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ABSTRACT

As part of its Regional Educational Laboratory contract to develop a framework for continuous school improvement in its four-state region, AEL, Inc., staff designed the Quest project. Formative evaluation had revealed the high level of satisfaction participants had with Quest and the great extent to which the project met its goals at each event. A case-study method was used for summative evaluation of the Quest project. This case study examines the impact Quest made at Bowman Elementary, a K-5 public school. The school has an enrollment of about 530 students, 73 percent of whom are African American. Sixty-three percent qualify for free or reduced lunch. Interviews, a focus group, and means on the Innovation Configuration Checklist revealed that Bowman Elementary had been highly involved in Quest, from attending network events regularly, to implementing continuous improvement strategies learned during project gatherings, to providing technical assistance to other network schools. Among the conclusions drawn was the observation that the school appears to have possessed several advantages prior to involvement in Quest that helped to support and sustain the school's participation. On the individual level, participants reported that they engaged in more reflection about education, change, and their own contributions to the school than they had prior to involvement. Appendixes include the Quest brochure and framework for continuous improvement, Quest team member individual-interview protocol, faculty group-interview protocol, student focus-group protocol, and questionnaires. (Contains 40 references and 6 tables.) (DFR)

BOWMAN ELEMENTARY:
A CASE STUDY OF THE QUEST NETWORK

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June 2000

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AEL's mission is to link the knowledge from research with the wisdom from practice to improve teaching and learning. AEL serves as the Regional Educational Laboratory for Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. For these same four states, it operates both a Regional Technology in Education Consortium and the Eisenhower Regional Consortium for Mathematics and Science Education. In addition, it serves as the Region IV Comprehensive Center and operates the ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of its Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) contract to develop a framework for continuous school improvement in its four-state region, AEL, Inc., staff designed the Quest project (see Appendix A). Based upon principles of inquiry, collaboration, and action research, Quest proposes to support and investigate ongoing school improvement efforts through twice-yearly conferences (which staff renamed rallies), summer symposia, a Scholars program, visits to participating schools, communication via listserv and mailings, and the creation of a Quest network of schools. The project began with rallies for elementary and high schools in October and November 1997 and has continued until the time of this writing. Membership in the Quest network has ranged from 20 schools to the current 17.

Formative evaluation had revealed the high level of satisfaction participants had with Quest and the great extent to which the project met its goals at each event (Howley-Rowe, 1999a-c, 1998a-f). Exploratory research also indicated various reasons some schools were more involved in the network than others (Howley-Rowe, 1999d). These sources of information convinced project staff that Quest had made some impact on those involved. Quest staff were therefore more interested in summative evaluation that elucidated *in what ways* Quest had been of value to schools and individuals in the project than in evaluation focusing solely on quantitative outcome measures.

A case study approach was taken for summative evaluation of the Quest project. Given that Quest staff were most interested in understanding the impact of the project on various levels, from the individual to the school to the network, the case study method seemed most appropriate. In addition, project staff were committed to understanding project impact from the perspectives of various participants in the network, including students, teachers, parents, and administrators.

This case study examines the impact Quest made at Bowman Elementary, a K-5 public school located in the downtown of a mid-size Tennessee city. The school has an enrollment of about 530 students, 73% of whom are African American and 27% White. Sixty-three percent of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch.

A variety of data collection methods and instruments were used in this case study. Systematic participant observation was conducted at nearly every Quest event, as well as semi-structured interviews and the solicitation of formative feedback from project participants. Pre- and post-test scores on the *School Professional Staff as Learning Community* (see Appendix F) were analyzed to discern if case study schools had become more like professional learning communities over the course of their participation in Quest. The evaluator and a trained Quest consultant conducted a site visit February 1-2, 2000, at Bowman Elementary, during which semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with five Bowman Quest team members using a predesigned protocol (see Appendix B). In addition, semi-structured group interviews were conducted with four members of the school faculty who had been minimally or not at all involved in Quest events (see Appendix C). A semi-structured group interview with six fourth and fifth grade students was conducted as well (see Appendix D). Finally, five Quest team members completed the Reflective Assessment

questionnaire (see Appendix E).

Other data sources included summary achievement data from the state-mandated Tennessee Writing Assessment. Another instrument completed by Quest participants at the close of the project was an Innovation Configuration Checklist detailing the essential components of Quest as well as variations thereof (see Appendix G).

Interviews, the focus group, and means on the Innovation Configuration Checklist revealed that Bowman Elementary had been highly involved in Quest, from attending network events regularly, implementing continuous improvement strategies learned of during project gatherings, to providing technical assistance to other network schools. Faculty reported a positive relationship between their use of The Protocol process, a technique for teachers to examine student work in a non-threatening atmosphere, and improved writing scores: The percentage of fourth grade students performing on the Tennessee Writing Assessment at least at the competent level increased from 44% in 1998 to 63% in 1999. School staff themselves felt they had become more of a professional learning community over the course of their involvement in Quest. Mean total scores on the Professional Learning Community instrument rose from 62.77 (SD 12.41) in 1998 to 78.79 (SD 5.09) in 2000 out of a possible 85 points. This increase was statistically significant at the .05 level, with a t score of 3.81; with $r = 1.10$, the effect size indicated that the increase was also meaningful in a practical sense.

Among the conclusions drawn was the observation that Bowman Elementary appears to have possessed several advantages prior to involvement in Quest which helped to support and sustain the school's participation. These include administrative enthusiasm for school improvement efforts and a climate of professionalism and commitment to teaching. The Bowman Elementary Quest team consequently has been highly involved in the project. On the individual level, participants reported that they engaged in more reflection about education, change, and their own contributions to the school than they had prior to involvement. Some also believed that the school has a greater focus on teaching and learning than previously. The school adopted three strategies learned of via Quest, which have had varied types and degrees of outcomes, ranging from the experience of including community members in participatory school evaluation activities to increased fourth grade writing assessment scores. Moreover, the school has developed significantly as a professional learning community over the course of its involvement in the network. Overall, it appears that Quest has made a significant impact at Bowman Elementary, particularly with regard to the specific improvement strategies undertaken at the school.

INTRODUCTION

AEL's Quest Project

As part of its Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) contract to develop a framework for continuous school improvement in its four-state region, AEL, Inc., staff designed the Quest project (see Appendix A). Based upon principles of inquiry, collaboration, and action research, Quest proposes to support and investigate ongoing school improvement efforts through twice-yearly conferences (which staff renamed rallies), summer symposia, a Scholars program, visits to participating schools, communication via listserv and mailings, and the creation of a Quest network of schools.

The project draws from literature on school change suggesting that subjectivity and personal growth are essential to the change process (Fullan, 1991). Yet because individual development takes place within a variety of social contexts, including school communities, staff designed the Quest network with attention to the ways shared vision, goals, and sense of community support ongoing school improvement (Barth, 1990; Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, & Hall, 1987; Postman, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1994). Similarly, school culture may impede or enhance significantly the viability of school improvement work (Richardson, 1996; Ryan, 1995). If a school community shares certain norms, such as self-evaluation, curiosity, proactivity, and high performance expectations, reform efforts are hypothesized to fare better than those in school cultures that do not possess such norms. Other research suggests that school administrators must assume a collaborative role in decision-making if reform efforts are to succeed (Hord, 1997), and that instructional and curricular goals must be informed by a diverse contingent of school stakeholders, including parents, students, and community members (Barth, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1994).

Quest staff were also attuned to literature suggesting that honoring the purpose of education enhances school change. Assessment strategies, for instance, ought to serve multiple ends, not the least of which is to provide information for ongoing teaching and learning (Wiggins, 1993). And ultimately, education generally and reform endeavors specifically need to nurture a host of attributes enabling students to make use of their education to lead thoughtful lives (Perkins, 1995; Postman, 1995).

In sum, Quest staff sought to create a network of schools committed to continuous improvement, collaboration, and inquiry. Participants would engage in, reflect upon, and assess the reform endeavors their schools undertook with the support of Quest.

Quest Activities

In the summer of 1996, Quest staff at AEL began working with teams from school communities in three West Virginia county school districts to invigorate efforts for continuous school improvement, using a variety of techniques for gathering input from all those with a stake in their local schools (Howley-Rowe, 1998g). This first learning community, called Leadership to Unify School Improvement Efforts (LUSIE), consisted of school teams including students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community members. Ultimately, this group wrote individual school

visions and improvement plans, and co-authored (with AEL) *Creating Energy for School Improvement* (1997), a supplemental guide for those poised to write their own state-mandated school improvement plans.

Quest staff also were committed to creating learning communities devoted to exploring continuous school improvement across the AEL region of Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. Hence, staff scheduled a pilot Inquiry Into Improvement conference in April 1997 for selected region high schools. Schools were selected in several ways. Some schools were recommended for the Quest experience by central office staff or school administrators. Other schools were asked to join Quest because they had participated in previous AEL programs. Still other schools were invited because Quest staff believed they were primed for the kind of collaborative inquiries into school improvement that Quest was designed to provide.

In October 1997, in Roanoke, Virginia, another conference was held for designated high schools in the AEL region, this time with an explicit emphasis on forming and nurturing a network of schools (Howley-Rowe, 1998c). A similar conference was held in Nashville, Tennessee, for designated region elementary schools in November 1997 (Howley-Rowe, 1998a). In order to facilitate the development of a Quest school network and to continue to help invigorate continuous school improvement efforts within network schools, staff planned a sequence of events in 1998 following these initial conferences. Dissatisfied with the conventional and prescriptive connotation of the word conference, Quest staff chose to call these network meetings rallies. Thus, all events previously called conferences are now termed rallies.

The high school network met a second time on February 8-10, 1998, at the Pipestem State Park Resort in West Virginia (Howley-Rowe, 1998d), following which the elementary school network participated in a rally on February 22-24, 1998, in Lexington, Kentucky (Howley-Rowe, 1998b). During the summer, 11 network members participated in the Quest Scholars Program, meeting at a colloquium in Charleston, West Virginia, on July 16-18, 1998, to collaborate with project staff in ongoing efforts to conceptualize, design, and research Quest (Howley-Rowe, 1998e). Finally, in August, network members and other educators in AEL's region participated in a symposium on assessment of student work (Howley-Rowe, 1998f).

From the high school network rally in October 1997 to the August 1998 summer symposium, Quest staff hosted six network events. The Quest network contained an essentially stable membership, although there were differences in the number of school teams that attended each event and in the frequency that school teams attended gatherings. Project staff recently investigated this phenomenon, finding that administrative support for participation in the network was the factor reported to be most important to schools' initial and sustained involvement in Quest (Howley-Rowe, 1999c).

Beginning their second year of network activity, Quest staff invited the elementary and high school networks to attend a rally together on November 2-3, 1998, at the Glade Springs Resort, near Daniels, West Virginia (Howley-Rowe, 1999a). Approximately half of the Quest Scholars met on

November 1, 1998, to plan several rally activities with project staff. Scholars from the high school network met for three hours on February 14, 1999, prior to a high school network rally held on February 15-16 in Roanoke, Virginia (Howley-Rowe, 1999c). A similar rally was held for elementary network members on February 22-23, 1999, in Lexington, Kentucky (Howley-Rowe, 1999b).

