

Running Head: THE ACCIDENTAL LEADER: A NOT SO UNINTENTIONAL
JOURNEY

The Accidental Leader: A Not So Unintentional Journey Into
Need, Community Building and School Structures

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Abstract

Attempting any new endeavor can be fraught with pitfalls. The start up of a newly established school is no different. Each comes with its own particular, and unique, problems with forming a cohesive community, which are exacerbated when the constituents— students, parents, staff, faculty and administration are new. The purpose of this action research project was to discover how the organizational acculturation, and community building of the faculty, could be affected the construction of a school intranet site. The study was three pronged: to establish effective strategies for peer mentoring and coaching; to identify, and account, the variety of socialization and technological levels of the staff in the format of intranet structure; and to identify the time constraints such an undertaking would place upon me and the faculty. Of the items studied, the importance of effective organizational development strategies and practices proved to be the vital key to opening the door of sustainable faculty group identity.

Problem Statement

The start up of any brand new venture can be plagued with unplanned for and unexpected complications. Opening up a brand new school, and this one in particular, had its own set of unique quirks bubbling to the surface. Old Wire Elementary School is in Rogers, Arkansas. It is located at the end of a dug up, trying- to- get resurfaced road in an expanse of red dirt and, on the horizon, a projected spackling of low income housing units just south the Walmart corporate headquarters.

The school opened on time. It did not function on time. While the pristine physical plant had most of what was needed— desks, tables, water fountains and the like, all the ephemera that would enable learning was not. At the state and district level, Arkansas is staunchly of the pro state testing, standards and textbook driven mind set. In Old Wire, we had some of our hardback textbooks but few teacher manuals, no student consumable books, no classroom math or science manipulatives in the upper grades nor any classroom library sets. Part of this was due to budget constrains but mostly it was to do to organizational issues in the planning of the school. Some of what we needed was coming. Some was not coming at all.

The staff of the school came from mostly outside of the school district. Of the faculty of twenty teachers, ten were part-time support service faculty. Of the ten remaining on-site members, eight had ten years of teaching experience or less. One other has seventeen, and I made up the last faculty member, with twenty-five. Our principal, who was a vice-principal at another elementary school for four years, is in her early forties and has been in the education game for fifteen years or so. Her newness, with the positive and negative connotations thereof, had ramifications in this situation.

The student population was drawn from two other primary schools with a trickle of new to the district students. The school itself was designated as a Title One school, with about 68 percent of the population currently being on free and reduced lunch. The total number of students is projected to grow as the low income housing projects that surround the school are completed. The percentage of the population of students who come from lower income backgrounds are projected to increase correspondingly. Each grade level had two classrooms running. The school was built to house four classes at each grade level with a maximum of twenty eight students in each class. The school was projected to double in population next year in both staff and students.

One of the major issues we have had was the lack of procedures, organization and system structures set in place this first school year. Our principal- who parenthetically, was a very nice person and had good personal and educational intent, seemed quite overwhelmed by the sheer volume of what she had to do. Stylistically, she was much the random abstract forced to work in a linear world. Her ability to prioritizing and time manage, for whatever reason, are poor. As a consequence, having no set or inefficient procedures lead to unsettled feelings amongst the staff. There was no obvious system in place build up group cohesiveness or to come to consensus nor provisions for clear flow

of information to the whole group. Nor was there clarity about the flow of information expected to be transmitted to the students or parents.

On the faculty's part, we were a congenial bunch that tried to work around the various obstacles and give our students the best quality of education we could while concurrently trying to build our own classroom communities. As I have grown to know my children, my teaching partners and my administrator, I was thrown into a conundrum as to how to apply my ARP. I had wanted to keep it just to my students but as things evolved, I believed that I had to go beyond that boundary.

It was hard to build a safe, warm and effective classroom community when the outside organizational structure was so fluid and ill-defined. What happens in that realm had direct and immediate implications for me and my class. My central problem statement correspondingly broadened to: "How can I use the formation and construction of site based "intranet" to serve as a vehicle for community building for the faculty of this newly opened school?"

However, to effectively execute the plan, the main question had to be broken down into smaller, discreet questions. They were as follows:

- RQ1: What specific strategies and behaviors can I use throughout the study that will allow me to be an effective peer mentor and coach in terms of community building within the school?
- RQ2: How do I determine, and appropriately incorporate, the specific socialization and technological needs of a faculty in the anticipatory/accommodation stages of organizational development when designing the intranet structure and implementation plan?
- RQ3: What are the technological ramifications of the development of the specific intranet site in regards to format, user time and integration with the greater technology division of the district?
- RQ4: What are the technological ramifications of the development of the site in regards to my time, teacher time and with the integration with the greater technology division of the district?

To start to research these questions, I had to have a multi-pronged approach. I had already had a series of conversations with the IT facilitator for the elementary schools in the school district to determine the technological skinny on what the district could or could not do and proceeded to build on that resource as the project continued. I think I thought she would become a firm sounding board for me educationally. We think in the same terms and she has very interesting viewpoints that were thought provoking and provocative. Too, I used my principal as a source of information on the parents and school population data as well as being the final "yes" woman to pass off on anything that I did beyond the scope of my classroom. I also planned to use the Pepperdine on-line resources and the

University of Arkansas library just twenty miles from Rogers to start my background documentation.

Yes, the start of any brand new venture is often plagued with unplanned for and unexpected complications...but also for unimagined opportunities for blessings and growth. There were no set in stone problems, methods or habits which were hard to break down. The prospect of building, as a group, something vibrant, effective and alive was enticing and entirely within grasp.

Literature Study

In the 1960s, the United States Defense Department's Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) was ferreting out a way to efficiently send information between its dispersed research facility's computers. Direct routing was established, yet problematic, as information in transit was easily lost or damaged. As a remedy, Leonard Klienrock of MIT, had theorized "packet switching". Conceptually, information could be broken up into sequential, segmented informational packages. These were then independently shipped, via various routes, jumping from linked available computers until they were reformed in the correct order at the designated destination. In 1969, a functional protointernet named ARPANET was up and running, shifting theory to reality. ARPANET used "open-architecture" networking. The three core principals of which were reliability, simplicity and independence: reliability in that package would be retransmitted until the source received it; simplicity in keeping the mechanics of the operation streamlined so less could go wrong; and independence in functioning in that each machine should be able to reach into the Internet without large modifications at the onset. The ultimate outcome was the development of the Transmission Control Protocol / Internet Protocol (TCP/IP), which remains a vital element of the Intranet today. After its adoption and standardization by the defense department, academia and commerce became involved and invested in the process by the 1980s. Privatization, and a reduction in the cost of services, paved the way for the private sector to access this new medium.

Institutionally, intranets provide a way for the creating and sharing of organizational knowledge restricted to a specific group of people by the use of firewalls or passwords. "Intranets are all about maximizing a companies strengths-intranets make it possible to leverage a firm's intellectual capital, whilst push technology has the potential to leverage a companies earlier investment in legacy systems and in house data bases." (Pedley,1999, p.9) There are two types of information technologies —push and pull. "Push" technology is where people are sent information specifically designated for them based on pre-defined elements. The purpose is to save any user time and energy as well as targeting a specific market. "Pull" technology occurs when information is culled or pulled from a large body of information or from the World Wide Web. Intranets embody push technology primarily, with aspects of pull technology, on the part of the specific user.

