

**EXAMINING
COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL REFORM
IN SCHOOLS
SERVING NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITIES:
CASE STUDY REPORT**

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INTRODUCTION

This document summarizes data collected from four school sites in the McREL's Regional Laboratory Central Region that serve a high percentage of Native American students. These sites are part of a larger cross-laboratory project among three laboratories: McREL, SEDL, and WestEd which is examining the ability of seven such schools to adapt existing school reform models to their local needs. All sites are participating in the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSR D) program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education.

This cross-laboratory project began in the Spring of 1999 and will be concluded in December 2000. A collaborative process was initiated to identify and solicit the participation of schools located in or within close proximity to tribal communities. The primary selection criteria for inclusion in the study were that the school had been awarded CSR D funding and that a substantial portion of the student population was Native American.

The participating schools from McREL's region ranged in size from 65 students to 631 students and included pre-kindergarten, elementary, and secondary grade levels. Three of the schools served predominately Native American student populations (54%–100%). One school, a charter school, serves a student population that included 26 percent Native American students. Due to their participation in the CSR D program, each site was provided a minimum of \$50,000 in financial support to engage in a comprehensive change process facilitated by the adoption of a comprehensive school reform model. Overall, this case study is designed to investigate the processes involved in selecting school reform models, identify the challenges and successes associated with school reform planning, and describe the influences of tribal cultural and perspectives on implementing successful comprehensive school reforms.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Site Selection

The Regional Educational Laboratory directors contacted the State Education Agency CSR D Coordinators and key officials at the Bureau of Indian Affairs to assist in identifying and selecting schools for inclusion in this study. The CSR D coordinators actively participated in the selection of all seven schools.

Once the schools initially selected for participation were contacted, district superintendents, principals, and CSR D site facilitators became involved in the decision to participate. Letters that described the research project and introduced the researchers who would conduct site visits and generate the data reports were sent to each of the sites. Along with the research description was an explanation of the study timeline, the expectations of sites in terms of data collection methods, and a list of site documents that needed to be made available to researchers. Because of the nature of this study, it was important for schools leaders to be receptive to the on-site data collection process. Two schools were selected in the McREL region in September, and two additional sites were selected in March 2000.

Following an agreement to participate, administrators at each of the schools were provided a set of data collection instruments and a site visit date was mutually established. Particular care was taken to schedule visits when key school-community activities or events would be underway.

Sample

The four sites in McREL’s region are as follows. Pierre Indian Learning Center is a Bureau of Indian Affairs off-reservation boarding school located in Pierre, South Dakota. Southwest Open High School is a public charter alternative secondary school in the Montezuma-Cortez RE-1 School District, located in Cortez, Colorado. Four Winds Community High School and the Tate Topa Tribal School are located on the Spirit Lake Reservation in North Dakota. Located in Macy, Nebraska, the UmonHon Nation Public School is a one-school district that serves students in grades pre-K–12.

The demographics of four schools included in the study from McREL’s region are shown in Table 1. These demographics were summarized from the CSRD applications, site documents, district accountability reports, and 1995–96 Common Core of Data available from National Center of Education Statistics.

Table 1
Demographics of Schools in Study

School Name	Size	School Context	Median Household Income	% School-age in Poverty	% White	% Am. Indian	% Hispanic	% Black	% Asian
1. UmonHon	470	Pre K-12		100%		100%			
Macy, NE	2500	Rural	\$23,804						
2. Four Winds	164	9-12		100%		100%			
Tate Topa	486	K-8							
Ft. Totten, ND	2000	Rural	\$11,105		2%	98%			
3. Southwest Open School	155	6-12		60%	58%	26%	16%	0%	0%
Cortez, CO	150	Rural	\$22,125		80%	10%	9%	>1%	>1%
4. Pierre Indian Learning Center	250	1-8		100%		100%			
Pierre, SD	15000	Small Town	\$31,448			100%			

Notes: NA = Information Not Available, FRL = Eligible for the federal free and reduced lunch program.

Some percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding. These demographics were taken from the 1995–96 Common Core of Data available from NCES.

Site Visits

The data in this report often include the words of the people involved in the schools. We have tried to honor the spirit and meaning of what the site participants shared with us over the past year about their, ideas and visions about their children, their school community, the reform programs implemented, and personal experiences. Thus, the case studies to be reported in the cross-laboratory study report are actually the stories of the various life experiences and views of the people who learn

and work at the schools and in the communities. As a result of the initial visit to each site, the primary types of data, specific data sources, and the broad research questions were refined in view of data availability and local conditions. Overall, the two site visits to each of the four Central Region sites made between November 1999 and May 2000 included:

- Introduction of the on-site researchers to key school officials;
- Collection of baseline and demographic information;
- Collection of information about model developers and their training and technical support activities;
- Collection of data on community organizations and agencies;
- Observation of a variety of family and community involvement activities related to social, cultural, and academic interactions among participants;
- Collection of data related to second-year training activities, reform program modifications, school-community events, update on administration, staff, students, and family data, and data on the overall progress of the local reform initiative; and
- Identification of accomplishments to date.

Data Collection

The major data collection methods used include documents review, formal and informal interviews, and participatory and non-participatory observations. In most cases, key data were collected from multiple sources to assure the validity and reliability of the information obtained.

Baseline data collected at each site included demographic information about the school, district and community, and the initial impressions of local staff and community members about the purpose and nature of the reform effort now underway.

Informal and formal interviews were conducted to describe the history of the school and community and to obtain a brief overview of their school improvement and/or comprehensive reform plans. The interviewees included, state CSRD coordinators, local CSRD program facilitators, principals, superintendents, district administrators, school board members, community members, tribal agency staff, parents, students, counselors, and teachers. As appropriate, various informants gave their initial and ongoing impressions of the CSRD initiative, described the local education context, and professional development and technical support needs. In total, over 70 participants were formally interviewed at least once, and 20 of these were interviewed during both sites visits. Model developers, trainers, and researchers working with staff and administration in each site were interviewed at least once in-person, or by phone or electronic communication. Developers were notified of each site visit in advance, to allow them to prepare local staff or participate in person.

Printed materials and documents were collected from district and school administrators, teachers, language and culture program staff, model developers, and tribal agencies. These materials included school calendars, event flyers, program brochures, CSRD applications, school improvement plans, standardized test scores, model developer evaluations, and local self-assessment documents.

Observations were made of family-school-community activities and events such as science fairs, back-to-school nights, pow wows, graduation ceremonies, college career fair, school board meetings, a buffalo hunt expedition, performing arts by students, day care programs, and sports events. Observations of the teaching and learning interactions in core subject classrooms, arts classes, library work, and vocational classrooms were also made.

The data sources and related information associated with the four major research questions for the study are listed in Table 2. The data collection method is also noted and the interview protocols are provided in Appendix A.

Table 2
Data Sources, Data, and Instruments

Data source	Information	Instrument
<i>Question 1: What are the major contextual factors that might influence outcomes?</i>		
Review CSRD applications	Contextual history of school community, current and past socio- cultural and economic demographics School reform/Leadership roles Identified needs/how model addresses needs	Document analysis; Coding form Case study write up
School principal School CSRD site coordinator Teachers Cultural Program staff	Contextual history of school community Match school goals, social, emotional, cultural, academic needs w/model Creating a fit between model, culture, academics Role of tribal community/culture in school reform Tribal community/culture influence operation and culture of school Fit reform with tribal community context Leadership roles/key people in reform Relationship among stakeholder groups/school Resources available/addresses needs Story of school reform	Interview Observation
District staff (superintendent and director of curriculum and instruction)	Support systems to sustain reform Contextual history of school reform efforts in district	Interview

Data source	Information	Instrument
<i>Question 2: What school-wide reform model was chosen by the school and why?</i>		
Review CSRD applications	Rationale for CSRD funding and the academic needs of students for the model selected Model fit w/ school community initiatives Identified needs/how model will address them Stakeholder /Leadership roles	Document analysis Coding form; Case study summary write up
School principal School CSRD site coordinator Teachers Cultural program staff	Selection process Fit w/ school-wide initiatives Stakeholder roles/goals/concerns w/ model Role in the reform model selection Appropriate model for students/teachers Identified needs/cultural and academic Model fits needs of school/community/students Model fit w/ tribal context/issues/concerns Development/Implementation reform plan Status of school-defined education reform plan. Rationale for selection (student needs)	Interview Observation
District staff (superintendent and director of curriculum and instruction)	Status of complex education reform in district Role in reform model selection Plans to evaluate reform /plans to sustain it Support systems for reform plans	Interview
<i>Question 3: What did the model developer and school do to address the Native American context?</i>		
Review documentation and products related to reform plan development and implementation *	Variety of roles of the model developers to support the implementation of the reform model	Document analysis Coding form Case study summary write up
School principal School CSRD coordinator Teachers Cultural program staff	Relationship with model developers Adapt model in terms of cultural context Adaptation made in training/tech support due to cultural context Fit between model and tribal context Challenges presented by tribal culture in reform Reform program builds on strengths/resources of community	Interview Observation

Data source	Information	Instrument
Model developers	Assess situation when model enters school Relationship with school staff and administrators Adapt model in terms of cultural context Adaptation made in training/tech support due to cultural context Fit between model and tribal context Challenges presented by tribal culture in reform	Interview Observation
<i>Question 4 What has the school accomplished since beginning work on this initiative based on stakeholder perspectives?</i>		
Review documentation and products related to reform plan development and implementation *	Contain information about the process of implementing school reform plans, i.e., training tech support, curriculum, instruction, assessments, more family involvement in the design and implementation of reform plan.	Document analysis Coding form; Case study summary write up
School principal School CSRD coordinator Teachers Cultural program staff	Training and technical support provided Changes in curriculum, instruction, assessment Changes in family involvement Evaluation/assessment process for reform plan Indicators of progress/impact on students Perception of model being appropriate so far District support for integrating culture in reform	Interview Observation
Model Developers	Assess student response/progress to model Assess school's progress compared with others Indicators of progress/impact on students Factors influencing reform model specific to this school, i.e., tribal culture, language and tribal community context	Interview Observation

*Notes. Model training materials, activity and event flyers, handouts, calendars, lesson plans, newsletters, reform plan, strategic action plans, etc.

Data Analysis

Analysis of the data collected at each site consisted of constructing a detailed description of the local context and activities before and after the comprehensive school reform program was initiated. Placing each school in its larger context of tribal systems, educational systems, and community settings was seen as essential to understanding each site as a unique story of reform.

Five forms of data analysis and interpretation were used in this case study so that informants' voices, first-hand experiences, and visions could be realistically and authentically represented in the best contextual sense. As advocated by Stake (1995) and Creswell (1998) for case-study analysis, these included (1) categorical aggregation of a collection of instances from data from which issue-relevant meanings emerge; (2) direct interpretation by examining a single instance and drawing

meaning from it without looking for multiple instances; (3) establishing patterns based on the interrelatedness between and among categories that emerge from the data; (4) developing naturalistic generalizations that suggest lessons learned from the case to might apply to other similar populations or situations; and (5) creating site descriptions that provide a detailed examination of all aspects and facts about the site, key players, and activities.

Procedures for Verification

Qualitative research procedures and standards for verification used in this study were drawn from the collective perspectives of a variety of researchers (Eisner 1991; Wolcott 1994; Stake 1995); Howe and Eisenhart 1990; LeCompte and Goertz 1982; Lincoln and Guba 1985). Extensive verification procedures were followed in the case study that prioritized the important question, “Do we have it right?” Two procedural concepts were used to guide this process: triangulation and member checking. Triangulation of information involved a search for the convergence of information from multiple perspectives. The process for interpreting research participants’ stories about the school, community, students, and their personal views, ideas, and experiences was to spend enough time in the field to understand the complexity of the school and community and the stakeholders involved.

Several primary participants from the school community were provided rough drafts of the data report to check for accuracy of recording and interpretation. Additionally, throughout the data analysis process, researchers checked in with the school and community to obtain clarification of information, events, or issues that was considered key to describing the experiences of the local site.

ORGANIZATION OF SITE DATA

In each of the four site data summaries that follow, the information collected is organized around the four major research questions being addressed by the cross-laboratory study. In each site data report, the headings provided indicate the topic of the information collected, and should not be viewed as sections of an integrated case study report. Rather, they label the key information collected on-site in the Central Region that will be used to develop a multi-site perspective about the use of comprehensive school reform models in locations that serve significant Native American student populations.

SITE 1 DATA: PIERRE INDIAN LEARNING CENTER PIERRE, SOUTH DAKOTA

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT....

Center Overview

Mission and Philosophy. Pierre Indian Learning Center's (PILC) vision reveals the strong convictions of its staff and administration to provide a positive and nurturing learning environment and conveys the essence of this school.

We are a community that is student driven. A community where students can achieve success and be recognized by staff and their peers. A community where curriculum is based on student needs; where academic and residential curriculum is written by the staff for their students.

Therapeutic. The teachers, residential staff, and administrators have worked diligently and passionately to stand on the merits of their vision for PILC through the development of a therapeutic residential model that began in 1994. The Therapeutic Residential model evolved over the next six years into a highly structured program covering alcohol, drug, and gang intervention, communication skills, decision-making, cultural awareness, and life skills. After-school curriculum was developed that included group and individual counseling sessions, horse riding, ropes challenge course, paintball, golf, bicycling, skiing, hiking, and other therapeutic activities. The result is a pervasive environment that demonstrates a "strong sense of community" based on "caring and nurturing relationships" between and among staff and students. With the guidance of an "assiduously committed" administration, the school has created a supportive climate for both children and staff alike who receive extensive professional on how to provide for children's needs.

Residential. A residential model was also accomplished by a new philosophy which encouraged utilizing a grass-roots approach to decision making that led to administrators giving staff autonomy (i.e., "the ability to make decisions concerning the programs and dynamics of the therapeutic community"). The result is that staff members at all levels are empowered to deal effectively with situations plaguing students in an effort to avoid failure and promote student success.

Administrators have also worked diligently to surround students and staff with an attractive campus including newly remodeled residential dorms. The foundation of their program is centered on Indian culture as they strive to teach significance, competence, power, and virtue. The core goal of the Learning Center is to instill a sense of belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity in school members and to provide a safe and nurturing community environment for children.

This is a remarkable place because all the needs, the needs of the whole child are addressed all the time. This is probably the first time in lots of these kids' lives that they have had a say in what is happening to them in terms of everything. For the first time they know what is expected of them; what the rewards are and what the consequences are and there's always a constant. The same person gets them up every

single morning for school and helps the little ones get dressed and the same people are at breakfast all the time and they learn a routine they learn that through cooperation and possible behavior they can receive rewards.

School System Context

The Pierre Indian Learning Center is an off-reservation boarding school serving students in grades 1 through 8. The Center is located on the eastern edge of the capital city of Pierre, South Dakota. The Learning Center serves fifteen (15) reservations across three states, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Nebraska. Tribal communities in North Dakota include the Standing Rock Sioux, Spirit Lake Nation, Three Affiliated Tribes, and the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa; in South Dakota they are the Cheyenne River Sioux, Crow Creek Sioux, Flandreau-Santee Sioux, Lower Brule Sioux, Oglala Sioux, Rosebud Sioux, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux and Yankton Sioux; and in Nebraska they include Santee Sioux, Winnebago, and Omaha Tribes.

Approximately 170,000 enrolled members live in the 15 Tribal communities served by the Learning Center. Numerous social and economic problems continue to plague these reservation communities. According to census data reports in 1990, unemployment rates are extremely high in all 15 of these Tribal communities ranging from 27% to 85% with an average rate of 71%. These socioeconomic forces lock many families into a cycle of poverty from which there are few options to escape.

Facilities

The Learning Center campus covers 190 acres of land and features the school building, health center, two dormitories, special education building, library, computer language laboratory, student teacher and guest housing, newly constructed science and math building, and a completely renovated administration building. Recreational facilities include basketball courts, soccer fields, playground areas, sandpit volleyball courts, gymnasium, ropes course, horse stables and riding area, miniature golf course, and Pow Wow grounds.

Recently, the Board of Education supported the administration's decision to implement a strategic plan to raise funds to expand the facilities to provide additional academic and residential programs for their graduating students. The plans include building a new high school and gymnasium. Based on that decision, they hired a marketing firm that will assist them in building public awareness of the Learning Center's effective academic and residential program and to solicit public and private monies to support their new initiative. Given the available funds, the administration and Board also plan on building a new elementary school in the future to replace the 1904 facility that is still in use today.

Indian Board of Education

A 15-member board representing each of the Tribal communities in Nebraska, South Dakota, and North Dakota from which their students come governs the Learning Center. The Chairman visits the school monthly and the Board meets on a quarterly basis and serves "strictly as a policy board"; "politics and personal agendas are nonexistent" and the Board of Education keeps students as the exclusive priority of PILC. PILC administrators described the Board of Education as professionals that clearly understand their role as a board. "They don't try and come in here with personal agendas

and hire and fire. We're lucky to have a really good board that doesn't micromanage the school. They don't get into all those tribal politics."

AT PILC, the administration has the power to make the types of changes that improve the school and that also allow staff to be responsive to student needs. Board members know PILC is ahead of the game in terms of school reform so they empower the administration to make the needed changes. "We don't have to go through all the red tape that a normal school district would have to go through, so we're constantly changing and revising the way we do things." The Board has "so much faith" in the school leadership because they see that the administration always has the "kids at heart."

Staff Profile

The organizational structure of the Learning Center consists of 112 professional, support staff and administrators distributed throughout the Center as follows:

- Academic – 50 staff,
- Residential – 41 staff,
- Health Services – 3 staff,
- Facilities Maintenance – 10 staff,
- Food Services – 5 staff, and
- Administration – 3 staff.

Positive school climate and collegiality. Communication between staff and administrators has solidified this school community and laid the foundation to support each other. One administrator who has worked at the school for six years made this general comment about the staff:

The whole no closed door policy here is phenomena because people are willing to wear a multitude of hats and assume a lot of different roles while they're here it really fosters a family relationship and for a lot of these kids it's the first time they are getting an idea of a social norm — if there is a norm. Our staff is always interested in going to workshops that concern whatever the current things that are happening today with special needs populations.

I perceive this place as pretty phenomenal because I've never seen a group of people who are more in-tune to the needs of the whole child. They don't just stress the academics—they do but at the same time realizing that these kids have so much excess baggage they also have to address the social needs and the spiritual and physical needs of a child.

I'm fascinated by the way this place operates. I've been in many different school districts and different types of districts like suburbia and inner city, and being a special Ed person, I've worked with children in hospitals with severe disabilities. I have never seen a place that operates as such a cohesive unit. The communication is really super here. My husband is a counselor here. He and the special Ed coordinator have a remarkable program for kids with severe emotional disturbances or kids who are certified ED or some kids who are not certified but really have some major emotional baggage that causes them to be explosive. Every night my husband is on the phone with the older kid's counselor and saying so and so had a really hard time in school today and make sure they're doing their social studies work and

they're having problems with this or so and so is having problems with this kid. It's amazing that even in the off hours that people are communicating to make sure that these kids are succeeding and that they are still on a good path.

People at the school foster such a community. A counseling couple took me under their wing when I first arrived at the school. They are very traditional Indian people and proclaimed me as their adoptive daughter. And I think that really helped our kids at the school be accepting of people who are different than them because even though they are very, very traditional they are so anti-racist and anti-segregation that I think that helps foster a positive image with the kids for non-Indian staff.

The majority of administration and staff have worked at the Learning Center for a number of years. The superintendent has been there for 12 years, the program coordinator for 28 years, the principal for 15 years, the residential program director and federal programs director for 6 years, and the school board chairman for 13 years.

More than 95 percent of all the residential staff is Native American. They play a key role in providing the children with caring and nurturing relationships just as parents would do with their kids under normal circumstances. Professional development crosses all departments and all staff at the Learning Center and is a major component of the school reform plan. The therapeutic model supports the professional training of all staff and especially those working in the academic and residential departments because they are interacting with the kids a considerable amount of their waking hours.

What it means to be a teacher at the Learning Center. Wearing a multitude of hats is a common saying around the Learning Center. Based on the majority of these children's past interpersonal relationships in dysfunctional family settings and the problems that exist "on the reservation," new teachers and staff are advised to first build relationships with these kids. Trust is such an essential factor to any child's learning processes and personal growth. Without trusting relationships with caring adult role models, children cannot possibly grow into emotionally healthy functioning adults. Comments from numerous administrators were as follows:

The advice I give student teachers when they come to the Learning Center, is that when you come to work here, you have to be willing to wear more than one hat because you are parent, counselor, and teacher to each of these kids. It's a hard balance but if you can't establish some rapport and trust with these children, there is no way they are going to be receptive to you as a teacher.

There were times when in my classroom I've had to scrap a lesson plan because I've had children who were extremely upset about something that happened over Christmas break. It's teaching kids how to be kids because they don't know how to be kids. They've always had this kind of tough persona, which is that survival instincts kicking in and they are dealing with the harsh realities of life way before they should have to. It's enabling them to learn positive ways of living and of healing themselves from their past and learning more healthy ways of living.

Providing structure for the students is critical for learning processes and personal growth and establishing themselves in a community of peers, teachers, dorm parents, and staff. Here is one administrator's description of structured programs:

They are so used to living in chaos and complete lack of structure that when they first get here they complain like mad, "this is a boot camp, this is a prison, I hate this, this is ridiculous." It's amazing how well the kids adapt to this structure that is here and it is really structured. Every minute of their day is structured, and they have an hour of free time after school and then they start in with their groups and then with their shower schedule and you name it. On weekends, well, all the time they have a therapeutic recreation program and a horse riding program.

Relationships with the kids transcend outside the school and across staff, their families and include celebrating kids back home on the reservation during the summer break. As described by one administrator:

You can be shopping with your family on a weekend, and our kids are out with counselors and they see you. They want to run up and say hi to you and your kid, and its one huge extended family is how I see it. Really having a child's well being as the forerunner in the whole scheme of things here I think is what makes things so successful. We all have one common goal and that's to help these kids succeed and feel better about themselves.

Even our teaching staff goes and gets the kids ready in the morning in the dorms sometimes they have breakfast duty and they really try to be a part of the kids school day. We have teachers who sometimes go at night and they pop into the dorms and stop in the wings and say "hey, how's it going and do you need help with anything." When the dorm staff get here around two or three in the afternoon, there's always counselors walking the halls.

During the summer months, we load up in buses and go visit our kids on the reservation. We take groceries, cash, clothes, books, and shoes to their families just to help them out a little bit, because many don't have enough without these additional resources. We also want to check in with our kids to see how they are doing and to let them know that even though they are gone that we still care enough about them to visit. We tell the kids to call us for anything they might need when they are at home and to let us know how they are doing, and to check in with us by telephone. It's a way to continue that relationship with our kids no matter where they are.

Student Profile

The majority of children are placed at the Learning Center by social services and the courts. Some students are homeless or have not succeeded in other programs. The huge emotional and social baggage students bring with them into the Learning Center reveals the problems associated with contemporary conditions of these 15 reservation communities. Students attending PILC come from "dysfunctional families." As a result of the devastating effects of long-term social and economic conditions including pervasive unemployment, alcoholism, drug abuse, violence, and gangs, the children have been raised in homes "lacking parental guidance and nurturing."

Experiences for these children range from “worrying about where their next meal will come from and where they’ll be staying tomorrow,” to youth whose “primary recreation is smoking whatever fast fix or high they can get a hold on or huffing” gasoline or spray paint. The Learning Center has received kids and had to immediately send them off for treatment because they were “addicted to various inhalants and had huffing problems.” Many of their students act out in self destructive behavior such as “self-aggression and self-choking.” One administrator’s response to this behavior was, “These are not the “normal things that kids in suburbia” experience . . . You’ve got to give these kids so much credit because they are survivors.”

It works really well, the whole therapeutic model is especially important to our little ones, I stop and think about the transition of college and imagine doing that when you’re six years of age or ten years of age. It’s very important for these kids to have an environment where they are learning healthier ways of living and healthier ways of being and being exposed to more positive influences.

I had a little girl explain it to me once, “this is the first time my stomach doesn’t hurt.” And it was kind of a sense of relief and you know what is expected of you and you know what you can do to achieve it and make yourself feel better basically.

The Learning Center conducts an “intensive therapeutic profile intake along with psychological inventory” so that immediate attention is given to prioritized problems. The school’s “student profile analysis” revealed that many children arrive having experienced a “plethora of severe problems” including physical, mental and sexual abuse, low self-esteem, depression, suicide ideation or attempts, grief, anger, drug and alcohol addiction, violence, unemployment, poverty, gang warfare, hunger and nutrition deficiency, tobacco addiction and abuse, lack of basic educational skills, eating disorders and obesity, lack of hygiene and general health care, inappropriate sexual activity, lack of impulse control, and family neglect or abandonment. One administrator had this to say:

We have so many kids who have extensive dental needs and vision problems and we contract with tribal health service organization to get these kids the basic health care that they have needed for many years.

A large percentage of children attending the Learning Center have been sexually abused – 80 percent of the girls and 75 percent of the boys. These kids have “major issues” to deal with because of that experience. Some were abandoned by parents and have lived in foster care for a number of years while others end up taking care of five siblings. A number of kids have a parent in prison. In short, these kids have very “different priorities than other kids” living elsewhere.

Even the young children have missed out on their childhood because they have been thrown into adult roles in situations beyond their control. These kids are often ashamed of who they are, not necessarily for being Indian but because they have not had a traditional family life; “mom’s in prison and dad’s run off and granny’s too old to take care of them so they’ve been bounced from foster family to foster family.” Many of the students are “wards of the tribe and they’re embarrassed,” “it’s just a typical feeling that everyone would have given the situation.” An administrator said this about kid’s experiences at the Learning Center:

They can experience success and they can be kids. It's funny because you'll just see 4th graders outside just spinning around with their arms outstretched have the time of their lives. And it seems ridiculous but they have never been able to be kids and to be silly and not be worried about things. Lots of these kids come from homes that are plagued with alcoholism or drug abuse or the parents are just not around and the kids are in custody of social services. The constant not knowing what the environment and walking on egg shells is removed.

Not all kids attending the school come from poor home environments. "We do have a few kids who have pretty stable family lives but their parents send them here because they think it's a good place for them to go to school." Native American parents like other parents want the best education available for their children and sometimes that means sending them to a school outside the community. Another reason parents choose to send their children to PILC is because the reservation community is laced with such a prevalence of the social perils and temptations that face very young children even before peer pressure becomes a factor. As one administrator put it:

As a parent, it scares me because there are so many kids in this area who meet these horrible qualification and who are that much in need of an alternative place to live and go to school. We've got several families extended families that send their kids here. We'll have 15 to 20 cousins from the Winnebago reservation and these kids come and they stay from second or third grade thru eighth grade.

We really try to give the kids a sense of ownership and accountability in what happens; this is their school. And that works. At the beginning of the school year they say, "this is a prison," but by the end of the year they are crying because they don't want to go home. We're really experiencing a great retention of students.

At the beginning of each school year, all the administrators, teachers, and staff travel to the 15 tribal communities to pick up the children and to welcome them back to their Learning Center. One administrator described what she saw:

I was shocked by going to the reservation to pick up the kids. I saw the deplorable conditions that some of these kids came from and it really saddened me. For the first time I was able to understand how the kids have so much extra baggage; and it was like I suddenly understood at that moment, why would you be interested in school if you were worried about where your next meal was coming from or you're seven years old and taking care of three younger brothers and sisters. You kind of understand where the survival instinct comes from with some of these children. School and education has been on the bottom of their priority list for most of these kids.

Student statistics recently compiled internally by the Learning Center's residential director and counseling staff reflected the following:

- Forty-four percent of students were eligible for special education services during the 1999-2000 school year;
- Twenty-two percent of students qualified for Exceptional Child Residential counseling;
- Seventy-eight percent of students were eligible for Intense Residential

- Guidance services;
- Eighty percent of female students and 75 percent of male students have a history of sexual abuse; and
 - Twenty-two percent of students receive medication for ADHD, depression, and other mental health disorders.