A second Scholars colloquium was convened from July 12-15, 1999, at Mountain Lake Resort, Virginia (Howley-Rowe, 1999c). The primary purpose of this colloquium was for Quest staff and Scholars to collaborate in evaluating and writing about the project, ultimately contributing written pieces to a book about the Quest network. In addition, a second summer symposium was convened in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, July 26-27, 1999 (Parrish & Howley-Rowe, 2000).

The third year of Quest events began with two rallies and a Scholars meeting in November 1999 in Bristol, Virginia. A rally for elementary schools was conducted from November 11-12, 1999. Scholars met to discuss writing and several Quest instruments November 13-14. And a high school rally was held November 15-16. Network high schools met again from February 14-15, 2000 in Roanoke, Virginia. Elementary schools participated in a rally from February 17-18, 2000 in Lexington, Kentucky. Evaluation of these events was not conducted as staff turned their efforts to summative evaluation of the project; Quest and the 1996-2000 REL contract funding the project would come to an end in November 2000.

Summative Evaluation of Quest

Evaluation Questions

Quest staff delineated several evaluation questions they hoped summative evaluation would address. These questions were categorized in terms of inputs and outputs, or independent and dependent variables. Staff wanted to understand the relationship of such issues as extent of involvement in Quest and school-specific improvement efforts inspired by Quest to issues such as the extent to which professional learning community was enhanced or to which participating schools approximated the Quest framework of continuous improvement. More succinctly, Quest staff hoped to learn from summative evaluation what impact participation in Quest had upon selected schools, individuals within them, and upon the network as a whole. Summative evaluation questions and the instruments or methods used to answer them are listed in Table 1.

Thus, summative evaluation of Quest is intended to answer the questions formulated by Quest staff and the evaluator. Summative evaluation will describe the impact Quest had upon selected schools and their school communities, providing some evidence of the effectiveness of the project.

Table 1
Summative Evaluation Questions and Instruments/Methods

Independent variables/inputs	**Instruments/Methods**
To what extent do Quest team members think their schools have enacted Quest components?	Innovation Configuration Checklist
What specific Quest related activities have schools participated in?	History of involvement
Dependent variables/outcomes	**Instrument/Method**
Has Quest enhanced professional learning community in network schools?	*School Staff as Professional Learning Community* instrument pre- and post-test
To what extent do members of the Quest team think their school approximates the Quest framework, and to what degree is this attributable to Quest?	Reflective Assessment instrument
What have been the changes in student achievement during Quest participation?	Achievement data School report card
What has been the impact of Quest on individuals, schools, and of what value has the network been?	Quest team member interviews
What have schools undertaken as a result of Quest, and what have been the results?	Faculty focus group Quest team member interviews
What have been the results of school projects undertaken due to Quest?	School data about results of school projects
What do network participants report has happened at their schools due to Quest? In what other ways has Quest been effective?	School stories

Purpose of and Audience for This Report

The primary audience for summative evaluation of the project is Quest staff at AEL. It is intended to offer project staff a summative perspective on the impact of Quest in four disparate schools. This report describes summative evaluation of Quest as undertaken at Bowman Elementary in Tennessee.

Other audiences include representatives of AEL's funding source, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), and policymakers, school administrators, teachers, education researchers, and others interested in strategies to support continuous school improvement. Case study schools may also be potential audiences for summative evaluation of Quest.

METHODS

A case study approach was taken for summative evaluation of the Quest project. Given that Quest staff were most interested in understanding the impact of the project on various levels, from the individual to the school to the network, the case study method seemed most appropriate. In addition, project staff were committed to understanding project impact from the perspectives of various participants in the network, including students, teachers, parents, and administrators. Case studies involve in-depth "multi-perspectival analyses" (Tellis, 1997) of single systems or phenomena; they rely on clearly delineated boundaries rather than on sampling (Stake, 1995). The focus, depth, and ability to account for multiple viewpoints associated with the case study approach led Quest staff to consider using such a method.

Moreover, formative evaluation had revealed the high level of satisfaction participants had with Quest and the great extent to which the project met its goals at each event (Howley-Rowe, 1999a-c, 1998a-f). Exploratory research also indicated various reasons some schools were more involved in the network than others (Howley-Rowe, 1999d). These sources of information convinced project staff that Quest had made some impact on those involved. Quest staff were therefore more interested in summative evaluation that elucidated *in what ways* Quest had been of value to schools and individuals in the project than in evaluation focusing solely on quantitative outcome measures.

Hence, summative evaluation of the Quest project includes case studies of four network schools. The schools were selected for their high level of involvement in Quest, varied interpretations and uses of the project, and diverse locations and demographic constitutions.

For example, one school used Quest to support parent involvement programs whereas another discovered a variety of inquiry techniques to improve student writing. One small elementary school is located in a rural, impoverished Appalachian area, while a very large high school is in a relatively wealthy suburb of the nation's capital. All four schools, nonetheless, found Quest flexible enough to accommodate their very different goals for improvement and structured enough to provide constructive strategies supporting change.

A strength of case studies is their reliance on triangulation of data to provide a more comprehensive description of the objects of study than might be rendered by use of a single research method. Using several data sources in order to corroborate theses is what Brewer and Hunter (1989) call "multimethod research." This approach posits that the strengths of each method will compensate for the weaknesses in others, ultimately providing a more complete account of that being studied.

On the other hand, the case study approach has been criticized for its "dependence on a single case [which] renders it incapable of providing a generalizing conclusion" (Tellis, 1997, p. 3). Although generalization to populations is certainly compromised by the case study method, generalization to theory is not as problematic if case studies are conducted with sufficient rigor and transparency. Hence, conclusions generated by case studies can be used to generalize by synecdoche as "a claim that the essential features of the larger social unit are reproduced in microcosm within

the smaller social unit, and that by studying them in micro we might make inferences about the macrostructure of which they are a part" (Brewer &Hunter, 1989, p. 123).

Both qualitative and quantitative methods contributed to this evaluation component of the Quest project. During project events, the evaluator engaged in participant observation (Becker & Geer, 1957; Emerson, 1983; Glazer, 1972; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; Miles & Huberman, 1994), a method highly suited "for studying processes, relationships among people and events, the organization of people and events, continuities over time, and patterns" (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 12). Furthermore, consistent with the Quest paradigm, participant observation involves "a flexible, open-ended, opportunistic process and logic of inquiry through which what is studied constantly is subject to redefinition based on field experience and observation" (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 23). This method "is a commitment to adopt the perspective of those studied by sharing in their . . . experiences" (Denzin, 1989, p. 156), thereby enabling researchers to evaluate how an event or process appears and feels to participants. Finally, participant observation places the evaluator squarely in the field, rather than in the office or on the phone, allowing for the collection of richer, more directly acquired data (Patton, 1980).

Denzin (1989) describes four variations in participant observation strategies: the complete participant, the participant as observer, the observer as participant, and the complete observer (pp. 162-65). The evaluator played a role more akin to the participant as observer, participating in ongoing project activities as appropriate but not concealing data collection.

In order to corroborate the theses generated by participant observation, the evaluator also conducted other data collection and analysis activities. The evaluator and a trained Quest consultant conducted a site visit February 1-2, 2000, at Bowman Elementary, during which semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with five Bowman Quest team members using a predesigned protocol (see Appendix B). In addition, semi-structured group interviews were conducted with four members of the school faculty who had been minimally or not at all involved in Quest events (see Appendix C). A semi-structured group interview with six fourth and fifth grade students was conducted as well (see Appendix D). Finally, five Quest team members completed the Reflective Assessment questionnaire (see Appendix E).

Pre- and post-test scores on the *School Professional Staff as Learning Community* (see Appendix F) were analyzed to discern if case study schools had become more like professional learning communities over the course of their participation in Quest. This instrument was first administered to all network schools in December 1997, and again in February 2000 as the project drew to a close. The surveys were sent to a contact person at each network school, who distributed the instruments to faculty, then collected and returned completed surveys to Quest staff.

Another instrument completed by Quest participants at the close of the project was an Innovation Configuration Checklist detailing the essential components of Quest as well as variations thereof (see Appendix G). All network participants in attendance at the February 2000 rallies were administered the Checklist. Three Bowman team members completed this instrument.

Other data sources included achievement data from the state-mandated standardized Terra Nova test and data gathered during Bowman participation in Quest sponsored events, including a technical assistance visit and project events.

Identical instruments and individual and group interview protocols were used across the four case study sites to allow for comparative analyses, should staff consider such comparisons useful.

BOWMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Context

Bowman Elementary is a K-5 public school located in the downtown of a mid-size Tennessee city. The school serves its immediate neighborhood and an extended area of approximately 5 miles away. Bowman has an enrollment of about 530 students, 73% of whom are African American and 27% White. Sixty-three percent of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch, and the school participates in a schoolwide Title I program. There are four classrooms serving each grade; class size is approximately 20 in grades K-2 and 24 in grades 3-5. Two 25-station computer labs provide each class with 30 minutes of instruction daily. The faculty includes 24 classroom teachers; three special education teachers; two computer lab managers; one coordinator of technology, and parent and other volunteers; a full-time librarian; a guidance counselor; and a physical education teacher. Art, music, and foreign language classes are taught by area specialists, and inclusion services are provided by certified staff and support personnel.

The school has several initiatives in place. One program provides an additional 15 minutes of instruction in math daily, and a collaborative arrangement between Bowman and the local high school allows high school student interns in child care to assist in kindergarten and first grade classrooms. An extended day program offers support to students who may need additional help with their studies, and a community outreach program provides Bowman students community service experiences. Finally, the Accelerated Reader program, an effort to encourage reading, has been put in place by Bowman's central office administration.

Before participating in Quest, Bowman Elementary possessed many of the advantages associated with a positive school climate. For instance, teachers reported that the school has a reputation for being committed to teaching and learning. As one such teacher put it, " I think a real strength at Bowman is the culture for learning. If a child doesn't learn here, I cannot understand why not. There are opportunities for children who are at the advanced end and there are . . . there are support services for every grade. There's after-school tutoring. There are mentors who come in. There are computers available in every classroom. There's computer lab every day. There's individual tutoring after school. There's . . . there's just no reason not to learn here. And I think that atmosphere . . . that atmosphere of learning is just very evident in everything that happens."

This commitment to students, however, comes with the expectation that school staff will work hard: "When I came from another school, they said 'Oh, you're going to Bowman, the school where you work.' I said, 'Well, don't you work?' Like I said, it's the perception that people have of Bowman school." Or, as another teacher phrased it, "It's a drawing force. It's a drawing force because here I think we have such a good relationship with each other. Because I've been here since August, but I feel like I've been here for a total of 29 years because this is always . . . It's like a magnet or something. It draws you here. Even though . . . if you're coming here you know that you're going to work. A lazy person can't come here. You have to be an active participant here. You can't be a lazy person and work at Bowman because you are going to *work*."

