STRATEGIC PLANNING: A PROCESS FOR RESTRUCTURING
THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND IMPROVING
COMMUNITY SUPPORT

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

By

Wayne D. Bingham, B.S.Ed., M.Ed.
Denton, Texas
May, 1996
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The problem of this study was to determine the change in public support which would occur due to a public school district's going through a strategic planning process and then the implementation of specific action plans. The purpose of the study was to demonstrate that the public support necessary to assure adequate funding for the district's programs could be gained by involving the community in a broad-based planning effort and by demonstrating a concerted effort to implement the actions required by the plan.

The population chosen to be surveyed was a registered voters' list of 13,747 persons. The selected participants was a random sample of 200 persons selected from the voter list. The selected sample was surveyed using the *Community Opinion Inventory* developed by the National Study of School Evaluation. The overall return was 78 on the preprocess group and 57 from the postprocess group. The survey instrument included 45 Likert-type items which were grouped into five general support areas.

Five research questions were addressed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. No significant difference was found in public
support as measured by the Community Opinion Inventory between the groups that were surveyed before and after the completion of the strategic planning process and implementation of the strategic plan. Additional findings and conclusions are discussed in the study.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The public schools can no longer meet the needs of the changing society which supports it without undergoing radical change. The methods which produced graduates who performed competently in the past will no longer be appropriate. In order for the schools to survive, administrators must be able to make unprecedented change within the school system and then find the funding to support it.

Change as it has been viewed traditionally in the schools is not sufficient. Administrators must be more responsive to their environment and be flexible enough to offer programs within schools which have not yet even been conceived. Additionally, administrators must gear up schools to offer education for a lifetime, not for 13 years (Decker & Decker, 1988). The rapidly changing nature of work will require that citizens learn new skills, perhaps two or three times in their careers. On the other end of the age scale, administrators must get underprivileged and deprived children in school at an earlier age in order to break the cycle of poverty which imprisons this segment of society.

An educational system such as the one described will be much more costly than the present system. Additional funding for public
schools will become a lasting reality only when the system is able to gain pervasive support from its constituencies.

It appears reasonable to assume that administrators cannot accomplish this task alone. They require the support of the community which they serve. This support seems to be contingent upon the nature of the administrators’ ability to respond to the communities’ needs. The building of a structure through which the response is channeled seems to pose the major problem (Zerchykov, 1992).

The design of such a structure must be planned and carried out involving the maximum number of the schools’ constituencies (Denton, 1991). The adage that people tend to support what they help create seems appropriate in this case. Effective school research has shown that more effective schools gain tremendous support through a shared vision or a common set of core values (Zerchykov, 1992).

Acting on the premises stated above, it becomes obvious that administrators need a process or a discipline for planning change within public schools that takes into consideration the conditions of the environment in which they must function, examine their internal capacities, and provide for the development of a common sense or direction for the future. In order to follow this process, administrators must accept that external factors will have a greater impact on their schools’ survival than the internal factors over which they have control (McCune, 1986).
The process which would appear to be particularly suited to address these problems is strategic planning. Strategic planning is a creative management process powered by the basic human drive to solve problems. The process forces administrators to focus on realistic examination of conditions and to seek out innovative ways to reach their goals (McCune, 1986).

Strategic planning has its origins in the business world beginning in the mid-1950s, and at the time were called long-range planning systems (Steiner, 1979). Public officials began to see the need for better planning in their agencies and started using strategic planning in the 1970s. Later strategic planning was attempted, to some degree, in the public schools. Steiner warned that strategic planning in the not-for-profit sector was somewhat more difficult because decisions in public agencies tended to be more politically dominated than in the profit-oriented sector. Steiner used the analogy of having all your employees, customers, suppliers, and competitors serving on your Board of Trustees. The implication for administrators is that strategic planning will be difficult to carry out in school districts because of the many pressures which may be brought to bear on the decisions of the planning team.

Prior to undertaking strategic planning, business leaders initiated a process of strategic thinking for managers which resulted in the building of formal plans. Rothschild (1979) stated that strategic thinking involves four basic activities:
1. Developing a clear understanding of your company's past position and both the external and internal factors which caused it to fail or to achieve its expected goals.

2. Discovering future trends or events which may have an effect on the company, either positively or negatively.

3. Reviewing current strategy and making a decision in regard to whether to change or not, as well as the degree and type of change.

4. The establishing of a monitoring system to measure the effect of the changes.

Long-range thinking by management in the for-profit sector of the economy led to the more structured process of strategic planning. Disruptions in the normal flow of activities in the business world became the norm during the mid-1950s and forced business leaders to plan for change in order to survive. Gardner, Rachlin, and Sweeney (1986) suggested that in the 1980s destabilization and fluidity would be the norm for all world business and that managements' response to that change would determine those that survive. The process for strategic planning has offered the best chance for intelligent long-range planning.

If one accepts the premise that change external to the public schools will necessitate change within the school and that strategic planning will provide the tools and the process for appropriate change, the problem to be dealt with is funding the changes. Change will not be inexpensive. Estimates for average yearly increases are between $73
billion and $110 billion (McCune, 1986). To obtain and maintain funding for these kinds of increases will require tremendous public support.

Proper implementation of strategic planning can result in the changes needed by the public school system to meet the rapidly changing needs of society. In the context of this study, implementation infers both the formulation of the plan and documentation of timely actions taken in pursuit of the stated objectives. If the public is aware of the process and the results of strategic planning, perhaps their perception of the efficiency of schools would be enhanced and the level of support become greater. If this should prove to be the case, strategic planning could be the key to both change and the necessary support to fund it.

Statement of the Problem

This study is concerned with the degree to which public approval of the schools is affected when administrators go through a strategic planning process and implement specific action plans for achieving specific objectives within their school districts.