School History: 1888 Beginnings

The Learning Center began in 1888 as a 20-acre land tract belonging to BIA that was originally intended to be the site of an Indian Industrial School. The school opened its doors to five students its first year in 1890 and operated under the absolute direction of BIA until 1972 when the first school board, representing the 15 tribes in that region, was formed. Shortly after, the decision was made to close down the school because more tribes were educating kids in public and contract schools in their local communities. However, the Winnebago Tribe decided to keep the school open because some problems were occurring in their community that resulted in special needs kids needing a residential facility. In 1974, the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act made it possible for the Board of Education to become the governing body for the school and to contract for the full administration of the school. Presently, the Learning Center is a 24-hour residential facility with an elementary school serving approximately 250 students from a three-state area. The Center develops its own curriculum and programs and is primarily funded through grant monies. However, things were not always the way they are today.

Administrator's first impression: Twenty-four years later. In the fall of 1975, teachers and staff were trained in preparation for the Board of Education's re-opening of the Learning Center. In January 1976, 50 students arrived at the school; in 1977, enrollment increased to 90 and by 1981, there were 160 students at the Center. However, conditions were not the best at the facility during that time as reported by the program coordinator. This administrator described the school based on what she found there when she arrived in April of 1976:

Kids with tremendous emotional problems were showing up and the structure of the Learning Center at that time was that there was no structure . . . the school wasn't a school. There were 16-year-olds who had never graduated from eighth grade. It was tough three or four years because we didn't really have a focus on what to do with the kids — simply that the kids were going to have a place to stay. And then, five or six years later we were still trying to find the right way to handle the type of kids who were coming to the Learning Center.

New leadership's first impressions in 1989. With the arrival of a new superintendent in 1989, major changes began to occur at the Center. Although the staff in the academic and residential programs received professional training, there was still the pressing need for more structure in the school and dorms. The new administrator was shocked when he realized the school's tremendous failures to effectively educate Indian kids and provide a safe and positive environment. These failures would take the new leadership a number of years to remedy.

The superintendent's initial perception of the Center in 1989 was:

I accepted this job thinking I was going to be an administrator of a school for kids with special needs such as counseling and special academic services and I have worked in other schools that had emotionally disturbed kids who couldn't function in

the regular school system and the Learning Center was the kind of place where we looked to send these kids for the special needs they had. We all believed that there was special staff and specially trained counselors, similar to other places like private counseling centers or treatment centers. But when I got here what I found was that the school was nothing more than a 'dumping ground' for kids in state hospitals and were about to be released. The public school districts where they come from definitely didn't want them because they couldn't handle them; the BIA schools didn't want them because they couldn't handle them and didn't know what to do with them. It was common practice for us to get a call from the state, "Hey we got this kid here and we don't know what to do with him — he's even schizophrenic and very dangerous and nobody wants him. The policy here was, "Sure bring them on down here."

The superintendent had no idea just how bad things were at the school. He recalled, "I didn't know what I was getting into when I came to this school . . . The buildings were very old and the grounds were terrible . . . There was lots of vandalism because of the type of kids we had." Tribal gangs were a real problem at that time in many of the off-reservation schools because gangs would move together going from one school to the next.

Leadership was lacking in the elementary school and there was no academic program. The superintendent describes that first day.

The first day I was here the principal told me — and this shocked me the most — "Our objective is not to teach the kids; our objective is behavior modification; our primary objective is to teach these kids behavior and if we ever get that under control then we'll teach them a little bit of math and whatever." I told him, "Then this is not a school and what kind of program do you have?" "Well, we have six pretty big guys in the school and I call them my 'goon squad' and when the kids start acting up, especially the big kids, I call the goon squad and they go into the classroom where the kid is acting up and they plop the kid down and sit on him until he promises to behave himself. Sometimes that takes 20 minutes and he's in there cussing and staff are sitting on him and then we let him up." I asked him, "Well what else is going on with the other students in the classroom while this is going on?" He tells me, "Well, they're just sitting around watching and some are even cheering the kid on."

The dorms also lacked structure. Staff had lots of disciplinary problems and the older kids controlled the dorms and the school. One staff member's account is as follows:

Their program in the dorm was to baby sit kids. That was their program — trying to keep them from totally destroying the building, trying to keep them contained so they weren't leaving. It was common practice for 20 or 30 kids to all run off to go into town and steal gas and vandalize the community and then go sit by the river and huff gas all night. It was not a good program.

A Plan for Change

Focus on curriculum. Based on his analysis of the problematic conditions, chaos in dorms and classrooms and the general lack of control with the student body, the superintendent took action to remedy the situation quickly. He described the cure for chaos as:

First thing I did was get rid of the principal and gave directives to staff that students were no longer in control of the school. We set up programs to serve these severely ED [emotionally disturbed] kids, who think they are in charge and that they're going to run the school and are threatening staff, and assaulting staff and we put them in a separate room with professional staff.

The next thing, I got all the staff, hired consultants and brought in our Board and we developed a competency-based curriculum. All of the teachers with the help of some community people and our board, our entire school developed curriculum.

The following year we implemented the curriculum and that was very successful; and for the first time, the teachers had something they could actually use and they said, "Hey, we're going to be teachers now and we're going to be evaluated." They liked it because it was theirs and they had developed it.

We took the test and looked at the weaknesses of our kids and where they needed the most help and we developed the curriculum to enhance where the kids were scoring lowest. We were state accredited and by then, we had the school back under control again. The state team came in and they were really impressed. They said, "This is really the first school that has a curriculum planned with competency and goals and is actually using it." I demanded that teachers follow it to the "T". I personally developed an evaluation instrument based on the curriculum guides to make sure that teachers would follow them.

Getting everyone on the same page was particularly important to the process for providing services to these students and generally improving the situation and conditions at the Learning Center. The superintendent had this to say about that process.

Our therapeutic approach, it's been very successful with the type of kids we have here. What it does is it gets everybody on the same page working as a team and as a community serving the needs of the kids, the total kid. We're not just worried about the academics of the kid, that's just a small part of it. We're worried about the social/emotional/mental problems of these kids and we deal with that in the residential department and by the time they get to the school some of their needs are being met and being addressed and that makes it easier for them to concentrate in school.

Teachers are involved in this, too. Teachers understand the problems the different emotional problems the kids have, they know the kids who have been abandoned, and they know the kids who have been physically and sexually abused. We have a comprehensive evaluation system involving a series of different testing that is done the first month with all the new kids that come in at the beginning of each year. So teachers have a good idea about who is FAS [Fetal Alcohol Syndrome] and who's ED, and how do we deal with these kids, and it's an upward battle because with this kid, say he's ED, and if another kid pushes him or if he blows up, you've got to handle him this way and you don't do this with him. It's a total commitment by staff. We have a very low turnover of staff especially in the academic department and the residential is improving too.

An unfortunate consequence of the lack of structured programs and bad leadership was that it also planted a negative image of the Center in the larger community's mind that would be difficult to shake no matter how much improvement was made over the next 12 years by the new leadership. Administrators' remarks were as follows:

It was an eye opener for me in terms of how the community regarded the school. I would be in town at the store and people would say things like "You're one of the student teachers out at the Indian School. Oh, that's a shame; couldn't you get a job someplace else?" When I asked, "What do you mean by that?" She replied, "Oh those Indian kids are really bad and that place is just terrible and I've heard plenty about the school." In the past, that was how the school was, and that's the stories, I've heard from the principal. She's been here for a long time and she told me there were times when "You'd be driving down the street and there'd be kids jumping out the dorm windows and just taking off going AWOL." It was that crazy and there wasn't a structure, and there was no way that education could take place because these kids were so unruly and the staff wasn't trained or prepared to take care of the kids with the types of problems they had. It was pure chaos, and a lot of people in town still have that mental image.

This was not a school and the community was having meetings and a Concerned Citizen group wanted the school closed and rightfully so, because it wasn't a school, it was only a place for delinquents who were housed or supposedly housed, and they were always going around vandalizing the community and they weren't learning anything, so we just took it from there.

Involve the community. It's been an ongoing process for administration and staff to try and repair that mental image many people in the community still have about the Learning Center and especially the image of Native Americans. One of the primary components in the school reform plan has been to "really strengthen community involvement." An administrator pointed out the number of outreach activities and events the school has initiated with the local community:

We have really elaborate open houses and when we have our science fair and art day we invite people from the community to come and see everything and to be judges for the various competitions we have here. It's really made a definite impact on changing the way people perceive this place. The staff actually does a lot of dissemination of getting our stuff published in the local paper and to different tribal publications, too. The kids also publish a newsletter that they put out and send home to let their families, and communities back home know what's happening at the school.

Pierre doesn't offer much in terms of formal recreation, but when there are plays or traveling performance groups that come through town, we take the kids. We also take them to movies and go to dinner, and they learn restaurant etiquette and manners they've never been exposed to what the rest of us just take for granted. And they really become a part of the community. Lots of the boys participate in the city football league and the entire wing with their cheerleaders will go to the games, and it fosters a community spirit. Our wrestling team travels all over the state to tournaments.

Over the five years I've been here, I've seen how things have changed. Our kids received a commendation from the governor, who was at a chess tournament that these kids were in, and he thought our kids were so well behaved and sociable that he actually invited them to spend a weekend at his cabin in the hills. Thirteen of our kids went. It was a unique situation where suddenly our kids were just like the other kids, and it's been really nice that the state has started to include us in a lot of its endeavors.

The governor was also kind enough to include us in his "Wiring of the Schools" project. We couldn't get enough funds, and we were at a loss for generating enough funds to get Internet at our school. Even though we're not a public school, he went ahead and did it for us. It helped us out immensely. Our geographic isolation makes technology so very important to us.

Improve the school campus. A campus-wide beautification program was implemented at the Learning Center in 1995 that changed more than the appearance of the facilities and grounds. The program coordinator who initiated the program the dorms described the impact this "beautification" had on the kids:

The next year we remodeled the dorms and color-coded all of the rooms. We structured after-school programs until 8:30 in the evenings. What happened was simply amazing given we didn't hardly have any new staff and we brought in the same type of kids. I truly believe that more than 50 percent of their [the kids'] problems disappeared when they walked into those dorm rooms and saw the change. My philosophy has always been that if you surround kids with beauty, you get beauty. Once kids figure out that you love them so much that you surround them with beauty and caring and discipline and with structure, they immediately respond to that.

A striking difference can be seen between the beautiful campus and dorms the kids live in and their "reservation" homes and communities. A troubling feature about many tribal communities is the impoverished conditions that exist in the majority of reservation homes, BIA offices, and educational facilities. The communities are riddled with gang graffiti and vandalism, especially in the residential areas in the vacant homes, lots, and buildings. This stark picture of how some of these kids live "on the reservation," compared to the Learning Center facilities is a culture shock to most of the new teachers and staff who have never before stepped foot in Indian country.

The beautification program also included remodeling the administration and business office located on the campus grounds next to the school building in a Victorian residence from the early 1900s.

Develop a sense of community in students. They established a job program for the older kids and linked it to the Beautification program to instill a sense of stewardship in the students for their dorms and the campus grounds. Remarks by one administrator made the following remarks:

The older kids participate in a voluntary paid job program taking care of the Center's horses, working in the kitchen, and taking care of the campus ground landscaping. We wanted to provide an atmosphere of cooperation and a pride in what we have here at the Learning Center. They can see the direct results of their efforts through service. This program has improved problems with graffiti and

vandalism. We have zero-tolerance policy for gang-related behavior like graffiti. It's paid off because kids have a sense of pride. Accountability factors in dorms that each kid has a job, they have roommates, they're in charge of cleaning the rooms.

Each child gets an allowance of \$5 to \$7 dollars depending on their age. We believe this teaches kids to value what they have and that "You have to carry your share." If a kid destroys something like a math notebook, it comes out of their allowance. If they return a library book late, we deduct that from their allowance. That's teaching kids responsibility and consequences.

Each wing goes grocery shopping once a month and cooks a meal for their wing. This is developing a sense of community atmosphere and a sense of pride in the entire environment as a whole. We don't really have problems with graffiti or vandalism and if there are the kids are held accountable and they pay for it. Like now the kids "outlawed" chewing gum and if caught you stay after school and use a scrapper.

Obtain board of education support. School reform is difficult even under ideal circumstances with committed participants and effective leadership within the school, the community, and the school board. The Learning Center's process for change and development of their school reform plan was fully supported by their entire Board. As described in a school report the Board's initial and formal action toward reform was:

The Indian Board of Education consequently empowered the Learning Center administration to refine the original model to best address the requirement of our students as effectively as possible with the limited resources that we had available. The newly adopted philosophy maintained that the Center would be a community with structure, and where administration and school board members would allow staff to consensus plan, school board members and administration would not make decisions without the community's input, and the community would have the full support of the administration at all time.

Turning Point for School Reform

From the early days of the model's conceptualization, Board members had been actively involved in the development of the Therapeutic Residential Model. In 1994, several Board members accompanied PILC administrators to the initial Planning Meeting for Off-Reservation Boarding Schools to learn more about therapeutic school models. Once they got back to PILC, the therapeutic model became the administrator's focus for serious school reform. They chose it because it was the model that really seemed to "best fit the needs" of their population. One administrator described that moment as follows:

We came back from the meeting and told staff that we had to have a vision of where we wanted to be with our kids and if they wanted to climb on the train and go along with this ride that was fine, but if they didn't want to totally change the way we were going to deal with kids, then they were not going to be able to work here.

This became a major turning point for both staff and administrators, one that set major changes into motion in the academic and residential programs over the next six years. Four essential therapeutic goals became the building blocks of the Learning Center school community:

- Develop the social, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and physical health of all students;
- Promote opportunities and experiences which allow students to explore their cultural identities and practices;
- Provide an emotionally and physically safe alternative home environment that supports the personal growth and development of both students and staff; and
- Provide an environment where every staff member is devoted to the whole being of the student and is supported with sufficient and appropriate training.

The residential program director described the changes in this way:

Our reform was revolutionary. It really was a “Herculean” effort for the people who started it. We needed a system of counseling that works with tough kids. We go back to “reality therapy.” A cognitive emotional training that involves learning how to change our thinking so that changes our emotions. That’s very effective with tough kids. It deals with the rationally emotive side of human behavior. Our kids have learned an irrational belief system . . . blaming others instead of taking responsibility for themselves and their actions. We point out to kids that each one of us is responsible for ourselves. However, none of that matters to kids if they don’t have a feeling that they belong and are cared for somewhere. . . So that’s the first premise we instill in our kids here.

Extensive training and professional development has been conducted with all staff in both the residential and academic programs to support these goals and, especially, to develop an effective system that provided for the unique needs of these students. Comments by one administrator were as follows:

We had implemented a different teaching style in the school in 1996-97 that was more hands-on, individualized learning styles, portfolios, and each child had a separate Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Our school has lots of special education kids and teachers have a hard time challenging our kids.

Professional development was challenging because of the diversity of staff at the Learning Center and “reform was tougher than people might imagine.” One administrator described the program as this:

The training was a challenge because we have both residential staff and academic staff. We dealt with issues such as the very different perceptions between dorm staff who are non-certified and staff with college education. One of the big things about the therapeutic model is that we really try to teach these kids to be proud of who they are. For years, Indian people were chastised for speaking their language and if they couldn’t pick up English, right away they were considered stupid. They were prohibited from doing their basic cultural beliefs. We completely

dispel that here. We encourage both the kids and the staff to be proud of their heritage and to speak their language.

INVOLVEMENT IN CSRD....

Initial Needs Assessment

In the 1994-1995 school year, the Center conducted a comprehensive needs assessment that covered social, emotional, and physical data, language proficiency, and academic performance. Academic data included the content areas language arts, reading, mathematics, science, and social studies for all grades. The assessment process was collaborative and involved the entire residential and academic staff, the Board of Education, the administration, the Office of Indian Education Programs and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The data reviewed were standardized achievement tests; informal inventory of all content areas; teacher observations; student work samples; teacher-constructed tests; conduct referrals; incident reports; and cumulative files.

Student needs. The data analysis from school records rendered findings that indicated many children suffered the following social disruptions:

- Significant academic deficiencies,
- Drug/alcohol abuse/inhalants abuse,
- Self-inflicted injuries,
- Theft,
- Fighting/violent aggressiveness,
- Truancy,
- Social withdrawal,
- Lack of positive self-esteem,
- Lack of positive peer relationships,
- Lack of assertiveness,
- Lack of appreciation for school,
- Excessive profanity, and
- Gang involvement.

The Learning Center identified their student's therapeutic needs through the data analysis process internally with their own population and also utilized some external data from a study conducted by the BIA and the Center for Disease Control in 1997. According to the Youth Risk Behavior Scales, responded to by 65 percent of all BIA students, the following statistics caused great concern among administrators and staff for the health and well being of their youth:

- Forty-one percent rarely or never wear seat belts;
- Fifty percent rode with a drunk driver during the past month;
- Ninety percent have smoked cigarettes;
- Sixty-four percent smoked cigarettes during the past month;
- Thirty-two percent used smokeless tobacco during the past month;
- Eighty-five percent drank alcohol;
- Sixty-five percent used marijuana; and

- Fifteen percent used cocaine.

Comprehensive academic screening and intakes from the Learning Center’s residential and health programs provided social, emotional, cognitive, and physical data. From that data analysis the following needs were identified:

- Develop a greater level of parent involvement;
- Acquire materials and resources that enhance and reflect tribal cultures;
- Incorporate native languages into the curriculum;
- Design programs which assist with language deficiency problems;
- Acquire resources which integrate the bilingual program; and
- Ensure that existing special education programs, Title I, regular education, residential programs, and curriculum is challenging and promotes the social, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and physical development of a child.

Poor test score results. Early stages of the CSRD program selection that preceded the implementation process were frustrating in many ways because of the labels and status placed on BIA schools in general. Administration and teachers struggled with the fact that they were labeled as a school in need of improvement based on standardized scores and the state’s criteria for the school report card and accountability standards. Many of their comments reflected their frustration, “It all seems so unfair,” “Standardized test scores are a horrible reflection of what is truly happening here, more than any other place because these kids have so much social baggage.”

Retention along with other categories listed in school report cards rate these schools along with other school communities that have very stable student populations. One administrator put it this way:

One of the things we were kind of in shock about was when we were originally invited to apply for this program because we were cited as a school having problems. We were shocked by that news. Then we stopped and looked back and said, how is this all decided and one of the things that determines our status is the annual report. They look at your retention; they look at your test scores and well, a whole lot of different categories that are really out of our control. If suddenly a parent gets custody back of their children, and they decide they want these kids, they make a call, and they come, and sign forms and they yank their kids out. And there goes seven or ten kids. So retention is not up to us, for the most part, and that seems like an unfair assessment.

We actually did a recent needs assessment and realized that we have a pretty great retention rate in our third to sixth grades. When you look at our seventh and eighth grade kids, you see that we have an influx of kids in those grades. They’re popping in at the start of school and in the middle, but they leave right away. We’ve only had these kids for one year of school and they’re thrown in with the mix of kids who have been here for many years. It’s not like we have had eight years to get these kids up to par academically. The annual report and school report card are two mandatory documents and serve as the data used to evaluate our school by federal and state education departments. The problem is we look like crap on paper.

It stinks to have to be on the defensive and have a lot of your funding and your entire rank as an educational institution be based on kind of an artificial set of evaluations. It's very upsetting. What stinks is in your heart you know we're doing a great job with these kids but at the same time when the bottom line comes down to federal and state evaluations that's what they are looking at.

Getting Ready for Reform

Building a commitment for change. Many schools have been slighted by the recent accountability and school report card trend that are used to apply pressure on schools based on how their students' scores rank compared with other schools. However, all too often these measures compare schools with extremely different student populations by using the same assessment that has proven to be biased toward middle- and upper-class white populations. So what do these schools "under need of improvement" status do about it? Well, the Learning Center administration and staff took a proactive approach that was described this way:

We decided that when we were labeled as a school "in need of improvement" that we could either be ticked off and really upset that we were regarded in this manner or we can look at the opportunity and use the extra funding to our benefit to make things absolutely the best they can be. We also said maybe we do need to stop and see what we are most in need of and [from there] we decided we really needed some additional training at various levels. We also had to discuss how we were going to do this training because we are a 24-hour facility. It's so hard to find time to do training during the school year when we all can't get together as a staff because we always have to take care of the kids. So we put together a budget for teacher stipends for summer training for when kids are home and we can do these intensive trainings.

Selecting a model. In the fall of 1998, the Learning Center organized a reform model research team consisting of educators who would examine the numerous models out there from which schools can select. The general consensus among staff, administrators, and board members was to find a reform model that will allow our school ... to meet the ever-changing needs of our students." One concern of the administration in the selection of a CSR program model was their ability to maintain the Residential Therapeutic model, which continues to be the cornerstone of their Learning Center. Some comments by administrators were as follows:

The Therapeutic model is the basic foundation of this place and the most important thing that happens here. We had to review the reform models carefully because we wanted the one that most closely coincides with our therapeutic model. Once the training started and we implemented BEST, we realized that we were already doing Effective Schools. We were already doing just about everything in the model and so it was more about putting a label on what was already happening. It all came to gather for us once we put everything that we were doing on paper and identified the correlates and who was responsible for the basic components.

We attended different training sessions on school reform. We decided to take what we were already doing and adapt other models to fit our situation. We made it clear to BIA and model developers that we were not intending to throw out what we had been doing here. To do so would be to say what we've been doing for the last

five or six years was all wrong so we're going to do what someone else was doing; no, that's not what we wanted.

Using Internet resources, including the Department of Education's regional education laboratory and school improvement sites, "a pool of potential" models was selected. Three models made it into "finalist" status with the team, Roots and Wings, Success For All, and Building Exemplary Schools Together. (BEST). Although all three models addressed disadvantaged and at-risk student populations, only the BEST model targeted both elementary and high school levels; it was also supported by the Office of Indian Education Programs. In February 1999, the Board of Education unanimously approved the staff's decision to adopt the BEST school reform model.

The BEST model. In 1987, OIEP established BEST as the model to improve BIA schools; the BEST design utilized the principles in the Effective Schools research-based model. Based on continuing research, three additional correlates were incorporated into BEST model: challenging curriculum and appropriate instruction; participative management and shared governance; and cultural relevance. The BEST model grew out of Native American researchers who formed an association with the support of BIA's Effective Schools Team and identified the factors and established correlates for what worked best in schools serving Indian students. Numerous Native American consultants work for BEST to assist schools and OIEP in the implementation of the model in BIA schools. The OIEP's Goals 2000 priorities for language and culture are clearly described in a document report as follows:

Language and culture are the central organizing themes of Indian education and must be the foundation of any school reform movement in America. Learning Center staff had been using correlates of the effective schools model for some time before the official adoption of the BEST design; staff perceived themselves as more than ready to accept the complete framework of the BEST.

The guiding principles for school reform advocated by BEST are designed to engage staff and students in a collaborative approach to continued school improvement. These principles also reflected the Learning Center's philosophy: Learning is a lifelong sharing process that is vital to all people; it should draw from the past to ensure the future.

An evolving process. Many challenges exist for the schools conducting CSRD programs, including learning what they are supposed to measure and "how to do it." External support onsite is not limited to three sessions a year and is determined by consultant and administration based on progress data and staff training needs. The BEST model requires an external trainer to provide the onsite training support. The consultant described his hopes for the Center five years down the school reform road.

The Hopes...

staff is still involved,
participatory management,
no micro-managing in day-to-day,
freedom in "let's do it" attitude,
tangible improvement.

The Strategy to sustain CSRD...

staff support,
shared leadership,
professional development,
professional development/staff support,
ongoing professional development.

The Learning Center has a “jump start” on the instructional correlate of school reform. They’ve got it down and they are working together. It will be a “real plan” that brings them to this point of tangible improvement. Bringing everything together and assessing what they are doing for kids; assessing emotional, spiritual, physical, and “prove they have done it academically” as well.

School leaders say the most challenging issues will be to “keep the finger in the dyke” in implementing the BEST program, “maintain order in classroom,” and “take care of disruptive behavior and control of kids.” With the higher incidents of special needs students in tribal schools, more focus has to be placed on training, staff support, and professional development. Transient students is another challenge to these schools that has clear consequences on school reform plan, achievement levels, program structure and content.

IMPLEMENTATION AND THE NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURE....

The Indian People

The Learning Center’s multi-ethnic mix of Indian and non-Indian people make it an interesting and unique place that is somewhat isolated from the everyday blatant racism occurring in the larger society and other schools. The culture of the school has created a climate of inclusion and respect for diversity among the kids and adults alike. The counter to this culture is unfortunately found close by in the town that borders the Learning Center and its protective arms that shield the kids from social harms. Administrators commented on the racism that continues to exist toward their kids and Indian people and between whites and other ethnic groups in general. This is what they said:

Where I come from in White country, black people are regarded a certain way still and Hispanics are regarded another way, and it’s Anglo Saxon Hell. A lot of reservation communities hate the white people. The town is, in general, a very racist community from what I can tell. People will say things like, “Well, checks [welfare] must have rolled in. Look at all the [Indian] people at Kmart.”— just extremely rude and extremely stereotypical things. I think there’s such an absence of that out here in the Learning Center. I don’t know precisely why that happens but there really is a community feeling that extends into people’s lives. I guess I don’t know why that happens if it is the fact that all different races are kind of invited to be one family here or if it’s because everyone here is so focused. But it’s really quite remarkable.

It was a culture shock when I first came here. I was extremely disgusted by how I had been taught on the East Coast how to perceive Native American people in general. I can remember clearly in school when we were celebrating Thanksgiving and half of us dressing up like Indians and doing the [mimicked the stereotypical song] wau wau deal. And I was really out of touch with the whole reality of what the situation was.

Our dorm staff are people who have experienced life on the reservation and who have experienced what it’s like to be a Native American person in a relatively hostile environment. Sometimes these bordering reservation towns are not kind to Native American people. It saddens me to see how very cut off we are from the community. Bit by bit we are making headway. We’re sharing the soccer field and we

let the YMCA use the ropes challenge course. We have very good relationships with a lot of people. We get reports back that our kids' behavior is excellent at the games. The superintendent at the public school in town tells us he likes it when our kids attend their events and games because our kids teach their kids how to behave. We work very hard on that issue of behavior. It helps other people have a better perception of Native American kids. One thing that is sad is that Native Americans go up to the mall and often times they are followed around more closely. I've witnessed that personally with staff.

Integration of the New Model

Given that the therapeutic model is the basic foundation of the Learning Center, administrators made sure they were demonstrating a close alignment of goals on paper and especially in the classrooms and the dorms. Even though staff generally were comfortable with the therapeutic model administrators were cognizant of the issues involved when adding another reform model to their teachers, already "full plates." Some comments about that process were as follows:

We aligned Effective Schools/BEST components in terms of what an effective school does with the Therapeutic model goals. This included everything that we believed in and wanted in a program for our kids and so we kept that vision as our focus when we chose the Effective Schools model. Cultural significance, for example is a correlate of our therapeutic model and it is also a component of BEST. We weren't as primarily concerned with what other BIA schools were doing. The fact that Effective Schools/BEST components so closely aligned with the therapeutic model which we had been using with great success for the past two years, we chose it.

As a teacher with 33 years experience, 10 at this school, school reform was difficult at first. Now it's great. We have improved education in ways that really address each child's needs. At first, it was difficult because I've taught for so long and changing the way you teach is hard; and I resisted at first. My first lesson took me eight hours to complete; the second one took four hours and so on. Now I understand the rationale for lesson plans. I think I'm a better teacher because of it. The BEST model really enhances the therapeutic model. Teachers here really like these models.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE....

Professional Development

The superintendent and the director of federal programs assist teachers in demonstrating high expectations for student's academic performance in the classroom. They monitor and guide the teachers in effectively accomplishing this goal through lesson plans and school improvement team meetings. They support staff overall by conducting school-wide in-service trainings and priority-based summer institutes. In April of 2000, the school spent \$18,000 in professional development. The summer budget is considerably larger based on the numerous institutes and training programs offered to staff.

Demonstrating how their professional development fits with the school reform plan one administrator's explained the process for identifying staff-training needs as:

CSRD enabled us to stop and say, "Okay, what is it that we really need?" We hadn't done that for two years. It was a blessing in disguise. We've now identified areas that are in need of improvement. We won't be able to do very much about retention, but we'll do the best we can with test scores. These kids have had extreme truancy problems and what not, and that's why they're here. It's not really a fair assessment of what's happening, but those are the standards that have been designated as the important ones.

We had an in-service this past summer where we gave everybody the revised plan and we told them, "Here's a two-year plan that explains the whys of what we're doing" and explained that it's a working document and if they find something that needs to be changed this is what we will change. We meet twice monthly and also have collaboration team meetings with dorm representatives and school staff. We update goals and revise our accountability. We homed in on the focus and designated the individual responsible for keeping track of all the different components.