Despite their sense that hard work was required at the school, teachers at Bowman reported that working in the school was rewarding. One teacher said it this way: "I think it's always been a very positive place to be. I think it's always been as long as I've been here. It's always been a place where you're given respect as a professional and allowed to do your job the way that you professionally thought you should do it."

Teachers reported that the school's mission and attendant work ethic were promoted by Principal Fred Vickers[1]. "He shares. And he doesn't make us feel like we are wrong or we are beneath him or anything. He makes us feel that we are really important and we are because if you look at your teachers, teachers can either make or break a principal," reported a teacher. Likewise, other teachers corroborated that Principal Vickers encouraged systematic analysis of teacher innovations as a vehicle for enhancing teaching and learning: "Mr. Vickers will allow us to use anything that we can. He won't say, "Rhonda, that's wrong.' or 'Rhonda, I don't think you should use that.' He'd say, 'If you could tell me why you would like to use this . . . how you're going to help your students.' And sometimes he lets us fan out on our own and maybe this wasn't the best book to use. And I . . . again it goes back to that top person. That top person has to have a high vision of what that school is going to be all about."

Yet innovation is expected to take place within the strictures of the school goals. As one teacher reported, "Mr. Vickers is very goal directed. So, there are, you know, goals are pretty well spelled out. Very focused and then he... I gave you my example I think yesterday about trying something in kindergarten and him saying, 'Okay, but make sure you know where you start and where you stop.' Which kind of goes along with the attitude of being . . . you know, having goals and then collecting data to see if you meet some of those goals. So, I think that . . . that's a strength of him as an administrator in setting kind of the target for our school."

Participation in Quest

Bowman staff began their involvement in Quest by participating in the first network rally in November 1997 in Nashville, Tennessee. Two teachers and two parents represented Bowman at this gathering. Since then, Bowman staff consistently took part in Quest activities, including Quest team attendance at each rally, participation in co-ventures in learning, and presentation at the 1999 summer symposium. In addition, one Bowman staff member has participated in the Scholars program each year.

The principal also took part in the School Change Collaborative (SCC), a national partnership coordinated by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL), along with Quest staff. During a meeting of SCC members in Chicago, Illinois, participants were introduced to a method of school assessment called Data in a Day (DIAD), in which school community members created observation forms, collected observational data, and analyzed and reported such

[1]Individual and school names in this report are pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of participants.

data to the broader school community. After modifying the process somewhat to address their concerns more fully, Bowman staff conducted DIAD at their school in early September 1998. Another Quest school, Xavier Senior High School, sent representatives to Bowman during DIAD to observe the process.

At the November 1998 rally, Principal Vickers described this process in detail (Howley-Rowe, 1999a, pp. 9-10):

> "Fred . . . discussed wanting to conduct the process differently at his school, Bowman Elementary, than he had seen it implemented at an SCC meeting, where he felt it had been divorced from the participating school's context. Thus, when the SCC was invited to observe DIAD at his school, Fred discussed with Quest staff how to conduct the process in a way that would significantly impact the school community. Ultimately, he decided to design the process around Bowman Elementary's state-mandated school improvement plan. He noted the he had "no doubt that most schools have a mission and vision, but fewer use it to reflect and make changes." Rather, Fred hoped to 'use [DIAD] to take a long hard look at the school, asking this question: If someone came in and read our mission and vision, would what they read be reflected in the actual school? Are we doing what we said we'd do?' Based on the school improvement plan, four theme areas became the foci for DIAD at Bowman: teaching and learning strategies that reach all children, appropriate student behavior, a culture for learning and academic focus, and high expectations for all students with appropriate academic support. Fred noted that teachers were then included in deciding what indicators might suggest the presence of the four theme areas. One of the facilitators then described the seven steps of DIAD: organizing and planning for the process, identifying themes for study, generating indicators for observation, collecting data, analyzing data, reporting findings, and continuing the conversations around the findings. The principal pointed out that because the Bowman school community generated the indicators, the resulting observation instrument was very non-threatening to them. He elaborated, sharing that he had invited not only teachers to participate, but also diverse students, parents, and support staff.
>
> "Once indicators were generated, Fred continued, the group broke into smaller research teams, each observing three classrooms for about 30 minutes. Following the observations, the research teams met to analyze and summarize their observations by the four themes. The next step involved the formation of new, larger teams, this time each representing one of the four theme areas. These groups were constructed in such a way that each team had observed a total of 18 classrooms and represented all grade levels observed. Teams analyzed the combined data from the smaller research teams with regard to their theme, and ultimately created a report that they presented to the entire faculty. Fred observed that the faculty 'took' the report much better because it had been presented by research teams that included students, colleagues, and parents. As a result of the process, the principal said that an action plan had been crafted based upon the findings, and consequently several changes had been made at the school. In sum, he said that his school 'continue[s] to reap benefits in a lot of areas I didn't even dream it would.' He told several stories to illustrate.

During the final report to the faculty, for example, a student said that the faculty needed to increase their collaboration. A visiting curriculum director asked the student if she knew what collaboration was, to which the student replied, 'It's when teachers get together to talk about how to help us better.' Fred laughed at this point in his story, 'I couldn't have scripted this better! I can tell you, collaboration wasn't in her vocabulary the day before.'".

Following DIAD, the Bowman principal co-authored an article about the experience with Quest staff. Currently, this article is being submitted for publication in an education journal.

Another initiative learned of during a Quest rally undertaken by Bowman staff is the Protocol process, a structured mechanism for discussing student work. Fourth grade teachers used the technique to examine student writing and discuss strategies for improving both teaching and learning about writing. The excerpt below from the evaluation report of the November 1998 Quest rally (Howley-Rowe, 1999a, p.10) describes Principal Vickers' discussion of Protocol use at Bowman:

"Fred began by sharing that he had once been an elementary supervisor but had never looked at student work in efforts to improve learning. Thus, the two months spent using the California Protocol at his school to look at student writing were a revelation. One teacher had asked him after several cycles of using the process, "Are we doing this right?" To which Fred had replied, "I don't know what right is, but let me ask you this: Are you thinking about student writing more than you ever have?" Four teachers responded without pause, "Yes." The principal briefly described the Protocol as a "simple, forced way to look at student work." A group of approximately eight students and teachers met to analyze various pieces of student work, discussing ways in which teachers might support improved student writing. One of their conclusions was that student writing was not as good as they might hope because teachers themselves were not as prepared to teach writing as they could be. As a result, the Protocol participants decided to share their thoughts and recommendations with other colleagues, choosing to focus collectively, for instance, on helping student writers to stay on the main idea in their work. Another way the Protocol impacted the school, Fred shared, was that students participating in the process came to view writing not as work assigned by the teacher, but rather as their own work. A facilitator noted that the SCC had observed faculty at Bowman conducting the Protocol; one of the SCC members said that Bowman displayed the best use of the Protocol that he had ever seen."

FINDINGS

Innovation Configuration Checklist Findings

Quest staff developed an Innovation Configuration Checklist (ICC) specifying the essential components of the project and variations thereof. The ICC was administered to Quest team members at the February 2000 rallies for elementary and high school networks. With a Cronbach alpha of .78, the overall scale possessed sufficient internal consistency, a type of reliability, for the purpose at hand. Items 1-7 provide four variations for respondents to select among; item 8 provides 3 options. For purposes of analysis, items 1-7 were converted to a 4-point Likert-type scale, with 3 representing the most ideal variation of components and 0 representing the least satisfactory variation. Similarly, item 8 was converted to a 3-point Likert-type scale.

Four members from Bowman completed the ICC. They gave unanimously high ratings of their school's participation for all components included in the checklist, a highly unusual occurrence. The mean score for the scale constituted by the entire checklist was 23.00 (sd .00), the highest score possible. ICC results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Innovation Configuration Checklist Descriptive Statistics

Item	N	Mean	SD
Quest school leadership team	3	3.00	.00
Administrative support	4	3.00	.00
Participation in network events	4	3.00	.00
Participation in co-ventures in learning	4	3.00	.00
Involvement with other Quest schools	4	3.00	.00
School improvement/action research	4	3.00	.00
Change in schoolwide view of school improvement	4	3.00	.00
Engagement in related school improvement efforts	4	2.00	.00
Scale	3	23.00	.00

The team members from Bowman believed that their Quest leadership team was inclusive with administrator, teacher, and parent membership; had been fairly stable over time; and had assumed active leadership in taking their quest back home to their broader community. The mean for this item was 3.00 (sd .00). With a mean of 3.00 (sd .00), members' assessment of the second component was also highly positive. They believed that their administrator was an active member

of the leadership team and was extensively involved in Quest activities. Again with a mean of 3.00 (sd .00), Bowman Quest team members unanimously indicated that individuals from their school had participated in three or more network events during the past year. Fourth, Bowman respondents reported that a wide cross-section of their community had participated in Quest co-ventures in learning (3.00, sd .00). Involvement with other network schools was also rated highly (3.00, sd .00), as was involvement with a school improvement project and action research in connection with Quest (3.00, sd .00). Finally, Bowman team members determined that their school had been actively engaged in school improvement efforts other than Quest and that results from these had been recognizable (2.00, sd .00).

Reflective Assessment Findings

Five Quest team members completed the Reflective Assessment questionnaire. This instrument asks respondents to rate their school's convergence with a description of a school representing a "100" on a scale of 0-100 in increments of 10 with respect to each component from the Quest framework of continuous improvement. They are then requested to cite evidence or examples supporting their rating and describe the ways, if any, in which Quest made an impact on their school's development with regard to the component under consideration. Finally, respondents are asked what factors other than Quest have influenced their school's development.

As shown in Table 3, Bowman component means ranged from a high of 84.00 to a low of 76.00, a difference of only 8 points. Standard deviations varied more, from the smallest of 8.37 to the largest of 20.74. The Cronbach's alpha for this administration of the instrument was r = .93, indicating sufficient reliability.

Table 3
Reflective Assessment Descriptive Statistics

Quest Framework Component	N	Mean	SD
Strengthening the Learning Culture	5	82.00	8.37
Broadening the Learning Community	5	84.00	8.94
Sharing Leadership	5	82.00	13.04
Shared Goals for Learning	5	78.00	10.95
Assessing and Demonstrating Learning	5	76.00	20.74
Enabling SMART Learners[2]	5	79.00	12.45

[2]Developed by Quest staff, SMART is an acronym for Successful, Motivated, Autonomous, Responsible, and Thoughtful.