The structural components of an intranet are simple. People need to have access to a TCP/IP system so that a given computer can communicate with another; a Web browser, such as Explorer or Netscape Navigator, which serves as the interface by which people

access information; Web server software such as Windows 2000 for the server and all attendant hardware set ups; and Web authoring software such as FrontPage or Dreamweaver. With the appropriate mechanics in place, the actual set up of an intranet is fairly simple and cost effective. How a person views and interacts with a given intranet depends on a variety of factors.

While the idea of intranets within the work place may be a fairly new development, personal experience and competency with both the medium, and social context in which it is used, has been around for a longer time. People use PCs at home, fire off emails to correspond with family members in different parts of the country and surf the web as they plan their next vacation. Familiarity, however, can lead to the underestimating the ramifications of usage in the work place.

There, technology takes on a transformative aspect. “New technologies initially modify tasks, skills, and other non-relational aspects of roles. These modifications, in turn, shape role relations. Altered role relations either transform or buttress the social networks that constitute occupational and organizational structures.” (Howday and Sutton, 2005, p.1) Organizations transition through three defined stages. Each stage has its own quirks in regards to need, purpose, and usage. Technologies that make a best match also shift correspondingly.

In the first stage, anticipatory socialization, individuals new to the group are frantically trying to figure out the “values, norms, and required behaviors that will allow him or her to participate as a member of the organization.” (Flanagan, 2005, p.4) Prior to being hired, many people access Web sites to learn as much as they can about the company and upon being hired, they will often use company intranets as an electronic file cabinet for static legacy and procedural data. The advantage being that particular technology is not dense in its structure nor does it have an attributable time restriction connected to it. Items such as procedures, policies, meeting times, telephone directories, schedules, job postings, newsletters and saved document files all come under its umbrella. Email is important. All of these allow the newcomer to garner knowledge without committing too many social faux-pas, understand the actual work culture, and allows the individual to contribute and be noticed.

In the accommodation/encounter stage, the honeymoon is over and reality has set in. The work structures are understood and relationships more subtle. The connection between the information and the social context become more dynamic. Layers of understanding enter the picture. Here intranets are used to “help to add meaning and purpose to individual and group work...they are primarily used for information sharing and publishing, e-mail, document management, electronic forms, and corporate directories.” (Denton, 2003, p. 33) While technologies such as collaborative web construction can foster social relationships, the need for more face-to-face time takes on a priority as the need to finesse becomes great. Media becomes richer and social time frames shorter. At the latter end of this stage, “interaction collaboration” occurs. Here, the core individuals make use of interactive services such as viewing training videos, on-line courses, banking and things of like ilk to enhance their professional lives.

The metamorphosis stage, or role management, kicks in when conflict arises. The mediation and resolution of conflicts requires an adroit social skill set on the part of the people involved. “Internet-based information retrieval technologies were heavily used for information seeking, that unmediated interpersonal channels such as the telephone, e-mail, and Internet-based conversation tools were used heavily for social bonding, and that face-to-face communication stood out as the channel most heavily used for persuasion and problem solving.” (Flanagan and Metzger.2001. p.153)

An unanticipated negative consequence is the phenomenon of information overload. This is when great volumes of data bombard an individual without discernable priority, propose or relevance to the job at hand. The time, stress and outright fatigue engendered is known as “Information Fatigue Syndrome” As the sheer bulk increases, so does the detrimental physiological and social outcomes. Relationships suffer, important decisions are delayed due to difficulty in prioritizing and culling details, attention spans become fragmented and shortened, and life is lived in the reactive, rather than reflective, present. (Denton, 2002)

Teachers, as professionals, have huge constraints mandated to them at a national, state and district level. Within their own classroom, the parent, student and classroom dynamics bind them in other ways. Finally, there are the parameters that the teachers place upon themselves regarding how they should operate. Schools, by nature, are socially complex. The massive juggling act required to do the job often occurs upon a carpet of social context. In instigating a vibrant and viable intranet system in a specific school site, there are several challenges.

Within the school environment, intranets serve many constituencies. The district’s objective is to propagate the overall vision, culture and structure of the school through the development of the larger IT parent system. Decisions are made top-down and often come with a large clutch of rules and guidelines. At the site level, specific groups within a school or individual teachers generate specific, child level intranet structures. These are free flowing, targeted and specific in audience.

Identifying the core needs of the specific population of teachers is vital. Time is of a premium. Therefore, the function of the intranet must be specific, detailed and well meshed with the various needs of the client population and the actors, or people who are constructing the intranet, have.

Third, a whole system of sustained trial, training, feedback and modification has to be figured out to so that both the teachers and administration can move through the diffusion of innovation stages. “This is the process through which new innovation (often initiated by a single individual or small group of actors) spreads to a much larger group of actors who adopt it and ultimately put it to use.” (Dasgupta. 2001.p.54)

The key is to “balance control and individual ownership while at the same time fostering the kind of individual initiative and interest which feeds the local developments. Over time the nature of this managerial challenge shifts, as the intranet evolves in content

and technological sophistication. Hence it is necessary to continually evaluate the appropriateness and timing of managerial interventions. Cultivate the intranet as a medium, do not manage it as a system.” (Dasgupta. 2001.p.58)

inally, as intranet itself must be viewed and constructed to change and grow as the needs and requirements of the users shift. Like the ARPA, a site specific intranet should be about ferreting out efficient, effective and innovate ways to address the shifting informational, cultural and social needs of the group.

Action Research Plan

My main question ARP question was, “How can I use the formation and construction of site based “intranet” to serve as a vehicle for community building for the faculty of this newly opened school?” I evolved the following action plan to follow for the 2005-2006 school year with the understanding that the plan should shift and evolve as it was put into action.

Foundation Phase: September-January

- Meet with the technology director and his second in command to discuss the feasibility of the project. Met with my principal to get her approval to pursue each major step with the staff.
- Get their initial, but informed, consent for the establishment of an “intranet” to document procedures, policies and materials of the school, to serve as an archive function and as a way to prepare for the school growing by half again next year.
- Install the appropriate hardware and drives on my computer and on the school server.

Instigation and Structural Phase: January-February:

- Meet with the faculty. Administer a technology competency survey. Brainstorm advantages and challenges to the start up of the project. Present examples of component of intranets from other school. Draw up broad outlines of areas of need. Solicit one person per wing and from the specialists to help with further development of the base structure. The promise of release time and staff development credits to be used as enticements.
- Meet with the pilot group to form base structure over several sessions with a training component in each. Key components are to find ways to form a cohesive unit with the staff that has been there a year while having ways to bring new teachers on board. The rationale is to assure viability, robustness and ownership beyond this one year. Journal logs will document process as well as meeting notes. The construction of a continuity guide on how to add materials will be developed.
- Once the base structure is done, then present to the greater group to get input and comments. Modify the plan and gain approval of the greater whole.

Implementation: March- April

- Delegate, develop and build the specific intranet structures. Core pilot group to be

MKO for their halls. I will oversee and do my share as well as trouble shoot problems; provide more extensive training for others in such things as file management, use of various file structures, and...unfortunately, Netscape Composer training- what the district requires, for the top level structures. As a promotional activity for new teachers, I also plan to do a small videography of the school. Some will be linked off our school web site but the bulk will be carried in an open drive.

