Educational Management Organizations as High Reliability Organizations:

A Study of Victory's Philadelphia High School Reform Work

by

David E. Thomas

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I certify that I have read this dissertation and that in my opinion it meets the academic

and professional standards required by Wilmington University as a dissertation for

the degree of Doctor of Education in Innovation and Leadership.

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Dedication

This executive position paper is dedicated to my Heavenly Father, who in the person of Jesus Christ, continually provides me with the wisdom, insight, commitment, and desire to positively influence and support the lives of students in Philadelphia and anywhere my path of divine work leads me and in loving memory of my earthly father, the late Dwight T. Thomas, Sr., who transitioned to his eternal rest during my time of completing my doctoral program. Daddy, words cannot express how impactful your zest for life has been on making me who I am today. Each day, I look in the mirror and see you in me and thank God for fashioning me in your likeness in so many ways. You are forever my hero, my first teacher, my protector, my guide, and my best friend! Without you, I would be lost in this world. To this very day, I am still grappling with living in a world without you in it. This is for you, sir!

Abstract

This executive position paper proposes recommendations for designing reform

models between public and private sectors dedicated to improving school reform

work in low performing urban high schools. It reviews scholarly research about for-

profit educational management organizations, high reliability organizations,

American high school reform, and school reform models in Philadelphia. Research

was reviewed and data was collected about the for-profit educational management

organization Victory's Philadelphia high school reform work and analyzed through

the lens of development, implementation and sustainability of school reform and the

concepts and characteristics of high reliability organizations. Research and review of

data showed that the initial development of a school reform model significantly

impacted upon Victory's ability to successfully and completely implement and

sustain reform. Regarding the ability to act as a high reliability organization in school

reform, research and qualitative data showed that Victory was able to, at some

measure, act as a high reliability organization in the majority of the concept areas

although the results were heavily impacted by design impediments which influenced

implementation and sustainability as seen in slow increments of student academic

improvement. Furthermore, when analyzing survey responses of a cross-sector of

individuals involved in Victory's design and implementation of its reform work in its

Philadelphia high schools, qualitative survey data supports this overarching finding.

Recommendations include school reform design models for low-performing urban

high schools fashioned after high reliability organization design and the mutual

collaboration and cooperation of public and private sectors in the design,

implementation, and sustainability of school reform models for low-performing urban

high schools.

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Chapter I

Setting the Stage

Contextual Framework

The researcher of the study's professional experience as an educator led to the development of a particular interest in areas surrounding urban school reform, primarily for high school aged students. Of those areas, that of greatest interest to the researcher is the work of school turnaround by for-profit educational reform and management organizations (Asher, Berne & Fructher, 1996). In many of the schools slated for reform/turnaround, where the majority of the students are typically classified as racial or ethnic minorities, there have been many reform movements over the last 20 years, one of which has been the full scale or partial decentralization of large districts through the privatization of schools or clusters of schools. Educational Management Organizations (EMOs) have been at the forefront of much of this work in large urban districts found in cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Chicago and come with much debate (Whittle, 2006).

Direct work with for-profit EMOs with turnaround contracts for Philadelphia public schools has afforded the researcher of this study the opportunity to be a part of several school turnaround initiatives for elementary, middle, and high schools; one of which was the transformation of a small, urban middle school into two single-gender academies and then later into a stand-alone all-boys 7th through 12th grade high school and another small, coeducational, urban middle school into a stand-alone all-girls 7th through 12th grade high school. As of summer 2012, both of these schools still

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existed in their turnaround forms and were located in an economically-challenged, urban area in Philadelphia servicing minority students and families from working class or poor communities.

Prior to any transformative work in these schools, they were each classified by the local school district, the state, and the local community as failing or low-performing schools (Gill, Zimmer, Christman & Blanc 2007). Each of these schools was plagued with high truancy rates, low levels of parental involvement, poor academic performance, poor facilities, under-resourced classrooms, less-than-adequate and under-qualified teachers and school administrators, high levels of violent and dangerous acts committed against students and school staff, high staff and administrative turnover, high suspension rates, disproportionately high numbers of students classified as "special needs," and high dropout rates. Because of the schools' substandard performance, they were placed in a pool of schools slated by the state to become part of a mid-scale turnaround initiative which was the result of a state takeover of Philadelphia's public schools in 2001 (Gill et al., 2007).

In brief, the model adopted by the state for Philadelphia's take over was the diverse provider model, which as defined in the 2007 published RAND report entitled, *State Takeover, School Restructuring, Private Management, and Student Achievement in Philadelphia,*

> provided flexible, competitive school marketplaces in which districts manage
> a varied portfolio of schools, providers have wide rein to innovate, and both
> are held accountable for student outcomes by strong contracts and through

availability of meaningful choices for students and parents. (Gill et al., 2007, p. 7)

The EMO by which I was employed was contracted to partner with the local district to turn these schools around, and, thus, my work with these schools began.

After an assessment of the challenges within these schools by Victory administrative and instructional team experts, coupled with the review of years of school performance and community data provided by the state and local district, a large part of the EMO's plan to transform these schools was to quickly address the climate and academic challenges by creating single gender learning environments, a common approach of Victory's school management and reform approach (Victory Schools, 2007). Creating single-gender classrooms and schools was a model for which this particular EMO was commonly known and had implemented in other schools, namely charter schools (Victory Schools, 2007). The first attempt came in 2002 to create single-gender environments in the schools under the new management contracts. As seen in the table below, over a period of 5 years, single-gender learning environments – both single class and whole-school initiatives – became the common practice of Victory in its Philadelphia schools (Victory Schools, 2007).

Table 1

Single-Gender Implementation Plan and Sequence of Victory-Managed Schools

Years	Single gender transitions by school
2002-2003	Fitzsimons Twin Leadership Schools (two separate single-gender academies were created in one building, each with separate administration and instructional faculty)
2003-2004	Fitzsimons Twin Leadership Schools, Pepper Middle School (full single-gender classroom model was implemented), and pilot single-gender classroom models in Grades 4 and 5 at Pratt and Bethune Schools
2004-2005	The Young Women's Leadership School at Rhodes (female students from Fitzsimons Twin Leadership School were merged with the female students from Rhodes Academy to create one single-gendered school housed in its own building); The Young Men's Leadership School at Fitzsimons (male students from Fitzsimons Twin Leadership School were merged with the male students from Rhodes Academy to create one single-gendered school housed in its own building); Pepper Middle School, pilot single-gender classroom models in Grades 4, 5 and 6 at Pratt and Bethune Schools
2005-2006	The Young Women's Leadership School at Rhodes, The Young Men's Leadership School at Fitzsimons, Pepper Middle School, Bethune Academy (full single-gender classroom model implemented throughout school), Pratt Elementary (full single-gender classroom model implemented throughout school), and Wright Academy (pilot single-gender classroom model for Grades 5 and 6)
2007-2008	The Young Women's Leadership School at Rhodes, The Young Men's Leadership School at Fitzsimons, Pepper Middle School, Bethune Academy, Pratt Elementary, Wright Academy, and Southwest Leadership Academy Charter School - full single-gender transformation throughout all Victory-managed schools

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As indicated in the above table, a second-tiered initiative to create two single-gender high schools came about in 2004-2005. The EMO, having learned from the challenges faced in 2002, took steps to plan this transition beforehand which required extensive outreach to the entire school community, conversations with state and local political officials, and school district senior level central office administrators (Victory Schools, 2005). Furthermore, it required the EMO to conduct some rather deep and intense introspection of its own organizational structure and approach to school turnaround which was carried out through professional develop sessions and team trainings for its staff and administrators in preparation for the implementation of the second-tiered initiative.

Arguably, taking on the task of this transition initiative for both high schools called for Victory's need to act as a "high reliability organization" (Rochlin, 1993, p. 11) or HRO as its reputation of being an effective EMO in Philadelphia was contingent upon successfully developing and implementing this work. The characteristics of a HRO that could have impacted upon Victory's function in such a fashion are its ability to conduct intense internal planning, conduct an assessment of organizational strengths and deficits which could impact upon the success or failure of the reform work, gather and utilize advice from those with expertise in the fields of education and urban school reform, state and embrace a renewed commitment to the challenge of reforming these schools and sustaining the reform over time, implement a sensitive and watchful eye to the operations of the company to ensure all things

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work properly each time, and state and communicate an organizationally-shared dedication to success in creating and sustaining reform (Datnow & Stringfield, 2000).

The turnaround work required more than a year of extensive community education; hiring of new staff with various areas of relevant expertise; professional development and training of current and new staff, faculty, and administration; parental outreach and education; and student education and engagement (Victory Schools, 2007). As a result of the transformation and the implementation of various interventions and supports during the contract period, all of the EMO's contracted schools (with special focus on the high schools for this study) experienced varied levels of success while also continuing to experience some levels of challenge. The researcher's intimate involvement in this transformation as a practitioner sparked an interest in studying the topic of factors contributing to both the successes and challenges of for-profit EMOs in contracted district high schools slated for turnaround in greater depth.

Need For the Study

The need for the study of EMOs ability to function as HROs in their reform work of urban low-performing high schools is more clearly seen when educational management organizations and high reliability organizations are defined through research. Additionally, a review of the state of high school reform in America as well as a look at the role of for-profit EMOs and HROs in school reform provides an additional level of context to understanding the need for the proposed study.

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EMOs Defined

According to Miron (2008), an EMO is defined as

a private organization or company that manages public schools – either district or charter schools. A contract is prepared to hand over executive authority to run one or more schools in exchange for a commitment to produce measurable outcomes within a given time frame. Ideally, this contract agreement assumes that an EMO will do a better job with the same or fewer resources. (p. 477)

EMOs can be for-profit or not-for-profit companies, can focus on the management of charter or contract schools (traditional public schools contracted out to companies for turnaround), and can service single schools or be a provider to multiple schools (Miron, 2008). Additionally, EMOs receive a management fee to service these schools. Fees and the funding models vary greatly amongst EMOs, depending on the legislation governing the contracts, the number or type of services contracted out to the EMO, and the way by which the EMOs operate their respective business models.

EMOs came to emerge in the early 1990s and grew out of market-based school reform theory. As stated in the National Education Policy Center's *Profiles of For-Profit Educational management Organizations, Twelfth Annual Report – 2009-2010*, market-based school reform is the theory that "by being forced to compete with other schools, existing public schools will necessarily improve or cease operating" (Molnar, Miron & Urschel, 2010, p. 1). One of the approaches to market-based school reform that has shown to gain greater support over the years is the work of for-profit EMOs. The concept of profit linked to performance is favored by supporters

and is seen as an incentive for the for-profit companies to work harder and more efficiently at reforming schools. According to Molnar et al. (2010):

> A for-profit company contracted to manage district public schools, it is reasoned, will have incentives (making a profit in the short term and retaining a profitable contract in the long term) to seek efficiencies and improve student outcomes and achievement. The competition in this context, takes place not among schools or districts themselves, but among current or potential managers of schools. (p. 1)

EMOs - Management Models

For-profit EMOs are privately-owned entities designed to ultimately provide a profitable return to the investors who own them. The landscape of for-profit EMO providers has grown to include those which have "executive authority" (Miron, 2008, p. 478) to manage schools (under a contract which outlines the specific terms governing the EMO's management of one or more schools in return for measurable gains in achievement and other positive outcomes for a specified term) and those which have a role as "vendor" (Miron, 2008, p. 478) (providing a targeted or specific service or product to schools for a fee; i.e., professional development, special education oversight, career and technical curriculum design and management, personnel recruitment, payroll, financial and/or legal consultation, curriculum and instructional oversight, etc.).

It is important to note that there are critical nuances to consider when attempting to fully understand the management ability of EMOs (for-profit or not-for-profit) contracted to have executive authority. The delineating factor between those having executive authority and those that are considered vendors doesn't take into

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account the specific power or level of authority given to an organization under the contracted terms. EMOs have been contracted to have executive authority with the ability to implement a *thick management* model or a *thin management* model (Gill et al,, 2007, p. 8). Both models have been characterized under that of executive authority; however, both models can be vastly different in terms of what is allowed and/or expected of the managing EMO.

Under Philadelphia's state takeover and implementation of the diverse provider model of school reform to address its under-performing schools, Philadelphia outsourced its schools to EMOs, implementing a thin management model, under which "schools were not turned over lock, stock, and barrel to providers, as would happen in the ideal diverse provider model" (Gill et al., 2007, p. 8). Instead, the School District of Philadelphia maintained management and responsibility for a large portion of critical components relevant to the success or failure of school reform. The district still had control and authority over the staffing of the schools as well as the school facilities themselves; school safety; food services; school calendar and closures; grade configurations; and teacher and student codes of conduct. Furthermore, and perhaps most critical, the administration and teaching faculty in provider-managed schools remained district employees. School principals were placed under a quasi-joint reporting structure shared between the providers and the district's regional superintendent offices, causing, to many, a blurred and unclear line of authority (Gill et al., 2007).

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In summary, the nuances related to management models for school reform are believed to have measureable impact upon the reform efforts of contracted EMOs, both for-profit and not-for-profit. When attempting to study this reform work, one must be knowledgeable of these nuances and the potential impact they may have on the work being performed. For the purposes of this study, the focus will remain on Victory as a for-profit EMO with executive authority to reform and manage two low-performing urban high schools under the contracted school reform model employing a thin management approach in Philadelphia.

HROs Defined

High Reliability Organizations, or HROs, through extensive research and work in the field, is defined by Datnow and Stringfield (2000) as "complex organizations that operate under the very unusual requirement that every important function must work correctly the first time, every time" (p. 6). Through practice and experience over time, these HROs become "remarkably reliable in doing a few important things while avoiding catastrophic failures in a few critical areas" (Datnow & Stringfield, 2000, p. 6). HROs assume and operate from a mindful and proactive perspective that potential pitfalls and problems should be expected and that the organization should be poised to successfully handle them when they arise.

Lionel Dyck (2007), in his article entitled, "High Reliability Organization (HRO) in Practice," listed five concepts of HROs that should be kept in mind when attempting to understand how they operation. Keith Hammond's (2002) article around the work of Weick and Sutcliffe's (2001) "Five Habits of Highly Reliable

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Organizations" interpreted these five concepts and discussed them as habits of HROs. The concepts outlined in both documents are highlighted in the table below, showing the alignment of HRO concepts to HRO habits.

Table 2

Alignment of HRO Concepts With HRO Habits

Dyck's five concepts of HROs	Hammond's five habits of HROs
Preoccupation with failure	HROs don't get tricked by their own successes
Reluctance to simplify interpretations	HROs embrace complexity
Sensitivity to operations	HROs anticipate while also knowing their limits
Commitment to resilience	HROs let the unexpected provide the solution
Deference to expertise	HROs defer to the front line experts

These five concepts/habits are commonly known in the field of organizational development as characteristics of HROs. Typically HROs are organizations that manage or govern high-stakes work such as air traffic control, health care organizations, nuclear power plants, and military/armed forces organizations. Organizations with theoretical and operational characteristics such as HROs are seen as critically necessary in these sorts of industries because of the high-stakes nature of the risks involved in minimizing mistakes and operating correctly each time, every time. Without a commitment to these characteristics, an organization involved in these high-stakes industries can bring about severe catastrophe with far-reaching implications to the larger society and well as those directly involved (Datnow & Stringfield, 2000).

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As stated in the work resulting from research of Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (1991), common to HROs is the fact that each operates in

> an unforgiving social and political environment, an environment rich with the potential for error, where the scale of consequences precludes learning through experimentation, and where to avoid failures in the face of shifting sources of vulnerability, complex processes are used to manage complex technology. (p. 32)

In summation, it can be said that HROs are needed to manage life or death situations.

When examining the state and condition of public education today, specifically in the high schools of America, it has been argued that the urgency to reform the nation's educational system for the positive impacting of our current society and future generations is high-stakes work (Quint, Thompson & Bald, 2008). Indeed, the human capital of America represented in the numbers of public high school youth cannot be ignored. Without an urgent effort to reform schools and increase student and school achievement, America's future can and will be severely impacted – perhaps in catastrophic ways.

