Vignettes of a Caring Culture in an Urban School

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Abstract

Significant numbers of urban schools have been struggling with special challenges. This project concentrated on the development of school culture in an inner city Midwestern college town in the United States. Due to failing state examination scores the school was restructured. Through specific Professional Development School activities student learning was supported. Working within the PDS partnership at the highly challenged secondary school, a needs assessment provided the impetus to develop experiential school climate and college preparation brain-based and communications' oriented learning opportunities. Through multiple approaches encouraged by grounded theory methodology, the changing of an urban school's culture was scrutinized. The anchors of a caring culture that were investigated included developing nurturing relationships; listening to and involving stakeholders; and planning for specific individual learning experiences. Important factors included school culture and reflective practices. Caring vs. control well describes the continuum that challenged the urban school environment and the personnel working within the school.

Key words/Phrases: Caring Culture, Professional Development Schools Partnership, Restructuring

1. Introduction

Many would argue that there have been few things, which have recently impacted the United States of America's educational system, more than No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the American Recovery And Reinvestment Act (Recovery Act), enacted by Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama. In each of these Acts, specific attainable goals were outlined and the successful attainment of these goals became a 'high-stakes' affair. Some of the performance-based issues outlined by President Bush addressed the academic performance of disadvantaged students and the encouragement of safe schools for the 21st century. In addition, NCLB provided for an accountability component for each school system (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). With the change in the administration (January 2009) President Obama's focus stated: "it's about the daily efforts, the choices large and small that add up over time. It's about the skills you build, the knowledge you accumulate, the energy you invest in every task, no matter how trivial or menial it may seem at the time" (Whitehouse, 2010). He underlined the efforts to include "Every child, every opportunity, every time" and stressed how important quality education is for each student (Whitehouse, 2010). In looking at the components of NCLB, one can see that there were many stakeholders who were impacted by the implementation of this policy. Some of the issues which the NCLB policy had on the State of Illinois, the fictitious Prairie School District and the fictitious Eagleton middle and high school will be addressed in this article.

In addition, we addressed how the Eagleton middle and high school participated in the transformation process from a more controlling environment to a more caring environment. Noddings (2005) asserted that caring is an integral part of well functioning environments: "classrooms should be places in which students can legitimately act on a rich variety of purposes, in which wonder and curiosity are alive, in which students and teachers live together and grow" (p. 12). Noddings underlined how intellectual achievement is greatly supported by strong social-emotional experiences, as does the work by Elias et al. (1997), and Zins et al. (2004), and Goleman (1996, 2006). "Caring relations can prepare children for an initial receptivity to all sorts of experiences and subject matters" (Noddings, 2005, p. 36).

This vision of a safe and caring environment can be seen reflected in the National Association for Professional Development Schools' (NAPDS) publication, 2008, titled *What It Means to Be a Professional Development School*. In this document the NAPDS outlined nine essentials of a working Professional Development School relationship. Essential #1 focused on a comprehensive mission statement for the partnership. The document specifically stated: "PDSs must provide safe environments where all students can learn, all students are comfortable, and all students are secure and physically, emotionally and intellectually out of harm's way" (NAPDS, p. 4). Another essential, Essential #4, focused on a commitment for professional development of all constituents; pre-service teachers, current teachers, and university teachers through reflective practices (NAPDS, p. 5).

2. Methodology

There were many different lenses that we could have used to approach this study. We decided that we would use a grounded theory approach in our study. We arrived on grounded theory because it would best assist us in trying to understand a phenomenon, specifically the phenomenon that exemplifies the culture of the school created between the two partners involved in the partnership (Haig, 1995). According to Corbin and Strauss, "incidents, events, [and] happenings are taken as, or analyzed as, potential indicators of phenomena" (1990, p. 7). For example, the conceptual idea of goal-directedness was a result of analyzing the many responses and observations related to the college simulation experience from various viewpoints, including the students' reports of their experiences; and the teachers' and the researchers' experiences while participating. Taken in total, these indicated the importance of such a concept in a developing, dynamic and caring school culture.