In all fairness, we feel like we are ahead of the game when it comes to school reform. As far as testing goes, yes, definitely our kids don't achieve as well on basic standardized tests. That's just a given. Yet, when we do our own accountability here, we do pre and post testing with our kids and we are seeing gains in leaps and bounds of where these kids started and to us that's the proof we need.

Recently, a bilingual education program director from Department of Education came to our school and was shocked with what was really happening here compared to what the kids' test scores and other school report card data show.

It's unfair that we're sited as a school in need of improvement in just about every level there can be. Department of Education people can't give us a straight answer about the process for labeling schools as in need if they [schools] provide supplemental data findings that counter their information and which show gains in related areas. It's very frustrating. . . . We also supplement our annual report with a narrative explanation. We don't know how much of that supplemental narrative is read and digested.

Stipends for staff development make up the largest cost in the overall CSRD program budget and are warranted because of the restraints of trying to conduct meaningful intensive training during school year given their status as a 24-hour, seven-day week facility.

Ongoing funding is an important part of school reform because professional development needs are essential to sustaining the changes created and to maintain systems of support and these are high priced components. As the superintendent noted:

You can't do anything unless you have staff development. Comprehensive school reform is not going to provide sufficient financial support. Right now, we get \$50,000 to implement or develop our model. When you implement something, you want to do as much capacity building as possible. You want to train staff and hire staff and make sure that permanent staff will be able to carry on the programs. We

have in this school a high number of kids that are inclusion and that raises the costs of providing services for the special needs kids. We're always going to need staff development.

Use of Resources

The reallocation of resources is now possible through the Consolidated School Reform Plan (CSRFP). As one staff said

The CSRFP prompted the administration to identify additional funding needs for professional development. For instance, special education funds are used to conduct comprehensive screening each fall and spring and these test scores provide important information for improving language arts and communications. Title VII funds support integrating Native American history, values, language into the curriculum and classroom, the purchase of computer equipment for the language labs, and supplements the evening tutoring program. In addition, Individualized Student Education Plan monies contribute to the goal of decreasing violent incidents through social and emotional activities relating to the dynamics of interpersonal relationships in the special residential programs.

A Collaborative Environment

Staff at the Learning Center were originally concerned that a CSRFP model might interfere with their success in using the therapeutic residential model. Thus, they chose a consultant with whom they had worked in the past and who is also Native American. Administrators shared their ideas, ideals, and concerns with the consultant and began setting into motion the plans for comprehensive improvement. Collaboratively, they developed professional development and technical support that was tailored for their needs. Administrators had this to say about the collaborative process, the consultant, the model, and the training process:

I think we kind of did it backwards, and it actually made more sense to do it that way. It was in 1995 when the initiative first came out. We established the reasoning behind what we were doing and that helped our staff to understand how things would work out in the grander scheme of things in terms of the match with both the therapeutic model and the CSRFP program model. We were able to pick a model and revise the reform plan according to all the data from needs assessments and the process of stopping and examining what it was we were doing at this school.

We did everything backwards. We stopped and asked ourselves what closely adheres because it had been such a system of trial-and-error and what really worked with our kids. Once we had this therapeutic model in place with its variations we didn't want to have to conform to any model that was going to remove the positive things that we had already achieved. We lucked out in a way because the effective schools model closely adhered to what we were already doing.

Collaborating with BEST Consultant has proved helpful in both identifying training needs and aligning them with the comprehensive school reform plan. Providing moral support has been an important piece to the training process for staff and administrators. Guidance and rationale for school

reform activities, assessment, and evaluation supported the Center's effort to improve their services to Indian students. The training process was described as:

Last fall of 1999, the BEST consultant conducted the first training and he was terrific in explaining to our staff what school reform was all about and why we were even having this plan and in relation to that. We also believe that it's important to let kids in on what's happening to them. It also really helps staff morale to know there's a rhyme and a reason to what you're doing.

The most benefit they've [BEST] given to us is to steer us in the right direction when we had a question or needed a consultant. It enabled us to put a concrete image of why we're doing what we're doing and that also helps us with the accountability. Our consultant is Native American and is a storyteller and is a "morale booster" for our staff. He has conducted two trainings so far for the BEST model. We have utilized other consultants referred by BEST in both our academic and residential programs.

We also utilize some of our own in-house experts like our residential director who does a training refresher course for CPR and teaches a full-fledged Crisis Prevention training program for all residential staff. We have lots of kids with oppositional defiance problems. Our dorm people are experts in crisis prevention and intervention and brush up on that issue. Defiant behavior training is another ongoing summer program that residential staff will attend.

Poised to Improve Student Achievement

The BEST consultant has a long history of providing training and evaluation services in the Learning Center that dates back to the mid- 1980s. Recently, he provided consulting services to BIA schools including building awareness and conducting training for Effective Schools model. Instructional leadership was "best done by external consultants and coaches" who provided onsite support and "it worked if principals wanted it to, otherwise it failed."

The August 1999 initial awareness workshop with Learning Center staff "went really well, according to one school staff member. The process for school reform implementation requires a tremendous amount of time-consuming coordination kinds of activities and planning tasks including pulling together external support, collaborating with other tribal schools and contact meetings, correspondence with OIEP staff, in-service scheduling, collaborative team meetings, evaluation and assessment.

Challenges and frustrations are normal for the school reform process, largely because this work is in addition to all of the normal duties and responsibilities for educating and caring for students, especially, in a 24-hour facility. Model developers generally provide the intermittent "morale booster" sessions that keep the momentum going until tangible results are obtained. They guide the process by keeping the greater focus on the school reform plan. In addition, they evaluate the process and the program by collecting and examining data for evidence that school improvement goals are being met.

According to the BEST consultant, the Center's "greatest strengths" are the stability of its administration, the CSRD program facilitator who is also the federal program director, the fact that

they established ownership and buy-in for the school reform plan and the Board of Education keeps the politics out of education. The Center's superintendent also “helped out a lot” to implement the Effective Schools reform model in an effective manner. The consultant noted that

The Learning Center is currently in the third phase of school reform. The next step is to become more effective in emphasizing student achievement. Students need to get into academics more than they have in the past since getting kids “perfect” before the learning begins is not a realistic expectation.

School staff members will conduct a needs assessment next year based on OIEP requirements. The BEST consultant plans on examining data every five years based on their school reform plan to help the school determine its progress and achievements during those five years.

SITE 2 DATA: SOUTHWEST OPEN SCHOOL CORTEZ, COLORADO

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT....

Overview of Southwest

Mission and philosophy. Southwest Open School started out as a small alternative high school over 14 years ago to serve students who either were expelled or had dropped out of the public schools. In 1986, a counselor and students started the alternative high school for “drop outs, teen parents, and retrievals from the community who had not traditionally been successful in regular schools.” Funds to establish the school were generated from a state program called Colorado Second Chance. Housed in one small trailer, the alternative school was a member of the Southwest Board of Cooperative Services (SWBOCS), a four-member district that provided special services to students primarily from the towns of Cortez, Mancos, Delores, and Dove Creek, and Towaoc, the Ute Mountain Ute tribal community. Southwest Open School (SWOS) successfully applied to the state for a charter that was approved by the Montezuma-Cortez RE-1 School District’s Board of Education in fall of 1999.

The district calendar, a document listing the different schools, ethnic populations, and information similar to the state report card, described the school as

a public high school that serves people who need a more active-type education. It provides a more flexible schedule. There is a one-to-15 student/teacher ratio. Approximately 150 students are attending some form of the Open High. Students who attend need to be self-motivated and responsible, and they can become very successful. SWOS is a school where small classes guide students through real-life hands-on learning. Students and staff respect each other and work together on projects. Students must complete 26 credits in order to earn a high school diploma. Infant Day Care and parenting classes are available. An on-campus clinic provides students with access to health care. Safety Net provides independent learning opportunities for students wanting to work at their own pace. Classes often travel in order to experience what they are studying. Outdoor “Adventures” take students into the wilderness for team building and outdoor fun.

Southwest Open School borders the highway leading out of town to rural communities, Delores, Mancos, and Towaoc, all within 10 or 12 miles from the school. Somewhat isolated from the main residential and business sections of Cortez, the school is located along a dirt road that leads to a church and house that sit adjacent to the school on the same block. The school facilities are seven portables/trailers that serve as multipurpose rooms, classrooms, and offices.

A Charter School

School staff decided to form a charter school to improve the school’s image in the community, increase funding for facilities at the school, and maintain a degree of autonomy from the local school district. The first year of the charter brought “lots of projects” to the school. As the

principal told it, “We jumped out of the frying pan and into the fire.” The charter and the autonomy brought greater flexibility to make the necessary changes and to make them quickly enough to impact the goals of the school: to prepare students who would not otherwise be in school, to either continue their education, seek employment, or both.

Another factor that contributed to SWOS applying for the charter status was that the SWBOCS was reportedly downsizing, from seven districts to four, and eliminating most of the programs, it administered. That reorganization would have prepared a barrier to the school’s ability to provide effective educational programs and services to its student population.

Generally, the funding associated to charters is substantially greater than the conventional avenues of funding through the local districts. The principal talked about the types of facilities SWOS needs and plans for acquiring solid funding to instrumentally change the types of programs the school might offer the community:

We need playing fields and a gym. I figured we couldn’t live in temporary structures indefinitely so we decided to apply for a charter under the Cortez school district. With that charter, we could still pull kids from the surrounding communities, 50, or more miles away, from Utah, New Mexico, and Navajo Nation. Currently, we use the Church facilities down the street and they’ve been so gracious in offering that large space for assembly time for our student body. Every week, the church prepares a lunch for our students.

Issues existed between the charter schools and the district that had not apparently influenced the school reform process simply because the charter schools have that autonomy and are not bound to the desires and whims of traditional school boards that sometimes don’t have the “real” interest in or for particular populations such as the students at SWOS. An administrator explained the tension:

The district has been “semi-cooperative” with us although they are not pleased to have charter schools. There’s a feeling in the state that charters are somehow in competition for students they didn’t want anyway. They [districts] like the fact that charters aren’t pulling monies from regular education. However, the districts want all the monies to go into their budgets to distribute as they see fit. That’s the sentiment. Battle Rock is another charter in the district; it is a one-room, one-teacher K–6 charter school that fills a niche in the community. The district had planned to close the school, and the community challenged them with the charter because they didn’t want to have their kids bussed out to other schools. This charter school serves a purpose like SWOS, but we are not favorably looked upon by the district because of dollars.

Cultural and Geographical Landscape

The Cortez area is in the geographically remote Four Corners region of the state. Bounded by four states, Utah, Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico, the region is rich in culture and history with a blend of unique ethnic cultures, Ute Mountain Ute, Navajo, Anglo, and Hispanic. Anasazi history is preserved in the 1000-year-old dwellings situated in protected lands in the Mesa Verde National Park, the main tourist attraction in the area. The “ancient ones” left the area long before the Ute Bands and the Plains Indians roamed the mountains and vast rolling plains of what is now Eastern Colorado.

According to the stories and legends of early Spanish priests and travelers, and the Hispanic and Ute oral historians, the Spanish traded horses to the Ute people living in the Dolores River Valley for assistance in looking for a short cut on their way to California to visit the missions. There are historical chronicles of early settlers who settled in the lush, fertile Montezuma Valley instead of going on west. Water was abundant in this valley providing the primary resource that eventually turned the region into a Mecca for agricultural enterprise.

Cortez is a small rural town of about 7,000 people, bordered by two reservations, Ute Mountain Ute and Navajo. The area is typically low-income: jobs pay poorly and are difficult to find. Youth employment and recreation are limited, so cruising Main Street and partying occupy most of young adult's leisure time. Few youth go on to college. Seasonal tourism and agriculture fuel the economy.

Tribal Community

The Ute Mountain Ute reservation lies in Southwest Colorado, Southeast Utah, and Northern New Mexico. Ute people moved onto 597,000 acres of tribal lands over 100 years ago and at that time, the Ute Nation divided into two bands in two communities and two states. The Weenuche reside in White Mesa, Utah and the Ute Mountain Ute live in Towaoc, Colorado. Currently, the Ute Tribe has 1,876 members, the majority are in their early twenties and younger.

Historically, the Ute Nation roamed throughout Colorado, Utah, and New Mexico in a hunter-gatherer society, moving with the seasons for the best hunting and harvest. Increasing numbers of European-American immigrants moved into Plains Indian lands and in the late 1800s. A treaty was signed with the United States that forced the Ute Nation onto reservation lands where they currently reside. After more than 100 years of no tribal rights to natural water resources on tribal lands, the Colorado Ute Water Settlement Act of 1988 allowed the Tribe to bring in the first piped drinking water to the reservation and irrigation water to the Ute Farm and Ranch project.

Tribal economy. Geographical isolation means there are no cities nearby to provide services for the tribe. Becoming economically stable has been a long-term goal of the Tribe, and they have looked for other means of implementing progress and creating successful enterprises. The natural resources of the land provided the Tribe with income from oil and gas wells, cattle grazing, and the new farm and ranch project. The Ute Mountain Ute Tribe is an entity that directs and manages a number of Tribal, Federal and State programs and has been successful in developing profitable businesses. Tribal enterprises include tourism, gaming, construction, convenience store, agriculture, and pottery.

Today the tribe employs over 900 people in its enterprises and departmental programs and is the second largest employer in the Four Corners area. The Ute Tribe opened the Ute Mountain Casino in September of 1992, creating 271 new jobs in the Four Corners area. When the Casino opened, over 50 percent of the employees were Native American, currently, 78 percent of the 372 employees are Native Americans. The Tribe established the Ute Mountain Ute Gaming Commission in 1991 to regulate and control gaming on all reservation lands for the Ute Tribe. Casino revenues are allotted to Tribal Programs and Operations, Education, Economic Development and Social and Family programs. Three additional businesses have been opened as a direct result of the Casino's success, the Casino Shuttle, the Sleeping Ute RV Park and the Casino Day Care. Some tribal

enterprises were also funded in part by a BIA Indian Business Development Grant and Economic Development funds.

Ute Mountain Tribal Park was organized through a non-profit foundation set up with the support of the Tribe and the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs to protect the Anasazi ruins and environment. Managing tourism is the Tribes approach to protecting natural resources, preserve the historical ruins and environment, and to provide visitors with a unique educational experience while on Tribal lands. In 1970, the Tribe opened a pottery factory outlet in Towaoc and employs 24 people, 90 percent of which are tribal members. The White Mesa wholesale pottery plant averages 8-9 jobs and has been in operation since January of 1994. The tribal pottery outlet produces approximately 50,000 pieces a year that are displayed and sold in the outlet showroom. Wholesale pottery is also offered through a catalog service.

The Ute Tribe has also developed a variety of education and recreation programs for children and adults including summer programs for youth, Johnson O'Malley educational services/tutoring and school supplies, Head Start, Day Care Centers, Sunrise Youth Shelter, and Adult Education. The Tribe established numerous health and human service agencies and organizations in the Towaoc and White Mesa communities to provide housing, health, rehabilitation, nutrition and food distribution, and family counseling assistance to Tribal families.

District Profile

Montezuma-Cortez School District RE-1 has 3,474 students attending seven elementary schools, a pre-K school, a middle school, and two high schools. Two charter schools serve elementary and secondary students, Battle Rock and SWOS, respectively. According to Colorado Department of Education statistics database for public school districts, ethnic groups represented in the district were comprised of the following: Native American 22 percent; Asian and Black >1 percent; Hispanic 11 percent; and White 66 percent. Native American students had the lowest graduation rate and second highest dropout rate (9 percent) next to Hispanic students (9.8 percent). In 1998, no Ute students graduated from the district high school. The district has a Title IX program that provides tutoring and other academic services and cultural activities to the Native American students.

Every year the district publishes a report for the Ute Tribe that presents the statistical information based on their children's academic performance, graduation, and drop out rates. It is a detailed report describing the performance comparisons of Ute students with other Native American students and the general student population in the district. In a recent report, extremely low proficiency rates for Ute students in third grade were reported; these scores were even considerably lower than other Native American students in the district (see special education section of this report). The Education Coordinator for the Ute Tribal Education Office reported that this document was an essential component to tracking the students and it provided a clear "paper trail" for the successes and failures of Ute children in schools.

There is a huge disparity between the student expenditures in SWOS and other Cortez schools and the Telluride community. The principal said, "The local school district spends less than \$4,000 per student while Telluride schools spend \$8,000 on each student in their schools."

Teacher Profile

In 1999, Southwest Open School had 18 employees, a principal, and 13 professional staff, including eleven certified teachers, a special education teacher, art and health specialists, one support staff, a counselor, a nurse and two paraprofessionals. Several student teachers each year complete their certification at the school. All the teachers at this school are experts in core content areas and many have extensive experiential education and outward bound/wilderness expertise. New teachers are mentored by master teachers to assist them in developing curriculum, and projects, lesson plans, and related materials. A report in which the principal was asked to describe SWOS staff said:

The SWOS staff are a diverse, dedicated, hard-working, intelligent group that teaches, counsels, advises, writes curriculum, leads adventures, implements new programs, works at community outreach, serves on community agency boards, accesses services for youth and families. They write grants, manage a charter school, maintain the facility, put gas in the vans, collaborate with the world, and do anything else that comes along.

Teachers and other staff members have organized teams to resolve issues and make decisions for the charter and general purposes of managing a charter school and its facilities. Since ELOB, additional team groups were established for consensus building and decision making for a number of purposes. The principal offered the following description of these teams:

We are so small that we function primarily as one large team. With the adoption of ELOB, we have formed three Critical Friends groups with five or six people, and one leadership team with seven people.

Teachers have had to learn to deal with the complexity of issues the students bring with them to school. Some of the teachers described how this process was for them when they first came to SWOS:

I don't know if you can prepare yourself for teaching this student population; it's something you have to experience, first-hand, to understand how to make it all work. That's the important piece of preservice teaching; getting that multicultural background of some kind in some form. That's the way we learn, and that's the way I learned too. You can talk about the cultural differences and stuff a lot, but until you get in there and experience it — you really don't know what it's all about. Teaching with a mentor really helps. Mentor relationships can give you a perspective about something you're not sure about, and that's helpful when teaching the first time. We pull in a lot of student teachers and some get hired when we have an opening. We don't have much of a teacher turn over here.

Many of the teachers chose to teach at SWOS because they felt alienated by their experiences in mainstream schools. The types of racial stereotyping that existed in those schools disturbed them and set them apart from colleagues. One teacher commented:

I used to work in small schools and basically had gotten really discouraged with the prejudice against certain kids and intolerance and the way that negative attitude was modeled for kids and the way kids picked up on that and turned that into clichés and ways to get at other kids. I started looking for something else and decided SWOS was it. I've been here for a year and love it.

Student Profile

Southwest Open School's student population was 58 percent Anglo, 26 percent Native American, and 16 percent Hispanic in 1999. In October 1997, 115 students were enrolled in the school. The following year 1998, the student count was 142 and by January, the number had risen to 182. Typically, enrollment increases throughout the year as students are expelled from or have dropped out of area schools and transfer to SWOS. Southwest Open School's dropout rate is quite high; 52 of 143 students dropped out in 1998. Many students only stay at SWOS for a short time. Last year, 25 pregnant or parenting teens attended SWOS: 29 students were enrolled into special education, the majority of students lived in single-parent homes, and approximately 60 percent of students lived at or below the poverty level. In October of 1999, the student count was 156.

Many of the SWOS youth are homeless, pregnant, and have been either expelled or pushed out of traditional public schools by administrators because they "don't fit in," they don't look, act or think like "good students," and basically, they are looked upon by the community as those "bad kids." Throughout most of their young lives, these kids were subjected to violence, alcohol and drug abuse, physical, emotional and sexual abuses, and a number of socioeconomic experiences that influenced their outlook on the rest of the world. One administrator described the student body like this:

The student population is diverse and can be considered at risk because income status, family disorganization and dysfunction, school and social failure, chemical dependency, abuse, and teen pregnancy. These kids have unprotected childhoods by becoming an adult too early. Kids get that way by having parents that are divorced and then they are way too responsible for other kids in the family or for having parents that die. Certainly, it's the case for kids who've been abused or neglected in any way. Kids should never have to be an adult at a very young age. I've talked to a lot of kids who have lived out on the streets, who were responsible for younger siblings, even living on the streets. They were only five years old and took care of their younger brothers and sisters while they lived on the streets and their parents did whatever. That is not an untypical story. It's this whole group of kids that has an unprotected or unsupported childhood that then struggles in schools because they don't have someone getting them up in the morning and making sure they get a bath and get off with breakfast in their stomach or go to school with a pencil and finish homework at night. Unsupportive families don't read to their kids. It just doesn't happen. Maybe mom's at work at night and there's a huge absence of fathers in these families. Dads in prison, on the streets, or some kids didn't even know who dad was; that's real common and this is across cultures. Over one-fourth of the population has unprotected kids in this community.

There are also students who are excelling in academics at SWOS. They take advanced math and science courses and conduct research projects that are really quite comparable to college-level work. One such student who takes AP classes said, "I like this school and the teachers. They make me work hard. They encourage me to do better. I get lots of support here at SWOS. It's a great place to go to school."

Students at risk of dropping out elsewhere. When asked what these kids would do if SWOS did not exist, one administrator replied, "Some would go to the district high school, some would

drop out, others would go live with families in other communities and attend a high school.” Clearly, even some students who don’t have some of the other issues going on in terms of unstable families and homelessness have also had marginalized experiences in traditional schools based on the parent and student comments below:

At the other high school, my first day of school, the principal told me, “You either get rid of that blue hair or you go somewhere else, we don’t want you here at this school.”

I just didn’t fit into the traditional student groups, jocks, nerds, or otherwise at the high school and so I decided to come here to Southwest Open.

The principal told me to get out of the school because I have a tattoo. So, I came to SWOS.

I went to the high school but the teachers and principals didn’t like the way I dressed. They treated me badly because I was pierced. So, I left and came here. Their dress code was too strict.

My sons were harassed by administrators and teachers at the other high school. My older son was blatantly punished because he produced what we considered a really well-done research paper about drugs, and the teacher turned him into the principal. After that, they made life miserable for both my boys. I eventually went to the school to try to straighten it all out with the principal and was appalled by the lack of respect and support for students who think differently than these people. Although my son wasn’t promoting the use of illegal drugs, that was the implication of his paper according to the teacher and principal, who never gave my son credit for writing a basically a high-quality paper. They wanted to suspend my son because he had written about drugs, not because he used drugs. He was guilty simply because he had written about drugs. They told me the school board had this “no tolerance” policy. Right after that meeting, I pulled both my sons out of that school and brought them to Southwest Open School. We are extremely pleased with the quality of education our sons are getting at this school. The boys like the school and they’ve made friends; and as long as they continue doing as well as they currently are, they’ll stay in this school.

INVOLVEMENT IN CSRD....

Impetus for Reform

Leadership view. The principal has been at the school for 11 years. She started as a counselor in 1989 when the school had a principal, secretary, 3 teachers, 40 students, and only 1 trailer. She described what the school was like back then:

We were a small alternative school with one trailer and have been at this same site for fourteen years. Until recently, SWOS never had any good long-range plans and no secure facilities. Programs were never secure. It was hard to make any plans because it was always a “here today and not sure about tomorrow” kind of

existence. This got real old for me, and especially, as our student body grew from 40 students to 156. I knew we had to make plans.

Preceding her tenure as principal, students worked on computer-generated worksheet packets, independently and received credits based on the packets. Eight students graduated in 1989, her first year at the school. Since that time, SWOS has grown into a “comprehensive experiential” school. The principal described that transforming process:

We grew out of the worksheet period, it was basically short-term, and grew into field-based activities and project based classes. We work hard trying to captivate the interest of a group that has been pretty alienated by the traditional school system.

Community perception of Southwest. Unfortunately, SWOS and many other alternative schools get a bad rap because they tend to be a “dumping ground,” more than a “real” academic program. As the principal noted:

When the school first started, some things that really happened had a negative effect on the school. The kids didn’t have to work very hard for their credits. It was basically a dumping ground for the kids who had screwed up in the other schools. There was definitely a heavy concentration of troublemakers. This bad image right off the bat was due to those factors. Unfortunately, that image continues to carry over the years and there are still people who would tell you that this is a bad school for bad kids. That image is going away. Anyone who knows us and has been here on campus for more than a couple of minutes doesn’t perpetuate those types of rumors.

Experience with change. Change was not a new concept at SWOS; rather it was largely due to the *culture* of the school that fostered the ideas to move forward with school reform. Since teachers would embrace the changes that grew out of the *charter* structure, it was expected that they also embrace the *CSRD* program largely because of the influx of substantial funding. Before school reform and the charter status, the school had little funding to support program development that was deemed essential to meeting the comprehensive needs of their student population. The principal put it this way:

Before participating in the CSRD program and the charter we had a wilderness program, we conducted science learning in the community and utilized the community as a classroom we did environmental projects with Bureau of Land Management and Park and Forest Service programs. We went from a small school, a 40-students alternative program to a charter school with 156 students.

Initial Needs Assessments

Low graduation rates. Academic skills of incoming students were assessed using the Test of Adult Basic Skills to determine their grade level competency and to enable staff to provide the educational plan that fit the student’s needs. Rarely does a student enter SWOS with skills that “match their corresponding assigned grade,” and many need intensive remediation.

Native American students are especially vulnerable to the limits of conventional education. By twelfth grade, enrollment drops to one or two. In 1998, only one Ute student graduated from the local district, and that was from SWOS. The reasons behind the academic struggles of Indian students are complex. But, comprehensive intervention programs that provide effective services

enabling them to complete school. Challenges are greater for school reform in terms of this population, which is diverse, at risk because of poverty issues, lack of family stability and dysfunction, school and social failure, chemical dependency, numerous abuses, homelessness, and teen pregnancy. The school takes a proactive approach to educating these students. A report described that approach as follows:

It would be easy to focus only on the negative aspects of student's lives and expect overwhelming failure. Instead, SWOS students are remarkably resilient and quite dedicated to earning high school diplomas and making their way into the adult world. Staff likes to think of these young people as "youth of promise" rather than youth at risk as they encourage growth and excellence.

Reading difficulties common. Baseline data were collected by the school, and analyzed by the Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound (ELOB) design specialist, to determine a starting point from which to measure improvement and to identify strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum, culture, and organization of the school. Students are somewhat resistant to standardized tests. Moreover, reading difficulties challenge the students when taking these tests, especially when 54 percent of the student read below sixth grade level. Data from the last three years (1996-99) showed that 74 percent of students are reading below ninth grade, 91 percent of students are below ninth grade level in math, 46 percent are below sixth grade in math, 80 percent of students are below ninth grade in language arts.

Discipline not an issue. Despite its reputation for being a "bad school," disciplinary problems are not prevalent at SWOS because they use "peer culture" to minimize student problems. Many students have had previous discipline problems at other schools before they came to Southwest, but the school culture and the flexibility provided to students mitigates most problems. There is a zero tolerance policy for fights, drugs, alcohol, weapons, and blatant disrespect.

Special education needs. SWOS has traditionally been a non-graded program. Students are not tracked; they are mainstreamed into classes where teachers individualized instruction. The Special Education teacher conducts IEP (Individualized Education Plan) meetings and monitors student progress. Advisors assist 15 students each to help them with "classes, conflicts, and life in general." Special education needs exist among Ute students as indicated in a district report to the Ute Tribe in 1999. Twenty-one percent of all Ute children and 11 percent of other Native American children in the district are certified special education. Statewide assessment scores for third grade Ute students in the district were listed as: two (8 percent) children were *proficient* and 21 (92 percent) were *in progress* while the other Native American children in the district were 31 (31 percent) were *proficient* and 69 (69 percent) in progress.

Model Selection

Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound (ELOB) was the model that closely fit SWOS philosophy, school culture, expertise of a core group of teachers, vision and school reform goals, and in particular, the special needs of students. The fact that the model was conducive to the school became the contributing factor for selecting ELOB according to the participants of this study. After careful review of more than a dozen reform models, SWOS chose ELOB. The process was described in a CSRD report as follows:

We feel this model will enable the students of SWOS to expand on their education through a variety of avenues. With the help of the ELOB model, students will meet more rigorous academic standards and character goals. Curriculum, instruction, assessment, school culture, and school structures will be modified to produce more engaging learning experiences and higher-quality student work. The heart of the model is the learning expedition. Learning expeditions encourage students and teachers to draw upon their own strengths and personal experiences to discover the unknown. Through our wilderness therapy programs, the staff and students have had the opportunity to experience first hand the power of ELOB design principles. Witnessing the emotional challenge of struggling to the top of a high fourteener, or the cooperation and teamwork involved in recovering from a flip in a class IV rapid (white water rafting) had given many of us an insight into the “true nature of learning.” The prospect of bringing these design principles in from the wilderness and applying them to the academic classroom is an exciting prospect indeed.

