate and to involve others. The

faculty and staff at Castle shared written information at faculty meetings, distributed information via mailboxes, and shared information and ideas within small groups.

Another type of help that was evident was the help that teachers and staff offered the students. In a kindergarten class, there were several examples of help that I observed within one lesson. (11/14/97 Kindergarten). The teachers desks were pushed together, the students shared materials in big crayon caddies in the center of their tables, and the students worked from big math manipulative tubs on the floor, with the directions from the teacher to "help each other out" when they needed it. I observed the classroom teacher helping one of her students when he had demonstrated improper use of the materials and said "cruel" words to his workmates. She calmly took him to a table, sat him on her lap facing her, and talked through the matter using soothing words, not punishment. It appeared that this was how problems were commonly solved, by helping a student who was disruptive get back on track with kindness and support, rather than resorting to punitive measures. Helping students who are having difficult times instead of punishing and ostracizing them was a practice that I observed in several classrooms.

In two first grade classrooms (12/12/97 first grade), the teachers were observed giving direct cues of how the students could help each other out. Phrases like, "If you need help finding them (countries on a map), help each other out" and "let's try to cooperate with each other to get this done." The tone of the classroom was "we are all in this together and we pitch in everywhere we can". One little girl dropped a large box of crayons on her way to putting them back on the shelf and four or five classmates instantly helped to pick them up without any laughter or cues from an adult to do so. The class was busy cooking potato latkes for their Holidays Around the World Unit. Teachers took turns naturally assisting each other and the kids by gathering materials, switching roles, and asking for assistance when needed. During this fun, but somewhat busy time of cooking and working on several projects at once, a parent volunteer arrived and began assisting the teacher and kids without any directions from the teacher. She even ran to the grocery store

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for more potatoes and cooking oil. The help of the parent was valued and welcomed, a reflection that the culture of these two particular classrooms was open and comfortable with their daily events and welcomed assistance.

The value of help also appeared in the way members of the culture took care of one another. Cunningham and Gresso (1993) believe that cultures that value and view people as an important part of an organization are successful. This point can be made best by the organization saying that the individual is so important to them that they are concerned for the individual's physical, emotional, and spiritual health. This then is another cornerstone of an effective work culture.

In an interview with the secretary (2/4/98 RT), she said it perfectly, "we all give to whoever needs it." She followed this up with a story of a new symbolic gesture they were going to put into practice called the Traveling Bouquet. The school purchased a bouquet of silk flowers and it would travel to various people around the building with notes attached to it. When I inquired how it would be determined who received it and for how long, she said that the faculty "just kind of knows" who would need it and when. The Traveling Bouquet was a symbolic way for the members of Castle Elementary to say "we care about each other."

•   The teachers are always sitting together and talking. They're all helping everybody out if some is sick, has problems at home, you know, that they have to be out, everybody just kind of pitches in and helps and says 'Don't worry about this, we'll take care of this.' I think the whole atmosphere of the school is positive. (RT, secretary, 2/4/98)

Another teacher (2/24/98 BV) pointed out that caring and help were interchangeable at Castle. When I asked about the play among the adults in the building, she saw that the play helped to define the relationships and support that existed.

- We do a lot of things to kind of get people together here. The chocolate conference today, getting together for coffee on Friday mornings at a local coffee shop and, if someone is sick, we provide meals for them. Not just if they are sick but if their family needs some support, it will be given from the school. It wouldn't even have to be a faculty member, it could be a parent or someone in the community that needed some help and people here are very willing to do that. I guess I see it because while I've been here I lost my father and I got a tremendous amount of support from everybody here. I got cards, I got phone calls out of state and we got meals when we came home. (BV, teacher, 2/25/98)

The help that the members provided for each other was an intrinsic part of how this culture functioned. They went into immediate action of making sure everyone knew when someone was in need and organized themselves to help that person out. A culture that communicates with and assists its own members is likely to communicate with and assist others as well.

Finally, help was demonstrated within this culture by its outreach and assistance to its children, their families and community members. A grant was written by the school's administrative intern to pull in so-called "hard to reach" parents from a trailer park community that was located in the attendance area of the school. The staff helped to create a room called "The Parent Place" that encouraged all parents to come in and socialize, have coffee, read, chat, use a computer or just stop in. Events such as bringing the Easter Bunny and Santa Claus to the trailer park laundromat with staff from the school and providing transportation via a school bus for evening events at Castle Elementary were organized. The coordinator of the grant, the administrative intern working with the building principal, sought out a steering committee of parents from the targeted community to provide needs assessment and genuine feedback regarding the relationship between the school and their community. The steering committee ended up being two moms who met with her for coffee at Hardees once a week. It was not only important for the school to help this particular community, but to understand it and work on its relationship with the parents, which would ultimately, help the kids.

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Another form of assistance for children and parents was the establishment of before and after school daycare located at the school. Members of CITE gathered input via surveys from and discussions with parents and community members regarding the need for working parents to have daycare at the school building. Families were provided with an easy and less expensive option of daycare. It also served to reduce the number of transitions for the children during the day. The CITE committee researched daycare providers and planned for the daycare to open for the 1998-99 school year. One parent (DR, 4/14/98) saw this move as the school "trying to educate the whole child and meet the diverse needs of the community." She viewed the daycare as "answering to the current culture of America and the immediate community in the age of working parents."

Another parent (JI, 4/29/98) cited the example of the piece of property that the school owned that backed up to a neighborhood. Citizens in the neighborhood were concerned that the school would not save the woods that separated them and would "plow it under". This parent was invited to be on the committee without being a member of that particular community, rather, it was her interest and assistance that was valued.

- Castle worked really hard to save that property. It kind of sat without much happening and just recently pieces fell into place to be able to make it into a shared garden. I actually sat on the committee that worked with what we can do that will help the neighbors on the other side and it will function for the community and it will function for the school. There's real exciting things happening out there. I see it as a growth factor. They're going to build a gazebo and they've got some tables so you can take your class out there. There will be a walking trail through it. They eventually will put in some kind of garden. They brought in the community people that are on that other side of that piece of property. They made a very conscious effort to bring them in. Castle looks for ways that they can offer assistance. They look for being supportive. (JI, parent, 4/20/98)

Children and help

The children saw helping and assistance from their teachers as a key value throughout their years at Castle indicated by their writing samples. Some students valued being able to help others by being assigned as "Friendly Helpers" their fifth grade year (a program the guidance counselor coordinated for these students to assist younger students) helping around the school building, and assisting other teachers. One student wrote,

> I enjoy being a Friendly Helper. We get to help out in kindergarten through fourth grade classrooms. I help out in kindergarten. It's very fun. You get to see how much kindergarten has (or has not) changed since you passed it. I have loads of fun playing with the kids. (student)

There were numerous comments about how the teachers had helped the students over the years. The children's words were both poignant and touching. Adult assistance was a sign of caring and kindness. The children critiqued their teachers with honesty and straightforward remarks. One student wrote, "My last teacher at Castle (meaning his 5th grade teacher) was o.k. But when it comes to complicated situations, Mr. L looks on both sides of the story." Other memories about the teachers were:

> The teachers here are really good. Most of the teachers I've had usually don't use textbooks, instead, they go to the library and find books on the topic. Then they'll teach us more and be able to explain more than just the textbook.

> I especially like the teachers here. Every single one of them try to help you in every way that they can. They don't really care about the grades you get, as long as you put forth your very best effort. And if you need them, all you have to do is ask and they'll be there.

> I have always had great teachers at Castle. They are always helpful when I need to find something.

> The teachers have been nice and helpful. They make learning fun. The teachers do a lot of activities to help us learn.

I will always remember my 4th grade teacher that kept encouraging me to go on with my life...And I will remember my 5th grade teacher forever too because she has always been there for me. And she has always helped me out. And how she cared about me. And I'll remember Mrs. F for all the encouragement she gave me and being there for me and Mrs. E for helping me with my work and helping me understand stuff.

The teachers are nice. Well, it was way better then I thought. They made me feel individually special out of all the other kids.

Well the teachers really care about the students at Castle. The teachers do not give up on you. If the work is too hard, they are more than happy to help you. If the work is too easy, they will give you a challenge. The teachers are understanding. Most of the teachers have gone through school problems that you are going through. They do not treat you like a baby. They do not do your work for you but want you to pay attention and be creative.

Helping was valued by these children. It was modeled for them by the adults in their classrooms. Receiving help from an adult was viewed at just part of the classroom routine, not as a stigma. These comments reflected a general feeling that help not only enhanced learning, but also provided a feeling of comfort and security. Help can only strengthen a culture. If help is seen as part of daily activities for everyone, the culture will attempt to incorporate it into almost everything they do. The members of Castle Elementary valued helping others, which, in turn, appeared to help every individual in the school.

Diversity

Diversity within a culture can be a tricky element. The more diverse a culture, the more the culture must find strategies to value not only the differences, but also the similarities. Castle appeared to embrace diversity by highlighting and celebrating it. They stressed similarities among its members, yet allowed the uniqueness of individuals to shine through. The strong value of diversity was illustrated by the actions toward children, the acceptance and tolerance of different people, and the types of diversity that not only existed at Castle, but was welcomed there.

The most obvious kinds of diversity within the student body at Castle were physical differences. It was common to have two to three international students in each classroom. It was also common to have children who received special education services with a wide variety of disabilities to be educated alongside their classmates without disabilities. Many of the disabilities were quite obvious due to adaptive equipment such as walkers and wheelchairs that were seen in the hallways and classrooms, a sign language interpreter or an oxygen tank. The fact that children could not speak English or had extreme learning challenges appeared to be a welcome challenge to the staff at Castle.

During my 12/18/97 visit to a 5th grade classroom, the general and special educator team taught a lesson. As the children participated in the writing activity, the teachers assisted all students in a non-biased, "floating" manner. An observer unfamiliar to the classroom would not have been able to pick out the students who needed assistance based on their IEP's (Individualized Education Plans for students with disabilities) versus students who just needed some general assistance. Interactions between the teachers and students exemplified assistance and helping each other to problem solve. Learning was learning with assistance versus learning by struggling. Peers were invited to help each other and the teachers were available to assist when needed. When I asked the question, "Is diversity valued at Castle and, if yes, how?" in my interviews, most respondents gave an immediate yes followed by a plethora of examples to support this notion.

- Diversity is valued in pretty much everything we do. We let one student do this while another student does that. If this child is capable of writing an essay where this kid could only put five sentences together, but they're both "A" work because that's what the child is able to do and that's pretty diverse. Even in the staff, everyone realizes that everyone has different abilities and one person may be a good leader and another person may not be a leader but they are good at following through and making sure everything gets done. (DN, teacher, 3/5/98)

- First of all, Castle is a public school and it has to value diversity. Obviously, they make a huge effort with the disabled kids. That's where you see the big effort. You know, and racial and gender in the

science classes and even with class efforts. There's someone working in the school to try and involve lower class families more in school and make them feel like it's their school as well as the PTA's school. (DR, parent, 4/14/98)

- I think Castle does value diversity. There's a little girl in my daughter's class that needs a lot of extra help and it's really a huge emphasis on having her not be different. My daughter enjoys being her helper. They don't really focus on the differences there, they're focusing on the similarities. In Mrs. W's class, there are a lot of different kids with a lot of different abilities and it works. They work together. I also think it's neat because of the university--you draw in different cultures. (MY, parent, 4/20/98)

- We have a variety of teachers and we want different outlooks from people who are older to people who are younger. They each have thing to contribute and they are listened to with equal weight. Everybody is just kind of accepted. We have a variety of children from economic backgrounds. We protect people's dignity. For instance, this trip we're going on, everybody has the opportunity to go even if they can't afford it. We try to make ways for people to pay part of their way. One student's family is using the barter system and his family is producing a quilt that we're going to raffle off and that's going to pay their way to go. (BV, teacher, 2/24/98)

- Castle looks for diversity. I think so--without making it seem like it's also politically correct. The Asian and Spanish speaking children have very much added and the children with handicaps. I think it has probably been a positive (for my son) in knowing that some kids deal with some pretty difficult things. (LG, parent, 4/9/98)

- Diversity is what makes any school function. For the kids coming in, diversity is good. They see how other people live, how other people react...we really have diversity in everything. I don't know if it's demonstrated so much as it's just the way of life here....all the kids are included and feel equal and you know we have field day and all the kids have chance. There's no competition here. (RT, secretary, 2/4/98)

There was a strong sense of not only tolerating diversity in its various forms, but also accepting and celebrating it. At the 5/19/98 collaborative planning day for Castle teachers and staff, one segment began with a brief video that showed faces of people of all walks of life with the song "It's in Everyone of Us" playing in the background. The

agenda for this section of the meeting was entitled "In What Do We Believe?". The faculty watched it silently and attentively. A few tears were observed. Teachers and staff were silent when the video ended. Castle appeared to take time to reflect upon their conscious effort to not only accept diversity, but to also work hard at preserving it.

Calendar and time

Most organizations are driven by calendars and time. Castle Elementary was no different. Members of the culture appeared to value time because, as many commented, there was never enough of it. Existing in a proactive environment forced the members of the Castle culture to use calendars and time to their advantage to stay organized and to mark in increments their accomplishments and deadlines. Wheatley and Kellner Rogers (1996) suggest that life is attracted to order. It experiments until it discovers how to form a system that can support diverse members. This system then provides stability for its members, so that individuals are less buffeted by change. The teachers at Castle depended on the school calendar being rather static and were able to anticipate how much time they had to complete certain tasks. For example, when the budget was discussed at the fall C.I.T.E. meeting, the committee knew that the spending decisions had to be made by November and all grade level spending had to be completed before March. The system that a calendar and clock created was both implicitly and explicitly embedded into the Castle culture. There were two sub-categories in the calendar and time value. One subcategory seeks to understand how calendars and time were incorporated into meetings; the other explored the importance of face-to-face time within the educators busy agendas.

While analyzing the meeting fieldnotes, there emerged a distinct pattern in the way the meetings were organized to make maximum use of time and the various forms of communication that were utilized to speed up the processes of decision-making and communication. All of the meeting notes included comments or procedures to check

calendars, set time limits or report back within a specified period of time regarding pertinent issues.

Table 2 includes a sample of meetings and how calendars or time concepts were discussed or addressed. This table is a clear example of how the Castle culture valued the time that they had together to make their time productive, and to balance their time across so many commitments, both professionally and personally.

If you asked public school teachers across the nation about planning time, the response would most likely be that "there just isn't enough of it." The educators at Castle placed a great deal of emphasis on being able to have time to plan, both individually and as collaborators. Time for planning was valuable because the members of the Castle culture had more than just lesson plans to prepare. The committee work was extensive, along with C.I.T.E. meetings, faculty meetings, family meetings and team planning meetings on a regular basis. Most of the face to face emphasis was captured via comments from individual members.

Table 2
Calendar and time concepts

MEETING TYPE AND DATE	CALENDAR	TIME CONCEPTS
Family meeting 10/15/97	• Need to coordinate calendars to meet and plan for elementary planning day • Need feedback on Black History activities by November 11 • Put November 19 date on calendar for next meeting, don't schedule anything else	• Prepared agenda • Folder with information from principal • Information on Black History month passed out
Family meeting 12/8/97	• We need to think ahead to plan winter and spring activities • What do we need to decide by next meeting? • April picnic, March art activity, February	• Do we want one long faculty meeting per month or two shorter ones? (some are too

	Valentines activities & reading month • Teachers all keep checking calendars for early releases, holidays • Set a date for reading activity	long, no time to talk) • All meeting discussions and decisions are documented on issue/action form
Faculty meeting 1/7/98	• Collaborative planning days put on calendars • Family meetings every other Wednesdays and early release days • Who can serve on the calendar committee for the county? • May 8 is family celebration day; let's make plans for how this will effect the schedule of specialties • February 12th superintendent will visit the building • Report cards go out the same day that the superintendent is here • January 26 & 27 staff development days; need input on how we will best use this time • Jot down responses to staff development ideas and put in principal's mailbox tomorrow	• Prepared agenda distributed • Schedule change for faculty meetings, prefer two over one monthly • Do refreshments take too much time at meetings? • We need a 45 minute limit put on meetings • "We're trying to cram too much into too little of time. I think we need afterschool meetings so we don't miss out on the greatly needed planning time

• The teachers are always doing...always planning (RT, secretary, 2/4/98)

• Planning time is necessary, it makes us come together as a group. (BV,teacher, 2/24/98)

• At family meetings, the interactions with others on the faculty and people we wouldn't normally see were opportunities. (Collaborative planning day, teacher, 5/19/98)

• Getting to know other faculty and staff in small groups was a benefit. (collaborative planning day, teacher, 5/19/98)

- Within the family structure, the small groups had more comfortable participation. (collaborative planning day, teacher, 5/19/98)

- The support of the family structure allowed us to express our feelings freely and built in a task force for concerns and responsibility. (collaborative planning day, teacher, 5/19/98)

- We need the time for discussions and to re-examine the book groups. (collaborative planning day, teacher, 5/19/98)

- Grade level planning has to be built in every week; it's always a struggle between family and grade level planning. (collaborative planning day, teacher, 5/19/98)

Many of the documents collected reflect how Castle used written information and documentation to enhance not only their face-to-face time, but also their own professional development. Appendix B contains samples of faculty meeting agendas. These are clear examples of how precise the use of time within meetings was utilized. The announcements section was for the faculty to read on their own without having to take up precious meeting time. The agendas appeared quite brief; however, after comments and input were provided on many of the issues, the agendas usually took up the allotted hour or longer.