Developing, implementing, and sustaining a successful strategy for the positive reform of public high school education has become an urgent effort for America (Quint et al., 2008). The characteristics, as indicated in literature about HROs, seem to be feasible and a transferable approach to be considered in the nation's efforts to bring about such reform in public high schools. The stakes in reforming public education are equally as high and the implications are arguably more far-reaching than any other industry.

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High School Reform in America

The need for high school reform in America is a pressing one. Laird, Kienzl, DeBell, and Chapman (2007) stated:

> Every year, America's public high schools enroll millions of students from a variety of backgrounds who will do well in their classes and graduate on schedule, ready for college or work. But for one in four incoming freshman, the numbers tell a different story. Within four years of entering high school, these students will have been held back or will have dropped out (p. 2).

Furthermore, additional research by Quint, Thompson, and Bald (2008) pertaining to the need for high school reform in America stated:

> There is a widespread acknowledgement that if more students are to succeed in high school, high schools themselves must change. Many districts have begun to implement reforms designed to make high schools both more welcoming and more academically rigorous, engaging students in critical thinking and in efforts to synthesize and apply knowledge to new problems. (p. 11)

Across the nation, the mission to reform public schools has taken center stage for legislators and other public officials over the last decade and slightly beyond. The urgency to identify schools that are low-performing and to devise a plan to turn these schools around is central to the nation's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) movement. Data from sources such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) shows that the schools typically in need of the most extreme and urgent reform are the nation's high schools. The students enrolled in these schools have often been subjected to a sub-par education since elementary school. Now that they are nearing graduation, the

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timeframe to fix the public education system for these students is drawing to a swift close. Therefore, reform efforts for high schools are of the utmost importance in the school turnaround agenda.

As identified by NCLB and AYP indicators, 1883[a] or 12%[b] of the nation's high schools, serving 15%[c] of the nation's high school students were considered low-performing in 2008-2009 through 2010-2011 (Miron et al, 2012). Yet, only .08% (n=146) of the high schools classified as low-performing were marked for reform under contracts to for-profit EMOs in 2008-2009, .07% (n=141) in 2009-2010, and .072% (n=136) in 2010-2011 (Miron et al., 2012). Furthermore, only .14% (n=272) of the high schools classified as low-performing were marked for reform under contracts to non-profit EMOs (Miron et al., 2012). The number of low-performing high schools is startling and paints a telling picture of the need for rapid and sustained reform. Yet, the numbers indicated above appear to highlight somewhat of a disconnection between the scale of the problem and the scale of the reform remedy employed by many districts.

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[a] A count of lowest-performing schools was developed by the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University from the set of all regular and vocational high schools with one hundred or more students enrolled in the 2007–08 school year that had a promoting power of 60 % or less. Schools were identified based on their three-year-average promoting power for the Classes of 2006, 2007, and 2008.

[b] Percentage was calculated from the total number of high schools that were included in the above analysis. This number may be slightly different than the reported total number of high schools from the NCES, which includes only regular high schools that do not serve grades lower than seventh

[c] This figure is based on the NCES-reported total 2007–08 enrollment for all high schools included in the analysis.

In the latter part of June 2007, a conference comprised of educational leaders from across the nation to discuss reform initiatives within their respective high schools was held in New York City (Quint et al., 2008). In preparation for the conference, a non-profit social policy research and evaluation organization, Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC), conducted interviews with members of the leadership teams from the districts represented at the conference. The intention of these interviews was to provide a high school reform landscape across districts (Quint et al., 2008). The interviews centered around four questions: "What challenges are you experiencing in your high schools? What interventions have you adopted? What has your implementation experience been? And what are you seeing that lets you know whether the interventions are working?" (Quint et al., 2008, p. 3). Common themes that emerged from the districts' answers surrounded the following three broad challenges:

- creating an environment in which students feel that teachers and other adults know them and care about them;

- ensuring that classes for students who begin at all levels of academic achievement are supportive, engaging, and demanding;

- and giving all students the guidance and assistance they need to plan for their future after high school. (Quint et al., 2008, p. 3)

Some leaders of national and local school reform efforts point out that reform on a school-by-school basis is extremely challenging without direct and involved support from the school district. State policies need to be aligned to support the

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expectations and programmatic reforms that make higher performance attainable. Supporting this idea, the National Governors Association published in the document, *Reaching New Heights: A Governor's Guide to Turning Around Low-Performing Schools* (2003), the following set of recommendations for state policymakers to pursue in turning around low-performing high schools:

> All states must start by reviewing their processes for identifying low-performing schools to ensure the indicators they examine are accurate measures of high school effectiveness. Low-performing high schools need comprehensive, not piecemeal, reform. Research suggests that governors should develop detailed high school improvement plans that include the following five strategies:
>
> - Align standards and assessments with the expectation that all students need to be ready for college success.
> - Increase student and teacher supports, including sustained professional development and time for collaborative efforts.
> - Ensure adequate human and financial resources to meet the scope and degree of educational challenges faced by the schools.
> - Create small, focused high schools that prepare all students for the future.
> - Support robust, high-quality public school choice options. (p. 16)

In this seemingly urgent quest to reform America's urban public high schools, one must take into account the achievement gap and the disparities that exist. Studies have been conducted about the racial achievement gap in education for many years (Quint et al., 2008).

> That there is a race gap in educational achievement is not news. Large numbers of the nation's children leave school, with and without high school

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diplomas, barely able to read, write, and do simple math. But the failures of
the schools are not evenly distributed. They fall disproportionately on
students of color. (Berlak, 2001, para. 4)

Still, in all of this discussion about the challenges that face urban public high schools,
the challenges as they relate to the achievement gap amongst racial/ethnic lines, the
need to reform, and the broad areas in which reform must occur, the question remains
when looking at the use of for-profit EMOs in school reform strategies: What factors
impact upon their performance (successes and/or challenges) in turning around low-
performing, urban public high schools, thus fostering a climate where these
organizations can operate as HROs?

For-Profit EMOs and HROs in School Reform

The work of school turnaround by for-profit companies has come under heavy
scrutiny since its inception. Many critics contend that creating a system that allows
for businesses and/or individuals to make a profit from education" is an idea that has
not proven itself to be economically viable or academically important" (Molnar,
2001, p. 12). These critics argue that the need and desire to make a profit can and
will take precedent over the task at hand, which is the quality and equitable education
of students. Moreover, the use of public dollars to fund these initiatives operated by
private organizations is viewed by those of this mindset as unscrupulous and harmful
to the fiber of this nation's public educational system. These critics believe that it is
improper to use public dollars to fund private entities to educate the nation's youth,
that for-profit EMOs cannot sustain themselves over the long term under this profit-
making model without eventually cutting resources and lessening quality, and that

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for-profit EMOs have failed to show their ability to educate students any better or with any greater amount of innovation than that of the publically-funded educational system (Molnar, 2001).

What many in both the pro and con EMO camps have failed to do from a fuller perspective is examine the for-profit EMO school turnaround movement from a collaborative effort of both public and private sectors and, furthermore, under such a collaborative effort, what factors need to exist to turnaround these low performing schools for the success of students, families, and communities. According to Datnow and Stringfield's (2000) work at the Center for Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins University:

> The improvement of schools is possible when the reform effort is well thought out, when teachers are active agents in the change process, when there are sufficient resources and time to support reform, when capable leadership is present, and when school cultures change along with school structures. (p. 3)

Furthermore, their work talks about the ability or inability of schools to sustain improvement and what factors are needed for long-term and lasting improvement. Datnow and Stringfield (2000) proposed that "the sustainability of reform relies on support from multiple levels" (p. 5) yet state that, too often, these levels lack any form of collaboration or coordination, causing major challenges to sustainable improvement.

The framework by which Datnow and Stringfield (2000) approached the subject of sustainable school turnaround is that of a collaborative approach, using the terminology *High Reliability Organization (HRO)* (p. 6) - taken from the research

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base of other fields (LaPorte & Consolini, 1991) and applying it to education, specifically the work as it pertains to school turnaround.

Stringfield (1995) summarized that a highly reliable school system exists when the following conditions and characteristics are in place:

- A finite set of clear goals, shared at all organizational levels

- A shared belief across the levels that failure to achieve those goals would be disastrous

- An ongoing alertness to surprises or lapses. Small failures that can cascade into major academic problems must be monitored carefully.

- The building and maintenance of powerful databases that are relevant to core goals; rich in triangulation on key dimensions; real-time available; and regularly cross-checked by multiple, concerned groups

- The extension of formal, logical decision analysis as far as extant knowledge allows. Many regularly repeated tasks become Standard Operating Procedures.

- Initiatives that identify flaws in Standard Operating Procedures, and honor the flaw finders. (pp. 70-71)

Furthermore, Stringfield (1995) contended that HROs must actively engage in:

- Extensive recruiting

- Constant, targeted training and re-training

- Serious performance evaluations. In HROs, monitoring is mutual, without counterproductive loss of overall autonomy and confidence which is

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achievable because the goals are clear and widely shared. HRO's do not

engage in one-way monitoring for its own sake. (p. 71)

Because time is the enemy of reliability, HROs are:

- Hierarchically structured. However, during times of peak activity, HROs can display a second layer of behavior that emphasizes collegial decision making, regardless of position.

- Clearly valuing of the organization by their supervising organization(s). All levels work to maintain active, respectful communication.

- Focused on allowing short-term efficiency to take a back seat to very high reliability. (Stringfield, 1995, pp. 71-71)

Datnow and Stringfield's (2000) work is important to this field of study,

provides a larger framework from which to study the issue of school turnaround, and

examines qualities needed in a school district to function as an HRO when working

toward sustainable school turnaround. Their work examines what is necessary for an

entire school district to operate as an HRO in reforming all of its own low-performing

schools, addressing its own challenges and failures, and designing its own reform

strategy and interventions. This work, albeit similar, varies somewhat from the area

of study pertaining to for-profit EMO's ability to function as HROs in school reform

work.

What Datnow and Stringfield's (2000) work does not highlight specifically is

the ability of for-profit EMOs, which have become a popular choice in the urban

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school reform movement, to function as HROs under the contracted school reform model in school districts that are often characterized as highly dysfunctional, highly bureaucratic, and hostile toward outside agencies engaged to fix its failures. It does not take into consideration the tension that can exist between districts and EMOs when the reform mandates originate from an outside governing agency through something such as a state-takeover, which can serve to create hostility amongst districts and EMOs – supposed partners in the mission of turning around low-performing schools for the benefit of students (Gill et al., 2007). Moreover, their work does not highlight the seemingly tougher challenge of for-profit EMO's ability to function as HROs in their work to reform those schools that most readily are in need of major turnaround work—urban public high schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to thoroughly examine this topic using the work of Victory Education Partners (formerly Victory Schools Inc., herein referred to as Victory) as a case study and to gain a more informed understanding based on qualitative data and research of the factors which influenced the for-profit EMO's ability to act as a HRO in its reform work of two low performing urban public high schools in Philadelphia. The overall goal of this study is to examine the work of Victory in Philadelphia and to identify factors contributing to its successes and challenges in turning around two low-performing urban high schools under the contracted school model and to determine what factors influenced Victory's performance to see if any valid correlations can be drawn from a review of the data

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presented and research conducted. It is surmised that a review of this data and research will allow for the proposal that under the proper collaborative culture between all relevant public and private sector parties, for-profit EMOs can, indeed, function as HROs in the reform work of low-performing public urban high schools under the contracted school reform model.

For the purposes of this study, it was necessary to review the operation of for-profit EMO's work in urban public high school reform through the lens of the HRO. As stated earlier, organizational development theorists classify HROs as sharing a similar set of five concepts which shape their perspective and guide their operation. The materials used in this study's literature review speak to and provide data that addresses this topic.

Literature Review Summary

The material reviewed for the study of this executive position paper touched on various aspects of the proposed research topic. Nothing found and reviewed spoke directly to the nuances of the specific topic of study. In addition to materials accumulated over the last several years, a separate search to retrieve more relevant data was conducted. Overall, the research found spoke primarily to the key strategies used in high school reform, evidenced-based improvement as a metric for successful school change, characteristics of high-performing schools, the legislation behind school reform in urban areas, the pressing need for high school reform in the United States, national EMO performance, the achievement gap in education as it relates to race and gender, the charter and school reform movements in urban areas, costs and

benefits to for-profit EMO reform, the history and operation of EMOs in America's schools, characteristics needed for school districts to operate as high reliability organizations (also referred to as highly reliable organizations or HROs) to bring about sustainable reform, healthcare organizations that operate as HROs, and habits needed for organizations to operate as HROs.

Included in this literature review are eight sources that speak to the history, operation, and performance of EMOs in America's schools (sources of which report data which substantiates both the opposition to and support of EMOs as viable options to school reform); six relevant sources that speak specifically about the work of Victory in its reform work in Philadelphia; four relevant sources that speak about characteristics of successful schools and strategies used to reform low-performing schools; two relevant sources that speak about the need for high school redesign; three relevant sources that speak about the achievement gap as it relates to race and ethnicity; two relevant sources that speak about the need for collaborative partnerships in effective school reform; one relevant source that speaks about restarting low-performing schools specifically under EMO management contracts; and four relevant sources that speak about HROs in practice and the habits they must employ to be classified as true and successful HROs.

The inclusion criteria used for the literature search consisted of an extensive internet search for works relevant to the proposed research topic of this executive position paper using the following mainstream search engines: Google, Hotbot, Bing, AltaVista, Excite, Go, AOL search, and Yahoo. Keywords used in this search were:

public education, educational choice, school turnaround, school reform, educational management organization(s), EMO(s), high reliability organizations, highly reliable organizations, HRO(s), urban public education, public schools, public school privatization, for-profit educational management organization(s), low-performing schools, high-performing schools, educational outsourcing, urban high schools, urban school reform, urban district reform, high school reform, high school redesign, school reform strategies, district reform, public school reform, school inequities, achievement gap, school change, and any combination of the keywords and phrases listed.

These searches led to the helpful discovery of various additional databases which house educational research and policy articles. These sites included www.educationsector.org, www.mdrc.org/publications/498/preface.html, www.eric.ed.gov, www.educationnext.org, www.edequity.org, www.ascd.org, www.oise.utoronto.ca, www.nces.ed.gov/pubsearch, www.urban.org/publications/411428.html, www.victoryschools.com, www.victoryep.com, http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/EMO-FP-09-10, http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/EMO-profiles-10-11, www.leonagroup.com/index1.html, http://epass.asu.edu/epaa/v9n15.html, www.rethinkingschools.org, www.hoover.org/publications/ednext, www.brighterchoice.org, www.educationnews.org, www.proquest.com, and www.cgcs.org.

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All of this newly discovered information, in addition to the materials and experience that accumulated during the 8 years of Victory's work in Philadelphia, provided an array of data specific to Victory's performance in Philadelphia, other for-profit EMOs and their reform work with high schools, and research articles on high school turnaround, successful reform strategies, EMOs, privatization of K-12 school management, overall school reform work, and HROs.

In summary, what can be gathered and learned thus far from the literature review relevant to the research topic is that although there is research that speaks to this area of interest, there has yet to be any full research done which looks at what supports and facilitates the ability or inability of for-profit EMOs to function as HROs in their reform work of low-performing urban public high schools under the contracted school reform model. Furthermore, the only work found that considers analyzing EMOs through the lens of HROs deals with the larger framework, examining qualities needed in a school district to function as an HRO when working toward sustainable school turnaround. The work examines what is necessary for an entire school district to operate as an HRO in reforming all of its own low-performing schools, addressing its own challenges and failures, and designing its own reform strategy and interventions. This work, albeit similar to the study of this executive position paper, varies somewhat from the area of study pertaining to for-profit EMO's ability to function as HROs in school reform work.

