

Fall 2006

School Renewal in South Georgia

Sean Michael Mulvanity

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd>

Recommended Citation

Mulvanity, Sean Michael, "School Renewal in South Georgia" (2006). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 478.

<https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd/478>

This dissertation (open access) is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies, Jack N. Averitt College of at Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu.

SCHOOL RENEWAL IN SOUTH GEORGIA

by

SEAN MULVANITY

(Under the Direction of John Weaver)

ABSTRACT

This study examines the implementation of the Accelerated Schools Project at one school in South Georgia. The Accelerated Schools Project is a comprehensive school renewal effort developed by Henry Levin which attempts to change both the school decision-making process and the instructional techniques used in the classroom. The unique governance structure, which attempts to involve all stakeholders in decisions that impact the institution, and the student-centered instructional technique are combined in an effort to instigate school renewal. The phenomenological nature of this study examines the implementation of the Accelerated School Project from a historical and cultural perspective. The author concluded that the *No Child Left Behind Act* placed a major barrier in the way of the full development of the Accelerated Schools Project. Additionally, elements of the particular place of which the school in question is a part, most notably racial tensions, impeded progress.

INDEX WORDS:

School renewal, Accelerated Schools Project, Savannah-Chatham County Schools, Critical pedagogy, Phenomenology.

SCHOOL RENEWAL IN SOUTH GEORGIA

by

SEAN MULVANITY

B.S., Florida State University, 1995

M.Ed., Georgia Southern University, 2001

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

STATESBORO, GEORGIA

2006

© 2006

Sean Mulvanity

All Rights Reserved

SCHOOL RENEWAL IN SOUTH GEORGIA

by

SEAN MULVANITY

Major Professor: John Weaver

Committee: William Reynolds
Grigory Dmitriyev
Nancy Malcom

Electronic Version Approved:
December 2006

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the three great women in my life. To my mother, who throughout her own trials and tribulations was never discouraged and was always a there for me. To my wife, Laura, who has walked beside me on this journey. And to Katie, my beloved daughter, who has inspired me to make this world a better place. I never could have accomplished this without each of you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. John Weaver for his time and patience in guiding me during this journey. His thoughts have made this a better work than I could ever produce on my own. I would also like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the remaining members of my committee: Dr. William Reynolds, Dr. Grigory Dmitriyev, and Dr. Nancy Malcom. Your questions and comments have made me examine a topic in more ways than I ever thought possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	6
CHAPTER	
1 A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF SCHOOL RENEWAL....	8
2 AN ATTEMPT TO GAIN PERSPECTIVE	24
3 EXAMINING THE LIFEWORLD.....	73
4 IMPLEMENTING THE ACCELERATED SCHOOLS PROJECT.....	89
5 THE STORY GOES ON.....	136
REFERENCES.....	148
APPENDICES.....	162
A Institutional Review Board Approval	163

CHAPTER 1

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF SCHOOL RENEWAL

While disliked and despised by many around the world, the United States of America remains a bastion of democracy idolized by masses who yearn to be free. In his work, *An Aristocracy of Everyone*, Benjamin Barber (1991) wrote:

Around the world the cry, 'Democracy!' has shattered tyranny's silence and caused the most stubborn of dictators to lose their confidence in the politics of fear. Walls are coming down and iron curtains are being drawn for the last time. The Statue of Liberty is an icon for young men and women who have never known freedom in lands that have never been democratic. Even in these cynical times, America remains for many abroad what Lincoln called the 'last best hope.' (p. 1)

Yet, as a nation, we continue to have a large portion of our population disenfranchised from the political process. While laws no longer serve as an impediment to participation in the political process, a general lack of knowledge and skills continue to reduce the ability of certain segments of the population to fully engage in democratic action.

As one of the primary conveyors of societal knowledge, our educational institutions have a responsibility to prepare students to actively engage in the government of our nation. Carl Glickman states (1993):

The essential value of the public school in a democracy, from the beginning, was to ensure an educated citizenry capable of participating in discussion, debates, and decisions to further the wellness of the larger community and

protect the individual rights to ‘life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.’ An educated citizenry and a democracy were one and the same; the lack of one would imperil the other. (pp. 8-9)

By aiding in the inculcation of democratic principles (citizenship, impassioned debate, respect for the opinion of others, and the willingness to defend the rights and freedoms guaranteed in our founding documents) in America’s citizenry, our educational system acts to preserve and protect the future of our nation. The provision of opportunities to explore topics in-depth without accepting the word of only one source and to participate in impassioned debate provide students the skills and mindset necessary to be thoughtful and engaged citizens.

Islands Elementary School, which serves children from pre-kindergarten to fifth grade, is located within the city limits of a large urban area of Southeast Georgia. The school is operated under the auspices of the local county board of education. While the name may conjure images of students from upper and middle class families attending a pristine school on an island paradise, reality is starkly different. Islands’ nearly seven hundred students are predominantly from lower income families living in the inner city. The students are bussed to the school’s island location.

While the school has recently been removed from the Georgia Department of Education’s Needs Improvement list, many of the students still struggle to perform adequately on state mandated tests. During the 2003-2004 school year, seventeen percent of the school’s fifth graders failed to pass the reading portion of the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test required by the state of Georgia. For the African-American population of Islands, which makes up seventy-five percent of the student

body, the statistics are more dismal. Twenty percent of this population failed to achieve an adequate score in reading. While failure for the fifth grade population was of little consequence during the 2003-2004 school year, the stakes have been raised for students who are in the fifth grade during the 2004-2005 school term. Failure on either the mathematics or reading portions of the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test means retention.

One hundred yards away, separated only by a parking lot from Islands Elementary, sits Marshpoint Elementary School. Surprisingly, Marshpoint Elementary is also operated by the local public school board and serves children in pre-kindergarten to fifth-grade. While the two schools' properties are contiguous, few other commonalities exist. Marshpoint's population is drawn from the predominantly white, middle and upper class suburbs of the city. Only eight percent of River's fifth graders failed to pass the reading portion of the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test.

The future of these two institutions has been the subject of much debate over the last year. The near mirror image populations and test score discrepancies have raised many questions. Why are two institutions, which serve identical grade levels and operated by the same board of education, located at one site? Furthermore, given the proximity of the two institutions, why is one school predominately white and the other predominately black? Why are the students of Marshpoint significantly outperforming the students of Islands? These questions have raised specters from the past.

Being a political entity, the school board could not ignore the ire of the community. In order to provide the appearance of actively searching for the appropriate solution regarding the disparities between Islands and Marshpoint, the board floated various proposals to end academic inequalities between the two institutions. One potential solution, the merger of both institutions, was vehemently opposed by the parents of Marshpoint students. A second idea, the appointment of one principal to lead both institutions, was quickly dismissed as only a cosmetic change. In order to appease the community, the Savannah-Chatham County Board of Education proposed and approved the implementation of a schoolwide reform effort. In February of 2005, Islands Elementary official became a member of the Accelerated Schools Project.

Four simple sentences quickly draw my attention. “Kids are not at-risk. They find themselves in an at-risk situation. The schools we want for our own children are the ones we should want for all children. All students can benefit from and deserve the kinds of enriched learning experiences we have traditionally offered in the best of talented and gifted programs.” These words are my first encounter with the concepts of the Accelerated Schools Project.

What is the nature of this journey we are about to impart on? Could the implementation of the Accelerated Schools Project at Islands increase the lines of flight for both students and teachers or is it another attempt to “veil the inequality of our educational system” (Kozol, 1991, p. 37)? Will our implementation of the Accelerated Schools Project impact student learning experiences? Will students make noticeable gains on standardized tests because of this new program? Will students,

teachers, parents and community members truly be involved in the decision making process at our school or will it be mere lip service? More remarkably, will students, parents, and other community members become involved in the school's governance structure? Finally, will we be successful in developing "creative, critical, and productive members of society" (Hopfenberg & Levin, 1993, p. 17)? These questions fill my mind. My study is born. My skepticism unshaken.

Founded in 1986 by Henry M. Levin, the Accelerated Schools Project's primary goal is to increase the academic abilities of educationally disadvantaged youth. In order to achieve this goal, Levin advocates for a profound transformation of the traditional school culture. According to Levin, the typical method of dealing with the educationally disadvantaged, the provision of remedial education programs, is fatally flawed. "The obvious solution seemed to be to do the opposite. If children arrive at school without the skills that schools expect, slowing down their development through remediation will get them farther behind" (Levin, 1996, p. 9). Instead of remediation, educationally disadvantaged students require acceleration to make the necessary gains to achieve grade level skills.

The acceptance of the three central principles of the Accelerated Schools Project is the first step in changing the culture of the school to one conducive to acceleration of learning for all students. The three principles, which Levin believed were absent from traditional schools, are unity of purpose, empowerment coupled with responsibility, and building on strengths (Levin, 1987). The first principle, unity of purpose, "refers to a striving among parents, teachers, support staff, students, administrators, the district, and the local community toward a common set of goals for the school that

becomes the focal point of everyone's efforts" (Hopfenberg & Levin, 1993, p. 21). The commitment of the various stakeholders in the school increases the institution's chance of reaching the shared goals. Empowerment coupled with responsibility, the second principle, places the power to make the important educational decisions of the school, implement those decisions, and responsibility for the consequences of those decisions in the hands of the all of the institution's stakeholders (Finnan & Swanson, 2000). Without "shared power and responsibility for developing a common set of goals and influencing the educational and social processes to realize these goals, desired improvements will probably not take place or be sustained" (Hopfenberg & Levin, p. 24). The third and final principle, building on strengths, advocates marshalling all of the school's resources to improve the educational outcomes of students. All individuals have strengths that can contribute to building an effective academic program. Families, teachers, and even at-risk students should be viewed as having a wealth of assets (Levin, 2001). When these strengths are accessed, learning is accelerated for all. Underlying the three principles of the Accelerated Schools Project are ten-core values-equity, communication/collaboration, community spirit, participation, reflection, risk-taking, experimentation, trust, respect, and the school as the center of expertise. "These values undergird every aspect of the accelerated schools philosophy, process, and daily practices" (Hopfenberg & Levin, p. 31).

The acceptance of the principles and values of the project places a school on the path of becoming an institution dedicated to accelerating the learning of all students. Unlike many programs aimed at raising the achievement of under performing youth,

the Accelerated Schools Project is not a targeted curriculum. The Accelerated Schools Project is a schoolwide reform effort. It “represents a philosophy and a process for transforming conventional schools into accelerated schools- schools in which powerful learning experiences become daily occurrences for all members of the school” (Hopfenberg & Levin, 1993, p. 20).

At the heart of the Accelerated Schools movement lies the power of democracy. Contrary to the authoritarian power structure of the traditional school, an Accelerated School attempts to invest power in every institutional stakeholder. Through the use of cadres, steering committees, and the School As a Whole, stakeholders have the ability to manipulate the course of the institution. Unique to the Accelerated Schools Project, the School As a Whole, a body composed of students, parents, administrators, and community representatives, is invested with the power to approve or reject major decisions involving the direction of the school.

The first major product of the School As a Whole is the development of a vision to be a guiding light for the institution. Once negotiated, the school’s vision becomes the guiding light for change in the school. As changes are made to the structure, procedures, and culture of the school, each is evaluated with the school’s vision in mind. Will this change move our school closer to our vision?

The democratic ideals that drive the governance of the school as an entire institution also inform the governance of the individual classroom. In the accelerated classroom, “a positive learning environment is negotiated between the teacher and students” (Finnan & Swanson, 2000, p. 111). The teacher is no longer the center of the classroom from which all knowledge is disseminated and all direction is given.

The work of John Dewey shapes the democratic beliefs of the Accelerated Schools movement.

Many of the values of the Accelerated Schools Project stem from the work of John Dewey, an educational philosopher who believed that a democratic education implies faith in the potential of both children and adults to understand, and to some extent shape, the world around them. (Hopfenberg & Levin, 1993, p. 33)

Paramount to the Accelerated Schools Project is Dewey's belief that in a democracy every child must receive a quality education. "What the best and wisest parents want for their own child, that must the community want for all of its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrowly and unlovely; acted upon, it destroys our democracy" (Dewey, 1900, p. 7). In Levin's (1996) words, we should "create for all children the dream school we would want for our own children" (p. 15). When we provide an elite education to a chosen few, we no longer function as a democracy and refute the tenets captured in our nation's foundational documents. When students are segmented into remedial educational classes, democracy begins to crumble.

In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey (1916) provides the mission statement of the Accelerated Schools Project.

A society which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustments of its institutions through interaction of its different forms of associated life is in so far democratic. Such a society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the

habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder.

(Dewey, p. 99)

Following in the footsteps of Dewey, the Accelerated Schools concept espouses the belief that every student should be taught in the manner reserved normally for the talented and gifted. By providing a general education for all, the Deweyian philosophy rejects the notion of placing children in tracks. All children should be provided a rigorous curriculum regardless of the current level of functioning or socioeconomic status.

In the 1970s, curriculum scholars began to interpret curriculum as “political texts” (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2002, p. 244).

Political theorists tend to view American society as rife with poverty, homelessness, racism, and political oppression. While they tend to blame these problems on the economic system, i.e. capitalism, they do regard the schools as participating in this general system of injustice and suffering (Pinar et al., p. 244).

The majority of scholars examining curriculum as political texts have taken a decidedly Marxist or Neo-Marxist viewpoint (Pinar et al., 2002). To these groups, the capitalist economic system exploits the general population (the working class) for the benefit of a small, powerful elite. Schooling plays a large role in perpetuating the system. The children of the elite are provided with educations suitable for obtaining employment as business executives, physicians, attorneys, and high-ranking government officials. The children of the working class are tracked into educations

that provide only the limited skills and mindsets needed to become cogs in the machine.

Many of the scholars in this vein appear to draw from the works produced by the philosophers associated with the Institute of Social Research at the University of Frankfurt. Founded in 1922 by Felix Weil, the institute was created with the hope of bringing together the different trends of Marxism into a unified theory (Jay, 1973). While the works of the scholars associated with the Institute delved into an array of topics, the content of their texts was critical of the economic, political, and social changes occurring during this era. The writing of Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, and Pollock examine the economic, cultural, political, and psychological domination of the masses and the modes of liberation for the dominated.

The works of the early members of the Institute have spawned subsequent generations of critical scholars in Europe, South America, and North America. In Europe, Jurgen Habermas continues to shape critical thought through his development of communication theory. In North and South America, critical scholars have tended to devote much time and effort examining education. One can have little doubt that Paulo Freire contributed greatly to this focus.

In the late 60s and early 70s, the works of Paulo Freire began to burst upon the scene. With the publication of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, and *Education as the Practice of Freedom*, the field of critical (or liberatory) pedagogy began to be explored. In these texts, Freire would illuminate the inner workings of oppression and methods for battling against the tactics of oppression. In his works, Freire speaks out against the subjugating nature of the

banking method of education and offers an alternative- honest, open dialogue with students about the nature of reality (Freire, 1970).

The condition of the oppressed can be altered but not without “struggle”. “This struggle is possible only because dehumanization, although a concrete historical fact, is not a given destiny but the result of an unjust order that engenders violence in the oppressors, which in turn dehumanizes the oppressed” (Freire, 1970, p. 44).

Humankind does not have to accept the current hierarchical condition as a societal necessity. The critical scholar attempts to illuminate the destructive nature of the oppressive tactics of the dominant class and offer solutions to the oppressed (McLaren, 1998). By performing these tasks, the critical teacher can “bring a halt to the immutable constancy of imperial identities of the patriarchal family, the authoritarian state, and the narrative of the happy compulsive consumer” (McLaren, 1995, p. 104) and break the shackles limiting the movement of the oppressed.

Since the early works of Freire, the number of theorists casting a critical eye towards the American educational system has mounted. Michael Apple, Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, and Ira Shor can be counted among the scholars who have heeded Freire’s call. Many of the current works of these authors points to the withering power of the teacher as a great evil. Teachers have ceded power to cultural forces outside of education. In order to change this deadly trend in education, teachers and students must seize power and radically alter the structure of schools.

Many of Levin’s own works may be cast as critical reviews of the American educational system. Levin’s early writings can best be described as examinations of the reproductive nature of American schooling. In traditional Marxist style,

reproduction theory holds that the economic base of a society determines the nature and structure of the society's institutions including its schools (Pinar et al, 2002). In order to effectively reproduce the class structure of a society, the class structure within the school will closely parallel that of the society at large. According to Levin (1976), the "social, economic, and political relationships of the educational sector will mirror closely those of the society of which they are a part" (p. 26). During this period, Levin saw little hope for educational reform efforts without profound changes in the major societal structures outside of the school.

In the 1980s, Levin's writings begin to show a break from his earlier reproductionist trends. Informed by the resistance theory of Paul Willis, Levin abandoned his belief in the strict reproductive nature of schooling. His writings during this period portray educational institutions as a force for both the reproduction of class structure and the expansion of democracy. Schools are a constant battleground between these two opposing forces. Levin's works after this epiphany concentrates on increasing the democratic tendencies of educational institutions. A part of this trend in his work includes the creation of the Accelerated Schools Project.

This study will explore the implementation of the Accelerated Schools model at Islands Elementary School. As the story of Islands and its use of the model starts to unfold, I began to ask myself the following questions: (1) Is the implementation of the Accelerated Schools Project at Islands a true attempt at reform or an attempt to deflect criticism? (2) Is the creation of a democratic school possible in the current environment or will societal and institutional factors prevent it from occurring? (3) Will the implementation of the Accelerated Schools model increase the democratic

nature of the school? (4) Will teachers and administrators be able to relinquish their authoritarian control of the institution?

The examination of the process and philosophy of Accelerated Schools and its impact on the school community calls for a holistic approach. No one element or variable can explain the impact of the Accelerated Schools Project. According to Hopfenberg and Levin (1993), “The Accelerated Schools Project represents a philosophy and a process for transforming conventional schools into accelerated schools- schools in which powerful learning experiences become daily occurrences for all members of a school community” (p. 20). The transformation process involves a multitude of processes informed by a myriad of players. Quantitative methods would be ill suited for dealing with this ever-evolving nature of the Accelerated Schools Project.

As a byproduct of the evolutionary nature of an Accelerated School, new questions and themes will emerge. The initial stage of implementing the Accelerated Schools Project into any educational institution is composed of four key components: taking stock of the current state of the school, forging a shared vision for the institution, setting priorities, and creating a governance structure for the school. While the four stages of the Accelerated Schools Project may be identical across all schools, the findings, decisions, and governance structures created are unique to each institution. The preconfigured nature of quantitative research would yield results of limited importance. Therefore, for the majority of my study, a qualitative approach would be proper.

In the current milieu, I am hesitant to ignore questions of effectiveness and replicability. In order to be heard, the question of standardized test scores must be addressed. To ignore the issue is tantamount to being ignored. While I do not plan on carrying out a large-scale quantitative evaluation of the effectiveness and replicability of the Accelerated Schools Project, my study will address the current research being done in this area. A review of the current quantitative literature regarding the ability of the Accelerated Schools Project to raise academic performance is a minor, but in my opinion necessary, portion of any critique of the program.

Now that the Accelerated Schools Project is nearing the end of its second decade of existence, quantitative studies should be designed to address the effectiveness of the program. Research projects can be designed to address whether or not the implementation of the Accelerated Schools Project accomplishes its goal of bringing “at-risk youth into the educational mainstream by the end of elementary school” (Hopfenberg & Levin, 1993, xi). While “numerous studies point to the increasing evidence that all children, including low-achieving students, respond well to rich and challenging curricula” (Finnan & Swanson, 2000, p. 35), to date, studies of the effectiveness of Accelerated Schools are limited in scope.

In effect, I prepared a case study of the implementation of the Accelerated Schools Project at Islands Elementary using the phenomenological research activities described by Max Van Manen. Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg (1991) define a case study as “an in-depth, multifaceted investigation, using qualitative research methods, of a single social phenomenon” (p. 2). Van Manen’s (1990) research methods consist of turning to a phenomenon of serious interest to the researcher, investigating

experiences as they are lived, identifying essential themes, using the art of writing to describe the phenomenon, have a pedagogical orientation towards the phenomenon, and researching the parts and the whole of the phenomenon in question. These methods will be explained in further detail in Chapter 3. An in-depth study of the launch of the Accelerated Schools Project at Islands can provide important insight into strengths and weaknesses of the implementation process. Field notes were taken and interviews were conducted to gather information. After collecting the information, the data was examined for themes. Additionally, during the process, a base line of students' standardized test scores will be developed which will be used in future studies to determine if gains were made.

Becoming immersed in a topic of study is fraught with danger. When we enter into an extensive interaction with an environment, our ability to remain objective can become compromised. We may romanticize the subject of our research (Fetterman, 1997). When this occurs, the results of our research become unreliable. We fail to see the ills and flaws of the subject of our research. As a former member of the faculty at Islands Elementary School, I became immersed in the topic and had to struggle to maintain perspective.

Additionally, the study being undertaken is merely a snapshot in time. Since the Accelerated Schools Project is a constantly emerging process, the portrait I painted was only accurate for a brief period of time.

Chapter II, a literature review, is divided into four major sections- the history of progressive education in the United States, the philosophical metamorphosis of Henry Levin, the history and philosophy of the Accelerated Schools Project, and the

development and major tenets of critical theory. Chapter III provides detailed information on the methodology used to conduct the study. The examination of the implementation of the Accelerated Schools Project at Islands will be conducted using a critical framework. Information will be gathered via the researcher's observations and interviews. Chapter IV will present the data collected during the observation and interview process. This chapter will provide detailed information concerning the implementation of the Accelerated Schools Project at Islands. Chapter V presents the findings of my research. In this section, I address each research question presented using data collected during the course of my study.

CHAPTER 2

AN ATTEMPT TO GAIN PERSPECTIVE

A multitude of school reform programs have swept the nation in recent years. One purpose of this literature review is to provide the information necessary to understand the principles and procedures of one such initiative, the Accelerated Schools Project. The Accelerated Schools Project has garnered favorable recognition and grown considerably in size over the last decade.

In the final two segments of the literature review, a review of critical pedagogy and the history of school desegregation will be provided. The field of critical pedagogy will be briefly reviewed, as it will provide the philosophical framework by which the Accelerated Schools Project will be examined. Finally, a brief history of the school desegregation process in the United States will be provided. I believe the history will prove pivotal in understanding the workings of the Savannah-Chatham County School System.

The Accelerated Schools Project is the brainchild of Henry M. Levin, longtime professor of higher education and economics at Stanford University and currently the William Heard Kilpatrick Professor of Economics and Education at Teacher's College, Columbia University and Director of the National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education.