Professional and personal development were considered to be valuable uses of time at Castle. The number of committees and work groups was a direct reflection of how the "we're never finished" concept was embraced by this overachieving faculty. Every person in the school was not only part of a Basic School family, but was also either on one to two other committees or assigned responsibilities across the year. In Appendix C is the "extra responsibilities" list which was built into the Castle culture. Most of these responsibilities existed to improve the professional knowledge of the educators or to make an extra contribution to the learning of children. In answering the interview question, "Does Castle as a school make continuous efforts to grow and enhance itself?" most respondents provided examples of how status quo was not acceptable to the Castle culture.

Professional development was not something to complain about, rather it was proactively planned by the staff so they did not waste their time attending "canned" staff development presentations external to their own values and initiatives. Table 3 provides a sample of responses from the above mentioned interview question related to Castle's personal efforts to grow. The answers consider not only the continuous effort that Castle makes to continually rejuvenate itself, but it also showcases the awareness level that the faculty and parents had regarding Castle's mission to remain life long learners.

Table 3
Answers to the question: How does Castle make continuous efforts to grow and enhance itself?

- **Long range goals**

- **CITE committee**

- **Applying for grants**

- **Continual self education by faculty members (technology, reading, spelling)**

- **Reading groups, Basic school families, sharing new strategies**

- **Attending and presenting at conferences, taking advantage of staff development activities**

- **Working on SOL's as a school, trying to figure out how to make inclusion work more effectively**

- **We look for our own staff development and for ourselves to grow as a faculty, encouraged to go to conferences, talk with the community and ask our parents**

- **In the Basic School families, trying to build across the grade levels and make connections with each other, sharing in our own building, Parents as Partners grant, YMCA tutors, Adopt a School volunteers, athlete mentors**

Final thoughts on values

Cunningham and Gresso (1993) propose that one of the more important characteristics of an effective culture is its ability to maintain each individual's integrity, while at the same time enhancing the dignity of each of its members. In looking at the four sub-values: decision-making, help, diversity, and calendar and time, the Castle culture placed a certain level of importance on individuality but prided itself on being a culture that was nurturing, and proactive. Its implicit and explicit actions spoke directly to the values that were ingrained in its daily workings.

Chapter V

Beliefs

Beliefs within a culture are more easily articulated than values and are usually shared by most members. Beliefs are what members perceive to be truth about their culture. If an organization believes it is strong and powerful, its actions will most likely look strong and powerful. Beliefs are below the surface and it is debatable if they are directly observable. If a culture believes that structure and organization within meetings make them productive, a structured and organized meeting can be observed as proof of their belief, however, their outcomes cannot be observed. Understanding beliefs is critical to deciphering what is meaningful to cultural members. Values and beliefs differ in that values usually cannot be articulated by members where beliefs are more easily articulated and can be observed in everyday events. Beliefs can be based on the members opinions while values are inherent to the culture and exist, many times, without members being aware of them.

At Castle, most beliefs were articulated verbally. However, I observed actions that supported the beliefs shared with me during interviews. Three core beliefs existed. These were: (1) leadership was important and took on many forms, (2) collaboration across members helped the culture to bond and thrive, and (3) the school belonged to the community. These beliefs overlapped into the culture's values and were similar in nature. The strong interwoven themes within both values and beliefs spoke to the culture's need to connect and to perpetuate itself through cooperative activities.

Importance of leadership

Leadership at Castle existed in many different forms. The principal was directly responsible for a style of leadership that invited others in the culture to become leaders. He

was highly visible yet not authoritarian. His role was crucial in sustaining the culture's growth and proactivity. The principal believed in delegating his responsibilities to others, making decisions via consensus and tending to the members personal as well as professional needs. In describing his leadership, members from the culture relayed the following opinions:

- The principal really wants the teachers' opinions. The teachers feel comfortable voicing their opinions. He makes everyone feel that they are a leader in themselves. He even has a sign on his door, " I am their leader, I must follow them." He's here for administrative purposes and the teachers look up to him as a leader. He makes others feel that they are in charge. He just puts his grace on everybody that they feel good about doing whatever they need to do. He knows they'll make wise decisions. (RT, secretary, 2/4/98)

- The principal is a strong leader in a quiet way. It's a great atmosphere. You feel like you are part of something. The leader and the teachers are working together. The principal makes suggestions but is open to alternatives and the teachers can look for other options. (CB, teacher, 2/26/98)

- I feel comfortable going to the principal to talk about issues first. The leadership from the principal trickles down to the secretary. It's leadership from experience. (JT, custodian, 3/5/98)

- The principal does a very good job. He is easy to talk to and tries his best to balance different perspectives on education. He is very involved. (DN, teacher, 3/5/98)

- The principal is always in the classrooms. You see him throughout the school constantly. I know how busy he is and he's at every event. When someone's putting on a play in the cafeteria, he's there. He's very visible. (JB, parent, 4/8/98)

- I think the principal is very soft-handed. if I could use that term. I never see him ordering folks about or I don't hear him...It's really hard to see the leadership chain of command. The only person that knows everything that's going on is the secretary. The principal is not very heavy-handed but he seems to get it done. (LG, parent, 4/9/98)

• I feel the leadership is very good. It's almost a pleasure to see the principal. He'll talk with you and he's informed on every student in that school and knows exactly everything about that student and he works well with the teachers, from my point of view. (RN, parent, 4/14/98)

Cunningham and Gresso (1993) talk about the process of delegation that an administrator can establish. It's a style of leadership that encourages employees to take risks, be unique, and make a difference if schools are to be true centers of learning. They add that an administrator must help employees to see greatness in themselves, others, and in their school. "All should be asked to celebrate their fullest potential. If an administrator can learn the methods to delegate to those closest to the problem or issue, they will feel empowered to develop the appropriate response or program to meet the needs of their constituency" (p. 191).

The principal at Castle was a strong believer in creating other leaders within the building and delegating responsibilities. The list of "extra responsibilities" (Appendix C) that was distributed at the beginning of the school year was not limited to bus and hall duty, rather, it listed the committees and committee chairs for shared decision-making (CITE), Basic School families, Professional Development, volunteer coordinator, and many other duties that may traditionally be seen as purely administrative.

Various forms of leadership existed at Castle and the members of the culture were certain that their own abilities and opportunities to be leaders was a belief. The many strong personalities within the teaching staff were not passive receptors of information or decisions. With so many leaders in so many forms came additional time and effort to discuss, plan and reach consensus on all of the issues that Castle managed. In public education, many principals simply make their own decisions regarding budget, professional development, and master schedules to save time and maintain their authority over their faculties. This kind of overt leadership could not work since the Castle staff strongly applauded decision-making and consensus building. Faculty, parents, students

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and community members were aware of the diverse leadership opportunities that existed at Castle.

- The teachers are always doing...they're applying for grants..they're always trying to get a little higher. Teachers make the master schedule. Our music teacher is the one that runs it and she gets it out to the other teachers to check for conflicts. Grade level teachers really work on their own (as a grade) and then ask the principal's approval. He knows that they are going to make wise decisions on everything. When he's out of the building, I make the decisions. I know him well enough that I know he is going to say this or that is fine. I help make decisions on students when they come in. Teachers think I make the decisions on my own because I'm the one that brings a new student to the classroom. The principal really makes that decision with my input. I handle the money. I put things in front of him and he signs it. If he's not here, I really kind of handle everything. (RT, secretary, 2/4/98)

- There are not going to be a lot of decisions made that are going to be handed down decisions; like do this by such and such a date without some discussion and/or explanation of why. I guess the whole notion of open-door policy applies. If something is happening in the school or something has been said that someone feels uncomfortable with, they can talk to me. They feel comfortable coming and talking to me about it and letting me know what their concerns are....Every teacher is a leader. Even among the students, we all try to teach leadership. Most definitely we've got leaders who are very much ...who accept leadership roles and responsibilities as far as the teachers go and are very overt kind of leaders. But we also have people who work behind the scenes in a quiet sort of way. They're bringing new ideas and people.listen to what they have to say. Then there's parents. We've got the CITE team that has as many parents on it as teachers. We want them to be involved in the decision-making and bringing out issues. And that's what's happening more and more and more. (RW, principal, 2/17/98)

- The leadership comes from just about everywhere. I think if you want to take a really large role in something and you want to take on some project, you can go for it. If you want to sit back and kind of be a supporter-type person, you can. The only thing you really can't do is nothing. I don't think you have that option here because there are so many things going on that everybody is involved in one way or another. I don't think you're forced to take on a project. I think you're encouraged and I think that most people professionally want to do that but there's a variety of roles; leadership that comes from the principal too but I think everybody has a chance here....Sometimes it takes a while to get things done. Maybe a little longer than if we had a lot of memos that came down and said, "this is

going to be done this way." I think you have a lot of people with a lot of different ideas, and the overall outcome is the very best. (BV, teacher, 2/24/98)

- Leadership comes from anybody who's willing to put forth time and effort to help someone that needs it. Leadership comes from experience. It just comes from everybody working well together. (JT, custodian, 3/5/98)

Leadership at Castle was displayed by the professional and personal development the teachers and administrator sought for not only their own self-improvement, but also their overall professional improvement to help in enhancing the culture. I observed members working on a variety of projects for school improvement. There were sincere efforts to grow as a culture, not to compete with other schools within the division, but to improve best practices and continually learn to heighten the children's learning and their own. It takes strong and supportive leadership within a culture to strive for improvement. A leader does not have the power to coerce or force members to go out and gain more knowledge. Leadership must be intrinsic to the members that reside in the culture. I specifically asked interviewees if Castle made an effort to grow and enhance itself.

- I feel that if I had something that I felt would be meaningful to the teachers and if I started asking around and finding that there were people who were interested, people would go along with it and look forward to it and be involved and you wouldn't have anybody doing a whole lot of complaining. I think it's just that eagerness to do well. I think there's a little bit of healthy competition there too of where when people learn something new and they begin sharing it and people want to know about it so they're willing to stay and learn more. (RW, principal, 2/17/98)

- I think Castle is constantly trying to deal with the issues of education. What's the best way to educate students and that's always a controversy....dealing with it on all different levels, with the school board and the SOL directives...they're just trying to integrate everything that's being asked of them to come up with what works. I know they have the Basic School concept they're working on now just as another way of trying to make everything work. (DQ, parent, 4/14/98,)

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- Since I'm on the CITE committee, I know they're working on being a Basic School and applying those principles to Castle. Just forming the CITE committee shows me that they're wanting to include parents in the decision-making. (JB, parent ,4/8/98,)

- I think the Basic School families are trying to build across the grade levels groups of people that feel connections. The inservices we do with people from the building presenting things is a good way to make new leaders and to give them the experience and help them build new skills. (DN, teacher, 3/5/98)

Much of the professional development as leadership was summed up by Mary Ellen Bafumo, a consultant and expert in Basic Schools, who visited Castle and worked with the principal and faculty. She felt that the Castle members had taken on Boyer's philosophy, not as a program, but as a way of life. She reflected on the many ways that Castle had incorporated this philosophy by being flexible and open to change and from the vitality she saw in the teachers within their family meetings and the Basic School activities. Each of the leaders from the families made presentations in mid-May to sum up what the status of their family was and what their plans were for the future.

Collaboration as a belief

Members of the Castle culture did very little in isolation. It was evident that the majority of teachers actively chose collaborative or team teaching over solitary teaching. The need to make connections and collaborate fit well with the values of helping and decision-making via consensus.

Collaboration not only occurred within teaching teams, but was also evident among children, with parents and within committees, as well. Collaboration in the classrooms was evident by how desks were arranged in groups, how children shared materials, how small groups were utilized during instruction, and how the teachers taught active collaboration skills to the children. Parents collaborated through volunteer efforts, conferences to assist in planning for their children, and being involved with committees to provide their input.

Collaborative teaching

True collaboration between teachers is one of the toughest issues within education. It takes time, effort, frequent communication and continual compromise. Rozenholtz (1989) states that "Collective commitment to student learning in collaborative settings directs the definition of leadership toward those colleagues who instruct as well as inspire awakening all sorts of teaching possibilities in others" (p. 68) Collaboration is directly linked with the opportunities for continuous improvement and career-long learning. Castle provided its teachers with continual occasions to not only collaborate to teach students, but to work in an environment built on mutual dependence, sharing and helping. The teacher collaboration at Castle was not merely surface congenial acts towards one another, but true shared work that had an impact on the culture and on each other.

Hargreaves (1991) points out that true collaborative cultures are deep, personal, and enduring. This kind of collaboration is a full-time commitment with the joys of success and the stress that accompanies conflict and increased job demands.

Most collaboration among teachers occurred in pairs rather than whole grade levels. Some grade levels collaborated on specific units or events such as fieldtrips. The school building was designed for some classrooms with accordion doors to be opened between classrooms where the others were self-contained rooms. The principal commented that he wished all of the classrooms had accordion doors so more teachers would have the opportunity to team teach. There were seven classrooms pairs with accordion doors. Five of them remained open all year to allow team teaching. Teachers in the self-contained classrooms collaborated by planning together and sharing students for centers or certain subjects.

Certain conditions seemed to augment or stifle team teaching. These conditions were teacher's personalities, their experience, and the similarity in teaching styles. I

specifically asked the interviewees' perspectives regarding how teachers work together at Castle and these conditions were mentioned repeatedly.

- We do have a very strong sense of collaboration and I think it's growing more and more and more. We've gone through a period over the last few months of some little personality conflicts among staff members. As I was having summative conferences with teachers and talking to people about their differences, I kept thinking to myself, "now, why would that be true that you have teachers that work very closely together but yet these little spats occur". First of all, you know that's natural that those things are going to happen. But the other thing I began to realize... I was comparing it to my old school and I know there were things like that going on there but people just went in their own rooms and did their things...there wasn't nearly as much collaboration. People weren't talking to each other so that leads me to believe the more people talk to each other, the more they're going to have little personality conflicts and those things are going to come to light. So, I've accepted that as not necessarily something bad, but just a by-product of teachers spending a lot more time working together. With the collaborative planning days this year, it's been a bit more difficult for them to sit and meet for that entire three hours. We've been encouraging them to at least meet with their teammate but to also spend time with other people...that it's not a private planning time. Some teachers collaborate and some don't based on their past experiences. If they're veteran teachers and they've taught for twenty years and for seventeen of those years they've taught pretty much in their own room with little collaboration, then it's very difficult for them to collaborate. If it's someone fresh out of college looking for any help that they can get and they find they're next door to someone who has lots of great ideas, then they're eager to collaborate a whole lot. The amount of collaboration that takes place between and among teachers also deals with some personality things and even teaching styles. (RW, principal, 2/17/98)

- The teachers really strive for planning time within the schedule. The teachers that do team always make time before school, after school, and during school to plan and they'll come on weekends to plan too, which a lot of them do. They meet in the mornings before school and do planning. Teachers really take it upon themselves to make planning time together. And they do activities together whether its just two teachers that are doing something or the whole grade. Like circus day or the whole kindergarten does beach day. They really work a lot together. I don't know whether the upper grades do as much because of the curriculum they have to fit in. There's not as much fun time. It's more kind of a structured activity but fun. I think some teachers plan a curriculum together and team teach but they might not share within the same grade level. It is helpful time-wise in planning. It's helpful for one teacher to teach a social studies unit and then the next teacher teach the other one. So that

teacher does have time to do grading or make copies and then again plan for other stuff. Some teachers do not necessarily share that with another team. Some teachers don't want to team teach because they don't want forty kids together and they may not feel that it is the right way to teach a unit because of how they have taught it in the past. They get the best results from teaching their group. It's really the teacher's personality if they want to do it and how they teach. (RT, secretary, 2/4/98,)

- I think teachers work in a very caring way together. We don't always agree and I think that's accepted. People can plan together, they teach together, they talk together and share ideas and materials. It's just a matter of coordination as far as materials are concerned and I think that's probably the biggest issue. It's just the time of when people want to use things but people are willing to negotiate and work together to do that. It takes a lot of work to collaborate. I think it takes a lot of time and you've got to be willing to give up ownership of something that you've done the same way for however many years in order to try something new. And you've got to be able to negotiate. I often refer to it as a marriage, that you've got to be able to give and take and some people can't do that. (WC, teacher, 2/9/98)

- We learn from each other here. It's a happy place. We do a lot to get people together here. It's a supportive place. There's people here who look out for you. People are always trying to share information and we team teach as much as possible. No one is pushed into it. All work situations are based on what's best for children each year. We tend to agree and disagree in an amicable way. Teaming helps you learn from other people. It cuts down on the amount of work if we're working together. The classroom is less lonely and it makes the school stronger. (BV, teacher, 2/24/98)

- Teachers gravitate to other teachers on their grade level and tend to team more and work more in pairs more strongly than they do across the grade level. I think they tend to choose a specialty teacher to work with due to time and other restraints. I see a lot of team planning at grade levels. I do hear grade levels bickering and it seems like the grade level are split. I think there's not enough working together in whole grade levels. I hear a team (pair) come in that wants to work together on a unit and the other team doesn't know they are doing that unit and it causes a lot of friction. I think some of that is because we pair up, , team teach and work well with who we teach like. Some teachers are very structured in their approach and it's very hard for them to take on a different teaching style. I think some teachers just don't like each other to be perfectly honest. It is real personal; some just have personalities that clash and I think in any organization or building, you're going to see that and it happens. I think we try to work together for the kids' sake. (CB, teacher, 2/26/98)

- For the most part, teachers work together pretty good. There's a few teachers I have a hard time dealing with and that's just a personality issue. But we still manage to have a good, decent work relationship. We can plan together and work together on things. I think some teachers work well together and some don't based on comfort level. I think it's just personalities or their common experiences or some have been in the same schools for a long time together and know each other and know how they work and have a history with them and know that the person is the same kind of person I am. Or they might be in the same stage of life; they're about the same age and the same kind of family situation and they can share those sort of common things together. (DN, teacher, 3/5/98)

- Everyone here is 100% devoted to kids. They believe in the kids and helping out each other. We work well together as a team here. It's a lot of togetherness and a family-like atmosphere that surrounds this place. It's just incredible. You don't have to hold back your opinions. Your own opinion is part of the family atmosphere. There is healthy types of bickering and it makes us grow as people. There are no knock-down, drag-outs. Teachers work as a team. That's how it's designed to work here; as team teachers. They get together and work together as far as having the same project going on at the same time, going on the same fieldtrips, and eating lunch at the same time. It's just a big deal to be able to work and then feed off of each other here and work as that team. There's four teachers to each grade and then once a month they get together and discuss so they can do things as a whole as well as their two teams. (JT, custodian, 3/5/98)

Collaborative classrooms

With a culture of adults focusing so much of their time and energy on collaboration and consensus, it seemed obvious that there were examples of collaboration among children. In a kindergarten classroom (11/14/97), the children sat around circular and rectangular tables using shared materials out of a communal caddie in the middle of the table. Students were encouraged to work in groups for a problem-solving activity with manipulatives. There was a large quilt made by the teacher and students with all their handprints hanging on the wall. The children helped each other make choices about where to work in the room and what materials to use. The teacher said aloud several times, "Remember to ask your friends for help."