For the purpose of this study, ongoing communication with professionals, experts, and colleagues within relevant professional networks who work specifically

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in areas surrounding high schools, high school reform, school turnaround, EMOs, privatization of schools, and for-profit educational management was maintained. Professional developments, workshops, conferences, and trainings addressing the key areas found in the research questions and active in and with key educational organizations (Victory, School District of Philadelphia, National Principals Leadership Institute, National School Change Awards, Academy for Educational Leadership and Transformation, National Education Policy Center, Association for Supervisory and Curriculum Development, Council of the Great City Schools, Philadelphia Council for College and Career Success, Project U-Turn Committee, Education First Compact, Philadelphia Education Fund, Citi Post-Secondary Success Initiative, Jobs For the Future's High School Graduation Work Group National Convening, and Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color) that address topics directly and indirectly relevant to the research questions have been attended (Community College of Philadelphia, 2011).

Research Questions

Resulting from the literature review, four possible questions servicing further study and research in this topic were compiled. Answering these questions from a review and analysis of the literature and research will provide a foundation on which this executive position paper is written. These questions are as follows:

1. What factors contribute to the ability or inability of for-profit EMOs to function as HROs in the reform work of low-performing urban public high schools under the contracted school reform model?

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2. What specific factors impacted upon the success and challenges achieved and faced by Victory in its reform work of two low-performing urban public high schools in Philadelphia under the state-takeover of Philadelphia's public schools and the contracted school reform model?

3. How did these factors (overarching as well as specific) positively or negatively influence the ability of Victory to function as a HRO in the work of low-performing urban public high school reform in Philadelphia?

4. How must these factors interact and operate so that the for-profit EMOs can function as HROs in the work of low-performing urban high school reform in Philadelphia and other similarly-challenged districts to ensure the quality and equitable education of students?

Research Plan and Methodology

A qualitative research design was employed as the primary approach relating to data collection and research supporting the position taken on the topic of for-profit EMO's ability to function as HROs in reform work of low-performing urban public high schools under the contracted school management model. The implications of this study required some aspects of quantitative data as well, which was found in the form of performance data of Victory's reform work in Philadelphia with its contracted high schools. To best research the question and present data to support the position taken in this executive position paper, data about Victory's reform work in its low-performing urban high schools in Philadelphia was presented and analyzed.

Survey data from teachers and administrators who worked with and for Victory in the Philadelphia turnaround high schools was gathered to provide a framework for the qualitative portion of the study. Additionally, Victory's performance data as reported for its contractual compliance was reviewed and analyzed. Because Victory is the only for-profit EMO that fits this description, as much data as possible from as many relevant sources as possible was taken into account and reviewed. A thorough review and assessment of this data helped determine what else might be needed to effectively present and support the position taken in this executive position paper with validity.

In gathering the qualitative data directly from the sample population, a survey was developed and distributed to interview participants, such as teachers, school administrators, EMO administrators, and district officials. A questionnaire to capture survey data was employed.

Historical data surrounding Victory's performance in reforming its contracted urban public high schools was the primary source of data for the case study included in this executive position paper. This data was reviewed and analyzed in concert with research such as what is contained in the literature review to gain a fuller understanding of the current state of the topic. This data provided a framework from which to work and analyze the data collected from the sample population through the survey.

Additionally, this data was used to guide the design of the interview statements contained in the participant survey. During this process, professional

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peers, colleagues, and experts from various professional affiliations (namely, Victory, National Principals Leadership Institute, Academy of Educational Leadership and Transformation, School District of Philadelphia, National Education Policy Center, EdisonLearning, and Cheyney University) were utilized to review, critique, and validate the survey and work. The expertise of the appointed Wilmington University doctoral advisor, other relevant Wilmington University faculty and staff, and the selected and approved third reader was utilized to assist in critique and validation.

Current and former teachers and school faculty and staff of Victory schools in Philadelphia, Philadelphia district administrators, as well as relevant Victory administrators, with knowledge of Victory's work in Philadelphia were selected as the survey population for this study. After gaining the proper permissions from all necessary parties, outreach to the selected sample population began. The survey was designed and distributed to the sample population in January 2013 and collected from participants in March 2013.

The data collected was handled in compliance with all necessary privacy and ethical standards. Every effort was made to properly and fully disclose the purpose of the study and the use of any collected data so that individuals who agree to participate in the study would be fully informed. Additionally, any assistance with understanding or interpreting the survey statements to the sample population was provided, if and when necessary. Full consideration was taken for any cultural, gender, ethnic, sexual orientation, or generational differences that might have existed

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amongst the sample population, and sensitivity to how the need for any assistance through this data collection process was given.

In summary, the research methodology was primarily qualitative in the gathering of new data and case study data. Quantitative data from the review of historical facts about Victory's turnaround performance in its Philadelphia contracted high schools was also used in the research. This data was reviewed and analyzed collectively to provide the basis for the position taken and supported in this executive position paper.

Chapter II

Analysis of Current Practice

For-Profit EMO National Data: 2002-03 to 2010-11

Fundamental to this body of work, it is important to review the demographic data of for-profit EMOs across the nation from a longitudinal perspective. The longitudinal data of for-profit EMOs show the growth of these organizations in the U.S. as they have become an increasingly larger option for management of schools slated for reform due to substandard performance. It is also important to review, from a cursory perspective, for-profit EMOs and their performance as measured by Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status, the federal metric used to determine the progress achieved by public schools which was instituted under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act.

The 13th annual report published in 2010-2011 entitled, *Profiles of For-Profit and Nonprofit Education Management Organizations* (Miron et al., 2012) gathered data of all EMOs nationally and publishes it for review and analysis. In gathering and presenting this data, it is essential to outline the definition of the three categories of for-profit EMO highlighted – large EMOs, medium EMOs, and small EMOs. According to Miron et al. (2012), large EMOs are defined as those organizations managing 10 or more schools; medium EMOs are defined as those managing between 4 and 9 schools; and small EMOs are defined as those managing between 1 and 3 schools. Primarily, data is longitudinally presented in alignment with these three categories for the purposes of this study.

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Some key facts about for-profit EMOs, the schools they manage, the students they serve, and the organizations' performance between 2002 and 2011 are bulleted below, giving a brief snapshot of some relevant information to help frame the foundational data in this study: (Miron et al., 2012)

- Since 1997-1998, when the first *Profiles* report was published, the number of schools managed by for-profit EMOs grew from 131 to 758 in 2011.

- In 2010-2011, 70.7% of for-profit EMO-managed schools were managed by large EMOs.

- More than 94% of schools managed by EMOs were charter and fewer than 6% were district-managed schools in 2010-11.

- In 2011, 56.3% of EMO-managed schools were listed as primary schools, with the remaining percentage (43.7%) being listed as either middle school, high school, or "other" (consisting of K-12 configurations, alternative education models, virtual schools, etc.)

- In 2010-11, for-profit EMOs operated in 33 states, with the highest number of schools managed by for-profit EMOs being in Michigan (181), Florida (150), Ohio (107), and Arizona (102).

- Over time, many large and medium for-profit EMOs began to expand their portfolio of services to include supplying supplemental educational services to schools and districts rather than solely remaining in the business of whole-school management and reform.

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- In 2010-11, 394,096 students were enrolled in schools managed by for-profit EMOs, 74.8% of those students being enrolled in schools managed by large EMOs.

- The average enrollment for for-profit EMO-managed schools has been substantially larger than the enrollment of non-profit EMO-managed schools.

- Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) ratings for 677 of the 758 schools managed by for-profit EMOs were gathered (89.3%).

- In 2010-11, 48.2% of schools managed by for-profit EMOs made AYP but 51.8% did not.

- The 46 district schools managed by for-profit EMOs had slightly lower performance ratings (40.5% met AYP) relative to the charters managed by for-profit EMOs (51.4% met AYP) (Miron et al., 2012).

The nature of this study requires that the data pertaining to the national landscape of EMOs be viewed and analyzed from a macro perspective to form a foundation to address the subset most relevant to this study which is *for-profit EMOs managing high schools under the contracted school reform model*. Tables 3 through 7 below provide this foundational data.

Table 3

Number of For Profit EMOs by Company Size and Year

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Large	11	11	13	13	15	15	17	17	14
Medium	5	9	11	12	13	16	17	19	21
Small	49	48	47	49	48	55	57	57	64
Total # EMOs	65	68	71	74	76	86	91	93	99
# States w/ EMOs	25	29	25	29	31	28	31	31	33

As seen in Table 4, the largest amounts of schools managed by EMOs in the nation were consistently contracted out to large EMO's.

Table 4

Number of Schools Managed by For-Profit EMOs by EMO Size

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Large	342	362	450	471	518	524	575	562	526
Medium	32	51	64	75	83	95	97	124	131
Small	68	70	70	78	74	82	82	88	101
Total schools	442	483	584	624	675	701	754	774	758

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Table 5 below illustrates number of students enrolled in the nation's schools that attend EMO managed schools between 2002 and 2011. Here, it is evident that large EMOs served the most amounts of students under contracts during that period, with the numbers of students increasing each year.

Table 5

Number of Students in Schools Managed by For-Profit EMO by Size

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Large	73858	86712	120527	139726	176468	194561	239618	279190	294838
Medium	4512	9409	14455	22376	19271	27207	30009	34430	52673
Small	15615	17931	19222	21521	23296	29232	32851	61422	46585
Total students	93985	114051	154203	183624	219035	251000	302478	375043	394096

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Table 6 illustrates the number of schools and enrollments by size and school level/grade configuration contracted to for-profit EMOs in 2010-2011.

Table 6

For-Profit EMOs: Numbers of Schools and Enrollments by Size and School Level

Large EMOs				
2010-11	No. schools	Total enrollment	% Enrolled	Avg. enrollment
Primary	321	162849	41.3	507
Middle	55	14662	3.7	267
High	86	26472	6.7	308
Other	74	90855	23.1	1245
Total	536	294838		551
Medium EMOs				
2010-11	No. schools	Total enrollment	% Enrolled	Avg. enrollment
Primary	58	21956	5.6	379
Middle	9	3313	0.8	368
High	29	15553	3.9	555
Other	25	11851	3.0	474
Total	121	52673		439
Small EMOs				
2010-11	No. schools	Total enrollment	% Enrolled	Avg. enrollment
Primary	48	18279	4.6	381
Middle	6	1569	0.4	262
High	21	6791	1.7	323
Other	26	19946	5.1	767
Total	101	46585		461

Table 7 below illustrates the total number of schools as well as the number and percentage of students enrolled in the nation's schools operated by for-profit EMOs by school level/grade configuration between 2007-2008 and 2010-2011.

Table 7

Total Number of Schools and Number and Percentage of Students Enrolled in Schools Operated by For-Profit EMOs by School Level (2007-2008 to 2010-2011)

	2007-08		2008-09		2009-10		2010-11		
	No. school	No. student	No. school	No. student	No. school	No. student	No. school	No. student	% enrolled
Primary	324	161256	419	189361	412	192260	427	203084	51.5%
Middle	33	13917	54	16022	54	15538	70	19544	5%
High	100	48745	146	41743	141	44514	136	48816	12.4%
Other	76	30495	114	92096	121	100758	125	122652	31.1%

The nature of this study requires that the data be viewed and analyzed more specifically to address the subset most relevant to this study which is *for-profit EMOs managing high schools under the contracted school reform model*. When viewed through this specific lens, the subset becomes very specific, as seen in Table 8 below.

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Table 8

For-Profit EMOs Managing District Schools Under Contracts, 2009-2010

	Headquarters	EMO size	# schools	# high schools	States
Connections Academy	Baltimore, MD	Large	4	0	AZ, CA, CO, FL, ID, MN, NV, OH, OR, PA, SC, WI, WY
Edison Learning	New York, NY	Large	30	0	CA, CO, GA, IA, IL, IN, LA, MD, MI, MO, MN, NV, OH, PA, WI
K12 Inc.	Herndon, VA	Large	1	0	AR, AZ, CA, CO, FL, ID, IL, IN, NV, OH, PA, SC, TX,WI, WY
Victory	New York, NY	Large	6	2	IL, NY, PA
White Hat Management	Akron, OH	Large	1	0	AZ, CO, FL, MI, OH, PA
Community Education Partners	Nashville, TN	Medium	1	0	FL, VA
KC Distance Learning Inc.	Portland, OR	Medium	4	4	KS, MN, NV, TX, WA, WI

Based on the data presented in Table 8, there are two companies that fit the subset description of being *for-profit EMOs managing high schools under the contracted school reform model* for this study. Those two companies are KC Distance Learning, Inc. and Victory. However, based on the management authority/roles of these two companies which vary considerably (KC Distance Learning is an educational vendor providing to districts, schools and charter management organizations, distance/online educational options for credit recovery, and instructional support and intervention while Victory is a for-profit EMO having executive authority in whole school reform under a thin management model), Victory stands alone in its reform work with its contracted high schools in Philadelphia.

The data presented in both the twelfth and thirteenth annual reports profiling for-profit and nonprofit EMOs indicate that of all for-profit EMOs nationally, only seven for-profit EMOs managed district schools under the contracted school reform model, and out of those seven, only two managed stand-alone high schools (for the purposes of this study, defined as public high schools with a grade configuration beginning the earliest, with 6th grade and going up to 12th grade) under those contracts. Additionally, the data indicate that the EMOs managing district schools under the contracted school reform model are primarily large EMOs (71.4%), with 29.6% of the other EMOs classified as medium EMOs. There were no small EMOs managing district schools under the contracted school reform model.

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The Work in Philadelphia – Diverse Provider Model of Reform

As this study focuses on the ability of for-profit EMOs to function as HROs in school reform of low-performing public urban high schools, it is critical to understand this study in the context of the diverse provider model and its roll out in Philadelphia following the state takeover of the city's public schools in 2001 (Gill et al., 2007). This study is not so focused on Victory's effectiveness in reform as a whole as it relates to outcomes of its privately-managed Philadelphia public high schools (although data and outcomes of Victory's privately-managed Philadelphia high schools are included in this study) but rather on Victory's ability to function as a highly reliable organization, as defined by a certain set of research-based characteristics, under the diverse provider model in Philadelphia, including all of its provisions and restraints.

As mentioned earlier, the diverse provider model in Philadelphia's reform movement was that of a thin management approach which did not fully turn over management and operation of the schools to the providers but instead left a large portion of the management and operation of the schools slated for reform in the hands of the local school district. The School District of Philadelphia maintained responsibility for staffing, management of facilities, food services, school safety, teacher and student codes of conduct, academic year calendar configuration, grade configuration, and holiday closures (Gill et al., 2007; Wright, 2006). Extremely important to reiterate is that the instructional staff (school administrators and teaching staff) remained employees of the district in all provider schools and remained part of

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the district's labor unions. Providers honored the union contracts of district employees in privately-managed schools to include such things as allotted time for meetings and professional development of teachers and principals, salaries, transfer policies, hiring new teachers, and working conditions (Gill et al., 2007; Wright 2006).

The study conducted by the RAND Corporation (Gill et al., 2007) highlighted that although providers had a quasi-joint authority over the appointment of principals in provider-managed schools, there were departures – both forced and voluntary – of principals not wanting to work in schools under private management. The study contended that these departures "further increased instability as teacher turnover in some schools soared" (Gill et al., 2007, p. 9). Specifically, Victory managed schools saw a turnover rate rise from 17% to 40% (Gill et al., 2007, p. 9).

Additionally important to the context of this study is an understanding of the continued role of the School District of Philadelphia in mandating initiatives that would influence all of its schools, including those under private management. Centralized reforms (as indicated in Table 10 below) were implemented in 2002 under then School District of Philadelphia CEO Paul Vallas to include items such as school renovation and construction programs and enhanced and upgraded approaches to instruction and curriculum resources (Gill et al., 2007). An increase in per-pupil spending district wide was evidenced of about $1900 between 2002-2005 which accompanied the increased per-pupil allocation received by providers ranging from $450 to $881 (Victory received a $750 per pupil allocation for its managed high

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schools under the first round of reform contracts) between 2002 and 2005 (Gill et al., 2007, pp. 9-11).