Levin's interest in the economics of education can be traced to his reaction to James Coleman's study entitled "Equality of Educational Opportunity." In this landmark study, Coleman (1966) found:

Schools bring little influence to bear on a child's achievement that is independent of his background and general social context; and that this very lack of an independent effect means that the inequalities imposed on children by their home, neighborhood, and peer environment are carried along to become the inequalities with which they confront adult life at the end of school. (p. 3)

Levin, shortly after earning his doctorate of philosophy in economics from Rutgers University, accepted a position as a researcher at the Brookings Institute. In 1967, Levin, in conjunction with Samuel Bowles of Harvard University, produced a sharply worded critique of Coleman's work. Levin and Bowles found the Coleman report "classic in terms of sloppy methodology" (Goldberg, 2001, p. 632). As one of the first serious critics of the Coleman report, Levin gained notoriety in the newly developing field of educational economics. Levin parlayed his new found fame into a tenure track position at Stanford University. In 1968, Levin departed Washington, D.C. for the Palo Alto where he would spend the next thirty years of his life.

Upon embarking on his career in the 1960's, Levin looked on the landscape of America and saw a nation rife with injustice (Levin, 1974). Despite the "romantic" notion of many, the educational institutions of the nation were no exception. To Levin, schools did not work to rectify societal injustices (Levin, 1976). In fact, these institutions were used to perpetuate these injustices.

As did many of his colleagues who turned a critical eye on our educational system, Levin subscribed to reproduction theory to provide a framework to understand the function of schools (Levin, 1974). In traditional Marxist style, reproduction theory

holds that the economic base of a society determines the nature and structure of the society's institutions including its schools (Pinar et al, 2002). In order to effectively reproduce the class structure of society, the class structure within the school will closely parallel that of the society at large. According to Levin (1976), the "social, economic, and political relationships of the educational sector will mirror closely those of the society of which they are a part" (p. 26).

To Levin, the mantra that the free, public education system in America is a force for equality is merely a smokescreen to mask the true nature of the institution. "Unfortunately, we are often too quick to accept the 'publicly declared intent' of our schooling institutions rather than examining their processes and outcomes" (Levin, 1976, p. 29). In defense of his reproductionist philosophy, Levin believed one had to look no further than results of the current American educational system.

If tracking and curriculum serve to sort and select children in such a way that the children of blue-collar occupations or unemployment and the children of the elite will be socialized for positions consonant with their class or origin, then we need not torture our senses by suggesting that these are not consistent with intent. (Levin, 1976, p. 28)

The insidious results of tracking the children of the working class and the poor into vocational curriculum, the back-to-basics movement, and standardized curriculums reveal the true intentions of our educational institutions. As a part of the larger society, our schools must provide the adequately trained human resources the capitalistic economic structures of our country needs, or as stated by Levin, "Emanating from the polity are a set of demands or socialization objectives for

transmitting the culture and reproducing and maintaining the economic, political, and social order” (Levin, 1976, p. 30). Through control of budgeting, curriculum designs, and districting, political entities, which are manipulated by the business sector of the nation, ensure the maintenance of the current order.

During this period, Levin refuted the belief that our schools could be reformed without profound changes in major societal structures outside the school. To Levin, the “only way we can obtain significant changes in educational functions and relations is to forge changes in the overall social, economic, and political relationships that characterize the polity” (Levin, 1976, p. 23). Attempts at educational reform such as compensatory and vocational educational programs for youth from economically disadvantaged families failed to place these students on equal footing with children from more advantaged backgrounds.

Levin contended that limited gains potentially produced by educational reform efforts were accidental. The “schools of a society serve to reproduce the economic, social, and political relations, and the only way that schools can change those relations is through their unforeseen consequences rather than through planned and deliberate change” (Carnoy & Levin, 1976, p. 4). Therefore, in order for substantial changes to occur in the superstructure of the society, a revolution of some variety must be initiated. Without said revolution, the social, political, and economic entities will be structured to maintain the status quo.

According to Levin, when changes occur in the forces and relations of production, contradictions arise between the society’s base and its institutions. Over time, the contradictions will lead to major changes in the nature and conditions of the society’s

institutions including schools. “Essentially, there would be a tendency for educational reforms to take place that would be supportive of the new work order” (Levin, 1974, 307). Eventually, the contradictions between the needs of the workplace and the outcomes of the educational institutions will be remedied. The schools will begin training students for the new reality of life on the job. “If we know the types of contradictions that might arise between the demands of work organizations and the existing educational approach, it should be possible to predict the nature of educational reform that will emerge” (Levin, 1974, p. 304).

As an economist, Levin paid considerable attention to the fiscal inequalities between school systems serving the children of the wealthy elite and those that educated the young of the working and under classes. In the seventies, Levin served as an expert witness in *Robinson v. Cahill* and *Serrano v. Priest*. In the *Robinson* and *Serrano* cases, Levin argued that the inequalities produced through the local collection and use of tax monies to support school districts were unconstitutional. In both cases, the courts found that the inequitable funding created by local school funding violated the equal protection clauses contained in both the New Jersey and California constitutions. Both states were required to significantly restructure school finance laws in order to provide a more equitable distribution of funds.

While the expenditures for various classes of students were vastly unequal, Levin did not believe that remedying this dismal fact, while a necessity for a democratic nation, would alone substantially increase the equality of educational outcomes. “Although a fairer distribution of educational expenditures among school districts is a

necessary condition for a fairer distribution of educational outcomes among children, it is not a sufficient condition” (Levin, 1976, p. 194).

In the 1980’s, the writings of Levin begin to show a break from his earlier reproductionist trends. With the publication of *Learning to Labor* in 1977, Paul Willis introduced resistance theory which “allowed political theorists to view the process of reproduction as contestable (Pinar et al, 2002, p. 252). Levin states that Willis’ work “argues that culture and ideology are in fact produced in schools, just as they are in the workplace. Moreover, they are produced in ways that are filled with contradictions and by a process that is itself based on opposition and struggle” (Levin, 1986, p. 23). Much in the vein of Apple and Giroux, Levin began to examine the internal struggle occurring inside of schools in America.

In *Schooling and Work in the Democratic State*, Levin contends:

Public schools in America are an institution of the State, and like other State institutions are subject to the pull of two conflicting forces over their control, purpose, and operation. On the one hand, schools reproduce the unequal, hierarchical relations of the capitalist workplace; on the other, schooling represents the primary force in the United States for expanding economic opportunity for subordinate groups and the extension of democratic rights. (Carnoy & Levin, 1985, p. 144)

This statement is in stark contrast to Levin’s earlier works that portrayed the institutions of a culture including its schools as being solely a reproductive force for the current social order. In his later works, Levin characterized schools as a battleground between forces promoting reproduction and advocates for social justice.

The desires of the capitalist economic system are confronted with “social movements that demand more public resources for their needs and more say in how those resources are to be used” (Carnoy & Levin, 1985, p. 47).

In the end, neither side gains total control over any institution of the State. A constant battle ensues in which one side may gain supremacy for a period of time (Carnoy & Levin, 1985). In our nation’s history, the 1930’s and 1960’s were times when the forces of equality gained the upper hand, but they were soon overthrown by the minions of capitalism (Shor, 1986).

The end result of this tug-of-war is an institution that is both a force for reproduction and democracy.

That as a result of the schools’ position as public institutions subject to outside pressures, they are marked by greater equality than the workplace. Even as schools attempt to satisfy their mandate within a capitalist economy, the public as a whole and social movements such as the civil rights and women’s movement have made them more democratic and equal than other social institutions. (Carnoy & Levin, 1985, p. 5)

Levin’s concentration on educationally disadvantaged youth can be traced back to the early eighties. Under a grant provided by Public/Private Venture, a Philadelphia-based, non-profit aimed at providing training for disadvantaged youth, Levin endeavored to gain an understanding of “what was happening with at-risk students” (Brandt, 1992, p. 19). While a multitude of reports, most notably *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform* produced by the National Commission on Excellence on Education, pointed at the dismal state of the American educational

system, “most of them never talked about elementary schools or at-risk kids” (Brandt, 1992, 19). As a part of the research, Levin began to visit schools in economically disadvantaged areas. Levin summarized his finding thusly:

We found most principals were spending 80 percent of their time doing two things: discipline and compliance. Their mental energies were sapped, and they didn't have the time for instructional leadership. When we looked at the classrooms, we saw that kids were mainly doing worksheets. They were bored, and the teachers were bored too. If you asked them about the kids, all you would hear was what was wrong with them. (Brandt, 1992, p. 20)

While the ideas formed and information gathered during the Public/Private Ventures experiences would provide much of the foundation of the Accelerated Schools Project, Levin's career in the early eighties allowed little time for additional activities. While at Stanford, Levin aided in the establishment and directed the Institute for Research on Educational Finance and Governance, a federally funded think tank charged with examining the impact of school finance laws, rising poverty rates, and the increase of single parent households on education (Goldberg, 2001).

In 1984, the Reagan administration, citing the need to take a new direction in educational finance research, ended funding for the institute. In response to the closing of the institute, Levin asked and received permission from Stanford to spend the 1984-85 academic year on sabbatical. During this pause in his career, Levin's mind turned once again to the academic needs of educationally disadvantaged youths.

Many poor and minority students leave public elementary schools without the academic skills needed to succeed in further education and to reach their full

potential. Students who fall behind academically in elementary school have a difficult time catching up to the educational mainstream; for example, academic achievement in the third grade has been found to be correlated with success in high school and postsecondary schooling. (Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 2001, p. 8)

Building upon ideas first conjured during the Public/Private Venture grant, Levin authored *Educational Reform for Disadvantaged Students: An Emerging Crisis*. In this short paper, Levin concentrates on the inadequacy of our current educational system to serve the needs of students who “by virtue of the accident of birth” are “destined to experience only the most limited educational progress” (Levin, 1986, p. 7). Levin identifies the rising number of educationally disadvantaged students in our nation to be “an impending crisis” (Levin, 1986, p. 13). The increased number of educationally disadvantaged students can be attributed to the high birthrate among the at-risk adult population, a new wave of immigration to the United States, and the increased poverty rate among children (Levin, 1987). Levin (1987) states, “As the disadvantaged population increases without appropriate educational interventions to improve its situation substantially, it is likely to form the underclass of a dual society” (p. 13). Levin opines that the creation of a dual society will lead to a nation torn apart by its inequalities.

To address the needs of the educationally disadvantaged, Levin put forth a sweeping reform plan. This marks his first attempt at reform and the point of embarkation for a journey that would consume the next decade and a half. In the plan proposed in *Educational Reform for Disadvantaged Students*, Levin offered a four-

pronged attack to meet the needs of the educationally disadvantaged. Levin's first prong of attack called for improving the preschool experiences of educationally disadvantaged children. To accomplish this task, he argued for training programs for parents, improvement of the educational programs at daycares and preschools, and quality educational media (Levin, 1986). The second prong was aimed at the learning environment of the home. In this portion of his reform agenda, Levin argued for the provision of high quality educational material to all children, grants to low income families to purchase computers and educational software, and community centers to provide educational opportunities for parents and children (Levin, 1986). In the third part of his proposal, Levin called for the expansion of school services to "bring disadvantaged students up to proficiency in the major subjects by the time they complete the sixth grade" (Levin, 1986, p. 25). To meet this goal, schools should provide medical screening and treatment and healthy meals to ensure that every student is prepared to learn. Additionally, extensive tutoring and cooperative learning programs must be developed and implemented. Finally, Levin pointed to the need to teach students with limited English skills the language. "Students who do not become proficient in the primary language of the society in which they live will face enormous obstacles within and outside the school" (Levin, 1986, p. 28). Ignorance of English will permanently condemn the students to the underclass. To address this issue, Levin proposed that schools should provide intensive language classes to provide all students with basic language skills.

When composing *Educational Reform for Disadvantaged Students*, Levin was forced to examine the current efforts aimed at educating at-risk youth. After much

searching, he arrived at the following conclusion. “Major changes in schools or school reform have not been highly successful anywhere in the world. Although there are occasional reports of success, the more typical case is one where substantial change is not present” (Levin, 2001, p. 2).

The majority of reform efforts targeted at educationally disadvantaged youth called for remedial education programs to raise the students’ academic skill levels. Levin believed this method to be fatally flawed. “The obvious solution seemed to be to do the opposite. If children arrive at school without the skills that schools expect, slowing down their development through remediation will get them farther behind” (Levin, 1996, p. 9). In reaction to existing intervention models at the time, Levin (1987) stated:

Experience over 20 years has shown that instructional interventions exist that promise to improve the achievement of disadvantaged students. These programs all have shown some success. The major challenge is that these successes have been exceedingly modest relative to the achievement gap. Raising achievement from the 15th to the 20th percentile, for example, does not substantially improve the educational or occupational fortunes of disadvantaged young people. (p. 19)

In the spring of 1986, Levin wrote a brief, 6-page paper that would provide the groundwork for the Accelerated Schools Project. The article, entitled *Accelerated Schools for the Disadvantaged*, stated that schools should build on students’ “strengths rather than searching for and ‘remediating’ their weaknesses” (Levin,

1996, p. 10). In order to achieve this goal, the culture of schools would have to be transformed “profoundly”.

Schools resist reform because their operation depends upon a stable and shared understanding or culture that is the framework that integrates and defines school operations. That culture is built on tradition, habit, expectations, and images of what schools should do and be. To suggest that schools should change is to suggest that traditions, habits, expectations, and images be immediately modified, a virtual impossibility. So school reform tends to focus on the illusion that is only skills that must be changed. But it is the attitudes and modes of operation which are the greatest obstacles to change, not a lack of skills. (Levin, 2001, p. 4)

In order to close the achievement gap, Levin proposed that an effective intervention model would address four critical criteria. First, learning activities would require students to perform at a high level in order to meet expectations. Second, deadlines would be set for closing the achievement gap “so that ultimately educationally disadvantaged children will be able to benefit from mainstream education” (Levin, 1987, p. 20). Third, the curriculum for disadvantaged children would be fast paced and high interest. Finally, parental and teacher involvement in the management of the school will be increased.

Levin’s vision of how schools should be managed stood in stark contrast to his view of most educational institutions.

Most schools that enroll such children embrace organizational, curricular, and instructional strategies of remediation that lead to reduce expectations and

stigmatization of at-risk students, uninspiring school experiences, and a devaluing of the rich talents of students, teachers, and parents. In the absence of change, students are subjected systematically to an experience that will assure high failure rates. (Levin & Chasin, 1995, p. 136)

Armed with a relatively simple plan, Levin, along with a group of graduate students from Stanford University, began to search for schools to institute the Accelerated Schools Project. By the fall of 1986, two schools, Daniel Webster Elementary School in San Francisco and Hoover Elementary School in Redwood City, had elected to adopt the Accelerated Schools principles. By 1989, the schools reported decreased disciplinary problems, improved work quality, and increased standardized test scores (Levin, 1996, p. 12). As word of the project began to spread, the Accelerated Schools program gained notoriety and converts. In 1989, the state of Missouri implemented the Accelerated Schools Project in five elementary schools. A year later, the state of Illinois followed suit by placing 25 schools under the Accelerated Schools banner. During the nineties, the number of schools adopting the philosophy and process of the Accelerated Schools Project blossomed to over 1,000 (Levin, 2001, p. 2). Today, the project counts over 1,300 schools as members.

In 2000, hampered by health issues and other commitments, Levin stepped down as Director of the Accelerated Schools Project. While Levin remains influential as a member of the Accelerated Schools' board of directors, he no longer acts as the day-to-day manager of the project. Shortly after Levin's retirement, Gene Chasin was named to the directorship. Chasin, with Levin's approval, moved the headquarters of the Accelerated Schools Project to the University of Connecticut, the home of the

National Center on the Gifted and Talented and Dr. Joseph Renzulli. Chasin and Levin believed the move to the university would increase the project's access to the groundbreaking research done by the National Center on the Gifted and Talented.

In 2003, the Accelerated Schools Project became The Accelerated Schools Powerful Learning Unlimited Success (AS PLUS). According to the National Center for Accelerated Schools:

AS PLUS expands on the previous ASP premise by providing enhancements to its teaching and learning services, facilitation, ongoing assessment and development of accelerated learning strategies in the classroom, and sharing successful strategies developed by individual provider centers with all of its centers nationwide. (National Center for Accelerated Schools Plus, 2005, para. 3)

Levin's educational theories and governance practices draw heavily from the progressive education movement. The progressive education era, which dawned in the late 19th Century and drew to a close in the mid-20th Century, is marked by experience-based curriculum driven by the individual needs of each child. Furthermore, the majority of progressives spoke against the formalized authoritarian structure of the school and advocated for the individual teacher's right to experiment with pedagogical methods in the classroom.

The late 19th Century and early 20th Century can be marked as a time of radical change in America. Due to the growth of industry, urban areas were rapidly gaining population. Technological and scientific developments that would significantly alter the day-to-day lives of the average citizen were developed. The wealth of the nation

was quickly being consolidated into the hands of a select few while the number living in poverty grew. Political bosses and captains of industry worked hand-in-hand to maintain their privileged positions.

Progressive reformers insisted upon government regulation of industry and commerce, as well as the conservation of the nation's natural resources; moreover, progressive reformers insisted national, state and local governments become responsive to the welfare of its citizens rather than to the welfare of corporations. (Semel & Sadovnik, 1998, p. 4)

Like other government entities, schools became the subject of progressive reform. Progressive education began as part of a vast humanitarian effort to apply the promise of American life- the ideal of government by, of, and for the people- to the puzzling new urban-industrial civilization that came into being during the latter half of the nineteenth century. (Cremin, 1964, viii)

According to Diane Ravitch (2000):

In education, the progressive movement had numerous, related aims: It sought to make the schools more practical and realistic. It sought to introduce humane methods of teaching, recognition that students learn in different ways, and attention to the health of children. It sought to commit the schools more to social welfare than to academic studies. (p. 54)

The plight of the American educational system was first brought to light by a series of articles written by New York pediatrician Joseph Mayer Rice. In 1892, Rice embarked on a nationwide tour of American schools. His journey led him to thirty-six cities in six months. Upon his return to New York, Rice proceeded to produce

numerous articles for *The Forum*. Rice's articles documented widespread corruption, untrained teachers, and a mind-numbing curriculum as being the rule and not the exception in education. But, in tiny pockets, Rice found what he perceived as progressive education. In the schools labeled as progressive, Rice found dedicated teachers presenting a unified curriculum infused with art, manual training, and social training and students actively engaged in the act of learning (Cremin, 1964). While members of the educational establishment accused Rice of being an ill informed, amateur journalist with an agenda, his work did raise concerns among others.

While Rice's work did not lead to immediate, large-scale changes in the American educational system, many inquests were sparked by his writings. The vast majority of common schools were found wanting. In order to improve the state of schooling, several educational reform initiatives were started. Collectively, the members of these reform efforts have been labeled the Progressives.

Prior to the 1890's, pedagogical techniques and school curriculum were informed primarily by faculty psychology (Tanner & Tanner, 1990; Kliebard, 1995; Pinar et al., 2002). Faculty psychologists regarded the mind as a muscle that needed frequent exercise to develop properly. "Memorization and recitation, like repetitions of muscular motions in a gymnasium, were thought to 'pump up' the brain" (Pinar et al., 2002, p. 73).

The first major salvo against the educational philosophy at the time and the work regarded as the cornerstone of the progressive movement in education was produced by the most unlikely of sources- Lester Frank Ward, a geologist and paleontologist with United States Geological Survey (Tanner & Tanner, 1990). In 1883, Ward

penned *Dynamic Sociology*, a two-volume text which rejected the notions of social Darwinism that ruled the day.

The social Darwinists, led by Herbert Spencer, applied the biological principle of survival of the fittest to the proper development of a society. In order for a society to achieve the highest-level evolutionary standing, individuals must be allowed to pursue their respective interests with limited governmental intervention. By allowing the survival and procreation of the unfit, government intervention would lead to corruption of the gene pool and would inhibit the evolution of the society.

In his publication, Ward argued that humans, given their highly evolved ability to reason, are capable of shaping their environment to improve the species. Interventions by society, such as education programs, can create positive social change. Individuals can be improved and are not mere subjects to evolutionary powers. Progressives adopted Ward's argument as the basis for the expansion and improvement of educational services to all children. According to members of the Progressive movement, a well-rounded education should not be preserved for the elite of society but should be made available to all.

The first large-scale progressive educational experiments in America can be attributed to the work of Colonel Francis W. Parker. Informed by the writings of Comenius, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel, Parker developed pedagogical principles which emphasized the child as the center of the educational experience, concrete observations of the natural environment, and the use of concentrations and correlations of subjects (Stone, 1999).

Parker's first educational reform efforts took place in the schools of Quincy, Massachusetts. Upon being named superintendent of schools for Quincy in 1873, Parker mandated a curriculum that virtually abandoned the memorization and recitation techniques that ruled the day. In place of rote learning, Parker introduced a curriculum infused with conversation, expository writing, inductive mathematics, field trips, and the fine arts (Stone, 1999).

In 1875, Parker moved west to accept the position of principal of the Cook County Normal School in Chicago. During his tenure at the normal school, Parker began to elaborate on his brand of progressive education and produced his most notable work, *Talks on Pedagogics*. In this signature work, Parker advocated for a concentration of the curriculum. Parker defined concentration as a unification of knowledge across subject matter boundary lines. According to the Colonel, unification more accurately reflected the nature of knowledge in children's environments (Tanner & Tanner, 1990). In the end, students will cover fewer subjects in more detail rather than numerous, fragmented subjects. Parker referred to his method of concentrating on unified subjects as quality teaching versus the quantity teaching typical of the traditional classroom.

The foundations of the Powerful Learning premise advanced by the Accelerated Schools Project can be traced to the work of Colonel Parker. Parker, in the same vein as the proponents of powerful learning, argued that the student should be at the center of the learning environment.

The environment of the child acts upon it and thereby determines the initial steps of all the studies that can be pursued. The personality of the being

determines also the action of external energies, and their reactions in expression. The spontaneous activities of the child are the sure and safe guides to finding and applying the conditions of education. (Parker, 1894, p. 376)

Additionally, Parker advanced the idea that education should be continuous.

Parker (1894) explained the need for an education to be continuous when he wrote:

The child stands in the center of a circle; around him is the environment of the universe, man and nature. Everything in its elements touches the child's soul; the child's soul goes out towards everything, reacts upon everything. We must not break or distort the circle if we would have it extend and grow upward in the spiral. (p. 387)

According to Parker, the curriculum presented in the classroom should be based on the natural environment of the child.

If Parker is considered the great implementer of progressive education, John Dewey can be deemed the great philosopher of the movement. Dewey's first two major works on pedagogical principles and educational philosophy, *The School and Society* and *The Child and the Curriculum*, are commonly referred to as the foundational works of the progressive education movement (Pinar et al, 2002).

The central premise of the Accelerated Schools Project, "the creation for all children the kind of school we would want for our own," is directly drawn from the work of Dewey.

What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all of its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely; acted upon, it destroys our democracy. All that society has

accomplished for itself is put, through the agency of the school, at the disposal of its future members. (Dewey, 1900, p. 199)

According to Dewey and Levin, educational institutions should treat each student equally.

Both Levin and Dewey found the creation of satisfactory educational institutions for all a moral imperative for democratic nations. Without such institutions, the very fabric of a democracy begins to unravel. Providing dissimilar levels and forms of education for students from differing social classes destroys the unique fabric of a democratic society and leads to the creation of an aristocracy (Dewey, 1916).