At a family meeting (12/8/97), there was a discussion of how the children should be more involved with each other across grade levels. The teachers talked about how the next

big step in planning events for the entire school was getting the kids together. For example, in January, the grade levels would get their kids together to work on a project or activity. In the spring, it might be cleaning up the school grounds or planting a garden together and then getting together regularly to weed, water and plant. The idea of children cooperating and being together across ages was a recurrent theme at most of the meetings at Castle.

Other examples of collaboration among children were represented via cultural objects such as large graphs on the walls that the children had completed as teams, rules that teams of students had designated and posted for their working groups, and elaborate unit projects that teams of children planned and created together.

First grade collaborative artwork

Collaboration between children and adults was also obvious. In classrooms, just watching the children follow established routines of how to ask for help from their neighbor, how to run group discussions, and when to summon an adult for additional input and assistance was visible evidence of collaboration. Many classrooms that I visit while consulting in school divisions across the state remain very adult-directed and compliance-based. Castle continually sought to collaborate across all levels, not just across adults. I think it would be rare to see a school where teachers were active and eager collaborators yet still ran strict, compliant-based classrooms with little student direction or input.

Parents as collaborator

Castle was seen as a school that welcomed parents with open arms to come in and participate. Others viewed Castle as a school that kept parents limited to their traditional roles as volunteers and occasional visitors for special occasions.

Both perceptions may be true. The parents that were actively involved through volunteering and participating on the CITE committee or PTA felt adequately involved in the Castle culture. Others may have felt that they were not part of the "in" crowd. One parent commented that if you did not volunteer on a regular basis and go on fieldtrips, you always felt outside of the loop. She said the sign on the front door reading, "All visitors please report to the office" was intimidating and sent a message that parents were not welcome to come in and freely interact. Another parent commented on the open-door policy that Castle maintained and said she was always greeted in the office and hallways with warm "hello's."

- Castle belongs to the community. Especially the Parks and Rec. and it being open all the time, after school. It makes it feel more useful. The sign on the door saying report to the office is the opposite. It makes is seem less accessible. It makes you feel you can't go anywhere but the office and only with their permission after that. Actually, I feel the school mostly belongs to the teachers. The kids do what the teachers say and learn what the teachers teach. Parents have very little input and the administration tries to leave the teachers alone. (DQ, parent, 4/14/98)

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- I think Castle belongs to the parents. The parents and the community. I think it's a community school. It's located right by several neighborhoods, so it's its own little community and I think we consider the school as part of that whole neighborhood, just another extension. Parents have always been invited to be there. I think they do a great job of making it available and accessible. I personally never got the feeling that they didn't want you to be there. I'm there all the time and everybody's glad to see you and no one says, "Could you wait up in the office." Sometimes I probably should be doing that. All the different committees you can be on if you want to and there's practically something every week if you want to go. I think they greatly invite you to be part of the classroom . (JB, parent, 4/8/98)

Castle's collaboration with the community appeared to always be near the top of their list to enhance and to continue to branch out in further directions. One obvious sign of collaboration with both parents and community members, although on a small scale, was the membership on the shared decision-making committee (CITE). There was an equal number of parents and teachers. Parents were represented across grade levels. Several community members were invited to be part of the committee, although only two committed and were faithful in attending. Since the facilitators and recorders switched roles at each meeting, parents and community members were also active in these roles.

The greatest community outreach I observed at Castle was through a grant they received for connecting to a specified community that encapsulated the majority of their students who would fall under the definition of at-risk. This community typically had low attendance at teacher conferences and school-wide events. The coordinator of the grant was instrumental in strengthening Castle's connection with this community by planning activities that members from this community could attend, not only at the Castle building, but also at the Laundromat within the community. The grant activities and the creation of The Parent Place (as previously mentioned in chapter V) within the school building demonstrated the Castle culture's forethought into tapping into the community and welcoming them in a variety of different ways. A study was executed to capture the attempts at inviting this community into Castle. The results showed some improvement in

the parents participation in school activities; however, work was still needed to continue to embrace this community and its parents.

If an elementary school exists within a community, the ideal situation is to have a strong association with the local community and its members. The association should strive to interweave faculty and staff members with community members through shared interdependent activities. In today's public arena, this close relationship exists in a limited number of schools and school divisions. However, Castle appeared to be on the right road in continually attempting to forge a stronger relationship with the community.

The Parent Place at Castle

School as community

Thomas Sergiovanni devoted an entire book to the idea of building community in schools. Castle has taken many steps in that direction, especially with the ideas of the school as a community and the school belonging to the community. Sergiovanni (1994) states that building community requires the development of a " community of mind" represented in shared values, conceptions, beliefs, and ideas about schooling and human nature. He speaks of the importance of schools as communities bound by moral commitment, trust, and a sense of purpose. He feels that communities must be built that are inclusive, meaningful and democratic.

Castle, from its very conception, has intentionally embraced the idea of creating a purposeful and collaborative community with all of its members. It's partnership with the town Parks and Recreation department to house a full-sized gym that is used by the children during the day, and the community on evenings and weekends was one prime example. The multiple ball fields surrounding the school building welcomed community use. Even the use of the cafeteria by community groups such as scouts, 4-H, university study groups, and other groups was eagerly accommodated. The agreement with the Parks and Recreation department brought the added benefit of having the grounds taken care of by their crews.

A pertinent question asked during interviews was "Who does Castle belong to?" I was a bit surprised when everyone but one participant answered "the community" without any hesitation. I assumed the answer would have been "the children" or " the school community" as the typical response. The explanations that the interviewees provided helped to support the notion that the community at large was intricately connected with Castle and it belonged to more than just the school division.

- That's how things operate here (at Castle). We're working together, we're part of a community and we're not just an isolated school. We help you--you help us. ..My middle school daughter plays volleyball and softball on the field out there. I know that they're open for a variety of different

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organizations to use the building. The Bicentennial Committee has been meeting over there regularly. It's very much a community-open school. They have used the fields for part of the church softball league that runs in the summer. I know they have soccer there. There's lot of community activities, like open gym time. (JI, parent, 4/20/98)

- Mainly, Castle belongs to the community. Anyone's welcome to use their gymnasium. The doors are always open to the parents to come in anytime. You can borrow their soccer fields. It belongs to everybody. (RN, parent, 4/14/98)

- Castle belongs to the community. They do a lot of other things here. They have an after-school program that was opened to all kids. I see that the Rec. center comes in here and uses it on Sundays. Soccer games are here on weekends; Little League and baseball too. (MY, parent, 4/9/98)

- Everybody is a stakeholder and has a good say in it. I think the community definitely is a stakeholder and always has its say. The principal has been a good buffer between the community or a facilitator for the community and the county schools. I don't think anybody likes the county schools a whole lot but the principal has represented our wishes to them and the school board policies very well. The kids certainly have their needs taken care of and the faculty has its stake in it. (LG, parent, 4/9/98)

- Castle belongs to everybody. It's a public place. It's a public building. It belongs to parents. It belongs to kids first. We just work here. It's a place for children to come and learn and to grow as people and hopefully, with our help, they get the best we can offer. (JT, custodian, 3/5/98)

- I would say Castle belongs to the community but I think it belongs to everyone, in large, not just the parents and the students and the faculty here. I think we believe the community, as far as the education of our students, has something to give to our students. When we incorporate them, like with our business partnership and reach out to the community, we have a list of resource people who have said they would like to continue to come in and talk about their occupation or their specialty area. I think we value that. We like the community to come in and share what we're doing and participate in the classrooms. We welcome them to come and see what we're doing. I think we make it an open-door policy. It's part of the education process of the students in the classroom. Also, I think we try very hard to make our building a community-accessible building for other groups to use and we try to be accommodating to the many groups from the community that need a facility to use. (CB, teacher, 2/26/98)

- Castle belongs to the community. Just about anyone who wishes to use the building is encouraged to do so. There are many many things going on here outside of school hours that really I can't even keep track of because we just kind of expect the building to be in constant use. There's an outreach with Parents-as Partners program to bring in parents that maybe haven't felt comfortable to use the building. We have children in a wide variety of home situations and we want to make sure that everybody feels as good coming through the front door as most of us do. (BV, teacher, 2/24/98)

- The school belongs to the community. I would hope that parents feel that when they walk into the building that it's theirs, that staff members think its theirs, and that kids think its theirs. I think what we're doing now, with the parent outreach grant, to try to reach out to parents who are not really involved in the school and, hopefully, will make them feel a little more comfortable and be involved. It's just something you have to work on over time...trying to get to those people who had bad experiences at school when they were in school and now have children. Hopefully, the parent place will help that. (RW, principal, 2/17/98)

- We want to be a community, family-based school. I think architecturally we worked that way with sharing the gym and the way the building is used. I think the parents are welcome into our building. I think the parent grant reinforces that we want the community to be involved. I thinks it's the support that comes through with all of that that ties it all together and the more involvement we can do in bringing parents in from a specific community and out that way will contribute to it (the school). (WC, teacher, 2/9/98)

Another way that Castle took on the concerns of the community was preparation to establish a before and afterschool daycare in the school building. The CITE committee was instrumental in researching the company that contracted the services to run the daycare and complete a needs assessment with all of the parents in the school.

Castle's was responsive to their surrounding community's needs and additionally sought out community input and outreach. Their Basic School philosophy contained a Parents as Partners theme. Boyer (1995) writes, "the circle of community extends outward to embrace parents. A vital partnership is created between the home and school, one that begins during the preschool years, is strengthened when the child formally enrolls, and continue from kindergarten through grade five" (p. 47). Although they did not create a Preschool PTA as suggested by Boyer, it looks to be close in their future. During the

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1998-99 school year, they have continued to reach out to parents and the community by implementing preschool fun days. At their first event, twenty-one children arrived with their parents to enjoy activities with Castle teachers and children.

Final thoughts on beliefs

Castle may not have solved the multiple problems surrounding parent and community involvement and partnerships, but their persistent attempts to problem-solve around community involvement, invite the community in, and plan activities to promote a stronger relationship speaks to their cultural beliefs of leadership, collaboration and developing the school as a community. One definition of culture states that it is "beliefs commonly held by the members of a group." Commonly held beliefs at Castle assisted in creating their daily reality such as what existed, what was considered important, how things were done, and what was recommended for improvement. Sometimes it was difficult to divide out what was a belief and what was a value within the Castle culture. Their beliefs provided them with a road map or a system that influenced their perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and actions. It provided them with the affirmation that what they sought out to do each and every day was purposeful and meaningful for all cultural members.

Chapter VI

Play

Castle's bright green roof speaks of playfulness. Play or the lack of it is part of all cultures or organizations. The way that play is exercised within an organization describes its culture. In looking at the relationships among the members of the Castle culture, it was evident that intentional and spontaneous play were important to the culture's creativity, and stability. Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers (1996) asked the question, "Can we bring creative play of the world into our lives in organizations?" Public education makes it increasingly difficult to concentrate on the importance of play when it screams standards, test scores and school accreditation.

The members of the Castle culture found time for play. Play appeared to be a cornerstone of the culture, sometimes being the "glue" that held the members together when life became stressful. The kinds of play that existed at Castle were child-to-child play, child-to-adult play (and vice versa), and adult-to-adult play. Most play took place within events, rituals or ceremonies. Intentionally scheduling play within their culture gave the members permission to also use spontaneous play whenever the occasion arose.

Child-to-child play

Play is part of children's learning. It teaches social skills and reciprocity. It teaches children critical life skills and lessons. Most of the child to child play at Castle was facilitated by adults. Adults set-up buddy programs that paired a younger class with an older one. These intentional play situations gave both younger and older children time together to work on special projects, play games, read together, and eat snacks. The teachers commented on how much all of the children looked forward to "buddy days".

Other play opportunities for children were spirit days. These usually fell on the last Friday of the month or near a holiday or school vacation. The SGA (School Government

Association) planned school spirit activities, and was comprised of student representatives from the third, fourth, and fifth grades. The SGA solicited input from the primary grades via surveys. Spirit days consisted of dressing up in costumes, wearing clothing backwards, or wearing silly hats. They usually coincided with a Read-A-Thon, visits by athletes from the local university, or a holiday that was recognized with special snacks provided by parents and teachers.

While combing through the children's writing samples for play related anecdotes, I discovered that most of their passages talked about what they defined as "being fun." Their comments were brief, but they mentioned many activities and events that involved play in one form or another. Most of these events were planned by adults. In Table 4, the various forms of play that the children described are listed.

Table 4
Examples of play from children's writing samples

IN SCHOOL PLAY	OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL PLAY	PLAY WITHIN CURRICULUM
• Football at recess	• Pool parties	• Specialty classes; PE, Art, Music, Library
• Playing on the playground equipment	2. Hershey Park fieldtrip	• Medieval feast
• Talent show	3. Fall carnival	3. Fieldtrips
4. Plays	4. Skating parties	• Civil war reenactment
5. Class parties	5. Bass Busters	• Science experiments
6. Friendly helpers	6. Going to the gym afterschool	• DARE
7. Spirit days		
8. Computer lab use		
9. Class jobs		
10. 91 Fun Fridays		

Friendships were mentioned frequently within the children's writing samples. Many of the students attributed their ability to make or maintain friendships to Castle's overall climate and friendliness. If you asked almost any elementary-aged child about the things they like most about school, one of their answers would be spending time with and playing with their friends. Play in a culture enhances relationships and friendships.

I feel great about Castle because you can make friends very fast. The first day I came to this school I made a lot of friends.

When I first started coming to Castle, I was in fourth grade. I was scared at first because I thought the whole school would pick on me like my other school did. But this school didn't. I'll always remember that.

Castle is a great school. All the kids are nice. I think that they have made a warm welcome to me and all of the other students that are new. It is a really friendly place.

At Castle, I have friends that are true friends. Every year I have at least one really good friend. True friends care and that makes me feel good by knowing that my friends care about me. I will always have someone to look up to or to just be there when I need them. I am a true friend. It is hard to be friends with someone who is not nice to me. I don't want friends who drop out of school or anything like that.

My favorite thing about Castle is the friendliness and kindness because it tells me that I have lots of friends and classmates to count on. My least favorite thing is when people do mean things to other people and it hurts their feelings or when people fight and call names. The students here are very intelligent and usually nice. They don't complain or lie.

I really liked the time when I met my friends three years ago. I like them because they are honest, fun, and nice to me.

Castle is a very kind school and it will be remembered by me. My friends were always cool and funny. We always had laughs. We got in trouble a few times for having fun and not paying attention.

I remember when I met my best friend. My other friend introduced me to her. She has been a really good friend to me. She's always happy, funny, and she tries her best to help people. She helps me with schoolwork.

The kids at Castle are always great. They are always nice. All of my friends at Castle like almost everything I do. Most of my friends are at Castle.

There was a critical connection between the children's perceptions of their friendships and the play facilitated by the adults. The important issues from the thoughts of the children were getting along with classmates, doing things together, and being kind to one another. The play opportunities for children happened during daily rituals such as physical education and recess. However, the deliberate events and activities that invited play and connected children was reflective of the Castle culture; their need to connect with one another, support each other and play together.