In Table 9 below, a synopsis of the Districtwide initiatives which were implemented under the diverse provider model of school reform in Philadelphia are listed. These initiatives were detailed in the RAND Corporation report (Gill et al., 2007, p. 10).

Table 9

District Initiatives Implemented Under the Diverse Provider Model of School Reform in Philadelphia

Initiative	Year
Zero-tolerance disciplinary policy, a uniform discipline code, new emphasis on disruptive students placement in alternative schools	2002-03
Mandatory extended academic day and summer programs	2002-03
Increase in teacher recruitment and retention efforts	2002-03
Reduced class size for K-3 math and literacy	2003-04
Preschool program expansions	2003-04
Establishment of K-9 core curriculum	2003-04
Introduction of K-9 instructional management system	2003-04
Expanded training and support initiatives for current and aspiring principals	2003-04
Initial implementation of K-8 schools creation to replace large middle schools	2003-04
Expanded site-based hiring of teachers through new bargaining agreement	2004-05

Understanding the aforementioned context is critical when studying Victory's work in Philadelphia as a for-profit EMO contracted to reform two low-performing urban public high schools under the Pennsylvania state takeover of Philadelphia's local school district.

Victory – Model of Operation and Approach to School Reform

An examination of Victory's work as an organization contracted to reform low-performing high schools in Philadelphia calls for a look at its mission and vision. Understanding the mission and vision of a district (or an organization) as it pertains to school change and reform is instrumental to a full examination of its ability to design, implement, and sustain effective reform (Smith, 2008). Furthermore, and specific to this study, it is helpful to examine the mission and vision of Victory to see if there is clear or perceived alignment with the HRO concepts and habits (Dyck, 2007; Hammond, 2002) and highly reliable school system conditions and characteristics (Stringfield, 1995) listed in the research. This approach will help to further hone the context of the study.

As stated in the unpublished documents created by Victory's (2007) administrative team in Pennsylvania entitled, "An Overview of the Past Five Years (2002-2007)",

> Victory's mission is to create great schools for America's children through partnerships with outstanding community groups and parents, school districts and state departments of education, teachers and teachers unions. Our exceptional team of nationally-distinguished educators has decades of experience as leaders in the nation's largest and most challenging public

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school systems and possesses an extraordinary commitment to creating measurable and lasting improvements in student academic achievement. (p. 2) Victory states its values in the same document as the following:

- We (Victory) believe that all children can learn.
- We believe that people are the key to a school's success.
- We believe that all communities deserve high quality public education and we serve all communities.
- We strive for substantial and lasting improvements in student achievement and we hold ourselves accountable.
- We seek to deliver the highest quality, most personalized services to our clients.
- We strive to combine the best aspects of the public and private sectors.
- We are deeply committed to the highest standard of ethics and integrity (Victory Schools, 2007, p. 2).

Victory states its service delivery model as one that uses a "clearly focused, standards based, data-driven teaching and learning model that empowers students to excel" (Victory Schools, 2007, p. 3). This model included the use of "highly-trained staff, standards-based teaching and learning, explicit instruction, accelerated personalized learning plans (for all students), and high expectations for all students" (Victory Schools, 2007, p. 3). Victory's service delivery model was implemented across its schools in Philadelphia during its contract term.

In reviewing the reform model of Victory and attempting to see alignment across the following three sets of information—the Victory mission and vision, HRO concepts and habits (Dyck, 2007; Hammond, 2002), and highly reliable school system conditions and characteristics (Stringfield, 1995)—a clear alignment is not

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easily identifiable. One rather clearly articulated idea listed in Victory's mission and vision statement is its "exceptional team of nationally-distinguished educators" (Victory Schools, 2007, p. 2) and its use of "highly-trained staff" (Victory Schools, 2007, p. 3), which can be identified as being in alignment with the HRO concept "deference to expertise" (Dyck, 2007, para. 3) and HRO habit of the "use of front line experts" (Hammond, 2002, para. 9) and the highly reliable school system conditions and characteristics of the "presence of capable leadership," engagement in "extensive recruiting," and "constant, targeted training and re-training" (Datnow & Stringfield, 2000, pp. 6-7). Here, a component of Victory's model more explicitly shows an alignment with key characteristics of HROs listed in the research. However, other components of Victory's reform model as expressed in its mission and vision are not written in a manner that will allow clear identification of alignment with characteristics of HROs.

Although this does not necessarily determine fully that Victory's reform model as stated in its mission and vision hindered or supported its ability to act as an HRO in its work to reform its Philadelphia high schools, Victory's ability to act as an HRO could be evidenced in its actions and work more explicitly than its written mission and vision as stated. Using Victory's reform model as a case study, it can be deduced that looking solely at the mission and vision of a for-profit EMO such as Victory does not provide substantial enough evidence to support a determination of its ability to function as an HRO in reform work of low-performing public urban high schools.

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While Victory actively began its reform work of its two Philadelphia high schools (Fitzsimons and Rhodes) in 2002 through 2003, it practiced and implemented several components of its mission and vision throughout the transformation process (Victory Schools, 2007). When Victory was contracted to manage both schools under the diverse provider reform model in Philadelphia, both schools were low-performing neighborhood middle schools hosting grade configurations of 6th grade to 8th grade. However, as part of a School District of Philadelphia high school redesign plan, Fitzsimons and Rhodes were slated to become two separate, small high schools with grade configurations of 7th grade to 12th grade over a period of 4 years (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2004; Wright, 2006).

Victory had no input into this aspect of redesign for Fitzsimons and Rhodes as it was determined by the School District of Philadelphia before and separate from the reform work contracted out to Victory under the state takeover. Victory's contractual charge to reform the schools and increase school and student achievement was implemented in various ways, one of which was the transformation work specific to creating two single-gender high schools, a common approach used by Victory (Victory Schools, 2007).

Victory – Reform Work in Philadelphia High Schools Through the HRO Concept Lens

Victory's reform work in its Philadelphia high schools implemented several reform strategies aligned to its model to attempt to improve school and student achievement, thus fulfilling its contractual obligations. One very important point to

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highlight is that Victory not only used data provided by the School District of Philadelphia and the state to determine the challenges plaguing the high schools it was contracted to reform, but it conducted its own assessment of the challenges, seeking input from current teachers, school administrators and staff, students, and families (Victory Schools, 2007). This information, coupled with the historic performance data provided to Victory when contracted to reform the schools, became the impetus for the model of reform implementation to be employed.

As a result, Victory Schools (2007) approached its reform work of its Philadelphia high schools by implementing the following:

- Systems of intentionality to provide personalized education to each student and to organize each school for success through schoolwide, grade group, and individual teacher and administrator goal setting; accelerated learning plans for all students; student assistance teams to enhance instructional strategies and implement interventions for all students; and governance by a school leadership team comprised of teacher leaders, building administrators, and critical building staff to monitor and guide the systems of reform

- Curriculum and instructional enhancements to the School District of Philadelphia's core curriculum to include extended blocks of literacy and math and the implementation of wall-to-wall contextualized learning institutes in the career fields of education, finance, entrepreneurship, architecture, and technology—each aligned with the interests of students

- Extensive and continuous professional development of administrative and instructional staff and faculty in each of its high school buildings, along with the assignment of individual school-based academic coaches to support and guide curriculum implementation and pedagogy and to support the transition from mixed-gender middle schools to single-gender high schools

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- Partnerships with community organizations, faith-based institutions, families, businesses and colleges/universities to provide a holistic approach to school reform

- Intensive and targeted college and career goals focused on increasing awareness of post-secondary options and careers as well as application to and enrollment in post-secondary institutions (pp. 4-10).

Preoccupation with Failure

The HRO concept of preoccupation with failure is aligned with the habit of that says "HROs don't get tricked by their own successes" (Hammond, 2002, para. 6). In examining Victory's reform work through this lens, it isn't clearly determined by any documentation reviewed for this study that Victory was or was not able to act in this capacity. Though Victory had experience in working with schools in urban communities, Victory's prior experience in school management was charter school design and operation, which is different from school reform, particularly school reform contracted under a thin management approach (Victory Schools, 2006b).

What one might assume is that given Victory's relative success in its work as a charter school design and management organization, it was able to foresee that this work in Philadelphia was different and, therefore, would require a new approach, new resources, and new ways of operation. Perhaps Victory took into account the vast differences between that work and its new task of low-performing urban high school reform under a thin management model and determined it important to develop a new, research-proven, targeted system of operation that could prove successful in this new work. In a way, that could support the notion that Victory practiced the relevant HRO concept. However, there was no documentation reviewed for this study that

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supports Victory's practice of this HRO concept.

What is documented is the performance-based structure of the contract which governed Victory's operation in Philadelphia under the diverse provider model. To surmise, Victory was contracted to increase student performance of its contracted schools as evidenced in state standardized test scores incrementally and consistently over the period of the contract (Gill et al., 2007). The approach taken by Victory to meet this performance-based contract was to focus heavily on increasing student achievement (Victory Schools, 2007). Failure to do so would result in the loss of contracts of its schools as well as limits to securing any future contracts under the diverse provider model of reform in Philadelphia (Gill et al., 2007).

As evidenced in Victory's use of systems of intentionality and extensive and continuous professional development, Victory implemented strategies that took into account its contractual obligation to increase student performance and, therefore, practiced such strategies throughout the reform phase to ensure that success was achieved and failure to increase student academic success was avoided (Victory Schools, 2007; Victory Schools, 2006b; Wright, 2006). Given this documentation, it could be deduced that Victory put forth efforts to act as an HRO due to the influences of the contract which governed its work in Fitzsimons and Rhodes High Schools.

Reluctance to Simplify Interpretations

The HRO concept of reluctance to simplify interpretations is aligned with the habit of "HRO's embrace complexity" (Hammond, 2002, para. 15). In examining Victory's reform work through this lens, it isn't clearly determined by any

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documentation reviewed for this study that Victory was or was not able to act in this capacity. It is noteworthy to highlight that under the thin management model of reform governing Victory's work in Philadelphia, the School District of Philadelphia retained critical components of school operations, as stated previously in this study. The RAND Corporation study (Gill et al., 2007) supported this notion and further stated that providers under the diverse provider model were required to follow the district's "highly centralized and cumbersome procedures" (p. 9) often governing the joint-authority ambiguity which limited the providers' authority exacerbated confusion amongst school staff, faculty, administrators, and students (Gill et al., 2007).

Keeping this in mind, the open question remains as to whether Victory saw these complexities resulting from the thin management model which governed its management of Fitzsimons and Rhodes High Schools as something to embrace with the potential of being the positive impetus for success in its reform work or something viewed as an impediment to successful reform. During the contract period, Victory (in documentation used to support its achievement results and in discussions to modify contract limitations) as well as the School District of Philadelphia (in presentations by the Office of Charter Schools and Innovation to the Philadelphia School Reform Commission and Philadelphia citizens) documented the thin management model as a possible impediment to successful reform of contracted schools (Wright, 2006).

As stated in his report, *The Impact of the Private and Public Provider Model*

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in Philadelphia School: Especially Victory Schools, Inc., Wright (2006) contended:

> Going forward, the Private/Public Partnership should allow for outside providers to have full managerial control of their schools inclusive of all services for the duration of the contracted period. We started out under the supervision of different regional superintendents and then moved to an EMO Region without any clarity in these situations. Support staff in the district must realize that there should be little difference in how the students are treated by district personnel at the various operational levels. In addition, we might want to consider better ways to staff schools in tough neighborhoods. If these at-risk schools are allowed to be partnered with the assigned EMO and managed appropriately, organizations such as Victory would, in return, completely transform and stabilize each school. (p. 5)

Furthermore, as stated in the RAND Corporation report (Gill et al., 2007) "continued district involvement in provider schools and mandated district-wide initiatives constrained provider autonomy" (p. 10). One may deduce from these aforementioned documents that the complexities faced by Victory pertaining to the joint-authority of its schools under the thin management model as it was implemented in Philadelphia was not embraced by Victory and, therefore, Victory did not act as an HRO as it relates to this concept.

Documentation does indicate that the schools contracted to the private providers were the lowest-performing schools amongst the district's portfolio of troubled schools (Gill et al., 2007). The myriad of challenges that existed in these historically low-performing schools facilitated greater complexities in the dysfunction of school operations, school climate, and other factors influencing student achievement (Wright, 2006). Under the reform contracts, tackling and addressing

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these complexities by private providers was not an option. Although not clearly

documented, Victory's work in providing professional development to its staff and

faculty, its approach to redesign and implementation of new programs within its high

schools, and its willingness to consistently assess its progress and re-engage its work

within its schools could arguably support Victory's willingness to utilize the

complexities within its contracted high schools to become the impetus for different

and proven-effective approaches to reform (Victory Schools, 2007). Further

documentation would be required to fully support such a claim for this study.

Sensitivity to Operations

The HRO concept of sensitivity to operations is aligned with the habit of

"HRO's anticipate while also knowing their limits" (Hammond, 2002, para. 18). In

examining Victory's reform work through this lens, it isn't clearly determined by

documentation reviewed for this study that Victory was or was not able to act as an

HRO in this capacity. Based on the contracts governing Victory's reform work of

Fitzsimons and Rhodes High Schools as cited earlier in this research, private

providers were limited in their management authority over the schools they were

contracted to reform (Gill et al., 2007; Wright, 2006).

Although it was noted earlier in this study (though not clearly found in

documentation) that Victory seemed to be able to use these contractual limitations as

evidenced in the form of complexities influencing its reform work to monitor its

progress and re-direct its trajectory for turnaround of Fitzsimons and Rhodes, it is as

equally unclear and undocumented that Victory was able to anticipate needed next

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steps to influence its reform in light of the limitations faced under its management contracts. The contractual limitations may or may not have influenced Victory's approach to reforming Fitzsimons and Rhodes. Outside of Wright's (2006) report entitled, "The Impact of the Private and Public Provider Model in Philadelphia School: Especially Victory Schools, Inc.", which supports Victory's ability to use the limitations of the contract to act as an HRO in this capacity, no other official documentation was found or reviewed for this study to support or refute such a finding.

Documentation does indicate that private providers were given an additional per pupil allocation ranging from $450 to $881 to perform services under the diverse provider model of reforming the lowest-performing schools amongst the district's portfolio of troubled schools (Gill et al., 2007, p. 9). Victory received $750 per pupil in additional funding under its first 5-year contract period and later received a reduction in per pupil fees, bringing its allocation to $500 per pupil (School District of Philadelphia, 2007). Victory used these dollars to finance reform initiatives not funded by individual school building budgets, such as hiring additional staff to implement reform initiatives, purchasing additional resources, contracting services for professional development and climate support, financing needed student support initiatives and programs, etc. The costs of instituting these reform initiatives (specifically at Fitzsimons) was actually greater than the per pupil allocation received by Victory for its management of its high schools for 2 straight years in 2006 and 2007 (Victory Schools, 2007; Victory Schools, 2006b).

Although not clearly documented, Victory's ability to know its limits yet anticipate its need to design initiatives to support its reform work in its high schools, as evidenced through its financial commitment securing additional resources outside of its explicit contractual mandates, could arguably be supported by Victory's work in this area for Fitzsimons and Rhodes High Schools (Victory Schools, 2007; Victory Schools, 2006b). Further documentation would be required to fully support such a claim for this study.

Commitment to Resilience

The HRO concept of commitment to resilience is aligned with the habit of "HROs let the unexpected provide the solution" (Hammond, 2002, para. 12). In examining Victory's reform work through this lens, it is somewhat determined by documentation reviewed for this study that Victory was able to act as an HRO in this capacity, specifically as it pertains to the transition of Fitzsimons and Rhodes High Schools to separate, stand-alone, single-gender high schools.