The moral responsibility of the school, and of those who conduct it, is to society. The school is fundamentally an institution erected by society to do a certain specific work, - to exercise a certain specific function in maintaining the life and advancing the welfare of society. The educational system which does not recognize this fact entails upon it an ethical responsibility is derelict and a defaulter. (Dewey, 1909, p. 7)

The Accelerated School philosophy advocated by Levin calls for education which is inclusive of all students. Students are not to be segregated into differing tracks- one preparing the masters, others preparing the slaves. Every student should be guided upon the path of learning high order thinking skills and not drilled with rote memorization skills.

Dewey and Levin are in agreement as to the nature of the education that should be received by all children in a democratic society. In his seminal work on education in a nation aspiring to democratic ideals, *Democracy and Education*, Dewey wrote:

In order to have a large number of values in common, all the members of the group must have an equable opportunity to receive and take from others.

There must be a large variety of shared undertakings and experiences.

Otherwise, the influences which educate some into masters, educate others into slaves. (Dewey, 1916, p.)

Levin's Accelerated Schools philosophy is built on the Deweyian notion of sharing and preparing all students to become active citizens.

Dewey and Levin argue that schools should be a microcosm of democracy. The students should be involved in the key decisions that affect the educational system in which they spend a major portion of their day.

On October 4, 1957, the progressives' efforts to implement large-scale curriculum reform suffered a near fatal blow. On this date, *Sputnick*, a 184-pound aluminum sphere, became the first manmade satellite of the earth. The feat was hailed not only as a victory for the Soviet space program but also for the Soviet educational system (Kliebard, 1995). In response to the Soviet's technological breakthrough, condemnations rained down upon the American educational system. The evil empire's ability to win the race into space was viewed as a failure of American schools.

In the 1960's, proponents of progressive education began to rally. Experimentation, while not condoned, was tolerated. Movements for equality gained momentum. Martin Luther King, Jr., the War on Poverty, and the Great Society legislation of Kennedy and Johnson marked the decade (Schubert, Schubert, Thomas, & Carroll, 2002). In the field of education, new policies and pedagogies began to

appear. Open admissions policies began to spring up on campuses across the nation. While the movement never gained critical mass, it could be viewed as an attempt to provide opportunities to the children of the poor and working class (Shor, 1992).

Open high schools, individualized curricula, and critical pedagogy were field-tested.

The age of experimentation and egalitarianism came crashing to an end with the election of Richard Milhous Nixon to the presidency in 1968. The conservative restoration had begun. The ideas of progressive education faced an uphill battle against the forces of the right. Since Nixon's election, the United States Department of Education has used several methods, primarily monetary, to ensure that schools provide educations that "turn the human mind into a commodity to be used by global corporations" (Spring, 2002, p. 134).

Recently, the progressive education movement has shown small signs of life. Several schools espousing progressive ideologies have sprung up across the nation. In 1990, the Network of Progressive Educators released key progressive ideas that should be incorporated into current school reform efforts.

- (1) Education is best accomplished where relationships are personal and teachers design programs which honor the linguistic and cultural diversity of the local community.
- (2) Teachers, as respectful professionals, are crucial sources of knowledge about teaching and learning.
- (3) Curriculum balance is maintained by commitment to children's individual interests and developmental needs, as well as a commitment to community within and beyond the school's walls.

- (4) Schools embrace the home cultures of children and their families.
 - (5) Students are active constructors of knowledge and learn through direct experiences and primary sources.
 - (6) All disciplines- the arts, sciences, humanities and physical development- are valued equally in an interdisciplinary curriculum.
 - (7) Decision-making within schools is inclusive of children, parents and staff.
 - (8) The school is a model of democracy and humane relationships, confronting issues of racism, classism and sexism.
 - (9) Schools actively support critical inquiry into the complexities of global issues. Children can thus assume the powerful responsibilities of world citizenship.
- (Semel & Sadovnik, 1998, p. 9)

While not an official member of the network, the Accelerated Schools Project advocates similar traits for its network schools.

School reform efforts have been classified in a variety of manners. Cuban (1992) divides reform efforts into two categories: incremental, reform efforts designed to improve the existing structure of the educational institution, and fundamental, reform efforts that identify the current structure of the educational institution as flawed and in need of rebuilding. Lieberman and Miller (1999) label reform efforts as either procedural or principled. Procedural reforms concentrate on modifying or replacing portions of the academic program at the institution. The procedural reform effort is narrow in focus. The principled reform effort is based on a value system that guides changes and will affect the entire institution. The Accelerated School Project can be classified as a fundamental, principled reform effort.

The Accelerated Schools Project is a comprehensive school reform effort as defined by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory's Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSR D) Program. The CSR D, a federally funded institution aimed at increasing the implementation of schoolwide reorganization efforts, identifies eleven program components that are key to improving the achievement of all students and constitute a fundamental change: 1) the use of research-based teaching and management strategies that have been field tested in schools of a diverse nature; 2) instruction, assessment, classroom management, professional development, parental involvement, and school management are integrated; 3) staff development is continuous and of high quality; 4) measurable goals for student performance are established; 5) the majority of the faculty, staff, and administration support the implementation and continuation of the program; 6) the program encourages shared leadership and teamwork; 7) provides for parental involvement at all phases of the program; 8) encourages the use of experts in school reform from outside of the school; 9) establishes a method of accountability on an annual basis to ensure that the school is advancing towards goals; 10) aids in the identification of federal, state, local, and private resources that can contribute to the continuation of the reform effort; and 11) the program has evidence of significantly improving student achievement. According to documentation provided by the National Center for Accelerated Schools, the Accelerated Schools Project meets all eleven program components necessary to produce comprehensive school reform. (Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program, 2005, para. 1)

Presumably, children who are put into remedial programs are children who arrive at school with 'defects' in their development that require repair of their educational diseases, evils, or defaults. But the school repair shop is peculiar because children are never repaired. Rather, they remain in the repair shop for their entire education. (Levin, 1996, p. 9)

Remedial education programs exploded in number after the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965. A product of the Civil Rights Movement, Title I of the act called for millions of federal dollars to be sent to poverty-stricken school districts for the provision of remedial educational programs. The purpose of such programs is to provide targeted instruction to educationally disadvantaged students to compensate for the students' failure to gain needed skills in previous years. In theory, the lowered class sizes and the instructional techniques used in the remedial classrooms should allow the students to make enough progress to catch up to non-remedial peers. In other words, the learning process is accelerated for the remedial students.

The harsh truth is that school reform is failing in the inner city because the diagnosis is wrong. Formulas for renewal-more homework, more testing, more requirements for graduation-work best for schools that are already succeeding and for students who are college bound. But to require a troubled student in an urban ghetto to take another unit in math or foreign language, without more guidance or support, is like raising a hurdle in the high jump without giving more coaching to someone who has stumbled. (Darling-Hammond, 1993, p. 753)

Levin argues that remedial education programs are ill suited for educationally disadvantaged students. “If children arrive at school without the skills that schools expect, slowing down their development through remediation will get them farther behind” (Levin, 1996, p. 9). With each passing year, students placed in remedial classes fall farther behind their mainstreamed peers. “Extensive investigations of the Title I evaluations and research on cognition suggested that, in fact, remedial approaches were more at the heart of the problem as opposed to a solution to the problem” (National Center for Accelerated Schools, 2005, para. 4). Low expectations in conjunction with a low interest curriculum have been proposed as one explanation for the minimal gains showed by students placed in remedial classes (Hopfenberg et al, 1990; Hopfenberg & Levin, 1993; Finnan & Swanson, 2000).

By deliberately slowing the pace of instruction to a crawl, instruction heavily emphasizes endless repetition of material through drill-and-practice exercises. Exposure to concepts, analysis, problem-solving, and interesting applications is largely proscribed on the premise that children must learn rote skills before they can try anything challenging or stimulating. (Hopfenberg et al, 1990)

For gifted students, acceleration takes on a different context. “Acceleration for gifted students is based on moving more quickly through an established curriculum, but it also involves providing students an opportunity to work independently with more abstract, complex, open-ended, multifaceted, and ambiguous material” (Finnan & Swanson, 2000, p. 9).

According to proponents of the Accelerated Schools Project, in the place of remedial education and gifted programs, all students should be provided accelerated

learning opportunities (Levin, 1986; Hopfenberg et al., 1990, Hopfenberg & Levin, 1993). Typically, schools adopting the Accelerated Schools' philosophy attempt to provide such learning opportunities by implementing the project's powerful learning framework. The purpose of the powerful learning framework is to ensure that all students are being provided meaningful educational activities that are challenging and lead to the acquisition of advanced cognitive skills.

Accelerated schools seek out, acknowledge, and build upon every child's natural curiosity, encouraging students to construct knowledge through exploration and discovery, and to see connections between school activities and their lives outside the classroom. All of these learning experiences require imaginative thinking, complex reasoning, and problem-solving. (Kim & Zitzer, 1999, p. 12)

The powerful learning component of the Accelerated Schools project is heavily influenced by constructivist theory. Constructivism views students and their ability to make meaning of the world around them as the central component of the educational process (Bruner, 2004). As students actively encounter new information, the learners substantiate, create, modify, or reject cognitive structures used to explain experiences. In the words of Jean Piaget (1971), "The essential function of the mind consists in understanding and in inventing, in other words, in building up structures by structuring reality" (p. 27). In a classroom committed to constructivism, the role of the teacher is modified from that commonly seen in the traditional classroom. The teacher withdraws from center stage and becomes a facilitator for children's learning.

The constructivist philosophy adhered to by the Accelerated Schools Projects draws heavily from the work of Lev Vygotsky. According to Vygotsky (1986), higher order thinking skills are acquired by students through interpersonal interactions with adults and knowledgeable peers. The interpersonal interaction allows for scaffolding to occur. Scaffolding allows students to work in their zone of proximal development, the area beyond which they can function independently.

Typically, constructivist learning techniques are reserved for students identified as gifted and talented. Students in remedial classes are viewed as being incapable of the higher order thinking skills required to process information and form hypotheses without considerable aid and direction from the instructor. The common practice in remedial classrooms is to “use drill-and-practice exercises as the principle educational strategy so that slow learners devote much of the school day to completing worksheets containing low-level repetitive exercises in all curriculum areas” (Hopfenberg & Levin, 1993, p. 14).

The powerful learning approach states that three elements need to be integrated when designing curriculum: what is to be learned, how the content will be learned, and the context in which the content will be learned. The Accelerated Schools Project advocates a curriculum that is integrated across subject matters (the what) and is presented and assessed based on the strengths of the individual child (the how). The entire school community should be focused on meeting the educational needs of every child (the context).

In order to ensure that learning experiences are designed with a constructivist perspective, teachers at Accelerated Schools are prompted to address five components

when planning lessons. Lessons should provide learning experiences that are authentic, interactive, inclusive, continuous, and learner centered.

Authentic learning in the classroom is connected to issues and situations encountered in the world outside of the school. Students become actively engaged in the learning activities due to the connection of the goals of the activity to the students' life outside of the classroom. Increases in the authenticity of learning activities have been linked to increased levels of motivation. Motivation has been identified as one of the most powerful discriminating factors between low-, average-, and high-achieving students (Albaili, 1997). As stated by Dewey (1902), "The child lives in a somewhat narrow world of personal contacts. Things hardly come within his experience unless they touch, intimately and obviously, his own well-being, or that of his family and friends" (p. 182). Additionally, authentic learning experiences allow students to access their prior knowledge base and make modifications to existing schema if necessary.

Interactive learning experiences allow students the opportunity to collaborate while working towards a common goal. Accelerated Schools Project literature states that the inspiration for the interactive component of powerful learning experiences is drawn from Dewey's concept of discovery learning and Bandura's social cognitive theory. "People judge the correctness of their predictive and operative thinking against the outcomes of their actions, the effects that other people's actions produce, what others believe, deductions from established knowledge and what necessarily follows from it" (Bandura, 2001, p. 1).

The learner-centered component of powerful learning states that lessons should build on the strengths and prior experiences of students and allow students to become directors of their own learning.

To create educational experiences that are learner-centered, student's learning styles must be identified prior to and activated during a lesson. In order to address the multitude of learning styles present in the typical classroom, differentiated instructional strategies can be used to increase the potential of learning taking place. "The model of differentiated instruction requires teachers to be flexible in their approach to teaching and adjusting their curriculum and presentation of information to learners rather than expecting students to modify themselves for the curriculum" (Boyd, 2004, p. 10). Tomlinson (1995) states that differentiated instruction uses a variety of methods for students to explore the curriculum and allows students to demonstrate their knowledge.

Inclusive learning opportunities attempt to grant all students equal access to learning experiences. Informed by Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, the Accelerated Schools Project suggest that learning activities will be of a wide variety thus increasing the chances that students will find activities which appeal to each child's learning style.

In regards to the effectiveness of institutions implementing the Accelerated Schools Project ability to raise standardized test scores, the quantitative research that has been conducted, while far from comprehensive, is promising. A major review of the program carried out by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (2001) found that five years after the implementation of the process and philosophy

of the Accelerated Schools Project students' average test scores increased in both reading and math. Furthermore, the study found the impact of the project was not equivalent across students or schools. Students who initially were in the middle stanines of standardized test scores saw the greatest gains. Schools with the lowest test scores before implementation of the project showed the greatest gains (Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 2001). Smaller studies conducted in Accelerated Schools in Florida and Missouri produced similar results to the Manpower study (Ignatz, Bauman, & Byrd, 2003).

According to The National Center for Accelerated Schools, the first step towards becoming an affiliate involves an exploration of the project by the school community. During the exploration process, the school community, including students to the fullest extent possible, should gain an understanding of the unique characteristics of the project. It is during the exploration process that the staff should become familiar with the three principles (unity of purpose, empowerment with responsibility, and building on strengths) and the ten core values (equity, participation, communication/collaboration, community spirit, reflection, experimentation, trust, risk taking, and school as center of expertise) underlying the Accelerated School's philosophy.

The exploration process should include intensive reading about the project, visits to an operating Accelerated School, and discussions with Accelerated Schools' coaches and principals over a one to three month period. After the exploration process is completed, "90% of a school community (consisting of all teaching and non-teaching staff as well as community members including parents and district

personnel) must agree to transform the school into an accelerated school” (The National Center for Accelerated Schools, 2005, para.1). Without the commitment of the supermajority of the staff, the Accelerated Schools Project has little impact on the institution.

Upon the determination to implement the Accelerated Schools Project, the school community will enter into the initiation phase. During this phase, the school engages in four key activities: taking stock, forging a vision, setting priorities, and creating governance structures. During this process, the Accelerated Schools Project argues that profound changes will occur to the school’s culture (Finnan & Levin, 1995). The culture of a school serving at-risk children is typically characterized by low expectations for and by students, limited parental involvement, and resistance to change (Levin, 1986; Hopfenberg & Levin, 1993; Finnan & Levin, 1995). The project’s initial phase is aimed at changing the school’s culture into one characterized by high expectations, continuous and intense parental involvement, and acceptance of change (Hopfenberg & Levin, 1993; Finnan & Levin, 1995).

The purpose of taking stock during the initiation phase is to build a schoolwide unity of purpose, empower all of the members of the school community to institute change, identify and build on the strengths of the school community, and to determine baselines for the institution (Hopfenberg & Levin, 1993; Davidson & Dell, 1995; McCarthy & Riner, 1996).

The quest for educational change begins with the ‘taking stock’ phase of the Accelerated Schools Project. It is during this phase that everyone in the school community works together to explore all facets of the school in order to

provide a comprehensive portrait of the school while incorporating the three principles. (Davidson & Dell, 1995, p. 4).

Four types of data (demographic, student learning, perceptions, and school processes) are gathered to establish the institution's baselines. Through these baselines, the shareholders will be able to determine strengths and weaknesses of the institution. During the course of the year, the school will use the Accelerated Schools Project's proprietary assessment instrument, the Tool for Reflection, Assessment, and Continuous Evaluation of Schools (TRACES), to determine institutional progress.

Upon completion of the detailed analysis of the institution, the school enters the second phase of the initial stage, forging a vision. The purpose of the vision statement is to provide a guiding light for the school. The programs and practices implemented at the school should be consistent with the institution's vision. Therefore, the vision statement must be concrete enough to drive the actions of all members of the school community. The formation of the school vision is a collaborative effort of the entire school community with the desires of the students playing a key role.

This process can unleash both the positive energy of hope and the cynicism of those who are afraid or unwilling to hope. The process of making a dream explicit can trigger a process of school culture change- a process in which not only surface changes occur, but deep changes in beliefs and assumptions take root. (Finnan & Levin, 1995, p. 1)

Levin and Finnan (1995) argue that the vision of an Accelerated School should drive fundamental changes in the school culture. At this point, the school community

compares the baseline data generated during the taking stock phase with its vision and develop a detailed list of the differences between the two.

According to *The Accelerated Schools Resource Guide*, the handbook for schools implementing the Accelerated Schools Project, “Governance, which refers to the communication and decision-making process of institutions, is handled very differently in accelerated schools than in conventional schools” (Hopfenberg & Levin, 1993, p. 86). In fact, the Accelerated Schools Projects identifies its governance structure as a feature that sets it apart from other school reform efforts.

Traditionally, schools have operated in a hierarchical, top-down manner with school-based and central office administrators issuing dictates to teachers and staff. In the school observing the typical power structure, “there is little or no connection between what happens in a classroom, grade level, or for that matter, on a school wide level. Teachers act in the roles of implementers or policies handed down from school districts and principals” (Davidson & Dell, 1995, p. 2).

Existing schools for at-risk students are largely dominated by decisions made by entities that are far removed from the school site and classroom. Federal and state governments and central offices of school districts have established a compendium of rules, regulations, directives, policies, laws, guidelines, reporting requirements, and ‘approved’ instructional materials that serve to stifle educational decisions and initiative at local school sites. (Levin & Chasin, 1994, p. 5)

The Accelerated Schools Project rejects this notion of school governance due to its isolationist and unproductive nature. “By engaging in this process, teachers build a

sense of community and empowerment. At the heart of the Accelerated Schools Process is collaborative inquiry which is used to identify challenge areas and potentially efficient and effective solutions” (McCarthy & Riner, 1996, p. 223). Schools which have successfully implemented school reform efforts have used a collaborative approach (Lieberman, Saxl, & Miles, 1988).

While numerous features of the Accelerated Schools Project can be found in other school reform efforts, the governance structure advocated by the project is distinctive. While constructing the tenets of the project, Levin recognized the need to involve all stakeholders in the school reform process. While other efforts have attempted to include other voices in the decision making process, the inclusive nature of the Accelerated Schools Project governance structure is unique. According to project literature, students should be equal partners in the school reform effort.

Levin states that engagement by students in the school reform process achieves two goals. First, students become committed to the successful implementation of the school’s reform effort (Glickman, 1993) and therefore increase the potential for the reform effort’s success. Meaningful participation in the school governance process increases students’ levels of motivation (Wilson, 2002) and commitment to school goals (Glasser, 1990).

When adults involve and take notice of children and young people’s views we give a powerful message about their worth and value. By recognizing their role in positively shaping and influencing communities and accepting their contributions, we give a powerful signal that they matter- not just because one

day they will be adults but because of what they offer us today, as children.

(Glickman, 1993, p. 9)

Secondly, the students' active participation in determining the course of the school prepares and encourages students to become involved in our nation's democratic processes. Preparing students to become engaged citizens has been pushed aside by demands for a more rigorous curriculum and accountability in the public schools (Glickman, 1993; Noddings, 1999; Albert Shanker Institute, 2003).

Although the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 refocused a generation-long emphasis on the importance of "core" subjects such as math and reading in our schools, this heightened concern with academics has a blind spot. The preoccupation with reshaping academics and raising academic performance is perceived by a growing number of Americans as overshadowing a task of no less vital importance: educating children and youth to become engaged members of their communities as responsible and informed citizens. (Albert Shanker Institute, 2003, p. 4)

While students passing through our schools today may potentially be able to perform at an acceptable level on standardized tests, their ability to perform the tasks necessary to sustain a democratic society are significantly impaired.

By engaging in the democratic process, students become committed to this particular form of government. Commitment forms the cornerstone of the democratic process. "At the mass level of culture and behavior, the single most important requirement for sustaining democracy--and for deepening and improving it--is that citizens be committed to it, passionately and sophisticatedly if possible, but at a

minimum, unequivocally” (Diamond, 1997, p. 244). Without the opportunity to engage in the debate and compromise indicative of the democratic process, one will not have the opportunity to form an unequivocal attachment. Most schools provided limited opportunities for students to make meaningful decisions which affect the course of the institution. In other words, the students are not treated as citizens of the school and do not learn to become citizens of the nation.

“If rights are going to be more durable and made more universal, students will need more than constitutional protection; they will need to ‘establish’ ownership of rights through discovery, invention, refinement, and application in continually changing contexts” (Knight & Pearl, 2000, p. 198).

In schools adhering to the Accelerated Schools’ suggested governance structure, three distinct levels of decision-making are formed: the School as a Whole, a steering committee, and cadres.

In the Accelerated School, the entire school community is charged with decision-making. The final arbiter of all decisions affecting the entire school community is the School as a Whole. The School as a Whole consists of all administrators, teachers, support staff, parents, students, and interested community members.

The school’s steering committee, which is composed of representatives from each cadre, the administration, support staff, the student body, parents, and community members, acts as a clearinghouse for information and a guide to ensure the school is moving towards making the institution’s vision a reality.

Cadres are “small groups that inquire into the school’s most important areas of concern- the school’s priority challenge areas, where the school’s present situation

falls short of its vision” (Hopfenberg & Levin, 1993, p. 88). Each cadre focuses on one key issue facing the institution and engages in the inquiry process to form and evaluate potential solutions. To ease the burden on the teaching staff, the number of cadres created at a school should be kept to a minimum by combining related issues (Levin & Chasin, 1994).

The inquiry process used by the Accelerated Schools Project is a methodical attempt to address an institution’s key issues. It is an attempt to move beyond simple, quick solutions to complex issues facing the institution. According to Davidson and Dell (1995), the inquiry process allows teachers to become change agents in the school. The collaborative nature of the inquiry process has been linked to positive changes in school climate (Finnan & Swanson, 2000) and an increase in the teaching staff’s sense of empowerment (McCarthy & Riner, 1996). The nature of the process replaces the limited ability of one teacher to enact change with a committed cadre with the ability to change the very culture of the institution (Levin, 2002). According to Lieberman and Miller (2004), a school reform efforts chance of success increases when “groups of teachers intentionally work together to transform the very cultures in which they work and lead” (p. 26).

Similar in scope and purpose to the scientific method, shareholders engaged in the inquiry process to not only provide possible solutions to issues but also to illuminate the underlying issues causing the problem. The process is composed of five interlocking components: focusing in on a challenge area, brainstorming solutions, synthesizing solutions and developing an action plan, implementation of the plan, and evaluation of outcomes and reassessment of the plan.