- This is the sticky middle of the project. Given that I do not know the level of competency of the group that I will have, close monitoring will be important. Monitoring of time spent, items under construction and making sure that each end user is finding value in what is being included. This requires two way feedback of the people involved which I will keep documented in a log.

Maintenance: May

To see if after the initial implementation phase, new material is added with confidence by other and more people. An end of the project survey will be given to provide data.

Cycle One

The *Instigation and Structural* section of my ARP plan ran from January to March of 2005. The function of this cycle was to: identify key needs the staff that could be rectified by setting up an intranet; conduct a technology survey find the baselines of technology skills; and institute training processes by which a robust intranet could be sustained over the years. Building community was supposed to be a by-product the intranet construction. It was to contain procedures to help transition new staff, and also support the current staff, organizationally. But, like the best laid plans of mice and men, at the very first faculty meeting to start up the process, a radical shift of focus from the technology to group dynamics and organizational structures began.

The scope of my interaction with the staff, and my principal, had now magnified exponentially. Several strands of interactions were currently in play: modeling and training, of the principal and staff, in effective organizational methodologies; building a viable vision statement and plan for the next school year and, at the same time, doing group values clarification on key items of contention; while using the available resources to build a basic structure for the school's web site and intranet compatible with the staff technological level.

One of the primary challenges in the school was that our principal was often not an effective communicator. Luckily, under the umbrella of helping me with my masters and getting the school prepared for its future growth, we had co-planned the broad outlines of several faculty meetings. These meeting followed effective organizational guidelines with me as the facilitator using the consensus model of group dynamics. Fortunately, I had had three years of training in this process prior to coming to this particular school. Purposes were set before to the meetings, fully formed agendas sent out, with an emphasis on shared responsibility amongst group members, tasks and activities varied

with each session, and the minutes or any follow up action done in an expedient fashion. There have been three staff meetings and one whole professional day done this way. As a staff, having these structures in place seemed to give a sense of serenity and purpose to what we were doing rather the feast or famine we had been having.

Some key resources helped me significantly in the structuring the meetings. The first was a book titled Joining Together- Group Theory and Group Skills by Johnson and Johnson. The resources and activities in there were stupendous and readily applicable. The other was a great facilitation site that I found named The Electronic Discussion on Group Facilitation from the University at Albany located at <http://www.albany.edu/cpr/gf/> This list serve had great ideas from facilitation experts out in the business world.

Forming a community based on shared power was an interesting aspect of the ARP process. Four ladies stepped up to the plate when I solicited for people to join me in helping to run meetings, which then reduced to two, due to time constraints. With this smaller group, we discuss each meeting in detail and planned out which activities would help guide faculty communication.

To be able to start the conversations, we had the staff consider these two questions, “What helped us, or would have been helpful now that they exist, to have over the summer to learn about the school and about our grade level?” The second was, “What processes can be put into place, or be documented in a central area, that would help new faculty and us get the “big picture” on what is happening in the school throughout the year?” By careful planning over a month, we were able to generate an organizational chart of concerns with provided the road map for our faculty meeting content for the rest of the year. (See Appendix A for the full chart.)

The chart was divided into three sections: issues that we could find answers to by contacting someone at the district level, ones that we could document from resources at our elementary school and ones that we would have to tackle at faculty meeting due to the fact that they required values clarification. Each member of the staff took key items and started to document what we currently were doing regarding agreed upon and standard procedures we already had in place. These were typed up and sent to me via email over the course of several weeks. The two ladies were becoming enthusiastic learners about how groups function. They were willing to take on a leadership roles in the faculty meeting and test out their burgeoning facilitation skills. This was an exciting group of which to be a part.

A problem, however, was that the model had not been fully generalized by my principal. There were several times when she canceled meetings, or assigned a meeting with minimal explanation of what was going to happen or what the expectations were to be. Too, her affect, at times, is not as welcoming as it could be and could shut down communication. The faculty had come to expect the effective meeting structure. I had talked with my principal indications from the faculty of certain expectations of structures, but at that particular time, I was not sure exactly what to do about beyond continuing the discussions and reinforcing how community could be built under her leadership using the

techniques. I ask for, and gained a critical friend, that I trusted not only as an educator but as a human being as well. Her job was to watch my interactions and provide feedback about how I am doing. I also bounced ideas off her regarding my interactions with my principal. Her guidance allowed me a certain psychological safety net as I maneuver my way through while also helping my guide my practice.

Identifying what our current school climate, student population and staff perceptions had been a key aspect of the nine week's discussions. In round terms, it was a process of polling everyone's perception in each area, and then coalescing the key items down to their essences. We did this by discussing the validity, evidence and forces that acted upon the each topic. The discussions were amazingly fruitful because, as we talked, we started to build a common vocabulary and understanding of how each person viewed the situation and came up with a collective whole. We had vetted both the current school climate and student population statements at this time. (Please see Appendix B for a norming process, the outline of how this was done at key faculty meetings and the resultant end climate and vision statements.)

Ascertaining how fifth grade students felt about the school was combined with an Understanding By Design assignment in the winter trimester of the Pepperdine course work. In the construction of a commercial for the school to be posted on the schools web page in the fall of 2007, the discussions the students had gave me a great deal of information about how these upper grade students perceived the school functioning. Although not directly applicable in regards to the boundaries of my Action Research project, it did serve as a nifty compliment. (See Appendix C for the UBD project outline.)

Rather than sending out a technological survey, as I had planned in my draft. I came to realize that a staff acculturation survey would be much more pertinent the focus of the ARP. After looking through a variety of studies on acculturation, I found "Exploring the Dimensions of Organizational Assimilation: Creating and Validating a Measure" by Myers and Oetzel particularly valuable because the question stems used in their Likert scale regarding socialization to corresponded well with the group process being done at Old Wire. Too, "Memorable Messages and Newcomer Socialization" by Kevin and Schlueter provided me particular insight in thinking about how to formulate questions that would help facilitate bringing new faculty on board in the next school year.

Using some of the Myers and Oetzel questions as a base, I selected five possible sentence stems I thought were a good fit in each of five key areas: acculturation, recognition, involvement, competency, adaptation and role negotiation. I then sent out copies of the questions to the two ladies in my organizational cadre and to my critical friend, asking them to select what they considered to be the top three in each category. After the questions had been vetted, I took the top overall ranked three and used them. There were also five open ended questions. These were: Do you feel more like a part of the school now than you did on your first day? What did others do or say that made you feel this way? What kinds of strategies would help a new person fit in next year at Old Wire Road? What do we do well? What can we do to improve? The survey was administered using Zoomerang, an on-line survey provider, located at

<http://info.zoomerang.com/> on March 17-March 20th. (Please go to Appendix D for the whole survey. This has been reprinted with permission of the company.)

At the close of the first cycle, the results had yet to be discussed with the smaller cadre and the principal. We also had our vision statement to finalize and the start of the values clarification discussions projected to begin at the first faculty meeting in April. On the docket for the top three items for discussion were: how the duty aides were supposed to interact with students; identify our universal school rules, how to speak respectfully to students while in a conflict situation. All of these had been identified on the organizational chart. The objective was that by only really understanding who we were could we make systematic, and organized steps, towards a collective vision of where we want to be. Each discussion would then become a mile marker along the road of establishing the vision of the year.