Bowman team members gave the highest mean rating to the component of "Broadening the Learning Community" (84.00, sd 8.94). Three respondents offered multiple replies, and two offered one each, when asked to cite evidence supporting their rating. Three responses indicated that trust, caring, and connectedness were important themes in their school. As one such individual phrased it, "Bowman is a center of learning with open communication and the welfare of our students at heart. I feel a sense of community in our school and see trust and respect shared amongst every staff member." Two comments indicated that the school made serious efforts to enhance parent involvement, including monthly newsletters, various volunteering opportunities, and invitations to schoolwide functions. Another comment suggested that parent involvement could be improved, although "I don't know what more could be done to foster this because we have so many outreach programs in place." Two comments indicated that sharing information and collaboration between teachers were other examples of a broad learning community at Bowman. For instance, team teaching was noted as evidence that Bowman faculty were invested in nurturing their professional learning community.

Asked in what ways Quest supported Bowman's development in terms of their learning community, three respondents offered multiply-themed replies. One answer could not be categorized because its meaning was unclear. Two responses indicated that Bowman staff had learned of student-led conferences at a Quest gathering. As a result of implementation, parent involvement at what would have been conventional parent-teacher conferences had increased. In addition, two responses mentioned that Quest facilitation of DIAD at Bowman had brought community members into the school. One response suggested that Quest offered "measures of successes," while another indicated that project rallies had been inclusive of parents, which in turn helped to broaden Bowman's learning community. And one respondent noted that Quest had provided "literature, human resources, and . . . positive or negative feedback on our goals"; however, the respondent did not elaborate how these had broadened the school's learning community.

Two respondents did not reply to the query concerning other factors that had broadened Bowman's learning community. Two respondents offered multiple answers. Mentioned once each were prior parent involvement programs, inclusion strategies that included team teaching, and flexible scheduling of parent-teacher conferences. As one Bowman staff member put it, "Bowman has always created a 'family' atmosphere . . . I believe Quest has strengthened it." Also mentioned once each were two Quest efforts, DIAD and student-led conferences.

With a mean of 82.00 (sd 8.37), Bowman's "Culture for Learning" was deemed by Bowman Quest team members the second component most closely aligned with their own development. Asked to describe evidence supporting their judgement, four respondents provided multiple answers, most of which were idiosyncratic. Two replies each indicated that student led conferences and the many opportunities for professional learning at Bowman supported their high rating of the school's learning culture. Mentioned once each as evidence of Bowman's culture for learning were instances in which staff reflected on how to improve, opportunities to innovate, administrative support, grade group meetings, and inclusion strategies. One respondent listed a number of sources of evidence, including grade group meeting summaries and parent feedback.

Respondents saw a few ways that Quest had contributed to their culture of learning. All five offered multiple replies. Mentioned thrice were sharing concerns and perspectives with others in the Quest network, and being exposed to new ideas (as one put it, "Give and take opportunities from within and without have provided opportunities to expand our thinking"). Noted once each were DIAD as facilitated by project staff ("Quest has given us a format and venue for reflection on what we do well already and what we can improve"), Quest inclusion of students at project events, and the many opportunities for staff development offered by Quest staff. Also mentioned were the ways Quest helped staff focus on "do[ing] a better job" and inclusion of students at network events.

Other factors influencing Bowman's learning culture, each mentioned once, included district standards, prior parent involvement programs, technological improvements at the school, the state mandated improvement plan, celebrations of success, and administrative support for innovation.

However, "Assessing and Demonstrating Learning" received the lowest mean rating from Bowman Quest team members (76.00, sd 20.74). Moreover, the large standard deviation indicates that there was some disagreement among respondents about how well Bowman aligned with the Quest vision of this component; ratings ranged from 40 to 90.

Asked to provide evidence supporting their rating, four respondents offered multiple answers. Three noted that Bowman staff used a variety of assessment strategies, while two added that expectations for learning were communicated clearly to students. Two responses indicated that Bowman staff studied state achievement test data as part of school improvement efforts. One respondent wrote, "At Bowman we have grade group meetings to study our test data and goals. Approximately two years ago we were not satisfied with our students' performance on the writing assessment test. We met as a group to decide the best way to address the issue. Out of several meetings without principal and members from Quest we decided to do a structural reflection [ie., the Protocol process] on writing whereby we could actually look at students' [work]. This process proved to be very beneficial and successful for most involved."

One respondent gave a rating of 40 to Bowman's alignment with the Quest vision of assessment. This individual warranted the claim that Bowman's focus on assessment did not match the Quest vision by noting that "the major source of data for school improvement is the state achievement test." On the other hand, the respondent added that "students assess their performance by reflecting in preparation for student-led conferences."

Asked what ways, if any, Quest had influenced the school's work in the area of assessing and demonstrating learning, one respondent did not reply and the remainder offered single responses. Two offered that various professional development opportunities made available through Quest had influenced the school. Interestingly, both also mentioned QUILT (Questioning and Understanding to Improve Learning and Thinking), a staff development program previously designed by Quest staff, as one example of an opportunity brought to the school in conjunction with Quest. And one respondent each noted that information about the Protocol process and student-led conferences had been received through Quest.

Two Quest team members did not answer when asked what other factors influenced assessment of learning at Bowman. Two wrote that state mandated testing played an important role in assessment. Of these, one added that teachers used such data as a means to reflect on instructional strengths and weaknesses and then plan goals for the upcoming year. Finally, a fifth respondent indicated that the school was also participating in a standards implementation program developed by a major university "which has opened our minds to more creative assessment and communication of expectations."

Professional Learning Community Findings

In January 1998, Bowman staff completed a post-test of the *School Professional Staff as Learning Community* survey developed by Hord (1997; Meehan, Orletsky, & Sattes, 1997). This instrument consists of five main subsections: shared leadership, shared visions, collective creativity, peer review, and supportive conditions and capacities (Cowley, 1999; SEDL, 1999). Subsections contain several individual items that respondents are asked to rate using a 5-point Likert-type scale, with anchor points of low (1) and high (5). However, the field test of the survey revealed that it measures one overall construct rather than five distinct factors (Meehan, Orletsky, & Sattes, 1997; SEDL, 1999). This construct could be described as the extent to which school staff constitute a supportive professional learning community. Therefore, an overall score is calculated for the instrument; the higher the score, the more respondents feel their school is a positive learning community. The instrument contains 17 items, and the overall score may range from 17-85 points.

The mean score from the 1998 administration of the instrument was 62.77 (sd 12.41). Administered again in February 2000, the mean score increased to 78.79, with a much smaller standard deviation of 5.09 (see Table 4). Hence, Bowman staff appear to believe that their school had become more of a learning community over the course of two years of their involvement in Quest.

Table 4
Professional Learning Community Instrument Descriptive Statistics

Administration of Professional Learning Community Instrument	N	Mean	SD
Pre-test total score	22	62.77	12.41
Post-test total score	33	78.79	5.09

A *t* test of paired total Professional Learning Community pre- and post-test scores revealed that the differences were likely not attributable to chance (see Table 5). It should be noted that the assumptions of the *t* test were violated in this study. The sample was not random, nor was it assumed that the data were drawn from a normally distributed population. Phillips (1982) contends, however, that "since those assumptions now appear to be far less important than originally thought,

the recent trend toward increasing use of distribution-free tests is currently being reversed" (p. 139). Likewise, Glass and Hopkins (1984) report research suggesting that violation of the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance has little impact upon the robustness of *t* tests. For these reasons, Quest staff chose to use the *t* test to explore the statistical significance of pre- and post-test differences on the Professional Learning Community instrument.

Seventeen respondents completed both the 1998 and 2000 administrations of the instrument. Their mean total scores were quite similar to the mean total pre- and post-test scores of the entire group of respondents, which suggests that an analysis of the smaller group would likely be generalizable to the larger group of Bowman staff who completed the survey.

The *t* score of 3.81 was statistically significant at the .05 level for the 17 respondents, indicating that Bowman's higher post-test score was likely not due to chance. Statistical significance alone, however, does not indicate the meaningfulness of findings; rather, it indicates the rareness of findings. The calculation of effect size allows the conversion of statistically significant results into the standard deviation metric, providing a better analysis of practical significance. Hence, the effect size was calculated in order to evaluate the practical importance of differences in pre- and post-test means. With $r = 1.10$, it is very likely that the change in Bowman scores is not due to chance and has practical meaning as well.

Table 5
***T* Test Results for the Professional Learning Community Instrument**

Administration of Professional Learning Community Instrument	N	Mean	SD	*t*	Sig.
Pre-test total score	17	62.94	13.07	3.81	.002*
Post-test total score	17	77.35	5.70		

*Significant at the .05 level.

Focus Group and Individual Interview Findings

Increased Focus and Reflection

The focus group interview with four third grade teachers and individual interviews with five members of the Quest team revealed the extent of impact the project has had upon Bowman. One of the most oft-mentioned areas of impact was the school's focus on its goals, noted in five instances by three interviewees. Teachers and the administrator noted that Quest facilitated a schoolwide concentration upon various strategies for achieving collectively agreed upon objectives. One teacher reported, "Well, I think it's given us a focus on what we need to do as a school. I hesitate to use focus because sometimes that . . . you look at that as real narrow and that's not what I mean . . . I guess maybe what I'm trying to say is . . . It's given us a lens to look through for what we're trying to do at our school."

Similarly, another said, "I think . . . the big plus and the big motivation with Quest has been focus. I think it really kind of makes you stop and think here's where we are. We know we want to be better. How are we going to get there?" Even more succinctly put, "I think that . . . it has unified all of us towards a goal of making it a community of learners and of looking at different ways of doing things."

Yet another teacher pointed out that the process of focusing schoolwide on collective goals in turn enhanced the school's sense of professional community. She described the process as "more of a joint effort . . . I think it's more unified. Instead of somebody telling us what we are going to do, I feel more aware of why we're gonna do it. And involved in why . . . I think the greatest difference is that . . . kind of partnership, or more than just a partnership, but that . . . that community building and unifying of all of us working together towards the same thing. I think it's just helped us pull it together in order to know the kinds of things that we need to do."

Quest was often reported to have challenged participants at Bowman to reflect upon their individual and collective practice, goals, and beliefs. Increased reflection was mentioned 12 times. Said one teacher, "I think anything that makes us stop and look at ourselves and kind of take stock of where we are and where we want to be and pushes us in the right direction is a positive thing. And to me that is a lot of what Quest has done. And . . . I think we need not be afraid of that, but kind of welcome the opportunity to do some self-examination." Another phrased it this way: "It makes us stop and assess ourselves—where we are, where we want to be. It makes us choose specific goals for change. And it's not just that we want to be better ten years from now. You have to say, 'I want to be better and disregard ten years from now' . . . It's made us focus on that kind of thing." "It's helped me, and I know it's helped Mr. Vickers, to be always looking for opportunities to stretch ourselves and our children," reported one Bowman staff member.

One respondent noted that being asked to present their school's story of continuous improvement during network events was a mechanism by which reflection and assessment were facilitated. She said, "I think that the reflection . . . of looking in order to present . . . to the network what you have been doing and how it's worked . . . you have to know what you are doing and how it's worked. And you have to really demonstrate . . . [Y]ou can't just say, 'Oh, we tried this and it worked great.' You know, you have to present: 'Well, this is what happened, this is how we did it, and, you know, the whys, the hows, and everything behind it' . . . to be able to share."