During the initial step, focusing in on a challenge area, the cadre attempts to clearly define a key issue facing the school. Defining the challenge area consists of more than just stating the nature of the problem. It involves providing reasoning for the creation and evolution of the problem. To perform this task, members of the cadre will hypothesize on and discuss the genesis of the issue. As a result of the exploration and discussion of the issue, the cadre should create a specific question which will organize and guide the group's work for the remainder of the inquiry process.

The second stage of the inquiry process consists of brainstorming about potential solutions to the challenge area. To ensure the widest possible breadth of potential solutions, the cadre should examine not only the solutions presented by cadre members but they should also avail themselves of expertise that is present outside of the school. Potential contributors outside of the school are community members, educational consultants, the district and state educational agencies, and other Accelerated Schools. During this stage, potential solutions should not be discarded. All potential solutions should be addressed during the third phase of the inquiry process.

After a list of potential solutions has been developed, the cadre should enter the third phase of the inquiry process, synthesizing solutions and developing an action plan. The cadre should address all potential solutions offered during the previous stage of the process. While some suggestions may be completely rejected by the cadre, others may provide partial solutions to the problem. After reaching consensus on the potential solutions, the cadre designs an action plan which will address roles, timelines, and sources of materials to enact the solution. During this part of the

process, the cadre should focus on determining a solution which will move the school towards making the institution's vision a reality. When the cadre believes a cohesive action plan has been designed, the plan is submitted to the school's steering committee and the school as a whole for comment and approval.

If an action plan is approved by the school as a whole, the cadre becomes charged with its implementation. During the entire implementation process, members of the cadre gather data to determine the effectiveness of the solution and examine the implemented program for potential improvements.

The inquiry process is cyclical in nature, a never-ending attempt to improve the institution.

Two great rivers of reform are flowing in opposite directions across the immense landscapes of American education. One river flows from the top down and the other from the bottom up. The top-down river has been the voice of authority proposing conservative agendas that support inequality and traditional teaching; the bottom-up contains multicultural voices speaking for social justice and alternative methods. These two rivers represent different politics, different models of teaching and learning, and finally different visions of the people and the society we should build through education.

(Shor, 1999, vii)

To the critical theorist, education is a political act. Decisions and the subsequent actions of the teaching staff overtly and covertly convey ideas of a political nature to students.

Critical scholars tend to view the educational institutions of the United States as mechanisms of indoctrination, enculturation, and training for one's future position in the economic machine. As Giroux (1988) argues, "The belief that schooling can be defined as the sum of its official course offerings is a naïve one" (p. 21). The full impact of schooling must take into account the stated and the hidden curriculum of the institution (Giroux, 1988; McLaren, 1998). "The hidden curriculum refers to the unintended outcomes of the schooling process" (McLaren, 1998, p. 212). The hidden curriculum is transferred via classroom rules, the organizational structure of the school, and instructional methods.

The very nature of the pedagogical practices of the traditional classroom serves to indoctrinate and obscure reality. The student is a passive vessel of knowledge in the classroom owned and controlled by the teacher (Freire, 1970; Shor & Freire, 1987; Shor, 1992).

The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world. More completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them. (Freire, 1970, p. 73)

The students become objects to be manipulated by the subject in control, the teacher (Freire, 1970). This structure of the classroom prepared the students to function in the capitalistic economy of the United States. The students become trained to take

commands and complete simple tasks at the direction of management. The students are only allowed to gain a limited view of reality.

The practices of the classroom teacher are of the utmost importance in the development of students willing to question.

To recognize that things, truth, and values are constituted by all human beings, including children, as they orient themselves to aspects of their lived worlds, is to begin to ground what we do in the classroom. To enable children to have a signified and signifying world is among the crucial concerns of a humane and critical pedagogy. (Greene, 1995, p. 55)

The teacher seeking to allow students to develop to the fullest extent possible finds value in all students. By considering each child to be a unique and contributing member to the classroom society, the students become intellectual risk takers (Freire, 1970; Greene, 1995; hooks, 2003).

While currently not so, critical theorists argue that education is a potentially liberating force in society (hooks, 2003). Giroux and Simon (1988) argue that schools can become:

social forms that expand human capacities in order to enable people to intervene in the formation of their own subjectivities and to be able to exercise power in the interest of transforming the ideological and material conditions of domination into social practices which promote social empowerment and demonstrate democratic possibilities. (p. 10)

In order to provide for such social change, individuals must gain the capacity to recognize the injustices that have become ingrained in our society, and then, once this

knowledge has been discovered, the courage and power to effect change must be obtained to force transformation. According to Giroux (1988):

Critical reflection and action become part of a fundamental social project to help students develop a deep and abiding faith in the struggle to overcome economic, political and social injustices, and to further humanize themselves as part of the struggle. (p. 127)

For brief periods of time, movements have attempted to expand liberatory teaching practices, but demands for traditional educational methods have overwhelmed the proponents of a problem-posing and critical education (Freire, 1970; Shor, 1986).

In order to achieve the goal of liberating students, schools “must abandon the educational goal of deposit-making and replace it with the posing of the problems of human beings in their relations with the world” (Freire, 1970, p. 79).

To remove the bonds of the dominant culture, the constraints must be recognized and acknowledged by the oppressed. By state of consciousness, the oppressed individual moves from being a dehumanized object and becomes a Subject with freewill. In the words of Freire (1973), the individual becomes an “integrated person.” The integrated Subject not only recognizes reality but through his or her understand of the nature of her or his condition can work to transform reality (Freire, 1973). “I like to be human because in my unfinishedness I know that I am conditioned. Yet conscious of this conditioning, I know that I can go beyond it, which is the difference between conditioned and determined existence” (Freire, 1998, p. 54). The critical educator defines the goal of the teacher seeking to release his or her students from the bonds of the dominant ideology. “Our task, the liberating task, at

the institutional level of the schools, is to illuminate reality” (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 36). In order to meet this end, teachers must create an environment, which allows the lifting of the veils that obscure reality. Both teacher and students “have to be learners, both have to be cognitive subjects, in spite of being different” (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 33).

To achieve the illumination of reality, students and teachers should engage in dialogue. “Dialogue is a moment where humans meet to reflect on their reality as they make and remake it” (Freire, 1973, p. 37). In the dialogue, both teacher and students are engaged as subjects in mutual communication. This is juxtaposed to the communicades issued from the subject-teacher to the object-student in the typical classroom. (Freire, 1973; Freire, 1998).

Proponents of critical pedagogy recognize that the decision to alter a class from the traditional to the critical is not an easy one for either teacher or students. Teachers fear the unpredictable nature of the democratic classroom, possible student resistance to the alternative pedagogical methods, and the potential destruction of their careers (Shor & Freire, 1987). The authoritarian nature of the traditional classroom is comfortable to most professional educators. By giving power to the students, the classroom teacher risks losing control. In the traditional classroom, the teacher maintains control by constructing the syllabus and employing the banking method of instruction. Additionally, Shor acknowledges that a portion of the student population will resist critical teaching methods (Shor & Freire, 1987). Most students have been trained to accept traditional methods of teaching. The introduction of an alternative will raise suspicion and fear in some students.

To Shor and Freire, with fear, the classroom teacher gains an understanding of the limits of change imposed by the system (Shor & Freire, 1987). When the fear grows to the level a teacher is willing and able to endure, a limit has been reached. “When we learn limits, real limits in our classrooms or in other arenas of society, we also gain some concrete knowledge on how much or even how little can be accomplished right now” (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 58). Once the educator has ascertained a limit, the educator may choose to push beyond the current limits and accept the punishment meted out by the system or wait for conditions and limits to change.

Teachers must initiate desocialization in their courses because students are not able to do it for themselves. After this initiation, teachers will be responsible for directing the process for some time to come, because it will take an unpredictable series of exercises before students accept self-government of their own learning. (Shor, 1986, pp. 186-187)

Many current educational reform efforts reduce teachers to “the status of low-level employees or civil servants whose main function seems to be to implement reforms decided by experts in the upper levels of state and educational bureaucracies” (Giroux, 1988, p. 20). The skills, abilities, and intellectual capabilities of the classroom teacher are either ignored or belittled in the majority of school reform efforts (Giroux, 1988). The demotion of teachers to mere functionaries in the classroom leads to a disgruntled and demoralized teaching corps (Smyth, 2000).

In the place of mere functionaries, critical theorists call for classrooms to be staffed with intellectuals willing to question and transform the system. Kohl (1983) defined an intellectual as:

someone who knows about his or her field, has a wide breadth of knowledge about other aspects of the world, who uses experience to develop theory and questions theory on the basis of further experience. An intellectual is also someone who has the courage to question authority and who refuses to act counter to his/her experience and judgment. (p. 30)

The intellectual does not act as machinery for the state but is a thinking and willfully acting creature capable of reordering the system. The intellectual teacher problematizes the teaching and learning situation by withdrawing from traditions and questioning commonly held beliefs.

Access to education has long been used as a method for controlling and exploiting minorities in the United States (Spring, 2002). By significantly limiting the educational opportunities of minorities, those in power correspondingly reduced the economic opportunities of the oppressed groups. The process led to the creation of a large, ill-educated workforce suited for manual labor.

Beyond the damage to the economic earning capacity, segregation distorts and damages the self-perceptions of individuals trapped in the system. According to the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. (1991), “It injures one spiritually. It scars the soul and distorts the personality. It inflicts the segregator with a false sense of superiority while inflicting the segregated with a false sense of inferiority” (p.85). Cornel West agreed with King when he stated:

No other people have been taught systematically to hate themselves-psyche violence-reinforced by the powers of the state and civic coercion- physical

violence- for the primary purpose of controlling their minds and exploiting their labor for nearly four hundred years. (West, 1993, xiii)

The false sense of inferiority and psychic violence were and are used as mechanisms to limit the demands of minority groups and thereby maintain the status quo.

“Most institutions, including schools, were designed to support authoritarian, inequitable, rigidly male-dominated, and chronically violent social structures. That is, they were designed to support the core configuration of the dominator model” (Eisler, 2000, p. 12).

At the dawn of the nation’s existence, numerous Southern states forbid the education of slaves. Those caught violating the law by providing even the most rudimentary of skills were subject to harsh penalties. In other areas of the country, while the education of blacks was not openly outlawed, the majority of educational institutions only provided services to whites.

While the Civil War ended slavery in the United States, inequities in government sponsored programs, including education, did not cease to exist. Local school districts continued to support two systems- one for those considered white and one for the others. The white school system continued to garner the lion’s share of the district’s resources. While challenged numerous times through the court system, the separate educational systems were found to be constitutional.

On July 26, 1948, President Harry S. Truman issued Executive Order 9981 which called for the equality of all persons serving in the armed forces of the United States. This edict has been pointed to as a watershed event in the treatment of minorities by

the courts. Numerous court rulings cited the presidential directive as the foundation for granting equal access to governmental services.

In 1954, the Supreme Court handed down the most decisive decision in the battle against segregation in schools, *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. Following the high court's decision, subsequent lower court rulings, and the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (which authorized federal agencies to cut off funding to school districts not complying with desegregation orders), schools across the South began to become increasingly more integrated.

From being almost completely segregated in their own schools, more than two-fifths of black students in the South were attending majority white schools and many more were in schools with significant diversity at the height of integration. Reversing the historic pattern, almost all of the Southern and Border states became more integrated than most Northern states with significant black enrollment. (Frankenberg & Lee, 2002, p. 6)

The integration of schools allowed for increased educational opportunities for black students. While desegregation does not guarantee fair treatment of all groups and equal access to learning opportunities, "it does, however, create a situation wherein such interaction may occur" (Kurlaender & Yun, 2002, p. 1). These interactions have been shown to reduce stereotypes and promote racial understanding therefore preparing all students to succeed.

In the 1980s, the tide of desegregation began to slow and then recede. Black and Latino students are becoming more isolated from their white peers. In order to dissuade criticism, defenders of the new segregation suggest desegregation "was a

good idea that didn't work, it was tried but it just drove out the whites, or it didn't solve the educational problems plaguing the schools it was intended to benefit" (Frankenberg, Lee, & Orfield, 2003, p. 9).

According to bell hooks (2003), "Teachers are often among that group most reluctant to acknowledge the extent to which white-supremacist thinking informs every aspect of our culture including the way we learn, and the manner in which we are taught" (p. 25).

CHAPTER 3

EXAMINING THE LIFEWORLD

The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the implementation of a schoolwide reform effort. With such efforts sweeping the country, it is important that we begin examining such projects in their totality in order to accurately gauge the consequences of the programs as well as the aids and barriers to implementation. The methodology to be followed will provide extensive data on the implementation of the Accelerated Schools Project at Islands Elementary School in Savannah, GA.

In the varied topography of professional practice there is a high, hard ground where practitioners can make effective use of research-based theory and technique, and there is a swampy lowland where situations are confusing ‘messes’ incapable of technical solution. The difficulty is that the problems of the high ground, however great their technical interest, are often relatively unimportant to clients or the larger society while in the swamp are the problems of greatest human concern. (Schon, 1983, pp. 42-43)

Unfortunately, that which makes quantitative research methods so powerful to the public-rigid design of the policies and procedures of the study, the use of control and treatment groups, the ability to replicate, the collection and disaggregating of quantifiable data- is also that which limits its scope. The portrayal of quantitative research in education as experimentation in a controlled environment is fundamentally flawed (Schon, 1983). Children and the schools that educated them are unique. While quantitative research studies are designed to control for confounding variables, this ability is limited when dealing with the multitude of traits which

compose the individual child and school as a whole. “Our current ‘scientific’ method focuses almost exclusively on identifying what works best generally. That is, our research designs compare how treatment and control groups do ‘on average’” (Allington, 2005, p. 463). The average student or school does not exist. All are idiosyncratic. Leaping to the justification of a program or policy due to the fact it has worked in a similar environment can lead to disastrous results.

In order to examine the true potential of the Accelerated Schools Project, we must descend into the swampy area where quantitative research methods are of limited use. The power of the Accelerated Schools Project is found in the transformation of the philosophy and processes of the institution. According to Levin and Chasin (1994), the goal of the Accelerated Schools Project is “to incorporate the entire staff into a governance and decision-making process around the unified purpose of creating powerful learning experiences for all children” (ix). In contrast to the typical educational institutions characterized by centralized power and disconnected learning experiences, the Accelerated School attempts to put power into the hands of all stakeholders and provide learning opportunities that are integrated into the students’ lives. These principles are informed by the works of John Dewey who “believed that a democratic education implies faith in the potential of both children and adults to understand, and to some extent shape, the world around them” (Hopfenberg & Levin, 1993, p. 33). Mere numbers cannot tell if the Accelerated Schools produce a democratic environment.

The holistic nature of qualitative research is one of its true strengths. In contrast to our previous subject, qualitative researchers do not attempt to isolate a single variable

but attempt to describe the natural world using multiple methods and senses (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The researcher investigates a phenomenon in its totality.

The examination of the process and philosophy of Accelerated Schools and its impact on the school community calls for a holistic approach. No one element or variable can explain the impact of the Accelerated Schools Project. According to Hopfenberg and Levin (1993), “The Accelerated Schools Project represents a philosophy and a process for transforming conventional schools into accelerated schools- schools in which powerful learning experiences become daily occurrences for all members of a school community” (p. 20). The transformation process involves a multitude of processes informed by a myriad of players. Quantitative methods are ill suited for dealing with this ever-evolving nature of the Accelerated Schools Project.

In order to investigate the implementation of the Accelerated Schools Project at Islands Elementary, the researcher will adopt phenomenological research methods to gain an understanding of the phenomena as it unfolds. Phenomenology can be portrayed as the “disciplined, rigorous effort to understand experience profoundly and authentically” (Pinar et al, 2002, p. 405). The experiences which are the focus of phenomenological research are the everyday lifeworlds of humans.

The creation of the discipline of phenomenology is often attributed to the work of Edmund Husserl. At the turn of the 20th-century, Husserl published *Logical Investigations and Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*. Following Husserl’s foundational works, the field of phenomenology exploded into multiple orientations.

Phenomenological as practice, while separated by Manen from the philosophical orientations, can find its roots in the writing of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. Husserl, building upon the early works of Franz Brentano and Carl Stumpf, elucidated the concept of intentionality. To Husserl, human consciousness is intentional- directed at an object. The human mind's acts of consciousness, the noetic, is directed at an object, the noematic. Due to the inability to separate experiences from the human consciousness and its meaning-making capacity, our lifeworlds cannot be studied in abstraction or in a positivistic manner (Greene, 1988). It is the human consciousness and its perceptions that arise as the primary units of analysis in phenomenological research.

Secondly, Husserl advocated the use of bracketing, the suspension of all empirical presuppositions, in order to gain knowledge of the essence of a phenomena. On the importance of bracketing, van Manen (2002) states:

One needs to reflect on one's own preunderstandings, frameworks, and biases regarding the (psychological, political, and ideological) motivation and the nature of the question, in search for genuine openness in one's conversational relation with the phenomenon. In the reduction one needs to overcome one's subjective or private feelings, preferences, inclinations, or expectations that may seduce or tempt one to come to premature, wishful, or onesided understandings of an experience and that would prevent one from coming to terms with a phenomenon as it is lived through. (p. 1)

Without the successful bracketing of one's preconceptions, the examination of the phenomena becomes flawed. The investigator is led astray by presuppositions which

distort the fundamental nature of the phenomena. To gain insight into a phenomena, or “direct and primitive contact with the world” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 12), the researcher’s assumptions, the mind’s lenses through which the natural world is viewed, can be bracketed. The *reductio* (reduction) of the phenomena to the experience as one encounters it, rather than as one conceptualizes it, is the goal of phenomenological research.

As a white, conservative, male, teacher in my thirties, I have a wealth of preconceptions that must be bracketed to gain direct contact with the experience in question. According to Merleau-Ponty (1948), “The things of the world are not simply neutral objects which stand before us for our contemplation. Each one of them symbolizes or recalls a particular way of behaving, provoking in us reactions which are either favourable or unfavourable” (p. 63). I recognize the preconceived notions that I possess regarding educational institutions and will endeavor to set these aside. In addition to my own observation, I intended to openly listen to the thoughts of others so that I may gain access to other thoughts.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty followed in the large wake left behind by Husserl. Merleau-Ponty’s work places the body and its sensory capabilities at the center of the experience. In *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962), Merleau-Ponty describes the centrality of human experience. “Our own body is in the world as the heart is in the organism; it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive, it breathes life into it and sustains it inwardly, and with it forms a system” (p. 235). As a system, human consciousness and the external world cannot be dissected (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

In the tradition of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty argues that the attempt to describe the primitive and natural world is fraught with difficulties brought on by human consciousness.

We see the things themselves, the world is what we see: formulae of this kind express a faith common in the natural man and the philosopher- the moment he opens his eyes; they refer to a deep-seated set of mute 'opinions' implicated in our lives. But what is strange about this faith is that if we seek to articulate into theses or statements, if we ask ourselves what is this we, what seeing is, and what thing our world is, we enter into a labyrinth of difficulties and contradictions. What Saint Augustine said of time- that it is perfectly familiar to each of us, but that none of us can explain it to the others- must be said of the world. (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 3)

While our vision may end at the object of our attention, our mind does not. The primitive and native experience becomes intertwined with the contents of our mind.

Merleau-Ponty speaks of the need to consider objects in their totality. To experience the totality of the phenomena, the object should be examined in completeness not as segments.

The unity of the object will remain a mystery for as long as we think of its various qualities (its colour and taste for example) as just so many data belonging to the entirely distinct world of sight, smell, touch and so on.

(Merleau-Ponty, 1948, p. 60)

When the observer attempts to divide the experience, the unity of the object under examination is lost and can no longer be understood profoundly and authentically.

I am thrown into nature, and that nature appears not only as outside me, in objects devoid of history, but it is also discernible at the centre of subjectivity. Theoretical and practical decisions of personal life may well lay hold, form a distance, upon my past and future, and bestow upon my past, with all its fortuitous events, a definite significance, by following it up with a future which will be seen after the event as foreshadowed by it, thus introducing historicity into my life. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 403)

To understand the nature of an experience in a profound and authentic way, one must recognize the impact of the surrounding system. Research must address the nature and condition of these interactions and how their involvement guided the development of the phenomena in question.

Phenomena cannot be separated from its historical context. Phenomena acquire their significance from the historical confluence from which it was created. In order to fully understand a phenomena under examination, the researcher needs to examine the lines of history which have led us to this particular point in time. According to Apple (2001),

Education as a field of study does not have a strong tradition of such ‘situating.’ In fact, if one were to point to one of the most neglected areas of educational scholarship, it would be just this, the critical relationships between ideologies and educational thought and practice, the study of the range of seemingly commonsense assumptions that would lay bare the political, social, ethical, and economic interests and commitments that are uncritically accepted ‘as the way it is’ in our day to day life as educators. (pp. 17-18)

Our schools do not develop within a void but are directed by the institutions which comprise the place.

The binding of memory to place, and so to particular places, can itself be seen as a function of the way in which subjectivity is necessarily embedded in place, and in spatialised, embodied activity. That persons 'surround themselves with the places where they find themselves' is thus indicative of the character both of memory *and* of subjectivity — the very identity of subjects, both in terms of their own self-definition and their identity as grasped by others, is inextricably bound to the particular places in which they find themselves and in which others find them, while, in a more general sense, it is only within the overarching structure of place as such that subjectivity as such is possible. (Malpas, 1999, p. 176)

The place to which one's existence is tied in part determines an individual's life choices and affects the interpretation of one's actions. Life does not occur in a vacuum but is directly influenced by the physical and social place in which one is positioned. Descriptions and interpretations which fail to address the place of activities fail to consider situations in their totality and may draw conclusions that do not achieve direct and primitive contact with the world.

Each school is a unique amalgamation of place, people, and culture. The purpose of my study is to gain a deeper understanding of how the unique blend of traits at a school can affect the adopting of the democratic principles incorporated in the Accelerated Schools Project.

Phenomenological research accumulates knowledge on the range of the individual, the specific, the unique. Its purpose is to probe into the richness of human experience and to illuminate the complexity of the individual perception and action against the background of our knowledge of the general laws or regularities in human nature. (Tesch, 1987, p. 231)

In order to glean this deeper understanding, I have decided to follow the hermeneutic phenomenological research methods as they are put forth by Max van Manen. To van Manen (1990), phenomenological research is the scientific study of lived experiences.

From a phenomenological point of view, to do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings. And since to know the world is profoundly to be in the world in a certain way, the act of researching- questioning- theorizing is the intentional act of attaching ourselves to the world, to become more fully part of it, or better, to become the world. (van Manen, 1990, p. 5)

Van Manen states (1990) that phenomenological research consists of six interconnected research activities:

1. turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
2. investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
3. reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
4. describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;

5. maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
and
6. balancing the research context by considering the parts and whole. (p. 31)

To perform phenomenological research is to become engaged in a quest for deeper understanding of an event. We are constantly bombarded with experiences but few can become the subject of extended examination. In order to focus one's attention, the object must engage the individual in more than a cursory way. Items of a passing interest do not become the subjects of our consciousness. Such items do not become the subject of phenomenological research.