As researchers we know that the data we collect and report on are affected by who we are and what we think. As active participants in the partnership, we needed to be aware of how our roles might affect our analysis of the phenomena. Specifically, in this study we needed to begin "with an area of study and [then allow] what is relevant to that area …to emerge". (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23). As researcher-participants, deeply embedded in the life and practice of the school, we as writers inhabited that area of not totally an insider but not an outsider either. The elements of grounded theory include concepts, categories and propositions presented in this article in a form of vignettes each depicting vital parts of the culture of caring and implications based on those portions of the school culture.

2.1 Participants

The participants in this study are the University and Eagleton Middle and High School. The two schools are involved in a Professional Development Schools (PDS) relationship. In trying to paint a picture of Eagleton Middle and High School, we use the School Report Card for Eagleton Middle and High School. The School Report Card has been released for each school in the state of Illinois since 1986 (Illinois State Board of Education, 2008). However, starting in 2002, the state began producing a State Report Card to fulfill one of the requirements in NCLB. The State Report Card can be accessed electronically at http://iirc.niu.edu (Interactive Illinois Report Card, 2008).

Eagleton is an urban school located in the Midwest section of the USA. In 1999, approximately 70% of the student population was black. By 2009, this statistic had risen to almost 82% black. During the same time period, the mobility rate of students enrolled at Eagleton rose from 33.6% in 1999 to 51% in 2007, but then dropped to 26.8% in 2009. Also, the percent of students coming from low-income houses rose from 49.9% to 87.3%. But not all news is bad at Eagleton. During that same time period, the dropout rate fell from 15.6% in 1999 to 0.2% in 2009. In addition, the Graduation rate increased from 56.1% to 79.4% over the same time period.

The PSAE results are mixed as well. The percent of students meeting or exceeding Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) in Reading and Mathematics showed irregular progress. Due to the fact that Eagleton did not meet AYP for five years, they underwent a restructuring process. In this process, the school underwent a series of restructuring activities, including committee work consisting of community members, constituencies, agencies, parents, teachers and students of the school. The restructuring work started by looking at data over the last five years of development in student's achievement, absenteeism, teacher backgrounds, curriculum, etc. Ideas brought forth were all gathered based on research-based practices. Through the rigorous, diligent work of some forty people in the community the restructuring plan took form, which then was expressed in goal areas and tasks. A new school format opened up with changed structures, consisted of an altered faculty, and the existing school spaces were to be used in different ways. The second major partner in this relationship is a small private local university. The university has PDS relationships developed with several local school systems. Eagleton is the only relationship with a school at the secondary level. In each of these relationships, a site coordinator is assigned to the PDS site. Each of the authors of this article, have at one time or another, been assigned as the Eagleton site coordinator. In addition, one of the authors was also a parent of students at Eagleton. Therefore, the authors do have a close relationship with different components of the Eagleton school system.

2.2 Data Collection

Throughout the restructuring process, the committee was supported by a Professional Development School relationship with a local university partner. This article addresses three specific initiatives that supported the transition process. During each of these processes, data was collected through surveys, informal observations and reflections. The data collected will now be provided in the form of three Vignettes. The following three Vignettes illustrate what the Professional Development School relationship was and how with the two components, the partnership worked to keep the caring environment that had existed at Eagleton through the transformation process. One of the key components to the success of this transformation was reflective practice that supports innovation. This reflective practice is the fourth essential in the NAPDS' *What it Means to Be a Professional Development School* (2008). It seems that these three components will continue to play an important role in the new Eagleton Middle and High School. It should be noted that the first Vignette addresses the overall PDS relationship, as then the second two Vignettes address specific programs affecting the culture of the PDS partnership. Our data collection and findings are expressed in the following three vignettes:

Vignette I: Professional Development School Partnership
Vignette II: Transforming Culture through the Code of Community
Vignette III: Transforming Culture through the College simulation

2.2.1 Vignette I: Professional Development School Partnership

Eagleton middle and high school is a Professional Development School with a university where strengths of each institution are utilized for the purpose of supporting student learning, preparation and professional growth of faculty in PreK-20 continuum, and promoting research and inquiry. This relationship has existed through the changes in the urban environment for a decade, through the changes of three sets of building administration and the government mandated restructuring process.