The final aspect of this cycle was a technological one. My connections with the greater IT district staff had primary been with the elementary IT facilitator in a series of email and face-to-face talks. Together, we have set up a faculty specific open drive, to be used for both the intranet and by each teacher by the end of the year. In regards to technological skills, most people could navigate the basic Word Suite with some PowerPoint expertise. Web expertise is restricted to two people on staff. That said, however, two ladies- one with some expertise and one with none, the facilitator and I made arrangements to work on April to set up the prototype of the elementary school site. Although I could have taught the Old Wire ladies how to construct a web site using Netscape Composer, I felt that it was a better idea to have the IT facilitator do it. The rational being that I wanted them to see her as a viable resource and “go to gal” when I was gone.

Concurrently, I also planned to set up the navigation structures in early April. Given the level of comfort with the technology, rather than going to a hard to sustain web-based intranet, perhaps using a PowerPoint driven entry page linked to the start menu of each teacher’s computer desktop might be the way to go, as it would allow any teacher to add to the intranet in their specific section while also not requiring a large learning curve. Too, this was the structure that the IT facilitator used herself and was comfortable in supporting. By having accessible technology, it would allow the intranet to be a changing and viable mechanism for the staff next year. As the school changes and grows, so should the intranet along with it. At least, that was my hope.

Cycle Two

The *Implementation* section of my ARP plan ran from March to the end of May. At the beginning of the year, the planned function of this cycle was “to delegate, develop and build the specific intranet structures and form a core pilot group to be MKO for their halls. I would oversee, trouble shoot problems, provide more extensive training for others in such things as file management, use of various file structures, and training in Netscape Composer training, which the district requires, for the top level structures. Some of the

information derived would be linked off our school web site but the bulk will be carried off an open drive. Given that I did not know the level of competency of the group that I would have, close monitoring of time spent; items being constructed; and making sure that each end user is finding a value in what is being included. This required two way feedback with the people involved which I would keep documented in a log.”

The actual *Implementation* stage, differed in key areas. From an organizational development standpoint, the main trust continued the outline derived at the end of the first cycle. The final vision statement had to be finalized and values clarification discussions begun; there needed to be continued training of the staff, and the smaller cadre, in effective meeting techniques; and a further mentoring of my principal in systematic, effective staff support. The organizational cadre planned, and lead, a significant proportion of the each of the planned faculty meetings.

On the first faculty meeting in April, the results of the survey were shared after I went through the results with my principal. To her credit, she didn't shy away from what was said in the survey. We did, however, have a lengthy conversation about what things could be put into place next year based on the feedback. In a broad terms, the faculty was generally happy about the job they were doing and their interactions with their peers. However, in regards to leadership of the principal there were many indicators that, that at level, things were floundering. In the acculturation section, a third of the respondents said they did not have a good idea how the organization was run but most felt like they were doing a good job in their specific area. Regarding recognition, fifty-five percent said they did not get recognition from the principal put most all said that they did with their peers. Everyone felt involved in the culture of the school but a third stated that they felt overwhelmed. In the adaptation and role recognition section, fully fifty-five percent of the staff felt neutral or positive about the statement that they questioned why things happened the way things did. This, in particular, was a key point. In the open response question, similar trends held true. A community had formed but without the principal being an integral part of the process. Part of the suggestions for new staff coming on board next year would be to be sure to have an orientation session, be supportive in the interactions and eight out of the fifteen people who wrote comments in this section stated that a mentor teacher was integral to bring new staff members on board. In our improvement section, statement about affirmation and celebration of what is going correctly was stated, being consistent of planning and disciplining and making sure that follow through from an administrative stance was important. Ultimately, the survey quantifiably validated what had been observed as happening from the start of the year.

On April 17th, after one faculty meeting and a morning on the following professional day, we finalized our vision statement for the 2006-2007 school year, using the consensus model for vetting. The vision statement incorporated the broad strands of the staff survey and the areas for growth in both the student and school climate statements in a observable outcomes along with dates to evaluate progress. The vision statement was the organizational guideline by which all further organizational discussion were connected. Procedures, rules and activities were to be planned with fostering progress towards

obtaining the standards we had set out for ourselves on this document. (See Appendix E for the Old Wire vision statement.)

Then, it was on to values clarification of the first two items indicated in the needs chart. The first of which was the delineation the duty aide's interactions with students. The duty aide conversation, on April 24th, was straight forward. The staff documented behaviors, both positive and negative, we had observed when the aides were interacting with the children. Both kinds of actions listed were ranked and the most significant items listed. The lists were then incorporated into a professional training session, to be administered by the principal, prior to the start of school in the following year.

On June 1st, the second values clarification session was much more intensive. This meeting dealt with understanding the dynamics behind our student's actions when being disciplined from a cultural viewpoint. The second aspect was figure out how to respectfully communicate with them, keeping our various cultural biases in mind, at that juncture. The conversation was a volatile one, in that, there were two teachers who had established a very negative climate in their classroom. There were intense power struggles and ramifications were being felt in regards to parent intervention, administrative interventions and the teacher's relationships with their peers. A lot of discussion in the smaller cadre had to happen concerning how to approach this particular situation.

Luckily, I was able to find a resource that allowed for a shift from finger pointing to a conversation about trigger responses and actions. Frameworks for Poverty, by Dr. Ruby Payne, provided a wonderful base for discussing how generational poverty students, of which our school had many, view schools and educators. Behaviors that triggered the emotional buttons of the teachers on staff and were addressed in the book were: continuous talking, talking back, disorganization, the victim mentality were all culturally bound, and unfortunately, contrary to the middle class cultural norms of most of the teachers. Key issues we teachers were having were rooted in this clash. By looking at the dynamic through this particular lens, we could come up with some strategies that would be effective with the students, offer "emotion"-lessly appropriate strategies teachers which could be vetted by all the faculty, and actively supported the goals of the vision plan for the next school year. (See Appendix F for a full outline of the procedures and methods we adopted.)

The mentoring of my principal continued with a variety of one-to-one planning meetings and incidental conversations. During this cycle, it really was two steps forward and one step back. While major meetings were some what jointly planned, sometimes smaller faculty meetings were called extemporaneously for the next day without agendas or notification. As a matter of fact, on the major values clarification meeting mentioned above, after the start up, she walked out and just disappeared! Later, when I asked her about it, she said that she was feeling sick but knew everything would run appropriately and well even if she wasn't there. It was and it did, but I found it disconcerting. One of the major things I had to learn to do this cycle was be nimble on my feet as far as pre-planning was concerned, and also when unknown meetings were thrown into the mix,

just to sit back and just let things carry on. Understanding that an emergency on her part was not an emergency on mine became a point of internal clarification for me.

Interesting group dynamics, however, did happen in the faculty meetings. Although, for the most part and for most of the time, I was able to have the faculty fully with me, I did have some off times. There was a powerful saboteur who sometimes used air-time and passive aggressive techniques to derail processes. Not so much that she didn't agree with what was going on but her need for attention and control was great. Some individuals, who were part-time or had been out for maternity leave, had to be caught up to speed on a regular basis. In the case of one individual, coming having her understand, according to the model we were following that backtracking on decisions made two months ago was not an option for her, proved to a time consuming job on my part. I found that close proximity, shifting physical spaces, listening to comments unemotionally and then restating them before a shift in focus were effective organizational structures to integrate these people into the greater whole and to assure them that what they were saying was not being ignored.