Human beings can have perceptions of the external world without becoming conscious of them, but our consciousness of external perceptions-our life-worlds- is where each of us lives in the most deeply personal sense. Not only do we feel our perceptions more acutely when we become consciously aware of them within our life-worlds, but we begin autonomously to consider what we can do about them. (Willis, 1991, p. 175)

The subject matter at hand commits the researcher to the lived world. As a professional educator currently questioning the nature and structure of the educational system, I possess a profound interest in attempts to improve the status of our children's learning environment. As a former member of the Islands' faculty, I have formed attachments to the faculty and students at the school. I am dedicated to understanding the Accelerated Schools' process as it unfolds at Islands and to provide others with an understanding of the school renewal process.

The data of phenomenological research is human experience. In order to gain this data, the researcher turns to experiences of the natural world as perceived by oneself or through the words of others. Through the close examination of our own experiences and the experiences of others familiar with the phenomena, we find primitive contact with the lifeworld.

Islands has clearly become a part of my lifeworld. My life's travels eventually brought me to become a member of the Island's faculty. I became immersed in the culture of the institution at a time of great change. While I left Islands, it still remains a part of me, and I retain a great interest in its future.

At the heart of phenomenological research lays the search for the essential meanings of an experience. It captures the human desire to make sense of life. The attempt to discover the essential meanings of an experience leads one to perform a thematic analysis of the data collected. Through the use of such an analysis, we endeavor to understand our experience. We desire to make sense of the phenomena. The discovery of themes in experiences allows one to give shape to the lifeworld.

The thematic analysis proscribed by Manen is not the mechanical coding and counting of transcripts and texts that comprises much of the traditional usage of the term. In van Manen's version of phenomenological research, thematic analysis involves the examination of a phenomena attempting to capture the central elements of the experience. In order to perform this type of thematic analysis, I will examine both my own perceptions and those of others regarding the Accelerated Schools program at Islands. During this investigation, I believe common threads will emerge from our stories and allow themes to be identified.

The purpose of writing and rewriting in phenomenological research is to enter into a conversational relation with the phenomena in question. As we write and rewrite on an experience, our thoughts and observations become focused. The writing and rewriting process engages the researcher in the act of reflection in order to produce the written word. In turn, the text produced attempts to provide a written expression of the essence of the experience. The process becomes cyclical. As we write, we reflect. As we reflect, we are drawn to rewrite. To Aoki (2005), reflection in phenomenological research is:

not the kind of activity that people as actors engage in their daily life. For in their day-to-day existence, actors deal with their concerns in routine ways without probing beyond the immediate exigencies. Missing is a conscious effort to examine the intentions and assumptions underlying their acts. (p. 106)

The process draws us closer to the direct contact we seek. According to Barbara Couture (1998), “our intersubjective understanding progresses toward truth through expression, that is, speaking or writing” (p. 184).

As I sit to write on the Islands’ endeavor, I am drawn deeper into the phenomena. I am forced to confront issues regarding the nature of the school renewal process that I have not in the past. The new thoughts raise new questions in what appears to be a never ending process.

According to Manen, performing phenomenological research should draw one into action. In the realm of education, such research informs pedagogy. Van Manen (1990) states, “In the work of writing and reading text we must always ask: how can

we invent in the text a certain space, a perspective wherein the pedagogic voice which speaks for the child can let itself be heard” (p. 153)? To the professional educator, the purpose of phenomenological research is to increase one’s understanding of the lifeworlds of students.

Current demands from political institutions have removed the teacher-student interaction as the central focus of educational research and placed at the center the dehumanized research-based instructional techniques. Phenomenological research reasserts the centrality of the teacher-student interaction in the educational process.

Against these drifts in the erosion of pedagogy, there is a more hopeful trend emerging. Partly as a reaction, it seems, against the influence of increasingly rationalistic, technocratic, and corporatist movements in education we see a renewed interest in the question of the ethos of pedagogical practices. First there are educators who seek to recover something that has been long absent from North American educational thought: an ethics-sensitive language of teaching and an epistemology of practice that is guided by an interest in the child’s experience and in the relational sphere between teachers and their students. (van Manen, 1999, p. 17)

Through the use of phenomenological methods, we connect with the experiences of the child and develop a clearer understanding of their world. The information garnered from such research increases our knowledge of the unique life of the child and influences the nature of our instruction.

The educational process and the institutions in our society which serve to educate are of great importance to the lifeworld of children. According to Langevel (2002):

Education first of all is confronted by tasks which inevitably have real and concrete consequences—consequences which are, or which are to become, the lived experiences of the lifeworld. Another consequence is that we are confronted by questions which concern the essential meaning of being human itself. (p. 6)

The experiences encountered during the education process not only add students' wealth of knowledge but also change the individuals' fundamental perception of the world.

First and foremost, my examination of the Accelerated Schools program is one of pedagogical interest. Is this good for children? Will this produce critical thinkers that are able to participate fully in the democratic process? These questions lay at the heart of my quest.

When performing phenomenological research, one must resist the temptation to become buried in the details and never return to viewing the phenomena as a whole. While a thorough investigation of the details of phenomena provide the details which allow the researcher to uncover essential themes, they also may tend to obscure the course of the research. During the course of the research process, one must step outside of the details and observe the entire phenomena. As I observe the implementation of the Accelerated Schools Project at Islands, I frequently am forced to pull myself from the thousands of details that bombard me and reexamine the totality of the process.

To investigate the implementation of the Accelerated Schools Project as Islands Elementary, I will conduct interviews with current faculty and members of the

community who have an interest in the process, consult texts which detail the history of the Savannah-Chatham County School System, and examine personal journals kept during my time at Islands.

Interviews with individuals involved with the integration of the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System and the implementation of the Accelerated Schools Project serve as a source for extensive and intensive data for this study. According to van Manen (1990), “We gather other people’s experiences because they allow us to become more experienced ourselves” (p. 62). The views of others regarding an experience allow us to become more cognizant of the full significance of an event or experience.

In order to maintain confidentiality due to the sensitive nature of the topics under investigation, the interviewees’ will remain confidential. The interviews conducted consisted of open-ended questions. Follow-up questions will be used to extend and clarify the interviewee’s answers.

A historical analysis of the integration will play a critical role in understanding the development of Islands Elementary School and the implementation of the Accelerated Schools Project at the institution. Through the use of primary sources, the analysis will provide a framework for the social and political conditions that influenced and continue to influence the development of Island Elementary. Unfortunately, far too many studies into school reform efforts fail to investigate the impact of cultural institutions and history on the course of restructuring.

Finally, field notes from my time at Islands will be used to provide further data involving the implementation process. Glensne states that the observation process

(1999) “seeks to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange” (p. 46). By observing the implementation of the Accelerated Schools Project, new light will be shed on segments of the process while others will fall into darkness as new questions arise.

CHAPTER 4

IMPLEMENTING THE ACCELERATED SCHOOLS PROJECT

The hallways of Islands Elementary School are alive. Children bustle down the corridors heading to their respective classrooms. Teachers stand on guard directing traffic. Three hundred yards away, a similar scene is being repeated at Marshpoint Elementary. The only noticeable difference between the two schools is one of color. Not the color of the floor tiles or paint in the hallways but the color of the students. The majority of the smiling, laughing children at Islands are black while their counterparts at Marshpoint are primarily white.

Islands Elementary is a gleaming, modern school. Build in the mid-nineties, the building is outfitted with the latest technology. Every room has at least three computers networked to the Internet. The school's computer lab is filled with new computers, a LCD projector, and video production equipment. Upgraded to the school's technology occur regularly due to the influx of Title I funds received by the school.

The Marshpoint Elementary building is nearly the twin of Islands, but Marshpoint lacks access to the considerable federal monies afforded Islands under Title I status. While the federal grant money allows Islands to offer technology and tutoring beyond the scope its sister school, parental involvement at Marshpoint acts as an equalizing force.

Two years prior, the closing of an outdated and dilapidated elementary school forced rezoning for Islands and Marshpoint. The attendances zones drawn during the rezoning created schools that were even more segregated than before. The rezoning

and subsequent news articles on the issue brought the disparities between the two populations to light. When news reports began to flow about the discrepancies between the two institutions standardized test scores, local activists groups began to question the local school board decision to create school zones which clearly appeared to segregated the races. Threats of litigation forced the local school board to act.

The setting is a dingy local high school auditorium. The room is packed and clearly divided along racial lines. Parents, students, community members, and local news personalities crowd the aisles waiting in anticipation for the monthly school board meeting to begin. A few members of the gathered throng hold placards in hand.

The school board members are seated on the stage of the auditorium. The board is nearly evenly divided along racial lines. Several are visibly anxious. The auditorium, normally sparsely populated for such meetings, is packed to near capacity. The back row contains new camera teams from each of the local network affiliates.

The meeting begins promptly at 7 p.m. The first few items on the agenda, including the adoption of a school system budget that does not include an employee pay raise, are dispensed with quickly. Finally, the president of the school board, a stately man in his fifties, announces the next item on the agenda, the proposed merger of Islands and Marshpoint Elementary Schools.

The first parent to stand and speak, a white female in her thirties dressed in a well-tailored business suit, unleashes a diatribe aimed at the school board. In a voice filled with anger, she states that a merger of the two schools would destroy the “special environment” that has been created at Marshpoint. In her opinion, bringing

in low performing students would burden the teachers and drag the remaining students down. Her child, a current student at Marshpoint, would be denied the opportunity to reach her full potential if the schools are merged. Near shouting, she delivers her final words. "We don't want this to happen. If it does, I will take my children to private school."

Mr. Hayes, a teacher with two children attending Marshpoint, was a student at Johnson High School in Savannah at the time of integration.

"Integration in Savannah did not go very well. When we first heard that the schools were going to become mixed, my parents got scared. None of us had ever had close contact with blacks. In Savannah, blacks and whites were and are in separate worlds. They did not worry too much about me, but they were frightened about how my sister would fare."

"From the very first day of school, I knew that we were in for a rough year. Police officers were all over campus. They had to line the halls because no one knew what to expect. All the white students were scared. We feared walking down the hallways. We were under the impression that we were going to be attacked."

"During the first week of school, young, black girl walked up to my sister and without say a word began to feel her hair. I guess she had never had the opportunity to see what a white person's hair felt like. It freaked my sister and parents out. They took her out of the public schools the next week and put her into private school. We could really afford it at the time, but they didn't want a black person to touch my sister. They allowed me to stay because I was close to graduating and a male. They thought I could defend myself if I needed to."

On the heels of the Civil War, the Congress proposed what is now the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. While the amendment faced stiff opposition, particularly in the state of Georgia, the Fourteenth Amendment was certified on July 20, 1868. Section 1 of the amendment to the Constitution (1787) states:

All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

While the addition to the Constitution called for all citizens to be treated equally by the state, arguments of how the races should be treated did not cease. A plethora of legal action based on the interpretation of the amendment ensued.

In 1896, the Supreme Court, in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the United States Supreme Court found that the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment could be abided by while providing separate public facilities for differing races. In delivering the opinion for the majority of the court, Justice Henry Billings Brown in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) wrote:

The object of the amendment was undoubtedly to enforce the absolute equality of the two races before the law, but in the nature of things it could not have been intended to abolish distinctions based upon color, or to enforce social, as distinguished from political, equality, or a commingling of the two

racess upon terms unsatisfactory to either. Laws permitting, and even requiring, their separation in places where they are liable to be brought into contact do not necessarily imply the inferiority of either race to the other.

While the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case was not related to the integration of educational institutions, the landmark ruling was used as the justification for providing segregated schools across the nation but particularly in the South.

Judge John Harlan, the lone dissenter in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), penned the following prophetic words in his stern rejection of the majority decision:

Our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law...In my opinion, the judgment this day rendered will, in time, prove to be quite as pernicious as the decision made by this tribunal in the Dred Scott case. The present decision, it may well be apprehended, will not only stimulate aggressions, more or less brutal and irritating, upon the admitted rights of colored citizens, but will encourage the belief that it is possible, by means of state enactments, to defeat the beneficent purposes which the people of the United States had in view when they adopted the recent amendments of the Constitution.

Over the next fifty years, Harlan's words unwound into truths. African-American youths across the nation were not afforded equal educational opportunities to their white peers. States continuously spent vastly more public money on educating white pupils. The *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision was used as a shield to provide substandard

educations and facilities to minority children. In 1950, the Educational Policies Commission found:

Lacking both incentive and opportunity, the probabilities are very great that, however superior one's gifts may be, he will rarely live a life of high achievement. Follow-up studies of highly gifted young Negroes, for instance, reveal a shocking waste of talent- a waste that adds an incalculable amount to the price of prejudice in this country. (p. 33)

In May of 1954, the Supreme Court struck down the *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling. In *Brown v. Board of Education*, the court rejected the belief that separate educational institutions could be made equal.

Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local government. Compulsory school attendance laws and the great expenditures for education both demonstrate our recognition of the importance of education to our democratic society. It is required in the performance of our most basic public responsibilities, even service in the armed forces. It is the very foundation of good citizenship. Today, it is a principle instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms. (Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, 1954)

With these words, Chief Justice Earl Warren called for an end to government-sponsored segregation, but for many students, separate and unequal educations remained a fact. School systems across the state of Georgia refused to comply with the new law of the land. Several school systems faced further court challenges from proponents of desegregation to force the issue. Justice Warren's words appear to echo the sentiments of Thomas Jefferson. Two centuries prior, Jefferson (1785) wrote, "Every government degenerates when trusted to the rulers of the people alone. The people themselves are its only safe depositors. And to render them safe, their minds must be improved to a certain degree" (p. 97).

The Savannah-Chatham County Board of Education effectively ignored the Brown decision for several years. While the local NAACP chapter called for integration of the public schools in Savannah immediately following the Brown decision, the board cited a state law forbidding integration as the reason for continuing segregated schools. Even among the African-American community, integration had its detractors. W.W. Law, former president of the Savannah chapter of the NAACP, called any attempt to integrate the school system "foolhardy" under the current conditions.

*In 1959, 36 African American parents filed suit against the Savannah-Chatham County Board of Education for violating the Fourteenth Amendment rights of their children. The case, *Stell v. The Savannah-Chatham County Board of Education* forced the district to confront the issue of integration. The district judge initially charged with the case failed to provide the plaintiffs with relief. On appeal, the Fifth Circuit Court, citing the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. the Board of Education of**

Topeka, Kansas as controlling, found in the parents' favor and ordered the Savannah-Chatham County school system to be desegregated.

The Fifth Circuit's opinion, handed down in 1963, forced the Savannah-Chatham County Board of Education to begin the integration of its schools albeit at an extremely slow pace. In 1971, the circuit court, following the Supreme Court's decision in Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education, ruled that the integration of the Savannah-Chatham County Schools had been minimal. The court mandated the board begin bussing to force integration with a target of creating schools which have a 60-40 black to white ratio.

For over thirty years, the system remained under the supervision of the court. Finally, in 1994, the system was released by the district judge charged with overseeing the desegregation process.

“As a young man, I remember when they ruled that blacks could come to white schools. It scared the hell out of parents. It became the number one topic. We used to have our set of schools which at the time seemed like private schools. We got everything we ever needed. Boy, did things change once integration started. All of a sudden, white students began to disappear from a lot of schools.”

“We were terrified of what was going to happen when they decided to integrate schools. Savannah was such a segregated city at the time. Whites and blacks had little to no interaction with one another on any real level. We didn't know what to expect from them when they came into our schools.”

“I still see far too many people worried about people of another race. They think the place is going to go to hell instantly when they let the black kids in. The white

parents decide to do one of two things when the black students started to be integrated into their schools: flee to the suburbs or pay for private schools. And, there was pretty much only reason for this to occur all of a sudden- the integration of the schools. At the time this white flight started to occur, there were no other events that caused the movement to occur.”

Starting in the mid-eighties, the tenor of the Supreme Court and several of the circuit courts began to change. In 1991, the Supreme Court found in *Oklahoma City Board of Education v. Dowell* that school systems should be released from court ordered desegregation plans if the local educational administration has made good faith efforts comply with the order and attempted to eliminate traces of desegregation in the system. Other school systems, including the local school board governing Rivers and Seaside, followed the decision with petitions to the courts to be released from judicial control.

Upon being released from judicial oversight, the school district controlling Islands and Marshpoint joined the growing tide of systems experiencing resegregation. The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, The Center for the Study of Race and Law at the University of Virginia (2005) have found “resegregation can occur quite literally from one academic year to the next, invited by policies that districts implement immediately upon release from court supervision” (p. 20). While the school district has made various attempts to derail resegregation, most notably the creation of magnet programs to draw white students to predominately African-American schools, contact consistently diminished during the nineties.

Ms. Wilkes is product and veteran of the school system governing Islands and Marshpoint Elementary Schools. As a child, she experienced the mandatory bussing policy firsthand. Arising in the hours before dawn, she huddled on the street corner awaiting the bus that would carry her across the city to her new majority white elementary school. As she waits, her eyes dart to the horizon where the faint outline of her previous school, a second home, can be seen.

The travel across town lasted over an hour. The bus, containing thirty African American children from the poorest area of the city, slowly worked its way to the students' new elementary school located in a middle class, white neighborhood.

"We were always quite on the ride. I cried most days as the bus pulled away from the corner and my second home faded out of sight. We felt like we were being punished by being sent to the school across town. I loved the school that was near my home. I ran there every morning, but when bussing started, I began to hate school."

"When we first arrived, the white students just stared at us. They didn't call us names. They didn't pick on us. They didn't try to start fights with us. They just gave us the look. The look that meant 'Your not supposed to be here.' But, we kept on coming to school. Some of them must have eventually figured that the stared weren't going to work so they began to start with the name-calling."

"At my black school, the teachers loved me and treated me like I was smart. At the white school, I was stupid. I couldn't do anything right. Or, at least, that's the perception I got from the teachers at the white school. While I understand the need and purpose for integration now, I didn't have any clue then. I felt that my school was

perfectly fine. While we did not have the newest and best of everything and the white schools did, our teachers made due. They knew that we could learn and we did."

Prior to integration, neighborhood schools served as part of the bedrock of the African American community. The schools were allowed to be developed by and for the community which it served.

The African American school had in many ways been one of the institutional anchors of black community life. When it ended and the new era of integration began, this institutional anchor of care concern, support, and involvement for black children was lost. (Glickman, 1998, p. 116)

"My grades dropped after the transfer. Before the move, I had mostly A's and B's. After, everything was a C or F. I thought I was doing good work but the teachers never did."

"But, besides my grades, I felt that the teachers and administrators listened to me at my old school. We had a voice. We could change things. When we went to the teacher or principal and explained how we thought something was wrong, they would listen and act upon our suggestions. I felt included in the school. At my new, white school, the teacher would stare at me whenever I told her about problems. She didn't want to hear about them. And, she definitely did not want to hear about ways to make things better. I was just a black child filling up space and making the school system look better for the judge. I wasn't a person."

"A person should have rights and a voice. At school, students should be listened to. We are there to educate and prepare them to become members of our society, but I felt like I was being talked down to. After a while, I stopped talking at all. If they

didn't want to hear what I had to say, I would waste my breathe on them. I held my feelings inside and a rage began to build."

"I entered the white school in the third grade. My rage built over the next two years and at times exploded. At my home school, I never had any disciplinary actions. In third and fourth grades, I found myself in the principal's and assistant principal's offices all of time. The teachers were always writing me up and never trying to find out what was wrong."

"Much as we don't want to admit it, many things have not changed since integration of the schools began here. Many of the white parents don't want to send their kids to schools that have a large population of blacks. In fact, soon after bussing was made law, white students began to flee form the public schools. Private schools started to pop up all over the city. It really says something when people would rather pay money than go to school with you. We began to feel like we had some sort of disease."

"The specters of the past are still alive today. My preacher says that often when he talks about race relations today. They keep on rising even after we want to think that they are dead. Now, in the Islands-Marshpoint situation, I can see many of those specters coming to life. The black student will corrupt their school if we send them there. Things just won't be the same. Teachers will have to teach down to them and drag everyone down. These are the same things that were said forty years ago when I began riding that bus."

"I sat through many of the meetings as we began talking about merging the two schools. I could tell that many of the Rivers teachers were worried about having to

deal with black children. They were happy with their perfect little world and didn't want any of us changing it. Some of them were blatant about it. They would speak of the Islands children as if they were out of control and just needed to be contained while the real educating went on at Rivers. I began to wonder if they saw me as black, or did they think that when I went to college I turned white on the inside. I never really told them about my experience with integration so I don't think they knew how strongly I felt about things."

"I often wonder why I didn't speak up more in the meetings. I could tell the whole merger problem was a racial issue and here I was remaining silent. I think I learned to remain silent over the years in school. After integration happened, I learned to remain silent. I learned that things went better for me if I didn't talk and share my opinions. As we begin to talk about anything that might have something to do with race, I remain silent."

While at first this the history of segregation and integration of the Savannah-Chatham County School System and the stories of one who lived through these troubled times may appear to be of little importance to the implementation of the Accelerated Schools Project at Islands, one should not ignore place when examining school renewal. Islands cannot be released from the community of which it is a part. The larger social issues create the situation in which the institutions must develop. Pinar (2004) states:

'Place' has been a concept largely absent in traditional curriculum scholarship, predictably so. From its conception as a specialized field in the early 20th century, curriculum studies have tended toward the formulation of

principles of curriculum development applicable anytime and anywhere. (p. 94)

School renewal, being a highly localized phenomenon, is impacted by place.

While Pinar delves into the impact of region, specifically the South, on curriculum and schooling, place can be more localized. Savannah is a city filled with racial tensions. These tensions have impacted the development of the individual schools including Islands.

I am a child of the South. While the race relations in the small town that I grew up in were far from idyllic, the impact on the schools was not as significant. With only one elementary, one middle, and one high school, white students and black students were constantly in contact with one another.

“As a black person in the South growing up during that period, you learned to remain silent on political issues. We might vote, but beyond that, many of us remained silent. It was a method of defense. If you remained silent and didn’t cause a stir, you could be left alone. Today, we are teaching many of the same things. We teach the kids to be quite and don’t rock the boat. If they can do that and find a place to fit in, they just might be a success. Unfortunately, by staying quite and not raising objections to things, nothing will ever change. We need to teach children, especially young black children, to raise their voices and have a say.”

“We get trained to have little to say, and I believe that it carries over to politics for many of us. We don’t want to speak up because we think it will cause more harm than good. If you keep on telling people in so many ways that they don’t count, they finally begin to believe it.

“We don’t want to vote because we don’t think that things will change, and even if we get someone elected, he will change when he gets to office and not care about us any more. Power corrupts.”

Over the next two hours, community members, the majority of whom are parents of Rivers students, take turns unleashing their feelings about the merger. The discussion centers on the affect the merger would have on the high performing population of Rivers. Several of the parents express concern about the inadequate state of Rivers but do not want to create new problems by combining schools.