Adult-to-adult play

Deal and Kennedy (1982) describe action-oriented, corporate cultures that are successful because of the intentional play they interject into their daily rituals. The "work hard, play hard" theme can help to sustain a healthy culture as long as there is a careful balance of both. Cultures that play are typically team oriented and strive for success as a group, not as competitive individuals. Deal and Kennedy point out that play is the flip side of intense work and planning. Cultures who are serious about their work are equally as serious about their play. Work/play cultures get a lot done. This environment is ideal for active people. Play can also materialize through creativity. Brainstorming and strategizing are playful components within a culture that make members want to keep coming together.

The adult-to-adult play at Castle was highly visible via observations, cultural objects, documents, and member's words. They thrived on play and it inspired and rejuvenated them. When there was a loss of play, the members felt it. They mourned chances where play was thwarted for one reason or another and anxiously awaited the arrival of upcoming play time.

- Our play comes out through our relationships.... When the teachers know each other well, it's great...you hear them laughing. You get here in the morning and go into the office and tell some jokes....We have activities on the last Friday of every month. We just got done with our Chocolate Conference which was great. Everybody goes home sick of chocolate. Even the principal, he's fun and quick with the jokes....when you're having fun at work, it's easier to be here. (JT, custodian, 3/5/98)

- I see a lot of joking around, a lot of kidding with each other but doing it in a fun way not mean. The silent auction we did for the kids fund was fun; that was play, definitely not work. Fun Fridays on the last Friday of the month...we all go out. We have the normal sort of play, like in family meetings and secret pals. We did the snow pool when the first snow day we thought was going to happen and the NCAA basketball pool. In the school I worked in last year, I didn't see as much play. It was a lot more closed off. Teachers talked real bad behind each other's backs and the school environment was real bad. It was hard to work there because no one seemed to want to do anything with anybody else.

So, I can see here, that when people are playing it just makes things better and more friendly. (DN, teacher, 3/5/98)

- I see a lot of socializing both before and during school. I see lot of pranks or little jokes played. Like, when an instructional assistant was moving to West Virginia, a teacher organized all these jokes and kidding around those here that are from West Virginia. It's always in good taste, the bantering back and forth about different things. As we age, we do things for each other like the parties with black balloons. I think the rapport and play are important. It shows that you are building a relationship at a certain level with the people you work with and that you are comfortable with that type of exchange. I think in a school that you never see play, there would be a lot of stress. (CB, teacher, 2/26/98)

- Frankly, I'm a bit concerned that we don't have as much play as we once had and I think it's leading back to so much pressure regarding some things right now. In the mornings, I see people in the hallways stopping and congregating and just having fun conversations and laughing and telling jokes. People genuinely like eating together and laughing and having a good time. Our Christmas party this year was wonderful. A lot of people made comments about how we need to do this more often. When we do get together, we have such a good time but it's hard to get people to do that. They're just so busy with their own personal lives. I think there's something special here, particularly, those first three years there was something different about the way people wanted to have fun and get together and have play time. This winter, we kind of got the doldrums but I think people are kind of coming out of that now. (RW, principal, 2/17/98)

- During football season, we get doughnuts every Monday morning and we talk and share. You ask how everybody's doing, like a teacher that's going to be a grandma for the first time and everybody wants to know about the baby. We have little events during the year, like Chocolate Day is coming up. We have first Fridays where we wear jeans and school shirts or colors. We go to a local restaurant and socialize or to someone's house. afterschool hours. To be an educator, you have to be able to play and laugh because of what goes on in the classroom and the home life that you see some of these kids coming from. It is necessary to play at times because of the weather or season or the standards of learning that are draining so many people....At another school I worked at, I didn't see it over there. It's something that can be done in every building, you may just have to have those few key people that will bring up the ideas and get people to do it. Or, you may have one person in the office that kind of alienates everyone. If it's not as friendly, people just don't want to come together. (RT, secretary, 2/4/98)

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- At the beginning of Castle, there was a lot of play. I think there was a lot of interaction, a lot of excitement, in getting to know each other . There were more regular and highly attended Fun Fridays or social activities outside of school. Some of the excitement is gone and some of the complacency of knowing what's going on in the building, we've pulled back into our rooms and the testing has added a lot of pressure. I think people are just tired. Going back to two faculty meetings a month as opposed to one will help. We just lost that opportunity to talk and to share . Those of us in the over fifty group have our own little organization and that has been fun for Friday morning coffees, but that doesn't include everybody. It's hard in a faculty this size to continually do things that include everybody. It is a core group that goes out and does things together. I'm glad the faculty meetings are mandatory which keeps people involved and active with each other. Snacks and goodies gives a little bit more opportunity for casual conversation. Play is where we get our excitement. That's where we get the support we need when we're having a tough year. (WC, teacher, 2/9/98)

There was a great deal of overlap between play and rituals and ceremonies. Many of the rituals and ceremonies at Castle were play or had playful and celebratory elements within them. The emphasis on play was purposeful.

Adult-to-child play

The general feeling of playfulness that one felt in the hallways at Castle lead one to believe that intentional play existed between adults and children. A choice example of this was Zero the Hero. The principal paraded around from classroom to classroom dressed in a black cape and a black "Zorro" mask and hat. Once a month this signified the day that ended in zero based on the number of days the children had been in school. The kindergarten children squealed with delight, wanted to shake his hand and tried to figure out who it was behind the mask. The older children snickered and pointed, most likely remembering their younger years when they were mesmerized by visits from Zero the Hero. The principal set a great example of how play between adults and children was not only connected to learning, but also fun.

In kindergarten, there was play between the adults and children the majority of the times. On the 100th day of school, there was a big celebration which the principal

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described; "The teachers had just as much fun planning it as the kids had participating when it all came to fruition. I dressed up as a one-hundred year old Zero and Hero and another principal came over and was Zero the Hero, my grandson. He would go into the classrooms first and say his grandfather who was one-hundred years old is coming in. The kindergarten teacher put powder in my hair to make it white and drew wrinkles on my face. So I went in and the kids got a big kick out of it.. I had teachers from all over the school come down to kindergarten to see if I would come to their classrooms." (RW, principal, 2/17/98)

In one kindergarten classroom (11/14/97), the teacher used play to gain and hold the children's attention and within her daily lessons. When the children were getting ready to complete a sheet on the letter "N", the teacher reviewed the pictures in silly voices while the children repeated in silly voices (e.g. " the newt in the necktie and the necklace...). During the reading of a popular children's book <u>Chicka Chicka Boom Boom</u>, the teacher continued to use expressive voices and encouraged the children to read parts chorally with her. Even lining up for music class was playful in nature when she said, "Line up if you're wearing ribbons, teddy bears, hearts, stripes, polka dots, underwear!" and the children giggled.

Play between adults and children was both planned and spontaneous. The Bass Busters was a club started by a male fifth grade teacher and the male custodian who both shared a great love for fishing. The club, exclusively for fifth graders, was divided into groups. Each group met once a month after school (weather permitting). They headed out to nearby ponds and lakes to fish. Parents assisted with carpooling and some joined in the fishing. The adults taught the children how to bait hooks, cast, and reel in their catches. It was marvelous to see the children waiting at the end of the day with their fishing poles, eager to get to their destination. They even had Bass Buster T-shirts that were designed by a fifth grade boy in the Bass Busters club. When I asked one parent if there was anything significant that his child would remember about Castle, he said,

- The fishing trips may well be one of the things he will remember about Castle. I remember how thrilled he was to come out to the pond and to throw his line in with the rest of the kids and to do that with Mr. R. It was just so neatly put together without any big deal. We're just going to go out and fish for a while and they were able to do that without any difficulty. (LG, parent, 4/9/98).

 When I spoke with the custodian about Bass Busters, his eyes lit up,

- With the Bass Busters...oh, we have a good time. We have forty-five fifth graders split up into three groups and every week we take a different group fishing at different places. It's just a passion and a love that Mr. R and I both share. We're into writing a magazine for kids actually. We publish it quarterly called, "Hooked for Life". It has nothing to do directly with the school but we circulate over 300 copies. It's designed for ages 5-12. The kids are encouraged to send in their pictures and their stories and they are encouraged to send their questions so we can answer them. We put their name and their picture in the magazine. (JT, custodian, 3/5/98)

Mr. R, the same fifth grade teacher responsible for starting Bass Busters, was also instrumental in teaching fifth grade boys how to play football during recess. I was told that he frequently asked the girls to join in. What came naturally to this teacher became a recess ritual that had a great impact on one student whose parent I spoke with.

- My son didn't know how to play football and all the boys and the teacher would play frequently. My son would just say he didn't want to play. Finally, the teacher insisted he play and he learned. Playing football became one of the highlights of his year. It's sad that he's going to middle school and won't have this everyday. It's really meaningful to him. He just loves doing it. He doesn't even have to score or play well, he appreciates the whole thing. The gym teacher plays with the kids. The adults are making sure things are happening right and really putting a lot of effort into this and my son's really benefited from it. It's great. (DQ, 4/14/98. parent)

Other parents and teachers mentioned the events that were set up to promote the idea of play such as the spring festival, the fall carnival, the local university's sports night at Castle, skating parties, and the Santa breakfast. In school activities included Read-a-

Thons, Walk-a-Thons, Field Day, Creative Arts Day, International Day, and the Chess

Club which was organized and run by the county's school psychologist who's office was

housed at Castle.

Spontaneous play between adults and children was seen in everyday events; an

instructional assistant sat in the kindergarten sandbox and built mountains with the

children, an ongoing joke between a student and the principal about his crazy ties, or the

way a third grade teacher used dramatic gestures and silly voices to line her students up or

get their attention before a transition to the next activity. One teacher, when discussing the

things he looked forward to at Castle each day commented,

- There's one little girl who always asks me to pick her up. One day, she was walking in the hall and I
  picked her up just to move her out of the way...I picked her up in the air and put her down and so now
  everyday she comes and finds me to pick her up. I'll see her in the grocery store and she asks me to
  pick her up. Eating lunch with the kids is fun. It helps you to get to know the kids and I think that's
  the best. I like to push the kids on the swings at recess or play football. Even when I'm teaching, I
  like to play with the kids, joke around with them or turn something they said into something silly.
  (DN, teacher, 3/5/98)

Some other comments from teachers regarding adult and child play were largely

related to the curriculum or developing children's social skills.

- I think that what comes to mind about play between teachers and students is the social skills group
  we've started with our children in second grade. This is a team project between the guidance counselor,
  the school psychologist, two second grade teachers and an instructional assistant. We're dividing our
  two classes into different groups and trying to teach the kids through play proper social etiquette like
  how to join a group, how to work without distractions, politeness and all of those kinds of things.
  Teachers getting right down in the nitty gritty and doing with the kids. With the new standards of
  learning, we're losing some play time with the kids because we have to teach about the tallest
  mountain in China or the governmental bodies.   We have lost some of the role playing we allowed
  more time for in second grade in the past. We try to include PE and music into our station time in the

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afternoon activities which is more relaxed and hands on. I think that is where there's more time for fun and playful interaction yet still maintaining academics. (WC, teacher, 2/9/98)

- I think Mr. R most of the time has his kids outside or even in the classroom playing and he will be right in the middle of it. Another fifth grade teacher does that a lot with her kids too. I do see the teachers taking part in things like that with the kids. Like when fourth grade winds up their medieval unit, they have their feast and all the teachers and kids are dressed up having fun together. (RW, 2/17/98, principal)

- We laugh and joke around a lot with the kids. I like to get to know my students and you have students telling you what's going on in their life and I usually share with them things that are happening in my life. So if I've gone through something funny at home, I share that with them. I really feel like my classroom is a community. We have fun. Our trips to Williamsburg and Jamestown are educational but relaxed and more playful. Field Day is just a real important and wonderful day where kids and adults play together. Our "play" at Christmas time is usually a service project, like reaching out to the community or trying to provide something for someone else.   The kids really enjoy it. (BV, 2/24/98, teacher)

- I see a lot of play between teachers and kids based on individual classrooms. I think as a whole school the opportunities come from the student government like spirit days where both kids and teachers participate. I've seen one teacher dress up as book characters for her kids. Two first grade teachers are always doing play things like a scavenger hunt or a country fair. (CB, 2/26/98, teacher)

Final thoughts on play

The need for play for both the children and adults within the Castle culture was clearly evident. Play assisted the Castle culture to continually develop their relationships with one another and enhance their collaboration. The members of Castle viewed play in their culture as an essential component for rejuvenation and regrowth. It demonstrated their commitment to interdependence and their own progressive development. The members of the Castle culture occasionally separated their work and play to retain their opportunity for self-expression within each arena. They also infused their work with play and playfulness in order to derive joy and satisfaction from their daily strife in the world of public education.

Chapter VII

Rituals and Ceremonies

Rituals provide bonds between participants that share a common purpose. Stolp and Smith (1995) contend that rituals are what provide consistency within schools. The authors explain that the intent of rituals are to instill deeper values. "Rituals illustrate two levels of the culture: daily surface level-experiences, similar to habits, and internalized norms and values" (p. 2).

While taking fieldnotes at Castle, I recognized dozens of rituals during each observation. These rituals ranged from how the students dumped their trays after breakfast and proceeded to their classrooms to how parents checked their children out of the office when picking them up early. The daily rituals I observed at Castle provided order and predictability for its members.

Many rituals were embedded into ceremonies. Ceremonies were "one shot deals" that did not occur on any regular basis and were celebratory or special in nature. Stolp and Smith (1995) point out that ceremonies accomplish several feats: they help emphasize excellence, interpersonal and social achievement (along with social recognition) and they maintain a sense of community, purpose and goal-oriented behavior. Some of the ceremonies at Castle occurred on a regular basis such as the annual holiday party every December and the Opening Day Celebration. Others ceremonies were somewhat spontaneous based on special events such as baby showers or a celebration for a faculty member's recent completion of her doctoral degree.

The rituals I focus on within this chapter are meetings as ritualistic events and the rituals within specific events. Meetings within the culture were significant because of the importance they held and their frequency. The ceremonies I explore are the Opening Day celebration and the last day of school faculty get-together. Both of these ceremonies were

significant of how the culture chose to celebrate the beginning and ending of the school year and what elements they emphasized within each ceremony.

Meetings as rituals

As mentioned within my methodology description, Schultz (1995) employed six themes to categorize the ritualistic behavior within organizations at meetings. These include: (1) the physical environment; (2) the traditions and rituals; (3) the common language used by all participants; (4) the structure of the meeting; (5) communication; and (6) any extra activity that occurs during the actual meeting. In looking at fieldnotes from different types of meetings at Castle (e.g. faculty, CITE, Basic School families), I applied each of Schultz's six categories and determined common themes across all meeting types.

Physical environment

Within many organizations other than schools, the locations where meetings take place can "say" a great deal about their culture. In schools, the location may boil down to having an available, large room to fit everyone. Most large group meetings at Castle took place in the library or cafeteria, depending on what type of food was being served (e.g. being closer to the cafeteria kitchen and large garbage pails). The library was more comfortable. Faculty and community members could spread out around tables and on sofas. Because the surroundings were comfortable and inviting, the meetings in the library tended to run more smoothly. This environment was also conducive to meetings that lasted longer.

Traditions and rituals

How participants communicated with each other and the structure of the meetings were rituals within meetings. This ritualistic behavior performed at faculty meetings, family meetings, and CITE meetings can be categorized as: entrances and greetings,

seating arrangements, eating and drinking, communication during the meeting, and dismissal of the meetings. The member's behavior looked the same across meetings and similar patterns were present.

Most meetings were held in the library, cafeteria or occasionally in a classroom, after the children went home for the day. Participants were prompt to meetings, usually showing up five to ten minutes before they were to begin. There was a great deal of socializing when entering meetings and during seat selection. Afterschool meetings may have been the first time during the day that some faculty members saw each other, especially if they taught on opposite sides of the building. Seat selection was usually determined by grade level, although the teachers and staff occasionally mixed themselves up depending upon when they arrived or if they wanted to talk to someone from another grade level before the meeting. There were only one or two late comers to the meetings that I observed. The members knew that the meetings were important and the quicker they got started, the quicker they could wrap up the business at hand.

It was a Castle tradition that grade levels took turns bringing snacks to faculty meetings once a month. Snacks also showed up on a more informal basis at other meetings, e.g. microwave popcorn. At faculty meetings, the snacks were set up on top of the book shelves in one section of the library and the faculty would fill plates of goodies and take them back to their tables to snack on during the meeting. This was a very social time. The faculty would wait in line and chat with who was next to them. The members looked forward to this time together. The food and drinks helped make the meetings more like celebrations. When it was suggested at one faculty meeting that the snacks be put on the individual tables as a way to shorten the meetings, the majority of the teachers strongly objected. They realized that the social time they had together was necessary for their own self-preservation and to connect with each other.