A surprising outgrowth this cycle revolved around the issues of power of personality and transference. At the time, these items served a powerful mirror regarding to my own assumptions about myself and what was happening. One of the ladies in the smaller cadre group was asked by another faculty member if anything was going to happen next year because I would be gone. The fact that this person identified the process so strongly with me, as a person, rather than seeing the collective effort of the smaller group really reinforced the fact that I had to step up the transference of visible leadership to the other ladies, and the principal, at faculty meetings. I also had to be very proactive in doing strategic planning with the smaller group to get them ready. For instance, in one of our training meetings, we spent the whole time about how to see the big picture of a situation and how to envision change. I provided short list of resources, which had been pivotal towards my own professional development over the years, to them.

Starting in April, I did intensive planning with the group, and systematically built in significantly increasing face time for the other ladies to present in the faculty meetings themselves. I stood in the back and watched the faculty while they presented, and then offer positive support and specific feedback after each meeting about what happened. A major truth became obvious to me, while systemic change can start by being personality driven, it has to shift to a belief in the larger process by a greater group to continue and be viable as a change function.

This cycle completed the intranet formation for the school and the construction of a solid foundation of the school web presence. I spent a great deal of time pondering the technological level of the staff to find a program that would provide ease of delivery, with the least steep technological learning curve, but which would still deliver the important contextual frames and content needed. After observing what people actually did in their classrooms, and how often they accessed alternative forms of media beyond word processing, I knew that I was setting the technological bar for the intranet too high. After rejecting training all of the faculty in Netscape Navigator; the web program

supported by the district and thinking about PowerPoint, which was the preferred mode of stand alone delivery for the IT facilitator for the school, I decided the best bet was to go with something people were already comfortable using— Word. The complexity of teaching that many phobic people Navigator in such a short amount of time, with limited support from the IT staff, ruled out a real web intranet structure. PowerPoint, although known to a few, had problems in that there was a limited amount of information that could be realistically presented on the screen at one time plus it was also cumbersome to use.

Yet, with Word, there was a mental correlate to the hard copy binders that folks were already using. For all these reasons, that is why I ultimately opted for a Word file based intranet system. I would have to teach the faculty how to use a folder navigation system, how to save appropriately, key file naming protocols, how to use hyperlinks, and how to add on to the Table of Contents section. All of these processes were do-able according to the strictures that I had. I also made sure to have a “How To” page directly linked to the main page of the intranet so that people could draw up the instructions on their own. The whole structure was linked to a master page right on the menu bar which pops up each time a computer is logged into by a teacher which adds a degree of security to the system as it is already password protected. The district backs up every night, so reserve copies are available with a minimal disruption to the whole intranet system. Too, I have left three CD copies of the current system with my principal and the ladies of the smaller cadre group. The major technological drawback with this particular form of intranet isn't so much that people will intentionally delete, or change, other people's work but do so because of an error in their computing skills or not remembering how to retrieve something.

With the program type out of the way, the intranet structure itself had to be made. After talking with the web committee, and thinking about naming protocols, it seemed that an efficient and effective way to go about things what to have the intranet and the web to have similar navigation and naming structures. If visually, they are similar and follow similar paths, the level of intuitive reasoning to use both will be less because people could generalize.

The function of the intranet was three pronged. First of all, it was to serve as a repository for static information which people new to the organization could access to learn the information they needed to start to become a productive member of the staff. Secondly, the intranet was a central place for individual teachers, and grade levels, to build files to document and support their curriculum year after year. Finally, the intranet would serve as a living history of the school as the minutes of committees, staff meetings and all other school activities were stored on the site.

Content for the intranet had been building up over the course of the months prior from several different sources. Some was created by teachers based on the needs chart developed at the beginning of the year and had steadily been collected. Standard procedures at the district, and school level, was culled from the district policy book, the Roger's district web page and email documentation from the Old Wire principal. I added

this content after standardizing, formatting and making the navigation structures. One of the major elements I realized that was missing from the needs chart, but had been discussed in conversations, was the lack of being able to find benchmark standards for each of the core areas in each grade level. I collected that information, on a district and state level, and added it to a standard page as well links to all the textbook web supports and literature links. Although not called for, it would make all teacher's lives easier with some known guidepost next year.

Two hour long training sessions, one on May 23rd and one on June 4th , introduced the finalized intranet to the staff. There was release time after the second session to build content for the next staff coming in next year. In the first session, I went over the function of an intranet and the navigation structures with specific stress on how to hyperlink. The second session reviewed the skills of the first, followed by a deeper and specific instruction of how to use an intranet to document common work per grade level and how doing so could actually make curriculum construction more efficient, easier and less time consuming. I saw many light bulbs go on at each session and comments I received at the time let me know that the use of Word as a medium allowed the majority of the group to grasp the function of intranet easier. I was successful in choosing a medium that the group would feel comfortable with and use independently. (Please see Appendix G for an chart of the Old Wire Intranet Navigation structure.)

Concurrently, the web committee met every Tuesday in April, and two weeks in May, to devise the structure, graphics and informational outlay of the web. I led the committee, along with two other ladies from the school and the IT facilitator for our school at the district level. The first phase was we Old Wire ladies determined what elements were important for the school site to have. That was followed by researching of existing sites for more ideas. The next section was learning how to use Netscape Composer and learning the idiosyncrasies of the program. Our group was at an advantage in that two of us had training in web design. Oddly, I had to push for making a shadow copy of the web as a fail safe on our local server rather than doing the work live, as the IT facilitator wanted. The FTP protocols proved a bit daunting, at first, for the other ladies. The committee had a professional release day on May 9th, and we met up in the district office with to finalize the format of the site. A starburst banner was constructed that was unique to the district and the blue and gray undertones color undertones a subtle match for the school colors and with the district web site. One of the problems we were having was that the wildcat, our official school mascot on the watermark embossed gif file in the main frame of the pictures, was very kitchie and did not fit with the subtle overall tone what we were going for. By opaquing the picture, it modified the contrast between that picture and the rest of the site. (Please see Appendix H for to view a picture of the main site.)

The organizational structure of the web was fairly simplistic but appropriate for the level of expertise of the people who will have to spearhead the adding content next year. There was an area for the principal's message, a monthly newsletter, grade level announcements, a photo gallery, and as well as a section for the PTO. Too, there are links to the school calendar, cafeteria menu and a Babblefish translation hyperlink for our Spanish speaking parents. The new format was posted and linked to the Rogers district

web site. In the final two sessions, the committee worked on a FAQ page at the parent level of the site and took digital pictures of the returning faculty members taken to be posted in the fall.

Third Cycle- For the 2006-2007 School Year

The two smaller working groups and I put structures into place to continue the work begun this year. I am grateful that there are dedicated individuals, in both the organizational cadre and the web committee, committed to see what was begun this year to grow. Even through they are nervous about being on their own, they do have the foundations they need to be successful.

The organizational group and I met twice in May for intensive planning sessions. Some of the conversations revolved around how my relationship had evolved with the principal and what they thought theirs could be. We discussed how that particular social dynamic, and the dynamic of the school, would shift depending on the personality of the new staff coming in. The Southern cultural issue of being perceived as a “good” girl, and not making waves, figured prominently at this juncture. We outlined the first semester’s plan. In August and September, after an initial planning meeting with the principal to see what her goals are for the year, the committee would solicit for new members to join them. The purpose was not only to add working bodies, but be inclusive while introducing the new staff to the process. The goal for the first semester is to have values clarification discussions on the following items: the development of the three key school rules of conduct representing the Old Wire core values; formation of contingency plans for discipline procedures; and to develop expectations for parent volunteers. At the end of the first semester, a mid-term status check on the 2006-2007 school vision will be looked at.