A well-dressed gentleman seated behind me utters, “I don’t understand why they want to pollute our school.” Several other voices assert their agreement with the speaker.

An African American woman strides to the microphone. Her voice quivers as she speaks. “My children deserve a chance. They should have the same opportunities as any other child in the district, but we all know that isn’t happening. Why?” In response to the young ladies plea, the crowd begins to rumble. Cheers can be heard from a small contingent of mostly African-Americans seated in the corner of the room. From the majority white crowd mutters of anger and resentment can be heard. While the words are indistinguishable, the intent is clear. We don’t want your kids here.”

Mr. Hayes speaks on the proposed merger. “As soon as I heard about the potential merger of the two schools, I thought about what we would do with my daughter. She would still be at Marshpoint if the merger occurred. I think I would

have pulled her out and put her in private school. I would have done it for her safety. I would have worried about what would have happened to her everyday.”

“I don’t know if the fear is rational, but we have never been told otherwise. We have been taught to fear blacks. While the times have changed in Savannah, our feelings have not changed all that much. We are willing to accept some black students into the white schools, but we don’t want too many. That may ruin the school.”

The uproar over the proposed merger leads one to believe that Islands is a complete failure as an educational institution. The truth appears to be starkly different. Islands’ students have performed well on both state and national exams. Islands only appears to be a failure academically when compared to its neighbor. Eighty and eighty-five percent of the students enrolled at Islands met or exceeded expectations on the mathematics and reading portions of the 2005 Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test respectively. These passage rates significantly exceeded the minimums required by the Georgia Department of Education in order to be identified as a school making adequately yearly progress and mirror the state’s results as a whole. For its success at raising the test scores of its poverty-stricken population, Islands was recognized as a High Flying School at the 15th Annual National Youth-At-Risk Conference.

Marshpoint Elementary, by every standardized measure collected by the state, is a school of superior performance. Ninety-five and ninety-seven percent of students at Marshpoint met or exceeded expectations on the mathematics and reading portions of the 2005 CRCT respectively. The school has been recognized as a Gold Award

School and a School of Excellence by the state department of education for their outstanding academic results.

When placed in direct comparison to Marshpoint, Islands appears to be lacking yet such a comparison does not take into account many of the factors outside the control of the school. Seventy-four percent of the students come from low-income households. Many of these children worry about having their most basic of needs met. To believe that the outcomes on standardized tests for Islands and Marshpoint students will be identical given these social ills is not reasonable.

For its lack of success compared to its neighbor, Islands is viewed as a failure by many in the surrounding community. Many wrongly blame the students, teachers, and administrators of Islands for these supposed failures. For this, the school must change.

The story of what goes on inside the building is a stark contrast to this misguided conception. The students are treated with respect. They are cared for and nurtured by the school personnel. I have never been a part of a staff that is more dedicated to the needs of the students. Unfortunately, the realities of place impinge upon the continual positive development of Islands.

The resegregation that produced the Marshpoint-Islands phenomenon is not an anomaly. America's schools are increasingly becoming divided along racial lines. According to Orfield:

American public schools are now 12 years into the process of continuous resegregation. The desegregation of black students, which increased continuously from the 1950s to the late 1980s, has now receded to levels not

seen in three decades... During the 1990s, the proportion of black students in majority white schools has decreased... to a level lower than in any year since 1968... Almost three-fourths of black and Latino students attend schools that are predominately minority. (in Kozol, 2005, pp. 265-266)

The failure of children to come into meaningful contact with those of other races is a matter of serious concern to the future of our democracy. Our nation is becoming increasingly more diverse, but the public schools of our country are becoming increasingly segregated.

At Islands, contact between African American children and white children is limited. Many of the African American children only interact with whites that are in roles of authority in the school. The lack of peer-to-peer communications among students of differing races could portend continual racial strife and further fragmentation of the community.

The perpetuation of any form of prejudice is a serious problem in a democracy because it blocks the development of mutual respect among citizens, but more serious still is the perpetuation of prejudice against an already disadvantaged minority, whose low economic and political position has been created in significant part by past de facto and de jure discrimination. (Gutman, 1987, p. 161)

Though only a parking lot separates Islands and Marshpoint Elementary Schools, a yawning gap exists between the two schools in the areas of achievement scores and racial makeup. These disparities have not escaped the attention of local community leaders. Calls have arisen to end the separate and unequal educational settings. The

first proposal to be discussed by the local school board to rectify the situation has the two schools merging to form one large institution accommodating both populations of students. One campus would host students in pre-kindergarten through second grade while the other would serve students in third to fifth grades.

Mr. Murphy is a veteran teacher but new to Islands Elementary. He is a white, male in his early thirties and has served as a teacher and coach in the district for five years. "I do and I don't understand what is occurring between the two schools. We are both public schools sitting on the same piece of ground. If a merger would create better academic and social opportunities for children, then we should merge. If not, let us continue on our own path. We are in the business of helping children. That should be our mission and our main focus, but unfortunately, for many of the parties involved, this is not the case."

"We are the second class school because we educate those kids. It has to do with the color of the skin. How the other school would be disrupted by trying to meet the academic needs of our children is just a ruse. It has very little to do with test scores. Its just in this day and age you can't say I don't want my child to go to school with black kids but that doesn't mean that they don't think it."

"The whole merger play is an attempt to keep some people from making too big of a stink. The school system doesn't want the NAACP to become involved and say the school is segregating students, but all you have to do is look at the situation to tell that is what is happening. When they began to rezone schools after closing down some of the older schools, they made sure to protect some of the school zones. The parents raised a stink and kept the black kids from coming to their schools."

“But, we knew couldn’t leave without having something to tell to the people. We had to be able to point at something and be able to say: ‘Look at what we are doing for you. This will solve all of our problems and make both schools equal.’ But, a program cannot begin to make the two schools equal. We can’t change how the kids come to us. If they are not prepared for school, then some program is not going to be able to do it. We need much more significant change than that to help make these kids equal. They are already so far behind some of the other kids who come from more advantaged families.”

Due to the political pressure placed upon the school board, the merger proposal was shelved for the 2005-2006 school year, but bowing to the demands for improvement in academic achievement for majority African American Seashore Elementary, the board approved funding for the implementation of a schoolwide restructuring project at the school.

“The cultures of the two schools are different. It was a bad idea from the start to attempt to merge the two schools. Marshpoint is about high academic standards. Islands serves students who struggle. If you attempt to put the two together, everyone will suffer.”

On December 8, 2004, the Savannah-Chatham County Board of Education voted unanimously to approve the following motion:

That Islands Elementary School become an Accelerated Schools Plus Academy and \$60,000 be transferred from the school systems contingency fund to Islands Elementary to fund the creation of an Accelerated Plus Academy at Islands (Savannah-Chatham County Board of Education, 2004)

Following the board's approval, the acting superintendent of the Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools, Colonel George W. Bowen, executed a partnership agreement with the Accelerated Schools Center. According to the agreement, Islands Elementary and the Accelerated Schools Center are committed to work together over the next five years, but either party may terminate the contract at the end of each year.

Per the terms of the agreement, the Accelerated Schools Center or one of its affiliates will provide extensive training and support as Islands works towards implementing the Accelerated Schools Project. During the first year, the focus of the training will be on the Accelerated Schools PLUS philosophy, the qualities of powerful learning, the development of school community owned vision, and the creation of a school governance structure. During subsequent years, the focus of training will shift to collegial coaching, strategies for meeting the needs of all learners in the classroom, assessment strategies, and the training of staff new to the school. For Islands, the majority of the training and support will be provided by the South Carolina/Georgia Regional Provider Center located at the College of Charleston. In return, the Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools will pay \$45,000 for each of the first three-years of the agreement and \$5,000 per year thereafter.

Ms. Wilkes: "I still want to believe that we are looking and trying to do what is in the best interest of all children concerned. I still want to believe, but it gets so hard."

"The whole purpose of this new project is to attempt to obscure the truth. Look here we did something for you folk. How condescending. But, it has worked in the past so why shouldn't it work now. Throw them a few scraps, and they will go away

for a while. By the time they figure out we didn't really do anything, we will have figured out something else to throw them. The cycle can continue forever it seems."

"The whole concept behind the Accelerated Schools Project sounds good but can it really be made a reality here. We need to have people that value the opinions of children but so few do these days. And when you consider that we are talking about African-American children here at Seaside, the chances of being listened to drop to near nothing. I don't know how many times I have heard teachers' talk about how these kids can't think or act like people.

"When people talk like that, how can you expect them to listen to the black kids and value what they think? And, don't believe for a second that the kids don't pick up on it. They know. They know when an adult cares about what they have to say and when they don't care. We want to believe that we are good enough to pull one over on the kids but we can't. They are born lie detectors."

"From the very start, we showed the kids and the parents that we really didn't want too much of their input. We wanted to tell them what our school was going to be about, and they needed to like it. That might not tell the kids what it is like to live in a democracy, but it does tell them what it is like to live in the United States. The kids and parents are being told what the school is doing. The school might give a couple of choices, but the choices aren't really choices. They are so similar that its like voting on nothing. Do you want to do choice A or choice B which is the same as choice A? Not really much of a choice. To me, it is like voting in America. Vote for the Republican or the Democrat. Both of them don't care what we think. They are just looking after themselves."

“When we get treated like that, we begin to shut down. We begin to believe that all of the decisions will be made for us. We can just sit around and allow things to happen to us. That’s not how it’s supposed to be in a democracy but that’s how its getting to be. Its sad.”

“Of course, we need to teach students how to live and work in a democratic nation. It is the most important thing we can do, but we ignore it. We expect kids to grow up and know how to take part in the democratic process. Does that make sense to you? The most important act we do as citizens of our country and we don’t teach it in schools. We don’t even attempt to teach children to known how to be an active part of the democratic process. Doesn’t make sense at all or does it?”

“If we don’t teach children, and especially black kids, to be a part of the process then they never will be. Their parents don’t know how to become part of the process. Most of them just stay out of it altogether because they think it is not worth the time. So, that’s the kids only role model because nothing gets taught in school about it.”

There is a general withdrawal from what ought to be public concerns.

Messages and announcements fill the air; but there is, because of the withdrawal, a widespread speechlessness, a silence where there might be- where there ought to be- an impassioned and significant dialogue. (Shor, 1992, p. 17)

It is March of 2005. A representative from the Accelerated Schools Center at the College of Charleston is presenting. While her talk primarily focuses on the Powerful Learning concepts of the Accelerated Schools Project, she mentions how the program

will increase standardized test scores several times. In today's environment, standardized tests scores must be front and center of any school reform effort.

"We get so caught up on test scores these day. It seems like it is all that we are worried about. We want to make sure that Johnny can read a paragraph and answer a few simple questions, but does that really mean that Johnny is ready for the real world?"

"These tests drive almost everything we do now. My students have to have passing scores on the reading and math portions of the CRCT. Everything else doesn't matter. We have been told to concentrate on just those two subjects and pretty much abandon everything else. I feel that my job is threatened if my students don't perform well on these tests."

"A, B, C, D. All these multiple-choice tests are used to determine if a student is ready for the next grade. They say that these tests will make sure that teachers are working to make sure that all students are successful. Well, you have to define successful. Answers a few questions correctly on a test does not define success to me."

"I understand why the administration has to put pressure on us to make sure that the test scores are good. They constantly have to worry about test scores. It seems to be their whole job these days. Every meeting we have is about test scores and how they can be improved. We are bombarded with data about test scores all the time. It gets tiring. You begin to become distracted from our job of educating children. The administrators are pulled away from their job of running a school and making it a nice, safe place to send your kids. They are worried about one thing- test scores."

As the presentation moves forward, we begin to be deluged information on how the Accelerated Schools Project increases the higher order thinking skills of the students at participating schools, but such skills are not a critical concern to schools. The sheer volume of material presented to teachers about standardized test scores shows where the school's focus lays.

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed Public Law 107-110, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, enacting the major educational reform bill into law. The law's primary stated goal is to hold:

schools, local educational agencies, and States accountable for improving the academic achievement of all students, and identifying and turning around low-performing schools that have failed to provide a high-quality education to their students, while providing alternatives to students in such schools to enable the students to receive a high-quality education. (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001)

The enactment of No Child Left Behind is the public consequence of growing trends in America. "A dispiriting public opinion and an overall diminishing confidence in the abilities of schools to succeed has surfaced even as expectations for schools are on the rise." (Beachum & Dentith, 2004, p. 276).

No Child Left Behind is not an anomaly but part of a growing trend of federal and state enactments aimed at controlling the educational process. According to Linda Darling-Hammond (1993):

Over the last decade, hundreds of pieces of legislation have sought to improve schools by adding course requirements, increasing testing requirements,

mandating new curriculum guidelines, and requiring new management processes for schools and districts. Similar reforms during the 1970s had tried to "teacher-proof" schooling by centralizing textbook adoptions, mandating curriculum guides for each grade level and subject area, and developing rules and tests governing how children should be tracked into programs and promoted from grade to grade. (p. 754)

The majority of these proposals have increased the accountability of teachers without correspondingly increasing funding to the local school systems. The lack of funds has led to limited training opportunities for the classroom teacher.

NCLB has been a disaster for public education. It is top-down authoritarian reform based in quantitative testing from the outside and from above, using standardized testing that robs teachers and students of creative classroom learning. NCLB is a conservative management instrument to sow more chaos in public education to distract discussion away from the gross funding inequities. (Shor, personal communications, November 24, 2004)

In order to achieve the aim of improving the performance of schools, the No Child Left Behind Act calls for the increased use of standardized testing. According to No Child Left Behind, every state must institute an annual evaluations system to monitor student progress. If a state fails to construct and administer such a system, all federal funds received by the local educational agency are place at risk. While the vast majority of the funding for the Savannah-Chatham County Board of Education is provided through state and local funds, federal grants provided approximately 13% of the school district's total revenue. Losing such funding would result in a significant

reduction of services provided by the district or a substantial increase in the local millage rate.

The consequences for not making Adequate Yearly Progress escalate with each subsequent year a school does not obtain benchmarks for student progress determined by the state. The penalties for being classified as a Needs Improvement school range from providing students with the option of transferring to a school. During the 2004-2005 school year, 30% of Savannah-Chatham County schools failed to obtain adequate progress.

The threat of massive school restructuring due to standardized test scores has become reality. School restructuring plans are being developed for Needs Improvement schools across the state of Georgia. The restructuring plans range from increasing the services received by students to replacing a school's entire staff.

Yet despite the political popularity of the testing "solution," many educators and civil rights advocates are suggesting that it has actually exacerbated the problems it sought to alleviate. They claim that these policies discriminate against minority students, undermine teachers, reduce opportunities for students to engage in creative and complex learning assignments, and deny high school diplomas because of students' failure to pass subjects they were never taught. They argue that using tests to raise academic standards makes as much sense as relying upon thermometers to reduce fevers. Most compellingly, they maintain that these tests are directing sanctions against the victims, rather than the perpetrators, of educational inequities. (Orfield & Wald, 2000, p. 38)

“Sad to say, but we don’t have time to listen to what kids want to learn about. I have too much to cover. Don’t tell me about having kids make vision statements. Tell me about how I can keep my test scores high and not get into trouble.”

Sadly, change and reform have become synonymous with methods to raise test scores. Children are not test scores.

Schools should be institutions dedicated to improve the lives of children. As a part of this charge, the individuals who are charged with achieving this mission must engage students and through this act of engagement uncover and discover the type and extent of real world experience the child brings to school.

Unfortunately, academic institutions disregard the importance of the child’s lifeworld. According to Freire (1998), the significance of understanding the environment of the student and the development of a healthy respect for the community of which the child is a part cannot be underestimated.

It’s impossible to talk of respect for students, for the dignity that is in the process of coming to be, for the identities that are in the process of construction, without taking into consideration the conditions in which they are living and the importance of the knowledge derived from life experience, which they bring with them to school. I can in no way underestimate such knowledge. Or what is worse, ridicule it. (Freire, 1998, p. 62)

“We are personally invested in the lives of the students. You can’t but help it when you hear some of their stories. That they make it to school nearly everyday is a miracle. They have encountered more in their short lives than I have in mine. You can’t help but respect their courage.”

In order to continuously raise test scores, teachers, administrators, and students are placed under enormous pressure. The mandates from governmental entities distanced from the local education institution force classroom teacher and school administrators into creating an environment which is distinctly undemocratic. Practices which are authoritarian in nature begin to become the norm. Dictates are seen as necessary in order to ensure that the institution will become aligned with governmental codes.

The authoritarian nature of schools reduces the institutions' ability to promote the democratic ideal.

Authoritarian practices, promoted and encouraged by many institutitons, undermine democratic education in the classroom. By undermining education as the practice of freedom, authoritarianism dehumanizes and thus shuts down the magic. (hooks, 2003, p. 43)

While authoritarian practices do not promote engagement in the democratic process, students do become exceedingly capable of following orders. This prepares the students for the world of work that awaits many of them.

The idea of involving students not only in minor decisions in the classroom (what should we do at recess, who should be our hall monitor) but also in decisions that influence curriculum and assessment is difficult for most teachers to swallow. Most of us were educated in a school and in classrooms that could be best characterized as authoritarian so to instruct in any other manner runs contrary to our mental picture of what it means to be a teacher.

The futility of undemocratic authority is that the teacher silences students and talks to himself or herself, or the teacher repeats what students already know

because they play dumb, or the teacher gets vacant mimicking of her or his words on examinations of papers written by students just getting by. Teachers and students are capable of far more than this. (Shor, 1992, p. 168)

The constant demand to raise standardized achievement scores has a multitude of effects on the classroom environment. Nel Noddings (1992) states:

The current emphasis on achievement may actually contribute to students' feelings that adults do not care for them. Everywhere we hear that our nation's future depends on a scientifically educated populace, that our children must work harder and do better if 'we' are to retain our competitive edge, that American should not settle for anything lower than first place. (xii)

Students, through the disassociation of the curriculum from their lives and the emphasis on standardized tests, learn that education is not about the growth of the individual child but is focused on providing a trained workforce.

Ms. Tyler, a white, female in her fifties, is the newly named principal of Islands Elementary School. During the previous year, she served as interim principal of the school but possessed limited decision-making power. All major decisions affecting the future of the institution, including the decision to implement the Accelerated Schools Project at Islands, were made by Ms. Kobler, the principal of a nearby elementary school. Due to community pressures, the county school board named Ms. Kobler as the executive principal. In this role, she would serve as the chief executive officer of both her current school and Seaside. Ms. Kobler, a white, female in her early forties, is a veteran principal who made the choice five years ago to adopt the Accelerated Schools Project at her current school. Tyler was named the permanent principal of

Shore at the end of the 2004-2005 school year. This marked her first time serving as a school's lead principal.

During the initial school meeting regarding the Accelerated Schools process, Ms. Tyler remains relatively silent. Three teachers from the school who have attended a brief conference concerning the process of become an Accelerated School have been called upon to make a presentation to the remaining school staff. The teachers state that the Accelerated Schools process has been proven to raise test scores and involves creating a schoolwide vision statement. When questions are raised, the presenters are unable to provide no further details. After the fifteen-minute presentation, Ms. Tyler calls for a vote of the school faculty on the matter of joining the Accelerated School Project. Ms Tyler states that the vote needs to be held immediately if funds are to be secured from the school board. Ms. Tyler adds that the vote should be unanimous and that the entire staff needs to be involved for the improvement plan to work. The vote is held in the open and is unanimous.

The Accelerated Schools Project emphasizes the need for the majority of the institution's stakeholders to be both knowledgeable about and committed to the institution's restructuring effort. The members of the Seaside team who were dispatched to research the tenants of the program were not able to convey significant information to the school's staff.

"Another program. Another binder filled with information that I will never use. Just what I need. Every year appears to bring a new program to improve school performance."

In the pressure charged environment of a school system identified as Needs Improvement, school reform efforts are prevented from being successful. Prodded by the state to make instantaneous change which is fundamentally impossible, schools are prevented from reaching the “click point- the point where the model or reform is fully internalized and becomes a part of how the school does business” (Schwartzbeck, 2002, p. 2).

Savannah’s school system appears incapable of allowing for the time necessary for the click point to be reached. Constant change appears to be the only constant. Why is this so? Almost all stakeholders appear to agree on one thing- Savannah-Chatham County Schools are in need of improvement. Students are not receiving a world-class education.

Savannah-Chatham County Schools have been in a constant state of flux over the last fifty years. During that time period, sixteen individuals have occupied the office of superintendent, including six that have been either fired or forced to resign under pressure, and the system has been the subject an investigation be an accrediting agency.

In September of 2004, the Savannah-Chatham County Board of Education became the subject of a Southern Association of Colleges and Schools investigation. The investigation, prompted by a letter from the parent of children attending Savannah schools, centered on allegations that board members had overstepped their bounds as stated in SACS’ policies.

On November 10, 2004, the school system ended its rocky three-year relationship with Colonel John O’Sullivan. O’Sullivan, appointed superintendent in 2001 by a

board vote which followed racial lines, negotiated his resignation a mere 12-months after signing a 32-month contract extension. The board agreed to pay its former superintendent \$350,000 to end his term as superintendent.

In November of 2004, SACS placed the Savannah-Chatham County School District on probation for violations of policies pertaining to school operations. SACS found evidence that school board members were meddling in the day-to-day affairs of school management. According to SACS policy, a school board “recognizes and preserves the executive, administrative, and leadership prerogatives of the administrative head of the school system; and permits the administrative team of the school system to implement policies and procedures without interference” (The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools). A SACS Special Review Team found that Savannah-Chatham County board members violated these SAC’s standards by circumventing the chain of command and directing school personnel to implement programs, seeking special considerations for children of friends and acquaintances, becoming involved in the placement of students, interfering with graduation procedures, and intervening in the employment process.

The placement of the entire school system on probation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools created an intense public uproar. Recall petitions were filed against four school board members including Hugh Golson, President of the Savannah-Chatham County School Board. While the petitions failed to force recall elections due to insufficient grounds or a lack of qualified signatures, the upheaval caused by the events focused the attention of many on the need to

reorganize the workings of the school board and not on the restructuring of failed schools.

On June 10, 2005, the school system's probationary status was removed but remained under a SAC's warning.

Despite the slow start, the administrative team of Islands appears to be willing to adopt the tenants of the Accelerated Schools in regards to shared decision-making.

"They are willing to listen."

"They want to make this the best place possible for students and teachers. To do that, they know that they have to discuss the real issues that face the school."

In a school that has fully adopted the Accelerated Schools philosophy, the principal is no longer considered the focal point of decision-making.

In an Accelerated School, the principal's role changes from manager to facilitator. You assume a role of helping as opposed to directing. Your role changes from managing people to helping develop people. As an AS PLUS principal one of the main goals is to build leadership as opposed to managing and to empower teachers, students, parents and the community. ("Quick Tips," 2005, p. 6)

The principal of an Accelerated School is charged with creating an atmosphere where the questioning of the status quo is not only tolerated but also encouraged. In order to feel free to engage in productive dialogue, students, teachers, and particularly teachers must not fear reprisals from the school and district administration.