Through this partnership the relationship is committed to preparing leaders in the human sevices professionals. By working together, the extended learning environments allow for all involved to experience aspects of innovation, responsiveness to change, shared decision making, leadership and collaboration.

> "PDS work is surprising, exhausting and energy consuming, but also energy creating. In reality it translates to a massive amount of details and multitasking for those involved…It is a multilateral approach to growth and development working simultaneously to reach the both the diverse and common goals of many constituencies.
>
> Willingness to share information, experiences and conscientious approaches to communication facilitate both ongoing development of the structure of the program but also the spirit and the energy of the project. Diversity of populations participating in the project, integrating into the community, and integrating across disciplinary lines are our core strengths." (Antola Crowe et al. 2007)

The continuum of the presence of PDS program includes workshops and professional development by the university faculty, consistent presence in the school through shared experiences as well as mutually generated goals for each year's partnership goals related to the School Improvement Plan of the school. In the PDS culture of the partnership the following aspects are articulated: responsiveness to change, shared decision-making, leadership and collaboration (see Figure 1).

Within the PDS partnership collaborative activities are planned yearly depending on the emphases the school has in their annual goals. One such activity was the Code of Community. This activity was designed, carried out and lives on throughout the restructuring process.

2.2.2 Vignette II: Transforming Culture through the Code of Community

The Code of Community was an intentional, democratic grassroots process through which supportive school culture, better peer and teacher-student relationships were pursued with hopes of stronger motivation for academic learning. The initial workshop was organized with a Core group of students representing diverse groups of students (expelled students, struggling students, student council, variety of ethnic groups) with staff members and parents who functioned as a main energy center for moving the process forward. The initial workshop centered on positive thinking, attitude exercises, a trust walk, emotional intelligence, creating supportive environments and portrayed a skit about self-esteem. It included an extensive discussion of the school's culture, its positive and negative aspects, and the ways in which students and staff wanted ideally to see their school culture. A series of workshops and working groups followed and groups worked on defining the policy for the school that would guide relationships and interactions. The group named it the Code of Community, thus wanting to focus on the realization that "We Are One As Individuals and One As a Community".

A series of workshops and working groups discussing and refining the code ensued with Core group members facilitating so each group could be heard when creating the Code, which included rights and responsibilities. Creating the code with students and faculty representatives, and parents was energetic but the Core group was noticing how different the groups were and how each time people would need to air out concerns and their feelings. Listening to feelings was a new experience for many. (See Appendix A.)

Much discussion was generated about the rights and responsibilities of students and teachers. Each round got more students involved with both students and staff members facilitating (120/850 all together). Faculty as a whole discussed and worked on the content and wording but expressed concerns about authority issues and rights of teachers. Some members of the faculty expressed concern that students had been given too much power in running the process and they should be controlled more closely.

After many meetings and thirteen workshops with various members of the school in meetings open to the community, a celebration was planned to mark the coming together of the process. Over sixty students and staff participated in organizing the details of the celebration. The celebration consisted of a core group of students and parents setting up the Auditorium and the gym; ROTC students acted as greeters and oversaw the signing of banners in the gym depicting the bullet points of the Code of Community; band, choir, and Key club oversaw the refreshments; university faculty and students prepared and oversaw the program; several faculty members, students and faculty participated as speakers; and donations were accepted from the community members. The local TV station news anchor, representing the African-American community, was the main speaker. All classes were halted for the school-wide celebration, which aired on the evening TV news. Students were enthusiastic and exhibited desire to grow in their leadership activities.

After the celebration, Code of community breakfasts were carried out and focused on topics generated from the students. These topics included listening, teaming, friendship, study skills etc. Students carried a miniature Code of Community on their I.D. badges and posters with the Code of Community were laminated and placed on walls of each classroom. The signed banners were hung in the large entrance foyer of the school. One student mentioned that this process brought "crunk –positive feeling, energy and atmosphere" to the school. Some expressed liking the music being played during the passing period when students transitioned from room to another. We have "pride in what we do". From the initial discussions where students had listed as negative features "undedicated adults, fights, high pregnancy rates, no passes given, drugs, gangs and boring teachers" this was a remarkable change.