The creation of two separate stand-alone, single-gender campuses at Fitzsimons and Rhodes High Schools was unsuccessful when first attempted by Victory in the 2002-2003 academic year. This attempt to transition the schools under Victory's first Philadelphia regional director was met with resistance by the individual school communities, parents, and students (Victory Schools, 2006a). According to documentation maintained by Victory on the challenges during the first attempt, resistance was met by parents, community members, and students groups, which, as if the process was abrupt and poorly timed, lacked parental and community

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input and was insensitive to community needs and climate (Victory Schools, 2006a). As a result of resistance faced, Victory did not abandon the idea of creating single-gender campuses but instead used the data and findings from the first unsuccessful attempt to create solutions for implementation of a successful transition in the 2004-2005 academic year and under new Philadelphia regional director leadership (Victory Schools, 2007).

Victory's commitment to the single-gender transition resulted in a plan that included an extensive outreach to community members, parents, students, school staff and faculty, and political officials to inform the public of the positive research behind single-gender education, and Victory's plan to implement this model, coupled with a wall-to-wall contextualized career academy model, aligned to student interests in both schools. These outreach events were supported by Victory's advisory council comprised of local business leaders, community leaders, student transition team members, and school leadership team members and took place beginning in the late fall 2004 semester and culminated in the summer of 2005 in the form of a community day, bringing together the communities of both schools for a time of celebration in preparation for the transitions to follow in the fall 2005 semester (Victory Schools, 2005). A detailed list and timeline of some of the more critical transition activities is listed below:

1. Follow-up meeting/discussions with (community leaders) in order to determine feasibility of full gender split and effect on community: December-January 2005
2. Meeting with Fitzsimons' student transition council: January 2005

3. Preliminary status briefing/meeting with School District of Philadelphia School Management Officer in order to obtain District feedback: January 2005

4. Meeting with Rhodes' student transition council: January 2005

5. Phone calls and letters distributed to Fitzsimons' parents inviting them to February 7 meeting: January-February 2005

6. Meeting with Fitzsimons' parents (survey distributed): February 2005

7. Phone calls and letters distributed to Rhodes' parents inviting them to February 16, 2005 meeting: February 2005

8. Preliminary briefing/status update summary provided to School District of Philadelphia School Management Officer: February 2005

9. Meeting with Rhodes' parents (survey distributed): February 2005

10. Formal Proposal Submitted to School District of Philadelphia CEO: February 2005

11. Letters disseminated to feeder schools inviting parents to March 16, 2005 meeting: March 2005

12. Meeting with feeder school parents at Fitzsimons: March 2005

13. Disseminated flyers to feeder schools and community informing them of parent and community hotline regarding gender separate transition of Fitzsimons and Rhodes: March 2005. (Victory Schools, 2005, pp. 1-2)

As referenced above, it is noteworthy to mention that Victory developed and disseminated a survey amongst parents and guardians of students at Fitzsimons and Rhodes to gather their thoughts on their knowledge of the partnership between Victory and both schools as well as their preference in creating single-gender campuses. The questions contained in the survey are listed below:

- Are you familiar with the partnership between Victory Schools and Fitzsimons and between Victory Schools and Rhodes?

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- After reading the information in this letter, are you more familiar with the concept of gender separate education?
- Would you prefer that Fitzsimons be an all-boys academy and Rhodes be an all-girls academy?
- Would you prefer that Rhodes be divided into dual, gender-separate academies, one for boys and one for girls?
- Would you attend a parent/community meeting about Rhodes and Fitzsimons becoming gender separate schools? (Victory Schools, 2005, p. 2)

Resulting from Victory's review of data gathered from the first unsuccessful attempt, changes in Philadelphia regional director leadership and other key Victory administrative staff members, use of the data from the first attempt, and survey responses to spur the design the implementation of a solution to a second successful attempt, it can be supported by documentation used for this study that Victory was able to act as an HRO in relation to this concept. This documentation appears to support Victory's ability to commit to resilience, using the challenges it faced to become the impetus for the solution informing its reform work as it related to creating single-gender campuses of its contracted high schools in Philadelphia.

Deference to Expertise

The HRO concept of deference to expertise is aligned with the habit of "HRO's defer to the front line experts" (Hammond, 2002, p. 9). In examining Victory's reform work through this lens, it is more clearly determined by documentation reviewed for this study that Victory was able to act as an HRO in this capacity. In Victory's implementation of its reform strategies and systems, Victory relied heavily on leading researchers and practitioners of the respective fields to train

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and develop its school leaders, instructional team members, and its own administrative staff. As highlighted in Victory's 2007 document, "An Overview of the Past Five Years (2002-2007)", nearly 98% of its professional development trainings focused on the two primary areas of enhanced use of curriculum and instructional resources and implementation and single-gender instructional approaches and program design. The other roughly 2% of its professional development trainings provided to its staff and faculty at its Philadelphia high schools focused on leadership strategies, school climate and culture, and data-driven decision making (Victory Schools, 2007).

The professional development training sessions provided by Victory to its staff, school faculty, and administrators were conducted by noted experts in various areas. Leaders and experts in both research and practice in the areas of single-gender school design and gender learning style differences were engaged to conduct extensive and consistent trainings during and after reform (Victory Schools, 2007).

Victory also consistently engaged and utilized leading experts in the areas of curriculum and instruction to provide training to its instructional and administrative staff at its Philadelphia high schools. Additionally, as noted in Victory's records pertaining to its transformation plan of Fitzsimons and Rhodes High Schools, students, parents, community members, current teachers and administrators, and School District of Philadelphia central and regional office personnel were also consistently engaged to inform and guide the process of reform both during and after.

Victory constructed and maintained student transition teams to gather

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information about student concerns, strengths, and interests to inform its reform efforts; developed and supported a community-led advisory council comprised of local community, civic, and business leaders to inform its work and reform efforts; and facilitated and maintained school leadership teams to inform its work, guide its practices, and implement its reform work within its high schools (Victory Schools, 2006a; Victory Schools, 2007).

At the leadership helm of Victory's operation in Philadelphia, a former employee from the School District of Philadelphia who played an instrumental role in the design of the diverse provider model was recruited and hired to run its Philadelphia operation for the first year. Victory, being the only provider in Philadelphia which implemented a single-gender classroom and school design in its reform work, soon after hired a national expert in single-gender approaches to public education to manage its work (Gill et al., 2007).

This documented information of Victory's reform work in its Philadelphia high schools supports the point seen earlier of an alignment in mission and vision as well as practice as it relates to the HRO's concept pertaining to deference to expertise (Dyck, 2007; Hammond, 2002; Stringfield, 1995). Here, it is evidenced that Victory was able to act similarly to an HRO specific to this particular area in its contracted work to reform its two low-performing public urban high schools in Philadelphia.

Summary of Victory's Reform Work Through HRO Concepts Lens

In reviewing literature and documents of Victory's reform work of its low-performing public urban high schools in Philadelphia through the specific lens of

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HRO concepts, there hasn't appeared documentation that can substantiate a strong supportive argument that clearly shows Victory was able to practice all five HRO concepts and habits. With the exception of the concepts of commitment to resilience and deference to expertise, much of the documentation used to support or refute Victory's ability to act as an HRO in its work to reform its contracted Philadelphia high school isn't clearly documented but, rather, must be deduced from documentation that is not publically available or coordinated and stored in a manner that would show clear alignment to HRO concepts and habits.

Perhaps this is true due to the fact that the HRO model and concept applied to school reform was not the basis for the organizational design of Victory as a company or specifically as a school reform organization. Perhaps it could be that Victory did use the HRO model as its design structure yet did not document its reform work of Fitzsimons and Rhodes High Schools from that perspective. In fact, no found documentation written or housed by Victory, the School District of Philadelphia, or outside researchers reviewed for this study showed Victory's reform work intentionally from the HRO perspective. The formal documentation found and reviewed in the study only seems to clearly support Victory's ability to act in alignment with two of the five characteristics of HROs in its reform work – commitment to resilience and deference to expertise.

Given this finding, a look at student state assessment performance in Victory's low-performing public urban high schools will be reviewed to see if any further conclusions can be drawn in support of this study. This information, along with

results from the qualitative survey disseminated to the sample population, will hopefully provide greater insight into the study of Victory's ability as a for-profit EMO to function as an HRO in its reform work of Fitzsimons and Rhodes High Schools in Philadelphia.

Victory- Student State Assessment Academic Performance Data for Philadelphia High Schools (2002 – 2009)

As stated earlier, Victory's thin management contract to manage its high schools in Philadelphia did not provide it with full authority over all aspects of the school administration and management but, rather, segmented only portions of the reform work out as the responsibility of the EMO (Gill et al., 2007). Without having the authority to hire or fire the schools' instructional faculty, administrators, or building staff, Victory was expected to positively impact student academic performance within its managed schools. Additionally, the earlier mentioned quasi-reporting structure of principals in Victory's Philadelphia-managed schools outlined the School District as the final rating officer of school administrators, with Victory being allowed to provide input in the rating of administrators of its school. Victory's input into these ratings was not made a requirement in the consideration of the final performance rating of any administrators running a school under Victory's management in Philadelphia (Gill et al., 2007).

As with other private providers under the thin management diverse provider model of reform in Philadelphia, Victory's contractual charge to reform the schools through improvement of student performance was challenged due to the unclear

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reporting lines, particularly as it related to the principal who is, as commonly known in educational theory and practice and as stated in research, the instructional leader of the school building (Smith, 2008). Without clear lines of authority outlined and without the power of the EMOs to exert any real authority over the instructional leaders of its school buildings (a model that is characteristic of thick management), the influence over instructional implementation and student academic outcomes was challenged (Wright, 2006).

Performance data of Victory's Philadelphia high schools on the Pennsylvania state assessment gathered from Victory's 2007 unpublished document, "An Overview of the Past Five Years (2002-2007)", coupled with and compared against (for purposes of accuracy) data taken from the Pennsylvania Department of Education's (2011) website housing state assessment scores for all Pennsylvania's schools for students, is presented below. This data of students enrolled at Victory's Philadelphia high schools in the testing grades (8th grade and 11th grade) is reviewed through the lens of Victory's interventions and supports put in place to evaluate any change in student performance (negative or positive) and to determine if the interventions employed by Victory impacting on student state assessment performance data where aligned with those previously highlighted characteristics of HROs.

In reviewing this data, it is important to note some critical elements of Victory's transformative work and the School District of Philadelphia's high school redesign work during the time this data was gathered. Beginning in 2002, the School District of Philadelphia had published its plan to redesign Fitzsimons Middle School

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and Rhodes Middle School into two small feeder high schools servicing the North Philadelphia community (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2004; Victory Schools, 2007). It was at that same time that the Philadelphia School Reform Commission contracted the reform work of these two schools to Victory to address poor academic performance of students (Victory Schools, 2006b). These two large changes in the structure and management of these already low-performing schools arguably could have had an impact on student performance data on state assessments.

Additionally, the full single-gender transition of Fitzsimons and Rhodes, merging the male students from both schools into one building (Fitzsimons) and the female students from both schools into the other building (Rhodes), took place in the 2006 academic year. During this time, it is also important to note that the principal and administrative team overseeing the transition of the female students, as well as over 85% of the instructional faculty servicing the female students, remained the same and transitioned with the students while the principal and administrative team overseeing the transition of the male students changed five times over the period of the transition between 2002 and 2007 – factors over which Victory had no control under its contract (Victory Schools, 2007; Victory Schools, 2006b).

In support of the information stated in the preceding paragraphs, Tables 10-13 below show the student performance data of Victory's Philadelphia high schools on Pennsylvania state assessments by school, by grade, and by content area during the contracted management period.

Table 10

Victory's Philadelphia-Managed High School State Assessment (PSSA) Performance Data (2002-

2009) – Rhodes High School, 8[th]Grade Math and Reading

Rhodes High School (Young Women's Leadership School)

Grade 8 – math	Academic year							
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
% Advanced & Proficient	12.5	6.6	12.2	15.1	9.7	31.5	29	46.5
% Basic	21.9	23.1	24.4	25.2	23.4	29.3	30.2	21.9
% Below Basic	65.6	70.2	63.4	59.7	66.9	39.2	40.7	31.5
Grade 8 - reading	Academic year							
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
% Advanced & Proficient	9.2	21.8	23.7	29.8	23.6	41.9	41.1	54.8
% Basic	22.4	32.5	27.0	20.4	29.3	21.7	22.4	24.7
% Below Basic	68.5	45.7	49.3	49.8	47.2	36.4	36.5	20.5

Table 11

Victory's Philadelphia-Managed High School State Assessment (PSSA) Performance Data (2002-

2009) – Rhodes High School, 11th Grade Math and Reading

Rhodes High School (Young Women's Leadership School)

Grade 11 – math	Academic year			
	2006	2007	2008	2009
% Advanced & Proficient	4.3	6.6	4	14.5
% Basic	6.5	19.7	16.2	24.2
% Below Basic	89.1	73.7	80.9	61.3
Grade 11 – reading	Academic year			
	2006	2007	2008	2009
% Advanced & Proficient	10.9	21.1	14.7	37.1
% Basic	32.6	19.7	22.1	32.3
% Below Basic	56.5	59.2	63.2	30.6

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Table 12

Victory's Philadelphia-Managed High School State Assessment (PSSA) Performance Data (2002-2009) – Fitzsimons High School, 8th Grade Math and Reading

Fitzsimons High School (Young Men's Leadership School)

Grade 8 - math	Academic year							
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
% Advanced & Proficient	2.7	1.1	10.8	13.5	9.8	14.9	24.7	19.7
% Basic	10.2	6.3	18.7	25.7	19.7	15.8	19.8	27.3
% Below Basic	87.2	92.5	70.5	60.8	70.4	69.3	55.6	53.0

Grade 8 - reading	Academic year							
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
% Advanced & Proficient	8.2	10.3	21.9	17.6	9.6	20.0	23.5	17.9
% Basic	23.2	20.0	26.2	23.1	9.6	15.0	14.8	10.4
% Below Basic	68.6	69.7	51.8	59.2	80.9	65.0	61.7	71.6

Table 13

Victory's Philadelphia-Managed High School State Assessment (PSSA) Performance Data (2002-2009) – Fitzsimons High School, 11[th]Grade Math and Reading

Fitzsimons High School (Young Men's Leadership School)

Grade 11 – math	Academic year			
	2006	2007	2008	2009
% Advanced & Proficient	1.9	5.1	3.9	11.8
% Basic	0	8.5	5.9	11.8
% Below Basic	98.1	86.4	90.2	76.5
Grade 11 – reading	Academic year			
	2006	2007	2008	2009
% Advanced & Proficient	1.9	5.1	9.8	11.8
% Basic	5.8	10.2	9.8	23.5
% Below Basic	92.3	84.7	80.4	64.7

Upon a cursory review of the student state assessment performance data of both high schools in Tables 10-13 above, it can be seen that from 2002 through 2009 (years covering the contract periods of Victory's management of Rhodes and from 2002-2006 covering the period Victory managed Fitzsimons), increases in student academic performance as indicated by state assessments showed steady and incremental increases. It is important to note that Victory's management contract with Fitzsimons was eliminated by the School Reform Commission in 2008 and state assessment scores showed a slight decline in 8th grade student performance in 2009. One might deduce that the change in management negatively impacted student performance.

According to the data above, greater increases were seen across the 8th grade and 11th grade students at Rhodes than evidenced in the 8th and 11th grade students at Fitzsimons. Victory has documented this difference as resulting from the continual turnover of leadership and instructional staff that occurred at Fitzsimons High School and its challenges to enforce management authority over instructional staff under the thin management contract model (Victory Schools, 2007; Victory Schools, 2006). According to Victory, the consistent leadership and instructional staff and team which remained in place at Rhodes High School under the contract period allowed for a more consistent implementation of the Victory mission, vision and model, evidenced in clear increases of student academic performance (Victory Schools, 2007; Victory Schools, 2006b).

As seen in Tables 10-13, a clear drop in academic performance on state assessments is seen across both schools and grades in the 2006 testing year. Victory documents this decrease as a result of the creation of the single-gender campuses which took place during that same year (Victory Schools, 2007). This statement seems to be supported as scores across both schools and grades increased the following year.