Food as a cultural object

The communication between the facilitator and participants was usually based around items on the agenda. This provided the structure for the meeting. The agenda was a critical communication tool for the participants. It allowed them to anticipate what would be discussed and what was simply for their information. Verbal communication during the meetings was expected and encouraged. The members were accustomed to voicing their opinions and ideas openly, even if it resulted in conflict among members. For example, when the principal brought up the issue of how the standardized testing scores would be interpreted by parents and the community, the teachers had a plethora of comments about how they should react to any critical feedback they encountered. Obviously, not all teachers agreed regarding how criticism would be fielded. Some wanted to take a more defensive stance while others felt that their hard work and dedication to teaching needed no defending. The differences of opinion were respected and this was how the conflict resolution process either typically began or ended.

The principal, who was typically the facilitator of faculty meetings, did not dominate the agendas, rather he facilitated the discussions to keep members on topic. The principal judged when discussions needed to continue at another time and facilitated this

process. Members of the Castle culture viewed this open communication at meetings as a positive element. It allowed both their individual and collective voices to be heard.

The dismissal of meetings occurred rather naturally when all of the items on the agenda were addressed. Due to the principal's keen facilitation skills, he could assemble and facilitate the agenda to end up at approximately the same time at almost every meeting. After the meetings were adjourned, many of the members would break into pairs or groups to touch base with one another. There was not a rapid dissolution of participants hurrying out the door or packing up before the meeting was over.

Common Language

Common language used at Castle meetings would most appropriately be classified as collaborative. After reviewing my meeting analysis notes, some key themes turned up again and again. The participants used terms that were child-centered. Their discussions commonly centered around helping, assisting, or collaborating to tackle an issue such as community outreach or meeting diverse learning needs of their students. Much of the language was based around communication and collaboration. A proactive theme was evident in the language used in most meetings. Words such as "explore," "plan," "investigate" and "support" were commonly heard. The language did not contain words of criticism or fault-finding. Conflict at meetings was discussed openly and equally among participants. The language did not reflect stress, blame, or oppression of any one person or subgroup within the culture. Some examples of typical words or phrases used that fall under the communication and collaboration themes follow in Table 5.

Table 5

Key Terms Used in Meetings

COMMUNICATION	COLLABORATION
• planning	• together
• talk	• collaborative planning
• feedback	• teams
• input	• assistance
• consensus	• we
• opinion	• family

Extra activity at meetings

       Shultz (1995) explains extra activity at meetings as conversations that are happening while others are speaking, people working on other duties when they should be listening, or jokes about the subject matter within cliques of participants. Knowing I was going to apply Schultz's meeting analysis to my fieldnotes, I purposely looked for "extra activity" at meetings. The surprising fact was that the members of the Castle culture were highly attentive and involved at the meetings that I attended. There was appropriate silence and respect when someone had the floor. The participants responded at suitable times. There were very few occasions when I observed a teacher grading papers or working on other assignments. Attentiveness was calculated by the participants eyes on the speaker or facilitator and their questions or comments related to the subject matter being discussed. This attentiveness was evident at all types of meetings, regardless of the facilitator. It was obvious that the participants at meetings were actively engaged and felt that the content was important to their daily lives within the culture.

       Deal and Kennedy (1982) classify meetings as management rituals. They say meetings are like going to church; they bond everyone together. They contend that the

most important rituals to manage an organization is holding meetings. The form of the meeting is simply a reflection on the culture. The rituals within meetings should fall in line with the values and beliefs of an organization. "Meetings don't always, or even often, produce decisions, but they provide occasions for expression, growth, and celebration of a culture that works" (p.70). Castle's meetings and the rituals embedded in them provided the members with opportunities for expression, growth, and celebration, as Deal and Kennedy point out. Castle's meeting behavior and the outcomes of their behavior helped to perpetuate their proactive collaboration which invited teamwork and consensus.

Children's writing samples

The rituals and ceremonies that I uncovered within the children's writing samples were divided into; (1) daily rituals, (2) yearly rituals, and (3) ceremonies that look very similar to the yearly rituals, yet are marked by their celebratory or transitionary nature.

Daily rituals

The children made reference to some daily rituals that were important to them. These centered around recess, lunch, computer time, and specialties such as physical education and art. Although academics probably came in second place in the noteworthy memories category, many students did mention certain projects or areas of study that stood out in their minds as enjoyable events. The majority of the children wrote about the times of their day that they welcomed the most. Some of their comments follow:

> Although Castle is a great place, there are still a few bad things. One is that recess is at the end of the day in 5th grade. That sort of defeats the purpose of recess.

> I like Spirit Day which is on the last Friday of the month. Sometimes we dress up like someone else. Sometimes we even wear special colors.

> In second grade, we always baked a cake for whose ever birthday it was in that month. I asked for German chocolate and boy was it good!

The best things at Castle are spirit days. I like Freaky Friday the best. I like to dress up funny and see all the weird outfits that other people are wearing. I like to dye my hair different colors and wear my clothing all wrong. Some people really go crazy and wear a different shoe on each foot. It tried that but it was too uncomfortable. Another cool thing we did was the "Souper Bowl". We take canned goods and place them outside our classroom doors. We compete with other schools in the county to see who can get the most canned food. Last year Castle won! We donate the food to the Food Pantry. It's a lot of fun and a nice way to help those less fortunate than you.

I like our snowflake board of good deeds, kind words, and helping hands. Each time our teacher sees a good deed, she will put up a snowflake. When she has put up all the snowflakes, we will have a party. I can't wait!

The children at Castle were unaware that the rituals established had specific meaning. For example, changing classes for certain subjects may have been established to get them used to more than one teacher or to just break up the rhythm of their day. The way they were taught to line up and walk on one side of the hallway helped to keep order and allowed others to use the hallway at the same time. Most of the rituals children performed at Castle appeared to be for a meaningful reason. I did not observe a ritual that was put in place by adults just to demonstrate their power or control over the children such as waiting for the classroom to be completely silent with heads on desks for ten minutes before they could go out to recess.

Yearly rituals

The rituals that children at Castle most commonly experienced were fieldtrips, the medieval feast in fourth grade, assemblies, the talent show, and International Day. The children used phrases such as "my fondest memories include..." , " the absolute best thing I ever did at Castle..." and "it was way cool when we got to go to...." to describe these significant events or memories during their years at Castle. These rituals were ones that children of all grade levels anticipated.

The most commonly mentioned fieldtrip was to Jamestown and Williamsburg during their fourth grade year. The students rode on chartered buses, spent their money in souvenir shops, walked around in the darkness of the Williamsburg streets during the candlelight tour, and spent the night in a hotel! For many of the children, it may have been their first night away from their parents, their first time staying in a hotel, or their first feelings of being a "big kid" doing "big kid" things. For others, it was their first time being out of the county. The children described their excitement and memories in the following writing samples:

My fondest memory is when we went to Williamsburg in fourth grade and we got to sleep the night there.

I liked in fourth grade when we went to Williamsburg. We got to stay overnight and got to watch TV and to go to a lot of cool stuff on the war we been studying. We also went to Jamestown. They had lots of guns and three ships. We got to go on one.

One of my fondest memories is when we went on our Monticello fieldtrip. We got to see how they keep ice cold. They had a big 16 foot deep hole and a sand pile shaped like a cone on top of a little house thing over the hole. When we went to Lexington it was very sunny. We got to see Robert E Lee's grave under a church. There was a guy from VMI on rollerblades that had a motor on his back and he could go 15 miles per hour and he could steer.

The trip to Williamsburg was very exciting but very tiring. The best part was getting to spend the night and getting to have a night tour. Everything was great except not getting to stay long enough. I wish we could have gone for three or four days instead of two.

I guess my favorite memory would have to be Williamsburg. I had a lot of fun. We saw two ships, a native American village, Monticello and my favorite street, Glousester. I had the most fun in my life.

Going to Williamsburg in fourth grade was so awesome. We got to sleep overnight in a hotel and shop too. It was so fun.

A great event is the International Day. We got to go to another classroom and learn about another country. It's so fascinating what you can learn about other countries.

One of my favorite memories is Twin Day and Field Day. Field Day is where you play cool games with friends. Twin Day you get a friend and dress the same and take pictures of you and your friend.

I like the special events. Like at the very beginning of the year, when everybody gets together and sings the Castle song and we make an earth of our grade's color.

One of my favorite memories was last year at our 4th grade medieval feast. We had a lot of good food and a lot of fun. I wish we could do the same thing with studying the Civil War.

Many of the ceremonies were to celebrate a value such as diversity with International Day or to mark a rite of passage such as the fifth grade graduation. The fifth grade pool party was the last hoorah before the children left for the summer. It was a time to celebrate their completion of elementary school and say good-bye to teachers and friends. Ceremonies were as important to children as they were to adults within the culture. They help make children feel part of something important within their school community. Taking time to celebrate the membership and feeling of belonging within a culture was crucial to all members.

Significant ceremonies

Two of the most significant times for both children and adults within Castle were the first and last days of school. Castle developed specific ceremonies that helped to usher in and escort out these significant days.

Opening day ceremony

The first annual Opening Day ceremony began the year I took fieldnotes. This was in conjunction with the beginning of Basic School families. The School as Community family was responsible for planning and facilitating the Opening Day ceremony. At 8:45 a.m., all parents were invited to accompany their children to school. Parents were summoned to the courtyard for a reception with the principal and other guests from the

school division and community. All parents were welcomed to return at 2:15 p.m. to complete a school-wide balloon project in their child's classroom. Huge paper balloons were supplied to each classroom and the teachers decided how they wanted their classes to decorate them. Some of the classes put their year's goals in writing and glued them to the balloons while other used small individual balloons for the students to write messages about what they looked forward to at Castle. Finally, at 2:50 p.m., the entire school of parents, children, staff and volunteers gathered around the flagpole in the front of the school building to celebrate with song and encouraging words from the principal. The words to the school song were passed out to everyone.

The Opening Day ceremony embodied the spirit of community and community-building across all participants. It sent a message to the educators and staff, community members, parents, and children that Castle was a wonderful place to be and that the school year was an exciting and special time in everyone's life. This annual celebration has become an important part of Castle's story and tradition.

Last day ceremony

At almost any school, the last day of school is typically a mixture of pure exhilaration and sweet sadness. There is a feeling of accomplishment of passing on another group of students from one grade level to the next. I observed (6-10-98) scenes of tears and glee from both the children and adults while I silently haunted the halls and classrooms the last hour of the final day of the school year at Castle. A section of my fieldnotes read, "...the lunchroom is mysteriously empty. An instructional assistant is laughing as she walks by talking to another teacher saying that one teacher wanted to use the last fifteen minutes of the day to discuss the last chapter in a novel the students' had been reading. She said, "I just told her 'no'." ....As I stand in the office, some teachers are talking about the "tears that will be shed" this afternoon at the faculty luncheon. It is the

last get-together with good-byes to six faculty members who are leaving. The principal walks by and says, "I don't know how we're going to get through this meeting."

The last day of school luncheon was a ceremony that the adults who worked at Castle looked forward to with sick feelings in their stomachs. It was a ceremony that marked an ending of a school year with some relief and the anticipation of some time off for much needed rest. It also meant having to say good-bye to fellow faculty members who were best friends and surrogate family.

The ceremony was held in the cafeteria about 30 minutes after the students boarded the buses. A few teachers busily rearranged tables and chairs while a local caterer set up tray after tray of food. As the teachers filtered in and found their seats, many tried to talk each other into making the final presentations because they anticipated how difficult it was going to be. The good-byes occurred before the food. It began with humor. A second grade teacher tried to get the everybody's attention by clapping once and then twice like she did for her children in the classroom. Laughter. She said "All of you that are moving away, please get big houses so we can come visit; we are all free this summer." Then the procession of remarks and gifts began The reading teacher read an acrostic poem about a first grade teacher. There was laughter and applause. Next, a third grade teacher began with humor and silliness and ended with tears and heartwrenching words about losing her teaching partner and friend. The tears among the staff were plentiful. A fourth grade teacher presented her teaching partner with a school T-shirt and a sorrowful good-bye to a friend and confidante.

The principal presented gifts to two faculty members who were taking a leave of absence from the school division. To lighten up the occasion, the physical education teacher presented the local teacher association awards for those teachers with ten, twenty-five and thirty years of experience. One of the instructional assistants that was leaving did not come to the meeting but left a sweet poem about Castle that was read aloud. She had purchased a butterfly house to be hung in the courtyard as her parting gift to Castle. With

that, the principal announced that it was "happy time...we can eat and open gifts". This statement was the closure to the part of the meeting that many organizations never address. There was permission given to express the overwhelming sadness in saying good-bye to cherished friends and co-workers. During the buffet lunch, the teachers laughed and socialized, almost relieved that the first part of the meeting was over with and they could once again concentrate on being together.

Although it may not have looked very ceremonial to an outside observer, all the elements were there; speeches, awards, gifts, food, and a specific time frame for all of it to occur. Castle's opening and last day ceremonies demonstrate its attention to maintaining a caring and family-like culture.

A daily ritual

Final thoughts on rituals and ceremonies

Rituals are commonplace and taken for granted within cultures, however, they tell so much about how a culture functions and thrives or stagnates. The daily rituals are a direct reflection on the culture's values and beliefs. Castle's rituals look similar to many other public schools, but reflect their specific values of help, decision-making, calendar and time, and the celebration of diversity.

Deal and Kennedy (1982) contend that ceremonies within organizations help to acknowledge particular milestones and can be extraordinary. "Ceremonies place the culture on display and provide experiences that are remembered by employees. Ceremonies keep values and beliefs uppermost in the members' hearts and minds" (p. 63). Castle's ceremonies were centered around bringing people together for fun, for recognition, for encouragement, for community-building, and for joy.

Chapter VIII

Cultural Objects

All cultures have objects or symbols that represent their values, beliefs, and customs. One typically thinks of cultural objects as ancient artifacts that hold deep and complex meaning for the members of a culture. Within schools, cultural objects can be anything from a sign on the front door saying, "All Visitors Please Report to the Office" to a mural painted by students on the wall. Cultural objects allow outsiders to "read" the culture through purely visual exploration. Delving into the study of school culture, I traveled to many schools and I could not help but analyze schools based on their cultural objects. At Castle Elementary, I uncovered three broad types of cultural objects while pouring over fieldnotes and documents. These are classified as: (1) places, (2) written documents, and (3) objects.

Places

The places or locations within a school building hold a great deal of significance because they are where the members reside. Locations and their outward appearance demonstrate how a culture functions; if a culture is organized, healthy, or proud. Throughout my fieldnotes, there are references to places within Castle and the meaning these places hold to people of the culture.

The office was the central hub at Castle. Walking through the front doors, the office greeted you with its openness and movement. The glass walls and doors appeared to say, "Come on in, you're welcome here." The entrance foyer was inviting with its columns painted as giant pencils and primary colors. Castle's front office was where staff, parents and students went for information, checked in and out, made copies, and conducted the daily business of education. Cultural objects such as the sign-in sheet and the mailboxes

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helped the school to function in an organized fashion. The office was the heart of Castle Elementary. It represented activity, socialization, structure, and cohesiveness. The secretary reported liking "one big area" where people congregate and meet. For example, the staff mailboxes were mentioned in almost every meeting as a means to disseminate information or communicate with one another via notes or memos. Staff members who entered the office at any time of day checked their mailboxes. The mailboxes never became cluttered or stuffed with forgotten memos or mail. They acted as the key communication resource for the Castle educators.

The courtyard held symbolic meaning within the Castle culture. Located directly behind the office, this space was intended to be a place to bring children for instruction. Although it did serve this purpose, it also symbolized that beauty and taking care of something was important. For example, the guidance counselor organized a small committee to plant a butterfly garden along the perimeter. Her motive was to have beautiful flowers to attract beautiful creatures. As the years went by, objects were added to the courtyard like a bench, a birdfeeder, and some garden art. I recall talking to the librarian about the places at Castle that were special to her. She said that walking through the courtyard several times a day to get to the library made her feel good. It was pretty and peaceful. The day after my interview with her, I was working at an older elementary in the same school division and passed by their courtyard. I stopped to think of its significance to the culture. Littered with discarded playground equipment and tall weeds, this dilapidated courtyard spoke volumes about the culture. Elementary schools act as cultural objects within themselves, but also serve as receptacles for other cultural objects.

Colors and decor of the building were cultural objects. The most commonly named objects by the adults I interviewed were the lobby columns that were painted as giant pencils. The pencils appealed to adults because they were child-centered. They appealed to children because they were child-like. Another frequently named object was the bright green roof. The green roof was representative of a place for children, full of fun and

Castle Courtyard

whimsy. Although its shocking color caused quite an uproar from the local community when it was first built, people seemed to have become accustomed to it.

Table 6 links the common cultural objects at Castle and their significance within the culture. Some of these objects are static and observable such as the lobby pencils while others exist on a symbolic basis like the food at faculty meetings.