Purposes of the Study

The purposes of the study are:

1. To determine the degree of support generated by engaging in a strategic planning process and then the implementation of specific plans.
2. If found to be successful, to encourage district leaders to involve themselves in the process.

3. To provide information to interested leaders in school districts, state education agencies, and other organizations of the side effect (positive support) generated by having a school go through the strategic planning process.

Hypotheses

The null hypotheses that were investigated are as follows:

There will be no significant difference between the mean scores concerning degree of support on the Community Opinion Inventory of those persons surveyed before the strategic planning process and those surveyed after its completion, in any of the following categories: (a) general support climate, (b) program awareness, (c) responsiveness to community, (d) equality of opportunity, and (e) resource stewardship.

The Procedure

The research procedure followed was a two-group, pre- and post-design. The two groups were randomly selected samples who received and replied to the survey. The dependent variable was the degree of support observed before and after the treatment. The treatment was the completion of the strategic planning process that included the monitoring of progress on specific actions taken.
The survey instrument used was the Community Opinion Inventory developed and validated in 1990 by the National Study of School Evaluation. The 45-question survey utilizes a Likert scale and negatively worded statements have point values assigned in reverse order. By utilizing points assigned to each statement in this manner, a mean value of degree of support for each item was assigned. Additionally, a mean value of degree of support was calculated for each of the five categories being studied.

The inventory was mailed to 200 persons randomly selected from the eligible voter list of the school district prior to the beginning of the strategic planning process. The sample was selected using systematic sampling. The names were chosen from an alphabetized school district registered voter list containing 13,747 names. The voters in the initial sample were determined by placing the numbers 1 through 68 in a container and a number was drawn. The number so selected was the first name chosen and then beginning with that number every 68th name on the list was selected.

The entire process of strategic planning in the district was heavily publicized through the local media and school district postal-patron mailings. Every household in the district received a copy of the final plan and a list of all persons who participated in the development of the plan.

The Community Opinion Inventory was mailed to another sample of 200 persons selected, using the same random process, immediately
after the second semi-annual progress report was released to the media and mailed to patrons of the district. The same scoring procedure was used on the second survey.

A one-way analysis of variance was computed to determine the statistical significance of the difference between mean values of degree of support on the Community Opinion Inventory before and after the formulation and timely implementation of the strategic plan. Each of the five categories of community support was examined in this manner.

Importance of the Study

A review of economic changes may seem removed from the educational world. However, the future of the United States economy will be profoundly influenced by the response of the educational community. The shift from an industrial to an information society places the importance of educational and training systems in a new light as the ability to develop, analyze, and apply information becomes the primary activity of society. Education and training systems, and the institutions that develop both, will be the critical infrastructure of society (McCune, 1986).

The restructuring of the economy will require major changes in the way the administration functions within educational institutions. These changes can occur most positively through a process which considers the environment as well as the changing manner in which they do their business. This is a description of the strategic planning process.
A natural corollary to attempting to meet the needs of a high technology society is the need for greater funding. Increased funding will become a reality only when the attitude of the public toward the schools becomes more positive and supportive. This study has importance if it can be demonstrated that the process which will direct change in a school district will also result in the attitude of the public becoming more positive concerning their schools.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited in that it was not possible to control all the factors which might affect a community’s degree of support during this time period other than the process of strategic planning. Such things as tax increases, bond elections, and successful co-curricular activities could have some effect which could not be controlled.

Definitions

The following terms used in this study have restricted meaning and are defined to provide clarity in understanding the rationale and methods applied.

**Strategic planning** is a process for organizational change and renewal which provides the methods for assuring that the organization matches its activities to the changes desired. Strategic planning provides the basis for change and improvement of a program’s management and evaluation of the organization’s progress (McCune, 1986).
Degree of support is defined in this study as a numerical value between 1 and 5 which indicates the strength of positive feeling the community has toward a certain aspect of the school district operation. The larger the number, the higher the degree of support.

Mission statement is a clear and concise statement of the district's purpose and function (Cook, 1989). Additionally, it states a vision or a preferred future for the organization.

Beliefs are the standards that establish the value system in an organization in clear, concise language. The statement of the beliefs within an organization not only establishes what it is, but expresses what organization leaders hope it to be.

Strategies in a strategic plan are statements of how organization leaders will utilize their resources to accomplish the objectives.

Objectives are those things which organization leaders must achieve if they are to accomplish their mission.

Action plans are specific actions which will be taken to support and achieve those things necessary to put the strategies in place.

Situation audits include both internal and external scanning and refers to the analysis of data from past, present, and future to provide the basis for strategic planning (Steiner, 1979).

A cost-benefit analysis must accompany each action plan and specifies projected costs for the plan and projected benefits, both tangible and non-tangible.
Strategic management begins when the strategic planning ends. It involves activities by the chief administrative officer which are directed toward maintaining the plan as the district’s central context and providing accountability for all actions in pursuit of the objectives.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review of the literature concerning strategic planning and community support has the following purposes: (a) to examine the research on strategic planning including processes and possible outcomes, (b) to examine the literature linking community support to overt actions by public schools, and (c) to examine the literature relating public support to funding.

Previous Research on Strategic Planning

Background

Quinn (as cited in D'Amico, 1988) stated that strategic planning has had a long history and that its origins were military. It has been used by generals to formulate battle plans for hundreds of years. Wilkinson (as cited in D'Amico, 1988) stated that strategic planning was adopted as a corporate planning process in the mid-20th century and introduced to the not-for-profit public sector shortly thereafter. Strategic planning had its beginning in the business world in the mid-1950s, and at the time was called long-range planning systems (Steiner, 1979). Disruption in the normal flow of activities in the business world became the norm in the mid-1950s and forced business leaders to plan for change in order to
survive. Gardner, Rachlin, and Sweeney (1986) suggested that the destabilization and fluidity of the 1980s would force businesses to change and that managements' response would determine survival. Strategic planning has offered the best chance for survival by forcing planning beyond simple long-range planning.