Building capacity and providing opportunity for individual change is critical.

Any transformation has to begin on a personal level. Each principal provided

teachers with opportunities to discuss ideas, to explore possibilities, to stretch beyond where they currently were in their thinking. The kind of psychological safety that encourages risk-taking and testing out of approaches and ideas is present in schools where teachers are not fearful. (Swanson, 1997, p. 27)

During my time as a teacher, I have encountered few administrators prepared to engage in true change.

The teachers of Islands are willing to engage in debate about the key issues facing the institution. The administration has fostered an environment in which questions can be asked and dialogue can take place.

Yet, in the end, the entire faculty appears unified behind

The act of leadership is to apply a touch of optimism, to hold high expectations of performance. Such an act may indeed make us vulnerable to betrayal and failure. But it also opens us to the possibility of greater human achievement, to the satisfaction that comes in helping human potential unfold, and to the pleasures that come when we call into action the noblest parts of the human spirit. (Bogue, 1985, p. 29)

An educated populace acts as a curb on the powers of elected officials. Able to understand the mechanics of government, current affairs, and possessing the cognitive abilities to predict the ramifications of decisions made today on the course of future events, an informed citizenry will not sit idly by while dictates are handed down by a select few.

While most students are required to complete a civics course before graduation from high school, these classes typically only instruct the pupils on governmental

structures and procedures. While an understanding of these topics is of importance, they provide little knowledge about avenues of active engagement for the citizen in our democracy.

Democracy has not seriously been undertaken as a curriculum project in this society. The democratic aim of public schooling has been tucked safely away in the rationale and mission statements of school-district curriculum guidelines. Beyond the establishment of free public schooling, surprisingly little has been done to educate children for democracy. (Parker, 1996, p. 11)

The Accelerated Schools Project aims to increase students' interest and abilities to participate in our democracy.

Engagement in the democratic process in America is at an abysmal level when compared to our fellow democracies. In recent national political campaigns, only sixty-five percent of eligible voters even bother to cast a ballot. This number is significantly lower than the democracies of Europe where typically over eighty percent of eligible voters will take part in his or her civic duty. In recent years, we have seen assaults on our personal liberties go unchallenged by the public while citizens in France and Germany are willing to take to the streets in protest over minor changes to laws regarding immigration and unemployment. While the violence that accompanies many of these displays is certainly unfortunate and regrettable, they are marks of a citizenry engaged in the process of democracy.

While placed on the back burner of the Accelerated Schools agenda during the implementation process at Islands, I was attracted to the democratic nature of the

program. The decisions that would guide the future of the school were not to be left in the hands of a few individuals with their own designs.

“All education is a political act.” Whether overt or covert, intentional or unintentional, the educational process is political in nature.

Education as a specifically human action has a ‘directive’ vocation, that is, it addresses itself to dream, ideals, utopias, objectives, to what I have been calling the ‘political’ nature of education. In other words, the quality of being political is inherent in its essence. In fact, neutrality in education is impossible. (Freire, 1998, p. 100)

Through the use of pedagogical practices, students can be informed regarding positions and rules of society.

The students who pass through these institutions that regularly ignore their scope of experiences and the opinions formed during these interactions with the lifeworld are chided as being unconcerned with others.

What struck us was not only what these young people said but also what they did not say. They showed little interest in people outside their immediate circle of friends and relatives: little awareness of current events; and virtually no expression of social concerns, political opinion, civic duty, patriotic emotion, a sense of citizenship in any form. (Albert Shanker Institute, 2003)

In Teaching: Making Sense of an Uncertain Craft, Joseph McDonald (1992)

wrote:

In this vision of a teaching life, the teacher believes resolutely in the transformative power of a community of learners; she takes her stance among

the uncertainties of the daily work with her eyes turned to a vision of the world as her students might re-create it someday. It is not enough to strive for students' individual improvement or for some sense of one's technical competence. One must teach for a democratic future. (p. 8)

I am sitting in the back of a fourth grade classroom. The majority of the students in the class are African Americans. The teacher, new to the field, begins the class with the following questions: "What do you want from our school? What do you want this place to be like?" The teacher's questions temporarily confuse the children in the classroom. All is quiet for several minutes.

Hesitantly, a young, black girl raises her hand. Her voice quivers. "I want to have more time to talk to my friends." Several heads begin to nod as the words are spoken. With the silence broken, students' hands begin to shoot into the air. The teacher rapidly points to a student and an answer rings out.

"I want more time outside."

"More science experiments."

"Better food."

"Be treated fairly."

"Respect."

Quickly, the noise level begins to rise as students begin to argue over the importance of various ideas. The teacher quiets the class and explains the process that they are engaging in.

"What we are doing today is trying to write a vision statement for our classroom. A vision statement is a reminder to everyone of the type of classroom we want to

create. It will be something we can look at everyday to guide us in the right direction. This is the first step towards doing that. We need to come to an agreement about how we want our classroom to be.”

The young, black girl who spoke first during this process raises her hand. The teacher calls upon her to speak.

“So, its like we are writing a constitution for our class?”

The teacher nods her head and smiles. “Yeah, I guess it is like that.”

I am floored by the connection the young girl has made.

By the end of the week, the scene has been replicated in each of the classrooms at Islands. Each classroom has negotiated a classroom vision statement. Outside of each classroom, a laminated sign hangs detailing the class’s vision statement.

We do not give children the credit they deserve. We do not believe them capable of making informed decisions, but this small classroom activity shows otherwise. While it may appear simple on the surface, the implications are potentially far reaching.

The skills displayed during the short interaction are those necessary to participate fully in a democratic nation. According to Amy Gutman (1987), the development of such skills should be the highest aim of the American educational system.

Deliberative decision making and accountability presuppose a citizenry whose education prepares them to deliberate, and to evaluate the results of deliberations of their representatives. A primary aim of publicly mandated schooling is therefore to cultivate the skills and virtues of deliberation. (p. 87)

Engaging students in dialogue regarding topics of interests prepares them for becoming engaged citizens capable of thoughtful decision-making.

The importance of allowing students to participate in the democratic process cannot be overstated. While it has become a cliché, today's students are tomorrow's leaders. They will be called upon to make decisions that will have a profound impact not only on our nation but also on the shape of the world for decades to come. As Lisa Delpit (1998) eloquently wrote:

I believe that teaching the skills and perspectives needed for real participation in a democratic society is one of the most revolutionary tasks that an educator committed to social justice can undertake. It is only through such education that we can hope to create a truly just society where the most disenfranchised of our citizens can gain access to the political power needed to change the world. (p. 51)

“It is very difficult to change our modes of teaching and allow students to make decisions. I was trained to be the decision maker of the classroom. Now, I am being asked to give away that control. But, when I think about these students and their future and what they must be able to do, I understand. We must give them these opportunities if they are to make political decisions in this very difficult world of ours. We need to prepare them to decide what is truthful and what is not and how to use that information to make choices. It may be difficult to run a classroom that way, but its difficult to run a country that way to.”

If students deal with significant issues, the classroom as government will not reach consensus on anything of importance, but it will develop citizens who can propose law, policy, and practice and defend those proposals with logic and evidence in open debate. (Knight & Pearl, 2000, p. 203)

“It’s about learning how to make choices. Sometimes, the choices are tough.”

The politics that result from our democratic deliberations will not always be the right ones, but they will be more enlightened- by the values and concerns of the many communities that constitute a democracy- than those that would be made by unaccountable educational experts. (Gutman, 1987, p. 185)

The core tenant of the Accelerated Schools Project calls for every student to be considered gifted and talented. Techniques normally reserved only for the top 5% of students (as measured by a norm- referenced test) are used in every classroom with every student.

Since the times of Plato, it has been argued that intellectually gifted individuals should be identified and trained to become the future leaders of the community. In modern America, gifted and talented programs have been advanced as the method to retain our nation’s technological and military superiority. Being labeled gifted or talented increases the students’ access to vast array of resources (technology, specialized teachers, decreased class size) that are denied or available only in limited quantities to the so-called average student.

In 1988, the Congress passed the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Education Act..

In effect, the Javits’ bill provides significant funding targeted at elevating the quality of education received by a select few students. Students placed in gifted programs are more likely to receive instruction in significantly smaller classes by teachers trained to raise the higher order thinking skills of pupils.

The vast majority of students identified as gifted are the product of white, middle or upper class households. The provision of supplemental educational services to children who are already at a distinct advantage educationally has been questioned.

In order to have education for the gifted, we must have education for the non-gifted. Students placed in lower educational tracks are assumed to be incapable of benefiting from instruction that allows for free thinking and the deeper exploration of topics of interest.

Traditional schooling forms, so clearly symbolized by the practice of tracking, are deeply rooted in assumptions about student differences and the meritocratic nature of schooling. Political and economic trends generate changes in rhetoric without addressing these assumptions or affecting the essential nature of schools as social institutions. (Oakes, 1998, p. 129)

Before the change to the Accelerated Schools program, Islands clearly tracked students. Each grade level had one class identified as accelerated. Every individual in the building understood which classroom held the students that would be taught at an accelerated pace. In other words, it was the “smart” class. What is the impact of being in the “dumb” class on students?

The NAACP Legal and Educational Defense Fund, The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, and The Center for the Study of Race and Law at the University of Virginia (2005) found:

One of the most significant barriers to classroom integration and sources of racial inequity is the practice known as tracking. Black and Latino students are disproportionately found in lower tracks, in which typically there are less

challenging curricula, lower teacher expectations, and lower student achievement. (p. 9)

“No, we don’t track students.” Every school that I have ever worked at has categorically denied tracking students. A closer look below the surface of this denial shows that tracking is alive and well.

Tracking has a profound impact on the students identified as inferior and placed in classrooms designed to serve lower ability students. Specifically, the placement in lower ability classes has been associated with the development a negative self-concept and the reduction of the quantity and quality of interactions between students of differing races.

In the past, the gifted classrooms have increased the segregation of white and black students at Islands. White students have been concentrated in the classes deemed to be accelerated while African American students have been placed in classes identified as average or at-risk.

Many low-income and minority students determine that they do not fit into either the school environment or mainstream society. Students who find themselves in remedial tracks or low-ability groups and students who attend schools that fail to educate large numbers of students feel that they are not really a part of the school and are unlikely to be accepted within the economic mainstream. (Finnan & Swanson, 2000, p. 84)

When proclaimed to have limited academic skills, students begin to withdraw from participation in the educational process. This limited engagement in academics can have devastating consequences on the future of a child.

As a teacher at Islands, I worked with students whose scores on the CRCT did not meet the standards established by the state. In order to overcome these academic deficiencies, the students were pulled from the regular classroom setting to take part in an early intervention program targeted at raising the students' scores to an acceptable level.

Why do such classes exist when the majority of current research associates the tracking of students with a plethora of negative effects? The clear and resounding answer is the fear of being declared by the state as being a school that "needs improvement." When did the desire to seek "improvement" make it acceptable to implement programs that have been identified as potential harmful to the long-term success of students?

At a significant cost to the school system, the entire faculty of Islands Elementary School has received training in the teaching of the gifted and talented. The training focused on providing differentiated instruction that suited the individual learning characteristics of each child. The purpose of the training is to ensure that every teacher is able to utilize these methods with all children and not just those identified as gifted and placed in a specialized class.

Gifted education methods are targeted at allowing students time for in-depth exploration of topics, the identification and nurturing of areas of interest, and fostering the development of higher-order thinking skills.

"While I always think that I believed that every child was gifted in some way, it was never in the forefront of my thinking when I was teaching. The Accelerated

Schools tell us that we should always be looking for the giftedness in every child. Sometimes it's hard to find but it is there."

"Every child benefits for high expectations. Once we set the bar high, the students will try to achieve it. Unfortunately, teachers often set the bar way to low and the students only work to clear it."

When students aren't tied to their desks but instead read, write, and inquire together, solve problems and experience life in meaningful, intellectual ways, then the atmosphere supports learning and the humanity of the educational endeavor. When a staff cares about all kids equally, and each individual uniquely, then all students are included with their special gifts to participate in each school activity. (Poetter, 1999, p. 29)

The drill-and-practice of low-level skills only prepares students to participate in limited ways in our society. Students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds will have limited opportunities to be challenged intellectually outside of the school setting. Without significant opportunities to practice higher-order thinking skills, these students will face limited occupational choices and will not possess the competencies necessary actively participate in the governance process.

Since the implementation of the Accelerated Schools program at Islands, teachers have been challenged to look beyond lessons which only prepare students to complete low-level tasks.

"They can't do that." It is the preconception that must constantly be avoided when preparing lessons that challenge students.

Fear and resistance are common reactions to change.

It is scary and unnerving to try to change your teaching, your curriculum, your assessment, your role and responsibilities, your students' assumptions and habits of mind, as well as the parents'. It must be equally frightening for students to define and identify their own problems in mathematics, or history, or biology. It is frightening to try to do that in front of other people- as teachers working collaboratively or as students talking openly. (Wilson, Miller, and Yerkes, 1993, p. 122)

To the majority of the teaching staff, the abandonment of or reduced dependence on traditional teaching methods means leaving one's area of familiarity. As accomplished students ourselves, we are comfortable with the banking method of education. Venturing away from the teacher as the center of the classroom causes distress.

“Am I doing my job?” The question is common among teachers attempt to institute a student-centered classroom. We have been taught that effective instruction involves the creation of carefully crafted lessons designed to transfer content knowledge from the expert to the novice. When entering the classroom, school administrators focus on the acts of the teacher.

Conditioned by years of schooling, students believe themselves incapable of making decisions regarding curriculum. This belief is particularly strong among students who have spent significant time in lower track classrooms. The teacher is seen as master of the classroom. Students are to receive information and record it for later use on meaningless tests.

Although most educators and parents agree that the ability to analyze and form opinions on issues is an important part of students' educations, the specifics of curriculum and pedagogy that aim to accomplish this goal are far more controversial. (Westheimer & Kahne, 1998, p. 14)

I find it difficult to believe that the resistance to change will not be overwhelming. As teachers, we have been battered by the next great proposal that will be the answer to all of our students' problems and eventually the end of all of society's ills.

Amazingly, the faculty of Islands dives right into the work of becoming an Accelerated School. While new programs are as frequent and contrary as changes in wind direction, the teachers are willing to engage in the difficult task of transforming the nature of the institution.

"I know that change is tough, but if it will help the children, I will try it. But, what if we fail? What will they try then?"

Change not only increases workloads but also fear. What is the nature of this new adventure we are imparting on? How will my life be changed? It is difficult to answer these questions when the journey has barely begun.

"It's all about the kids. It's all about the kids. It's all about the kids."

This becomes the manta repeated numerous times when questions are raised regarding the implementation of the Accelerated Schools Project at Islands.

CHAPTER 5

THE STORY GOES ON

In this chapter, I will summarize the findings that emerged during my research, provide recommendations which will remove barriers to school renewal, and discuss plans for further research. In Chapter 1, four questions were proposed to guide this study: (1) Is the implementation of the Accelerated Schools Project at Islands a true attempt at reform or an attempt to deflect criticism? (2) Is the creation of a democratic school possible in the current environment or will societal and institutional factors prevent it from occurring? (3) Will the implementation of the Accelerated Schools model increase the democratic nature of the school? (4) Will teachers and administrators be able to relinquish their authoritarian control of the institution?

Question 1: Is the implementation of the Accelerated Schools Project at Islands a true attempt at renewal or an attempt to deflect criticism?

While I believe that all individuals involved in the decision to implement the Accelerated Schools Project at Islands are firmly committed to increasing the educational opportunities of the students who enter the doorways of the school, the genesis of the concept appears to be rooted in the criticism received by the school board regarding the existence of two institutions charged with similar purposes but serving distinctly different populations.

Merger proposals first began to swirl as allegations were lodged against the school board citing the Islands-Marshpoint dichotomy as an example of the continued racist manipulation of the public schools. Tortured by a past marked with hostile race

relations, the school board felt the need to attempt to rectify a perceived wrong. Talks of a merger quickly were doused by the political might of Marshpoint parents.

“We must do something.” This sentiment arose among many in positions of authority. Maintaining the status quo was not deemed to be politically acceptable. Pressures external to the institution forced the implementation of the Accelerated Schools Program in an attempt to deflect criticism regarding the racial imbalance between Islands and Marshpoint (**Thesis Finding 1**).

At the end of 2004, the faculty of Islands Elementary School voted unanimously to adopt the Accelerated Schools Project. This vote followed a bitter and contentious debate regarding the future of Islands. Due to political pressures, as well as financial timetables, the school community was not afforded the opportunity to review the Accelerated Schools Project in its entirety before the vote to adopt.

The vote failed to follow the procedures proscribed by National Center for Accelerated Schools. The National Center recommends a protracted buy-in phase before such a vote takes place. During the buy-in phase, members of the school community, including students, are given the opportunity to become familiar with the tenets of the Accelerated Schools Project and determine if the renewal effort is appropriate for the institution. As a renewal effort, this step is deemed to be of critical importance to future implementation of the program.

The Accelerated Schools Project is formulated to be a process of renewal and not reform. According to Goodlad (1994),

‘Renewal’ is not the same thing as ‘reform’ or ‘restructuring’. The latter terms connote replacement and intervention. Renewal connotes evolution to

healthier levels of functioning. Reform and restructuring suggest acting on a displeasing or somehow inadequate object. Renewal suggests that object and subject are one; an entity renews for its own sake, not at the behest of others.

(p. 634)

Renewal is an internal process that seeks to evolve the institution into a form suitable to stakeholders. Renewal is not a formula proscribed by outside entities. The hasty implementation of the process precluded it from beginning as a renewal effort. I do not believe that this necessarily prohibits the Accelerated Schools Project from ever developing into an internal growth process aimed at evolving the school but the disregard for the buy-in stage will make this more difficult. If the teachers of Islands see this as one more program initiated by board office personnel, the Accelerated Schools Project at Islands will become merely that- an external program given little attention and effort.

Question 2: Will the implementation of the Accelerated Schools model increase the democratic nature of the school?

The importance of educating citizens in order to keep this experiment in democracy that we call America alive has not been overlooked. In 1820, near the end of his life, Thomas Jefferson wrote:

I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education. This is the true corrective of abuses of constitutional power.

At this early stage in the development of the nation, Jefferson recognized that democracy is not inherent in the human race but must be cultivated through the judicious use of education. Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad (2004) reiterate Jefferson's comment in more modern terms:

Human beings are not born with an innate understanding of or appreciation for democracy, nor are we born with the skills and dispositions to participate effectively in a democratic way of life. If we want to live in a democratic society, then we must prepare ourselves to do so. In a large, diverse, and complex society like ours, such preparation is and must be the primary purpose of public schooling. (p. 12)

Since the era of Jefferson, the need for education in the pursuit of democracy has only increased. As our nation and the world have grown in complexity and connectedness, the ramifications of the decisions made in the governance of this democracy have increased in magnitude. It is one of the primary goals of our educational institutions to prepare students to become active citizens and add their voices to the dialogue that will attempt to ensure that our nation's government makes sound decisions regarding our future course.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of students do not receive an education befitting the needs of a democracy but rather are trained to take part in the American economic machine. Our educational system is used for a breeding ground to develop individuals capable of maintaining America's economic and military superiority. While the increased funding and training opportunities in mathematics, engineering, and the sciences have provided innumerable benefits to our nation and the entire world, can

the preparation of our future citizens to be active participants in the democratic process be deemed of any less import? According to Levin and the Accelerated Schools Project, creating engaged citizens is as important for the future of our nation as the development of the next wave of physicists, chemists, and engineers.

At this early stage of the implementation process, formulating projections for the future course of Islands' journey is extremely difficult but encouraging signs can be found (**Thesis Finding 2**). Dialogue is an initial step in the renewal process. The Accelerated Schools Project has increased dialogue among the staff regarding the future and proper path of development of the institution.

Instructional practices and a curriculum more appropriate for a democratic society are beginning to be implemented but barriers to full implementation exist. Classrooms where students are allowed to negotiate the curriculum and investigate topics in depth aid in the development of the skills necessary to be thoughtful citizens. At Islands, instructional practices are beginning to be modified to allow students opportunities to engage in the exploration of topics in more than just a cursory fashion. Other changes, such as an increase in the use of dialogue and the use of a student driven curriculum, may develop given time.

The development a school devoted to vision and principles of the Accelerated Schools Project is not a feat that can be accomplished during the course of one academic year. The teachers, students, and administrators must be allowed the time for full implementation to occur.

Question 3: Is the creation of a democratic school possible in the current environment or will societal and institutional factors prevent it from occurring?

The Accelerated Schools Project purports to prepare students to participate in the governance process of the nation by providing the skills and cultivating the attitudes necessary to create engaged and effective citizens. At Islands, the democratic principles of the Accelerated Schools Project have not been fully implemented.

In *Revolutionizing America's Schools*, Glickman (1998) posed the following questions:

Since research indicates that students learn better in modernized and democratic environments (even on traditional standardized measures of achievement) and since most people know that such change is a necessity to equip students well for the future, why has there been such reluctance to change on the part of many educators as well as parents and community members?

The question correctly recognizes the power of a democratic learning environment to prepare students for the future but wrongly places blame for the failure of such institutions developing on educators, parents, and community members. The primary barriers to the implementation of a modernized and democratic environment in schools are external to the institution. National and state mandates function as barriers to implementation of the democratic components of the Accelerated Schools Project **(Thesis Finding 3)**.

With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the bands of control on the local school were tightened. In the executive summary cataloging the agenda of the act, President Bush stated, "The federal government must be wise enough to give states and school districts more authority and freedom. And it must be strong enough

to require proven performance in return” (No Child Left Behind, 2001, p.1). President Bush has followed through on his pledge to hold schools accountable by requiring standardized testing programs to be implemented in all states, but local school districts have not seen a corresponding increase in freedom. In fact, the need to consistently increase test scores to meet the demands of No Child Left Behind reduces the freedom of educational institutions to implement schoolwide renewal efforts which attempt to address issues beyond the basic abilities to read and perform mathematical calculations.

In its mandated punishments for schools where students score low, NCLB seems to assume that educators can just shove America’s deep social problems- poverty, racism, drugs, crime, and the rest- right out the classroom door. Students must pass the same tests regardless of whether they lead lives of privilege or despair. But educators know the outside world is always in their classrooms, sitting with each student. (Jehlen, 2006, p. 27)

No Child Left Behind acts as one part of a larger mystification of the American public. According to Shor (1980), “Mystifications offer uncritical minds false ways to put it all together, to see an illusory whole, to integrate the confusing pieces into fraudulent truth or unity” (p. 66). This corrective action on the public education system in the United States attempts to detract from larger social issues. No Child Left Behind reiterates the American cultural mantra that education leads to economic success and power in our society.

The failure of the American educational system to lift a vast proportion of the minority population out of poverty has led to a new round of questioning regarding

this societal ill. To confuse, confound, and mislead the American public, teachers and local educational institutions were identified as the root cause of this failure.