Table 6
Cultural object significance

Type of Cultural object	Significance to culture
Objects	
Children's art and school work in hallways	Reflects the variety of teaching formats & instructional techniques; the celebration of childrens' creativity & knowledge
Food	Time to socialize, celebrate, and take care of each other and ourselves
Money	Culture spends a great amount of time and effort trying to make sound decisions regarding budgets (territory issues do crop up since spending is not always equal across grade levels)
Colors of the building (primary squares painted on floors, walls, colors of cubbies and rooms)	This is a place for children; a bright & happy place to be
Written objects	
Written agendas at meetings	Purposeful use of time, organization, shared information, and action
Personal calendars	Commitments to many responsibilities; time important factor in culture, efficient use of time
Flyers & newsletters	Constant communication with families; openness in sharing events and ideas with outside community; celebration of progress and talents
SOL's (statewide curriculum standards by grade level)	Stressful for members of culture; culture does not do well with mandated regulations or curriculum; many meetings items and discussions regarding the effect on the school
Phone tree	A communication instrument to alert all members of important information,

	especially personal issues and someone's need for support
Report cards	A large emphasis with parents and children; teachers view traditional grading system as a necessary component in the culture
Places	
Gym	Collaboration between outside community and the school makes for a good community connection, good space for children, creatively used space by faculty and community
Playing fields	Another collaboration between the town and school; culture sees this connection as a positive enhancement of the school
Foyer	Welcoming, sofas for parents & kids, open & spacious, showcases of children's projects & relevant events
Playgrounds	Colorful; represents fun & play, socializing of both kids and adults
Design & accessibility	Built in a square to make it easy for children to travel, accessible for persons with disabilities, accordion doors allow for team teaching and more instructional space for children & teachers
Office	Glass provides invitation to come inside, "hub" of the school, high visibility to symbolize openness of culture to outsiders

Documents

After spending an entire school year collecting documents that appeared in staff mailboxes, were shared at meetings, and traveled home with children, I realized the great emphasis that they had on the members of the Castle culture. The constant trail of paper illustrated that the members of the culture communicated, played, and demonstrated creativity in educating not only children, but also the community. Each of these documents served as an artifact that supported the story of the Castle culture. These documents were descriptors that provided information about how the culture communicated and what they emphasized. I categorized the documents into the following areas: (1) fun/personal, (2) weekly bulletins, (3) central office and outside information, (4) faculty meeting agendas, (5) school business, and (6) school-wide events. A brief description of the contents under each category assists in understanding how the culture used documents to perpetuate its values and beliefs. Many of the described documents can be found in the appendices.

Fun/personal

Connecting with one another appeared to be a continuous effort at Castle. The staff reached out to one another and to their community in a variety of ways. When the parent of a child who attended Castle suffered a stroke, the faculty and staff wrote notes, sent flowers, and made several trips to the hospital. The personal letter from the family addressed to the entire Castle staff expressed their deep appreciation for the ongoing concern and support that the Castle members provided during this time of need. Additionally, when a lunch room aide who had worked at the school since it opened was pregnant with her third child, the social committee at Castle sent out a memo for everyone to contribute to buy her a gift certificate and presented it to her one afternoon with snacks and decorations.

On the lighter side, each summer, lunch dates were set for staff to get together at area restaurants to catch up and socialize. From what I was told, between eight to fifteen

people usually attended and socialized for several hours with laughter and food. Staff socials the last Friday of each month (affectionately called Fun Fridays) were held at area restaurants or staff members homes. Staff were encouraged to bring their children and spouses whenever possible. Appendix D contains documents that advertised events to connect with one another. These include: (1) the last day of school celebration, (2) Secret Pals, (3) Social committee plans for the year, and (4) the holiday breakfast.

Distinct forms of playfulness and fun continually appeared in the documents I collected. The two that I chose to highlight were the song that an anonymous group of faculty members wrote for their first faculty meeting in August (Appendix E), and the "warm-up" exercise for the staff to complete at the first faculty meeting of the year to see how well they "really knew each other" (Appendix F). The silly nature of not only the words in the song but also its performance, demonstrated that the members within the culture rely on humor and play to keep them from getting too bogged down with the seriousness of public education. The "test" at the faculty meeting was a pure exercise in fun and reconnecting with one another after a long summer apart.

Weekly bulletin

The weekly bulletin (appendix G) was a cultural object that served to keep the communication flowing between the principal and faculty on a regular basis. The format of the bulletin allowed the staff to do quick checks of who was on bus duty, who was celebrating a birthday, and what special events such as fieldtrips, assemblies, testing schedules, and faculty meetings were on the calendar. Announcements included everything from a videotape that was lost or missing, the death of a retired teacher from the county, and enrichment classes offered at a nearby university to information about upcoming conferences and news from town hall about an upcoming celebration. Halfway through the year, websites of the week were added for faculty to utilize for themselves and for their students. The weekly bulletin has been in existence since Castle began. It was a cultural

object that represented the continuous flow of information between the administration and staff. It communicated announcements along with personal thoughts that focused members of the Castle culture on continual personal and professional issues.

Outside and central office information

These documents were used to informally assess the impact of outside influences on the Castle culture, especially from the school division central office. One fairly positive influence showed up in the notes from the superintendent's advisory meetings (Appendix H). A staff member from each school was selected to meet monthly as a group with the superintendent to discuss issues of concern or importance. The Castle representative did an excellent job posting the dates of upcoming meetings to get input from the staff and then sent memos about what was discussed at the meetings. Most of the issues showed up again on weekly bulletins or for whole group discussions at faculty meetings. For example, after the state standards testing was piloted, the Castle staff held a 45 minute open discussion on how this would affect not only their curriculum but also their teaching.

Other outside documents included superintendent's memos, local teacher association flyers, the school board's annual goals, and notification of town events. Outside documents did not appear to cause any real concern to the Castle members. Their own internal communication occurred to keep them in constant motion towards self-enhancement.

Faculty meetings

Faculty meeting agendas were a substantial document within the culture. A standard format was used for predictability and to move the meetings along. The agendas began with the "meat" of the discussion topics, commonly facilitated by the principal. For example, on the March 18th agenda (Appendix B) the discussion centered on ordering supplies, celebrating Earth Day, updates from the county calendar committee

representative, upcoming visitors and information about standardized testing, just to name a few. Within the Castle culture, the members recognized that anything in this section was fair game for discussion.

The remainder of the agenda was entitled "for your information". These items were discussed only if clarification was needed. Knowing that calendars and time were highly valued by this culture, the calendar section usually had the members flipping through their daily planners when they arrived, making sure they had all pertinent dates recorded. The faculty meeting agenda was a cultural staple that the members depended on for both information and to keep business progressing as usual. The agenda was the cultural object, while the meeting was the ritual symbolizing the culture's need to maintain order.

Business

The main documents within this section relate to the CITE committee and the Basic School families (Appendix I). To maintain order and document progress, the CITE committee used agendas and meetings minutes. The two central issues addressed by the CITE committee throughout the year were how to spend the budget and if Castle should pursue establishing a before and after school daycare program. There was also continual discussion regarding the membership of the committee such as who was on, who was off, what years individuals rotated membership and if all factions were well represented.

Basic School families used a similar organizational structure by publishing agendas and minutes for each meeting. The Basic School families agendas were driven by events that were planned around each of their focus areas (Basic School families described in chapter four). Most of their business centered around making decisions about school-wide events. One set of meeting minutes (October, 1998, Appendix I) organized the issues using an "Issue," "Action," and "Person Responsible" format. For example, in planning the Basic School Fair for March, decisions were made to use all parts of the building, every teacher in the building needed to contribute to one of the commonalties and each child had

to be represented with a piece of their work at least once. The Curriculum family was responsible for the overall arrangement of the event. Meeting minutes from the Basic School families supported the notion of decision-making as a value within the culture.

School-wide events

Within this section, the documents focused on school-wide events that enriched both children and adults (Appendix J). Reading Month and Fine Arts Month provided learning opportunities in more creative and nontraditional forays. Girdle meetings were scheduled monthly and open to staff members who wanted to get together for discussion on any issues they needed support in (no pun intended!) Staff were requested, on the flyers, to give the facilitator topics ahead of time so she could map out the time needed for each issue. These meetings differed in that they did not have agendas or minutes, rather they were informal and viewed as "therapeutic". The flyers advertising these meetings were intentionally silly with pictures, cartoons, and phrases that made one smile. The facilitator invited guests within and outside of the school division to join the discussions and brainstorming. Sharing chocolate was mandatory at every Girdle meeting!

There were multiple documents that advertised the activities sponsored by The Parent Place. This grant established outreach to a nearby community that typically had little parent involvement with Castle and housed the majority of at-risk students. The events included holiday gatherings for the families at the community Laundromat and transportation to school-wide events that occurred in the evening or on weekends. The Parent Place at Castle was a room off of the cafeteria that was open for parents to come read, talk, use the computer or telephone and have a cup of coffee. An open invitation was sent to all families at Castle to utilize the room and signs were posted around the school building all year long. The documents advertising school-wide events symbolized support, outreach, and enrichment for all members of the Castle community.

The documents collected during the school year at Castle filled a large accordion file. I assume that most schools have a similar amount of documents that fill up their faculty mailboxes, children's backpacks and bulletin boards; however, the documents at Castle specifically embody the culture's persistent need for information, for order, for communication and for renewal in their mission to educate themselves and the community.

Objects

One usually thinks of an object as a tangible entity that can be seen and touched. The cultural objects discovered during my observations at Castle were a mixture of both tangible objects and symbolic objects. For example, all of the "things" on the walls in the hallways were representational of how Castle expressed itself.

Children's self-portraits in hallway

Children's work and artwork covered the walls in every hallway every day. The displays were not based on exemplary graded work to be displayed for a chosen few, rather, huge arrays were exhibited of entire classes projects, posters, and artwork that not only gave an observer the chance to see what was being learned, but to show how the

learning took place via various formats and expressions. The children's work was important. That was the symbolic meaning of the covered walls.

Also displayed were large balloons of different colors representing each Basic School family. These were great symbols of the unity that existed at Castle. A bulletin board exhibited pictures of teachers and their classes that were within each family. The two large glass showcases located in the foyer were used to display children's artwork depicting particular themes, such as the study of a particular artist or culture. While I traveled to school buildings where I served as a consultant during my year of data collection, I took particular notice of what was on the walls in the hallways in other elementary schools. In comparison, I never felt that the amount or the variety of children's work ever came close to what I saw at Castle. Typically, the work in other buildings reflected one assignment that each student was given with very specific parameters, therefore, there was little distinction .

First grade balloons

The sacred place for regular postings of documents for the teaching staff was on the bulletin board in the main office. Above the copier in the main office were posted humorous and poignant thoughts about education, educators, and children. Others were silly pictures or cartoons with captions contributed by co-workers to brighten each other's day.

Money was a cultural object at Castle that was tangible; however, the symbolism of what was represented by money or the lack of it surfaced again and again. Money meant that something did or did not take place. For example, when the county school board no longer received its allotment of money from the state for computer technology, the new technology that was expected at Castle did not materialize for that school year. The discussions around this issue were constant. The teachers expressed the stifling effect that this lack of technology had upon their students. Money reappeared as an ongoing point of conflict when the budget for each grade level was discussed at several shared decision-making (CITE) meetings.

Cultural objects and children's writing samples

In combing the samples of children's writing for their notion of cultural objects, there was repetition in what they found important and relevant. The objects most commonly mentioned were the green roof, the colors of the building, the shape and aspects of the building, computers, the gym and the playgrounds. This was not surprising since these objects were intentionally designed when the school was being planned and built to be child-oriented. Some of the children's comments follow:

ROOF

When I first came to Castle, I thought the green roof was ugly. I still do but it does stand out in the crowd. It helps when people ask what school I go to. Sometimes I have to say the green roof school.

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This school might not look so cool because of the roof but to tell the truth, it's extremely nice inside.

The first time I passed by Castle, I said inside my head, "Look at that school, a green roof!, and the shape is awesome! I've got to go in there and check it out.

The thing I would change would be the roof, definitely the roof.

I like the design in Castle and the green roof. It's a very cool and big school.

COLORS AND SHAPE OF BUILDING

I like how the building is in a square. The courtyard in the middle makes it look excellent.

Castle is a very big and well made building. It is colorful and large.

One of the most important things is that Castle is a bright welcoming school. All along every hallway there are skylights and/or lights. The colors are red, yellow, green and blue and we have a school song with the colors and I think it is a cool song.

I like the pencils in the lobby and the lots of space to do things in.

COMPUTERS

The school has good computers and the Internet. I like getting on the Internet and finding out different information. The computers are pretty good. There are games, a writing and publishing center and a lot of other great stuff.

I'm glad that our school has computers and that there are so many of them because that means more students can use them. It's great that we have the Internet access because most of the important things happening in the world are written about on the Internet. Our computer labs are good for just typing up stories and reports.

I would change the computer servers. The stupid things keep crashing and everyone suffers because of it.

One thing I would change is the computer system. All of our stupid computers shut down about twice a week. But I do think it is good that we have computers in every classroom and access to the Internet. I would not change that.

GYM AND PLAYGROUNDS

The playground is big and allows many students to play in it without being crowded. A huge gym is another specialty at Castle.

We have a very big gym which is fun to have P.E. in and after school, if you don't ride the bus home, you can go to the gym and play there.

At recess, we have lots of space to play and the equipment like the monkey bars are fun to play tag on.

Castle has a pretty small playground and it could be a little bigger. And the school could put up nets on the basketball courts.

Castle is the biggest school in the area, it has a green roof, a small cafeteria and a gym with carpeting.

I would like to change some of the playground equipment because mainly all that is out there is three slides, swings, a tunnel and an arch. I would change all of these things that I have listed above except the swings to monkey bars, a jungle gym, and three bigger slides.

The gym is so big. It has lots of basketball hoops and lots of space to do things in.

The children's comments expressed their ideas of what was important at Castle. The objects that came forth were critical to children; spaces to play, an accessible building that is comfortable and looks good, and a roof that stands out, yet had mixed reviews. The computers were important to these children living in today's wired society. They appreciated having access to them and used them for their learning. The physical aspects of the Castle building were important to the children. They primarily valued teachers that were understanding and helpful, but also wanted to have places to play and comfortable surroundings.

Final thoughts on cultural objects

The cultural objects at Castle had a lot to do with creature comforts. The physical beauty of the building and grounds were important to all members of the culture. Sharing food was a custom that enabled members to get together, express their caring, or enhance their celebrations. The Castle community revolved around the needs of children and their visual objects reflected their child-centeredness. Written communication and documents maintained order and regularity. These documents served to perpetuate the work that was being done by the members of the culture. Castle Elementary may be very similar to many elementary schools across the country in many ways; however, their cultural objects clearly portrayed their commitment to their values and beliefs. Their cultural objects signified their communal nature, their need for connection and their need for orderliness.

Chapter XI

Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

for Future Research

<u>Discussion</u>

Evidence that the key elements selected in my study existed was thoroughly described within each chapter discussion. Some elements were much easier to describe than others due to the multiple data sources that were available. For example, play was evident in children's writing sample, documents, fieldnotes, and interview transcripts.
Most of the key cultural elements at Castle were implicit rather than explicit. Sarason (1996) points out " One of the most difficult problems in recognizing that the major problem in our schools engages far less in the characteristics of individuals than it does in its culture and system characteristics is that one cannot see culture or systems the way one sees individuals. Culture and systems are not concrete, tangible, or measurable the way individuals are" (p.227-228). For example, values and beliefs were implicit elements within Castle's culture yet were articulated through the activities and actions of the members subconsciously. One just could not put a finger on these elements without combing through multiple data sources to find the clues that unveiled the layered stories that described the values and beliefs at Castle.

Castle's self-awareness of its culture directly influenced how their culture functioned. This especially was evident in the interviews. The interview participants provided consistent and similar responses to key questions about values, beliefs, play and cultural objects. Although they could name their significant traditions and rituals, they were not as aware of the impact that these had on their culture and how it functioned. For example, meetings were driven by proven rituals that made them productive, social and

collaborative, yet the members could not specifically say that the rituals were what made them this way.

The members also expressed dissatisfaction when an element was lacking or failing in some way. When they lacked play and connectedness, they were aware that it affected their energy and purpose of educating children to the best of their abilities. When they did not take the time to meet or socialize, their morale not only suffered, but so did their creativity.

Castle's awareness of their culture helped unite them towards continuous renewal. Their awareness of their culture helped to sustain their culture. The awareness of their culture helped bring about their creativity, collaborative spirit, and their liveliness in educating their children.

Castle was enthused through its own growth efforts. The leadership was aware that paying attention to both individuals and the culture as a whole was important in nurturing a healthy culture. The personal and professional care-taking by all members of the culture evidenced their attention to the welfare of the culture. The educators understood their own cultural needs. They purposely embedded their values and beliefs into their actions and daily events. They tended to each other. By being aware of both the explicit and implicit cultural elements, the members of the Castle culture can seek to continue their development in more specific and concentrated efforts. In looking at school renewal, they can put into place action that directly related to their cultural elements.

This study serves as a mirror of the key cultural elements at Castle Elementary. These elements describe and explain the nature and inner workings of the culture. Although the perfect words to explain the value of my study are often elusive, the impact of school culture on the process of education cannot be ignored. My study does provide a rich example of the impact of school culture on one elementary school.

The findings of this particular study do not suggest a specific course of action for the Castle community. However, this is to be expected as school culture is not a "problem"

that must be corrected with a specialized agenda. Rather, as this study has illustrated, the culture of a school community is dynamic and exists as a reflection of its members. It will grow or wither depending on the understanding of the members. This study will help the Castle community understand itself as a whole, and serve as a powerful foundation upon which to strengthen and nurture the culture. By providing Castle with the details of their culture that are rather implicit, they can embed this information into future change and reform efforts.