Steiner (1979) warned that strategic planning in public agencies is more difficult than in the private sector because of the volatility of the politically dominated public institutions and emphasized his point with the analogy of having all employees, suppliers, and competitors serving on a private sector board of directors. Despite the implication that many pressures may be brought to bear on the decisions of the planning team, strategic planning has become a major force in directing the activities of public schools (Jordan & Cavender, 1992). Hurst (as cited in D'Amico, 1988) stated that strategic planning had become the dominant planning paradigm in America.

The rapid external changes of the 1990s, including economic, demographic, technological, political, and social factors, have forced school officials to change their approach to problem-solving (Rieger, 1994). According to Winter (1995), even the most casual observation of the world around us is continuing evidence that technological and social changes are accelerating at an amazing pace. The future we imagine now arrives with breathtaking speed, and we often find ourselves unprepared. Herman (1993) stated that strategic planning allows school
administrators to formulate a vision of what the school should be and to formulate solutions to potential problems before they become crises. According to Rieger, suitable changes to policy, program, and delivery systems can be anticipated by using a planning system which includes external scanning and stakeholder involvement.

Strategic planning in the public schools establishes the direction of the school district through a series of planning meetings. Parents, business leaders, teachers, and administrators participate in the sessions and formulate core beliefs, a mission statement, perform internal and external scans, develop strategic objectives, and specific action plans (Rieger, 1994).

Cook (1989) offered some additional insight into these key elements. According to Cook: (a) core beliefs are a formal expression of the organization’s fundamental values; (b) a mission statement is a clear and concise statement of the organization’s purpose and function; (c) an internal scan is a thorough examination of the district’s strengths, weaknesses, and organization structure; (d) an external scan is a study of the environment, present and future, in which the organization must function and compete; (e) strategic objectives are what the district must achieve to accomplish its mission and to be true to its fundamental values; and (f) specific action plans are descriptions of actions required to achieve the results necessary to reach the organization’s objectives.
Definitions of Strategic Planning

Definitions of strategic planning are numerous and varied. It is instructive for the purposes of this report to examine the definitions of some of the leading professionals in the field.

According to McCune (1986), strategic planning is a rational process or series of steps that move an educational organization through:

1. understanding the external forces or changes relevant to it;
2. assessing its organizational capacity;
3. developing a vision (mission) of its preferred future as well as a strategic direction to follow to achieve that mission;
4. developing goals and plans that will move it from where it is to where it wants to be;
5. implementing the plans it has developed; and
6. reviewing progress, solving problems, and renewing plans.

(p. 32)

Strategic planning obviously goes beyond a mechanistic series of planning procedures. Its power is in its capacity to create dissonance in people, upset old views, identify new possibilities, and pose new questions. In this sense, strategic planning is: “a management process for changing and transforming organizations, a management philosophy, an educational experience and staff development activity, an organizational development experience, and a community education and involvement process” (McCune, 1986, p. 32).

Cook (1989), arguably the leading authority on strategic planning for public schools, defined strategic planning by first stating what it is not. According to Cook, strategic planning is not a model, a process, an academic exercise, a prescription, an edict, or political manipulation of a
budget. Rather, it is an effective combination of process and discipline. Discipline is the ingredient of the plan and process is the organizational procedures through which the plan is derived.

The discipline, as the substantive components of the plan, forces a complete resolution of the critical issues facing the organization. The process, appropriately applied, assures a focused effort on the issues involved. Cook (1989) stated that, in basic terms, the strategic planning occurs when: “both the discipline and the process are aimed at total concentration of the organization’s resources on mutually predetermined measurable outcomes” (p. 93).

A succinct defining of strategic planning is offered by Herman (1993) who stated that it is a process by which school officials may envision their schools’ future state and make plans for achieving that vision. Strategic planning is the type of planning which allows school officials to decide where they want to go and plan how they are going to get there.

Strategic planning enables school district officials to manage change and determine their true needs through a disciplined, district-wide approach to making long-term decisions. The effect of combining this disciplined approach to planning, with involvement of the stakeholders, results in a document with application to the actions taken on a daily basis in pursuit of the district officials’ vision (Jordan & Cavender, 1992).
The concept of strategic planning was clarified by Lewis (as cited in Stewart & Bailey, 1991) in a listing of four strengths of the strategic over the static, long-range process:

1. It recognizes that a school should be concerned not only with student learning, but also with its roles as an agency and a part of the community.

2. It recognizes that there are powerful stakeholder groups in the community with great potential for influence.

3. It recognizes the interrelated nature of all the components of a school organization such as personnel, facilities, community relations, finance, and instruction.

4. It recognizes that the total environment in which the school exists must be involved in the planning process.

Even though these definitions vary somewhat, each identifies three essential elements of strategic planning: (a) an orientation toward the future; (b) a vision for the organization; and (c) broad-based participation of administrative staff, faculty, and community members in the planning process (Basham & Lunenburg, 1989).

The Planning Process

The planning process is basically how the plan is to be developed. That is, the sequencing of planning activities and the means and methods of achieving the completion of the plan. The development of a strategic plan is a time-consuming process, and it is important to keep in
mind that time is not the important factor. Rather, it is the completion of an appropriate product (Cook, 1989). McCune (1986) stated that if all stakeholders are appropriately involved, the time from beginning to full implementation would be from 15 to 18 months. Cook established a total time requirement of 9 months.