When asked what the students had learned through the workshops and the process, they expressed numerous aspects of self-growth and showed a measure of self-esteem not previously recognized by them:

- Something surprising was everyone getting along, and no one fighting or no racism.
- I was surprised that many people, not only at my table, but in the group as a whole, shared the same ideas that I had concerning the Eagleton community.
- I learned that I need to remember to include all people in activities for them to feel good about themselves. We all need to have a sense of community so that we can feel good about ourselves as individuals. It seemed like most everyone agreed (closely) on issues we talked about.
- I learned that I have more qualities about myself than I thought.
- I did not know that I had so many qualities.
- I learned that I am truly a leader and can take care of others.
- There are a lot of kids who do care about what happens at Eagleton, and we can make a difference and affect change one person at a time.

The Code of Community, a process planned for the school community, was especially powerful. After implementing the shared Code of Community, the elements of a caring community through desired interactions in the culture of the school were seen. The atmosphere of the school developed leadership and intentional culture building. These changes were witnessed through a difference in student's self-perceptions (see Figure 1).

2.2.3 Vignette III: Transforming Culture through the College simulation

This Vignette describes how Eagleton high school students completed their college simulation culminating experience at a local University. The experience began in the fall when the Eagleton students participated in a week-long simulation of what it was like to take a college course. College simulation was experiential in nature (Kolb, 1984). It gave students concrete chances to experience a few aspects of what it is like to be a college student. The goal was to give students a concrete sense of the expectations of a college classroom. Experiences in the college simulation included several components. First, students were given readings that addressed the material to be covered as a unit in a college course. Then on Monday and Wednesday of the simulation week, students attended a classroom lecture session, lead by a university professor. On Tuesday and Thursday, of the simulation week, study sessions were held. These study sessions discussed and clarified concepts presented in the previous days lecture. The study session also allowed for review of the concepts before the exam that was given on Friday of simulation week. The university professor graded the exams and gave feedback on the high school student's performance.

The follow-up and culminating event consisted of a college visit. Students had a chance to think further about the college experience. The high school students were given the opportunity to shadow a University college student for a day. Earlier, in the college simulation process students were asked what areas they might want to study when they go to college. The students were matched with college students with similar interests. The high school students shadowed a university student throughout the day to gain a better idea of the expectations and experiences in college. They toured campus and saw university life. Some of things they experienced included viewing a dorm room, cafeteria eating, classroom observations and other campus activities.

Some of the findings from this experience could be categorized into six different categories. The categories are: Responsibility and Independence, Understanding Reality, The Concept of Effort, Goal-directedness, Skill Development, and Knowledge of College Life. What follows are excerpts taken from the surveys completed by the students at Eagleton middle and high school.

2.2.3.1 Responsibility and Independence

This topic was an extremely important cluster that showed students were aware that the control they have over their own lives were about to change in college. They commented on issues of being in charge of their own schedules, finding motivation to study and do work on their own, their own relationship with work and learning in general. Following are excerpts that exemplify this cluster:

- It is more on you and not on the teacher to help you with your work.
- …it is basically up to ourselves to determine how well we do and the input we put into it.

- …you cannot take a chance like I'll read it tomorrow, no you can't do that you have to get right on it.
- When doing work you basically have to do everything on your own. You will get to see how to take full responsibility for everything you do and the work will be harder. You don't have to go to class if you don't want to.

Some students showed an increasing awareness of maturity and growth while observing other students' behavior and reactions during the experience, both their peers from the high school and university students.

- …there are really not many rules but yet the behavior of the students was great. The students are very mature.
- Many of my high school classes contain students that are immature and don't realize that we are all in school to learn. I want to learn as much as possible about the subject in class. I think college simulation gave me a chance to explore all the topic and gain more knowledge.