In conclusion, a review of the student state assessment performance data provides some insight into Victory's ability to increase student academic performance as outlined in its management contracts of Fitzsimons and Rhodes; however, it doesn't provide much support in determining if Victory was able to act as an HRO in its reform work of Fitzsimons and Rhodes High Schools under the Philadelphia diverse provider model. It is important to reiterate here the primary purpose of this study which is not so focused on Victory's effectiveness in reform as a whole as it relates to outcomes of its privately-managed Philadelphia public high schools but rather on Victory's ability to function as a highly reliable organization, as defined by a certain set of research-based characteristics, under the diverse provider model in Philadelphia.

In order for a review of student academic performance data to more clearly support this study, documentation would have to exist that indicates an alignment of student academic performance of contracted schools with Victory's organizational design and approach to reform. Because the contracts governing the private providers under the diverse provider model of reform in Philadelphia were not drafted in a

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manner that aligned performance with organizational design and approach, it poses a challenge to drawing any solid conclusions in relation to this study. This lack of alignment and insensitivity to different reform models as reflected in management contracts also seems to support the RAND Corporation's (2007) finding that the diverse provider model of reform as implemented in Philadelphia did not provide a true opportunity to study whether different approaches as employed by various providers were more successful than others in reform of Philadelphia schools (Gill et al., 2007).

Qualitative Survey Data – Presentation and Analysis

As a final attempt to gather and review data to support this study, a qualitative survey was crafted and disseminated to individuals involved in the transformation and reform of Victory's contracted high schools to gather their opinions of Victory's ability to effectively design, implement, and sustain reform and to gather their opinions on whether Victory was able to act as an HRO in its reform work of Fitzsimons and Rhodes High Schools under the management contract in Philadelphia. Those surveyed were active members of the Victory transition team for Fitzsimons and Rhodes High Schools and were directly involved in the transformation and reform planning, implementation, review, and support (Victory Schools, 2005). Table 14 below highlights the numbers and percentages of the survey distributed to the members of the transition team.

Table 14

Qualitative Survey Distribution Data

Transition team category	Original number	Number distributed	Percentage distributed	Number returned	Percentage returned
Victory staff/administrator	8	7	88%	6	86%
School-based district staff/administrator	6	4	67%	3	75%
Student transition team members	8	4	50%	2	50%
Others involved in transition work (Community members, researchers, etc.)	4	3	75%	2	67%
Total	26	17	65%	13	76%

The statements in the distributed survey are grouped to cover two primary areas. The first 19 statements pertain primarily to looking at Victory's work in Philadelphia in the development, implementation, and sustainability of reform within its high schools as aligned to the concepts put forth in research (Datnow & Stringfield, 2000). The last five statements focus on Victory's ability to act as an HRO according to the HRO concepts and habits as aligned in the research (Dyck, 2007; Hammond, 2002). All statements are to gather participant opinions of Victory's work in reforming its Philadelphia high schools. In addition to answering the statements in the survey, participants were given the opportunity to share any

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comments or thoughts about the survey and/or Victory's reform work in Philadelphia; these were written by the respective participant at the end of the survey form. A breakdown of the survey results, viewing the data from each statement separately, is outlined in Tables 15-39 below, accompanied by an individual and summary analysis of the results.

Tables 15

EMOs as HROs Survey Results: Victory's Reform Work in Philadelphia High Schools

Survey statement 1			
The contract between Victory and the School District of Philadelphia to reform Fitzsimons and Rhodes provided Victory with the appropriate amount of authority to effectively implement successful reform under the contract terms.			
Response	Number	Percentage	Breakdown of respondents
Disagree/somewhat disagree	10	76.92	Victory staff/administrators – 6
			District staff/administrator – 1
			Student transition team member – 1
			Other (Community member, external evaluator) – 2
Agree/somewhat agree	3	23.08	District staff/administrators – 2
			Student transition team member – 1
Don't know	0	0	N/A
Totals	13	100%	100% (n=13)

Providing pretty clear responses across those surveyed, the majority (roughly 77%) disagreed/somewhat disagreed that the contract between Victory and the School District of Philadelphia to reform Fitzsimons and Rhodes provided Victory with the appropriate amount of authority to effectively implement successful reform under the contract terms. Out of the remaining respondents, roughly 23% agreed/somewhat agreed with the statement.

It is noteworthy to highlight the breakdown of the respondents in each category as well as to highlight some of the comments of respondents pertaining to

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this survey statement. Of those comprising the 77% were Victory staff/administrators and District staff/administrators having direct understanding and knowledge of the contract terms governing the reform work, two "others" having direct understanding and knowledge of the contract terms governing the reform work, and one student transition team member who had less knowledge of the contract but was heavily involved in the initial steps of the transition process. All individuals, with the exception of the student transition team member, had roles in the transformative work of Victory's Philadelphia high schools which called for a deep understanding and knowledge of the contract terms throughout their time working with Victory and the School District of Philadelphia.

When given the opportunity to provide insight as to this statement, the student transition team member and the external evaluator obliged and articulated his understanding of the contract governing Victory's work as follows:

> Before Victory took hold of our institution, no one seemed to care about what we (students) did after high school. If not for them (Victory), many of the students at Fitzsimons High School would not have even given college a shot. Victory's job was to take over the school and fix it, to implement educational values in the students, to show students that there's more to life than what they see every day.

Furthermore, the student expressed an understanding that Victory did not have the authority to hire or fire the teachers or principals of the schools. When given the opportunity to provide insight as to this statement, the external evaluator stated the following:

In my role, I observed that Victory had excellent staff/personnel; adequate resources (could have used more); yet the School District of Philadelphia provided no major positive supports. As a result, the successes experienced by Victory were limited by constraints and the Philadelphia School District's lack of collaboration and cooperation as an equal partner.

Of those comprising the 23%, two were District school-based staff/administrators having less of an understanding and knowledge of the contract governing the reform work as the job responsibilities of these respondents did not warrant an intimate knowledge of such details and one student transition team member. None of these individuals elected to provide any further comment as to their understanding of this statement or the contract governing the reform work of Victory over its Philadelphia high schools.

Table 16

EMOs as HROs Survey Results: Victory's Reform Work in Philadelphia High Schools

Survey statement 2			

The contract between Victory and the School District of Philadelphia to reform Fitzsimons and Rhodes provided Victory with the appropriate amount of authority to effectively sustain successful reform under the contract terms.

Response	Number	Percentage	Breakdown
Disagree/somewhat disagree	9	69.23	Victory staff/administrators – 6
			District staff/administrators – 1
			Other – 2
Agree/somewhat agree	4	30.77	District staff/administrators – 2
			Student transition team members – 2
Don't know	0	0	N/A
Totals	13	100%	100% (n=13)

Providing pretty clear responses across those surveyed, the majority (roughly 69.5%) disagreed/somewhat disagreed that the contract between Victory and the School District of Philadelphia to reform Fitzsimons and Rhodes provided Victory with the appropriate amount of authority to effectively sustain successful reform under the contract terms. The remaining number of respondents (31%) agreed/somewhat agreed with the statement.

It is noteworthy to highlight the breakdown of the respondents in each category as well as to highlight some of the comments of respondents pertaining to this survey statement. Of those comprising the 69% were Victory staff/administrators

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having direct understanding and knowledge of the contract terms governing the reform work and one district staff/administrator also having direct understanding and knowledge of the contract terms governing the reform work. Each of these individuals' roles in the transformative work of Victory's Philadelphia high schools called for a deep understanding and knowledge of the contract terms throughout their time working with Victory and the School District of Philadelphia.

The two respondents classified as "other," one who was a community member having direct understanding and knowledge of the contract terms governing the reform work and the other who was an external evaluator having direct understanding and knowledge of the contract terms governing the reform work, also disagreed/somewhat disagreed with the statement. In this instance and to provide further context, it is important to refer back to the previously quoted insight provided by the member classified as "other," who stated his understanding of the contract which governed the reform work as an accurate or inaccurate understanding of the contract terms can influence one's response to statements relating to the contract.

Of those comprising the 31%, two were District staff/administrators having less of an understanding and knowledge of the contract governing the reform work as the job responsibilities of these respondents did not warrant an intimate knowledge of such details and the two student transition team members, both of whom did not have direct understanding and knowledge of the contract terms. In this instance and to provide further context as well, it is important to refer back to the previously quoted insight provided by the one student transition team member, who stated his

understanding of the contract which governed the reform work as an accurate or

inaccurate understanding of the contract terms can influence one's response to

statements relating to the contract.

Table 17

EMOs as HROs Survey Results: Victory's Reform Work in Philadelphia High Schools

Survey statement 3			
The contract between Victory and the School District of Philadelphia to reform Fitzsimons and Rhodes provided Victory with the appropriate amount of human and fiscal resources to effectively implement successful reform under the contract terms.			
Response	Number	Percentage	Breakdown
Disagree/somewhat disagree	8	61.54	Victory staff/administrators – 5
			District staff/administrators – 1
			Other – 2
Agree/somewhat agree	5	38.46	Victory staff/administrators – 1
			District staff/administrators – 2
			Student transition team member – 2
Don't know	0	0	N/A
Totals	13	100%	100% (n=13)

Providing split responses across survey participants to this statement, it is important to understand that not all respondents were knowledgeable of the fiscal resources allocated to Victory to implement its reform work in Philadelphia or that those fiscal resources were the driving factor determining the staffing of Victory administrative and staff personnel within its Philadelphia high schools. Out of all survey respondents, 8 individuals were knowledgeable of the per pupil allocation given to Victory under the contract (5 Victory staff/administrators, 1 District staff/administrator, and the 2 respondents classified as "other"). Furthermore, those

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eight individuals shared the same response: disagree/somewhat disagree (roughly

61.5%). The other survey respondents, all who responded agree/somewhat agree

(38%), stated that they had no knowledge of the per pupil allocation amount.

Table 18

EMOs as HROs Survey Results: Victory's Reform Work in Philadelphia High Schools

Survey statement 4			
The contract between Victory and the School District of Philadelphia to reform Fitzsimons and Rhodes provided Victory with the appropriate amount of human and fiscal resources to effectively sustain successful reform under the contract terms.			
Response	Number	Percentage	Breakdown
Disagree/somewhat disagree	8	61.54	Victory staff/administrators – 5
			District staff/administrators – 1
			Other – 2
Agree/somewhat agree	5	38.46	Victory staff/administrators – 1
			District staff/administrators – 2
			Student transition team members – 2
Don't know	0	0	N/A
Totals	13	100%	100% (n=13)

Providing split responses across survey participants to this statement as well, it is important to reiterate and understand that not all respondents were knowledgeable of the fiscal resources allocated to Victory to implement its reform work in Philadelphia or that those fiscal resources were the driving factor determining the staffing of Victory administrative and staff personnel within its Philadelphia high schools. Out of all survey respondents, 8 individuals were knowledgeable of the per pupil allocation given to Victory under the contract (5 Victory staff/administrators, 1 District staff/administrator, and the 2 respondents classified as "other"). Furthermore,

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those eight individuals shared the same response: disagree/somewhat disagree

(roughly 61.5%). The other survey respondents, all who responded agree/somewhat

agree (38%), stated that they had no knowledge of the per pupil allocation amount.

Table 19

EMOs as HROs Survey Results: Victory's Reform Work in Philadelphia High Schools

Survey statement 5			
Victory's presence and involvement in the reform of Fitzsimons and Rhodes had a positive impact on the schools' faculty and staff members, students, and community.			
Response	Number	Percentage	Breakdown
Disagree/somewhat disagree	0	0	N/A
Agree/somewhat agree	13	100	All categories
Don't know	0	0	N/A
Totals	13	100	100% (n=13)

In response to this survey statement, every participant across all categories responded the same. Given these results, it can be said that Victory's presence and involvement in the reform of its Philadelphia high schools was viewed as having a positive impact on the members of the school community, as seen by those involved in the transformation work who responded to this survey.

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Table 20

EMOs as HROs Survey Results: Victory's Reform Work in Philadelphia High Schools

Survey statement 6			
Victory's presence and involvement in the reform of Fitzsimons and Rhodes had a lasting impact on the schools' faculty and staff members, students, and community.			
Response	Number	Percentage	Breakdown
Disagree/somewhat disagree	0	0	N/A
Agree/somewhat agree	12	92.31	Victory staff/administrators – 6
			District staff/administrators – 2
			Student transition team members – 2
			Other - 2
Don't know	1	7.69	District staff/administrators – 1
Totals	13	100%	100% (n=13)

A clear majority of respondents (92.31%) expressed that they agree/somewhat agree with this survey statement, with only 7.69 expressing a response of "don't know." It is important to note that none of the respondents expressed disagreement/somewhat disagreement with this statement. Given these results, it can be inferred that the overwhelming majority of respondents agree/somewhat agree with the statement that Victory's presence and involvement in the reform of Fitzsimons and Rhodes had a lasting impact on the schools' faculty and staff members, students, and community.

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Table 21

EMOs as HROs Survey Results: Victory's Reform Work in Philadelphia High Schools

Survey statement 7			
The School District of Philadelphia put forth every possible effort to collaborate with Victory to ensure that the reform efforts focused on Fitzsimons and Rhodes would culminate in a better educational environment for families and students within the schools' communities.			
Response	Number	Percentage	Breakdown
Disagree/somewhat disagree	10	76.92	Victory staff/administrators – 6
			District staff/administrators – 2
			Others – 2
Agree/somewhat agree	3	23.08	District staff/administrators – 1
			Student transition team members – 2
Don't know	0	0	N/A
Totals	13	100%	100% (n=13)

The solid majority (roughly 77%) disagreed/somewhat disagreed with the statement that the School District of Philadelphia put forth every possible effort to collaborate with Victory to ensure that the reform efforts focused on Fitzsimons and Rhodes would culminate in a better educational environment for families and students within the schools' communities. Out of the remaining respondents, roughly 23% agreed/somewhat agreed. Given these results, it can be inferred that the School District of Philadelphia did not put forth every possible effort to collaborate with Victory to ensure that the reform efforts focused on Fitzsimons and Rhodes would culminate in a better educational environment for families and students within the

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schools' communities as seen by those involved in the transformation work who responded to this survey.

Table 22

EMOs as HROs Survey Results: Victory's Reform Work in Philadelphia High Schools

Survey statement 8

Victory put forth every possible effort to collaborate with the School District of Philadelphia to ensure that the reform efforts focused on Fitzsimons and Rhodes would culminate in a better educational environment for families and students within the schools' communities.

Response	Number	Percentage	Breakdown
Disagree/somewhat disagree	0	0	N/A
Agree/somewhat agree	13	100	All categories
Don't know	0	0	N/A
Totals	13	100%	100% (n=13)

In response to this survey statement, every participant across all categories agreed/somewhat agreed with the statement. Given these results, it can be said that Victory put forth every possible effort to collaborate with the School District of Philadelphia to ensure that the reform efforts focused on Fitzsimons and Rhodes would culminate in a better educational environment for families and students within the schools' communities, as seen by those involved in the transformation work who responded to this survey.

Table 23

EMOs as HROs Survey Results: Victory's Reform Work in Philadelphia High Schools

Survey statement 9			
The School District of Philadelphia did everything within its power under the contracts governing Victory's work with Fitzsimons and Rhodes to ensure that Victory was able to implement its reform model for the ultimate goal of school and student success.			
Response	Number	Percentage	Breakdown
Disagree/somewhat disagree	6	53.84	Victory staff/administrators – 4
			District staff/administrators – 1
			Other – 2
Agree/somewhat agree	5	38.46	Victory staff/administrators – 1
			District staff/administrators – 2
			Student transition team members – 2
Don't know	1	7.69	Victory staff/administrators – 1
Totals	13	100%	100% (n=13)

Although somewhat split across surveyed participants, the majority (roughly 54%) disagreed/somewhat disagreed with the statement that the School District of Philadelphia did everything within its power under the contracts governing Victory's work with Fitzsimons and Rhodes to ensure that Victory was able to implement its reform model for the ultimate goal of school and student success. Out of the other respondents, 38.46% agreed and 7.69% of respondents expressed a response of "don't know." Although the data shows a slight majority of respondents shared the same feeling about this statement, to make a more valid determination to this statement, it

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would be necessary to gather more qualitative context from those surveyed. Based on

the responses to this statement, the data could arguably render inconclusive.