For another teacher, the reflection engendered by Quest concerned her contribution to the school ethos: "I think as far as our school as a community of learners and building that community, it's caused me to ask myself, 'Am I a part of that?'" For two other teachers, Quest enabled them to question their assumptions about the potential of students conventionally thought to be less than able. One respondent said, "I'm sure every school has . . . some population maybe or some . . . group of students that we feel like are not reaching their fullest potential. And it's really easy for us as teacher to say, 'It's because, you know, this . . . They're low income or whatever.' I think that Quest has kind of challenged that . . . I mean, every school has their own population that may be harder to reach and they have all done it. You know, sharing the success stories from other schools makes you

say, well, they have done it with these obstacles in their way. You know, there's no reason why we can't do it too." Similarly, another shared, "I, probably, in all honesty, didn't think that special ed kids could necessarily read. You know, now, it's like yes, of course they can and they will and this is what's gonna happen."

The principal reported that Quest offered the opportunity to reflect on current practice, theory, and research, a habit difficult to maintain while administering a school: "It's so hard because when you get into a school you get real involved just to make it run lots of times. In just the inertia, you know, of getting lunch served and getting everything together . . . And you don't really have time to . . . really see what's going on in your field . . . what the current thought is."

Three interviewees noted in seven instances that from Quest they had gained an appreciation for continuous school improvement and self-evaluation. The principal reported that the project offered a vehicle to explore ongoing reform efforts with the school staff: "I've tried to say . . . to [staff] two things. One is, 'If you do what you did, you get what you've got. So, if you're not happy with what you got, what are you gonna turn around and do the same thing that you did?' And that pretty much sums it up for me as far as school improvement goes . . . Another thing . . . that I have said over and over is [that] you don't have to be sick to get better." A teacher shared her perspective that, "No matter how long you teach, there is always something that you can learn. And that's why I enjoy listening to some of the other things at the Quest rally that the teachers had to say, some of the other things they were doing . . . And when I went back [to Bowman], and I thought about it . . . I guess I have been doing some [of those things], but at least that helped me to add on to what I already knew." Another said, "I think that being involved . . . [in] Quest has really channeled my development towards . . . looking for how to make things better and reflecting on my current practices and thinking about, 'Ok, did this work? If it did, let's continue and even fine tune it . . . Plus, quit doing this [if it failed] and go on to something else."

Quest contributed to the development of skills, according to three interviewees, particularly in terms of learning them from other practitioners in the network. "We learn from one another, and it's helped us tremendously with different strategies and reaching our children," reported one focus group participant. Interviewees identified the facilitation of Data in a Day and the Protocol process as the skills they had acquired through Quest.

The Quest Network

Ten comments were made during interviews and the focus group about the benefits of networking with other schools in Quest and positive characteristics of the network itself. As one Bowman staff member put it, "It provided a forum for learning from others and taking in . . . what other people are doing well and how I can change it and make it mine." Another reported that the networking experience broadened her understanding of what change efforts were possible: "Sharing the success stories from other schools makes you say, well, they have done [it] with these obstacles in their way. You know, there's no reason why we can't do it too." The principal put this notion another way: "I think [the network] has helped me to understand that school improvement isn't the

same everywhere, that while the goals may be the same . . . every school is going to take a different approach based on what they're doing." Principal Vickers added that his sense that school improvement may be a common theme across quite disparate schools was strengthened during his visit to Bending Knee Elementary in rural West Virginia, during which he offered staff development on the Protocol process. "After having been there and seeing some of the problems [Principal Ellison] is dealing with and those kinds of things, I was even more impressed [with her work]," he explained. For these interviewees, networking provided contact with a variety of schools undertaking school improvement.

Other Bowman interviewees discussed the positive atmosphere of network gatherings. One focus group participant expressed surprise at the networking and collegiality at rallies, saying, "I had never been to a workshop where when the people meet, they're hugging. And it's like a family reunion . . . I didn't expect the networking, the show and tell . . . I learned a lot from that." The network offered a larger community of learners beyond Bowman, according to the principal: "I would feel very comfortable with calling . . . any of the people from the schools that are involved."

Five interviewees made comments about the benefits of networking with Quest schools from states other than their own. "What I really enjoyed when I was at the Quest rally . . . it gave me the opportunity to actually see some of the things that other teachers are doing in other systems and even other states. Because sometimes I think we become so stagnated with being in one place all the time." The principal argued that seeking ideas from schools nearby that are floundering may not be effective: "We've got to look outside of where we are . . . We've got to think, 'Okay, is this where we want to be? We're not there. So, where else do I need to look in order to . . . get help to get where I want to be?' . . . You can't do that by just looking at the people around you and even just looking at people in your state." For these Bowman staff, networking with schools beyond their own state broadened their repertoire of school improvement strategies.

The Protocol Process

During the 1998-99 school year, Bowman fourth-grade teachers used the Protocol process as a vehicle for examining and discussing student writing in an effort to improve the percentage of students achieving at least at the proficient level on the Tennessee writing assessment. Principal Vickers saw the use of Protocol as clearly related to improved writing performance. "I think the increase in the writing assessment is . . . directly attributable to Quest because of the structured reflection that came out of it and the collaboration of teachers," he reported.

In 1997, 51% of Bowman fourth grade students received at least a score of "competent" on the Tennessee writing assessment (see Table 6). However, by 1998, the percentage of students scoring at least "competent" had dropped to 44% (although a slightly higher percentage of these students scored in the "strong" and "outstanding" categories). Aiming to improve the following year's scores, the principal introduced Protocol in the fall of the 1998-99 school year as a means for fourth grade teachers to focus on ways to enhance teaching and learning of writing.

Even the four teachers participating in the focus group who had not been involved in the process knew of the impact its use had made upon writing scores. One such teacher reported, "Protocol . . . I know in fourth grade, they were really singing praises about Protocol with . . . last year the writing assessment. We saw a tremendous increase in their writing scores from the year before." By spring 1999, the percent of fourth graders receiving a score of at least competent had risen to 63%.

Other benefits of the process have been varied. "Boys and girls are more responsible for their work and for their behavior. It puts responsibility upon them 'cause we [have] student improvement plans and [it gives] them more responsibility with the plans."

Table 6
1997-1999 Bowman Elementary Tennessee Writing Assessment Percentages*

Rubric Score	1997	1998	1999
Outstanding	0%	4%	1%
Strong	7%	11%	12%
Competent	44%	29%	50%
Limited	36%	43%	29%
Flawed	11%	9%	4%
Deficient	0%	0%	0%
Blank or Refusal	3%	4%	5%

* Percentages may total to more than 100% due to rounding.

A teacher shared the effect participation in Protocol has upon her: "Protocol has taught me to shut up and listen. You know, I love to talk but there's a time you have to listen. You learn a lot by listening. And we [are] always on the boys and girls to listen . . . Well, I've learned to listen to my colleagues and learn something from them. And so, I just taught myself to be a better listener using the Protocol method." This respondent also revealed that she had used the process in other settings outside of the school. She reported, "And I've also used that in my private life at auxiliary, at clubs and meetings . . . [I]t helped us out a whole lot. We were gathering and [I] mean, we were just talking about everything. You know how women are. We just talk and not get anything accomplished. Meet for an hour and not get anything accomplished. So, I told them let's try something different and we tried that. And it worked out pretty good."

Similarly, another teacher reported that Protocol gave her discussions focus they might otherwise have lacked. "I'd talk and I might just ramble on and on," she shared. "Well, with Protocol you're given a subject and you just talk about it for a while. And I know I can talk. Well, one day I

was sitting here and our principal said to me, 'Just talk about the subject.' And I started talking. He told me . . . he said, 'You can stop talking now.'" She then continued that the process had also enabled her to engage with other teachers in the building. After her experience using Protocol, this teacher offered the following advice to other colleagues: "Because even though, you spend a lot of time in the classroom . . . don't just spend that time there. Get out and share some of the things with the people in your school, even your co-workers."

Another benefit of Protocol reported by a Bowman teacher was the practice in speaking about professional matters it afforded. She put it this way: "I think that teachers feel comfortable now with being able to get up and talk and do presentations. We feel that because of Protocol, we're a little more experienced than we were because I like to talk but sometimes we just rattle on and on about things, but . . . with the Protocol, I think we kind of set a goal and kind of stick to that particular subject."

One fourth grade teacher used the process with some of her students after school to discuss their writing. As a student participating in the student focus group explained, "It was a new experience. I ain't never heard of Protocol before . . . [My teacher] asked me to come to her room one afternoon. And I saw a whole bunch of other students there, and I sat down . . . and we were, like, two desks right in front of each other and two desks on the side. And we would write stories, then read the other person's stories. We would exchange. So, we had to tell them what we liked or [what] we didn't like, what we thought was good, and we thought needed improvement."

Although one student thought providing suggestions for improvement "was hard because they might be your friend," another reported liking "the compliments they would give you . . . most of them I found very, very flattering."

In terms of outcomes from the student Protocol process, three of the six focus group participants believed they had become more adept writers. "I thought I had become a better writer because when I started I was writing a half page and not writing any details . . .[Later] we had to write a story two pages long. I just got such wonderful ideas from the other kids." Another elaborated, "We didn't figure it out at the time, but [our teacher] was . . . helping us prepare for our writing test because they was last year in fourth grade . . . And I got a [TCAP score of] 4 or 5."

Data in a Day

Participants in this case study were asked to describe outcomes from their use of the participatory school evaluation process, Data in a Day (DIAD), learned of by Principal Vickers at a School Change Collaborative (SCC) meeting. One benefit of the process teachers noted was the way in which it invited parents and community members not traditionally involved in school evaluation to participate. Said one teacher, "I really like the Data in a Day last year. It involved so many people. It involved the children here at school. It involved teachers here at school. It involved community people here. And there was such a sharing and such a cooperation that that could [not] help but benefit the total atmosphere of the school." The principal elaborated, "We talked a lot in

Quest about involving all the stakeholders and all the segments of the community. And I think that Data in a Day does a really good job of that . . . We included, which they had not in other places we had seen . . . We included a teacher assistant, our cafeteria manager . . . our patrol lady around here . . . We had one or two ministers and those kinds of things." Another reported, "I think some of the parents had a personal interest. They . . . had an opportunity to put . . . their comments up front to [make us] aware of some things they appreciated and some things they kind of questioned also."

Likewise, one teacher became more aware of community perceptions of the school during DIAD, which she began to see as a public relations tool. "I really thought a lot about what the community members were seeing. I'm sure it's the same in . . . all sorts school systems, but it feels like our community a lot of times is being a 'me' kind of, you know. Even with the snow days, there were some words about how . . . teachers are lazy and all this stuff. And [it] really was important to me, to show when people came in from the community to critique our school and look at the things that we're doing, I really wanted to show them the very best." Moreover, her view of the community changed as a result of DIAD; rather than a source of blame, the community became an ally in addressing shared concerns. As she phrased it, "[L]et's, you know, really include them in the solution to our problems rather than blaming them for them."