2.2.3.2 Understanding Reality

Both teachers at the high school and university study group leaders remarked on the influence the experience gave students to bridge the gap between what they thought college might be as opposed to their preconceived notions about it. Some students came to the experience having visited other colleges so this was not their first visit to a university. However, this experience offered a different degree of active engagement.

- The college simulation experience was very realistic. It gave me somewhat of an idea what to expect and what not to expect.
- I learned that college is only what you make of it, and only you can decide what's best for you. I think the college simulation experience for me was very realistic. It gave me somewhat of an idea of what to expect in college and what not to expect.

Some high school students participated in the experience *"to have a change from everyday /high school/, but I doubt I will attend college".* Field notes and observations during the van rides back from the university to the high school yielded data that showed this doubt of being able to go to college was removed or lessened for some students.

2.2.3.3 Effort

In the data it is clear that students became aware of the recognition of the effort, or even tedium that will be required of those wanting to go to college and become successful in college. Many recognized that they had not put all of their effort into studying at the high school level and were going to have to change some of their ways of approaching studying. College was seen as something where you will muster up your stamina in order to achieve your goals.

- You do have to work hard and go at what you do.
- College is absolutely what you make it.
- You have to get your priorities straight and it takes a lot of studying.
- You have to stay focus/ed/ and be willing to learn.

These are representative comments of hundreds of remarks showing a similar awakening to the shift that individuals in their own perception needed to make to become eligible for college.

2.2.3.4 Goal-directedness

This experience made it possible for the high school students to discuss and explore their own career goals by having discussions with people from a field they were interested in pursuing after high school. In study groups students also asked questions directly related to their concerns about future choices.

- My favorite part of the college simulation was getting to come to the university to shadow a student. I thought it was really great that I was able to shadow someone who was learning to be what I want to be.

This excerpt reflects how the reality of discussing and conversing with a person who is in preparation for a career, gives opportunities for students who are just beginning to think about such possibilities. Participation in the experience gave high school students the opportunity to discuss the sometimes hazy, sometimes non-existent career choices they have begun spending time thinking about.

2.2.3.5 Skill development

Much of the college simulation data gathered showed numerous remarks by the students referring to note-taking, learning to pay focused attention, their own observational skills, and becoming a more astute learner in their listening, writing and reading skills. The awareness of these skills were coupled with their understanding of how the responsibility for the entire effort of learning is going to fall on their own shoulders much more so than before in their previous educational experiences.

- I think I have to do more on my own, like reading and note taking. I think we will be able to cover more material then we do in my regular high school classes.
- High school teachers make you do the work and high school has more class clowns that can distract you from listening but college there are nothing but adults who want to learn.
- The most difficult part was having to decipher important details that should be written down while trying not to write too many non-important details and listening to the lecture at the same time.
- I learned better study habits and a little about what college will be like.

Students became more aware of approaching learning and differing ways of presenting things: '*he was addressing in the form of an outline on the overhead was a great help and put everything into a short summary in the outline form"*

Many students recognized that they needed more skill development because it was challenging trying "*to keep up on the note taking",* or understanding what the professor was saying because the class proceeded quickly.

2.2.3.6 Knowledge of College Life

From field notes and interview data and observations it was apparent that students were most curious about the extra-curricular environment of the university. Many student remarks had to do with the nature of their experiences during the day on college campus.

- I wanted to experience the real college life.
- The best was …getting to participate in classes. Learning what college students go through on a normal day.
- Today was a great experience that will never be forgotten.
- I believe that every high school student should have a chance to do this.

The freedom of choice in activities and running lives of their own was something that many high school students appreciated learning about. Again, here is the connection of awareness to the responsibility one will have to step up to when going to college.

- *I learned that you are in charge of your own education in college.*

Social life outside of the classroom and learning to become professional including aspects of college life were noted.