School culture must be recognized and acknowledged to address a school's efforts to enhance or change. The Castle study provided a look at each of the parts that comprise the whole culture. By taking each of these pieces, this information can shed light on the school renewal process, the continuation of the Basic School philosophy and practices, and other initiatives they seek in the future.

Although Castle members were aware of many of their cultural elements before this study began, they could not put into words or action how the elements interweave and impact each had on the others. For example, rituals of meetings and ritualistic behavior within their meetings embraced their play, their values, and their beliefs. Another example of interwoven elements was how the culture made decisions (value) via collaboration (belief) and via meetings (ritual). Stolp and Smith (1995) contend that the concept of school culture offers schools and leaders a more holistic way to look at a school. "By deepening their understanding of culture, school leaders will be better able to influence values, beliefs, and underlying assumptions held by all members of the school community, with the goal of building an ethos of excellence and caring" (p. vii). The authors go on to say that a school leader's most important role is to be a culture builder who instills the values of concern for others, personal and group success, and continuous improvement. Paying attention to school culture keeps the members aware of the need to cultivate the health of the school community.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) list eight guidelines for schools to work interactively as communities. Number one on their list is "understand the culture of the school before trying to change it". Castle's educators are visionaries. They use their proactivity and creative energy to develop visions of what they want for the students and adults within the school community. Cultural elements are both their stepping stones and stumbling blocks in their journey towards their visions. For example, when they intentionally scheduled play, they were energized and creative. When play was lacking and people felt disconnected with one another, they fell into a more reactive mode that lessened their creativity and drive.

Deal (1987) notes that schools show remarkable consistency across time. Few seem to be able to explain why the cultural patterns exist or what we can do to make them different. He suggests first, to understand why the patterns are so stable and immune to change, and then set into motion ways to address the past, present, and future within individual schools. Schools are symbols. The images and beliefs that arise from schools are largely hidden from conscious view. Deal contends that the reason the frustration exists over efforts to improve, reform, or change schools and their practices is because those imposing the change are usually from outside of the culture and do not pay attention to the cultural elements that exist.

Deal explains that culture is an all-encompassing tapestry of meaning. Culture is "the way we do things around here". The ways are transmitted from generation to generation. Culture is learned. Since culture helps provide stability, certainty and predictability for its members, any kind of reform or change brings the feeling of a loss of control and havoc within the culture. Deal's solution is to put into action strategies that allow cultures to develop transition rituals, to bury and mourn what has been lost, and then to celebrate the new forms that begin to emerge. It is the matter of fusing old with new and celebrating the transformation across a community.

Castle's members were aware that they had certain ways of "doing" in their culture and were generally at peace with the traditions and rituals that were meaningful to them. However, they often strived to energize these traditions and rituals by finding additional ways to build onto what they already knew worked and what they liked. Although they were a young culture, they were already a well-established culture. Since they had the luxury of being somewhat self-selected, their cultural members were already accepting of many of the practices that were proactive and collaborative. The most important message that was spoken to new members of the culture, both silently and verbally, was that the philosophies that we hold are sacred and we will help to support you in adopting them.

Limitations

In setting out to study the culture at Castle, I was eager to include not only the positive aspects, but also the unflattering realities within the culture. In this study, it appeared that the school culture at Castle had few flaws and was close to perfection. I am skeptical that a perfect school culture could exist anywhere. My data reflected the positive images and elements that existed most likely due to my history in the culture and the somewhat protective nature that the members may have had when I was taking fieldnotes, conducting interviews, or collecting other forms of data. There are aspects within the Castle school culture that could be perceived as negatives, as there are in any organization. Human beings working closely together on a daily basis bring multiple sources of possible conflict. However, these aspects were not obvious within my data and I chose not to actively focus on this information. I did not seek out the problems in the culture.

Sackmann (1991) devotes an entire journal article to the difficulties and limitations of studying culture within organizations. She asserts that we have yet to find user-friendly methodologies that organizations can use efficiently for their own self-study. She says that there is a scarcity of empirically-based knowledge of culture and that a variety of in-depth

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methodologies are the best way of providing insight into the nature of this complex phenomena called "culture".

Making comparisons and generalizations from one cultural study to the next remains difficult. Sackmann notes that the best researchers can do in this area, even when they have "lived" in the culture, is to play the role of the detached onlooker. Sackmann does caution against limiting explanation to verbal accounts since they may be imperfect indicators of actual behavior. There must be a way to systematically cross-reference verbal information with other data sources.

Another limitation noted by Sackmann includes the differences between researchers' abilities to establish rapport, to open doors, and to obtain access to culturally sacred matters. In my study of Castle, the culturally sacred matters were not overly evident. Important information may have been withheld, socially desirable answers may have been given, or personal concerns may have overshadowed actual events. Sackmann says that some of these biases may be discovered in a long-term investigation, one that she states would take three to five years. The shorter the study, the less likely a researcher will be privy to this richer data.

Implications for Practice

There is not a cookbook that tells educators how to go about studying their own school cultures. My study fell into a similar mode that Stolp and Smith (1995) employed. They suggest breaking school cultures down into categories that educators can study and pay attention to when planning new reforms or initiating change. They recommend studying school culture by the artifacts, values, beliefs, and underlying assumptions. Schools can begin by making lists of their symbols, language, documents, rituals and traditions. They suggest having all teachers and students in the school write down (or for young children, draw) their own thoughts of their school culture. From these lists and narratives, the values and beliefs will come to the surface. Since all elements of school

culture are not visible, the authors suggest a final piece called underlying assumptions. They believe schools should look at their values and beliefs and then determine the hidden assumptions by asking the question, "What are we leaving out? What isn't here?". Paying attention to values and beliefs that are not being acted upon will help guide a culture to energetically plan to act on these overlooked elements.

Using the idea of self-analysis within a school, members of school cultures need to focus on the interrelationships between the elements and address this overlap by systematically addressing each element. In school culture, there are no surface "fixes" since all cultural elements are connected. When new initiatives are applied to schools without regard to the cultural elements that exist, it is like Teflon. They make stick temporarily to the surface, but do not have a chance of permeating the culture without the members of the culture giving their consent.

Sackmann (1991) suggests organizations using methodologies for studying their own cultures that they are comfortable with and feel will yield the most beneficial information. These may be questionnaires, participant observations, structured interviews with cultural members, group discussions, in-depth interviews, and the study of cultural symbols and artifacts.

It is important for educators to study components of their culture from an insider's perspective. It provides a sense of structural elements such as the subcultures of classrooms, and how these are linked to the whole culture. It also allows comparisons to be made across individuals within the culture to better understand the culture's purpose and work. Since schools do not have the time or energy to conduct in-depth enthnographies, the use of a variety of instruments that will uncover elements most crucial to their sustainability and their continual renewal is recommended. Any information that helps to uncover and reflect on the taken-for-granted aspects of their work life is highly valuable to the culture.

Sackmann (1991) feels that organizations should take time to perform continual cultural self-studies guided by the societal belief that "there is always room for improvement". Cultural studies are more likely to be carried out by organizations where constant improvement was a way of life for them.

The strategies Deal (1987) offers are based in renewal, not reform. He feels that school cultures can never reform due to their resiliency, however, they can review and renew themselves on a continual basis. The key to renewal is fusing the past, present and future together. Deal suggests the following actions: "(1.) Recreate the history of a school to develop a new shared vision. (2.) Articulate shared values through rituals, symbols, and artifacts. (3.) Anoint and celebrate heroes to provide tangible human examples of shared values and beliefs. (4.) Reinvigorate with rituals and ceremonies that combine learning, celebrating, and binding together of individuals. (5.) Tell good stories often. (6.) Work with the informal network of cultural players such as custodians and secretaries to provide them with encouragement and recognition" (p. 13-14).

To sum it up, Deal says, "Old practices and other losses need to be buried and commemorated. Meaningless practices and symbols need to be analyzed and revitalized. Emerging visions, dreams and hopes need to be articulated and celebrated. These are the core tasks that should occupy educational leaders for year to come" (p. 14).

Schools need to review lists of cultural elements, prioritize those that are sacred to their daily functioning and put into action step-by-step action plans to address each. These action plans should be kept simple and doable. Documentation and consensus from all members is critical for any level of success. It may begin with discussion. It may begin with team building. It may even begin in within subcultures. The main point is, that it has to begin.

Recommendations for future research

School culture can be viewed as a large umbrella that shadows a number of different topics or issues that are critical to school reform, renewal, or change efforts. This process of studying specific elements within individual schools can be taken many steps further in other studies:

1. Another investigator may apply the same elements from my study to examine culture in an entire school division.

2. Another option is to study individual classroom cultures and how they relate to whole school cultures.

3. Similar research could be replicated in other schools and comparisons drawn across schools.

4. The connection between school culture and the size of a school may provide insight into school culture and the initiation of school renewal.

5. School culture and the transition of one principal to the next could yield interesting findings related to leadership and culture.

6. Urban and rural school cultures could be studied to examine similarities and differences. Do all schools, because they are schools, have certain cultural elements?

7. The effects of externally imposed changes or regulations and school cultures could be investigated.

8. School culture and the transient or stable nature of staff may assist the educational community in discovering strategies in how to continually rejuvenate or reinvent schools as staffs change or stay the same.

Final thoughts

Castle's story could not be told without mention of their unique and dynamic culture. Their story is their culture. Castle's school culture may be rare or fairly typical of

elementary schools across our nation. Personally, I do not feel that a comparison would be very beneficial to its members. The importance of this study was to determine the specific cultural elements that existed and to verify the sub-elements within each cultural element. These sub-elements explain the how's and why's of the culture's inner workings. Others can learn from Castle's culture. This study was intended not only for the benefit of Castle's members, but also for the benefit of the education community in seeing how one school was analyzed and how the elements of the school were consistent and related. Castle could be viewed as a tool to reach a greater understanding about school culture. Castle's cultural elements celebrate an individual school that focuses on human circumstances: care, collaboration, and relationships.

This casestudy is a view into one school's culture. It is not intended to explain how other culture's could "become" Castle, rather, it allows a preview of specific elements that exist and held up one school as an example of what is positive and possible.

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APPENDIX A:

Children's Writing Prompts

5th grade writing prompts

Since you will be leaving Castle at the end of this school year, try to recall your fondest memories from not only this year but years gone by and write about several of them in descriptive detail. Provide reasons why these memories are good ones.

What have been the best aspects about being at Castle Elementary? What have been aspects that you would have liked to change? Write a compare and contrast essay describing in rich detail these aspects.

If you were to be interviewed by a reporter about Castle Elementary school, what would you tell him or her? about what you have learned? about your teachers? about special events? about a favorite memory? about how you feel about your school? about all of the above? Write several descriptive paragraphs describing your school.

APPENDIX B:

Sample Faculty Meeting agenda

Castle Elementary   **Faculty Meeting Agenda**   **March 18, 1999**

For Discussion
1.   Supply Orders --Kurt
2.   Earth Day -- Character Family
3.   Patti's messages
4.   Calendar Committee
5.   Jone's Mill Elem. Visitors -- March 27
6.   Phonemic Workshop -- need volunteers!
7.   Math event at Math Emporium
8.   Health and Nutrition Fair
9.   Basic School Institute
10. Could 3rd and 5th stay for 5 mins. To talk about SOL testing dates?
11. Other
12. If time we will discuss the following; if not we will hold for a future meeting:
Less homework on PTA-sponsored event evenings; our reading"crisis;" portfolios to pass to next grade.

For Your Information (We will discuss only if you have questions.):
1.   Purchase orders using the CITE instructional money must be in by April 27 or you will lose that money.
2.   Ann Pound asks for your help! She has some student teachers who have a break on Mar. 26 and 27. She would like for them to come a spend a day here. We need at least one volunteer for each grade level on each day to make room for these students. They can spend the day helping you in any way you need, as well as observing. Please let me know by tomorrow morning (Thurs.) if you agree to have a student visit in your room. Ann says she wants these student teachers to see the great thing we do here at Castle!

Calendar:
March
19….Castle School Fair, 6:30-8:00
20….Conference Day --use for conferences or comp. Time
23….Gifted Testing for some 2-5 students
24….Report cards go home
24….Collaborative Planning Early Release Day, 1 p.m.
25….Fourth grade administrating writing predictor
25….CITE , 3:40, Library
26….Health and Nutrition Fair -- details coming later
26….GIRDLE, 3:40, Library
April
1….Grades 3-5 attending concert -- 9:20-11:15
1….Second grade field trip --10:00-2:00
1….Faculty Meeting, 3:40
2….Outreach person in 5th grade in a.m.
2….PTA Board Meeting, 7 p.m., Conference Room
3….Fun Friday!!
6&7….Outreach visits to Wyatt Court and Wade Forest; Easter Bunny will go along!
8….Family Planning Meetings
9….Collaborative Planning Early Release Day, 1 p.m.
10-13….Spring Break!!
Major dates April-June
April 20….Fourth grade music program, afternoon and evening
April 21-May….SOL Assessments in grades 3 and 5 during some of these days
April 23-24….Fourth grade trip
April 25….PTA Craft Show and Brunswick Stew Sale, 9:00-3:00
May 4….Family Celebration Day (Note: This is a change from May 1.)
May 14….PTA Variety Show--evening
May 15….Area Schools Bicentennial Concert --Coliseum --7:30 p.m.
          (Our fifth graders will be participating. They will practice on May 14 and 15 during the day.)
May 20-22….Safety Patrol Trip
May 29….Field Day …………………………..June 12….Last day of school!!!!!!!!!!

APPENDIX C:

Extra Responsibilities List

Castle Elementary School

Extra Responsibilities by Family Priority
1997-98

Family #1 School as Community Priority (Blue)

- Family Rep
- Family Historian
- Partnership committee
- Adopt a School Coordinator
- Home School Communications Network
- PTA reps
- Photography committee
- Volunteer Appreciation reception
- Showcase
- Variety Show committee
- Parent Involvement
- At-risk focus

Family #2 Coherent Curriculum Priority (Red)

- Family Rep
- Family Historian
- Family Fair (Academic Fair)
- Subject Area Reps: Social Studies, Science, Language Arts/Reading, Math, Computers
- Reading Month Coordinators
- Field Day Coordinator
- Young Authors Coordinator
- SCA

Family #3 Climate for Learning Priority (Yellow)
- Family Rep
- Family Historian
- History Month (Black History, Fine Arts coordinators)
- Safety & CPR
- Care and Share

- Secret Pals

Family #4 Commitment to Character Priority (Green)

- Family Rep
- Family Historian
- Guidance Advisory
- Earth Day
- Christmas Store
- United Way

Other special duties:

- Staff Development Committee
- CITE
- Child Study Committee
- Technology Committee
- OM Faculty Sponsor
- Safety Patrol Sponsors
- Bass Busters
- Superintendent's Advisory Council
- Principal designee
- Central Supply Coordinators

APPENDIX D:

Documents that Connect

1. Last day of school celebration flyer

2. Secret Pals

3. Social committee plans for the school year

4. Holiday breakfast flyer

Castle's Staff Celebration

The Last Day!!!!
Tuesday, June 9, 1998

Morning Treat: Bagels/Spread in lounge
Afternoon Treat: Late Lunch in the Cafeteria
After School 3:00 to 5:00

Say Goodbye and wish everyone A
WONDERFUL SUMMER!

Dear Friends:

It's time to sign up for SECRET PALS!!!! Where else can you get so much entertainment for so little time and money? It's great fun to sneak around and surprise people, especially your co-workers. You don't have to spend a lot of money --- even simple treats are appreciated, and you know how much a well-timed surprise can make your day if it's ever happened to you. SO, DON'T DELAY! Get a sign-up sheet from Rose's box, fill it out, and put it back in the folder by next WEDNESDAY. We will draw names then.

Social Committee Plans for 1997-98

Fun Fridays:

-First Friday designated as Fun Friday, we dress down for the day and then get together after school at someone's house or at a restaurant.
-Each Friday morning at about 7:30 a.m. everyone is invited to meet at the Big Easy Coffee House for coffee, tea, breakfast, and lots of giggling. It's a great way to begin the day! See you there!

Goody Days:

Once a month a faculty meeting(1ˢᵗ Wednesday) the following people will prepare goodies (not elaborate) for everyone to enjoy!

November: Ray, David, Sheri, Sue, Roberta, Mary, Barbara, and Lisa
January: 5th grade and Mark
February: 4th grade and Teresa
March: 3rd grade and Mary
April: 2nd grade and Ann
May: 1st grade and Serena
June: Kindergarten and Carrie

Holiday Parties:

Party for staff and guest at someone's house on Saturday, 12/6.*
        (There is no address at the present time, however, if you would like to host this party for about 60 people talk to ROSE.)
In addition to this party we will have a Holiday Staff Breakfast, on 12/19* at 8:00am., in the library, w/**optional** $10 gift certificate exchange. This breakfast will be potluck. The committee will provide juice and coffee.

Dues:

As always the committee wants to be available to help in times of need to everyone here at Castle. We depend on your dues to help provide some of these needs. The dues this year are as last year, $16 for full time faculty and staff and $8 for part-time and instructional aides. Rose will be collecting this money. If you write a check make it payable to Rose.