At that time, everything on the original needs chart will be done. The organizational cadre is then projected to run another needs chart generation and then go about organizing discussions on issues important to and identified by the current faculty. At the end of the school year, the vision plan for 2006-2007 will be evaluated and a new variant drawn up for 2007-2008. Luckily, the current organizational cadre has also said that they would oversee the continued addition of content on the intranet as the year progresses.

One of the major structures still left hanging is the whole plan for finding mentor teachers for the new staff. Although that was a repeated stress in conversations by the faculty at the meetings, the principal was ambivalent. I am not very sure as to why this was. It is going to be the first real challenge for the ladies when discussing the fall semesters outline with the principal in August.

In regards to the school web site, on our professional day, the web committee outlined key areas that further training of the faculty. One of the missions of the school’s IT department is to get into schools more to do training, and the IT facilitator is on board with providing the training. In the first semester the following sessions have been

planned: navigation structures and saving files; digital photography; and simple picture manipulation using Microsoft Picture Manager. Also, during the first month of school, the content that was constructed in June will be posted as well as information about the Back to School Afternoon in early September. The IT facilitator, will help facilitate that with the two web committee members.

Final Reflection

The title of my Action Research Project is such an incredibly apt one. This whole journey really has been a Series of Fortunate Events, in satirically Lemony Snicket kind of way. It was the luck of the draw that I ended up in a totally new school with a novice principal at the helm. And that the school had a significant organizational need with a faculty with a keen urgency to find a solution. It was by happenstance that I had the leadership quality, skills and desire to seek out ways to fill the gap and that I had a principal who allowed me free rein without being threatened. By a dint of elbow grease, conversations between the characters, multitudinous adventures, alliances, pitfalls, and subsequent plot thickenings. The need was successfully met. End of story, close the book and, “Good night.”

Of course, what actually happened was far more complicated— as all human endeavors are, but without any one of these components in place nothing would have come to fruition, depth of experience and intentionalizum of the actions go untold. My main question was, “How can I use the formation and construction of site based intranet to serve as a vehicle for community building for the faculty of this newly opened school?” This had been further broken down into four sub-questions that honed in on different aspects of the project. By looking first at the component research questions, the global understanding that come in response to the main question will make more sense. Aside from my own perceptions, I also solicited 360 degree feedback from six people on staff. My principal—who was in a supervisory position; my organizational cadre ladies—the mentoring choir; my critical friend—the above the fray eyes; and from two people who were not fully on board with what I was doing. One of these individuals, would at times, sabotage the process in the faculty meetings and the other was often mentally disengaged. The feedback focused on the first two sub-questions of my ARP which dealt exclusively with the human dynamic. With a stamped, self-addressed envelop in hand I went and asked for their feedback. I received five well thought out letters in response, that I really have appreciated, and which validated a great deal of what I have done this year. (Please see Appendix G for the full text of the feedback that I received.)

RQ1: What specific strategies and behaviors can I use throughout the study that will allow me be an effective peer mentor and coach in terms community building within the school?

The construction of a new school’s cultural identity is like being pitched into a stormy sea late at midnight. No indicators of the shore, water depth, surge height or who is in the water with you. A bonding experience? Most definitely but without strong and insightful

leadership, the security of the cultural lifeboat seems like an eternity in coming. At Old Wire Elementary, from an organizational development standpoint, both first order organizational structures and the establishment of deeper second order cultural development to amalgamate personal values into a shared collective, had to happen concurrently with everyone being in the in the anticipatory stage of socialization. Everyone was not sure about what their job was or how to do it, how they would be evaluated by the various constituencies that affected their job performance, the social interactions that were normal and who would be a good person to form a personal relationship with. (Flanagin and Waldeck. 2005) To add to the mix, the stage of socialization generally lasted up to six months, which would put the organization into the spring of the school year.

It became apparent to me by mid-October that the principal was not going to be able to provide the kind of leadership which would help transition the school towards safety. Unfortunately, it was not within my purview to lead on a school wide scale either. But, under the conceit of my ARP, I could legitimately model purposeful leadership and introduce methods by which the whole school could use to define, and refine, its culture. “Purposing is a continuous stream of actions by an organization’s formal leadership that [induces] clarity, consensus, and commitment regarding the organization’s basic purposes.(Vaill. 1982. page 28) By shifting the focus of my ARP solidly on the development of group culture and developing language for professional discourse, the greatest amount of positive, viable change for the school could occur.

Being able to adopt and use the structures and vocabulary connected to the consensus model butted up against two underlying cultural issues, the first being that elementary school teachers, as a whole, tend to not speak up for themselves and do as directed due to wanting to create a harmonious environment. Secondly, given that the faculty was almost exclusively female, and of those females— Southern, there was a cultural bias towards not speaking up when in disagreement with an issue or when confused. This resulted in silence, behind the scenes manipulation or other forms of passive aggressiveness to get the message out without being overtly confrontational. Being perceived as in the public arena as being “not nice” was definitely something that had to be deal with when trying to open up clear channels for communication.

When introducing the consensus model with the staff, I was highly systematic in certain areas. In teaching the method, I broke each part down into discrete parts which could be delivered in about forty minutes, which was about the time span focused attention could be brought to an issue at an after school staff meeting. I was sure to use the method teaching it. I modeled what I preached. I sent out agendas with a purpose before the meetings; used a time keeper, gatekeeper, recorder and facilitator; used the correct vocabulary in the correct way; opened doors for discussion by asking provocative questions; clarified and sought consensus of thought; reviewed and reiterated what had been discussed the next day in an email which documented what happened.

There was a strict set of guidelines for making guidelines, with a common vocabulary and expectations for behavior. There was little ambiguity on the method but there was

incredible flexibility on the content as the internal flow and the basis for the next round of discussions were all triggered by the staff and what happened in the meetings. “Being flexible does not mean abandoning key commitments, but it can mean altering the order of key priorities, and it definitely means being willing to modify time lines” (Evans. 1999. page 249).

A second attribute that I believe that lead to success was the building of group decision making, ownership, and a power sharing into the process. What started as a one woman show by necessity broadened into a variety act with many actors. I spent a lot of time watching the dynamics and providing feedback. All the items finalized were based out of group need. Who took on leadership for fueling the talks varied in the faculty meetings according to who had the most heat on the topics. I made an overtly stated, and consistently applied, position of neutrality. My role was to sponsor effective communication. Interestingly, this often came in the form paraphrasing what was being said and asking questions which were reflective, and clarifying, in nature. Digging deeper into attitudes and rationales helped the group see the motivation behind what was being stated by both the person talking and the listeners. Part of the problem, initially with the group conversation, was the habit of being people being oblique in references or using blanket statements without details or examples. Again, I think this related back to the cultural issue of not wanting to offend. Too, listeners had to become aware of the filters that they brought in the form of assumptions about situations or people.