- This was a very nice experience. It gave me a feel of college life and how it is going to be. I enjoyed it.
- I thought that either people studied all of the time or partied. They said everyone does a little bit of both but it depends on the timing.
- It was fun. We got a tour which was helpful for us not to get lost. All of the staff was helpful and polite. The student panel filled in some answers for me about college and they were pretty cool. The lunch was fun too. I got to sit with my friends and talk about all of us going off to college.

Cafeteria, available activities and organizations and the nature of the dorms, and awareness of financial aid were also noted:

- I was surprised at the size of the dorm rooms, I had no idea of their size!
- A lot of students that go away get financial help or grants to go to college.
- I didn't quite understand all of the financial aids and stuff that was available for me so I wasn't going to go to college because I thought I wouldn't be able to afford it.

This shows how financial concerns could become a real physical-institutional barrier even though in many instances it is only a matter of perception, rather than reality.

High school students also made perceptive observations about the people they met, and comparing it to their own prior experiences.

- Many people tend to fall into the same types of social groups as they did in high school, despite the diversity here.
- The surprising and unexpected experience I had was meeting the students; they aren't so dull, they have a sense of humor and are friendly to everyone.

These examples show how a cultural setting could enlarge the perceived opportunities or diminish them to become either social-cultural (Jensen, 1995) or intuitive-affective (Lozanov, 1978) roadblocks in the decision-making a high school student engages in. Many students, prior to the college experience, had concerns about being able to fully participate because of attention or focus or because of their fear of speaking in front of bigger groups. Biological-medical barriers (Jensen, 1995) and social-cultural (Lozanov, 1978) factors can become overwhelming:

- *Sometimes I like to hear what others have to say before or if I have a response, so I can see what everyone else feels compared to what I feel.*
- *I don't always discuss what I have to say in front of a large group of people.*

On the day of shadowing university students, the high school students were asked which twenty-two areas they had discussed with their college shadowing partner, most indicated that more than half of these areas had come up by the high school students in discussions with the university students. While high school students rated that they knew a great deal about college prior to the shadowing day, their comments indicate that they gained many insights relative to the specifics of college life. When surveyed, students reported depending more on conversations about college on parents, friends and family members than counselors and teachers in the school environment. Many students have a good general idea and expectations of college life with no huge surprises in store during the college simulation but reported more comfort in knowing that after the experience they could grasp a greater number of specific details about college life. The college simulation exemplified the following elements of a caring school culture: Responsibility and independence, understanding reality, effort, goal-directedness, skill development and knowledge of college life around the academic experiences (see Figure 1).

3. Discussion & Implications

Throughout the restructuring, Eagleton has been transforming into a more caring community. Some of the implemented changes are staff reorganization, organization into smaller learning communities within the larger school, offering choice, bringing in a health center, service learning opportunities for students and co-teaching between special education and regular education. In addition, an Academic Conference with community volunteers occurs after each grading period. All of these changes facilitate a "safe environment" as described in the NAPDS's nine essentials. The context of the events, processes and culture of the partnership highlighted exemplify the NAPDS Essential #4: Shared Commitment and Innovative and Reflective Practice.

The innovations discussed here of the Eagleton school form a pathway from a more controlling culture through the uncertainty, opportunity but anxiety provoking restructuring process to a more inviting and caring culture. The future is unknown but the structural changes have been made. Functions of physical spaces have been changed. The foyer is an area filled with study tables. The Code of Community banners welcome people in. The Code of Community represents a process that shaped the culture of the school in its communicational style and expectation.

The college simulation experiences include positive gains in perceptions regarding the possibility of attending college and the accuracy of images of the college experience. In the experiences of students many report having a more specific understanding what might be entailed in their future as a college students. Currently plans are being made to provide the college visit experience to the middle school students. By allowing younger students to participate in the college visit, it is hoped that they will be more motivated to succeed at the secondary level, to already think within the framework of their future.

As far as the Professional Development School relationship, the college simulation experiences enriched both the intricate connections between persons involved in the experiences and facilitated the positive culture of interactions between the university and public school personnel. The college simulation was by far the most distinctive PDS experience in the relationship of the school and the university. Various departments of the university and admissions were involved which had a positive effect on further developing the details of the college simulation experience to better meet the needs of the students and the goals of the program itself.