The vision states that the school will foster academic excellence and success, personal competency and self-efficacy in every student; and they will challenge staff to personal and professional excellence. Southwest Open School provides a supportive atmosphere and a wide variety of services designed to assist and educate area students. Teachers all overwhelmingly agreed that ELOB fit the school culture and philosophy:

The nature of the ELOB model is one that easily was incorporated into the school philosophy because it was very similar to the school culture, philosophy of teaching, and generally, the way we think this population best learns.

What ELOB did for us is that we were kind of an island of uniqueness in this sea of conservative school districts and we were trying to fit into the culture of the area, which is really diverse. ELOB gave us some structure for the things we were already doing. We didn't have guiding questions and ELOB gave us those. Our methodology was experiential based and non-graded. ELOB gave us a place to start — a place to hang our hat on. It gave us a support system that we didn't have before. We had two or three schools around the state that kind of did what we did and we could call them but otherwise we had no support system. ELOB was a support system that allowed us to belong to something. If we had questions, we could call and ask them “what if” questions. It's a really nice support system. ELOB also gave us a vocabulary to work with. We had previously been inventing this thing as we go along and associated with the Association of Experiential Education and Colorado League of Charter schools places that could give us some support. But they couldn't give us as much support as we needed, and most certainly they couldn't provide us with vocabulary, some of the structures we need, like lesson plan guides, and curricula materials and books. ELOB also gave us the process for assessing each other and looking at each others work; the process for revisioning is something we were doing before, but now ELOB gave us the format that made it official.

We already had the caring environment and safe environment; those are things that have always been important to us. We adapted to ELOB easier than most schools. We already had staff willing to jump in with both feet. That's the kind of culture of this place.

The first of these reasons was considered especially important as ELOB is considered the viable method for obtaining these comprehensive outcomes:

- Increased academic achievement in basic skill areas,
- Greater challenge in class work,
- Increased graduation rates,
- Improved teaching and learning practices that are cohesive and relevant to student's lives,
- Improved attendance through interesting and relevant classes,
- Increased parent involvement and buy in,
- Implementation of more a cohesive staff development model, and
- Effective incorporation of standards into curriculum.

Southwest Open School had not previously coordinated any standardized testing of students. Instead, student portfolios were used to measure progress. The charter structure, however, requires the same testing as the district, which is the statewide assessment, the CSAP. Thus, one of the primary reasons listed by the school for CSRD funding was stated as, “to repair this obvious lack of accountability on academic gains, and to show that students do make substantial progress towards state and district standards during their tenure at SWOS.”

Overall, teachers like that the charter and ELOB were a good match for SWOS. As one teacher put it:

We now have the flexibility to change schedules and the school calendar. We have common planning time that wasn't available before the charter and until ELOB brought some structure to our program. The charter has five board members who assist in the process of running the school.

IMPLEMENTATION AND THE NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURE....

Leadership and Teamwork

Southwest Open School's culture has the components many researchers deem essential for successful school reform. The numerous hats “worn” by administrators, teachers and students alike evidence shared leadership. Comments by staff and administrators about the school environment were as follows:

Teachers model shared leadership and the students that have been here for awhile have also learned this behavior and expectations and model that for the new students. The principal has a really strong leadership in terms of vision. She is very good at looking long term and shaping a vision that we want to follow. She also depends a lot on shared leadership and many decisions are made as a faculty as a whole rather than as a top-down situation. It's frustrating sometimes to do it that way because it's not always the most efficient. This year we've gotten so much busier with the reform model that we've gotten much more efficient in cutting to the chase and getting down to business.

ELOB model has a leadership team. We have meetings that act as a way to discuss issues and take back to Critical Friends Groups. We're still working out the bugs on that — who's responsible for that and figuring out roles... Leadership with students has always been really important. The student charter board was started last year before either the charter or the model. We decided we wanted our students to have more voice. That was important especially because our school grew so large recently. The assembly became so large that not all students were comfortable with voicing ideas so we looked for other ways to return leadership to the kids in the realities of a bigger school.

Emphasis on the Learner

ELOB is more holistic in nature and the emphasis is on the learner so there is this personal responsibility to learn. We relate this to the Navajo model of learner that involves “womb learner,” where education occurs all day, everyday, even while sleeping, you're learning. This view takes the educational learning “out of the box.” Motivation is learner-based and culture-based learning is done in a holistic school culture. The desirable culture for SWOS is respect based school culture.

Starting with respect, that's the basic tenet of our philosophy around here. It's all supported to work on respect. A culture of mellowness means to not get up tight with the kids or fight with them. Try to make those things that happen to them in everyday life in school better. We try to make learning one of their choices in life and not something we are trying to shove down their throats. We teach and model for them that you're not only responsible for your own learning and own education but ownership for your environment is also expected. If you look at our so-called at risk population at this school there have been only two incidents of graffiti on the bathroom walls in five years and we don't have people tearing up computers or stealing things because it's part of the culture; this is your stuff and why would you steal your own things and why would you break your own table apart.

It also takes it off our shoulders of having to police our student body.”

Teachers shared their perceptions about the culture:

I like the philosophy at SWOS that you have to build relationships first, because I think that's really true with teenagers today. If teenagers did in fact grow up in a safe secure place and have a stable life then you don't have to do that because they walk into the school trusting you; however, that's just not the reality of most of our kids, so instead of fighting reality we try to just deal with it. I also like the way that faculty works with a common vision rather than a lot of isolated people, which is the traditional model; where the math teacher does what the math teacher needs to do and the English teacher does what the English teacher needs to do, and there is very little coordination from department to department. The larger community/society doesn't want to look at these issues facing kids today.

The most rewarding thing for me is to see students that have come here and have really hated school and have been unsuccessful in schools. Then they come here and love it and want to be here, and feel like they belong and feel like they are accepted.

It only makes sense that schools ought to be for kids. There's so many schools where kids don't want to be and don't feel welcome. Kids feel like they are wanted here.

In a CSRD report, the implication for ELOB supporting and maintaining the school culture was stated as follows:

ELOB offers a whole school, ongoing approach to staff development, where teachers are also learners. Studies consistently show that learning expeditions raise the level of academic achievement in participating schools. Students are motivated to become better at reading, writing, mathematics, and other skill areas in order to produce high-quality original work. The staff plans to align these learning expeditions with district and state standards. Studies show that the power of adventure and discovery creates a school atmosphere where students are more motivated and develop perseverance and self-discipline. Increased attendance and decreased discipline problems are other by-products of student interest in the learning expedition.

Student-Centered Focus

Southwest Open School is dedicated to implementing real experiential based learning that incorporates critical thinking and comprehensive understanding into student work through project based classes. An administrator told why it is so critical to provide special services to this population:

Students often enter SWOS with substantial gaps in their academic skills. It is not uncommon for an incoming student to score at a second or third grade level in basic skill areas. At risk, populations are being served in elementary schools; however, middle and high school are kicking them out of everywhere. They're already starting the bounce around process probably by elementary school. It's just because they have huge abuse issues; they're angry or they're unmanageable because nobody's ever taught them to manage anything. When they're little and you can just pick them up and drag them off wherever you want, it's not a big deal, but when they're 13 and they're big, that's a problem. And that's when families start getting rid of them or shuffling them around.

SWOS offers programs that are quite different from those at the traditional area secondary schools. The school focuses on building the academic and personal strengths of students and fosters resiliency through “mentoring relationships and meaningful education.” Self-advocacy skills are learned by students to enable them to become “contributing members of the SWOS family,” and the larger community. Disenfranchised youth often find “purpose and meaning” through their experiences at the school. Disciplinary problems are a “rarity,” largely because of student “buy in” to the school philosophy and programs. No expulsions or suspensions occurred during the 1997-98 school year.

One teacher provides this overview of the importance of wilderness trips for these students:

Wilderness trips involve the whole class designing the trip. We go out on a three-week intensive and a four-day trip to prepare the kids for the longer one. This component fits well with ELOB and our teachers know how to do this well. Another teacher did cross-country snowshoeing last year with students. The trip builds

confidence and self-motivation for kids because nobody gets you up the trail except yourself. These trips and classes help the students grow. The environment itself having more freedom and really stressing that with freedom comes responsibility is a message that says, "Look at the really neat things we do and we're able to do these things because we trust you to do what you need to do and not push it and not cause problems."

A Focus on Cultural Differences

Some of the challenges to teaching in alternative programs with such a diverse ethnic populations are attributed to cultural differences. Students come from such a variety of backgrounds and family situations that culture is the defining element that sets them apart in the classroom and in society. According to teachers, they experience more challenges in the classroom:

The challenges for me are the combinations of diversity in the classrooms. You might have an economically disenfranchised white student with somebody from the Ute or Navajo tribes. They all perceive the world in such a different way; so trying to teach a diverse group like that is probably the biggest challenge to me. Even though Navajo and Ute are both Native Americans, their perception of life is so different in terms of the paradigm of the world. I once read that the life expectancy on the Ute reservation was 35 years of age. The Ute students have a "so-what-I-don't-care," kind of an attitude because there's so much abuse and alcohol abuse and neglect going on around them that what we're doing here seems so trivial. Sometimes the students don't care and that comes into the classrooms. It's hard to care about learning if their dad was drunk last night and beating up their stepsister or something like that. It's real tough to be focused and all [in school or a job].

It's hard to adapt math to a hands-on activity based learning expedition. It's a real challenge. ELOB helped me with that. I was told that all the ELOB schools are struggling with that. Math is the hardest to do that with. I also like ELOB because the weakest part of the school has been that they don't offer enough challenges for higher-level students and especially not in terms of the college-bound students. The school has done a really good job of taking kids with very low skills and getting them up and getting them more confident and preparing them to be functioning citizens, but not sure that we've helped our higher level students very much. In terms of the type of problem solving and being able to think independently, we've done that very well. Those skills such as how do you do a footnote have been skipped over here. Looking at how to raise standards and still meet the needs of our lower-skilled kids is the challenge.

In terms of physical space and staff since the school grew, we added a few staff and that made a huge difference in our communication. We found that tipped the balance to getting into one room and having an effective meeting. We need more space now.

ELOB stresses lots of flexibility so in a sense you're using the model by adapting it to your situation. I've made some adaptations in some classes when I realized that project-based idea doesn't always work. For example, basic math class addresses the need to just do math, not projects, because the students have problems doing a

project if they don't know the math the project requires them to know. Once we get them into high-school-level math, then we can start doing more of the project-based math. ELOB in theory would always be a project-based curriculum, however, there are certain situations where that just don't work.

The difficulties that Ute and Navajo kids have in the traditional school is the lack of flexibility and lack of true acceptance. With our relationship building, we have really always been good at welcoming a diverse student population. We're really modeling for the kids that we not only tolerate we accept and celebrate diversity. There's a difference. It is not just semantics; there is a different feel and environment that is not present in some other schools. Flexibility is in terms of attendance. That seems to have been a big issue for many students in the Native cultures and their extended family is so important -- and if someone is sick, ill or dying or if there is a death, and they need to leave for a week or two to go be a part of the family, in the regular school that's seen as absenteeism and they're expelled for it. While here, they may not earn credits in their classes but they can still come back to school. We don't kick them out. Small things like that make a difference to them.

The tribe hired me to teach literature and culture classes for the Safety Net program. I've been working on school reform since 1970s. Elders teach language and values in school because it creates a presence of tribal importance in schools for our students. Retaining language in tribal communities is a priority. The Navajo Head Start teaches language and other tribes have worked with schools to develop Head Start program that develop language skills effectively, for example Taos teaches Tewa. At one local school there is nothing going on in terms of language and culture classes. I used to teach Spanish, Ute, and Navajo language and culture in that school 20 years ago in 1978, but no longer.

Youth Voice and Leadership

Southwest Open School has a Charter Student Governing Board that meets with the regular charter advisory board to make decisions and policies for the school. Student board members sit on different committees and teams to represent the peer student body in critical decisions made about students and managing and operating the school. As one teacher put it,

ELOB stresses student leadership, the responsibility for learning is a major design principle, some kids take to that and want to run with it. It's really hard for others because they've been so trained to be passive where somebody will tell them what to do and how to do it. It's pretty hard for them to start to think independently and see it as their job rather than someone else's. Student growth in getting more willing and able in taking more responsibility and be more self-motivated are important concepts in ELOB.

Southwest Open School is an open school; meaning it's by choice that kids choose to be here. Policy decision making by students is required and is a credit class each term that kids get "pretty darn good at the end of 4 to 6 terms of decision making processes." The principal offered this example:

Currently, the student charter board wants to raise the minimum credit requirement because they feel like a lot of people are not living up to their potential or are slacking off in classes; and these students are ruining it for everybody. And it does happen some. Students have the authority to change this policy. First, they have to bring it to the whole student body by presenting it to community groups, which is a smaller version of the student body, where everyone has a place to talk and teachers facilitate the conversations. The community groups come back to the charter board and each group has a representative from the board, and they'll present what their community thought. If there is an overall consensus, and everyone agrees, then the student charter board will go to our charter school board and make that recommendation as a policy change.

Another responsibility of the student board has is to facilitate the school assembly each week at the nearby church. Each week, the team presents communication norms that are expected from all those attending the assembly. Respect was clearly the primary message sent by the students observed at a recent assembly at SWOS. Expectations included respectful communication by the audience and presenters when interacting with one another, good listening skills, and especially respect for others while debating sensitive issues. Student leaders gave directives to peers and teachers, such as, "Listen, and if you talk, use respect," and "The speaker has the floor."

Student community groups meet and organize their presentation and decide the topics they will publicly discuss. One Community group presented a political topic about criminal issues associated with presidential candidates. Both liberal and conservative views were addressed. The students used posters and handouts and they talked about the research projects and papers they had worked on for a particular class they were taking.

Gallery Day

At Gallery Day, students highlighted both individual and team projects in an all-day series of public presentations at the nearby church. The event was attended by parents, community members, and teachers. Based on ELOB project-based learning expeditions, each student described the places they visited and what they learned. For one such project from a geometry class, students built balsam wood bridges and towers to see whose bridge could hold the most weight.

Another class, World Builders, studied astronomy, botany, microbiology, meteorology, and marine biology, and created their own "world."

In a psychology class, students conducted a "becoming a researcher" project. They researched various topics on the Internet and in the library at the local state college to complete an independent research paper. They had to cite references and sources in their papers. Students described their research papers briefly; one student explored dreams, a spiritual journey, and self in his paper. Together students wrote and performed a one-act play to demonstrate their knowledge learned in that course. The play involved a scene at a mental institute with patients that had an array of mental disorders. Two doctors were making their daily rounds while one really dangerous and "deranged" patient was killing off all their patients, each with a different mental disorder.

Students in the Cultural Assimilation class shared their expedition experiences by presenting guiding questions about cultural assimilation, "What is a cultural shatter belt? How does geography affect symbolism in Navajo Art and Culture? And how does geography define culture? They talked

about the “creation journey” and how chaos and culture could be understood by using the “medicine wheel/four directions/four colors that are symbolic icons in Native American cultural traditions and belief systems.

Navajo Country class shared what they had learned through a slide presentation and gave detailed descriptions about their visit to see a medicine man that conducted a sweat ceremony for the students; they learned how the sweat was a way to heal the community through ceremony and for the purpose of regenerating the spirit.

Teachers and students assess the Gallery Day presentation based on rubrics for content knowledge, ELOB design principles, and core practices. Teachers and students used rubric sheets to “grade” student/peer presentations. Students were assessed on the quality of their individual research and good teaming values demonstrated throughout the presentations. Questions were raised for each team to answer individually by peers and numerous teachers; most of these students were able to respond with the ease and composure of a “veteran” presenter that testified to experiences in standing before an audience of peers.

Clearly, Gallery Day was an event that demonstrated the student’s academic work, their personal and team experiences conducting a variety of ELOB projects and extended field expeditions that “pushed the envelope” on teaching and learning beyond the four walls of the classroom for teachers and students alike. Comments made by students and teachers were as follows:

I’ve never done this type of classes or presentations at other schools. I think it’s a great idea and is worthwhile for other schools to do this type of instruction.

My greatest challenge as the instructor for this class was that I greatly underestimated how much we can do. I never really understood what students could do until this class.

Trust, team building, community team work are all important skills and finding a way to do that is a meaningful project and lesson. It’s what we focus a lot of energy on in this school. We’re proud of these kids. They really do well.

Safety Net Program

Many students have been extremely disenfranchised in mainstream schools and in other ways throughout their lives. Thus, they were unable to adjust and function even at SWOS and needed alternative programs that were “safe environments.” The principal applied for expelled student funding from the state to develop a Safety Net Program that served as a transition program to “keep kids in school and move them gradually back into the charter school program to graduate.” The principal said, “We started the Safety Net Program at SWOS two years ago. Basically, we start where the kids left off at the other school.”

The Ute Tribe approached the principal about implementing an additional Safety Net program for their youth in the Towaoc community. The tribal education office liaison officer refers tribal members to SWOS and the Safety Net Programs. The Tribe funded the program with \$60,000. The Tribe wanted the program in-house at the Tribal Center where they also had access to additional services such as day care, counseling, and rehabilitation services. SWOS teachers and the principal had this to say about the process for developing this program:

The Safety Net Program requires a different structure because it is a transition program, and we recently implemented an additional one based on tribal students' needs for an alternative program. Some of the kids were expelled from Cortez Middle School and they had no other place else to go. One 14-year-old boy had really low self esteem; when he first arrived in September he hung his head and now he is holding his head up and walking straight and tall. He had a tough family life and now he is working out and shooting hoops and doing lots of physical activities. That's also part of our program here. We have to work a lot with these kids to get them to trust us and to enable them to sit in a regular classroom environment and learn content.

At first, the Tribal leader was against the Safety Net program and the alternative school. But now the grandson goes to school at SWOS. Everyone's perception, even the tribe's, has been, "Troublemakers go to this school."

The Safety Net middle schools kids' retention rates are poor, attendance is sporadic. This is due mostly to angry kids, kids not ready for freedom and responsibility that goes along with freedom. Their trust level is shaky at best and the carrot is freedom for most kids, kids who are developmentally mature. Towaco's one- room "school" has drawbacks. First, we have a multiage and multilevel needs' group, which makes it difficult to meet all the needs of each student. The range of students is from middle to high school; one 16-year-old student has four credits and a 24-year-old student has only a half-credit left to graduate. I'm working very intensely with four boys, ages 14-15, in seventh and eighth grades. We have young women in this program, but they come and go, and I'm not sure why their attendance is generally bad.

Limited Resources

Inadequate facilities and equipment continue to be an issue.

This has been a stressful year with everything going on. Not having enough rooms can stress people out and make things a lot harder. The school is currently beyond the physical realities of our population and programs. Getting a plan into place for new facilities is going to be a huge issue for us. Currently, we are negotiating with the district to buy land behind school to expand classroom space; plans include buying two more portables next year. One of our classes last year created a plan for new buildings and sports fields and eventually we'd like to have funds to build everything in that plan. Like the theater — I love to do that, but we don't have the space. We also wanted to open a cafeteria as an expedition of running and planning a food service business. We are really restricted by facilities here. It's hard for a science teacher to do lab-based classes when he doesn't know what room he's going to be in from one day to the next.

Computers too, everyone is making all these plans for classes to use the computers and there's only two classrooms with all the computers in them so we have to fight over them. If we could just continue to build more facilities. It's important that we continue to work really hard to get technology for all of our students. So many of

them are from families that don't have computers, and it's such an important skill and they're so scared of it if they haven't grown up with it. Kids take to computers if they learn early enough but when they don't, they are really intimidated by it, and they'll stay away from it.

Our principal is doing an amazing job in getting grants. We got funds for the weather station, the outdoor equipment for our wilderness trips, technology and graphing calculators in math. It's nice to have those small grants to adjust some of those inequalities that these kids grow up with because they don't have parents who will buy them these graphing calculators or are not able to.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE....

Higher Expectations

ELOB has enabled SWOS staff to use a framework for school reform that created new support systems. The culture at SWOS didn't need fixing, so ELOB design specialist worked on providing materials, lesson plan guides, tools, and rubrics for assessment. A relationship-building foundation was already in place at the school so the training moved into assisting teachers to focus more on literacy, inquiry-based learning projects, and assessments. Six-traits writing training for all core teachers and staff was conducted in 1999. Training enabled staff to address math and to find ways to get the kids doing math at grade level. The other certified teachers, support staff, and principal received training in May 2000 to enable them to support and co-teach learning expeditions. Teachers and principal described the improvements ELOB had brought to their school:

The model fits well within the culture of the school setting, and it gave us structure we didn't have previous to ELOB. The model was a starting place for SWOS to concentrate on and emphasize academics and to begin to connect expeditions to academics and classroom instruction and learning. SWOS had no support system for school reform. Belonging to something was important to SWOS. ELOB provided technical support and training and gave us a vocabulary for what we were doing rather than creating something "new" for what we did. ELOB provides lesson plan guides, curriculum materials, books, and an expeditionary planning guide with guiding questions.

ELOB is looking at raising expectations. Gallery Days has raised expectations. Kids go and see what other kids are doing and I've already seen our kids take more ownership in what they're doing and want to be better because they realize that other people are going to be looking at it. The fact that ELOB stresses authentic work is critical to expectations building. It's not just something you're going to put into a folder that nobody will ever see; somebody is going to see it, and it will have that value. We are trying to change our portfolio system — looking at doing portfolios where they have to present or maybe defend before they move onto the next level. Once again, trying to make it more authentic to them.

We struggled with the assessments for Gallery Day and we decided that the structure was part credit and part celebration of students work and it varies from class to class. For example, I taught a class where they were looking at how to teach math

and we worked with elementary students to teach them math. For Gallery Day, students presented a lesson plan on teaching math. I thought it was a crowning achievement to be able to plan, prepare, and present your own lesson. That showed they had gotten something in other classes more than just to show people what we had done. I like the freedom to decide what is appropriate for our class. Sometimes the wilderness trip class we do is assessed based on the crowning achievement of the trip itself because the kids learn so much. Gallery Day is more telling about it less than the assessment of it. We haven't had well-defined criteria for Gallery Day. The ELOB trainer is assisting us in doing that. At the last training, we developed a rubric defining displays and presentations and aligned these with standards for students to meet. We redefined steps to doing that assessment and we're going to standards-based from credit-based standards at SWOS. Standards will be earned not by a set of classes but based on the standards such as a type of speech learned by doing a speech, writing it, and oratory experiences.

Professional Development

ELOB training has helped me to see steps to get students to take on more responsibility and motivation toward learning. By modeling what you want from them, you see them improve. Before I came to this school, I threw things at kids when they really didn't have a model to follow. ELOB has helped a lot for me to learn to show them and work with them through a process and try to have everything planned out; to do it all together, the next time with guidance, and then the next time they do it all by themselves.

We need to have ongoing ELOB training. It's so easy to go to one training and then it gets lost. It's been great this year with ELOB. We had a definite weakness of types of professional development in the past and that makes it difficult to bring about change as quickly as we would like; however, when we're really well-grounded in ELOB in three years, then we'll feel more comfortable with all the new ideas and concepts and how all that works in the classroom. Going to conferences after the ELOB training is over will be necessary.

Behavior Contracts

School leaders find that before the ELOB model can be successful, they still must address a number of social issues. As one teacher put it,

Kids have social and emotional needs that need tacked as well. The drinking and violence is the prevalent model for kids instead of parents modeling doing well in school and getting an education. At first, parents were difficult to deal with and middle school kids are the hardest to reach. Absenteeism is prevalent. There's no retention of kids; it's like a revolving door for expelled kids. There's lots of anger in these kids that is targeted at me. Disrespect is a problem with some kids. I had one student spit on me. That's a difficult situation for any teacher. I try to look at it in terms of the kid, I see a young man who doesn't know how to deal with social situations with others, and he's frustrated and doesn't know how to deal with his

frustrations. He has no guidance from home or a role model to model or coach him except me and a few elders who interact with our kids here in this program.

Middle school, in particular, presents a “crossroads” point for adolescent youth who have unstable family lives. Two middle school students discussed their experiences in schools attended previous to SWOS. An eighth grade boy said, “Teachers taught the same thing in the same way every day and it was so boring. Math and science problems were especially boring. I did like basketball at that school.” Another tenth grader commented, “I had eight different teachers everyday and they all annoyed me because they talked too much and asked too many questions.” A seventh grade student said, “I was always in the discipline room, daily in the other schools.” Another student said, “I just didn’t go to school until this program [Towaoc] started.”

Then they all signed the “Learning and Expectation Contract.”

Parent and Community Involvement

Another challenge has been getting parents and the community involved to enhance the program activities, benefit the kids, and fulfill the standards and the spirit of comprehensive reform. Teachers offered the following comments.

Parent involvement is pretty poor partially because it’s that way in all secondary schools and partially because of the population we have in which many of these kids don’t have very stable homes. Another reason that I can relate to is that teachers have a real fear of getting parents involved. Sometimes it’s so much easier not too. It’s sort of threatening to put you in the position of being potentially criticized, and we’re just scared of that. ELOB has helped us with that with Gallery Day. It’s been really neat to see parents coming to that and being involved in a positive way. Not many parents are involved in a daily way. Part of that is that’s not where our [teachers] energy has gone; instead, all of our energy goes to kids. There’s also the fact that teachers see some parents as the enemy. There are times when you [teacher] see that some of the kids have gone through so much stuff that you don’t feel very good towards the parents. It’s difficult to be polite to a parent that is really hurting their kid.

Community and family involvement is one of the things that we have actually been rated the lowest on from the ELOB trainer. I know that I don’t do enough because we don’t do it enough here. It varies from teacher to teacher and there are some people who are much better than others in getting more people into the school. We’ve tried to bring in mentors and bring in experts; that’s a big thing with ELOB to bring in community members to classes that fit what they do. Some of the classes have tried to do this, but it’s definitely something that we need to do more of. In part, our isolation contributes to the school being less visible in the community than other schools are. We tend to sit over here and do our stuff and be pretty self- sufficient.

The church coming in last year [recently built] down the road from us, sort of adopted us and they let us use their classrooms and the large room for assembly. I produced a play last semester and we used their space because we don’t have a place large enough at the school to do performances. They [church] do a power lunch every week and feed the whole school. That’s been a tremendous thing for the kids to

see people who welcome them enjoy them and value them. I try to find ways to thank them. The church has really reached out to the kids and us. We've really tried to build that relationship and we've certainly used everything they've got. We try to also get the kids to recognize how neat this relationship is as well.

The ELOB model provided the school with some strategies for involving families and community members in the life of the school, especially as a way to enable students to interact more with key players. Community resources, particularly parents, were incorporated into the learning expeditions. Parents were invited in to share career experiences with students or present expertise in a hobby, interest or business enterprise, and others told about the traditional ways and beliefs of the Navajo and Ute people.

ELOB “forced SWOS to cooperate with the community” rather than to stay stagnant in an isolated place. The ELOB expeditions, teamwork, and character development components, the charter school structure, and ownership of the school are concepts that most parents have been well received.

The principal had this to say about parent involvement:

Parent involvement varies in different households. Upwards of one-third to one-half of our students live on their own or don't live with parents. They live with friends or in foster care or whatever. Kids have been pushed out of schools and their homes in many cases; it all goes together. My theory is that if there is somebody at home who backs you up, then you can stand up to almost any kind of pressure at school or work or wherever or out on the streets in peer groups. If you don't have anyone at home who is backing you up, you're an easy target because you're vulnerable; you are disconnected and you are angry. You're probably not a good problem solver either, and,...you get pushed out of other places too.

School leaders also found that they had to make the first effort to get parents involved:

Some parents visit schools but too many don't. This is because a lot of our parents haven't had good experiences in the schools. They've been told all through the years that your kid is not keeping up or your kid is lazy or your kid is not going to make it and your kid is a trouble maker and what not. Parents tend to shy away from those kinds of parent-teacher conferences. We don't do any of that, and if we have kids who need intervention, we call parents and try to set up meetings to try to address the problems whether it's attendance or behavior problems. We conducted a parent survey on the first Gallery Day, 6 parents attended. They liked Gallery Day. You can see how the kids just shine in front of their parents showing them what they've done and what they've learned and whom their friends are

Some families don't know how to negotiate with the schools. They don't know how to go in and get a good teacher for their kid. All parents, or almost all parents, love their kids and want them to do well, but some just have more advantages than others.