The literature in regard to the actual processes and procedures for developing a strategic plan and the critical elements to be contained, therein, is remarkably similar. Jerry Herman (1989b), in his article entitled “School District Strategic Planning: Part 1,” stated that strategic planning is a systematic process that involves:

1. Identifying beliefs or core values.
2. Recognizing trends through internal and external scanning.
3. Identifying those factors critical to the district’s success.
4. Determining a vision for what the district should be.
5. Completing an analysis of the district’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
6. Developing a mission statement which details the district’s reason for existence.
7. Arriving at strategic goals and objectives which focus on the mission and vision of the district.
8. Developing action plans which delineate responsibilities, timeliness, evaluative criteria, and cost or benefit analysis.
9. Arriving at monitoring structures which provides for timely evaluation.

The outcomes of Herman’s (1989b) systematic process make up the critical elements which Cook (1989) referred to as the discipline of the plan. The determination of the critical elements of discipline simply state the composition of the plan and does not deal with the processes and procedures required to produce those items.

Research into the processes and phases for developing a strategic plan reveals great consistency among the authors. The primary differences tend to be in terminology and not in sequences or activities. McCune (1986) stated that there are five general phases of planning. Those phases are: “Phase I—Creating a research base for planning change, Phase II—Developing the strategic plan, Phase III—Developing the implementation plan, Phase IV—Implementing and monitoring the plan, Phase V—Renewing the plan” (p. 38).

The actual development of the plan can begin only with commitment of the Board of Trustees and the superintendent. Once the decision has been made, various members of the school staff and community members are selected to serve as a planning team (Jordan & Cavender, 1992).

A vital decision to be made by the Board of Trustees and superintendent prior to the appointment of a planning team is the decision as to whether or not to engage the services of an outside
facilitator. Cook (1989) stated that the necessity of a facilitator is a foregone conclusion, as no successful planning process will be accomplished without this assistance. Cook's position was that the really important decision is not whether you will hire a facilitator, but who you hire. McCune (1986) on the other hand suggested that it may be wise to hire outside consultants to give unbiased advice and mediate conflicts. Kaufman and Herman (1989) were silent in regard to this issue.

The time between commitment by upper-level management and the actual first meeting of the planning team is best used as a period for intensive research about the district. According to Cook (1989), data should be gathered from the preceding 5 years in the following areas: "funding, enrollment history, achievement scores, pupil-teacher ratios, expenditure per student, district demographics, staff profile, [and] salary and benefit comparisons" (p. 144).

In addition to research about the district itself (internal scanning), it is imperative that data be gathered in regard to the nature of the environment in which that district operates (McCune, 1986). The external scanning should develop information regarding demographic, political, social, and economic factors. Herman (1989c) expanded this concept with a description of items of a more specific nature such as: federal, state, and local legislation and mandates in addition to the rules and regulations of the various governmental agencies; business and industrial plans; community attitudes; demographic variables which may
affect programs; and the growth or decline of civic and religious groups which offer programs which complement the schools.

The next step in the process is to determine who will be involved in the planning. One approach is to take the Board of Trustees and top management as the primary committee charged with reviewing data, reviewing the implications of the data, and formulating a vision for the district. A top management group would develop alternatives and return the work to the board for review and final formulation of the plan. Another approach is the appointment of a task force of community and staff members to review the data and formulate the plan (McCune, 1986).

Cook (1989) suggested no alternatives as to the general composition of the planning team. The team must have four characteristics. First, the team should contain staff members from both upper-level management and those whose responsibilities are operational. Second, there must be team members from every component of the school community, community members, parents, and students. Third, the planning team should consist of 20 to 25 members. Last, the committee should be selected whereby there is an appropriate personality mix.

Once the planning team has been selected, the next activity is the first planning session. During the first planning session, consisting of a retreat setting of 3 to 4 days, every component of the plan should be
developed except the action plans (Cook, 1989). During this session, the committee identifies the core values of the district. These values describe those things which are non-negotiable. The next step is an analysis of the data resulting from internal and external scans. This information allows the committee to recognize the characteristic of the school itself and its relative position in its environment. Utilizing this analysis, the planning committee could identify those factors critical to the district's success. The information and analysis thus put together enables the group to write a mission statement in which the district's reason for existence is detailed. Once the committee has successfully written its mission statement, the work can begin on arriving at strategic goals and objectives which focus on the vision of the organization. The written document containing the mission statement and the goals and objectives stated in pursuit of the vision represents the outcome of the first planning meeting.

The next step is to formulate the implementation plan or action plans. The implementation plan fills in the ways in which the goals and objectives are to be reached. Each objective or strategic goal triggers the need for an action team. Each action team should be a mini-version of the planning team and would be charged with the responsibility of designing specific actions to accomplish the more general strategic goals (Cook, 1989). McCune (1986) recommended that the plans be developed by those persons responsible for carrying them out.
Cook (1989) recommended that a second planning session be held by the planning team when work was completed by the action teams. The purpose of the second session is to review, revise, and finalize the action plans and to complete the plan. The final task at this meeting is to build in the time schedules for implementation and develop yearly cost projections. At this point, the plan is ready to submit for board approval.

The final step in the process for developing a strategic plan is to build in a monitoring process and determine accountability for timely completion of the action plans. There is universal agreement in the research that accountability must be assigned and periodic reports on progress given to various stakeholders (Cook, 1989; Herman, 1989b; McCune, 1986).

The final product of this process would be a document which articulates the district officials' vision, tailors specific actions to be taken to attain that vision, and a monitoring process to assure timely progress.