The principal also reported viewing DIAD as a public relations tool. He shared a story related by a staff member: At a church meeting, a community member spoke negatively about Bowman, to which the minister, who had participated in DIAD, responded, "I really have trouble believing that . . . I've been to that school. I've talked to those kids over there and I know . . . how affirmed they feel." The principal continued, "I thought, 'Well, that's a benefit of Data in a Day that we don't talk about."

Three teachers and the principal noted the importance of including students in DIAD. One such teacher described a particularly difficult student who appeared to relish participating in the process; "He is part of this very important reflection on our school and that may be the very thing that saves him." She continued, "And I just think that's what's great about being here and being involved in Quest is looking beyond the surface of a child and what they do that drives you crazy. And saying that he is a valuable human being, and it's our job to help him, you know, become a value to society."

Student-led Conferences

Bowman first piloted student-led parent conferences with one class per third, fourth, and fifth grades during the fall of 1998. One teacher who now finds student-led conferences preferable to traditional parent-teacher conferences reported, "[W]hen I first came, I felt a little leery about the student led conferences. And I [worried that] the parents are going to challenge me about these conferences after they finish talking to their children. [Another challenge] was are they [students] actually telling the parents enough about what they have been doing or what they haven't been doing. Have I actually worked with them enough so that they will know what they are supposed to do when they . . . conduct the student led conferences. . . So, what we actually did... we kind of staged . . .

mock . . . student led conferences."

At the November 1998 rally, Bowman Quest members reported that the pilot had been successful. The process was then extended to all classrooms, K-5, during the 1999-2000 school year.

Teachers at Bowman, whether Quest participants or not, saw two major benefits of the student-led conferences. First, the process forces students to account for the quality of their work as they prepare to present to their parents at the conferences. One teacher put it this way: "That's really been successful. It's a whole lot different for a child to have to explain to his parents why I did really well . . . You know, a lot of kids don't know why they get the grade they do. But to be able to go through and say, 'I got this grade because I did this, this, and this' . . . It gives them a greater understanding of what they are accomplishing or why they're not accomplishing yet."

Another respondent described student-led conferences as a vehicle for addressing the "Enabling SMART Learners" component of the Quest framework for continuous improvement. She explained, "And in this framework again, the student led conferences come to my mind because the students are responsible for their work. They know what they have done from the nine weeks. They have their papers. They have taken their papers home. They've shown them to their parents. And at that time they take the responsibility. They take the lead role [in] sharing their goals with their parents. See, we have forms [for] them to fill out and . . . on those forms they state why they made those scores, what they did to make low scores or high scores, and then their goals—how they are going to improve them. And to hear those children tell their parents they're going to go home and study and they want them to help them study, really I think enables SMART learners. You've got your parents involved, your teachers involved, and most of all your students involved."

Three teachers reported that students' enthusiasm and interest in student-led conferences effected parent participation in them. "You know, they're getting them [parents] to come because they want to share their success. And they are proud what they have done," is the way one teacher explained this phenomenon.

The second major benefit noted by interviewees was increased parent attendance. One teacher described the impact student-led conferences had upon parent attendance at conferences that previously would have conformed to the conventional parent-teacher meeting format. "I guess I would say we [had] average parental involvement. But after the student led conferences, I would say about 95% of our parents are involved in their student learning. And that was a[n] initial product of Quest. And this year we tried it schoolwide—K thru 5. And out of my room, I had 95%. Most rooms had 95% or more participation from parents . . . [I]f we had not tried that, getting the students to take control of their work and explaining it to their parents, we would not have had the parental involvement."

CONCLUSIONS

Bowman Elementary appears to have possessed several advantages prior to involvement in Quest which helped to support and sustain the school's participation. These include administrative enthusiasm for school improvement efforts and a climate of professionalism and commitment to teaching.

Several Quest team members at Bowman agreed unanimously that their level of involvement in the project had been very high. Activities have included team attendance at most network events, administrative support for the endeavor, participation in co-ventures, ongoing communication with other network schools, implementation of several school improvement and action research efforts, and engagement in related school improvement work.

On the individual level, Bowman Quest team members reported reflecting more about their practice and their contributions to the school. For some, this meant their beliefs about children's abilities were challenged, whereas others used the reflection afforded through involvement in Quest as a means to consider continuous improvement strategies. Some Bowman staff reported that Quest also assisted the school in developing a more concentrated focus on collective goals for teaching and learning.

Bowman staff undertook three processes learned of through Quest. During the 1998-99 school year, fourth-grade teachers used the Protocol process as a means to examine student writing in an effort to increase the percentage of students achieving at least at the competent level on the Tennessee writing assessment. Bowman also conducted DIAD, a participatory school evaluation process, with the assistance of Quest staff. Finally, several third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers piloted student-led conferences during the fall of 1998. During the 1999-2000, all classrooms enacted the strategy following the successful pilot.

Results from the use of the Protocol process were varied. In terms of student outcomes, the percentage of fourth graders receiving at least a score of competent increased from 44% in 1998 to 63% in 1999. Several students who participated in the process also believed their writing had improved. However, during interviews, teachers addressed more fully the benefits of the process to their own professional growth, noting that it provided a mechanism for more focused discussion on matters of instruction. In addition, the use of Protocol afforded Bowman teachers a greater sense of collegiality and shared practice.

Although likely not attributable to the use of the Protocol process alone, scores from the post-test administration of the *School Professional Staff as Learning Community* instrument corroborate teachers' perceptions that the school staff have become more collegial and operate increasingly as a learning community. The increase in mean scores on the instrument were both significant and substantial.

Results from DIAD were more indefinite, according to Bowman staff. Involving parents and

community members was seen as a benefit in and of itself, although to a few respondents, it was a public relations tool. Others thought that including students in the school assessment had been important.

Despite the diffuse results of DIAD, Bowman Quest team members reported on the Reflective Assessment instrument that the school most closely approximated the description of a school focused on the framework component of Broadening the Learning Community. DIAD was cited only twice as a Quest activity that had supported Bowman's development in terms of the component. Other project elements reported to have enhanced the school's efforts to expand its learning community included the introduction of student-led conferences, "measures of successes," inclusive rallies, and feedback and resources.

Student-led conferences contributed to two results at Bowman. First, students became more adept at discussing their school work, as preparing for their presentations at the conferences forced them to explain the work's purpose, outcome, and ways outcomes might be improved. Second, parent participation in the student-led conferences exceeded participation in the former, traditional parent-teacher conferences.

In summary, the Bowman Elementary Quest team has been highly involved in the project. On the individual level, participants have engaged in more reflection about education, change, and their own contributions to the school than they report having done prior to involvement. Some also believe the school has a greater focus on teaching and learning than previously. The school has adopted three strategies learned of via Quest, which have had varied types and degrees of outcomes, ranging from the experience of including community members in participatory school evaluation activities to increased fourth grade writing assessment scores. Moreover, the school has developed significantly as a professional learning community over the course of its involvement in the network.

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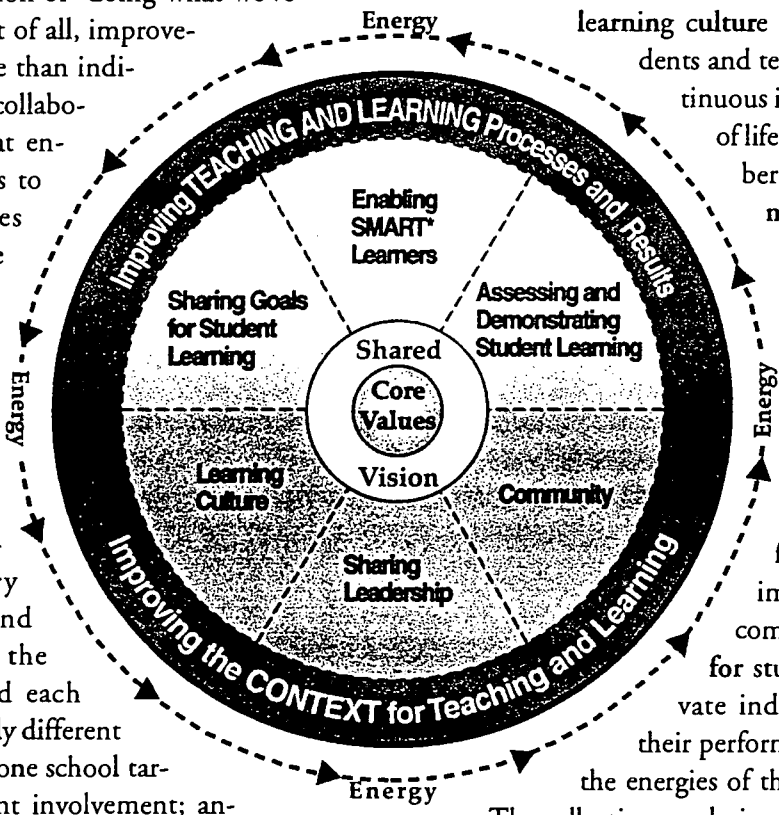
APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A:

Quest Brochure and Framework for Continuous Improvement

Quest for Quality Learning Communities
A Program for Continuous School Improvement

School improvement is challenging work; to be effective, it must be continuous. Improvement is not a single act or program; it is a process of always wanting to learn more about how better to help all students achieve at higher levels. Improvement is visionary; it involves risk-taking, uncertainty, and a rejection of "doing what we've always done." Most of all, improvement requires more than individual effort: it is a collaborative endeavor that engages and responds to the diverse voices within an entire community.



Teams from 20 schools in a four-state region now collaborate with staff from the Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) to study and learn together in the Quest project, and each school takes a slightly different path. For example, one school targets increased parent involvement; another hopes to raise the level of student thinking through teachers' working together and coaching one another; a high school improves teaching by listening to what students say about how they learn best; other schools focus on specific curriculum areas such as writing or science education.

The Quest framework unifies their thinking about school improvement. These **core values** offer a blueprint for continuous progress: ongoing questioning of practice, high expectations for all, individual responsibility for better performance, collegial sharing and support, and thoughtful reflection on practice.

Stemming from these values is a clearly defined **vision** of student excellence that is shared by all members of the school community. A strong **learning culture** encourages both students and teachers to choose continuous improvement as a way of life in their school. Members of the **school community** connect to one another through a shared commitment to improved learning conditions for all. **Shared leadership** encourages and enables everyone to assume responsibility for making a positive impact on the school community. **Shared goals for student learning** motivate individuals to improve their performance and help focus the energies of the entire community.