SITE 3 DATA: SPIRIT LAKE NATION FORT TOTTEN, NORTH DAKOTA

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT....

Native Americans in North Dakota

The North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission compiled statistics (1997-1999) on Native American students throughout the state and reported:

North Dakota ranks as one of the top 20 states with a significant enrollment of Native American student populations in the country with 10,734 students enrolled in BIA, Tribal, and Public schools in the state. Native American students constitute approximately 8.9 percent of the total North Dakota enrolled student population. By ethnicity, Native American comprises the second largest group of students in North Dakota.

For many of these students, the dominant culture of the public school is incompatible with their own cultures and languages. There are differences in distinct and various ways of acquiring knowledge, forms of communication, familial structures, and sociological, cultural, and linguistic modes learning of Native learners that can cause problems for Native American students in the school environment.

Socio-economic issues also complicate the learning environment as well. The consequences are low achievement scores, high dropout and transfer rates. For example, the 1999 dropout rate for Native American students statewide was 42.2 percent. The economic conditions of many Native communities reveal high incidences of poverty, unemployment, and health problems for Native children and their families. Many native families move to the urban settings for employment and economic reasons.

There are four federally recognized Tribes and one Indian community in North Dakota including the following: Spirit Lake Tribe, Fort Totten, ND (Enrolled members 4,300); Standing Rock Tribe, Fort Yates, ND (Enrolled members 13,000); Three Affiliated Tribes, New Town, ND (Enrolled members 8,700); Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, Belcourt, ND (Enrolled members 28,000); Trenton Indian Service Area, Trenton, ND (IHS User Population 1,800).

A recent report by the Commission reported data collected by the state and federal agencies that facilitate funding and programs for Native American populations in North Dakota listed these socio-economic statistics:

- In September 1998, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated the North Dakota Indian population to be about 30,000 – 5 percent of the state's population. Only one county (Kidder) reports no Indian population in the Census update.

The 1990 U.S. Census data estimated 41 percent of the Indian population live off-reservation in nearby communities or in urban centers.

- Indians are young and increasing at a rate of about 2.1 percent per year. It is reported that Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa is increasing at about 10 percent per year.
- The average age for Northern Plains Indians is 18 years old as compared to North Dakota average age of 35 years.
- Forty-three percent of American Indian population is under the age of 20 years – about 13,000 Indian children in North Dakota.
- Poverty rate for Indians in North Dakota is more than three times the rate for North Dakota All Races population – 38 percent compared to 11 percent.
- In the Northern Plains, the Median Household Income for Indians is \$12,310 as compared to the U.S. All Races of \$30,056.
- Indians are nearly three times as likely to live in households without plumbing facilities as the general North Dakota population.
- Unemployment varies from reservation to reservation but averages 63 percent for North Dakota Indians as compared to the U.S. rate of 4.3 percent.
- Seventy-eight percent of young Indian women, ages 14-24, are at high risk for contracting the HIV/AIDS virus.
- Indian youth ages 15-24 years old have a 382 percent higher suicide rate than U.S. All races rate – 67.5/100,000 compared to 17.7/100,000.
- Poverty rate for Indians in North Dakota is more than three times the rate for North Dakota All races population - 38 percent compared to 11 percent.
- In the Northern Plains, the Median Household Income for Indians is \$12,310 as compared to the U.S. All races of \$30,056.
- Indians are nearly 7.5 times as likely to live in households without adequate sanitation facilities as the general North Dakota population. *NDIAC 97-99 Biennial Report*

Approximately 57 percent of the T.A.N.F. caseload in North Dakota is American Indian families.

- Unemployment varies from reservation to reservation but averages 55 percent for North Dakota Indians as compared to the U.S. rate of 4.3 percent.

In a recent report listing North Dakota death statistics for Native American population compared to the All-Race population. Based on primary cause of deaths these statistics revealed some disturbing facts that point out the extreme hardships that impact school age children and families in Tribal communities:

- In 1993-1997, the average age of death for Native Americans is 54 as compared to the All Race population age of 74.
- Heart disease and cancer related deaths for Native Americans were two times more than the number of deaths related to these diseases for the general population—198/98 and 225/110.
- Diabetes related deaths were more than ten times higher - 150/30.
- Accidental deaths were over four times greater - 130/30.
- Suicidal deaths were almost three times higher - 39/4.

School Context: Spirit Lake Reservation

Spirit Lake Nation (formerly Devils Lake Sioux) was established by treaty between the U.S. government and the Sisseton Wahpeton Sioux Bands in 1867. The Dakota people living on the reservation represent numerous bands including members from Yanktonai, Wahpeton, Sisseton, and various other Seven Council Fires. There are also a small number of Chippewa from the Turtle Mountain Band living in Spirit Lake Nation.

Spirit Lake Reservation is located in east central North Dakota and covers approximately 405 square miles primarily in Benson, Eddy, Nelson, and Ramsey counties and spans 245,141 acres (Spirit Lake Nation web page). Fort Totten is the tribal headquarters and primary reservation community. Three other communities within the reservation lands are Crow Hill, St. Michael, and Woodlake. Residents also live in another three incorporated towns situated on Tribal lands—Warwick, Hamar, and Oberon.

Fort Totten is about 13 miles southwest of Devils Lake along the primary state highway 57 that runs through the reservation and has been under water numerous times since the lake floods began in 1995. The reservation borders Devils Lake, the state's largest natural lake, on the north and west. Wooded areas dot the lands close to rivers and lake while the remainder is rolling prairie hills with fertile farm and pasture lands. Devils Lake spans 90,000 acres of area stretched over 200 miles. Ice fishing is a favorite sport on the lake during winter. There are also numerous small lakes on the reservation including Twin Lakes, Spring Lake, Free Peoples Lake, Elbow Lake, and Skin and Bone Lake. Sheyenne River forms the southern boundary of the reservation. The portion of the Sheyenne

within the Reservation is approximately 50 miles long: ultimately the Sheyenne River feeds into the Red river, which flows northerly between North Dakota and Minnesota into Manitoba, Canada. Numerous small streams and springs within the Reservation also contribute flows to the Sheyenne River. In addition, the rivers and streams of the Spirit Lake Nation reservation have substantial areas of associated wetlands.

A state historical site is located on the southeastern edge of Fort Totten. A military post built in 1867 was used until 1890 when it became a boarding school for Indian children. The brick buildings, which replaced an earlier log fort, appear much as they did when built in 1868. Seventeen original buildings are now being used to house the Pioneer Daughters' Museum and other museum exhibits.

In 1998, there were 5,086 enrolled members of the Spirit Lake Tribe. Total population within the Spirit Lake Nation borders is 6,339 representing 350 people from other Native American tribes and 900 non-Indians (Spirit Nation web page; another report states 4,300). In 1998, the BIA reported the unemployment rate as 75 percent (Aberdeen Agency data). In 1990, the average household income was \$14,583 (another report states \$10,833 and non-family house household average was \$5,000 for the same year) and over 62 percent of children and 56 percent of the total population were in poverty; children under five years of age in female households lived in extreme poverty (80%) and kids under 18 years (74%). The current median income is \$18,000 for the area. In 1990, only 52 percent of the population had graduated from high school and 2 percent had a bachelor degree or higher.

Cultural data reported in the school improvement plan by administration stated the following statistics that compare the Native Americans living in the Aberdeen area to U.S. All Races: "Aberdeen area Indians have a 131 percent higher infant mortality rate; they are 1,682 percent more likely to die from alcohol-related complications; and 252 percent more likely to die from suicide.

The primary sources of employment include the school systems, health services agency, BIA, and the Tribe. Sioux Manufacturing and Dakota Tribal Industries are tribal enterprises and employ about 250 people. The tribe also runs a bingo hall and Spirit Lake Nation Casino and Resort, which employ 200 people. A locally owned grocery market has 12 workers.

Tribal housing, low-rent units and HUD, exist in the four major reservation communities in the area. Currently, 300 families are waiting for housing due to the flooding of 100 homes that were either relocated or destroyed in the Devils Lake floods. Bureau of Indian Affairs agency offices, Indian Health Services, and Tribal government offices share facilities in the "Blue Building."

Located in Fort Totten, the Cankdeska Cikana Community College (formerly Little Hoop), named in honor of a WWII hero, has been serving the Spirit Lake Nation communities since 1974. The college is located in the old high school and employs 79 staff. Each year over 300 students attend the accredited college. The college offers associate degrees in Arts, Science, and Applied Science and certification in tourism, casino operation, carpentry, office technology and food service.

The Spirit Lake community lacks adequate access to educational resources outside the school facilities. An under-funded Community Recreation Program provides limited activities and there is no public transportation system available, which makes public resources on and off the reservation inaccessible to many residents because they have no transportation.

District Profile

The Fort Totten school district covers an area of 34 square miles of rural reservation lands and students are bused to the school. Four Winds Community School is located on the far western end of the district, atop a sloping hill that looks out over Spirit Lake Nation tribal lands. The circular school structure depicts two symbols of Spirit Lake people, the life-giving womb of mother earth, and the cross-shaped symbol of the Four Directions.

Built in 1979, the school serves as both the Tate Topa Elementary School, a BIA Tribal grant school with 453 students, and a public high school with 208 students, totaling 661 students in 1999. The district has an enrollment of 208 Native American students for the 1999-2000 school year. The superintendent has been at the school for 12 years. The facilitator has been in the district for 11 years and is from the community.

A total of 95 percent of the student population is eligible for free and reduced lunch. Together, Fort Totten Public School District #30 and Tate Topa Elementary have a superintendent, 2 principals, 66 professional staff, and 60 support staff that manage and operate the schools. Both schools share the same superintendent, whereas each school has a separate school board. Five members belong to the Fort Totten Board of Education, all but one has Dakota Sioux heritage, and the Tribal school board has four members, all are tribal members. Three Native American certified teachers, a principal, a curriculum specialist, and four language specialists and culture, work in the schools. The elementary school and high school developed a Goals 2000 Educational Improvement Planning Grant in 1998.

Four Winds High School. Demographic information and data were accessed from the state's annual school district profile (available on-line) and from the case study protocol school background information sheet, which was filled out by the school support staff.

The Four Winds Community School provides a facility for the Fort Totten Public High School District #30 and Tate Topa Elementary Tribal School (Pre-K-8). The principal has been at the school for seven, (three years as principal and four as special education coordinator). Teachers have an average of 12 years teaching experience.

The number of courses offered since 1997 has increased to 68 from 64. The percentage of students taking advanced math and science classes significantly rose from 0 percent in 1997 to 61 percent for boys and 39 percent for girls in 2000. There was no school improvement plan or other types of accountability plans until 1999. Parent involvement in parent/teacher conferences for grades 7-12 increased from 35 percent in 1997. Professional development days decreased from nine days in 1997 to 0 in 1998, and rose to four in 2000.

More than 95 percent of the high school population is eligible for free and reduced lunch. More than 30 percent of the students in the high school are certified in special education. The high school student teacher ratio is 7 to 1 with a class size of 16. The percentage of pupil turnover in a school year is 29 percent. Fifty of the 208 high school students were in the Alternative Program in 1999; levels included 16 freshman, 9 sophomore, 9 junior, and 15 senior. The average daily attendance rate has declined slightly each year from 90 to 85 percent since 1997. Enrollment retention rate was maintained.

Graduation rates for the past four years ranged from 28 percent to 41 percent and steadily increased the last two years. Thirteen out of the 26 seniors (50%) dropped out of school last year

(1999-2000). The 1990 statistics showed there were about 200 youth ages 16-19 in the reservation area (Benson County) that had not completed high school, were not enrolled in school, and were not in the labor force (1997 Kids Count in North Dakota report).

The percentage of students attending a four-year college increased dramatically from 0 percent in 1997 to 20 percent in 1998, then plummeted to 4 percent in 1999, and dipped even further to 0 percent in 2000. Students attending a two-year college significantly increased from 0 percent in 1997 to 32 percent in 2000. The percentage of students going to a vocational school declined steadily from 36 percent in 1997 to 0 percent in 2000. The number of students going to the work force also declined from 56 percent in 1997 to 27 percent in 2000. The percentage of students entering the military increased from 6 percent in 1997 to 41 percent in 2000, which might bear an explanation for the decline in the other options available for graduating seniors since young adults entering the military can simultaneously attend college.

Although the CTBS (Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills) slightly increased for 10th grade students in 2000 in all areas, the tests scores are considerably lower than the state average, which also increased last year. One of the problems with the testing scores for Four Winds students is that the number of students tested has declined from 50 percent to 25 percent since 1997 (no data was listed for 2000).

During 1997-99, almost 100 school age children, 19 years or younger, were referred to the Spirit Lake Youth Alcohol and Drug Education program for a substance abuse evaluation. Out of these, about 40 received in-patient treatment at state facilities and the others received services from local centers. The number of referrals comprises of about 15 percent of the school population.

In the past five years, teen pregnancy rates have been over 20 percent of the total births in the area. Four Winds has a Parent Program in the high school that serves between 25 and 35 single parents — fathers and mothers — annually.

In 1998, there were 68 juvenile court referrals and 31 unruly behavior cases, 3 assaults, and 18 vandalism incidences reported. According to a Carl Perkins evaluation for the last five years, at least 25 percent of the high school population has been involved with the court system.

Tate Topa Elementary School. The principal was born in the community and has been in education for 20 years, four at this school. The curriculum specialist is Native American and has been at the school for seven years, and the Title I director has been at the school for 27 years.

Based on the Goals 2000 report (1998) for BIA schools, indicators for improvement were achieved in several areas including the yearly retention rates for enrollment increased from 89 percent in 1997, parents attending parent/teacher conferences in secondary grades rose from 35 percent in 1997, and average daily attendance increased in one year from 86 percent to 89 percent in 1998. Goals 2000 Performance indicators for 1998 listed percentages for student level of proficiency in two content areas. These included math (64 percent partially proficient, 34 percent proficient, and 4 percent advanced); language arts (63 percent partially proficient, 34 percent proficient, and 3 percent advanced).

At Tate Topa, daily attendance rate was 98 percent and the enrollment retention rate was 100 percent. Parent involvement grew to 91 percent in the primary grades. The school had 233 incidents of violence and 36 incidents of substance abuse. In terms of technology use, 25 percent of staff were

partially proficient, 55 percent proficient, and 20 percent advanced; teachers utilizing new assessments were 35 percent partially proficient, 45 percent proficient, and 20 percent advanced.

The school implemented the following strategies to facilitate reform:

- Created a cooperative working relationship with the LEA serving high school students;
- Created focus activities to decrease violent and disruptive behavior;
- Developed K-8 performance standards and benchmarks;
- Established a new teacher mentor program;
- Provided extended-day learning opportunities including holiday breaks;
- Revised district standards to incorporate state and national content standards;
- Provided Family Night and Community Dinner events for families;
- Made available child care services for family events;
- Conducted celebrations to present awards/recognition for student achievement, attendance, and other achievement;
- Established a comprehensive curriculum development and evaluation process with reviews; and
- Provided Dakota language and culture instruction and activities.

Tests scores are among the lowest in the nation. Table 3 describes the 1998-99 CTBS (Terra Nova) assessment results and show that Four Winds and Tate Topa students scored considerably lower than the state and national averages.

Table 3.
Student Scores on the CTBS

Discipline	Grade	Four Winds School	State Average
Reading	4	34.4	64.0
	8	32.9	63.6
	10	39.5	63.9
Language	4	34.7	61.2
	8	34.4	61.9
	10	40.1	62.8
Math	4	29.8	61.4
	8	30.6	65.0
	10	36.3	67.8

(Source: North Dakota Department of Instruction, School District Profiles).

Dakota Cultural History

The Sisseton-Wahpeton bands were Dakota (eastern Sioux) and remained in Minnesota and the eastern Dakota region. The word "Sioux" was coined by the French taken from the Ojibwa Chippewa name "Natawesiwak" (also referenced as Nadowesi). The Chippewa name referred to

Sioux as enemies and meant “enemy or snake.” This name was given to Dakota when they resided in the western Great Lakes region. Dakota means friend or ally and is the preferred name.

Several theories concerning the origin of the Great Sioux Nation exist. Many creation stories trace the nation’s birth to the Black Hills of South Dakota. Others say the people of the “Oceti Sakowin” migrated to the Dakota regions from the woodlands of Minnesota. Seven original bands of the Great Sioux Nation were joined in an alliance called the “Oceti Sakowin,” or “Seven Council Fires.” This confederation of tribes spoke three dialects. The Santee spoke Dakota. The Yankton originally used Nakota, but many adopted the Dakota dialect in the mid-1800s. And the Teton spoke Lakota. The Oceti-Sakowin (Seven Council Fires) including the following councils:

- Mdewakantonwan, Spirit Lake People
- Wahpekute, Shooters among the Leaves
- Sissetonwan, People of the Fish Ground (Sisseton)
- Wahpetonwan, Dwellers among the Leaves (Wahpeton)
- Ihanktonwana, Little Dwellers at the End (Yanktonais)
- Ihanktonwan, Dwellers at the End (village) (Yankton)
- Tetonwan; Dwellers on the Plains (Teton)

The Sisseton and Wahpeton are two of the original Seven Council Fires. Each of the Councils was made up of seven Bands, which were made up of Tiyospayes. Seven is considered a sacred number. Sharing a common fire was a tradition among the Oceti-Sakowin councils. Keeping the sacred fire was an important activity on marches; coals from the previous council fire were carefully preserved and used to rekindle the council fire at the new campsite.

As these tribes moved south and west, the dialect and traditional customs changed into Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota. The initial consonant sounds indicate their differences. Dakota and Lakota are still widely used, but the Nakota dialect is almost out of use. Speakers of the different dialects have little difficulty speaking to or understanding each other. The Sisseton-Wahpeton bands use the Dakota dialect.

Although there are members of several bands associated to the Seven Council Fires living on the reservation, two predominant Councils reside in Spirit Lake Nation. The Sissetonwan, People of the Fish Ground speak Dakota and the Ihanktonwana, Little Dwellers at the End; they used to speak Nakota, however, now they are more influenced by the Dakota dialect. Little Dwellers at the End are known as the Yanktonai Council. The general history of the Yankton band described briefly on the Yankton Sioux’s Internet web page states:

The Yankton Sioux lived and roamed in an area, which today encompasses parts of Canada, Wyoming, Minnesota and North and South Dakota. Yankton people were a reflection of diversity in that they had a livelihood of surviving in the forests and lakes of Minnesota, as well as tilling and producing corn on the Great Plains. They also followed the buffalo herds for sustenance and for their teachings of natural law, which are reflected in their traditional spirituality. The Yankton journeyed into the Sacred Black Hills for spiritual rejuvenation and ceremonial gatherings. They practiced a way of life that was based on the rhythm of the four seasons and the honoring of all living beings as relatives. Almost three hundred years earlier, the Yankton Sioux claimed and settled the lands they call home. Beginning as early as 1730, more than 30,000 members of the federation of Sioux

abandoned their places of residence around Minnesota's Lake Mille Lacs for more than 80 million acres to the west. The Yankton claimed the northernmost tract between the Des Moines and Missouri Rivers as far north as the present-day border between South and North Dakota. Yankton is a shortened version of a Sioux phrase meaning People of the End Village.

Culture and Language Issues

As in most reservation schools, the children have language issues pertaining to both English and their native language that complicate learning experiences in school. Parents and grandparents of many students experienced severe treatment concerning language and cultural traditions and practices under the administration and staff at boarding schools. Today, the children are the only ones who can maintain those critical language skills and cultural knowledge, yet they struggle with learning both languages because many don't have the basic language and literacy skills in either language.

The Culture Program director attended the Fort Totten Indian Boarding School until it closed in 1959 and has been at the school for 12 years. He described some of the socioeconomic and cultural issues that exist in Spirit Lake Nation:

Back in the boarding school days, there was respect for authority figures, like teachers at school. Learning was thought of in a better way [back then] than it is today. Contemporary culture is different in schools.

Cultural identity.

It's a problem; our kids today have no sense of cultural identity. That stems from lost of culture, then lost of identity, then loss of values." The guest speaker, Rueben Fast Horse, visiting the schools today had a critical message. He told kids and parents in Head Start and then again, in Four Winds, "Know yourselves; it's critical to your identity. You have to understand your culture and identify with it to be proud of who you are and your heritage as an American Indian." [Another teacher said, "Kids are not interested in learning [their] culture or language because their parents are young parents and don't value culture or language." The school improvement committee also set as an objective, "to motivate high school students to take Dakota Language classes.

There are many community and family structural problems in our reservation. Alcoholism and drug abuse are severe in the community and the parenting structure has suffered because of that. We have dysfunctional families. What I mean by that is, parents have no parenting skills. There's too much violence in community and families and unfortunately, kids have adults and parents who model violent behavior, so kids learn violence from family. Family is based on the strength of extended family and that structure is undermined destroyed by alcoholism and drugs, violence. We have lost close ties, and relationships are lost too, now that money is needed to feed the illnesses, which also destroy relationships.

Dependency is pervasive.

There's a lot of community dependency on the government on the reservation. In the boarding schools, they taught us to be dependent on the government for everything

we had, food or rations and housing, so now we have an extremely pervasive dependency on tribal government for everything. People come to the Tribe for even small things; they asked us to make decisions for them, or to ask what we think about something. These are very simple questions that the normal person would just know based on common sense or common experience but our people have been programmed to be too dependent to even think on their own. Families need the self-confidence to change their dependency into independent thinkers.

Four Winds Culture and Language Program

The structure of Four Wind's culture and language program is to provide students with a variety of courses and programs across all grades, and to build confidence and resiliency in the student population. These range from teaching language, traditions and culture to special education, elementary and high school students, an honor classroom, and a disciplined student classroom. Language classes are offered that cover numerous levels of language acquisition and protocol for interacting with elders; formal and informal context of language.

Program staff are tribal members. Culture and language teachers are educational experts in terms of language and cultural knowledge of Dakota people. In 1998, the culture program director and four teachers developed the Dakota curriculum to utilize in the classes they were teaching at the schools. Although the program director has a Master's in special education, none of the four teachers is a certified classroom teachers, and thus, have no methodology training for formal education the teachers. Instead, they received their certification through the state department of education and tribal offices in North Dakota.

Special education program. The program also serves the 166 special education students (25 percent of total student population) to enable them to participate fully in educational experiences that enhance their talents and academic strengths. The program staff identifies needs of special education students and recently, they implemented an additional wood shop class for special needs kids in grades 3 through 8.

Dakota curriculum guide. The language specialists requested the curriculum guide be revised last year after piloting it for two semesters. Ongoing revision and adaptation of curriculum, assessments are healthy signs of school reform. One of the director's roles is to be a liaison between mainstream teachers and administrators and the culture teachers and the community, especially, in terms of "what's best for the kids." The culture program's four language specialists and director developed the Dakota Curriculum for the culture and language program in 1999. The goals for developing and implementing the Dakota Curriculum and classes were described in the recent school improvement plan as follows:

"To establish K-12 content standards and curriculum in Dakota Language and Culture, Science, Math and English Language Arts, and to create a process for cyclical review and updating of content standards and curriculum. The Dakota Language and culture curriculum is currently in the process of being written and revised to meet K-12 student needs. It is about 50 percent completed and is scheduled to be done by June 1999. Pre and posttests have been developed for the high school class."

Limited English proficiency. According to a 1998 school wide language assessment program, Basic Inventory of Native Languages, 95 percent of the students in grades K-12 were classified as having Limited English Proficiency (LEP).

Culture and language classes. In 1999, culture and language classes were implemented in the elementary school. Currently, there are four classrooms per grade level in the elementary school and one elective course for secondary students in high school, where language and culture are taught weekly. The program supports a student operated Dakota radio program that is bilingual and allow students to practice and use Dakota Sioux language. The Title I director/media teacher teaches it as a speech and broadcasting class. The kids conduct all the radio programs and interview guests on air.

Teaching and learning practices and prescriptions. Consistency with the application of the new curriculum, instructional practices, and incorporating prescriptions into the language and culture program classes is difficult. Part of that problem might be resolved with revision and methodology training for the language specialist. Consistency is a learned patterning skill that is really the function of the prescriptions and can be accomplished by organizing a series of activities, tasks, products, and references to be utilized in the teaching and learning process.

At the time of the final site visit, all of the language specialists had attended Temple University for on-site training sessions, but none were utilizing the prescription system implemented within the Community for Learning Model. The facilitator has maintained a professional collegial relationship with the culture program staff and has been respectful in terms of their educational expertise in language and culture. Part of the resistance is the same as the regular classroom teachers, and that is the amount of time it takes to understand, develop and practice using the learning centers, and prescriptions. Another issue concerns the gap between “professional” staff and non-certified staff. Relationships between these groups is particularly strained because language and culture classes are “viewed as secondary” to the music and PE classes where teachers are aligning curriculum with standards and benchmarks.

Frustrations have existed on both sides; demands of the model on teaching staff were “overwhelming” and at first, the prescriptions were extremely time consuming for regular classroom teachers. One classroom teacher said, “The first time I developed a prescription it took six hours, the second time four hours and then it became more manageable after that.” While some of the classroom teachers have been using lesson plans for a long time, the culture program staff has not been accustomed to being included in on the structural practices that exist within formal educational settings. In addition, the program staff does not have the same level of classroom training or experiences with formal education or curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices as certified classroom teachers.

Community outreach activities. The culture program staff has developed numerous programs and events that enable students to interact with elders like the brown bag lunch sessions where they talk Dakota language with students. A local judge wants to sponsor a community rehabilitation program. There are academic activities, after-school reading program funded by the “Save the Children” program that started in 1988. The director, however, wears several “hats,” so finding time to continue with this program is difficult due to his extended responsibilities and the lack of community involvement. A tutoring program for high school students is in its second year. Four to eight students come to the tutoring session two nights a week.

Families attend parent involvement events and activities that have been successful due to the assistance of the facilitator who helps with this program; she thought of ways to bring in parents. They prepared food and invited families and have an exceptional turnout (100 percent participation) when they did this for four classrooms at each grade level.

Safe and drug free program. Four Winds has a Respect and Protect program that is supported with safe and drug free funding from the state. The school chooses topics from a list of 80 possible topics that state program staff then present to both parents and kids four times a year.

Another program supports outreach activities to bring the community members into the school more often. They invite the public in to use the school resources. They keep the library open during summertime for community use. Parents can read to kids, and they have a reading hour for kids, a story time. A bus picks up families and brings them to the school.

Grants and external funding has been particularly important in developing the programs that fit the needs of their student population. The school applied for a 21st Century grant, (awarded funding in Fall 2000), school to work, and alternative program for their special needs students.

Integrating tribal culture. Only a few regular classroom teachers are integrating tribal culture and language into their instruction and curriculum. The Dakota broadcast and speech class and social studies classes have teachers who feel comfortable and facilitate the culture, history, and traditions into class time or planned school community time. A teacher in the alternative program encourages students in that program to incorporate their culture, history, and language into research projects and writing assignments that are designed by students and teachers. The students participate at their own pace, design their course schedule as a partial day rather than all day, and decide if they will acquire a GED rather than a diploma.

INVOLVEMENT IN CSRD....

Impetus for Change

Four Winds administrators' self-assessment revealed that classroom challenges were exacerbated by the shortage of quality teachers, inconsistent teaching, less-than-rigorous academics, low expectations, inconsistency in educational programs, poor teaching and learning practices, and ineffective remedial social promotion practices. School reform models are addressing many of these curriculum and assessment issues and other school factors that influence student and teacher relationships and performance.

The leadership and organization at the two schools resembled two charting very different courses; each with a different timeframe and both trying to create the magic map that would guide them toward improvement first. This division in leadership and organization did more to hamper than to assist them in achieving the same thing, comprehensive school community improvement for students and teachers. Once that issue was resolved and the school boards agreed to have only one superintendent, communication and collaboration were possible. Notwithstanding, there is still room for "better communication and collaboration between administrators and school board members" from both schools.