*These dates are still tentative, let Rose know if they are not good for you.

Social Committee: Martha, Ellen, Carrie, Joan, Gail, Barbara, Mary, Co-chairs: Debbie and Rose

Castle Holiday Breakfast

December 13th, 8:30 - 10:45
(Hosted by the CES Safety Patrol)

Mark December 13th on your calendar right away for an experience you won't want to miss! Members of the Safety Patrol invite all Castle families and friends to join them for a warm and festive holiday breakfast. SANTA CLAUS will be the guest of honor, and children will have the opportunity to sit on Santa's lap to whisper their hopes for presents. For $2.50 you may have a picture taken by a photographer. Come any time between 8:30 and 10:45.

Prices for the breakfast are $3.50 for adults, $3.00 for children (under 2 years old are free). If a family has more than 2 paying children, the price for the 3rd child, etc., is $1.50. WE NEED TO KNOW IF YOU ARE COMING, so please fill out the reservation form below and have your child return it to his/her teacher by NOVEMBER 21st. We'll send home a confirmation of your reservation with your child.

_____
RESERVATION FORM   HOLIDAY BREAKFAST
(please return by November 21st)

Please fill in bellow the number attending. You may pay at the door or you may prepay with this form by sending cash or a check made out to Castle Elementary. Make sure that your money and slip are in an envelope or attached together so they don't get separated. Prepayment will save you from waiting in line to pay breakfast morning - simply give your name or plaid confirmation receipt at the door.

_____ Number of adults attending   x $3.50 = _____

_____ Number of children attending   x $3.00   = _____

_____ Number of children (third or more)   x $1.50   =_____

I chose to prepay now: _____Cash _____Check   Total   = _____

NAME: _____

PHONE: _____ CHILD: _____ TEACHER:
_____
_____

Your child is safer because of the hard work and dedication of the safety patrol. Please support this fund raiser which gives us all an opportunity to come together to celebrate the holiday season. If you are unable to attend the breakfast, donations to the safety patrol fund would be most appreciated.

Thank you!

APPENDIX E:

Silly song

(To the Tune of "Did You Ever See a Lassie?")

Did you ever see a faculty, a faculty, a faculty,
Did you ever see a faculty as contented as us?
We're happy, we're cheerful,
Good-humored and genial,
And we never, never never, no never do we fuss!

Have you ever seen a staff, a staff, as staff
Have you ever seen a staff so merry and bright?
Our demeanor is joyful,
Our laughter irrepressible,
And we never, never, no never do we fight!

Have you ever found a school, a school, a school,
Have you ever found a school where the people are so fine?
There's little complaining,
But we're not restraining --
And you'll never, never never no never hear us whine!

APPENDIX F:

Getting to Know Your Colleagues

Getting to Know Your Colleagues

What do you know about your colleagues? See how many blanks you can fill in before asking anyone. Then, begin asking around. Try to guess. Only rule is that you can't say, "what one is you?"

_____ 1. Who spent time this summer touring the West with family and no one ever complained?

_____2. Who has the <u>unfortunate</u> background of having a Bachelors from William and Mary and a Masters from UVA?

_____3. Who will become a grandmother this year?

_____4. Who finished writing a dissertation this summer and will defend it in a few weeks?

_____5. Whose spouse will be teaching in middle school this year? (Hint: She gave a whole new meaning to "pump you up" last year.)

_____6. Who just returned from a fun-filled week in New York? (Hint: This should hold her over for a few months.)

_____7. Who spent time aerobicizing with friends in Roanoke before getting started back with school?

_____8. Who always loves to spend time with her grandchildren in Georgia? (Hint: She's all ours this year)

_____9. Who drove cross country with her parents this summer?

_____10. Who promised to come in one hour each day this summer to get organized and came in only one hour the whole summer?

_____11. Whose real name is Tammy?

_____12. Who spent the summer as a lifeguard and swimming teacher?

_____13. Whose son returns to town to teach this year?

_____14. Who attended at least one auction this summer looking for American Fostoria pattern glassware?

_____15. Who student taught with Jackie?

_____16. Who met her future husband on the bus?

_____17. Whose husband pulled down his pants at their wedding reception?

_____18. Who once said tot he superintendent, "Hi, I'm ___ ___ and you would be?"

_____ 19. Who went to see her uncle who has a wooden leg (his third one) sing with a gospel group this summer?

_____ 20. Whose son's acting career continued this summer with an advertisement spot?

_____21. Who wanted to take the daughter to Graceland for the Elvis memorial this year, but instead chose to stay home and wait for Elvis to call on a special telephone?

_____22. Whose daughter once refused (and I mean refused!) to dance in a dance recital?

_____23. Who has strangers who want to accompany her into the examination room when she goes to see the doctor?

_____ 24. Who was once nabbed for stealing flowers from a roadside garden? (Hint: This same person once had a goat eat the license plate from her car. Second hint: This same person rear-ended a nice, very reasonable man because she was laughing so hard at West Virginia jokes on the radio.)

_____ 25. Who hides her telephone under the sofa?

_____ 26. Who has taught in more schools in the County than any other Castle faculty member?

_____ 27. Who once made a superintendent walk in yellow paint for the sake of inclusion?

_____ 28. Who sold her house and is on the look-out for an new one?

_____ 29. Whose dog Misty made her owner very nervous last year?

_____ 30. Who found on her desk this summer a framed picture and special note from a dear friend?

_____ 31. Whose Minnesota background makes her non-stoppable in the winter?

_____ 32. Who has a cat (Wally) that is the descendant of the Smith's cat (Moki)?

_____ 33. Who would have a difficult time right now doing some of the stunts she perfected as cheerleader at CHS?

_____ 34. Who perfected the 360 way of crossing RT. 20 last winter?

_____35. Who is a "Real Man"?

APPENDIX G:

Sample weekly bulletins

Castle Weekly Bulletin _____

Week of : September 15-21

Thought of the Week: Not he/she who has much is rich, but she/she who gives much. - - Erich Fromm

Happy Birthday to: Joan Edwards on 17th, Ann Fisher on 18th, and Jay Stone on 19th.

Bus Duty: Ricker and Jones (Someone asked that I make this larger!)

On the Calendar:

Monday	Adopt-a-School Orientation on stage; 8-12
	Conversation with Tammy Olin and Melissa Moore, 3:40, Library
	Scout Night, 7 p.m., Cafeteria
Tuesday	Dental Screening, K-5
Wednesday	Safety Patrol Fund-raiser, Baskin Robbins, 4-8
Thursday	PTA Meeting, 7 p.m., Cafeteria, Program: Basic School

Resources of Interest:

Information about the following resources is on the mailbox bulletin board:
1. Operation Chemistry -- workshops for grades 4-8 on SOLs
2. OUTREACH -- links SU international students with children who speak the same language

Announcements:

1. As most of you have heard by now, Karen Sloan's husband passed away this morning. Karen is an aide at Memorial Ave. and has been involved in PTA over the years. The family has requested that no flowers or food be sent at this time until they can make arrangements. We will keep you informed.
2. Also, because Karen is Sam's neighbor, we decided to move our get-together this afternoon to Debbie's house. Come by the office if you need directions. I hope lots of us can be there to celebrate our new school year!
3. Wendy Barnes is our United Way representative. Since we are not having a faculty meeting for a while, she will be placing information about United Way in your boxes next week. Please give as you feel you can; United Way is certainly a worthwhile organization.
4. The Climate for Learning Family will meet Wed., at 8 a.m., in Martha's room.
5. Please let me know of your meeting and notes, etc. from families. I would like to attend all I can.
6. A reminder to staff that you should use Internet in an appropriate, professional way. Remember, too, that sites you have visited and images you have pulled up on the screen can be accessed. So, be careful! Big Brother could be watching you!
7. A reminder and clarification: A CSMP Workshop is being presented on Sept. 23-24 at the farmhouse from 8:30-4:00 each day. Lunch will be provided on Sept. 23;

participants are on their own for lunch on Sept. 24. This workshop is actually for anyone in any grade who is interested, not just K-3. So if you are interested, see me ASAP.

8. Welcome to Jenny Edwards, our new part-time special ed. teacher. She is a t Springdale for the other half of her day. She will be working with kindergarten and second grade. We're glad she's here!

9. Remember that Tammy Olin and Melissa Moore will be her on Monday at 3:40 in the library to talk about how they van best help us in our quest to meet the needs of a diverse group of learners. Bring lots of ideas on how you would like to see them work with us.

10. A concern has recently been raised about the safety issue around children having snack on the playground. Please be sure that you have students sit or stand quietly while eating snack to deal with the hazard of choking. Also, please be sure that litter is properly controlled.

11. I will be talking with students on the intercom soon about being respectful of the work on the walls in the hallway. Please encourage them to look but don't touch!

12. The copy paper situation is not one that we should over-react to. The allotment of paper that we have been given is about the same as last year. Just be mindful that we should always use paper when necessary. Let's be good stewards and save some trees! Oh, and please don't hoard paper in your closets; we'll provide paper if you need it!

13. We had a great meeting yesterday on the Outdoor Classroom idea. Lots of super ideas were shared about how we could use that area. If you want to be involved, see me. Our next meeting is scheduled for Sept. 25 at 3:45.

14. We also have a group who has begun exploring a grant to deal with our at-risk students. We would love to have input from others. I know that Sylvia is interested. We already have some great ideas, but would love to have more. If you are interested, please let me know!

Castle Weekly Bulletin

Week of : February 23 - March 1

Thought of the Week: Destiny is no matter of chance. It is a matter of choice: It is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved. --William Hennings Bryan

Happy Birthday to: Jennifer King on Feb. 26

Bus Duty: Charleston and Ricker

On the Calendar:

Tuesday	Chocolate Day
	Fifth grade field trip, 9:15-11:45
Wednesday	CITE, 3:45, Library
Thursday	Group (class) pictures
	GIRDLE, 3:40, Library
Friday	BMS staff here to meet with 5th graders, 2:00, Cafeteria

Resources of Interest:

Information about the following resources is on the mailbox bulletin board:

1. Details about some excellent science resource materials available from the Extension Office are on the front counter. I think you might be interested!

Announcements:

1. Supervisor of Special Education will be here on Thursday (26th) to visit around the school and talk about special ed.
2. Sue Stuart is in the Hospital with pneumonia. She's being given oxygen and antibiotics. She is in Room 424. At first, she was told she would go home today, but they have decided to keep her another day.
3. Tammy Olin will be here on the March 24 early release collaborative planning day. She would love to be involved in collaborating with you. Put a note in her box if you would like to have her come to your meeting. Otherwise, she will float around.
4. The College of Human Resources and Education is accepting nominations for consideration for the 1998 Excellence in Education Conference to he held in November. Nominations must be postmarked by March 31. We have a lot of great programs going on. If you are interested in nominating a program, see, and we will work together to get the forms filled out. Let's get some recognition for the great things we're doing!!
5. I will be serving as a representative of the principals on the Calendar Committee for next year. Please let me know your thoughts so I can share them.
6. Sample versions of the School Performance Report Card from the State Dept. of Ed. are on the counter office. They are interesting; you might want to see how we will be required to provide the public information about our school next year!
7. If you have suggestions on modifying the STAR Grant process, please send them to Paul Root at the SBO.
8. Occasionally we need a child's car seat when we are bringing parents in for meetings. If you have one that you could lend or give us, please let Katie know. Thanks!

APPENDIX H:

Superintendent's advisory meeting notes

Superintendent's Advisory Council Meeting---March 10, 1998

BUDGET—Money ($475,000) for technology is gone by the way of the car tax. This was money to come from the state. We might have the resources to add to technology, but it might only be to upgrade what we now have rather than to add new technology.

Locally—the 8 cents tax increase was advertised in the county. The Board of Supervisors was glad to advertise this amount, even though many supervisors would not vote for such an increase. We asked for 5.2 million and will probably get 3.2 million.

The state might add money for school construction then the county could disperse the money in a different way from the original purpose.

INSURANCE—The insurance committee met with a representative of Carilion. At first, the committee was told that Carilion would not accept the other insurance carrier as of October, 1998. After a lot of discussion, they extended it to October, 1999. A decision for after this time will be made later.

The committee also met with the president of the other insurance carrier. He told that that they would add people to work with us. They are also trying to increase service for mailing of pharmaceuticals.

When more decisions are made, the committee will let us know by way of a letter explaining what is happening.

TRANSPORTING CHILDREN IN CARS- As of now there is no policy about where children should sit if they are being transported in a county vehicle or in your own car. The board is looking at the issue of transporting children. There is a liability issue whenever taking a child home in a vehicle other than the schoolbus. A person should use his best judgement as to where the child should sit. Think about where he will be safest.

AT-RISK GRANT—The intent is to continue the at-risk grants next year. Any school having a grant will be asked for an interim report to make sure the grants are successful. They are not 100% sure of budget, but as of now, the grants are protected.

SICK LEAVE-- The problem of the working of the sickleave policy was discussed. It was pointed out that sickleave days appeared to be restricted

to using them for certain things—ex. "A maximum of two days per contract year may be used for necessary appointments with physicians or dentists." Again, the superintendent recommended that common sense be used by both the employee and the school administrator. There should be waivers for special cases. Individual cases are always different and each case should be treated individually. The language of the policy book will be looked at later.

NEXT MONTH—Next month we are meeting at the warehouse for a special tour. Tune in then for the next episode in the exciting life of a SAC representative.

Thanks,
 Sue
SAC Rep.

APPENDIX I:

Basic School family meeting minutes

MINUTES OF BASIC SCHOOL FAMILY MEETINGS

FAMILY: REP MEETING   DATE: OCTOBER 8, 1997

ATTENDING: PRINCIPAL, SUE, BETH, ANDY, PATTI

Some suggested items for agenda:
- Plans for family-wide activities--------- Report from family reps. Meeting
- Plans for school-wide activities-------- Discussion of extra responsibilities

MINUTES:

| Topic/Issue:	Action:	Person Responsible:
Card stock copies of SOL's; do we need these?	Principal has some copies; will put a note in weekly bulletin for those teachers who do not have completed sets.	principal
University theatre plays for Black History month; cost is $4 per child.	Grade levels need to decide if they are interested and let Martha know by next Wed.	Grade level reps. & Martha
Basic School Fair in March; lobby & library, in gym, cafeteria,not in classrooms	Community: A sense of time & space, membership in groups & institutions Curriculum: Use of symbols; Life Cycles Climate: Response to the Aesthetic, connectedness with nature. Character: Living with purpose; Producing & consuming. (each team can contribute to any or all commonalities, each child should be represented at least once (min. of 2, max of 4), curriculum family will get more info. to us.	Everyone!
Food/reception for Basic School Fair	School & community in charge	School & community family
Family assignments for support staff	Patti made a draft ; principal will write a letter inviting them to participate	Patti, principal
Early release/family planning/lunch	Principal will discuss at faculty meeting to decide which early release	Principal
School Renewal	Think of how families will fit in these categories for accreditation purposes	Family reps & families
KEEP EVERYTHING IN ARCHIVES!!!	This will be documentation for renewal.	EVERYONE!!

APPENDIX J:

1. GIRDLE flyer

2. Parent Place announcement

Book Drive!

Parents as Partners is collecting books for a parent resource library to be located in The Parent's Place, off of the Cafeteria. We want to provide a convenient place for parents to check out materials. We will gladly accept donations of children's books and any books that may be of interest to parents - especially books related to parenting, children's needs, education, etc.

There will be a collection box behind the desk in the main office.

Don't forget the Family Reading Celebration at the Valley Mall on Saturday, February 21!
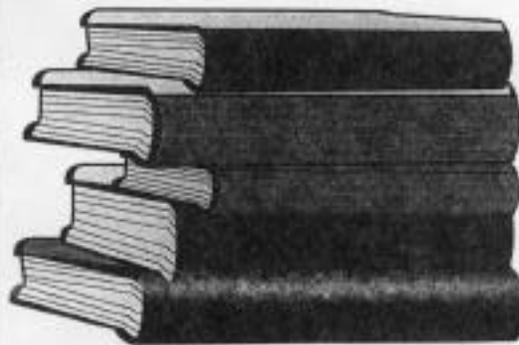
GIRDLE

MANDATORY

PRICELESS

Perfect.

GOOD FOR AMERICA

THURSDAY
MAY 7
3:40 - 4:40
POPCORN &
CHOCOLATE
LIBRARY

TOPICS TO CYNDI
THIS AFTERNOON!!

VITA

Kenna M. Colley

513 College View Drive
Blacksburg, Virginia 24060
Work (540) 831-5736
Home (540) 951-1559
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Employment

1996-present	Training and Technical Assistance Center (T/TAC) for Professionals Serving Students with Disabilities at Radford University Radford, Virginia 24142 Three years as Project Coordinator
1990-1996	Montgomery County Public Schools, VA Six years as special educator, elementary & middle
1986-1990	St. Mary's County Public Schools, MD Four years as special educator, middle

Education

B.S., Special Education, SUNY Geneseo, 1986.

M.S., Severe Disabilities, The Johns Hopkins University, 1991.

C.A.G.S., Teaching and Learning, 1998.

Certifications

Learning Disabilities
Mental Retardation
Severe Disabilities