The collection, analysis, and use of **student assessment data** sustains continuous improvement, providing a measure of the effectiveness of the community's efforts. SMART learners are Successful, Motivated, Autonomous, Responsible, and Thoughtful. Fully equipped to become lifelong learners, they are ready for life and work in the 21st century. In short, continuous improvement spawns the energy and excitement necessary to transform a collection of individuals into a true learning community.

Goals of the Quest Project

1. *Connect* with colleagues. By serving on a Quest leadership team, participants connect with others on their school team, forming bonds that enhance working relationships. In addition, Quest teams connect with teams from other schools, districts, and states, allowing everyone to learn from others' experiences. A listserv, inquiry@ael.org, facilitates connections across the network.

2. *Create* a learning community. Teams become part of the Quest network learning community with the expectation of recreating this experience in their own community.

3. *Connect* with concepts and stories related to continuous school improvement. At Quest rallies, the Quest framework is a source of study, dialogue, and sharing among teams.

4. *Create* personal and shared meaning. The Quest network places a high value on processes such as reflection and dialogue, which lead to deeper understandings of continuous improvement.

5. *Commit* to continue learning with this community. Quest schools have made a three-year commitment to study and learn together, with a focus on improving student achievement.

What is a learning community? "Learning communities are essentially communities of inquirers . . . sustained by a continued commitment to share this journey of exploration with one another on matters people care deeply about" (Ryan, 1995).

Peter Senge et al. (1994) write that a learning organization "is a place where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, . . . and where people are continually learning how to learn together."

6. *Commit* to continue the Quest back home. The "rubber hits the road" at schools, not at Quest events. AEL helps school teams take their learnings home and apply them for the benefit of students. Site visits, called Co-Ventures in Learning, provide opportunities for AEL staff to visit each school, in order to better understand the context of that school's efforts, and tailor assistance to the school's needs.

The Quest project hopes to achieve results at three different levels:

- For individuals, sharing leadership on a Quest team leads to more reflective practice and renewed under standing of the concepts that support continuous improvement.
- For schools, Quest will provide motivation and support for ongoing and/or new school-based initiatives to improve teaching and learning.
- For the Quest network of schools, our collaborative learning and research will yield stories, insights, processes, and products—all of which will be helpful to the broader educational community.

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APPENDIX B:

Quest Team Member Individual Interview Protocol

Quest Co-Venture 2 Interview Protocol

Instructions: We are interested in your perceptions regarding the difference Quest has made for you personally and for your school. Please respond to the focusing questions honestly and openly. There are no right answers, and we are sincerely interested in your personal assessment and reaction. Also, please be assured that your name will not be associated with any of your comments. We are committed to protecting your confidentiality and anonymity.

1. Personal/Professional: What impact has your involvement with Quest had upon your **personal and professional growth** and development?

If the respondent does not talk about the following areas of impact, the interviewer should probe for more information using the prompts below.

(a) In what areas have you increased your **knowledge and skills** as a result of Quest participation?

(b) What **attitudes or beliefs** have been challenged and/or modified through involvement with Quest?

(c) What **questions** have you been prompted to investigate?

(d) What **personal behaviors** have you changed or attempted to modify as a result of your involvement in Quest?

(e) What meaningful **relationships** have you developed?

2. School reform/improvement: In what ways has participation in Quest contributed to your **school's journey of continuous improvement**?

(a) Please describe specifically the **results** or outcomes for students and adults that you believe attributable to Quest.

(b) Think about the Quest **framework** and its six constructs. In which of these areas has your school become more focused?

Culture for Learning
Sharing Leadership
Community of Learners
SMART Learners
Assessing and Demonstrating Learning
Sharing Goals for Learning

(c) What is different now as a result of your school's focus on this component?

3. Value of Network: To what extent and in what ways has the Quest **network** supported the individual learning and school improvement you described above?

Additional prompts for further information below.

(a) What is the value of networking with others schools as we have done in Quest?

(b) Describe the value of relating to schools outside of your own state.

APPENDIX C:

Faculty Group Interview Protocol

Quest Co-Venture 2
Faculty Focus Group Protocol

Thank you very much for participating today in this focus group interview. We're interested in learning more about what school improvement efforts you've undertaken here since your school's involvement in the Quest network.

Let me describe a few guidelines before we begin. First, we will be recording today's conversation. However, let me assure you that your name will not be associated with any comment you make. We will have the tape transcribed, but you will never be identified personally. This is to protect your confidentiality and anonymity. Second, the purpose of a focus group is to get everyone's candid viewpoint. No one's answers are right or wrong, so please respect everyone's opinion. And, finally, it is important that everyone has an opportunity to express their opinions concerning each question. It is my job to ensure that everyone has that opportunity. With these guidelines in mind, let's begin!

1. For those of you **not** directly involved in Quest, what is your understanding of the project?

2. What school improvement efforts have you undertaken here as a result of your school's participation in Quest?

3. How successful have these been? For what reasons?

4. What student results or outcomes have you seen as a result of the improvement projects you've undertaken? (Do you have data or stories supporting this that you might share with us?)

5. What other results or outcomes have you seen as a result of these projects? (Do you have data or stories supporting this that you might share with us?)

6. What is your favorite story about the projects you've participated in?

APPENDIX D:

Student Focus Group Protocol

Co-Venture 2 Student Focus Group Protocol

My name is _____, and I work at an organization called AEL. We have been working with your school to find out more about good teaching and learning. Today we're going to ask you a few questions about being a student here. We are tape recording our conversation, but no one at your school will listen to the tape, and any comment you make will not be associated with your name.

There are a few guidelines for this kind of discussion. First, we're talking about opinions today, so no one's answers are right or wrong. Please respect each other's answers. And second, it is my job to make sure that everyone has a chance to speak. Please be considerate and take turns when answering. Any questions?

Let's begin.

1. Remember an experience in school when you felt very successful as a learner. Please you describe that experience to us.

    Probes:
    - What was it that made it successful?
    - What did you do?
    - What did the teacher do?

3. Remember an experience in school when you did not feel successful as a learner. Please describe that experience to us.

    Probes:
    - What was it that made it not very successful?
    - What did you do?
    - What did the teacher do?

3. How do you learn best—or how do you like to learn? Try to elicit the types of instructional approaches that "work" for these students.

5. *Elementary*: Is school easy or hard for you? For what reasons? *High School*: Do you feel challenged in school? Are there opportunities to be engaged in challenging courses?

6. *High school*: What kind of schedule does this school operate on (traditional; 4 x 4 block; AB block; other). How well does this work?

7. What are some words you would use to describe this school that capture "what is important around here"?

8. What else would you like to tell me about learning in this school?

APPENDIX E:

Reflective Assessment Questionnaire

Reflective Assessment for Quest Schools of Continuous Improvement

Name: _____ School: _____

Directions: This instrument was designed to help you reflect upon your school's development as a school of continuous improvement. For each of the six dimensions of the Quest framework, circle the number that best represents your school's current position on the continuum. Then explain your rating and describe how change has occurred. **Please be honest. We appreciate frank and open responses.**

Also, please be assured that your name will not be associated with any of your comments. We are committed to protecting your confidentiality and anonymity.

Culture for Learning

➤ The paragraph below describes a school at "100" in the area of "culture for learning." Where does your school fit on the continuum?

Members of the school staff frequently reflect on how to improve the school for all students. They not only ask lots of questions–including "How can we do this better?"–but also they regularly try new ideas, with administrative support, and celebrate their successes as a community. Likewise, students are curious and show excitement for learning.

100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0

➤ On what do you base your rating? Cite specific evidence/examples to support the above rating.

➤ Has involvement in Quest for Quality Learning Communities influenced your school's development in this area?

□ No □ Yes

If yes, in what ways has Quest made an impact? Give specific examples.

▼

If yes or no, what *besides involvement in Quest* have been the major factors influencing your school's development in this area?

Community of Learners

➤ The paragraph below describes a school at "100" in the area of "community of learners." Where does your school fit on the continuum?

Members of the school community, especially students and teachers, feel connected to one another and to the school as an organization with a clear mission. Open and regular communication promote norms of trust and respect. The school is a center of learning for the entire community; parents and other community members are welcomed and valued.

100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0

➤ On what do you base your rating? Cite specific evidence/examples to support the above rating.

➤ Has involvement in Quest for Quality Learning Communities influenced your school's development in this area?

□ No □ Yes

If yes, in what ways has Quest made an impact? Give specific examples.

▼

If yes or no, what *besides involvement in Quest* have been the major factors influencing your school's development in this area?

Sharing Leadership for Learning

➤ The paragraph below describes a school at "100" in the area of "sharing leadership for learning." Where does your school fit on the continuum?

Teachers, parents, and students have a forum for input into decisions and have easy access to important information about the school. They know that they are listened to and that what they think and do makes a difference. School administrator(s) participate democratically with teachers. School leadership teams include students–or at least are guided by students' perspectives–as they plan for school improvement.

100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0

➤ On what do you base your rating? Cite specific evidence/examples to support the above rating.

➤ Has involvement in Quest for Quality Learning Communities influenced your school's development in this area?

□ No □ Yes

If yes, in what ways has Quest made an impact? Give specific examples.

If yes or no, what *besides involvement in Quest* have been the major factors influencing your school's development in this area?

Shared Goals for Learning

➤ The paragraph below describes a school at "100" in the area of "shared goals for learning." Where does your school fit on the continuum?

Goals for school improvement are specific, measurable, and identifiable by all segments of the school community. These goals are a major consideration in decision making about allocation of school resources. They affect decisions at both the classroom and school levels.

100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0

➤ On what do you base your rating? Cite specific evidence/examples to support the above rating.

➤ Has involvement in Quest for Quality Learning Communities influenced your school's development in this area?

□ No □ Yes

If yes, in what ways has Quest hade an impact? Give specific examples.

▼

If yes or no, what *besides involvement in Quest* have been the major factors influencing your school's development in this area?

Assessing and Demonstrating Learning

➤ The paragraph below describes a school at "100" in the area of "assessing and demonstrating learning." Where does your school fit on the continuum?

At the school level, multiple data sources are carefully studied and used in setting goals. Results of student achievement tests are disaggregated and are widely communicated and interpreted to the broader community. At the classroom level, teachers communicate clear expectations for student performance and use a variety of methods to assess progress. Students and teachers actively assess their own performance and time is provided for this reflection.

100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0

➤ On what do you base your rating? Cite specific evidence/examples to support the above rating.

➤ Has involvement in Quest for Quality Learning Communities influenced your school's development in this area?

□ No □ Yes

If yes, in what ways has Quest hade an impact? Give specific examples.

If yes or no, what *besides involvement in Quest* have been the major factors influencing your school's development in this area?

Enabling SMART Learners

➤ The paragraph below describes a school at "100" in the area of "enabling SMART learners." Where does your school fit on the continuum?

Throughout the school, students and teachers are actively engaged in meaningful work which they understand is connected with the real world and with their future. Students are aware of their own personal strengths in learning, they increasingly are intrinsically motivated to learn, and accept responsiblity for their own performance. Students and teachers are aware that learning discrete facts is not nearly as important as is developing skills necessary for lifelong learning in the complex world of the 21st century.