New relationships between the Tribal school and the public high school are being supported through funding and goals in the school improvement plan in 1999, the report stated:

The LEA (Four Winds' superintendent is the Local Education Agency) and Tribal Grant School have established and implemented cooperative school improvement efforts during the past several years that have greatly improved the working relationship between the institutions and the services to K-12 students. Examples of these new cooperative efforts include employment of a Curriculum Specialist, Technology Director, Registrar, Title IX (Equity) Coordinator, and grant writers that encompass the needs of K-12 when submitting grant proposals. Several positions are shared between the two schools—job coach, agriculture instructor, tutors, etc. The improvement committees of the LEA and Tribal Grant School work as teams instead of being limited to K-8 or 9-12. The actual K-12 School Improvement Plan is in the process of being revised to encompass the entire school. The high school had previously been working on a plan but started over to include the elementary. The Elementary and High School will work in concert to review and update K-12 content standards and curriculum in Dakota Language and Culture.

Shortage of effective teachers. Based on the goals to improve student performance, the absenteeism and graduation rates, both the administration and families have stressed the importance of hiring high-quality teachers and providing a high-quality professional development program for the teachers in the district and Tribal school. The culture program director reiterated this concern:

We need a higher quality of teachers for core subjects, and because we have a shortage of teachers, this is affecting student scores in math. The students need less drill in textbooks and better quality teaching practice. We can't control how kids do on tests, however, if we have high expectations, and then kids will progress. The culture program staff is non-certified. This year they will do lots more literacy training, while last year they did mostly art.

Child safety and crime. Challenges exist within the school environment that stem from complex and deep-seeded problems that are manifest in reservation communities due to historical situations concerning socio-cultural, economic and political issues. The demographics of the children and community reveal the range of special needs, and in doing so, also show the gaps in support systems that are essential for succeeding in comprehensive improvement. The social and economic problems in the community create an unsafe environment, which in turn, has an immense impact on children.

Tribes generally do not have the necessary resources to provide assistance or develop prevention or intervention programs. The Self-Determination Fund presents some resources for Tribes. However, it does not compare to the tremendous financial needs placed on the community due to alcoholism, poverty conditions, violence, and abuse. Based on increased incidence of child abuse and family violence in reservation communities, additional child protection funds were included in a 1999 BIA Budget to protect children from abuse, neglect, and domestic violence. In states with no youth detention centers, youth are typically sent back into the communities in which they committed the crime. The following is an excerpt from the BIA's budget report:

An increase of \$5 million is requested to replenish the Indian Self-Determination Fund. In response to documented increases in the incidence of child abuse and family violence, the budget includes an increase of \$5 million to help tribes protect children from abuse and neglect, and reduce domestic violence.

As a direct response to an alarming public safety crisis in Indian Country, the budget proposes a \$25-million increase for BIA's law enforcement programs. At the request of President Clinton, Attorney General Reno and Interior Secretary Babbitt last year formed an Executive Committee of tribal leaders and Federal staff to analyze and make recommendations on reducing Indian Country's rising rate of homicide and violent crime.

The committee and the tribes strongly recommended additional funds for long-term improvements in Indian Country law enforcement service. In 1999, \$182.5 million in new and redirected Federal funds are proposed to support law enforcement in Indian country. The BIA will use increased funding for core law enforcement functions such as criminal investigators, uniformed police, and basic detention services. The Justice Department will use its funds for detention center construction and such targeted programs as juvenile justice.

Economy. A recent Goals 2000 report from the school described the bleak economic situation of the community:

Unemployment figures reported in 1998 by the South Dakota Office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, show that seventy-five percent of the [work] force on Spirit Lake Nation is unemployed. This figure indicates that a substantial portion of the population lives below the poverty level. As a result, approximately ninety-five percent of the student population in high school qualifies for the free or reduced price lunch program. Without an education designed to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to complete in an industrial and technological society, the economic future for the young people on this reservation is bleak.

Natural disasters have had impact on the lives of everyone in the area that should be considered when examining the Four Winds school reform process. Particularly close attention should be given to how these situations can undermine the daily process of education.

For almost a decade, Spirit Lake Nation Reservation residents have experienced loss of homes, loss of economic stability, and countless frustrations and problems that are consequential to the rising of waters of Devils Lake. Teachers and staff commuting the thirteen miles to and from Four Winds Community School from their homes in the town of Devils Lake have similar frustrations and problems.

The two lane county road that leads into Fort Totten and the reservation from the eastern side of the lake and the town of Devils Lake crosses "atop" the rising waters of the lake. It is similar to Florida's Key West highway/bridge with the exception that it is not a bridge and the rising waters have washed away the road, making it impassable at times and under construction during much of this past decade.

Since 1993, Devils Lake has tripled its size from a 40,000-acre lake to over 120,000 acres at a cost of nearly \$300 million because of wet weather in the upper Devils Lake basin. In 1992, there were about 42,000 acres of water in the upper basin. By 1997, the worst year of flooding in the basin, Devils Lake had grown to more than 100,000 acres. Wetlands in the upper basin grew to an astonishing 255,000 acres or 250 percent. Crop losses since 1993 have been estimated at \$350,000

per year. Total impacts on the agricultural economy and those businesses dependent on it are considered to be about \$9.5 million.

The problems are wide spread and impact all those living in the surrounding communities in the lake basin. The following is an excerpt from the Devils Lake Journal, the local newspaper, in spring of 2000:

Devils Lake Mayor Fred Bott addressed the economic impacts on the area.

Before the flooding, Devils Lake was a community that kept pace with growth in the states average incomes, sales and we saw a net population gain every year. Since the flooding began we've dropped every year behind the state average and our population is declining because of the flooding and road situation.

Bott, a Devils Lake High School teacher, says his classes quite often discuss current events involving Devils Lake:

We talk about the dike and the outlet. Every year we talk about an outlet, I see more disbelief in their [students'] eyes. They're not convinced it's going to happen. At the hospital they're having trouble recruiting professional staff. People turn down the offers because they don't want to come to the area.

The frustrations run deep for these communities because of the government's slow response to a crisis situation and the fact that there are no easy solutions to fixing the increasingly dangerous situation. The local newspaper reported in March 2000:

Clarence Greene, who leads the Spirit Lake Nation's efforts on roads, doesn't understand why the federal government is threatening to pull future funds for road raises for those sections of roads acting as dikes:

We had to fight the Bureau of Indian Affairs tooth and nail to get the two prior grade raises. They just want to let it go. If we lose any leg of the system we could lose the entire St. Michael area. If we lose any of the roads in that area guys won't be able to get to their land to farm. I don't know what they'd tell their lending agencies.

Greene estimates loss of land could be nearly 10,000 acres. St. Michael could lose its septic lagoon. And there are 30 to 40 homes that may be lost:

I don't know if the federal government understands. The cost of moving homes, septic systems, water lines, building new access routes, preparing land for the houses. The costs will be astronomical. They don't have a clue to what it will cost in the long run if we can't continue to raise the roads. We're so close to the finished product. We should finish the product.

The good news came in September 2000, when the U.S. Senate approved \$51.8 million for water projects in North Dakota and specified that the funding will be used in flood control efforts in Grand Forks, Devils Lake and Grafton as well as for developing the Garrison Diversion. The Devils Lake Journal reported," The funds were part of the 2001 Energy and Water Appropriations bill. Democratic Senators Byron Dorgan and Kent Conrad of North Dakota said in a statement that dealing with water issues is a key to the state's economic future."

Needs Assessment

Prior to reform effort, Four Winds conducted a needs assessment to identify strengths and weaknesses of students and teachers. This is the initial process in school reform that preempts the comprehensive school improvement plan and CSRD program development. Not having the best record of accomplishment for CTBS scores and other accountability criteria also landed the school on the state's schools in need of improvement list. Based on a 1998 survey that went to parents, students, and staff, the following concerns were noted in a report and beginning with the highest concern:

- Overall curriculum and academic standards,
- Attendance,
- Rules and expectations,
- Positive relationships with teachers,
- Teachers work to meet student's needs,
- Respect for teachers and others,
- Student accept differences in individuals,
- Adequate counseling,
- Improvement of basic skills, reading and math,
- Student involvement in the arts,
- Staff development, and
- Administrative support.

Poor academic achievement. Test scores for high school students from 1992-99 were extremely low as described in a school improvement report in 1999: "In general, 25 percent of all students in grades 9-12 scored below the 10th percentile and less than 1 percent scored above the 50th percentile."

Attendance and behavior issues. Average daily attendance rates for the same period ranged from 77 percent to 88 percent. Student mobility rate at Four Winds was 29 percent. Over 740 disciplinary incidents were reported during 1997-98.

Postsecondary education rare. On average, fewer than 25 percent of high school graduates from Four Winds go on to college or any educational institute beyond high school.

Selecting a Model

In January 1999, low-performing schools were invited to a state CSRD workshop to examine school reform models and participate in the funding initiative. Four Winds administrators attended that session and went back home with a plan in mind for utilizing a reform model that would fit well with their students learning styles and would peak the interests of everyone at the school and in the community as well. Key people involved in the initial selection and implementation of the CSRD grant were the district's federal programs coordinator, curriculum specialist, superintendent and principals. The facilitator is also the grant writer for the district and oversees the majority of social developmental kinds of programs like sexual harassment, sex education, parenting, safe, and drug free schools, and the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. Between January and May 1999, the facilitator held meetings with the schools board and staff in an effort to build awareness of the CSRD program and the *Community of Learners* reform model.

The Four Winds Community School's CSRD facilitator described some changes that took place before the selection process:

School reform was a way to begin to address the really hard changes that needed to take place in the school. We still have two sets of board members and this makes it more challenging to implement school reform plan in a consistent manner with tribal politics; and that interferes with policies that should have equal pressure and consequences on students and teachers alike. One change we were able to make was to have one superintendent for both the tribal elementary school and the public high school. Before, there were two superintendents one for each school. Another change was to begin communicating between principals; that was difficult because no communication had been going on between them or other administrators for as long as I've been at this school, until we changed it.

The model that the Four Winds Community School eventually chose was Temple University's *Community for Learning* (CFL) model. Administrators said they chose the CFL model because they agreed with its philosophy, liked the connection to community, and most importantly, because it had been successful in schools with minority populations. As one administrator put it,

Identifying a model that best fit Four Winds was our goal. Community for Learning, we thought was a model that would work well with our kids. We're outside the mainstream so we had to choose a model that worked for our kids and teachers. It had to be a model that would allow language, and culture content. Community for Learning was a research-based model that had worked well with minority populations.

More specifically, these aspects of the CFL model led administrators to believe the model would work with their students.

- It has been successful where there is high dropout rate, high unemployment, poverty, transient families, moderate crime rates, gang activity, and poor attendance.
- It is the design for the block-scheduling approach.
- It utilizes current curriculum and standards already in place.
- It supports special education inclusion.
- It promotes the community for learning — work sites, museums, higher education, homes, community organizations, and agencies.
- It has been successful in rural and minority schools.
- It supports school-linked comprehensive and coordinated health and human services delivery components.
- Its design is for pre-K–12th grade.

Administrators felt strongly CFL would foster comprehensive school restructuring focused on improving school organization and instructional delivery, and thus allow teachers to be more responsive to the individual developmental and learning needs of students. They wanted a school environment that fostered educational resilience and supported relationship building between and among teachers, students, families, and the community. Administrators believed that the model

would enable the school to create an organization that would provide professional services at the school and to ensure the delivery of effective teaching and learning practices in classrooms.

Community for Learners' Model

Developed in 1990 by Margaret Wang at Temple University, the goal of the CFL model is to achieve social and academic success for students by linking schools with community institutions. The approach to creating a CFL school is to provide students with an array of opportunities that extend from the classroom and school to the larger community and then connects those learning experiences to the learning process back in the classroom.

Distinct features. Community for Learning has two distinct features, the first of which is an emphasis on collaboration among professional staff in the school and the community that extends into the classroom in a very organized and thoughtful manner. The idea is to provide a range of learning opportunities for students, establish a coordinated system of support services across school programs and community organizations, and foster a community-wide commitment to student success. Collaboration is organized among classroom teachers, staff, counselors, psychologists, and administrators to work in teams to meet the special academic and social needs of children.

Another feature of the model is the research-based Adaptive Learning Environments Model (ALEM) of instruction that is an inclusive approach to meeting the individual needs of students in regular classrooms. Teachers incorporate teaching and learning practices that are deemed effective with each student, utilizing a variety of instructional strategies and grouping patterns—whole class, small groups, and individuals. Students are also expected to take more ownership for planning and monitoring their learning progress.

Teachers develop an organized plan — prescriptions — describing in detail each student's learning tasks based on small units that are frequently and consistently assessed and modified. Students progress at their own pace, advancing when ready, and taking extra time when necessary. Individualized attention is provided for those who are not progressing well and as well for students who are ready for the next challenging and advanced lesson.

IMPLEMENTATION AND THE NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURE....

Originally, the administration wanted to implement the model in the high school, not the elementary school. However, model developers were not interested in working with Four Winds unless the model was implemented school-wide in both schools. The model requires a full-time facilitator who oversees implementation and assist with training. The principals, facilitator, and other administrators develop a site-specific plan that “mobilizes the school's resources” to support the “classroom and community-wide” implementation.

Professional Development and Training

A team of program implementation specialists from Temple supports the CFL model. The process for implementing the model begins with the commitment by school-wide consensus of the staff via ballots and count. The initial training is a two-day meeting at the Center with facilitator and principals to develop a needs assessment process that helps identify training needs at the school, visit model school sites, and to create an implementation plan for the school. The second training involves

a four-day workshop with teachers at the school that includes classroom preparation to implement the model components.

The Center's implementation staff provides 10–15 days of on-site professional development and customized technical assistance to staff and administrators based on needs identified by teachers, observations by principals, and assessment data gathered by program staff. According to the implementation specialist for Four Winds, "We contracted with Four Winds for a certain number of days per year with site visits every couple of months that first year; we stay at the site four to five days each visit. In July of 2000, newly hired teachers will receive CFL training at the school. We probably conduct eight to ten days of training and technical assistance with the school during the first year."

The goal of the training is to build capacity for facilitators and principals to assist with the professional development and technical support in their schools and to sustain the model. Networking among schools implementing the model occurs at the annual seminar where teachers and principals share ideas and get research materials to assist the process. Facilitators meet periodically at Temple University for planning sessions. Online technical support includes a listserv to extend the sharing of materials and ideas among school sites and the Center staff. Review of their implementation process is ongoing and conducted by principals, facilitators and Center staff who also participate in additional data collection that is focused on progress, identifying areas that need improvement and training priorities.

Late high school teachers' training. The first implementation training for principals and staff took place at the school in August of 1999. However, the school was experiencing a glitch in the training schedule concerning teachers. The model developer had set a date for the implementation training and although the facilitator requested a rescheduling of the training because the majority of high school teachers would not be attending it. However, the Center's implementation specialists refused to change the training and proceeded as planned. The elementary principal had mandated that teachers go to the training and administrators had provided a \$100 stipend as incentive for teachers. However, only five high school teachers chose to attend that training in August. The next opportunity for implementation training for these absent teachers would not occur until late October.

The implementation specialist worked with individual teachers to "set-up their classrooms, reorganize desks and tables, and develop learning centers" at that first on-site training. Learning Centers are a method of applying specific content and learning practices with students. Two types of folders are incorporated into the folder crates that serve as the learning centers that hold a prescription and materials for each student to enable them to take more ownership in their learning processes. The "wait time" folder contains work that builds on their strengths and keeps them "busy and learning" within the classroom structured timeframe. The other folder is the maps out a plan to improve in areas that are weak or if they have fallen behind in work this keeps them on task for completing those assignments.

Late facilitator training. The initial CFL training for facilitators and principals never occurred. The facilitator was tied up with other duties and responsibilities at the school and was unable to attend any training sessions for facilitators until spring of 2000. So, too, principals had "too many responsibilities" and were unable to attend the session. Another problem was the "11th hour" notification by Temple for training meetings. The facilitator said, "Temple waited to announce the training sessions until the last minute; usually they called less than one week before the sessions

were scheduled and there was no way that I could simply drop things and go to these meetings.” Another concern expressed by the facilitator was,

Temple has yet to give us a strategic plan of action with scheduled training sessions and basically a plan for implementing the model with a timeframe for where we should be headed and when certain things should take place. It feels like we've got nothing tangible to direct us.

When the Four Wind's facilitator did finally attend a session for school-site facilitators, she found it to be “not so interesting” and a “poor training overall” with “nothing new” presented. The facilitator said,

It would be more helpful for me to have visited a model program [school]. Temple paid my way to training however, the implementation specialist couldn't meet with me and I really went to that training to get a timeline for the rest of the school year. I was disappointed and anxious because I don't have a sense of when, how, and with whom things will take place over the next year.

The facilitator noted that the second training at Temple was “okay,” and “better than the first,” because they learned to align curriculum assessments and learning strategies. Temple and researchers from University of Denver were collaborating on new evaluation and assessment instruments so we spent a lot of our time on discussing “their issues rather than the facilitators' [concerns].”

Other activities that were purposeful included collaborating with other site facilitators. “I liked that part,” noted the Four Winds facilitator, because they learned where the “good program sites were.” She observed that “some schools were further along, and we would be too if we had done our training in the summer instead of August and October.” Another helpful lesson from that session as “that paraprofessionals should be creating learning centers along with teachers.”

Principals did note, however, that even though they were unable to attend the initial, off-site training session, that they found the on-site training sessions helpful. One principal made the following observation:

The training has been really helpful for me because I didn't really understand in the beginning how well the model was knowledge based. I didn't understand the rationale behind Community for Learning, either. . . . Part of the problem with school reform is that everyone approaches reform from the negative side of schools rather than the focus being on positive stuff. I think it would be more purposeful to build on its strengths not from negatives.

Changing the School Culture

Reform for Four Winds entailed a lot more than simply carrying out the implementation tasks. Rather, it involved creating a new school community culture — one which encourages collegiality, serves the needs of students, and raises expectations for everyone, including teachers, administrators, staff, students and families. It also meant formalizing organizational relationships within the school and with families, business, and government agencies, private, tribal, and public. These changes were not easy, as one administrator noted:

Getting teachers ready for change was a challenge. Keeping an open mind was important to changing teaching practices. Teacher's creativity was rejuvenated [with the model]. All the paperwork, documentation for achievements, aligning standards, and benchmarks has placed too much pressure on teachers. Finding time to share with peers and planning meetings to share ideas, talk about kids, the prescriptions, what's working and what's not; what did kids learn, how do kids feel about this lesson plan ... is a challenge.

Teacher Resistance

Despite the awareness building meeting prior to model selection, administrators were apprehensive about teacher buy-in and predicted they would meet some degree of resistance. First, they anticipated that the work involved in the implementation of a school improvement plan for administrators, teachers, support staff, students, and families would be overwhelming. Second, they would have to get teachers to understand that “conventional teaching doesn’t work.” Beyond those initial concerns, they recognized that the real work would happen in the classrooms when teachers began to implement the model’s components and assessment tasks.

Because the “time involved was overwhelming” and a certain degree of resistance occurred with “both teachers and administrators,” change in classroom instructional practices was “long and slow process.” Teachers and administrators needed support and individual assistance from both the facilitator and implementation specialist. Mostly elementary teachers attended the August training and over 50 teachers and 1 principal went to the October workshop. Sometimes planning meetings occurred after school and it was suggested that substitutes be provided for teachers who attended these meetings.

Planning time had not been implemented in the schedule and posed a challenge to team meetings and planning time in general. Some initial “resistance to team meetings occurred across grade levels and departmentalized teachers” due to that time crunch issue. Differences in the process of implementation and the change that is involved for both teachers and administrators included the “scared resisters and the enthusiasts.”

Teacher shortage created an additional problem at the school that contributed to the list of challenges for implementing the model. In addition to the shortage of content area teachers [no science teacher, no full time English teacher, only one math teacher], teachers also had to cover for the absent teachers and that “makes for a long day” for staff. “Absenteeism is also a problem with teachers” at the school. High school teachers have “eight different sets of students, this means five different prescriptions plus three repeat classes. In general, CFL had a direct impact on the “low moral” at the school due to the extra work and time involved plus the added stress of the teacher shortage.

Block scheduling went into effect at the high school in 1999 and was congruent with the model’s stated organizational and structural correlates. The block schedules were in place with three preparations and another block used for preparation time and study hall, however, “a group of teachers complained” and the schedule changed to a modified block schedule. Some viewed this action as another example of inconsistency and change by administration that directly undermined the model.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE....

Teachers' Support of the Model

In general, teachers had good things to say about the model and the implementation process. But they expressed frustration with the demands district administrators were placing on them to quickly put the program in place. One teacher said, "We've got this constant threat over our heads for improving scores and both schools are basically under the gun to improve by the Tribal Council and the state." Another put it this way:

We have an administrator standing over your head telling you, "Aren't we supposed to be writing prescriptions for every class?" That is not what we were told at the workshop; we were told to ease into things and start with one class and get comfortable with that one. I think that sometimes the administration want to move into things really fast and they forget the demands they are putting on their faculty. They load so much paper work onto us and we hardly have time to teach; we know what we need to do, we just have to do it.

Teachers also expressed frustration about the CSR model being just another in a long string of innovations that the district has adopted. As one teacher put it, teachers feel like they are constantly being forced to adopt new programs, often before the previous innovation has had a chance to bear fruit:

Too many programs are not always a good thing. The academic programs change too often here. You drop a phonics program and take up whole language one that completely changes how a student learns and if you do that [changing too often] for a period of time that's going to affect kids. The lack of consistency and not taking time to develop [the program fully] or incorporate a planning stage is common here. We're talking often times in a week you are expected to just do it, and there's a lot of just "sink or swim" here. We have had a little bit more training with this model. There has been that "jumping into it quickly" a little bit with this CSR.

Despite concerns about rushing the implementation phase of the program, teachers did find that the training sessions provided them with valuable information and ways to improve their practices. One teacher has this to say about the training sessions:

We had one training before school started with Temple that involved workshops on assessments and prescriptions and wait time folders [learning centers]. Trainers had lots of good information and we copied some materials and we got good ideas from them. I think we're coming along with this.

Teachers' Attitudes and Practices

At the same time, school staff noticed improvements in teacher's attitudes and practices. As one administrator observed,

Few teachers did prescriptions correctly in the beginning; more are doing them now, and I see things are improving since teachers initially began using them. Staff began to see the rationale for prescriptions and they see the reason we are doing them. Now

teachers realize the reform model is for improvement. Teachers like the follow-up from the initial implementation training. They feel like there's no time to implement the model, but are sold on the philosophy of it.

As principals, the facilitator, and teachers became more comfortable with the model, they became more involved in the process of developing “prescriptions” and learning centers. One administrator gave this observation:

At Four Winds, people have developed more positive attitudes and change has occurred. This is the first year since I have seen some teachers using curriculum in the ten years I have worked at the school. Teachers have made progress in lots of areas, however, these [changes] don't change scores overnight or attendance either. Most teachers are excited, especially the elementary teachers. They [teachers] like the model. Some teachers are now looking at themselves after 30 years of teaching, while others are making plans to retire, because they don't want to change their teaching practices.

Another administrator offered this description:

In the elementary school, teachers and students alike like the model. Teachers began by trying out one subject area at a time. Rubrics, standards, benchmarks, and measurements helped surface kid's learning process and teachers use these to measure outcomes. It's easier now; prescriptions give them the flow of teaching. We now have well-prepared teachers; they're organized and see the benefits [of their work]. Prescriptions are a framework for teaching and learning practices. You can tell if a teacher is using the model simply by the way their classrooms are organized, desks in a row or in clusters with tables.

Moreover, school officials saw positive effects on students.

Teachers are now more comfortable with the model and are getting more comfortable with assessment. We have already seen improved student learning and teachers see the benefits; lesson plans [prescriptions] are interesting; we've seen a positive impact on discipline and attendance has gone up 10 percent from 80 percent; and teachers have redesigned their classrooms to benefit kids. Some of the teaching strategies were already being used before CFL.

Another administrator made this observation:

The staff need more CFL training to enable them to understand the concept of learning centers. There was a co-facilitator position recently established, but she has had no training yet. [I'm] not sure if the enthusiasm is there for CFL. There are additional issues to consider in terms of the model — for example, since learning centers were implemented scores decreased. The problem stems from the fact that Temple University trainer put together the learning centers, not teachers, and these centers are not about learning practices.

In Spring 2000, Four Wind's teachers' practices were assessed using Temple's ALEM instrument. The findings from the self-assessment of teaching and learning practices in classrooms across grades were mixed, as were the reactions. Temple researchers and the facilitator collected data

in classrooms to study teacher behavior while implementing ALEM, the instructional component of CFL. Teachers were observed numerous times while interacting with their students in the classrooms to determine if they were proceeding successfully with the implementation of ALEM.

The most important finding from this study was that “teachers were teaching down to students. Based on grade level benchmarks teachers had “lowered them for all kids” in their classrooms. The facilitator presented the findings in an informal meeting between middle school teachers, principal, and facilitator and suggested that additional training was needed for teachers for learning to develop the prescriptions. The principal reminded teachers, “prescriptions are required, not elective items, for all teachers.” Teachers were also reminded to complete their technology training, a school wide requirement, before the new middle school addition was opened in January 2001.

To support teachers in making these kinds of changes, recently, new programs and courses have been developed and implemented at Four Winds to establish the kind of support system that is essential for “creating a community for learning.” School-to-work, vocational courses in construction, small engines, office management, accounting and art wood crafting were developed for high school students and the wood crafting class was expanded into the elementary school for special education students.

In the end, as one administrator noted, two things need to happen with this model before it will take hold in this school and community:

We first need to find that all-important “carrot” for teachers and students; we have to find the answer to what makes it worthwhile for teachers? And then, this will transfer to the students through instructional practices and relationships. Indicators for success are collaboration, collegiality; another one that is really important is, teachers seeing kids succeed everyday. It’s the little things that count, those little daily successes that kids need to experience because these do a lot for their self-esteem and the teacher’s.

The District Facilitator’s Role

Many teachers noted that the school’s CSR program facilitator played a key role in helping teachers implement reform. One teacher described the facilitator’s role this way:

The facilitator is a very effective person and she is not threatening person. I have not seen anyone here who is threatened by the fact that she is going to be coming into their classroom and observing and they look at it more like it is a good time to ask questions. She is more of a resource than evaluator. She does so much, not sure how, but she was probably a good choice as someone very non-threatening to have work in this program in this school because she made everybody feel a lot more comfortable.

The facilitator noted, however, that required a lot of long hours. She described the extensive time-consuming process for collecting baseline data using Temple’s ALEM instrument — it’s 14 pages long — for assessing teaching and learning practices and aligning these with individual student academic and developmental needs. As she put it:

I have to go into each classroom, K–12, and conduct two observations and a series of interviews with several students and all teachers from every grade level, every classroom, and this process takes about six hours for each one. It’s an overwhelming amount of time and there’s only one of me to do all this work on top of all the other “hats” I wear. It’s also an interesting process because you get to see first-hand how teachers are incorporating the learning centers and prescriptions or if they’re not.

To accomplish her work, the facilitator developed a system of monitoring prescriptions and assisting teachers. By doing this, the facilitator observed that not all teachers were wholeheartedly implementing the program:

Some teachers are feeling threatened because they are being asked to do prescriptions. Some teachers turn in prescriptions and some are not and I have to go and asked for them; others do fine with the learning centers and some don’t do them at all.

Lastly, the facilitator organized and revised all the school initiatives, programs, and projects to make these congruent with and incorporated them into the comprehensive improvement plan. In spring 2000, the facilitator began the critical task of revising and aligning all programs with the overall school improvement plan. Teachers and administrators worked in teams to revise curriculum and benchmarks to align with standards. Gaps existed in some content areas for certain grades and that had to be remedied as well.

Curriculum Alignment

Implementation specialists from Temple assisted Four Winds in identifying specific needs of teachers and the overall school. The facilitator, principals, teachers, and Center staff noted that, “One of the biggest needs is getting the curriculum together with standards and benchmarks.” There were some huge gaps in the curriculum.” Similarly, the implementation specialist from Temple made the following observation:

Specific needs for the school is to get the curriculum together, stronger administrative support and training. Elementary teachers do more than the high school teachers with CFL because high school teachers are still working on the curriculum, benchmarks that are used to complete prescriptions. Fine-tuning will be done this summer with the facilitator who is also overwhelmed with numerous other jobs [at the school]. Four Winds needs a full time facilitator who doesn’t have to also write grants and conduct other programs like the sex education or [sexual harassment] programs.