Herman (1988) offered a series of elements to ensure success and a series of pitfalls to avoid:

10 Pluses to Ensure Success
- Involve all crucial stakeholders in the planning process.
- Allow sufficient time to develop the initial plan (approximately 1 to 2 years).
- Remember that strategic planning is an ongoing process; revision is always required.
- Develop your desired outcomes/goals before you develop action plans.
Use data from your internal and external scanning to make corrections or modifications in your strategic plans.
Manage your plan; don’t just develop it.
Sell and market the vision for the future your plan implies.
Develop action plans that will ultimately get you to your future strategic goals.
Involve others! Involve others! Involve others! (p. 23)

10 Pitfalls to Avoid
- Don’t allow sufficient time.
- Don’t involve all important stakeholders.
- Don’t use knowledgeable planners and process consultants (internal or external)
- Don’t allocate sufficient resources to support the planning effort.
- Don’t develop a vision or strategic goal.
- Forget that planning is a continuous process.
- Forget to collect, monitor, and use external and internal scanning data.
- Forget to modify or amend your strategic plan as new data alerts the need for change.
- Forget to have the community, employees, and important others buy into the plan.
- Forget the keys to strategic planning success are involvement and ownership by many! (Herman, 1988, p. 23)

Benefits of Strategic Planning

The literature is filled with perceived benefits as a result of strategic planning. Rieger (1994) listed the following as benefits or by-products: an ability to foresee and manage changes, a common sense of direction, coordination of efforts, strategic thinking, and transformation effect.

According to Moldof (1993), the best argument for strategic planning is a list of benefits the school receives. Strategic planning enables a school to: “prioritize, be proactive, allocate scarce resources,
provide a point of differentiation and pride, and link one's job to a common higher purpose” (Moldof, 1993, p. 24).

Herman (1988) listed specific outcomes of strategic planning which should be beneficial to school district officials willing to take the time and trouble to develop and implement such a plan. These benefits derive directly from the plan and are as follows:

1. A specific long-term plan is developed to achieve the desired future.

2. Critical data are monitored and continuously reviewed.

3. The stakeholders are involved in the planning process. These are the key communicators who explain the why, what, and how of the plan.

4. This broad involvement builds broad-based ownership and support.

5. Specific goals and objectives are determined to support the vision and mission statement. These are the checkpoints on the road to achievement.

6. The action plans are developed and serve as the vehicles to achieve the checkpoints.

Much of the literature supports the view that public and staff support is enhanced by the broad-based approach required in strategic planning. School district officials have used this method to successfully implement programs which have previously been plagued by parent,
administrator, and district discord (Moldof, 1993). Johnson (1989) stated that in addition to generating valuable ideas, strategic planning taps new reservoirs of support and gets current supporters more involved. In this regard, strategic planning may be one of the most important things an organization can do (Johnson, 1989). Kay Psencik (1991), in an article about strategic planning, stated that the people in a central Texas city developed renewed confidence and enthusiasm for their schools. Parents believe they can and do make a difference in the education of their children. Psencik added that the development and implementation of the plan gives the school and the community the opportunity to work together in harmony in order to ensure success. McCune (1986), Cook (1989), and Herman (1993) expressed similar views in regard to the benefits of renewed community support which accrues as a result of the broad-based involvement in the process.

The link between community support and the process of strategic planning was documented by Chopra (1988). Chopra described the completion and implementation of a planning process characterized by broad-based community and staff involvement. According to Chopra, the plan led to two successful finance campaigns—a $13.5 million annual operational levy and a $21.5 million bond program for renovation and building needs. The gestalt of the article was that strategic planning serves not only as a tool for developing strategy to meet change but for increasing public confidence in the school district (Chopra, 1988).
Criticisms of Strategic Planning

Problems with strategic planning tend to be reported in business literature more than in educational publications, probably because such planning has been utilized for a longer period of time in the private sector. The criticisms are focused primarily on the implementation of the plan. The majority of the problems with implementation were in the areas of communication and in preparation of line managers (Rieger, 1994).

Other criticisms reported by Rieger (1994) were claims that such planning leads to inflexibility and lack of creativity. Additionally, it is suggested that strategic planning was a fad, and, therefore, many schools were participating because it was the fashionable thing to do.

Linking Community Support to Overt Action by Public Schools

School district administrators and the communities they serve are irrevocably linked not only as provider of services to customers but through many other activities such as community education, volunteer programs, planning activities, partnership, and extracurricular activities. Educational leaders have traditionally been apprehensive about opening the inner sanctum of their institutions to the public but have been astonished with the degree of support and enthusiasm that these programs have generated. The mutual involvement has helped community members to view the school's problems as their own.
Whatever the dynamics, getting the community involved with the schools results in mutual benefit (Decker & Decker, 1988).

The involvement of key members of the community in planning, as well as other activities, is critical for support. Creating a dialogue with the many constituencies in the community can be rewarding for both the school officials and the community. The more diverse the opinions heard, the more the school officials can learn in regard to what the community expects and, more importantly, what it will support (Dlugosh, 1993).

The issue of involvement is discussed by Barbara Kudlacek (1989) in an article about planning with specific interest groups. Kudlacek listed four suggestions for planning in regard to inflammatory issues with groups which have some vested interest. Involving key special interest groups in the planning stages of new activities or programs was recommended as a way to defuse these issues. The rationale is that people support what they help to create. Kudlacek suggested that it takes courage to include your most vocal critics in the process, but experience has indicated that these groups tend to become part of the solution instead of part of the problem once their input is solicited.

Common sense tells us that school officials cannot accomplish their objectives working alone. They need the support of the community they serve. If they are responsive and provide the various constituencies
with an opportunity to have a voice in what the school will be and what it will do, that support will materialize (Zerchykov, 1992).

A review of the literature pertaining to the methods of enlisting community support offers many alternatives. Claudia Long (1985) offered recommendations in four major areas. Consistently providing written and oral communication about issues, problems, programs, and opportunities for input is believed to be instrumental in the effort to enlist support. Second, involving community stakeholders in decision-making groups on the various issues facing the school was recommended. Further, the utilization of school volunteers and active parent-faculty organizations was proposed. By involving the community in school affairs in the manner prescribed, many positive outcomes can be realized. Improvement in the academic program, increase in the financial base, and a boost in teacher morale are a few of the benefits that can accrue (Long, 1985).