Another whole thrust towards in shared power was the formation, and subsequent training, of the organizational cadre. This was a joyous endeavor and extremely fruitful. This was mentoring of the best kind where, in the end, the two ladies felt professionally empowered and knowledgeable. With their assuming more of the leadership role in faculty meetings, the ladies were able to successfully practice the skills that we targeted when planning the faculty meetings. I provided feedback as to what I saw and we discussed what changes in leadership skills should happen at the next meeting. A serendipitous plus was that people, other than those in the group, could see that the process was generalizable and there was a core of individuals to continue the process in the future.

Next year is going to be a challenge for Old Wire Road in that the school will grow in staff and population by half again. My principal was able to see one model of effective organizational development. Her application to using it herself was spotty. Towards the end, however, she did use some of the structures for consensus building that had used in prior faculty meetings. She has said that next year she plans to be up and running using the full process. I firmly believe that she sees the benefit of the model and can use the structures. What I am not so sure is that she will due to her lack of internal planning. But, one has hope. I was sure “to seek opportunities for people to assume leadership roles. Any organization stronger when it has a “density” of leadership rather than a single gifted chief. And a good chief seeks to develop strong leadership whenever possible.” (Evans. 1999. page 248) The smaller cadre can provide the density for her.

The cadre has a general outline of what needs to be done in regards to finishing off the values clarification generated this year and a time line for the evaluation the school vision plan. There are challenges. First of all, the smaller cadre must develop a collaborative relationship with the principal. Given that one of the ladies is the school counselor and already has an equitable and favorable relationship with the principal is a plus. Finding peer mentors for the new staff was indicated as needed by the current faculty. How to go about doing this will be the first job they get to tackle together. Secondly, flying solo in developing a faculty meeting agenda has the smaller cadre a bit nervous. The ladies have good instincts. They will just need to jump in and gain experience. The last challenge will occur in the second semester, when the new members to the school have integrated into the collective, and supplies an unknown dynamic to the process.

Everything done was tied back to making Old Wire a community of practice—emotionally, socially and professionally. That goal was applicable for both the current staff and those staff members yet to come. Milestones were made like the development of the needs chart and the codification the vision statements. Validating opposing viewpoints and modeling open discussion in a safe and professional way chipped away at cultural biases. By being highly aware and being appropriately reactive to what was happening made us more reflective of our current practice. We were able to plan for the future, while building up common group understandings with more trust in the system and in each other. We had transitioned beyond the anticipatory stage, with most being in the encounter stage of socialization. Most people participated in the schools activities to the extent that they could and felt comfortable in understanding the expectations of their job. A few go-getters in the metamorphosis stage, as evidence by some very astute work by a few ladies in actively mediating some social issues to a successful end. Given that, according to traditional paradigms (Jablin, 1984) the school really should have just entered into the encounter stage by the spring, the fact that most of the faculty was beyond this stage was worthy of mention. While part of this was due to that we all we throw into the fire at the same time, a lot was due to the conversations that the faculty had had in staff meetings. The message fostered action and action fostered the message. The sheer recursiveness of this was what lead to success this first year. The whole concept of continual school improvement is just that—it is continual. It will be important that the group of three continues builds up the structures of what has been established this year and goes beyond next year.

RQ2: How do I determine, and appropriately incorporate, the specific socialization and technological needs of a faculty in the anticipatory/ accommodation stages of organizational development when designing the intranet structure and implementation plan?

The content of the intranet itself rose out of the school's need to be able to clarify and document procedures and also prepare for integrating new teachers next year. By using the needs chart as a road map, the majority of the static information was documented by the end of the year. One of the important things, for me, was the “need to capture the “tacit” knowledge that is held in people's heads and make it explicit by storing it on the computer as files, units or email. (Dasgupta. 2001. page 24) The more complicated

gathering of information, from sources outside of the school, I did. Interestingly, there were several people who felt that once they understood the process, there was no need to actually write things down. This included the principal. As a matter of fact, in our first two faculty meetings, no agenda as given out nor any minutes taken. It took some explanation to shift their perceptions, and the experience of seeing the whole intranet in its entirety, for some folks to see the application for others and the future.

While most individuals were very diligent, there were some strategies that I had to employ to bring more people into the fold. Some individuals just required a personal email or two. Others, particularly the specialists, required me walking personally down to their classes at during our common free times, and doing some personal face-to-face reiterating about how needful and important their specific input was. I was also sure to visit with the cafeteria and janitorial staff to get their insights on certain plant issues too. The concept of the intranet as a way to document, develop and construct shared curriculum rather than just a static grouping of information toward dynamic development of was wonderful to see click when it did.

That said, there was a theme in the feedback that I received that said my vocabulary, at times, was such that people had a need to run for a dictionary. Keeping my audience in mind will be something I can be more attuned to next year. Overall, though, I feel very successful in making a match between the generation of information and the level of the staff. The amount of work for each individual was appropriate, without being onerous, and I think that for the most part the endeavor was perceived as being worth while.

RQ 3: What are the technological ramifications of the development of the specific intranet site in regards to format, user time and integration with the greater technology division of the district?

RQ 4: What are the technological ramifications of the development of the site in regards to my time, teacher time and with the integration with the greater technology division of the district?

As with many larger school districts, the technology department in Rogers conducts business far removed from the daily functioning of the component schools. The district IT department was also incredibly understaffed with a harried and aloof head. For the 13 elementary schools in the district, there were two facilitators and three full time technicians. The IT department was run out of the central office, and while there were computers in each school, there was no on-site IT person to promote the integration of technology into the daily curriculum or even consistently service the machines. As a matter of fact, a person was having trouble, she could not reach the district office to request a maintenance form directly nor was there a form on the district web site. Only the principal and the school secretary had permissions to submit forms, so a person had to work through them. Needless to say, much like was well demonstrated in Larry Cuban's book, Oversold and Underused: Computers in the Classroom, the computers in the elementary schools were there but rarely used.

I started out my journey contacting the IT Director and spending a hour talking with him, in the summer, in general terms about technology in Rogers. There after, I worked with the elementary facilitator. This whole process was a journey of ask, follow up, wait,

remind, call, wait and then something would happen. I learned three things very quickly, being the very small cog in a large lumbering machine that I was, if I could find a way around a problem or solve it myself, I should do it. Secondly, I needed to nurture my IT relationships rather than demand action. I ended getting a direct telephone number the IT facilitator that way when she figured out that I wasn't going to abuse her time. Finally, I learned to build in build in a lot redundant lag time when dealing with the district.

Leadership for technology innovation, and use, was left to each site. The advantage of such a hands-off approach was that one could do pretty much what one wanted as there was no competition for resources. Any perceived inequity between students was of little issue as the majority of the teachers in the school had little understanding of how to integrate technology into an already packed day. Which resulted in several outcomes, the first was that my students and I had on-demand use of the computer lab right across from my room. I refined the blocking of integrated computer time with core curriculum and worked with the other fifth grade teacher on an end of the year project based on the Trail of Tears.

Secondly, I realized that any technology leadership had to be organized and developed by me in such a way that other teachers could see the benefits to themselves professionally and in regards to constructive use of their time. One of the advantages here was key individuals were already interested in further developing their understanding of technology, so I did have a willing, but very small, group from which to solicit. "If the management support is there, if there is a culture in which people are willing to try new ways of working, if there is adequate hand-holding and training, then you in with a real chance that the intranet might revolutionize the way things are done." (Pedley. 1999.page 20). Although not part of my original ARP, when my principal approached me about developing the school web presence, I volunteered to start the process with two different ladies than the organizational cadre. Organizing the meetings, setting up integration with the IT facilitator at the district level, building collaboration, delegation of responsibilities for the group, and training for the ladies to take over the job in the next school year was all was under my purview. Support from my principal was in the form a release day in the spring. One of the crossover techniques I used was to make sure that there were common elements in visuals and navigation between the Old Wire intranet and the web site and, secondarily, with the Rogers district site. By starting small with a pilot group, and watching what resulted this year, leads me to believe that a viable, if small, web site for the school will be possible.