The culture of Eagleton school is affected by its history, which has changed from the integration struggles of the sixties through an ongoing media image of the school as a place where bad things will happen. It is *the* school "below the hill" in an urban setting. In the minds of some people there is still a racial struggle, for others the school CAN change. The life of the school reflects the struggles around the society that surrounds it (Kozol, 2000). The school district is challenged by declining numbers of students. The experience of the people inside the school is very different from the outside perception of the community. There is a fierce pride that marks the people's experiences within the school and the community, a pride that has deep roots in its glory days as a four-time state champion in a much-loved sport.

More intentional changes related to the curriculum and reorganization have occurred: Career Academies have been held, the community school is a reality. Respectful communication with students is the aim where their voices are being heard. Dense networking with parents and community members as volunteers marks the events of each school day.

What have we learned? Cultural shifts in the life of a school are ongoing. Each part and group and individual of the school community changes the whole of the culture, and the way culture is felt and experienced: restrictive, warm, threatening, joyful, energetic, ominous, uncertain etc. School culture changes with the changes in administration and their personal beliefs about how a school community should function and what teacher-student, student-student and school-family relationships ought to look and sound like. The continuum from one grade to the other in a student's life waits no grand plan to shape up. The lived curriculum of a student is what they take with them to the rest of their lives (Daignault in Pinar, 1996) be it successful or not, as seen in the eyes of others. The experience within one student's life cannot wait for the school's structure to be tweaked just right. The life of a student is here. Today.

4. Conclusion

What does all of this mean to our partnership? Over the years, the P-12 school and the university have been able to stay committed to their partnership. This has not been an easy task, given the personnel and societal changes that have occurred in each system. The school is now at the end of its second year post-restructuring. The Eagleton Middle and High School is still evolving, as well as the PDS partnership. The future promises to bring new and exciting challenges to both systems. How will each system be able to facilitate the partnership? According to Siebert, 2005, "[r]esiliency means being able to bounce back from life developments that may feel totally overwhelming at first" (p. 5). Although Siebert discusses the resiliency of an individual, we believe that this statement can be applied to the PDS relationship discusssed above. We believe the resiliency level of the the relationship depends on the resiliency of each of the systems, as well as all individuals involved in the partnership. It will also depend on the amount of reflective practice and energy used to facilitate the continued development of a caring environment at Eagleton Middle and High School.

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Appendix A

Eagleton Middle and High School Code of Community

We Are One as Individuals and One as a Community

The members of the Eagleton Community come together as individuals to work in the best interest of all. The Eagleton Community is made up of every student, teacher and staff member, parent or guardian, and alumnus of Eagleton middle and high school, in addition to community members who live or work in our attendance region. This document outlines our basic obligations in our community and we are united in an acceptance of these ideas.

We will act in a civil manner
- Act respectfully toward others
- Be caring
- Consider the point of view of others
- Use positive forms of communication

We will work toward our potential
- Be prepared
- Welcome challenges
- Work for continuing growth
- Be involved in the school and its activities

We will accept differences
- Treat each person as an individual
- Interact without being influenced by prejudice

We will act responsibly
- Meet understood expectations
- Do things in a timely manner

We will be accountable
- Understand implications of choices – both actions and lack of action
- Accept appropriate consequences for inappropriate actions

	Essential #1 Safe Environment & Community Involvement	Essential # 4 Shared Commitment to Innovative and Reflective Practice by All Participants
Vignette 1: PDS Partnership	• Responsiveness to Change	• Shared Decision Making • Leadership Collaboration • Innovation
Vignette 2: Code of Community	• Articulation of Code of Community for Safe and Constructive Interactions	• Intentional Culture Building • Involving P-12 Students and Faculty, University PDS Personnel • Leadership Development
Vignette 3: College Simulation	• Responsibility and Independence • Understanding Reality • Effort • Goal-directedness • Skill Development • Knowledge of College Life	• Development of intentional Activities • Process Nature • Purposeful Reflective Practice

Figure 1. Elements of Caring Culture