The realization that school officials and communities must work together to enable schools to reach their full potential is at the heart of a reform movement entitled community education. In the context of the reform movement, community education is a way to look at public education as a total community enterprise. It is seen as a tool for linking school and community in such a way as to productively combine needs and resources for maximum benefit (Thompson, 1993). Thompson further described a very successful school-community project in which
action plans were developed and implemented for each of seven schools in the Flint, Michigan school district.

The community education concept is characterized by a joining of community institution and agencies, including the schools, in order to realize the full potential of the system. Five of the patterns recognizable in this functional coalition are: “involving community and staff in educational decision-making; providing education and support for the family; utilizing community resources to enhance the curriculum; extending educational opportunities to citizens of all ages; [and] collaborating with community organizations and agencies” (Denton, 1991, p. 17). A basic premise of this effort is that improvement will occur in the educational arena only with the active participation of all local constituencies (Denton, 1991).

Ross Zerchykov (1992) suggested that great community support can be gained through the use of school-community councils. These councils can achieve a social compact between the schools and the community. The community will support and assist in the implementation of the mission if it is granted a voice in the determining of the mission and policies of the district. The concept of determining core values (so vital to strategic planning) is a vital function of school-community councils, and the ability to agree on these concepts is critical to mutual support (Zerchykov, 1992).
The creation of a partnership in educational decision-making, resulting in enhanced community support, is detailed by Kerewski (1985). The involvement of interested constituencies in school related decisions is described and documented to provide results which indicate that teachers, school officials, and community establish a productive, caring environment which could not have developed in isolation.

Wilson and Rossman (1986) described collaborative efforts between school and community which produced a collection of exemplary schools. These schools were characterized as being very open to their constituencies. The sharing of facilities, financial resources, human resources, and performance of community service by the school officials were cited as examples of this collaborative effort. Additionally, it was recommended that the school district officials establish an identity which takes advantage of the characteristics of the community. Three specific benefits seem to accrue to the schools as a result of this collaboration. First these links with the community strengthen the technical aspects of the school by tapping into the tremendous expertise available in the community. This represents a tremendous increase in technical knowledge available to the district at no increase in cost. Second, involving the community will make the schools more accessible and will build political support among the constituencies. Finally, these collaborative efforts will result in a more caring environment in the community for all.
The Baltimore County (Maryland) Public Schools conducted a successful effort in building community support with regard to values education. The subject matter being considered, values education, was volatile and tinged with emotion. Instead of the normal procedures, district officials put together a task force representing all geographic sections of the county as well as reflecting the diversity of the district in race, religion, age, income, education, and philosophy. The work of the task force was completed in a timely manner and widespread support for the findings was reported (Saterlie, 1988). The consensus opinion of the authors reviewed was well stated by Chopra (1988) in his assertion that processes which involve the community serve to map strategies to manage change, but, more importantly, to enhance public confidence in public education.

Linking Public Support and Funding

Literature documenting a definite link between gathering public support and the funding necessary to support the schools is sparse. The article by Chopra (1988) offered a direct link between the strategic planning process and two successful finance campaigns—a $13.5 million annual operational levy and a $21.5 million bond levy.

Johns, Morphet, and Alexander (1983) reported that nationwide, approximately 42% of school revenue receipts are obtained from local sources. In Texas 53% of school revenue receipts are obtained from local sources. Approximately 97% of local school revenues are obtained from
property taxes. The levying of a local tax involves political
decision-making. Local taxes for schools are levied either by direct vote
of the electorate or simply by a vote of the board of education, which has
been elected by the public. The levy of a tax, either for current expenses
or to service a bond issue, gives the public an opportunity to express their
approval or disapproval of the allocation of its resources to support the
services provided by the district. Despite a belief in the value of
education, taxpayers must be convinced that the tax levies required are
necessary to finance needed school services. Many requests for both
school operating tax levies and bond issues are rejected.

An irrefutable link between public support and funding for schools
is forged by Senate Bill I, in the revised Texas Education Code (1995), as
passed by the 74th legislative of the State of Texas. Prescribed funding
sources and methods, details of budgeting requirements, procedures for
setting local tax rates, and great detail of how the local community is
involved in these matters is defined in this document.

The building of permanent facilities for public schools in the State
of Texas is at the immediate and direct whim of public sentiment.
Procedures necessary to issue long-term bonds for the building of
permanent facilities is prescribed in Section 45.001-45.003 of the Texas
Education Code (1995). This type of funding is the only long-term
method for financing public school facilities that is certain to pass all
legal tests. As stated in Section 45.003 (a), bonds for such facilities
cannot be issued and taxes levied unless authorized by a majority of qualified voters at an election called for that purpose. Therefore, funding for permanent facilities is not available for public schools unless there is sufficient public support to approve a bond issue.

The funding and fiscal management of public schools is a function of the budgeting process. As stated in Section 44.002 of the Texas Education Code (1995), the superintendent shall prepare a proposed budget covering all estimated revenues and projected expenditures for the following fiscal year. Further, the budget must be prepared according to generally accepted accounting principles, rules adopted by the Texas Education Agency, and policies adopted by the local Board of Trustees. Once the superintendent has prepared the budget, public input and political pressure is overtly brought into the process. Public involvement is detailed in Section 44.004 of the Texas Education Code. The president of the Board of Trustees is directed to call a meeting of the board stating that the purpose of the meeting is the adoption of a budget for the next fiscal year. The president must then provide for the publication of notice of the meeting in a newspaper of general circulation in the county in which the school’s district administrative office is located. This notice is required to be published not earlier than the 30th day or later than the 10th day before the date of the hearing. The Board of Trustees, at said called meeting, adopts the budget for the next fiscal year. Any taxpayer of the district may be present and participate in the
hearing. The stated purpose of the legislature is to make the budgeting process subject to the mood of the public.