In order to correct the supposed tragic failure that is our educational system, politicians have subverted the power of local school board, individual teachers, students, and parents. The needs of the stakeholders of the institution have been replaced with demands of political and economic powers.

In addition to the barriers to school renewal caused by No Child Left Behind and the state mandates created to enforce the law, localized factors can distort the school renewal process. In the case of Islands, racial factors acted to distort the renewal process (**Thesis Finding 4**). Race plays a fundamental role in the educational agenda of the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System. The school system cannot be separated from the political, cultural, and historical complex of which it is a part.

The need to fix Islands Elementary by merging the institution with its majority white counterpart amounts to educational racism (Glickman, 1998). The demand that Islands should begin to mirror its majority white, middle class neighbor in order to achieve success denies the inherent differences of the school's constituents.

To engage in a serious discussion of race in America, we must begin not with the problems of black people but with the flaws of American society- flaws rooted in historic inequalities and longstanding cultural stereotypes. How we set up the terms for discussing racial issues shapes our perceptions and response to these issues. As long as black people are viewed as a 'them,' the burden falls on blacks to do all the 'cultural' and 'moral' work necessary for healthy race relations. (West, 1993, p. 6)

The outside pressure to recreate Islands in the image of its neighbor acts to block renewal.

While these factors cannot be said to preclude a democratic school from developing, they certainly limit opportunities.

Will the teachers and administrators be able to relinquish their authoritarian control of the institution?

Necessity dictates the current top-down structure of both classrooms and schools. The current demands for ever increasing standardized test scores forces teachers and administrators to maintain authoritarian command. Sergiovanni (2000) states:

This commitment to standardization places community building at risk and compromises the discretion that parents, teachers, students, and local communities need to decide for themselves what their goals and purposes should be, what values they should pursue, and what it is they want their schools to accomplish. (p. 81)

In today's environment, the majority of professional educators, both teachers and administrators, find authoritarian control of classrooms and the entire institution necessary to produce results on standardized tests. Due to constant threats to their careers, school principals feel the need to regulate as many phases of classroom instruction as possible. In turn, the classroom teacher, fearing reprimands and termination, enacts administration dictates and removes all possibilities for the development of a democratic environment.

In the educational system, teachers and students are divided at the bottom of the ladder. They are alienated from each other by a hierarchy and a curriculum

that establish the teacher's authority at the expense of the students. But, empowerment requires their cooperation. They each know things the other must know. (Shor, 1992, p. 201)

The teachers of Islands, through the benefit of solid leadership and partial implementation of the Accelerated Schools Project's powerful learning concepts, are beginning to move away from the authoritarian model of classroom management and towards fostering a more democratic environment (**Thesis Finding 6**). Students are being allowed limited opportunities to negotiate the curriculum and perform in-depth explorations of topics. Through increased dialogue, teachers are beginning to constructively discuss the future of the institution and are becoming an active part in school governance.

The administrative staff of Islands has been supportive of the adoption of the principles advocated by the Accelerated Schools Project. Without administrative support, the movement towards a more democratic school would be crushed. Continued encouragement by school administration, while it will not ensure the development of a more democratic environment, is needed for the movement to flourish at Island.

A school where every child is gifted and talented. A school where every student, parent, teacher, administrator, and community member is a valuable voice in the guidance of the institution. A school where dialogues are commonplace and dictates are kept to a minimum.

Renewal takes place on a microcosmic level- the individual school. Houston (1995) finds that:

Until America is willing to consider the context within which schools exist as a part of the problem, our efforts at reform will fall short. Creating 'standards,' 'benchmarks', or 'outcomes' are useful. We need to know where we are going. Moving towards more authentic assessment makes sense. But before trying to go somewhere else, we need to better understand where we are now. (p. 170)

In order for renewal efforts to be valid, localized factors must be considered. Efforts which provide strict guidelines cannot be considered plans for school renewal but merely attempts at reform. Considering local matters often leads one to explore

This new form of organization would attach much less importance to standardization, central bureaucratic control, and externally imposed rules as means of controlling the performance of schools, and more importance to school inquiry and problem solving, school autonomy, professional norms, and client choice. (Elmore, 1990, p. 290)

No Child Left Behind stifles movement towards these new forms of organization. The rigorous demands of the law place standardized test scores in a position of supremacy. School officials are forced to make choices based on the best interest of test scores and not in the best interest of children.

As racial isolation deepens and the inequalities of education finance remain unabated and take on new and more innovative forms, the principals of many inner-city schools are making choices that few principals in schools that serve suburban children ever need to contemplate. Unable to foresee a time when black and Hispanic students in large numbers will not go to segregated public

schools and seeing little likelihood that schools like these will ever have the infrastructure and resources of successful white suburban schools, many have been dedicating vast amounts of time and effort to create an architecture of adaptive strategies that promise incremental gains within the limits inequality allows. (Kozol, 2005, p. 266)

The story of educational renewal at Islands Elementary is far from its conclusion. In the year covered by this study, one could not hope for full implementation of all the principles advocated by the Accelerated School Project. In the future, I plan to follow the story of Islands and its implementation of the Accelerated Schools Project and chronicle its development. Will an environment conducive to the development of engaged citizens be advanced? Will all students be given the educational opportunities normally afforded only to the gifted and talented, and if so, what is the impact on standardized test scores? Will the barriers to full implementation of the project be overcome or removed? These are questions that only can be answer in time.

References

- Accelerated Schools Project. (2004, November). *What is an accelerated school?*
Presented at Islands Elementary faculty meeting, Savannah, GA.
- Albaili, M.A. (1997). Differences among low-, average-, and high-achieving college students on learning and study strategies. *Educational Psychology, 17*(1), 171-177.
- Albert Shanker Institute. (2005). *Education for democracy*. New York: Albert Shanker Institute.
- Allington, R.L. (2005). Ideology is still trumping evidence. *Phi Delta Kappan, 86*(6), 462-468.
- Aoki, T.T. (2005). Toward curriculum inquiry in a new key. In W.F. Pinar & R.L. Irwin(Eds.), *Curriculum in a new key: The collected works of Ted T. Aoki*, (pp. 89-110). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Apple, M.W. (2001). *Educating the "right" way: Markets, standards, God, and inequality*. New York: Routledge Farmer.
- Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. *Annual Review of Psychology, (8)*1, 1-5.
- Barber, B. (1991). *An aristocracy of everyone: The politics of education and the future of America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Beachum, F. & Dentith, A.M. (2004). Teacher leaders creating cultures of school renewal transformation. *The Educational Forum, 68*(3), 276-286.
- Benz, C.R., Newman, I., & Ridenour, C. (1998). *Qualitative-quantitative research methodology: Exploring the interactive continuum*. Chicago: Southern Illinois University Press.

- Boyd, T. (2004). *Accelerated Schools PLUS: Research base for selected services*. Retrieved September 2, 2005 from <http://web.uconn.edu/asp/>
- Brandt, R. (1992). On building learning communities: A conversation with Hank Levin. *Educational Leadership*, 72(6), 19-23.
- Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas. 347 U.S. 483 (1954).
- Bruner, J. (2004). *Acts of meaning: Four lectures on mind and culture*. Boston: Harvard University Press.
- Carnoy, M. & Levin, H.M. (1976). Introduction. In M. Carnoy & H.M. Levin (Eds.), *The limits of educational reform* (1-22). New York: Longman.
- Carnoy, M & Levin, H.M. (1985). *Schooling and work in the democratic state*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Coleman, J.S. (1966). *Equality of educational opportunity* (Report No. OE-3800). Washington, D.C.: National Center for Educational Statistics.
- Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program. (2005). *Program components*. Retrieved August 12, 2005 from <http://www.sedl.org/csr/program>
- Constitution of the United States of America. (1787). Retrieved November 12, 2005 from <http://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/constitution.html>
- Couture, B. (1998). *Toward a phenomenological rhetoric: Writing, profession, and altruism*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Cremin, L. (1964). *Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American education 1876-1957*. New York: Vintage.
- Creswell, J.W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. London: Sage Publications.

- Darling-Hammond, L. (1993). Reframing the School Reform Agenda; Developing Capacity for School Transformation. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 74(10), 752-755.
- Davidson, B.M. & Dell, G.L. (1995, April). *Building on strengths for educational change*. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association.
- Delpit, L. (1996). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. New York: New Press.
- Delpit, L. (1998). Teaching for social justice: Lisa Delpit. In W. Ayers, J.A. Hunt, & T. Quinn (Eds.), *Teaching for social justice* (p. 51). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Dewey, J. (1900). *The school and society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Dewey, J. (1902). *The child and the curriculum*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Dewey, J. (1909). *Moral principles in education*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education*. New York: Macmillan Company.
- Diamond, L. (1997). Cultivating democratic citizenship: Education for a new century of democracy in the Americas. *Social Studies*, 88(6), 244.
- Donald, D.C. & Devine, L. (2000). A dream differed. *Savannah News*. Retrieved November 10, 2005 from <http://www.savannahnow.com/features/reseg/RESEG>.
- Dye, J.F., Schatz, I.M., Rosenberg, B.A., & Coleman, S.T. (2000). Constant comparison method: A kaleidoscope of data. *The Qualitative Report*, 4(1).
Retrieve February 12,2005 from www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR4-1/dye.html

- Educational Policies Commission. (1950). *Education for all American youth*. Washington, D.C.: Author.
- Eisler, R. (2000). *Tomorrow's children: A blueprint for partnership education for the 21st century*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Elmore, R.F. (1990). *Restructuring schools: The next generation of educational reform*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Policy Research in Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED356519)
- Feagin, J.R., Orum, A.M., & Sjoberg, G. (1991). *A case for the case study*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Fetterman, D.M. (1997). *Ethnography: Step-by-step*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Finnan, C. & Levin, H.M. (1995, April). *Using school culture to bring vision to life*. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association.
- Finnan, C. & Swanson, J.D. (2000). *Accelerating the learning of all students: Cultivating culture change in schools, classrooms, and individuals*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Frankenberg, E. & Lee, C. (2002). *Race in American public schools: Rapidly resegregating school districts*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Frankenberg, E., Lee, C., & Orfield. (2003). *A multiracial society with segregated schools: Are we losing the dream?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Freire, P. (1973). *Education for critical consciousness*. New York: Continuum.

- Freire, P. (1998). *Teachers as cultural workers: Letters to those who dare teach*. Westview Press: Boulder, CO.
- Glesne, C. (1999). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. New York: Longman.
- Glickman, C.D. (1993). *Revolutionizing America's schools*. New York: Jossey-Bass.
- Glickman, C.D. (1998). *Renewing America's schools: A Guide for school-based action*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Glickman, C.D. (2006). Educational leadership: Failure to use our imagination. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 87(9), 689-690.
- Giroux, H.A. (1988). *Teachers as intellectuals: Toward a critical pedagogy of learning*. London: Bergin and Garvey.
- Giroux, H.A. & McLaren, P. (1992). Writing from the margins: Geographies of identity, pedagogy, and power. *Journal of Education*, 174(1), 7-30.
- Giroux, H.A. & Simon, R.I. (1988). Schooling, popular culture, and a pedagogy of possibility. *Journal of Education*, 170(1), 9-26.
- Goldberg, M. F. (2001). A Concern with Disadvantaged Students: An Interview with Henry Levin. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 82(8), 632.
- Goodlad, J.I. (1994). The national network for educational renewal. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 75(8), 632-637.
- Goodlad, J.I., Mantle-Bromley, C., & Goodlad, S.J. (2004). *Education for everyone: Agenda for education in a democracy*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- The Governor's Office of Student Achievement. (2003). *Profile of Islands Elementary*. Atlanta, GA: Office of Student Achievement.
- Greene, M. (1988). *The dialectic of freedom*. Columbia, N.Y.: Teacher's College Press.
- Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Gutman, A. (1987). *Democratic education*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York: Routledge.
- hooks, b. (2003). *Teaching community: A pedagogy of hope*. New York: Routledge.
- Hopfenberg, W.S., Levin, H.M., Meister, G., & Rogers, G. (1990). Accelerated schools. *Education Digest*, 50(4), 30-38.
- Hopfenberg, W.S. & Levin H.M.. (1991). Accelerated schools for at-risk students. *Education Digest*, 56(9), 47-50.
- Hopfenberg, W.S. & Levin, H.M. (1993). *The accelerated schools resource guide*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Houston, P.D. (1995). School reform through a wide-angle lens: The consideration of context. *Daedalus*, 124(4), 169-172.
- Ignatz, M., Bauman, G., & Byrd, N. (2003). A Longitudinal study of the Accelerated Schools Project in Northwest Florida, 1993-2001: A school-college partnership between schools in Gadsden and Leon Schools Districts and Florida A&M University. (ERIC No. 447482)

- Jay, M. (1973). *The dialectical imagination: A history of the Frankfurt school and the Institute of social research, 1923-1950*. Berkley, CA: The University of California Press.
- Jehlen, A. (2006, May). Moving beyond NCLB. *NEA Today*, p. 27.
- Jefferson, T. (1785). Notes on the state of Virginia. In G.C. Lee (Ed.), *Crusade against ignorance: Thomas Jefferson on education* (p. 97). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Kim, L. & Zitzer, M. (1999). Powerful learning framework for teachers. Los Angles: California State University. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED431069)
- King, Jr., M.L. (1991). The current crisis in race relations. In J.B Washington (Ed.) *The essential writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (pp. 85-90). San Francisco: Harper.
- Kleibard, H.M. (1995). *The struggle for the American curriculum 1893-1958*. New York: Routledge.
- Knight, T. & Pearl, A. (2000). Democratic education and critical pedagogy. *The Urban Review*, 32(3), 197-226.
- Kohl, H. (1983). Examining closely what we do. *Learning*, 12(1), 28-30.
- Kozol, J. (1991). *Savage inequalities*. New York: Perennial.
- Kozol, J. (2005). Confections of Apartheid: A stick-and-carrot pedagogy for the children of our inner-city poor. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 87(4), 265-275.

- Kurlaender, M. & Yun, J.T. (2002). *The impact of racial and ethnic diversity on educational outcomes: Cambridge, MA School District*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Legenveld, M. (2002). Reflection on phenomenology and pedagogy. *Phenomenology and Pedagogy*, 1(1), 5-10.
- Levin, H.M. (1974). *The limits of educational reform*. New York: Longman Publishing.
- Levin, H.M. (1976). Educational Reform: Its meaning? In M. Carnoy & H.M. Levin (Eds.), *The limits of educational reform* (pp. 23-51). New York: Longman.
- Levin, H.M. (1986). *Educational reform for the disadvantaged student: An emerging crisis*. New York: NEA Publishing.
- Levin, H.M. (1987). Accelerated schools for the disadvantaged. *Educational Leadership*, 44(6), 19-21.
- Levin, H.M. (1996). Accelerated Schools: The background. In C. Finnan, E.P. St. John, J. McCarthy, & S.P. Slovacek (Eds.), *Accelerated schools in action: Lessons from the field* (pp. 3-23). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Levin, H.M. (2001, May). *Learning from school reform*. Paper presented at the meeting International Conference on Rejuvenating Schools, Hong Kong.
- Levin, H.M & Chasin, G. (1995). Thomas Edison Accelerated Elementary School. In J. Oakes & K.H. Quartz (Eds.), *Creating new educational communities* (pp. 130-147). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lieberman, A. & Miller, L. (1999). *Teachers: Transforming their world and their work*. New York: Teachers College Press.

- Lieberman, A., Saxl, E.R., & Miles, M.B. (1988). Teacher leadership: Ideology and practice. In A. Lieberman (Ed.), *Building a professional culture in schools* (pp. 148-166). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Lieberman, A. & Miller, L. (2004). *Teacher leadership*. New York: Jossey-Bass.
- McDonald, J.P. (1992). *Teaching: Making sense of an uncertain craft*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Malpas, J.E. (1999). *Place and experience: A philosophical topography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation. (2001). *Evaluating the accelerated schools approach: A look at early implementation and impacts on student achievement in eight elementary schools*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Marshall, C & Rossman, G.B. (1998). *Designing qualitative research*. New York: SAGE Publications.
- Massey, A. & Walford, G. (Eds.). *Studies in educational ethnography*. Stamford, CN: JAI Press.
- McCarthy, J. & Riner, P. (1996). The Accelerated Schools inquiry process: Teacher empowerment through action research. *Education*, (117)2, 223-230.
- McLaren, P. (1995). *Critical pedagogy and predatory culture*. New York: Routledge.
- McLaren, P. (1998). *Life in schools; An introduction to critical pedagogy in the foundations of education*. Boston: Pearson Education.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1948). *The world of perception*. New York: Routledge.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *Phenomenology of perception*. New York: Routledge Classics.

- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968). *The visible and the invisible*. Chicago: Northwestern University Press.
- Morrison, T. (2000). *The bluest eye*. New York: Plume Books.
- The NAACP Legal and Educational Defense Fund, The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, & The Center for the Study of Race and Law at the University of Virginia. (2005). *Looking to the future: Voluntary K-12 school integration*. New York: Authors.
- National Center for Accelerated Schools. (2005). *History of the Accelerated Schools Project*. Retrieved March 5, 2005 from <http://www.acceleratedschools.net>
- No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. (2001). Pub. L. No. 107-110.
- Noddings, N. (1992). *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Noddings, N. (1999). Renewing democracy in schools. *Phi Delta Kappa*, 80(8), 579-585.
- Oakes, J. (1998). *Keeping track: How schools structure inequality*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Orfield, G. & Wald, J. (2000, June 5). Testing, testing. *The Nation*, 270(22), 38-40.
- Parker, F.W. (1894). *Talks on pedagogics*. New York: E.L. Kellogg.
- Parker, W.C. (1996). Introduction: Schools as laboratories of democracy. In W.C. Parker (Ed.), *Educating the democratic mind* (pp. 1-22). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Piaget, J. (1971). *The psychology of the child*. New York: Basic Books.

- Pinar, W.F. (1994). *Autobiography, politics, and sexuality: Essays in curriculum theory 1972-1992*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Pinar, W.F. (2004). *What is curriculum theory?* London: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Pinar, W.F., Reynolds, W.M., Slattery, P., & Taubman, P.M. (2002). *Understanding curriculum: An introduction to the study of historical and contemporary curriculum discourse*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537 (1896).
- Poetter, T.S. (1999). *Mapping school change in an accelerated school: The case of Miami East North Elementary School*. Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 436480)
- Potter, W.J. (1996). *An analysis of thinking and research about qualitative methods*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Quick tips. (2005, Spring). *Imagine: Accelerated Schools Plus Newsletter*, 14(2), p. 3-5.
- Ravitch, D. (2000). *Left back: A century of battles over school reform*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Savannah-Chatham County Board of Education. (2004). *Contingency use-Islands Elementary Accelerated Schools Plus Academy*. Retrieved January 1, 2005 from <http://www.boarddocs.com/ga/sccs/board.nsf/public>
- Schon, D.A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books.
- Schubert, W.H., Schubert, A.L.L., Thomas, T.P., & Carroll, W.M. (2002). *Curriculum books: The first hundred years* (2nd ed.). New York: Peter Lang.

- Schwartzbeck, T.D. (2002). *Patterns in implementing comprehensive school reform: What the researchers say*. Washington, D.C.: National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED470023)
- Semel, S.F. & Sadovnik, A.R. (1998). *Schools of tomorrow, schools of today: What happened to progressive education*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Sergiovanni, T.J. (2000). *The lifeworld of leadership: Creating culture, community, and personal meaning in schools*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Shor, I. (1980). *Critical teaching and everyday life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Shor, I. (1986). *Culture wars: School and society in the conservative restoration*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Shor, I & Freire, P. (1987). *A pedagogy for liberation*. London: Bergin & Garvey.
- Shor, I. (1992). *Empowering education: Critical teaching for social change*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Shor, I. (1996). *When students have power: Negotiating authority in a critical pedagogy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Shor, I. (1999). Forward. In I. Shor & C. Pari (Eds.) *Literacy in action: Writing words, changing worlds* (iii-ix). Boston: Boynton/Cook.
- Slavin, R.E. & Fashola, O.S. (1998). *Show me the evidence! Proven and promising programs for America's schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Smyth, J. (2000). Reclaiming social capital through critical teaching. *The Elementary School Journal*, 100(5), 491-510.

- Spring, J. (2002). *Political agendas for education: From the religious right to the green party*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Stone, S. J. (1999). A conversation with John Goodlad. *Childhood Education*, 75(5), 264-267.
- Swanson, J.D. (2003). *Principals' perspectives on factors which facilitate and block powerful learning*. Chicago: American Educational Research Association. (ERIC Document Service No. ED410687)
- Tanner, D. & Tanner, L. (1990). *Curriculum development: Theory into practice*. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Tomlinson, C. (1995). Deciding to differentiate instruction in middle schools: One school's journey. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 39, 77-87.
- Tesch, R. (1987). Emerging themes: The researcher's experiences. *Phenomenology and Pedagogy* 5, 230-241.
- United States Department of Education. (2001). *No Child Left Behind*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experiences: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. Buffalo, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Van Manen, M. (1999). The language of pedagogy and the primacy of student experience. In J. Loughran (Ed.) *Researching teaching: Methodologies and practices for understanding pedagogy* (pp. 13-27). London: Falmer Press.
- Van Manen, M. (2002). *Phenomenology online*. Retrieved February 20, 2005 from www.phenomenologyonline.com.
- Vygotsky, L. (1986). *Thought and language*. Boston: The MIT Press.

- Wainwright, D. (1997). Can sociological research be qualitative, critical and valid? *The Qualitative Report*, 3(2). Retrieved February 12, 2005 from www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR3-2/wain.htm.
- West, C. (1993). *Race matters*. New York: Random House.
- Westheimer, J. & Kahne, J. (1998). Education for action: Preparing youth for a participatory democracy. In W. Ayers, J.A. Hunt, & T. Quinn (Eds.), *Teaching for social* (pp. 1-20). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Willis, G. (1991). Phenomenological inquiry: Life-world perceptions. In E.C. Short (Ed.), *Forms of curriculum inquiry* (173-186). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Wilson, S.M., Miller, C., Yerkes, C. (1993). Deeply rooted change: A tale of learning to teach adventurously. In D.K. Cohen, M.W. McLaughlin, & J.E. Talbert (Eds.), *Teaching for understanding: Challenges for policy and practice* (pp. 84-129). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs Institutional Review Board (IRB)		
Phone: 912-681-5465		Administrative Annex P.O. Box 8005 Statesboro, GA 30460
Fax: 912-681-0719	Ovrsight@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	

To: Sean Mulvanity
132 Vickery Lane
Savannah, GA 31410

CC: Dr. John Weaver, Faculty Advisor
P.O. Box 8144

From: Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

Date: May 2, 2006

Subject: Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project numbered: **H06205**, and titled **“School Reform in South Georgia”**, it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.

Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.

This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter. If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the research protocol, you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,

Julie B. Cole
Director of Research Services and Sponsored Programs