Regarding the development of the intranet itself, I realized that the actual construction was mine alone. The time it took to was marked. Not because constructing an intranet was new to me, I have made and used web based ones before, but in the actual match of the format to the technological expertise of the staff. Although I had not conducted a specific survey as to the technological level of the staff specifically, opting to focus on the community organization levels instead, I did know by informal observation that most were restricted to word processing, some PowerPoint, and email on stand alone machines in individual classrooms. Three teachers used a digital camera to document processes in their classrooms as well as taping video feed off the district web site. Only one other teacher had a own personal web but it was used for an outside business and managed by a web service company.

I knew that I had to make a very concerted effort to keep the program learning curve as low as it could be; the format of clear; make it so the teachers could do it on their own effectively, with the benefits being as high as possible to assure adoption of the medium. My goal was to move the staff out of the into at least the adaptation stage of technology use of the intranet where each faculty member was trained in terms of how to input content and maintenance of the system. The front loading of the content, and buy in, was happening in the organizational development arena of my ARP. Concerning the program development itself, I made sure that there was a fit to the needs of the faculty, introduced the intranet in stages, and provided training sessions as documented in the cycle reports. A key component was training in just what an intranet was and what it could do to enhance their own professional lives and collaboration. The structure of the intranet fostered ease of use in this department. Too, because teachers could access the intranet from their personal computers when they had free time, personal choice was assured as to when, what and how much to add.

That said, I wish that I could have started my ARP earlier. Because the organizational development element took up an unanticipated block of time, the actual physical development of intranet was pushed back to later in the year. Some of the feedback I received had some relevant suggestions regarding printed outlines of some the technological aspects. Had I had more time, these would have been really nice additions to the training sessions. However, what I found to be at the end of the year was a scatter in technological skills. While there were two people who were in the introduction phase of usage, due to their part time status in the school, the majority of people had come through to the adaptation stage. Noted early adopters were already in the acceptance stage where the technology was being used to build up resources in the intranet for the grade levels and for the new teachers who would be joining the staff the next school year. Too, some new staff had already had a look at the protointernet prior to the end of the year.

Ultimately, by setting upon a Word file based intranet system, I believe that there is a foundation set for the growth of the intranet next year. Given the fact that this year was the very first year of existence for Old Wire, I am appreciative of the fact that we were able to come as far as we were technologically. I do have further questions concerning the continual development of the intranet itself. I do not have one core person responsible for its upkeep but a loose amalgam of three. Is not having a core person at the head going to be a detriment to development of a viable intranet in the second year? Will the early adopters in the adaptation phase prove to be good role models for the other faculty in usage? How will the three adapt and change support for site management in the second semester so that the dire empty net syndrome does not occur?

In answer to the main ARP question, the construction of the intranet did engender a stronger and more viable community at Old Wire Road. Not because of the existence of the intranet itself, but because of the real and fruitful conversations about what we at Old Wire wanted our community to be and how we were going to get there.

Personal Change

When I look at all that has happened this year, I am really startled by the complexity and layers of interaction my ARP brought. It has been a year of real and transformative

change which only time will allow to surface as I apply what I have learned and done to other situations. For the short term, some clear truths do stand out.

The first thing I really learned was that it was not about the technology... ever. New technologies will come, older ones will go. The existence of a given technology is not the critical aspect. The relationship people choose to have with the technology, and the effect it has on their lives, is. My charge, then, is being proactive in finding the technology that will add benefit to the lives of the people around me and being the conduit by which a new relationship is formed.

Secondly, I am now acutely aware of just how complex establishing a collective, and shared, vision actually is. The sheer volume of elements to keep in mind, and the interconnectedness of all the attributes, is a daunting process. I now truly understand why it takes three years for solidification of second order change. When I worked in Japan I had the opportunity to see this kind of change happen, from start to finish, in the development and institution of a new evaluation model for teachers in my school there. I was an active and strong participant and took the lead on several committees. I was of the evangelists but I was not of the visionaries. The difference between helping to lead, and the actually being at the helm, is a phenomenal and humbling experience which is so hard to understand if one has never been in the position.

I now know that I can be a true and effective leader on a large scale. Passion and avocation had been a hall mark of my professional life in the past. Yet, at times, with passion there was intense emotional heat. Granted, the heat of convictions, but a force with which to be reckoned for both myself and what, or who, I was directing the heat toward. What I didn't understand was that kind of passion was also limiting who and what I could become. One of the quotes from Peddy that has continued to resonate with me is one where she is describing her own understanding of the role conflict played for her, "Conflict is very natural. It occurs when someone else's values, beliefs, interests or opinions stand in the way of what I want or need. Putting it that way helps me look at the situation rationally instead of from the perspective of my feelings. I've learned that whenever I tie things up with my feelings, I lose my objectivity and my edge when it comes to problem solving." (Peddy. 2001. pg. 131) I was given the opportunity to practice taking the "me" out of the equation this year. Am I passionate? Yes, but passionate about the process.

Compassion and empathy play such an important role not only in leadership but in being a good human. I have been graced to have these applied to me over the years and it is with joy that I am able to do the same for others. Listening, really listening, and being understanding of what individuals are feeling and saying while retaining my own sense of self has been important. I have been able to say what I have needed to say, which has at times been within the context of a conflict situation, in an emotionally neutral and clear way while at the same time being receptive to the other person. But, I have a long way to go in this department and that is why it is one of my long term goals.

Yet to be a leader, one has always be seeking ways to improve and grow. Carl Rogers said that "learning that was more than an accumulation of facts. It is learning which makes a difference—in the individual's behavior, in the course of action that he chooses in the future, in his attitudes and in his personality. It is pervasive learning which not just an accretion of knowledge, but which interpenetrates every portion of his

existence.” (Rogers, 1958) I believe in the power of authentic learning and change. There is so much out there that I do not know. I need actively learn from others regardless of their age or their station. I have only some pieces of a puzzle. There are so many other pieces out there. For that matter, so many whole puzzles!

I believe that true leadership resides in my actions. While I can articulate just what I am doing and why, it is my actions represent who and what I am more adroitly than any of my words. In the classroom, a positive classroom climate is all about collective ownership. When dealing with adults, it is...all about collective ownership. Celebrating the successes of others, supporting the growth of those in need, being comfortable with the times of gray and stress are all part of the process. That old adage about being stronger together than apart is incredibly true.

One of the things that I want to do is to continue to learn, develop and apply my skills in organizational development and facilitation. Over the next decade, what I would like to do is end up as a consultant to international schools using these skills or to teach at a collegiate level back here in the States. In the short run, I apply what I have learned specifically to my sixth grade students in San Paulo next year in the development of the social studies class rooted in the study of cultures and to the larger grade level as a whole as four out of six of the sixth grade team will be new.

But the ultimate truth that I derived out of all this, the most substantive change, is that I need to mentor growth in myself and others; affect positive change in the environment around me; and always, always do service towards the greater good.