Given the critical nature of funding by local sources, as noted above, the method and processes of securing this financing form the lifeline of the district’s support. The only option available for such large sums of money is the levying of local property taxes.

The level of public access to information and possible intervention in the process is detailed in the Truth-In-Taxation bulletin published by the Comptroller of Public Accounts in July of each year (Sharp, 1995). Chapter 26 of the property tax code requires taxing entities to follow the law in regard to truth-in-taxation in adopting their tax rates. The law states two purposes:

To make taxpayers aware of tax rate proposals and
To allow taxpayers, given certain conditions, to rollback or limit tax increases. (Sharp, 1995, p. 1)

There are four principles described in the Truth-In-Taxation bulletin:

Property owners have the right to know of increases in the appraised value of their property and to be notified of taxes that could result from this new value.

A taxing unit must calculate and publish its effective and rollback rates before adopting an actual tax rate.

A public school must publish special notices and hold a public hearing before adopting a tax rate that exceeds either the effective rate plus three percent or the rollback rate.

Public schools are subject to a rollback election triggered by petition if the adopted tax rate exceeds the sum of the effective rate plus $.08 plus the rate required to service the district’s debt service. (Sharp, 1995, p. 1)
In summary, given that the primary basis for financial support for public schools requires some form of local levy or property tax, the level of public support is critical to adequate funding. The State of Texas, in particular, has a heavy reliance on local funding and the high level of public involvement in the processes for accessing those funds is mandated in the Texas Education Code (1995). Few school district Board of Trustees can withstand the political pressure which can be brought to bear on them by a non-supportive community as they seek the increased funding necessary for improvements in their programs.

Summary

The literature reviewed in this chapter focused on processes and possible outcomes of strategic planning, community support for schools, and the relationship between community support and funding. The research studied is in agreement that the desired outcome of the strategic planning process is a written document containing the vision of district officials in a mission statement, a list of strategic goals and objectives which focus on the vision, and a series of specific action plans addressing each of the objectives. Additionally, it is considered critical that broad-based participation by the various constituencies in the community be an integral part of the process.

References to efforts by schools to enlist community support are numerous and varied. The research revealed that the commonality of the successful efforts was public participation. School district officials which
involved the stakeholders in their processes were uniformly successful in building community support for their agendas.

The review of the literature reveals a direct link between community support and the availability of adequate funding for a school's programs. The primary basis of a school's support is the levy of a local property tax and the ability to levy and collect sufficient funds is linked, by mandate, to the will of the public.
CHAPTER 3

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study was designed to determine whether or not public approval of the schools is positively affected by the district going through a strategic planning process and implementing specific action plans for achieving the objectives of the plan. A stratified sample of community residents was surveyed before the planning process and another sample was surveyed after its implementation to examine the relative measure of support for the schools with regard to general support climate, program awareness, responsiveness to the community, equality of opportunity, and resource stewardship.

Targeted Population

The targeted population consisted of all registered voters in the school district. This registered voter list contained 13,747 names.

Sample

A systematic random sampling was used to select 200 participants from the population identified by the registered voter list of 13,747 names. The targeted sample was identified by drawing a number from a set of numbers 1 through 68. The sample was then selected by beginning with the name corresponding to the number drawn and
selecting every 68th person thereafter until 200 names were selected. This procedure was followed to identify the targeted population for both pretest and posttest samples.

Each person selected received a survey packet. Each packet contained a cover letter, a survey instrument, a set of instructions, and a stamped, self-addressed envelope. A second mailing was made to each group to offer another opportunity for response.

Instrument

The survey instrument used in this study was the Community Opinion Inventory developed by the National Study of School Evaluation (1990). The instrument was designed to assess community support in the five areas of general community support, program awareness, responsiveness to the community, equality of opportunity, and resource stewardship. The Community Opinion Inventory was validated by the National Study of School Evaluation and the reliability coefficient for the total scale was .91. The instrument is made up of 45 Likert-type items covering a variety of topics relating to community support for the schools.

In the instructions, the respondents were asked to rate each item on the degree to which they support the school in that area. A scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree was used to indicate the strength of the perception of each respondent in regard to the item. A score of 1 to 5 was assigned to quantify the results.
Data Analysis

Inferential statistics were used to answer the research questions posed in this study. A one-way analysis of variance was used to determine the statistical difference between mean values of support for the school district in the five areas being studied.

Additionally, descriptive statistics were analyzed in order to offer additional insights into the results. Specifically, the means and standard deviations were examined for the purposes of this study.
CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The results of the statistical analysis for this study are presented in this chapter. The results of the one-way analysis of variance for each of the five research questions are discussed.

Summary of Statistical Procedures

The data analysis was done by computer utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Because the samples were drawn from populations assumed to approximate a normal distribution with homogeneity of variance, parametric statistical procedures were used. A one-way analysis of variance was utilized to determine the statistical significance of the difference between the mean values on the selected items before and after the formulation and implementation of the strategic plan.

Analysis of Variance Results

A one-way analysis of variance was completed to test for significant differences between mean values of degree of support on survey items relating to general support climate, program awareness, responsiveness to the community, equality of opportunity, and resource stewardship.
Hypothesis 1: There will be no significant differences between mean scores concerning degree of support on the Community Opinion Inventory of those persons surveyed before the strategic planning process and those surveyed after its completion regarding "general support climate." A one-way analysis of variance was used to compare pre- and post-mean scores on the survey questions relating to general support climate. The results are presented in Table 1. The means and standard deviations for general support climate scores are reported in Table 6.