Training addressed spending time on alignment of prescriptions with curriculum; administration and teachers were confused with how [to make these cohesive] these fit in and how much do they do for each subject and with the learning center work. The high school principal requested more training to work on the curriculum components. The management of classrooms is strategic in the model and we had the teachers use a few different techniques.

Adaptation to Tribal Culture

According to CFL implementation specialist, CFL is “not a curriculum-based model, it’s supposed to fit the school and not the other way around.” As a result, “the model fits with the tribal context of the school community fine because the model addresses individual needs and fits any student.”

One of the strengths we try to build on in this community is family; we try to take all of “that” that already exists in the community. Four Winds already has parent community support programs in place. We take what’s already in the school and reallocate funds, and align functions of programs like PTA with the model.

Adaptations to model were also necessary in professional development. In terms of the modification to the model that is site-specific, the implementation specialist said,

Adaptations depend on state policy and standardized tests. We invited them to a pre-implementation training for family support. They needed some basic training that included “how to work as a team” [type of] training. Administrators attended that training; the teamwork training was the third training for staff.

Teachers also noted that sometimes that they had to make modifications to the program to better suit their individual students. As one teacher observed,

I modified some of our prescriptions for slower kids and that works out well. Just highlighting things just so kids can find it helps them. Kids knew what was expected of them before and we just reorganized it in a different way. I’ve been teaching auto mechanics for many years and when I got into this, it was totally laid out.

Improved Student Motivation and Attitudes

One of teachers and administrators’ biggest concerns at Four Winds was motivating students. One teacher observed, however, that the CFL strategy of assigning student work as “prescriptions,” helped to better motivate many students:

Getting kids here and getting them motivated is a real challenge. It’s a process and it’s evolving. Students that have a habit of not showing up — they are probably not going to show up no matter what. A few students, once they see they have everything right here (in the prescriptions), they’ll stay home one day because they know what to do and have it right in front of them and can work on it at their own pace. I think it’s an advantage to have the prescriptions and to let students know what is expected of them. The kids like to know what is expected of them (and the prescriptions do that).

Teachers and administrators noted, however, that sufficient planning time was needed to design engaging, effective lessons and thus, improve student motivation. As one teacher observed,

There’s a good possibility to this model to get the students motivated, but it all goes back to time. It’s a process. I think it goes back to planning time; in order to come up with the kind of creative activities to do with your students [as the model implicates] you’ve got to have the time to create them, find them, develop them. And if you don’t have time, you’re just taking them out of the [same old] box of tricks.... I’ve got

activities that the kids have enjoyed doing every year that I pull out, but I need time to find some new things to come up with.

Another teacher noted that one the biggest benefits of CFL was the fact that it encouraged re-teaching material when students did not get it the first time. This, in turn, has improved some students' attitudes about their schoolwork:

It's helped to have the student learn the material in a way that if they don't get it the first time we're allowed to go back and cover it again, you might say more so under this method than before. Usually, before if they don't get it the teacher would say we have to move on. This model has been more supportive of the re-teaching of material. That's been beneficial because generally the students that I'm dealing with do what they can to just get by, and I'm seeing that if they have to go back and do it over, they're kind of waking up and saying, "I'm going to try and do it better the first time so that we don't have to do it again."

To this end, teachers noted that the various conferences and opportunities to share ideas have helped them design better lesson and unit plans. As one teacher put it,

Kids like a little different variety. The model developer is helping with some of that. Going to conferences helps, too. We brought back a lot of material from the Social Studies [national] conference.... I went to a small engines school for a week that was excellent. The math and science workshop for the state was beneficial. That's the kind of stuff that we need to just keep up on what we should be doing. We need reinforcement in order to see if we're on the right track or not and then to know how to change it if we're not. We need that type of stuff to keep abreast of new things like textbooks and different methodology.

Addition of After School Program

In June of 2000, a summer program was implemented to impact graduation rates of students, and to prevent students at risk of dropping out from leaving and to assist them with specific services that prepare them to stay in school and successfully complete academic work. In a proposal, the high school principal described the issues involved with this population:

Throughout this year, interested groups have studied data regarding the graduation statistics of Four Winds High School. Tribal Council members expressed concerns regarding the number of students who do not make it to graduation as well as those who require more than four years of study to graduate. These are concerns, which we at Four Winds High School have, also. [Teachers] and I have studied a variety of factors to determine how we can make changes, which would provide a greater chance of preventing student dropout as well as assist students to get through school in the traditional four years.

After conducting an examination of freshman students' school records, school staff found that each year a substantial number of this level of students fail their core classes. Subsequently, they have to retake these courses the following year, which ultimately puts them behind when they are just starting high school. This retention also overcrowds the 9th grade classrooms with additional students from the previous year and locks students into a pattern of failing and trailing behind their

cohorts. Summer school was seen as a way to assist this special needs group and established a precedent for another essential component of the school's support system for "creating a community of learning."

Four Winds also received funding to create a new kind of learning center at the school that continues to build support systems for the school and community that function to serve the special needs of this population. Over 600 children as well as community members and families will be served by the Learning Center over the three -year period of the grant. A recent report described the center as follow:

Our partnership envisions community learning centers housed in the local school and district recreational facilities (future) serving all levels of students. The community learning centers will be open to all ages. Our vision of activities and services include:

- *GED preparation classes offered evenings and after school hours at alternative education center at the college and high school two days per week year-round;*
- *Tutoring for high school students and alternative education high school students at Alternative Education Center, after school hours and evenings two days per week year-round;*
- *Tutoring offered to high school students four evenings a week during school year;*
- *Recreation programs year-round and beyond what the school and park board offers, for example, swimming, culture dances, golf, baseball, football, student choices, and special cultural game;*
- *Oral history of the Mini Wakan Oyate, by elders and culture leaders and field trips to historic sites on reservation;*
- *Computer technology instruction and personal use of computers, Internet access community-wide;*
- *Parenting classes through Head Start, Early Childhood, Early Head Start, Healthy Start programs and parents of all ages;*
- *Student organizations and clubs (e.g., 4-H, Boys and Girls, Science, Math); and*
- *Cooperative education, community vocational education, fine arts instructions, and opportunities for School –to- work students.*

The local newspaper article described the center as follows:

The Fort Totten Public School District recently received a grant to begin an after-school program for their students, but according to Coordinator Antoinette Young,

elementary kids are not the only ones who will benefit from it. The 21st Century Community Learning Center grant, awarded to the district from the U.S. Department of Education, will be used for after-school activities and tutoring for school-age children, but will also be used toward GED testing and the purchase of computers for parental use.

Older students will also benefit from the program with possible employment. "We were given money to hire students 16 and over as assistants," she said. Young is currently in the process of developing a training schedule for the teenage assistants. In addition to CPR and first aid, she said the students would learn communication skills and how to work with younger children. "This could be a good start for them," Young noted, "It's good work experience and they will learn important leadership and communication skills." Young said she has already received 15 applications from interested teens, but, she is quick to add, no students will be turned away. "We will not deny anybody — we can find a job for everyone.

Adults in the community will benefit from the program in several ways - not only will they be assured their children are in a safe place, they can work toward their General Equivalency Diploma (GED), use a community computer and, Young added, they are in the process of developing a parent resource library within the school's existing library. She added it is very important for adults who are planning to obtain their GED to do so now, before the exam changes in 2001.

A Focus on Involving Parents

Four Winds has some challenges with parent involvement and they also have had some successes with numerous activities and events sponsored by the school for the community. This is not surprising based on the history of the community's relationship with school officials and their own personal experiences in boarding schools where being Indian was a bad thing. An administrator recalled that it was not that long ago that "kids at the high school were told not to act like they were Indian." As a result, it is no surprise that many parents never visit the school.

Administrators and teachers alike expressed concern for low parent involvement in the school. A teacher said, "Parents don't seem to care." An administrator described a recent multifaceted event at the school,

We held an Education Forum at the school for families and principals presented their school reform program. We held parent teacher conferences that night as well, and served a meal preceding the forum. While over 250 family members and 100 staff attended the dinner. Only 20 parents came to the Forum and out of those only 12 stayed for the complete presentation and those were Tribal Council members.

The other side to that is the elementary school where one teacher described her experiences with parent-teacher conferences as follows:

I'm an 8th grade teacher and have taught in other grades as well [7 years at Four Winds]. [Parent involvement] is changing. Each year it grows. This is the era of parent education; better, educated parents, the more involvement we will have from

parents. This year over 80 percent of the parents for this class came to the parent teacher conference.

She also noted that the her principal has an open door policy at the school for parents:

Parents can visit the elementary school and classrooms anytime although few visit. I believe that if kids are excited [about school], their parents will hear about it. We plan to have updates about the model program for parents and teachers will present where we started, what we did, and where we're going kinds of information.

The high school principal noted the relationship between truancy and parent involvement:

Absenteeism and truancy can be improved if parents become role models and become more involved. If we can get them to believe in their kids, to believe in educational values, and to take pride in their home and community. Education is not a priority in this community. The employers don't require a diploma or GED. Sometimes I think it might be best to make our high school program all alternative [school wide] for our students.

School leaders hoped the CFL model would help to promote better parent involvement at the school. The program's local facilitator described how the model was expected to enhance parent involvement:

We fit this model to the school and community not the other way around and we really think that the model fosters and encourages Native American culture in our school. The program utilizes community and its resources as learning sites. The philosophy [the model] is that learning does not only take place in classrooms, it also takes place in the community. Our culture program staff and paraprofessionals received the model training just like the certified staff.

To encourage parent involvement, the school has convened family and community events and activities ranging from dinners and parent-teacher conferences to job shadowing with employees at local manufacturing companies, businesses, tribal agencies, and organizations. Some additional activities listed in the school's action plan were as follows:

- Sponsor and organize monthly PAC (parent action committee),
- Make available course syllabi for parents,
- Individual parent contracts for discipline and attendance and parent involvement,
- Home visits by home/school liaison,
- Document and implement all parent contacts and contracts into all programs school wide
- Administer self-assessments/ surveys annually and individually by home/school liaison personnel.

SITE 4 DATA: UMON'HON' NATION PUBLIC SCHOOL MACY, NEBRASKA

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT....

Community Context

The tribal community of Macy is located in the center of the Omaha Indian Reservation about 90 miles northwest of Omaha. Macy has a population of about 2,200 tribal members; an additional 4,200 tribal members reside outside their reservation. Following the government's relocation policy, Omaha people moved to Macy in the 1600s from Ohio and have lived on the present reservation since 1884. The northern part of the reservation was given to the Winnebago by the Omaha people after they were removed from their lands in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

To an outsider entering the Omaha Indian Reservation from the southeast, you can see an abundance of rolling hills with trees and vast corn and soybean fields expanding from the road to the horizon. Only a few farms and ranches dot the agricultural landscape between the city and the small rural towns; and these get smaller, older, and sparser as one gets closer to the reservation.

Teepees to permanent structures.

The Omaha Tribe has experienced drastic change in their traditional communities over the past century. Their traditional homes changed from the teepee which was made from buffalo hides and wooden poles and was both portable and affordable, to the federal government subsidized wooden housing structures that are permanent fixtures in Tribal communities across this nation.

In Macy, there are two primary residential communities distinctly HUD (housing and urban development) homes. One borders the southeastern end of town and the other runs parallel to the northeastern side of Macy and both are in close proximity to school, health center, tribal center and police and fire stations. The homes in the southeastern section were built within the past five years. In the other residential area there's a mixture of older and newer homes that line one side of the street, some are under construction, further up the road is another housing complex that dates back about 25 years. Graffiti marks are visible on a few homes and some of these also have boarded up windows although families are living there. While there are homes and yards in need of extensive repairs, others stand out with their landscaped yards of green grass and all windows-intact and recently painted exteriors. A few older homes with large trees and bigger yards are dispersed throughout Macy among the tribal agency buildings and businesses in the center of town and along the two main streets. There's a stark difference between these and the houses in the residential areas of town where the lots are smaller, treeless and the homes are larger and newer.

Tribal facilities. Tribal governing offices and agencies include the casino, community college, health center, fire department, tribal police, road maintenance, and the public school, which provide the majority of employment opportunities in Macy. There is one convenience store and gas station in town.

The Four Hills of Life Diabetes Center recently re-opened as a multipurpose health and after school program facility (previously known as the Boys and Girls Club). This organization is directed and managed by Omaha people and was developed to provide health education and services to families in Macy. They have academic and recreational activities for the children in the after-school hours. There's a weight room and organized recreation activities. The center also provides academic tutoring and cultural activities after school.

Directly across from the school and the Four Hills of Life Center is an older multipurpose community facility that houses the auditorium/gym. School and community events take place in this building. Adjacent to the gym is the Tribal Police Station; a one-story red brick building that was recently built. The Fire and Rescue Station, also a newer brick building, is on the next street and directly north of the gym. The Tribal Government Offices with Head Start, and other agency programs are located up the hill northeast of the center of town in a third large red brick structure. Two dirt roads lead out of town and extend into the rolling hills of the Omaha Nation.

The economic situation for Omaha Tribe is similar to other Indian reservation communities. The unemployment rate is 39 percent and 94 percent of those employed live below the poverty rate (1990 Census Report). In sharp contrast to the Omaha people, Winnebago's unemployment is 27 percent and 13 percent of those working live below the poverty level. The relative prosperity of the Winnebago Tribe stems from "casino revenues and investments in worthy business ventures." Macy has three retail businesses, a small grocery market, a cafe, and a gasoline convenience store owned by the Tribe.

As recent as 1972, Omaha Tribe regained land on the east side of the Missouri, which was the site of their new casino in 1994. The revenues were considerable for a few years until the Winnebago built their casino closer to the border town, Sioux City. Then, the city of Omaha brought in the riverboat casino and that "practically wiped out" the casino revenues for this community. "To provide jobs" for their people is the primary reason why this casino continues to operate today.

School Overview

Mission and purpose. The Umon'Hon' Nation Public School strives to be a leader in developing programs that are essential to strengthening the learning opportunities for Omaha Indian children. The school's vision of educational reform and mission statements reflect the hopes, dreams, and ideas of many people in the school community, and also points to their commitment to providing a learning community rich with traditional Omaha cultural experiences and rigorous academic opportunities:

Umon'Hon' Ta'Paska: Strengthening Our Place to Learn. We at the Umon'Hon' Nation Public School in consultation with our community, Parents, and School Board have made a commitment to "Positive School Reform within our School District, Community and Indian Reservation." The meaning of Umon'Hon' Ta'Paska, is "that place you hope to leave your children when they are finished learning." This not only has a traditional Indian meaning but our administration, staff, parents, and larger Indian community have this vision that we will "change our place to learn in order to strengthen our students personal and academic achievement."

The mission of the Umon'Hon' Nation Public Schools through positive interaction with the Omaha Tribal Community is to provide a student-centered education. In a safe and respectful learning environment allowing our students to strengthen Native American, traditions yet flourish in other cultures.

Facilities. The school is nestled inside the small Nebraska community of Macy, home of the Omaha Indian people since the 1800s. Umon'Hon' covers a square block area plus additional land parcels occupied by multipurpose buildings and sports fields. One of these buildings is a four-unit complex that houses the Teacher Cadre Program and the new superintendent office. A parking lot sits between this building and the vocational shop, which resembles an army bunker. Behind the elementary wing, two portables sit at the back of the school next to a playground. Further along the other main street, parallel to the West side of the school, is the ever-popular sports field that consists of both baseball and football fields.

Built in 1974, the district administration and Board of Education have initiated an expansion plan that will increase the size of the school by two additional wings and will provide separate space for the middle and high school students. Another phase of the 28-month project includes building a gym.

Teachers and students. All of the students are Omaha with the exception of four who are children of faculty working at the school. UMON'HON' Nation School's 50 professional staff and 27 support staff include four Omaha. The staff has an average of eight years teaching experience and the average teaching salary is \$28,344. A majority of staff live outside the community because the school is located on tribal lands and make the daily commute from several outlying communities, the furthest is Sioux City 65 miles away. Teacher turnover rate at the school is 9 percent and pupil to teacher rate is 9:1. Tribal affiliations represented in the student population are Omaha, Winnebago, and Northern Cheyenne.

Special education There's a growing trend of increasing numbers of special needs students across the nation that places more pressure on schools to provide services for which their teachers and staff are not professionally trained. A number of other factors exist aside from the professional staff, and that includes not only the amount of funding necessary to provide effective services, but also the time and funding for schools to examine, assess, and analyze the needs of special populations.

This national trend is reflected in the growing numbers of students entering Nebraska public schools today with special needs. According to state data compiled by Nebraska Department of Education Special Populations Office, the numbers of special needs children, ages six to 21, increased by about 32 percent over the last decade (1987-97). The state data for Umon'Hon' and other districts in Thomas County paints a rather dismal picture of what happens to many of these special needs children. Over 34 percent of the student body at Umon'Hon' was certified special education students in 1998. The majority of those children have a variety of learning disabilities (83%) and another 15 percent have behavioral disorders and mental health problems. According to the 1998-99 data on special populations in Nebraska schools, although 1,135 students graduated, more than 500 children, as early as eleven years of age. In addition, the majority of those students not completing school had one of three special needs ranging from 57 percent with learning disabilities, 21 percent with behavior disorders, and 16 percent with mental health problems.

Part of the problem is districts have relatively few professional staff in regular classrooms and even fewer teachers that have the expertise to deal with the emotional and behavioral issues kids bring with them into the schools. In particular, the harsh living conditions in Tribal communities have resulted in a large number of families that have missed out on positive parenting modeling, left school early, have low job skills, and participate in risky social behavior patterns. Alcoholism and substance abuse have been at the root of the problems children experience in school and personal life. Teachers who have been at the school for more than 20 years had this to say:

In the early 1980s, extreme alcoholism was pervasive in Macy and now the children of those young adults show signs of FAS (fetal alcohol syndrome). About 30 percent of our children are identified as FAS kids.

The community has been dysfunctional since WWII because of the alcohol problems. Role models are rare. Kids and adults alike were sniffing gas in 1968; it was a big problem in this community.

One of the problems is that the Tribal Housing Authority takes care of all the problems for the adults. Another is the Tribal court isn't helping the community youth with their policy of only slapping hands and favoritism practices. The kids and adults need to learn there are consequences for their behavior; it's how kids learn. We can't change student behavior; they have to change their own behavior.

Board of Education

The community has historically elected Omaha people to the Board of Education. For the past three decades there has been only one non-Indian member elected. Currently, six Omaha people sit on the school board. The level of interest and expertise of board members in comprehensive school improvement was demonstrated by their participation in the examination of school reform models and visiting the ELOB School in Dubuque, Iowa, three years ago. Administrators and a teacher had this to say about the Board of Education:

They give our administration the flexibility to run the school. Board members goal is to provide quality education. With this Board, our teachers have the freedom to cover the curriculum as necessary.

Overall, they generally do a fine job. Sometimes we have problems getting a couple of the members to come to the meetings. They want us to pay them for their time and provide food for them to attend the meetings.

School District Funding

According to the Nebraska Department of Education database of statistical data on district tax base and general fund, the Umon'Hon' Nation Public School district's funding base is considerably lower than other districts serving similar numbers of students (372 to 426 students, pre-K-12). In comparison to 1998-99 funding base for all the school districts within the same county Umon'Hon' district's was substantially lower when compared to other districts in Thomas County that have a funding base from four to 25 times higher in assessed valuation.

Living on the Reservation

During the two site visits to Macy, the community was conducting traditional and public funeral ceremonies. Death and healing from those losses are part of life. Gifts of new life and celebrations also take place in this tribal community. The parents tend to be young and some are still in school.

The Omaha Nation Foundation developed a day care and early childhood program for their community to help young parents complete school and attend the local college. Pow Wow celebrations are a tradition and take place both in the school and in the community. It's common practice for tribal schools to celebrate graduation in traditional ways, such as a Pow Wow. However, some tribal practices actually diminish students' motivation to finish school, as one teacher noted:

The Omaha Tribe gives a "per cap" check to every tribal member when they turn 18 years of age. I wish they wouldn't give students their per cap unless it was tied to a diploma or even a college incentive. Students tell me, "I would stay in school if I had to have a diploma to get my per cap." Unfortunately, sometime last year the tribe decided that kids could get loans based on their per cap and so now it will all be gone by the time they turn 18.

The Tribe has a law that states students must stay in school until they are 18 years of age to earn a diploma. But they don't enforce this law. There are other ways they could be supportive of education. They could stress the importance of a high school diploma if they told the kids "no per cap unless you have a GED or diploma."

Alcoholism, drug abuse, gangs, and unemployment are all systemic problems that have persisted for half a century. Kids and teachers spoke somberly about the pervasive welfare system that is considered "an income." When asked what types of work are available for them when they leave school, one student replied, "the casino or welfare."

Many Omaha families don't want their children to leave the reservation. That separation breaks down family traditions. For many of these parents, the pervasive fear that their children will never return home makes it difficult for them to heartily support their children's educational and career aspirations. It seems like a huge sacrifice that would not serve the family and would go against the cultural and social traditions they have for so long tried to maintain.

Moving Toward School Reform: Before CSRD

School improvement planning began at the school in 1996 with the goals of improving attendance, parent involvement and student achievement. The academic, attendance, and parent involvement problems existing at the school previous to the new superintendent's arrival in 1995 were enormous. A report described the situation at Umon'Hon' as dismal:

We still are dealing with 92.6 percent poverty rate (based on free or reduced lunch measures). With the total student population at Umon'Hon' defined as "at risk." More dramatically, only four students graduated from the 1980 kindergarten class of 64 students. The 1996-97 school year attendance for secondary grades averaged 70 percent. For the same time period, 754 grades were given in the high school, 452 were F's (60%). According to the Stanford Achievement Test administered in April of 1997, we were on the mean at the 10th percentile in total reading; this includes word

study skills, word reading, and reading comprehension. According to an Informal Reading Inventory (Jerry L. Johns' Basic Reading Inventory) administered in the fall of 1997 to all elementary students, we had no students in the second grade reading at grade level, 13 percent in the third grade reading at grade level, and 13 percent at the fourth grade reading level.

The previous administration had not effectively ran the school and failed to provide the academic rigor that these students needed to succeed in academics and complete school. Administrators described the school in this way:

First, we worked on the attendance issue which is a huge problem at this school. Keeping kids in school during the day and everyday is a struggle. School Wide Title I program and school reform have been going on at this school since 1995.

An effective strategy we used was a class-size reduction initiative that lowered the number "No learning was going on at this school before 1995. Five years ago, over 300 suspensions were reported and now we have suspended two or three high school kids and one or two elementary kids. For years, the previous administration was only graduating three students, now for three years in a row, we've had ten students graduate and this year we had 12 students graduate; I wish they all would finish school. Back then, the administration expelled 68 out of 130 students in the high school, and that information was made public through a [Omaha] World Harold article at that time.

We reduced the number of students from 23-29 kids in a classroom down to 15 or fewer kids in primary grades. Grades 4 through 6 have even lower numbers.

Nine years ago, my first impression of this school was not good. I couldn't believe they were educating kids like this. Umon'Hon' didn't look or feel like a school. The environment was not at all conducive to learning.

The previous superintendent in 1990 misreported attendance information, and as a consequence, our school was heavily fined by the U.S. Department of Education. Additional consequences to repaying the monies owed (\$2 million) were a severe teacher shortage and overcrowded classrooms that I believe resulted in the literacy problems we see today in this school in the older students. During that era, we had a skeleton staff of 15 teachers until 1994-95, whereas before that time when that misreporting was going on we had lots of teachers. One year the entire budget for the school was only \$1,000 and the school had major repairs that couldn't be done because of the lack of funds. Our textbook situation was really awful at that time and finally in 1996, the Tribe gave the school \$120,000 to buy new books. That was during the time when the casino was going good."

The Umon'Hon' School Improvement Plan has since undergone several revisions following a collaborative process for review, discussion, consensus and change, and especially, throughout the planning and development phases of their school reform program that began in the fall of 1997. Their major reform plan focused on improving those weakest areas as identified in their improvement plan. During that initial phase of reform planning, administrators became aware of the CSRD federal program for states that targeted schools listed as "in need of improvement" based on

their school report card and accountability reports. A CSRD report framed the specific goals of that reform plan as follows:

We intended to increase the attendance in the high school by 8 percent and the elementary by 5 percent by the end of the 1996–97 school year using the average attendance rate from the final semester of the 1995–96 school year serving as our baseline; to develop faculty committees in such areas of curriculum, discipline, extra-curricular; to get 60 percent of the families involved in their child’s education by the end of the 1996–97 school year; to have all faculty involved in professional development and in the reform committees; and to have each staff member make at least one positive personal family contact per week.

Attendance, Achievement and Attitude

Umon’Hon’ is reportedly “among the most troubled in the nation, plagued by high dropout rates, high truancy and rock-bottom test scores. The annual dropout rate in the school is four times the state average. The daily absentee rate is three times the state average” (Omaha World Herald, May 20, 2000). Frustrations run high at the school for teachers and administrators in an environment where it’s “not uncommon for 12–16 students in the ninth and tenth grades to drop out.” The other side to this is the graduation rates have improved from five years ago when only three students were graduating each year. Now for three years in a row, ten students have graduated. This year 12 students complete school.

Low attendance during spring in previous years influenced the decision by the staff and administration to compress the school year schedule. For this reason, they decided to shorten all holiday breaks from November through May which meant no winter break. Cutting out the breaks made it difficult for everyone and many teachers became burned out. They really “didn’t get the results they had hoped for. Absenteeism and truancy continued during the spring and “teachers experienced extreme burn out.” Administrators said,

I went to a Department of Education meeting on truancy in schools in Tribal communities and when our school board met at the NIEA conference, we realized there was no policy in place for truancy at Umon’Hon.’

In the Fall of 2000, the principal reported that:

Attendance continues to be a problem. We are short two truancy staff this year and we can’t find any community members to take those positions. Last year, teachers were asked for suggestions to improve our attendance rates and they told us that “we want to have a policy in place and it needs be used with consistency so our kids know what to expect.” Part of the problem is now that we have the policy, but we don’t have the staff to handle the discipline. We have that policy that says, “If kids go out of the classroom this is what you do,” but I don’t have the staff to do it right now.

Another concern is that just because students come to school, Does not mean that thy attend classes. If classes are boring or if students don’t have a good relationship with teachers, they start manufacturing reasons to leave classes and take a stroll in the hallways. Administrators had this to say about the truancy situation:

The attendance issue is a cop out for teachers. If we really wanted to solve it, we could. It's really about attitude, and attitude is how well you will accept kids and your ability to work well with kids. What model delivers education [most effectively with these kids] is important.

I've asked students who roam the halls "Are you done with your work?" They say, "Yes" and I say, "Do you have some other work that the teacher has given you?" They tell me, "No, there's nothing else for me to do." So it's really a two-part problem we're dealing with. The part the kids are creating by leaving the classroom, yet they don't have any work to do, and that's the teacher's part. Teachers need to make sure every student has something to work on in that classroom. The best defense against discipline is to have engaging activities.

Leadership and Frustrations

All these situations weigh heavily on teachers and administrators. Managing the daily paper work and administrative duties is a full time job that leaves very little time for other things that concern instructional leadership coaching, discipline of students, and assisting in those "behind the scene" types of activities and support for teachers to conduct ELOB expeditions. One administrator had this to say about leadership and management roles:

Management and leadership are extremely difficult to maintain and balance. Right now, the leadership is missing. There's no leadership only management of the day-to-day responsibilities that go along with this job. I'm assessing numerous departments to make sure the tools are in place so people can get their jobs done.

There are teachers who come to work after 8 a.m. and leave before 4 p.m. just because they don't want to put the effort into ELOB. There's a lot of ELOB taught differently and there is one class where ELOB is not infused at all. The other side to that is there is one teacher who comes early and stays after school everyday because that's what it takes to do ELOB and she wants it badly enough. Others don't want a program that requires them to put in that extra effort and ELOB is a model that takes more time to develop and organize than other programs.

I have teachers who don't want to come to work and so they stay home because they have a headache or something. I really don't understand how that works for them — to miss a lot of work.

The facilitator talked about the numerous strategies used to get kids to school:

Here at the school for awhile, teachers were supposed to go out to the home and bring kids to school if they were not here right away in the morning. One teacher told us that when she went to the home the parent said, "I can't get my daughter up to go to school." That student is in eighth grade. If parents can't provide the role of the parent, which is to get the child to school, then how can we as teachers change that situation? How can a teacher make a difference if education is not important in the household? How can we change how kids value education? Someone from the school went to bring a fourth grade girl to school and the parent didn't know where she was and she hadn't come home that night. The parent was not worried and didn't express

concern. How can that child value anything if the parents don't value their child enough to be concerned about them not coming home. The parent could have at the least told the child they are grounded. This happens way more than it should.