Table 24

EMOs as HROs Survey Results: Victory's Reform Work in Philadelphia High Schools

Survey statement 10

The School District of Philadelphia did everything within its power under the contracts governing Victory's work with Fitzsimons and Rhodes to ensure that Victory was able to sustain its reform model for the ultimate goal of school and student success.

Response	Number	Percentage	Breakdown
Disagree/somewhat disagree	9	69.23	Victory staff/administrators – 5
			District staff/administrators – 2
			Other – 2
Agree/somewhat agree	3	23.08	District staff/administrators – 1
			Student transition team members – 2
Don't know	1	7.69	Victory staff/administrators – 1
Totals	13	100%	100% (n=13)

Although somewhat split across respondents, the large majority (roughly 69.5%) disagreed/somewhat disagreed with the statement that the School District of Philadelphia did everything within its power under the contracts governing Victory's work with Fitzsimons and Rhodes to ensure that Victory was able to sustain its reform model for the ultimate goal of school and student success. Out of the other respondents, 23.08% agreed/somewhat agreed, and 7.69% expressed a response "don't know." Given these results, it can be inferred that the School District of Philadelphia did not do everything within its power under the contracts governing Victory's work with Fitzsimons and Rhodes to ensure that Victory was able to sustain

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its reform model for the ultimate goal of school and student success.as seen by those

involved in the transformation work who responded to this survey.

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Table 25

EMOs as HROs Survey Results: Victory's Reform Work in Philadelphia High Schools

Survey statement 11			
Victory did everything within its power under the contracts governing its work with Fitzsimons and Rhodes to ensure that it was able to implement its reform model for the ultimate goal of school and student success.			
Response	Number	Percentage	Breakdown
Disagree/somewhat disagree	0	0	N/A
Agree/somewhat agree	13	100	All categories
Don't know	0	0	N/A
Totals	13	100%	100% (n=13)

In response to this survey statement, every participant across all categories agreed/somewhat agreed with the statement. Given these results, it can be said that within its power per the contract governing its work, Victory did everything possible to ensure the reform work was implemented for the ultimate goal of student and school success, as seen by those involved in the transformation work who responded to this survey.

Table 26

EMOs as HROs Survey Results: Victory's Reform Work in Philadelphia High Schools

Survey statement 12			

Victory did everything within its power under the contracts governing its work with Fitzsimons and Rhodes to ensure that it was able to sustain its reform model for the ultimate goal of school and student success.

Response	Number	Percentage	Breakdown
Disagree/somewhat disagree	0	0	N/A
Agree/somewhat agree	13	100	All categories
Don't know	0	0	N/A
Totals	13	100%	100% (n=13)

In response to this survey statement, every participant across all categories agreed/somewhat agreed with the statement. Given these results, it can be said that within its power per the contract governing its work, Victory did everything possible to ensure the reform work was sustainable for the ultimate goal of student and school success, as seen by those involved in the transformation work who responded to this survey.Table 28

EMOs as HROs Survey Results: Victory's Reform Work in Philadelphia High Schools

Survey statement 13			

Parties necessary to positively implement reform for Fitzsimons and Rhodes (District and school administrators, teachers, students, parents, EMO administrators, policy makers, design teams) were actively involved in the co-construction of reform throughout all stages of development.

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Response	Number	Percentage	Breakdown
Disagree/somewhat disagree	6	46.155	Victory staff/administrators – 2
			District staff/administrators – 1
			Student transition team members – 1
			Others – 2
Agree/somewhat agree	6	46.155	Victory staff/administrators – 3
			District staff/administrators – 2
			Student transition team members – 1
Don't know	1	7.69	Victory staff/administrators – 1
Totals	13	100%	100% (n=13)

In response to this survey statement, responses were split across categories with an even split across two responses (roughly 46% disagreed/somewhat disagreed and 46% agreed/somewhat agreed). It is important to note the variation of categories across responses to this statement. There is almost an even representation of respondent categories across each response. From these results, it can be inferred that involvement in the design (length of time involved, role, level of involvement, involvement in none/some/all, etc.) throughout the reform stages would impact one's response to this statement. However, to make a more valid determination to this statement, it would be necessary to gather more qualitative context from those surveyed. Based on the responses to this statement, the data renders inconclusive.

Table 29

EMOs as HROs Survey Results: Victory's Reform Work in Philadelphia High Schools

Survey statement 14			

Parties necessary to positively implement reform for Fitzsimons and Rhodes (District and school administrators, teachers, students, parents, EMO administrators, policy makers, design teams) were actively involved in the co-construction of reform throughout some stages of development.

Response	Number	Percentage	Breakdown
Disagree/somewhat disagree	7	53.85	Victory staff/administrators – 3
			District staff/administrators – 2
			Student transition team members – 1
			Other – 1
Agree/somewhat agree	6	46.15	Victory staff/administrators – 3
			District staff/administrators – 1
			Student transition team members – 1
			Other – 1
Don't know	0	0	N/A
Totals	13	100%	100% (n=13)

In response to this survey statement, responses were split across categories, with the majority (53.85%) disagreeing/somewhat disagreeing and 46.15% agreeing/somewhat agreeing. It is important to note the variation of categories across responses to this statement. There is almost an even representation of respondent categories across each response. From these results, it can be inferred that involvement in the design (length of time involved, role, level of involvement, involvement in none/some/all, etc.) throughout the reform stages would impact one's

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response to this statement. However, to make a more valid determination to this statement, it would be necessary to gather more qualitative context from those surveyed. Based on the responses to this statement, the data renders inconclusive.

Table 30

EMOs as HROs Survey Results: Victory's Reform Work in Philadelphia High Schools

Survey statement 15			
Parties necessary to positively implement reform for Fitzsimons and Rhodes (District and school administrators, teachers, students, parents, EMO administrators, policy makers, design teams) were not actively involved in the co-construction of reform throughout its stages of development.			
Response	Number	Percentage	Breakdown
Disagree/somewhat disagree	8	61.54	Victory staff/administrators – 4
			District staff/administrators – 3
			Student transition team members – 1
Agree/somewhat agree	3	23.08	Victory staff/administrators – 1
			Others – 2
Don't know	2	15.38	Victory staff/administrators – 1
			Student transition team members – 1
Totals	13	100%	100% (n=13)

In response to this survey statement, the majority of respondents (61.54%) disagree/somewhat disagree. It is important to note that out of these respondents, all were directly involved in some aspects of the design of the reform efforts and work. The three respondents that agreed/somewhat disagreed with the statement were not either directly nor indirectly involved in the initial stages of design but, rather, became engaged at least a year or so later in the process. Of the two respondents that expressed a "don't know" response, the Victory staff/administrator was not yet

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employed with the company during the time of reform design while the student transition team member was engaged in the reform work later in the process.

From these results, it can be inferred that involvement in the design (length of time involved, role, level of involvement, involvement in some/none/all, etc.) throughout the reform stages would impact one's response to this statement. Additionally, it can be said that according to the majority of responses, parties necessary to positively implement reform for Fitzsimons and Rhodes (District and school administrators, teachers, students, parents, EMO administrators, policy makers, design teams) were actively involved in the co-construction of reform throughout its stages of development.

Table 31

EMOs as HROs Survey Results: Victory's Reform Work in Philadelphia High Schools

Survey statement 16			

Parties necessary to positively implement reform for Fitzsimons and Rhodes (District and school administrators, teachers, students, parents, EMO administrators, policy makers, design teams) were actively involved in the co-construction of reform throughout all stages of implementation.

Response	Number	Percentage	Breakdown
Disagree/somewhat disagree	5	38.465	Victory staff/administrators – 3
			Others – 2
Agree/somewhat agree	6	46.155	Victory staff/administrators – 2
			District staff/administrators – 3
			Student transition team members – 1
Don't know	2	15.38	Victory staff/administrators – 1
			Student transition team members – 1
Totals	13	100%	100% (n=13)

In response to this survey statement, responses were closely split across two categories (38.46% disagreed/somewhat disagreed, and 46.15% agreed/somewhat agreed). It is important to note the variation of categories across responses to this statement. There is almost an even representation of respondent categories across each response. From these results, it can be inferred that involvement in the implementation (length of time involved, role, level of involvement, involvement in none/some/all, etc.) throughout the reform stages would impact one's response to this statement; however, to make a more valid determination to this statement, it would be

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necessary to gather more qualitative context from those surveyed. Based on the

responses to this statement, the data renders inconclusive.

Table 32

EMOs as HROs Survey Results: Victory's Reform Work in Philadelphia High Schools

Survey statement 17			

Parties necessary to positively implement reform for Fitzsimons and Rhodes (District and school administrators, teachers, students, parents, EMO administrators, policy makers, design teams) were actively involved in the co-construction of reform throughout some stages of implementation.

Response	Number	Percentage	Breakdown
Disagree/somewhat disagree	3	23.08	Victory staff/administrators – 1
			District staff/administrators – 1
			Other – 1
Agree/somewhat agree	10	76.92	Victory staff/administrators – 5
			District staff/administrators – 2
			Student transition team members – 2
			Other – 1
Don't know	0	0	N/A
Totals	13	100%	100% (n=13)

In response to this survey statement, the overwhelming majority of responses agreed/somewhat agreed while only 23.08% of remaining respondents disagreed/somewhat disagreed. Even with this majority split, it is important to note the variation of categories across responses to this statement. From these results, it can be inferred that involvement in the implementation (length of time involved, role, level of involvement, involvement in some/none/all, etc.) throughout the reform stages would impact one's response to this statement. Based on the responses to this statement, it can be inferred that parties necessary to positively implement reform for

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Fitzsimons and Rhodes (District and school administrators, teachers, students, parents, EMO administrators, policy makers, design teams) were actively involved in the co-construction of reform throughout some stages of implementation according to those surveyed.

Table 33

EMOs as HROs Survey Results: Victory's Reform Work in Philadelphia High Schools

Survey Statement 18			
Parties necessary to positively implement reform for Fitzsimons and Rhodes (District and school administrators, teachers, students, parents, EMO administrators, policy makers, design teams) were not actively involved in the co-construction of reform throughout its stages of implementation.			
Response	Number	Percentage	Breakdown
Disagree/somewhat disagree	9	69.23	Victory staff/administrators – 4
			District staff/administrators – 3
			Student transition team members – 2
Agree/somewhat agree	4	30.77	Victory staff/administrators – 2
			Others – 2
Don't know	0	0	N/A
Totals	13	100%	100% (n=13)

In response to this survey statement, the majority of respondents (69.23%) disagreed/somewhat disagreed. It is important to note that out of these respondents, all were directly involved in some aspects of the implementation of the reform efforts and work. Three of the four respondents that agreed/somewhat agreed with the statement were neither directly nor indirectly involved in the stages of implementation but, rather, became engaged at least a year or so later in the process.

From these results, it can be inferred that involvement in the implementation (length of time involved, role, level of involvement, involvement in some/none/all, etc.) throughout the reform stages would impact one's response to this statement.

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Additionally, it can be inferred that parties necessary to positively implement reform for Fitzsimons and Rhodes (District and school administrators, teachers, students, parents, EMO administrators, policy makers, design teams) were actively involved in the co-construction of reform throughout its stages of implementation.

Table 34

EMOs as HROs Survey Results: Victory's Reform Work in Philadelphia High Schools

Survey statement 19			

The work of Victory and the School District of Philadelphia to reform Fitzsimons and Rhodes was done in a way that would facilitate positive sustainable reforms beyond the contracted term of Victory's involvement in Philadelphia.

Response	Number	Percentage	Breakdown
Disagree/somewhat disagree	9	69.23	Victory staff/administrators – 5
			District staff/administrators – 2
			Others – 2
Agree/somewhat agree	4	30.77	Victory staff/administrators – 1
			District staff/administrators – 1
			Student transition team members – 2
Don't know	0	0	N/A
Totals	13	100%	100% (n=13)

In response to this survey statement, respondents were somewhat split across categories with the large majority (69.23%) disagreeing/somewhat disagreeing with the statement. Based on the responses, it can be inferred that the work of Victory and the School District of Philadelphia to reform Fitzsimons and Rhodes was not done in a way that would facilitate positive sustainable reforms beyond the contracted term of Victory's involvement in Philadelphia, as seen by those involved in the transformation work who responded to this survey.

Table 35

EMOs as HROs Survey Results: Victory's Reform Work in Philadelphia High Schools

Survey statement 20			
Under the contract terms governing Victory's reform work at Fitzsimons and Rhodes, Victory was able to effectively learn from the challenges it faced and use those lessons to implement improved reform strategies for school and student success.			
Response	Number	Percentage	Breakdown
Disagree/somewhat disagree	0	0	N/A
Agree/somewhat agree	13	100	Victory staff/administrators – 6
			District staff/administrators – 3
			Student transition team members – 2
			Other – 2
Don't know	0	0	N/A
Totals	13	100%	100% (n=13)

In response to this survey statement, 100% across all categories agreed/somewhat agreed with the statement. Given these results, it can be said that aligned to HRO concepts and characteristics, under the contract terms governing Victory's reform work at Fitzsimons and Rhodes, Victory was able to effectively learn from the challenges it faced and use those lessons to implement improved reform strategies for school and student success, as seen by those involved in the transformation work who responded to this survey.

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Table 36

EMOs as HROs Survey Results: Victory's Reform Work in Philadelphia High Schools

Survey statement 21			
Under the contract terms governing Victory's reform work, Victory was able to effectively utilize the challenges it faced to be the impetus for constructing and implementing solutions for the reform of Fitzsimons and Rhodes.			
Response	Number	Percentage	Breakdown
Disagree/somewhat disagree	0	0	N/A
Agree/somewhat agree	13	100	Victory staff/administrators – 6
			District staff/administrators – 3
			Student transition team members – 2
			Others – 2
Don't know	0	0	N/A
Totals	13	100%	100% (n=13)

In response to this survey statement, 100% of respondents across all categories agreed/somewhat agreed with the statement. Given these results, it can be said that aligned to HRO concepts and characteristics, under the contract terms governing Victory's reform work, Victory was able to effectively utilize the challenges it faced to be the impetus for constructing and implementing solutions for the reform of Fitzsimons and Rhodes, as seen by those involved in the transformation work who responded to this survey.

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Table 37

EMOs as HROs Survey Results: Victory's Reform Work in Philadelphia High Schools

Survey statement 22			

Victory was able to effectively utilize its own organizational complexity (diversity of personnel, diverse network of resources, vast array of experiences, for-profit organizational structure, etc.) to propel it to greater adaptability under the periodic contractual and policy changes during its reform work with Fitzsimons and Rhodes in Philadelphia.

Response	Number	Percentage	Breakdown
Disagree/somewhat disagree	1	7.69	District staff/administrators – 1
Agree/somewhat agree	12	92.31	Victory staff/administrators – 6
			District staff/administrators – 2
			Student transition team members – 2
			Others – 2
Don't know	0	0	N/A
Totals	13	100%	100% (n=13)

In response to this survey statement, the overwhelming majority of respondents (92.31%) expressed agreement/somewhat agreement with the statement. Only 7.69% (n=1) respondent disagreed/somewhat disagreed. That respondent was a district staff/administrator whose job responsibilities did not warrant a need to understand or have knowledge of several factors in the statement, such as contractual and policy changes governing the reform work and Victory's organizational structure. Given these results, it can be said that aligned to HRO concepts and characteristics, Victory was able to effectively utilize its own organizational complexity (diversity of

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personnel, diverse network of resources, vast array of experiences, for-profit organizational structure, etc.) to propel it to greater adaptability under the periodic contractual and policy changes during its reform work with Fitzsimons and Rhodes in Philadelphia, as seen by those involved in the transformation work who responded to this survey.