100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0

➤ On what do you base your rating? Cite specific evidence/examples to support the above rating.

➤ Has involvement in Quest for Quality Learning Communities influenced your school's development in this area?

□ No □ Yes

If yes, in what ways has Quest hade an impact? Give specific examples.

If yes or no, what *besides involvement in Quest* have been the major factors influencing your school's development in this area?

APPENDIX F:

Professional Learning Community Instrument

School Professional Staff as Learning Community*

Directions: This questionnaire concerns your perceptions about your school as a learning organization. There are no right or wrong responses. Please consider where you believe your school is in its development of each of the five numbered descriptors shown in bold-faced type on the left. Each sub-item has a five-point scale. On each scale, circle the number that best represents the degree to which you feel your school has developed.

Last Four Social Security Numbers: ___ ___ ___ ___

Date: _____

School: _____

1. **School administrators participate democratically with teachers sharing power, authority, and decision making.**

1a

5	4	3	2	1
Although there are some legal and fiscal decisions required of the principal, school administrators consistently involve the staff in discussing and making decisions about most school issues.		Administrators invite advice and counsel from the staff and then make decisions themselves.		Administrators never share information with the staff nor provide opportunities to be involved in decision making.

1b

5	4	3	2	1
Administrators involve the entire staff.		Administrators involve a small committee, council, or team of staff.		Administrators do not involve any staff.

---

2. **Shared visions for school improvement have an undeviating focus on student learning and are consistently referenced for the staff's work.**

2a

5	4	3	2	1
Visions for improvement are discussed by the entire staff such that consensus and a shared vision results.		Visions for improvement are not thoroughly explored; some staff agree and others do not.		Visions for improvement held by the staff are widely divergent.

2b

5	4	3	2	1
Visions for improvement are always focused on students and teaching and learning.		Visions for improvement are sometimes focused on students and teaching and learning.		Visions for improvement do not target students and teaching and learning.

2c

5	4	3	2	1
Visions for improvement target high quality learning experiences for all students.		Visions for improvement address quality learning experiences in terms of students' abilities.		Visions for improvement do not include concerns about the quality of learning experiences.

3. **Staff's collective learning and application of the learnings (taking action) create high intellectual learning tasks and solutions to address student needs.**

3a

5	4	3	2	1
The entire staff meets to discuss issues, share information, and learn with and from each other.		Subgroups of the staff meet to discuss issues, share information, and learn with and from each other.		Individuals discuss issues, share information, and learn with and from each other.

3b

5	4	3	2	1
The staff meets regularly and frequently on substantive student-centered educational issues.		The staff meets occasionally on substantive student-centered educational issues.		The staff never meets to consider substantive educational issues.

3c

5	4	3	2	1
The staff discusses the quality of their teaching and students' learning.		The staff does not often discuss their instructional practices nor its influence on student learning.		The staff basically discusses non-teaching and non-learning issues.

3d

5	4	3	2	1
The staff, based on their learnings, makes and implements plans that address students' needs, more effective teaching, and more successful student learning.		The staff occasionally acts on their learnings and makes and implements plans to improve teaching and learning.		The staff does not act on their learning.

3e

5	4	3	2	1
The staff debriefs and assesses the impact of their actions and makes revisions.		The staff infrequently assesses their actions and seldom makes revisions based on the results.		The staff does not assess their work.

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4. **Peers review and give feedback based on observing each other's classroom behaviors in order to increase individual and organizational capacity.**

4a

5	4	3	2	1
Staff regularly and frequently visit and observe each other's classroom teaching.		Staff occasionally visit and observe each other's teaching.		Staff never visit their peers' classrooms.

4b

5	4	3	2	1
Staff provide feedback to each other about teaching and learning based on their classroom observations.		Staff discuss non-teaching issues after classroom observations.		Staff do not interact after classroom observations.

5. Conditions and capacities support the school's arrangement as a professional learning organization.

5a

5	4	3	2	1
Time is arranged and committed for whole staff interactions.		Time is arranged but frequently the staff fails to meet.		Staff cannot arrange time for interacting.

5b

5	4	3	2	1
The size, structure, and arrangements of the school facilitate staff proximity and interaction.		While the facility and school membership are large, the staff are working to maximize existing arrangements for interaction.		The staff takes no action to manage the facility and personnel for interaction.

5c

5	4	3	2	1
A variety of processes and procedures are used to encourage staff communication.		A single communication exists and is sometimes used to share information.		Communication devices are not given attention.

5d

5	4	3	2	1
Trust and openness characterize all the staff.		Some of the staff are trusting and open.		Trust and openness do not exist among the staff.

5e

5	4	3	2	1
Caring, collaborative, and productive relationships exist among all the staff.		Caring and collaboration are inconsistently demonstrated among the staff.		Staff are isolated and work alone at their task.

*Hord, Shirley M. (1996). Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

APPENDIX G:

Quest Innovation Configuration Checklist

School Name: _____ Your Role/Position _____

Date: _____

Quest Schools of Continuous Improvement
Innovation Configuration Checklist

Directions: The eight items in this instrument represent the components associated with the Quest Network of Schools of Continuous Improvement. Beneath each component are alternative ways in which the components might be implemented in a school. For each item, circle the letter which best describes *your* perception of how Quest has been implemented in your school.

1. School Leadership Team

a. All three of the following are true of our school leadership team: (1) It is inclusive with administrator, teacher, parent, and (in the case of high schools) student membership; (2) It has been fairly stable over time; and (3) It has assumed active leadership in taking our quest back home to the broader school community.

b. Two of the following are true of our school leadership team: (1) It is inclusive with administrator, teacher, parent, and (in the case of high schools) student membership; (2) It has been fairly stable over time; and (3) It has assumed active leadership in taking our quest back home to the broader school community.

c. One of the following statements is true of our school leadership team: (1) It is inclusive with administrator, teacher, parent, and (in the case of high schools) student membership; (2) It has been fairly stable over time; and (3) It has assumed active leadership in taking our quest back home to the broader school community.

d. Our school does not have a true leadership team.

2. Administrative Support

a. One or more of our school's administrators are active members of the leadership team and extensively involved in Quest activities.

b One or more of our school's administrators are members of the leadership team and have been occasionally involved in Quest activities.

c One or more of our school's administrators have been involved in a few Quest activities and have been generally supportive of our team.

d Our school administrators have not been involved in Quest activities and are only minimally supportive of our school's involvement in Quest.

3. **Participation in Network Events**

a. Individuals from our school have participated in three (3) or more Network events during the past year including Rallies, Summer Symposia, and/or Scholar's Colloquia.

b. Individuals from our school have participated in two (2) Network events during the past twelve months including Rallies, Summer Symposia, and/or Scholar's Colloquia.

c. Individuals from our school have participated in one (1) Network event during the past twelve months including Rallies, Summer Symposia, and/or Scholar's Colloquia.

d. Individuals from our school have not participated in any Network events during the past year.

4. **Participation in Co-Ventures in Learning**

a. A wide cross-section (i.e., administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and students) of our school community participated in the Quest Co-Venture(s) in Learning.

b. A limited number of our school community—primarily administrators, teachers and staff—participated in our Quest Co-Venture(s).

c. Our school has not yet engaged in a Quest Co-Venture in Learning, but plans to do so during this school year.

d. Our school has no plans to participate in a Quest Co-Venture.

5. **Involvement with Other Quest Schools**

a. Our school has been directly involved in sharing successful practices with other Quest schools by either (1) adopting a practice that we learned about from a sister school, (and)/or (2) helping a sister school adopt a practice that has been effectively used at our school.

b. Individuals from our school have visited another Quest school or our school has hosted a visit by another Quest school to our campus.

c. Leadership team members have shared ideas with individuals from other schools at rallies and other network events.

d. Our school has had very limited involved with other Quest schools.

6. **School Improvement/Action Research**

   a. Our school is implementing a school improvement project in connection with our involvement in Quest and is collecting data to demonstrate its impact on student learning.

   b. Our school is implementing a school improvement project in connection with our involvement in Quest, but has not designed a formal plan for assessing its effectiveness.

   c. Our school is currently considering one or more school improvement initiatives that would be supported by our involvement with Quest.

   d. Our school has no plans to pursue an improvement initiative as a part of our involvement in the Quest network.

7. **Change in School-Wide View of School Improvement**

   a. Our school community has been significantly impacted by the Quest approach. A wide cross-section is aware of the Quest framework and committed to work on one or more of the component parts.

   b. Our faculty and staff have focused on one or more aspect of the Quest approach to continuous improvement.

   c. Members of the Quest leadership team have been affected by the Quest approach to continuous improvement.

   d. Our school community has not been influenced by the Quest approach to continuous improvement.

8. **Engagement in Related School Improvement Efforts**

   a. Our school has been actively engaged in other school improvement efforts and the results have been recognizable.

   b. Our school has been involved in other school improvement efforts but there are no clearly identifiable results from our participation.

   c. Our school has not been involved in any other school improvement efforts.

APPENDIX H:

Completed Evaluation *Standards* Checklist

Checklist for Applying the Standards

To interpret the information provided on this form, the reader needs to refer to the full text of the standards as they appear in Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, *The Program Evaluation Standards* (1994), Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage.

The Standards were consulted and used as indicated in the table below (check as appropriate):

Descriptor		The Standard was addressed	The Standard was partially addressed	The Standard was not addressed	The Standard was not applicable
U1	Stakeholder Identification	x			
U2	Evaluator Credibility	x			
U3	Information Scope and Selection	x			
U4	Values Identification	x			
U5	Report Clarity	x			
U6	Report Timeliness and Dissemination	x			
U7	Evaluation Impact	x			
F1	Practical Procedures	x			
F2	Political Viability				x
F3	Cost Effectiveness	x			
P1	Service Orientation	x			
P2	Formal Agreements	x			
P3	Rights of Human Subjects	x			
P4	Human Interactions	x			
P5	Complete and Fair Assessment	x			
P6	Disclosure of Findings	x			
P7	Conflict of Interest	x			
P8	Fiscal Responsibility	x			
A1	Program Documentation	x			
A2	Context Analysis	x			
A3	Described Purposes and Procedures	x			
A4	Defensible Information Sources	x			
A5	Valid Information	x			
A6	Reliable Information	x			
A7	Systematic Information	x			
A8	Analysis of Quantitative Information	x			
A9	Analysis of Qualitative Information	x			
A10	Justified Conclusions	x			
A11	Impartial Reporting	x			
A12	Metaevaluation	x			

The Program Evaluation Standards (1994, Sage) guided the development of this (check one):

____ request for evaluation plan/design/proposal
____ evaluation plan/design/proposal
____ evaluation contract
_x_ evaluation report
____ other: _____

Name Caitlin Howley-Rowe Date 6/19/00

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(e.g., author of document, evaluation team leader, external auditor, internal auditor)

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