Attendance is on the minds and lips of everyone here. Attendance rates for elementary vary between 80 percent and 90 percent on a daily basis whereas the secondary rate hangs around 70 percent and then trickles to 50 percent in the spring. At one time, we used to give out lunch slips that had to be signed by all teachers in all their classes for kids to be able to eat. There was a 10-minute window for late arrival, but the students didn't like it. We changed that policy and as a result, attendance dropped from 50 percent to 30 percent in two days so we reinstated it again. Parents didn't like the policy because they thought it was cruel and we heard statements like, "Johnny only came to eat," and "This was the only meal the kids get in the day."

INVOLVEMENT IN CSR.D....

Umon'Hon' Ta'Paska: Strengthening Our Place to Learn through ELOB

In October of 1997, Umon'Hon' held an Educational Summit that was widely attended by parents, community members, and tribal leaders. It marked a turning point for school reform that set the stage for CSR.D program development. Participants at that Summit reportedly discussed the pervasive academic problems their children had in school:

Our children are failing and this must change. They are unable to compete with other schools. Our children cannot read, write, or do math. They are not able to go onto the next step, which should be college, training, or some other vocation. Why is this happening to our children?

After the Summit, an Educational Focus Group consisting of administrators and tribal community members, many of them parents, met to "explore other viable and relevant learning models." Recognizing that although changes were visibly evident in the school, an organized comprehensive design was still lacking. Essential elements were missing that would provide the substance to create long-term positive educational change. In response to the focus group concerns and the discussion about Native American children's learning styles at the Summit, the superintendent and community members attended the New American Schools conference and state-sponsored CSR.D workshop to examine reform models. The superintendent and other administrators had this to say about the selection process for the school reform model:

Initially, the decision for which model was given to me by the Board of Education, and I proceeded to attend the state-sponsored conferences and workshops to learn about the various school reform models. I spoke to one model developer who refused to work with us and another model I examined had blocked out Midwest states. I approached the Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound (ELOB) folks and they agreed to work with us. We still had to get the staff and board's consensus for this model. When the staff developed trust in me, I moved forward with the reform model. The Culture Center Advisory Board, the school board, and the staff unanimously

selected the ELOB model after visiting the ELOB model school, Dubuque Community School.

After they went to Dubuque, the community members said, "This is something we need at our school . . . our kids can learn this way." They came back and the school board members presented to the rest of the Board. Both the Board and teachers voted to implement ELOB.

Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound

The Expeditionary Learning reform model is based on the principles of Outward Bound and focuses teaching and learning practices on improving student performance through rigorous academic standards and character goals including: responsibility, self-discovery, creativity, caring, success, collaboration, stewardship, inclusion, reflection, and compassion.

Everything in the school, curriculum, instruction, assessments, school climate, and general structures of the school are centered on children producing quality work through learning expeditions. Professional development and training assist staff in the facilitation of project-based and thematic learning that actively engage students in the classroom and out in the real world. Building a culture of high expectations and continuity with students is an important component in ELOB. Teachers are expected to stay with students for more than one year. Collaboration and collegiality among teachers are essential correlates to improving teaching and learning practices. Teacher teams share planning time to examine practices, develop expeditions that are interdisciplinary in that they cross grades and content areas. Annual self-assessments are done with ELOB staff. Results in the schools using ELOB are higher levels of student engagement and motivation. Attendance at all ELOB schools is reportedly to be over 90 percent.

IMPLEMENTATION AND THE NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURE....

The leadership at UMON'HON' actively supports implementation of the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program, Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound (ELOB). UMON'HON' Nation High School began the transition to ELOB in August 1998. They are currently in the third year of implementation. Expeditionary Learning's design specialist conducted the first training with secondary teachers and the superintendent before school started in 1998. Teachers concentrated on learning the "how to" for implementing the model's ten design principles and core practices into their curriculum and instructional practices. They began planning and developing learning expeditions that incorporated the ELOB core practices, i.e., Learning Expeditions, Reflection and Critique, School Culture, School Structures, School Review. Teachers were encouraged to integrate several content areas into the design of their learning expeditions.

While seeing the role of educators as vision-ist was not something new to teachers at Umon'Hon', "thinking outside the box" was a new approach to teaching to which they were unaccustomed. Now education has to be approached with the whole child in mind, the Indian child. The superintendent had this to say:

We have to start with an Indian mind when we're talking about what type of person do we want to see when children leave this school. With that vision, we have developed a tremendous amount of programs over the past couple of years for the community and closely connected to language, culture, and school. We have a day

care facility for children ages 6 weeks to 3 years. We have an Early Childhood Program that takes the children to the next stage of learning and development. Then, there's Head Start that also provides parenting classes and educational classes. All these programs have culture and language components. We recently applied to the state for funding to develop a new alcohol and drug rehabilitation program and a prevention program including counseling, probation, and mental health.

Day care and early childhood programs were part of assessing the needs of teen parents who were leaving school before graduating. Day care is a way to let them know that we want them here. We have an extremely high dropout rate among the high school students who are parents. We bought a van to transport kids to day care and then teen parents to school. Needs assessment revealed that out of 46 original high school students only 2 graduated and 22 of these were single parents. One year our kids had 19 babies; another year 21 babies were born and we had 17 mothers and 4 fathers in school that year.

The rationale for expanding educational and child development programs is tied to the realities of our school community. For too long, we have been concerned with how students feel about being Indian. Generally, our kids think it's not cool to be Indian. We know that because we have sixth graders that tell teachers, "I wish I was white like you." We know that because only 25 out of 100 student who start school finish and some don't finish in four years, it takes them five or six years to complete school. We have to start education sooner with these kids to start to change the number of kids who will graduate. We hope to graduate 15 kids this year; 11 graduated last year. Both parents and staff work hard to get these kids graduated.

The first year of ELOB was characterized as burst of excitement and enthusiasm for program. The second year brought experimentation with expeditions, school wide and the third year they began examining where they needed to go from there. The superintendent commented on the process:

None of the models is capable of working with schools to make them self-sufficient and self-sustaining; we have to do this on our own. We had to build a culture that couldn't be torn down. The key is to have a program that staff love and will come to work for. The kids will follow suit.

Recruiting staff made a difference in retaining them as well. We changed our approach from retaining to recruiting. We used our own staff to recruit other teachers and to make selections. Some of the original staff stayed who felt they could teach the ELOB model and others left. Our staff has high expectations of our kids. The facilitator and the new high school principal enable the model to have the overall staying power in the school.

The facilitator described ELOB in this way:

ELOB challenges us to find new ways to approach learning and to get things across to the learners. The (Superintendent) tells us to think outside the box. It's hard when you've taught so long with certain styles to change.

The great thing about ELOB is that there is a broad variety of ways to learn rather than one way — learning out of the textbook. The textbook is used to learn skills and content, and then you use ELOB to put the skills to use. That's the important thing to understand about ELOB.

Preparing the kids for the world. They have to learn the skills and also how to apply those skills. ELOB pushes us toward applying them.

We've put ourselves out there with ELOB and we're going through this process of change because of ELOB. It gave us the flexibility to do what we needed to do to be Omaha. It allowed us to "kick open the black box."

Getting Kids from the Hallways to Learning

Administration and staff examined effective practices occurring at the school and held collaborative meetings with teachers and staff. They worked on student learning and school climate. They paid close attention to the kids' behavior and consistency in discipline. They hiring hall monitors/truancy staff from the local community. The children needed discipline with an authoritarian role model with whom they might be related or at the least someone who knew their family well. This air of familiarity can be seen among students and Omaha staff in the way they interact and acknowledge each other in passing. The superintendent reiterated this by saying,

We opened up the school to the community in many ways. The hall monitors come from the community. They approach the kids in a particular way, which is familiar to the kids because they are from their own community. They are extended family to many of these children.

Parent Involvement

In 1995, less than 20 percent of parents attended conferences with teachers. That has changed over the years to about 60 percent of parents including parents with children in secondary grades. The superintendent elaborated on the changes:

It changed because our school changed. Our attitudes about the kids and the community leadership changed and so did the climate of the school. We became more receptive to parents and students. We set a rapport with the community that wasn't here before 1995. We also retained higher quality staff.

Parents that have the clear understanding of the importance of education and are positive role models for their children can be seen visiting and working in some capacity in the school community. They might be a school board member or work as a tutor, cook, custodian, paraprofessional, bus driver, in Head Start, or day care, early childhood programs in the school. Some parents wear two or more of these hats; they are Board member and paraprofessional and student in the Teacher Cadre Program. They might also work outside the community or at the casino. Many of these parents experienced similar academic struggles as their children have in school. These parents had additional challenges because many of them went to boarding schools. There were no public schools serving tribal communities back then.

Growing Experts

Two years ago, an in-house teacher education program, Teacher Cadre Program, was developed at Umon’Hon’ for community members. They decided to raise funds to “grow our own experts” and to rise above one of the most difficult situations in Tribal communities, which is the lack of Native American teachers in schools. Teachers and instructors developed Omaha cultural and language teaching resources that filled the void in curriculum materials for students and teachers that previously had been a stumbling block in classroom. The superintendent described the program in this way:

There are 16 students, all Omaha, who are part of a five-year goal to have a set of certified teachers to integrate Omaha culture and language into curriculum and maintain those components in all children’s knowledge base when they leave school. Currently seven cadre program students are working as paraprofessionals in the school. Each year we bring in ten more students from the community into the program.

Community Leadership and Commitment

The Omaha community has produced many leaders over the years, some have stayed, some have left to seek careers, and some of those have returned to Macy. The Tribal Task Force is an example of the kind of leadership that exists among Omaha people and fills a critical space in comprehensive school reform and community improvement initiatives.

In the mid-1990s, community leadership and educational involvement took shape as a Tribal Task Force that crossed several tribal communities. Initially, Task Force members focused their energy on convincing the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) to support their efforts to improve educational opportunities for their children. The DOE’s response was to sponsor an Educational Summit that addressed the Tribal Task Force concerns and issues in the educational systems serving their children. Umon’Hon’ grant writer described one of the goals of the Task Force as:

Umon’Hon’ needs more Native Americans, more “maha” people in administrative roles. There are just a couple of us in the Culture Center. Through grant writing efforts, we have brought \$2.3 million in funding into the Culture Center in two years and that funding was used to develop five major school and community programs.

The Tribal Task Force dreams were finally being realized through the efforts of the Culture Center. By developing essential programs that provide specific services to individuals and groups, the Center has been able to support the school community needs. An administrator said,

Currently, there are five projects and programs that were designed and implemented to meet school and community needs. Professional development and training needs of teachers and staff are funded through Obey-Porter. We focus on specific needs of teachers and students in terms of the curriculum. We have integrated culture standards in curriculum and we’re working on K–6 language immersion. We need to develop a language system for all our students. Currently, we teach language to our little ones in Head Start.

We’ve tried to do different programs with our kids. We had an entrepreneurial class with the economics teacher a couple of years back, and developed a bottled-water

company. The kids did okay for a while. The following year, I had to take it over because the kids had moved on to other things and the interest was no longer there.

The Historical Buffalo Hunt Expedition: A Great Idea

In the past, the buffalo meant survival for our relatives, especially for those who went on the last historic 1876 hunt. Education is our buffalo now. Education is the way you, your family, and your community will survive in the future. That is the reason we wanted all of you to experience this Hunt. We hope this experience taught you how education can be the road for you to provide for your family and your community. We hope this trip taught you how many people care about you and your future. This Hunt also signifies how education is the way for us to hold on to our culture and language. Now we have to make education more significant like the buffalo was to our ancestors (Denine Parker, Omaha woman, Art teacher).

Their first major school-wide ELOB expedition began with a “great idea” which came from a discussion between the music teacher and an Omaha professor of history who was conducting a socio-historical account of the “last successful buffalo hunt” by the tribe in 1876. At the August 1999 training, this idea resurfaced when teachers were creating their learning expeditions for the school year. The idea gave way to a grander plan than anyone at UMON’HON’ would have imagined back in the fall. The initial plan was to conduct a high school expedition called The Reenactment of the Last Successful Buffalo Hunt of 1876. That plan later grew into a middle and high school project and involved a considerable amount of preparation and organizing by administration and teachers.

In the spirit of ELOB, the middle and high school teachers developed curriculum and fieldwork mini-expeditions in preparation for the Buffalo Hunt in November of 1999. Teams of teachers designed thematic project-based learning activities linked to standards in collaboration with the Culture Center staff. A report in the Omaha World Harold on November 15, 1999 described those activities as:

For Omaha Nation’s junior high and high school students, aspects of the hunt have been woven into a range of subjects, during the first 11 weeks of school. Students in English classes have written papers and poems about the buffalo and tribal history. Shop class students have built tepees and learned how the construction methods used are still relevant today. Students in gym have played traditional Omaha games, such as shinny, similar to field hockey. Art students have made beaded moccasins. Social studies classes have studied the histories of the Omaha’s 10 traditional clans, which in many ways remain a part of the tribe’s social structure today. An advanced science and math class has studied prairie ecology, sampling square-foot plots of grassland and identifying and categorizing the plants.

Michael Parker, a senior, sat in class recently trying to identify a strange vine with heart-shaped leaves that he found in one of his samples, wrapped around a long-stem of grass. He and his partner eventually decided it was a wayward English ivy plant. The class would later do a mathematical analysis of its collected samples. “It’s a lot more hands-on and you memorize stuff a lot better when you do that.”

Angelina Tamayo, a junior, will narrate as members of a shop class assemble a one-tenth scale model of a tepee. The class can raise the poles, tie each down, and attach

the cover in less than 10 minutes. She said, "I'm really proud of being a Native American and where I came from." I am looking forward to sharing that with non-natives. I was surprised by how little I knew about my culture.

Community participation. Over 30 family and community members attended the 5-day school wide ELOB expedition better known as the Buffalo Hunt last November. Many of these participants expressed their gratitude to the teachers, staff, and administrators who planned and organized the event. They also demonstrated support and encouragement for their children on that historical event that took them far from home. Several carloads of families hung back away from the loud but very well behaved group of 106 middle and high school students and observed the 46 staff and community members facilitating the events. They would join this mass of participants for the ceremonial activities and sometimes for meals. The gathering of clans, the singing, drumming, and community building activities were extremely moving for children and adults alike.

Here's what people said about the expedition:

The ELOB approach makes teaching and learning more project-based and adventure-based. Trying to bring these [instructional and learning] concepts into the classrooms fit better with our students than conventional learning out of the textbook; and it fits with the majority of teachers well. Some felt reluctant to take part in ELOB summits and one thing that ELOB has done here is there are a lot of things going on to get teachers to expand their horizons and to think outside the box. This Buffalo Hunt experience helped some of our teachers get more into the culture and less fearful of making a mistake in cultural terms or offending someone by doing something that the culture didn't see as being appropriate. They learned the parameters of culture and where to go get help in learning things about the culture they didn't know before.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE....

Benefits of the Expedition

Expeditions clearly benefit components to all those who participate, especially when linked to the cultural and traditional foundations of tribal history and the contemporary issues of tribal life and school. As the superintendent reported:

Students who had not been to school in a long time showed up for that expedition. Attendance improved, at least for a while. Discipline practices became more consistent and we developed more stringent discipline policy. We want empty halls and full classrooms. We want a better atmosphere at the school.

We were successful in achieving our goals. We accomplished building a school community. We had a positive response overall among students. Kids got in touch with who they are as Omaha people. They were able to have the opportunity and the space to be Indian and feel good about it; positive modeling took place because there were Omaha elders that also work in the school at the event. Teachers took kids out into the community to conduct research and to write research papers and listen to elders and document their stories and interact with these people. We're getting good responses from parents and we're getting good responses from kids.

A parent made this observation:

ELOB is engaging students and writing skills have improved. I'm so glad we have the ELOB program. This model was the only one that worked for Umon'Hon' school community. I personally have seen how it has improved academics. My child's writing skills have increased. I knew that he had the potential, but he didn't know or believe it. Recently, I heard him tell his mother to use correct grammar. I believe there is a school wide impact on performance because of these reform models.

Reported in the *Omaha World Herald* (Nov 15, 1999), the Culture Center director had this to say:

It's been a positive thing for the students, the staff, and the community. It's built self-esteem and pride in who we are. Kids have been telling me they have learned so much more about their history and culture through this semester long ELOB. Not only has the hunt been a good learning experience, it has sparked Omaha students' interest in cultural heritage that had been slowly dying for generations. Students are now going home and asking questions of their parents and tribal elders. In the end, the Omaha students aren't just reliving their tribe's last buffalo hunt; they may be revitalizing their own culture. Instead of being an ending to the final hunt, I hope it's a birth.

Gallery Day: Celebrating Achievements

One of the fun and exciting events that is a primary product of ELOB expeditions is a Gallery Day. This event spotlights what and how students learned in a celebratory manner is the purpose of this ELOB component. Students and teachers organize the event and invite the school and community to see all their work from their expedition. The Gallery Day in January 2000 represented all the work and projects which students had conducted over the last semester for their ELOB. Parents and community members visited the school to see what their children had created. Students presented their work in a public forum with peers and family members and teachers. They had lots of pictures from their expedition displayed on poster boards and in portable exhibits. Seniors worked on Power Point presentations of their research projects. They displayed their portfolios that showed the process of learning about their history, the clans, integrated cultural traditions, and language. They documented all their work in their binders. Celebrations and fun were also part of their ELOB experiences.

Additional Reform

The administration did not see ELOB as the only reform program that was needed in the pre-K-12 school. The extremely low reading and math scores were issues that could not be ignored, regardless of what model was chosen. As the superintendent put it:

ELOB is not the complete picture in our reform plan; it is not bringing the complete package our students need. ELOB is not so much a program as it is a philosophy that says 'kids learn better this way.' In order to achieve the complete package we had to change our philosophy and ELOB helped us change our philosophy.

Improving Literacy through Success for All

Another school reform model was chosen for the elementary grades K–8 by the principal and the Title I coordinator in fall of 1997. Success For All was identified as the reform model that would hopefully result in the much-needed improvement of the younger student’s reading abilities. Visiting a Kansas school site that had implemented the model enabled the K–8th grade teachers and staff to see the model and participants in action. The model developer conducted an in-house SFA awareness session at the school for all staff and administrators. Subsequently, the entire staff made the decision to implement SFA in the fall of 1998. Success For All program was funded through state lottery Tier II funds. The program is currently in its third year. After two years after implementation, administrators said about the program:

The Success For All model is the best move I’ve ever made. We implemented SFA in the elementary grades two years ago. SFA involves assessments combined with basal readers from first to fifth grade. The objective is to get kids closer to reading and writing at grade level based on SFA testing scores. Kids gain confidence and self-efficacy, and that improves with reading and they feel more comfortable. We assessed students in grades 1–5 at the beginning of program. Our greatest success that first year was with the kids in fourth. These students went from no one reading at grade level to 100 percent of students reading at grade level.

In the elementary level, kindergarten thru fifth grades, we implemented a Success For All (SFA) model that teachers have also adapted for sixth thru eighth grade students. A major turn-around occurred when we began the SFA in elementary grades. I attribute the change in the school climate to SFA. I also believe this program and the climate contributed to staff retention and student and teacher buy in for improving scores.

Middle school students read novels. SFA is adapting their materials so older student can read novels rather than basal readers. More of the older students are choosing chapter books this year as compared to last year.

We also see students transferring their improved reading ability to other content areas. Teachers also utilize Accelerated Reader (AR) to assist kids in building comprehension skills. Each of these programs supports the other because kids are already reading a book with one program (SFA) so they decide to take the AR test to assess themselves. Kids used to have teachers read to them mostly and now they can read independently. Kids like the challenge this program brings to them. We’re also utilizing the Saxton Math program which is challenging and will help them improve math skills.

SFA is all about expectations. Kids like to know what to expect. It’s also about repetition, the consistency of work. Our kids have improved in reading. First month of SFA kids read 200 books total in the primary grades. Recently, our fourth graders read 1,177 books in one month.

Teachers and SFA. Success For All is generally described as a prescriptive program for teachers that utilizes instructional strategies and promotes consistency everyday for 90 minutes. Teachers are provided with specific reading materials and guidebooks that assist them in both

instructional strategies and in developing lesson plans. Teachers have readily accepted the program at Umon'Hon' although "perception of the SFA program differs among staff." In addition to SFA, they also implemented Six Traits Writing program, which is aligned closely with the state standards for Language Arts. This program teaches team developmental writing. The facilitator described the progress of these programs as follows:

Teachers are growing. We're always modifying and changing the program as it's being developed. We have established implementation checks to assess our progress. As facilitator, I want to be on the same page as teachers are.

The program is structured around a 90-minute reading period for K-8 students. High school students also have a literacy period that covers about an hour.

All the teachers like the program. They think it's working to improve reading skills. We have monthly planning meetings. SFA training involves Family Support, utilizing SFA materials, learning instructional strategies and using teacher guidebook, and assessments.

Assessment scores for our students across grades showed that in some grades they are maintaining their reading levels and we also see individual improvement by some students. First-grade test scores were not what we had hoped for, however, other grades did really well.

We have five new elementary teachers, a new high school teacher, two new teachers in the middle school, and numerous new staff support in special education areas.

SFA model developer. Success For All training occurs each semester with Umon'Hon' teachers. Once the initial staff training was completed preceding implementation of the program, SFA trainers made site visits. During the second year, new teachers will attend orientation workshops in other locations, sometimes out of state, which tends to be costly for the schools. Administrators expressed these concerns:

SFA has grown and expanded a lot since its inception, and especially, after CSRD funding became available to schools. This makes it more difficult for them to keep up with the number of clients and schools they have acquired through this school reform initiative. I've heard that it's also a struggle for them to retain their teacher/trainers. We requested to have the same SFA trainers as we had the previous year. We don't want different trainers each time. It sometimes creates too much discontinuity in a training program.

The third year funding didn't include onsite training for staff. New staff needs training so they have to travel to another site to get training because on-site trainers are too expensive. CSRD funding doesn't take into account new teachers or teacher turnover. We've spent lots of funds on SFA but they refused to do onsite training for new teachers.

Our reading facilitator is concerned because of the failure of SFA in some prominent school districts; Baltimore dropped the program recently.

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APPENDIX

INSTRUMENTS USED FOR CASE STUDY INTERVIEWS

Native American Case Study School Background Information

Name of School: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____ Nearest urban center: __ miles

Telephone #: _____ Fax #: _____ Email: _____

Principal: _____ Superintendent: _____

School Board Members: _____

Percentage of tribal members on school board ____%

Reform Model Data (Data Source) _____

School CSRD Coordinator: _____ State CSRD Coordinator: _____

School Reform Model: _____ Implementation of reform began in 19 __

Number of teacher trainings to date: _____ Reform plan developed in 19 __

Strategic Plan w/ timeline developed in 19 __ Benchmarks developed in 19 __

Number of new teachers since reform model implementation: ____ Grade level/s: _____

Number of new staff or resource personnel since reform model implementation: _____

Position/s:

Number of new administrators since reform model implementation: _____

Position/s:

List any changes in school board membership since reform model implementation.

List any district resources applied to CSRD model implementation (i.e., professional development).

School Related Data (Data Source): _____

Total School Enrollment: _____

Enrollment by Grades and number of classrooms by grade ():

PreKdg: _____()	Grade 4: _____()	Grade 9: _____()
Kdg: _____()	Grade 5: _____()	Grade 10: _____()
Grade 1: _____()	Grade 6: _____()	Grade 11: _____()
Grade 2: _____()	Grade 7: _____()	Grade 12: _____()
Grade 3: _____()	Grade 8: _____()	Spec Ed: _____()

Percentage of pupils eligible for free and reduced lunch: _____%

Ethnic representation of non-Indian students: _____% _____% _____%

Average class size: _____ Average daily attendance percentage rate: _____%

Per pupil expenditure: _____ Average Pupil/Teacher ratio: _____

Percentage of school budget supported by state aid: _____%

Age of school building: _____yrs.

Upgrading of facilities since reform plan implementation?: Yes ___ No ___ Year: 19 ___

Feeder schools:

Mobility rate of students/families: _____%

School completion rate (based on students beginning ninth grade, how many complete school)?
_____%

List partnership programs or activities with feeder schoolteachers and administrators.

Teacher Related Data (Data Source): _____

Number of professional staff: _____ Number of unlicensed support staff: _____

Average teacher salary: \$_____ Average years of teaching experience: _____

Average number of years teaching in tribal school communities: _____

Teacher turnover per year: _____ Number of Native American teachers: _____

District Related Data (source of data): _____

Number of student enrollment _____

Community Related Data (Data Source): _____

Population of community: _____ Percentage of non-Indian population: _____%

Principal source(s) of employment income for general community (i.e., what jobs are available in their immediate community/or if they have to commute to other communities for employment:

Community services/resources: (i.e., library/health/college/safety/educational/employment):

Urban relocation sites:

Tribal Related Data (Data source): _____

Tribal affiliations represented by students: _____ Tribal enrollment: _____%

Tribal Council Members:

Tribal Offices/Departments:

Principal source(s) of revenue for Tribe (i.e., casino; natural resources):

Federally (state) recognized tribal status: Yes ____ No ____

Other sources of data available for this study

Initial Fall 1999 CSRD Site Visit Research Questions

Name _____ Date _____
School _____ Title _____

Before we get started, do you have any questions about the study you'd like to ask?

Background

Yrs in education _____ Yrs at school _____
Yrs living in Indian country _____ Yrs in this community _____

What factors influenced your decision to work in this school and community?

School Reform Model Selection and Implementation Process

1. Why is a comprehensive school reform being implemented in your school?
2. What approach was used to implement the model and when did you begin implementation?
3. Who are the key people who have been (consistently) involved in this reform process?
4. What role do you have in the selection of your school's reform model?
5. What is noteworthy to date?
6. What other school improvement initiatives have been implemented before this reform?
7. What advantages do you see in this model?

8. What have been some of the challenges your school has faced implementing this model?

Tribal Culture

9. Did tribal culture play a part in the selection of the school reform model chosen by your school?
10. To what extent, if any, were students, parents or community members involved in the selection, planning, or implementation of your school reform model?
11. Please describe the process for including these stakeholders in the reform process.
12. In what ways have tribal culture, history, or language been integrated into the curriculum at your school since the implementation of the model?
13. How was tribal culture integrated into the curriculum in the past, previous to this school reform model?
14. What specific challenges have teachers had with integrating tribal culture into curriculum and instruction?

CSRD Model Developer

15. How are funds being spent to support your school's reform model?
16. What kind of relationship does the model developer have with key people in your school?
17. What are your school's expectations of the model developer?

18. How helpful has the model developer been in meeting stakeholder's expectations?

Implementation Process

19. What's been accomplished so far in the implementation of your reform model?

20. What's working well?

21. What challenges have you faced?

22. What role has technology played in the implementation of the model?

Current Needs

23. What are your school's current needs? How will these needs be met?

24. Do you have an evaluation plan with goals/benchmarks to aide reform efforts?

25. Does your school have a strategic plan with benchmarks and timeline for internal evaluation of the reform progress?

Support from District and State Ed Agency (Institutionalization)

26. What role has the district office, intermediate services, or state education agency played in your reform efforts?

27. What other organizations or consultants have contributed to the implementation process?

28. Has your school networked with other schools conducting similar reform initiatives?

Teacher Interviews

1. What grades have you taught at this school?_____ And this year?_____
2. How would you describe your approach to or philosophy of teaching? Has your approach to teaching changed since the implementation of the model? Challenges?
3. Have your teaching and learning practices (instructional methods and practices) changed since the implementation of the model?
4. Describe the process in which these changes took place for you and in your classroom? Challenges?
5. Could you provide an example of what an activity or project that integrates tribal culture entails for you? For students?
6. Please describe a typical student in your classroom.
7. Define the overall characteristics of a “successful” student.

8. Has the reform model changed family and community involvement in your school? If yes, how has it changed and when did you first notice these changes?

9. Has the model influenced changes in curriculum? If yes, how and what process took place to implement changes?

10. And what about assessment? Do you continue to use the same assessments or have these changed based on this particular school reform model?

11. Have new standards been implemented along with the reform model? Do these align with state/district standards?

12. Have you been able to determine if the model is working for you/students?

13. What have been the highlights of this model for you/ students?