Table 38

EMOs as HROs Survey Results: Victory's Reform Work in Philadelphia High Schools

Survey statement 23

Victory practiced a consistent concern with creating stability in its reform of Fitzsimons and Rhodes in Philadelphia, questioned its assumptions pertaining to its own successes and reported problems internally as well as externally, and facilitated a climate for its higher-level administrators to trust their gut feelings in their reform work.

Response	Number	Percentage	Breakdown
Disagree/somewhat disagree	0	0	N/A
Agree/somewhat agree	13	100	Victory staff/administrators – 6
			District staff/administrators – 3
			Student transition team members – 2
			Others – 2
Don't know	0	0	N/A
Totals	13	100%	100% (n=13)

In response to this survey statement, 100% of respondents across all categories agreed with the statement. Given these results, it can be said that aligned to HRO concepts and characteristics, Victory practiced a consistent concern with creating stability in its reform of Fitzsimons and Rhodes in Philadelphia, questioned its assumptions pertaining to its own successes, reported problems internally as well as externally, and facilitated a climate for its higher-level administrators to trust their gut feelings in their reform work, as seen by those involved in the transformation work who responded to this survey.

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Table 39

EMOs as HROs Survey Results: Victory's Reform Work in Philadelphia High Schools

Survey statement 24

Victory was able to gather and trust information from those on the front-line of their reform work of Fitzsimons and Rhodes (Victory school-based administrators, principals, assistant principals, faculty, school-based staff, students, parents/guardians, community members, etc.) and use this information as well as empower those individuals to impact its reform trajectory.

Response	Number	Percentage	Breakdown
Disagree/somewhat disagree	1	7.69	Victory staff/administrators – 1
Agree/somewhat agree	11	84.62	Victory staff/administrators – 5
			District staff/administrators – 2
			Student transition team members – 2
			Others – 2
Don't know	1	7.69	District staff/administrators – 1
Totals	13	100%	100% (n=13)

In response to this survey statement, all but two participants (84.62%) across all categories agreed/somewhat agreed with the statement, with one Victory staff/administrator disagreeing/somewhat disagreeing and one District staff/administrator expressing a lack of knowledge regarding the statement. The one Victory staff/administrator (representing only 16.6% of the total number of Victory staff/administrators surveyed) that disagreed with the statement did not provide further insight for the response. Given these results, it can be said that aligned to HRO concepts and characteristics, Victory was able to gather and trust information

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from those on the front-line of its reform work of Fitzsimons and Rhodes (Victory school-based administrators, principals, assistant principals, faculty, school-based staff, students, parents/guardians, community members, etc.) and use this information as well as empower those individuals to impact its reform trajectory, as seen by those involved in the transformation work who responded to this survey.

Summary of Qualitative Survey Results

According to survey results, one's knowledge of the contract terms governing Victory's reform work in its Philadelphia high schools seemed to influence responses to certain statements in the survey. Knowledge of Victory's management contract appeared to be more common amongst specific groups surveyed, such as Victory staff/administrators, District staff/administrators, and those classified as "other." The large majority of individuals across these categories had some level of knowledge and understanding of the contract terms which governed Victory's reform work of its Philadelphia high schools and tended to have more common responses to survey statements.

Those individuals less informed (or perhaps somewhat misinformed) of the specifics of the management contract were the student transition team members and individuals (one Victory staff/administrator and two District staff/administrators) whose job responsibilities and whose involvement with the reform efforts and work required less of a need for knowledge of the contract terms (Victory Schools, 2005). Individuals across these categories tended to have more common responses to survey questions as well.

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It is important to note that each surveyed participant was provided the opportunity to provide additional information to qualify his/her responses to some or all of the survey statements. Only 4 of the participants did. This additional context provided valuable information for the analysis of some survey responses. Had more participants done so, survey results may have come out differently, perhaps impacting some or all of the statements rendered inconclusive in this survey.

For the first 19 survey statements pertaining to Victory's work in Philadelphia in the development, implementation, and sustainability of reform within its high schools, determining factors that influenced responses across categories were contract knowledge and level of involvement in the reform work (length of time involved, role of involvement, stages of involvement, etc.). Responses varied more often amongst statements about reform sustainability, with somewhat less variation of responses amongst statements about reform development and implementation.

A noteworthy fact to mention is that across categories, statements pertaining to Victory's ability, effort, and commitment to cooperate and collaborate with the School District for effective reform were almost always viewed commonly in support of Victory's willingness to work toward positive reforms. When analyzing responses similar to statements about the School District's ability, effort, and commitment to cooperate and collaborate with Victory for effective reform, answers seemed to support the School District of Philadelphia's lack of willingness to work toward positive reforms, seeing some commonality across categories.

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For the last five statements focusing on Victory's ability to act as an HRO in its Philadelphia high school reform work according to HRO concepts and characteristics, responses tended to be more common across categories in support of Victory's ability to act as an HRO in its reform work. Similar to the first set of questions, surveyed participant responses were varied, albeit less, amongst statements about sustainability. Overall, survey responses to the last five statements tend to support earlier research that Victory was able to act as an HRO in its Philadelphia high school reform work in the majority of HRO concepts and characteristics.

Chapter III

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

What factors contribute to the ability or inability of for-profit EMOs to function as HROs in the reform work of low-performing, urban public high schools under the contracted school reform model? According to the literature, one critical factor is the school reform model design itself. As mentioned earlier, both the RAND Corporation study (Gill et al., 2007) and Wright's (2006) report supported this notion. The Rand Corporation study stated that providers under the diverse provider model of school reform in Philadelphia were required to follow "highly centralized and cumbersome procedures" (p. 9) of the School District of Philadelphia which limited the providers' ability to implement reform. These limitations were a result of the contracts provided to the EMOs under the thin management model of reform implemented in Philadelphia (Gill et al., 2007). This finding is also supported in the analysis of the qualitative survey responses in this study.

What specific factors impacted upon the success and challenges achieved and faced by Victory in its reform work of two low-performing, urban public high schools in Philadelphia under the state takeover of Philadelphia's public schools and the contracted school reform model? Similar to the question above, the school reform model of thin management governing Victory's contract to reform its Philadelphia high schools influenced its success and posed challenges to implementation and sustainability. The quasi-management, joint reporting structure of school district

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administrators and personnel at both of Victory's Philadelphia high schools impacted upon Victory's ability to successfully implement its reform model. Although a review of data and survey results showed that Victory was able to effectively act as an HRO aligned to the majority of HRO concepts, full implementation and sustainability to obtain highly successful results were negatively impacted by the design of the reform model itself.

How did these factors (overarching as well as specific) positively or negatively influence the ability of Victory to function as a HRO in the work of low-performing urban public high school reform in Philadelphia? The thin management model of school reform governing the contracted work of Victory's Philadelphia high schools negatively influenced Victory's full ability to act as a HRO. A critical part of what defines a successful HRO is not only the approach it takes in its work but the results it achieves from implementing that approach (LaPorte & Consolini, 1991). The thin management contracts governing Victory's work hindered both its ability to assume a full HRO approach aligned to all concepts as well as the results achieved.

How must these factors interact and operate so that for-profit EMOs can function as HROs in the work of low-performing urban high school reform in Philadelphia and other similarly-challenged districts? Factors that govern school reform of for-profit EMOs should interact collaboratively and cooperatively from the same initial HRO premise that every critically important function of an HRO must work correctly the first time, every time to avoid catastrophe (Datnow & Stringfield, 2000, p. 6). Both public and private sector groups involved in school reform should

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see themselves as equal partners and must interact and operate under this governing premise to ensure that as equal partners in school reform work, both groups function as HROs—becoming "remarkably reliable in doing a few important things while avoiding catastrophic failures in a few critical areas" (Datnow & Stringfield, 2000, p. 6).

Recommendations

This executive position paper proposes recommendations for designing reform models between public and private sectors dedicated to improving school reform work in low performing urban high schools to be implemented and sustained. Based on the content in this executive position paper, the following recommendations are suggested to public and private sector groups when designing school reform models for low-performing urban public high schools.

Recommendation 1: Align the reform models of low-performing urban high schools with the models of high reliability organizations. As stated previously in the research, HROs are organizations that govern high-stakes work, such as air traffic control, health care organizations, nuclear power plants, and military/armed forces organizations, because of the high-stakes nature of the risks involved in minimizing mistakes and operating correctly each time, every time. Without a commitment to HRO concepts and characteristics, involvement in high-stakes industries such as those listed above can bring about severe catastrophe with far-reaching implications to the larger society and well as those directly involved (Datnow & Stringfield, 2000).

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Further common to HROs is the fact that each operates in "an unforgiving social and political environment, an environment rich with the potential for error, where the scale of consequences precludes learning through experimentation" (Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 1991, p. 32). HROs are organizations needed to manage life or death situations.

When examining the state and condition of public education today, specifically in the high schools of America, it has been argued that the urgency to reform the nation's educational system for the positive impacting of our current society and future generations is high-stakes work (Quint et al., 2008). This nation's human capital represented in the numbers of public high school youth cannot be ignored. Furthermore, these countless numbers of youth are rapidly approaching the final stages in their public education journey where they will soon be expected to transition from childhood to adulthood, with the added expectation that they can adequately function in a larger society that requires academic, social, emotional, and developmental levels of competence and independence. Without an urgent effort to reform low-performing public high schools and increase student and school achievement now, America's future can, and will be, severely impacted in catastrophic ways.

The concepts and characteristics as indicated in literature about HROs are feasible and transferable approaches to be considered in the nation's efforts to developing, implementing, and sustaining successful reform strategies for low-performing urban public high school education. The stakes in successfully reforming

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public high school education are equally as high; the timeframe for those students enrolled is quickly drawing short, and the implications are, arguably, more far-reaching than any other industry.

Those groups in our society charged with the task of designing school reform models ought to consider taking a deep look into the design and function of HROs and consider re-constructing reform models aligned to organizational structures and practices of HROs, particularly for high schools in need of reform. When taking this approach and when determining which public and private organizations will be involved in the reform work, factors which can influence successful implementation of the structure and practice ought to only be considered. Whether or not an organization is for-profit or not-for-profit should not have influence over involvement if it has no impact on the implementation and sustainability of successful reforms under a re-constructed reform model.

Implications. Taking an approach to the reconstruction of school reform models from an HRO perspective would require a shift in organizational design theory in public education. This would call for a major shift in thinking about the purpose of public education, how public education operates, who should be involved in the operation of public education, how public schools are funded, and how schools should be measured for success and/or failure.

Active engagement of a diverse group of vested professionals and constituents would be required. District and school administrators, teachers, students, parents, community members, EMO administrators, HRO professionals, and state and local

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policymakers must comprise the design teams charged with reconstruction and must all have an equally valued voice in the design process. Systems of accountability must also be developed, implemented, and monitored for successful reform to take place throughout the design, implementation, and sustainability processes. The financial implications of such an approach to reconstruction on local district and state education budgets would require further research and study. Models of funding feasibility would need to be explored and implemented.

Recommendation 2: Public and private sector groups should mutually collaborate and cooperate in the design, implementation, and sustainability of school reform models for low-performing urban high schools. Though the schools in need of reform, as studied in this executive position paper, are public schools, both public and private sector groups should be actively involved in collaborative and cooperative efforts of design, implementation, and sustainability. Literature and research in this study shows that the contracts governing the reform work in Philadelphia's public high schools did not facilitate an environment which would allow mutual collaboration and cooperation amongst public and private sector partners in the reform efforts (Gill et al., 2007; Wright, 2006). Furthermore, research and survey results indicated that these contractual impediments impacted upon the successful ability of private sector groups such as Victory to reform low-performing urban public high schools.

Datnow and Stringfield's (2000) work around school districts' ability to function as HROs in reform did not take into consideration reform efforts which

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would take place under a climate such as the one which facilitated the reform work in Philadelphia. It did not consider the ability of for-profit EMOs, which has become a popular choice in urban school reform, to function as HROs under the contracted school reform model in highly dysfunctional and highly bureaucratic school districts often hostile toward outside agencies contracted under a state takeover to remedy its challenging schools. This climate can be seen as detrimental to creating a sense of collaboration and cooperation amongst public and private sector group partners in the mission of turning around low-performing schools for the benefit of students (Gill et al., 2007).

Perhaps as opposed to waiting so late in the process that a state takeover of education is warranted, a proactive approach to reconstruction of public high school education should be considered and implemented where public and private sector groups are engaged in the design, implementation, and sustainability of education from a collaborative and cooperative framework. Similar to Recommendation 1, this proactive approach should equally engage public and private sector groups for the reconstruction of educational reform aligned with the concepts and characteristics of HROs, holding all involved and vested parties accountable for success of students and schools.

Implications. Taking an approach to facilitating the mutual collaboration and cooperation of public and private sector groups in the design, implementation, and sustainability of school reform models from an HRO perspective could only grow out of an implementation of Recommendation 1 and would require the same foundational

shift in organizational design theory in public education. As with Recommendation 1, the same active engagement of a diverse group of vested professionals and constituents would be required. All must have an equally valued voice in the design, implementation, and sustainability processes, and all must have equitable investment in the results of the success and/or failure of reform efforts. It is important that all parties involved realize that they all must equitably share in the impact of success and/or failure of reforms. A system requiring intentional and deliberate cross-sectional collaboration and cooperation would need to be designed and implemented to ensure cross-sector work and buy in.

Systems of accountability for both public and private sector groups must be developed, implemented, and monitored for successful reform to take place throughout the design, implementation, and sustainability processes. This recommendation carries financial and resource implications with it as well and would require further research and study to examine its feasibility.

Future Considerations for Research

Based on the findings of this executive position paper, future considerations for research can be made. These considerations may be of particular interest to those involved in school reform in both the public and private sectors.

Consideration 1: Conduct the same study via a case study of a not-for-profit educational management organization to examine if the profit structure of an EMO has any bearing on its ability to function as an HRO in reform work of low-performing urban public high schools. Because there is a body of research and group

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of researchers in direct opposition to for-profit school reform companies being involved in turnaround work of low-performing schools, the same study examining a not-for-profit organization under the same contractual guidelines would prove valuable to the body of research surrounding this topic. Consistent or contradictory results may be found which would substantiate the validity or invalidity of this study, thus potentially leading to new research questions.

Consideration 2: Conduct the same study of Victory's work in its reform of low-performing elementary schools in Philadelphia to determine if an HRO approach is more effective at influencing student success and school turnaround in earlier grade configurations. Given the fact that, as discussed in the research, the need to implement reform efforts by the time students are in high school is more critical and extremely high-stakes, the same case study of Victory's work in its contracted low-performing elementary schools would prove valuable in determining if there is a more suitable stage or grade level at which a for-profit EMO should function as an HRO in school reform. Consistent or contradictory results may be found which would substantiate the validity or invalidity of this study, thus potentially leading to new research questions.

Consideration 3: Conduct a study of for-profit EMO's reform work contracted under the vendor reform model to determine if this model is more conducive to an EMO's ability to function as an HRO in school reform. The vendor model of reform occurs when EMOs are contracted to provide a targeted or specific service or product to schools for a fee (Miron, 2008, p. 478) (i.e., professional

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development, special education oversight, career and technical curriculum design and management, personnel recruitment, payroll, financial and/or legal consultation, curriculum and instructional oversight, etc.). This model of reform is one that does not provide executive authority to outside managers but rather aligns strengths of providers with areas of need in districts and schools. Consistent or contradictory results may be found which would substantiate the validity or invalidity of this study, thus potentially leading to new research questions.

Consideration 4: Conduct a study of for-profit EMO's reform work contracted under the thick management model of reform to determine if this model, as alluded to in the research, is, indeed, more conducive to an EMO's ability to effectively implement and sustain its reform strategies. In light of the research reviewed for this study which addressed the flaws/challenges with the thin management model employed in Philadelphia's reform work, a study of a for-profit organization contracted to reform a similar group of low-performing urban public high schools under the thick management model would prove valuable to the body of research surrounding this topic. Consistent or contradictory results may be found which would substantiate the validity or invalidity of this study, thus potentially leading to new research questions.

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