Table 1

Analysis of Variance Summary Table of Support Scores by Group on General Support Climate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>F Ratio</th>
<th>Probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27.5109</td>
<td>27.5109</td>
<td>.3030</td>
<td>.5847*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4,176.4682</td>
<td>90.7928</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p > .05

No significant difference was found between group mean scores on general support climate (F (1, 46) = .3030, p > .05). The difference in mean scores between pre- and posttest groups did not show the significant positive change necessary to reject the null hypothesis.
Hypothesis 2: There will be no significant differences between mean scores concerning degree of support on the Community Opinion Inventory of those persons surveyed before the strategic planning process and those surveyed after its completion with regard to "program awareness."

A one-way analysis of variance was used to compare pre- and post-mean scores on the survey questions relating to program awareness. The results of the analysis of variance are presented in Table 2. The means and standard deviations for program awareness are reported in Table 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>F Ratio</th>
<th>F Probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15.2317</td>
<td>15.2317</td>
<td>.3903</td>
<td>.5333*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>4,916.8230</td>
<td>39.0224</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p > .05

The posttest mean scores on program awareness did not show a marked increase over the pretest means. No significant difference was
found between groups regarding program awareness ($\text{F (1,126) = .3903, p > .05}$), therefore the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

Hypothesis 3: There will be no significant differences between mean scores concerning degree of support on the Community Opinion Inventory of those persons surveyed before the strategic planning process and those surveyed after its completion regarding "responsiveness to community."

Results from the analysis of variance used to compare pre- and posttest mean scores on responsiveness to the community are reported in Table 3. The mean and standard deviations for program awareness are shown in Table 6.

Table 3

Analysis of Variance Summary Table of Support Scores by Group on Responsiveness to the Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>F Ratio</th>
<th>Probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.8451</td>
<td>11.8451</td>
<td>.2552</td>
<td>.6143*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>5,754.5121</td>
<td>46.4074</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>5,766.3571</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p > .05
The difference between pre and post-mean scores regarding responsiveness to the community proved to be too small to reject the null hypothesis. No significant difference was found between groups on responsiveness to the community ($F(1,124) = .2552$, $p > .05$).

Hypothesis 4: There will be no significant differences between mean scores concerning degree of support on the *Community Opinion Inventory* of those persons surveyed before the strategic planning process and those surveyed after its completion in “equality of opportunity.” A one-way analysis of variance was used to compare pre- and post-mean scores on the survey questions relating to equality of opportunity. The results are presented in Table 4. The means and standard deviations for equality of opportunity are reported in Table 6.

Table 4

*Analysis of Variance Summary Table of Support Scores by Group on Equality of Opportunity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>$F$ Ratio</th>
<th>Probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25.6649</td>
<td>25.6649</td>
<td>1.4758</td>
<td>.2267*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>2,156.3748</td>
<td>17.3901</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*$p > .05$
No significant difference was found between group mean scores on equality of opportunity ($F(1,124) = 1.4758, p > .05$). The positive change in responses between pre- and post-mean scores on the survey instrument were not sufficiently large enough to reject the null hypothesis.

Hypothesis 5: There will be no significant differences between mean scores concerning degree of support on the Community Opinion Inventory of those persons surveyed before the strategic planning process and those surveyed after its completion in “resource stewardship.” A one-way analysis of variance was used to compare pre- and post-mean scores on the survey questions relating to resource stewardship. The results of the analysis of variance are presented in Table 5. The means and standard deviations for resource stewardship are reported in Table 6.

Table 5

Analysis of Variance Summary Table of Support Scores by Group on Resource Stewardship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>$F$ Ratio</th>
<th>Probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7616</td>
<td>1.7616</td>
<td>.1235</td>
<td>.7259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>1,797.7306</td>
<td>14.2677</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p > .05
The difference between pre- and post-mean scores for resource stewardship was not sufficiently large to reject the null hypothesis. No significant difference was found between groups on resource stewardship ($\mathcal{F}(1, 126) = .1235, p > .05$). In summary, statistical analysis revealed no significant difference between groups surveyed before and after the treatment on any of the five general areas of support.

Standard deviations are reported to indicate the variation of the responses. Very little variation is reported. The greatest variance is .809 on posttreatment "general support climate" and the smallest is the pretest "equality of opportunity" at .494.

In short, the reported mean scores tended to be high on the pretest and the posttest with very little change in the mean ratings. Standard deviations are reported for all mean scores and all groups to indicate the variations in each of the ratings, with little variation being noted. The results are reported in Table 6.

The difference between pre- and post-mean score ratings were very small for each of the five areas. The largest margin was -.119 (negative) for general support climate and the smallest -.053 (negative) for responsiveness to the community.

General support climate showed the highest mean ratings for both pre- and post-surveys. The means being 3.981 for the first administration of the survey and 3.862 for the second. The lowest
Table 6

**Means and Standard Deviations for General Support Climate, Program Awareness, Responsiveness to the Community, Equality of Opportunity, and Resource Stewardship by Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Area</th>
<th>Pre-Mean</th>
<th>Post-Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General support climate</td>
<td>3.981</td>
<td>.679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.862</td>
<td>.809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program awareness</td>
<td>3.139</td>
<td>.459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.193</td>
<td>.511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness to community</td>
<td>2.959</td>
<td>.574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.906</td>
<td>.558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality of opportunity</td>
<td>3.410</td>
<td>.494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.293</td>
<td>.561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource stewardship</td>
<td>2.905</td>
<td>.562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.997</td>
<td>.504</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ratings in the summary were pretest resource stewardship at 2.905 and posttest responsiveness to the community at 2.906.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The perceptions of community members in regard to support of the schools were surveyed before the district officials began a strategic planning process and after the implementation of the plan. Responses were analyzed to determine the degree to which public support would increase due to the formulation and implementation of a strategic plan. The total population was an alphabetized registered voter list of 13,747 names. A systematic random selection process was used to select 200 school district registered voters for each of the groups. There were 78 respondents to the initial survey and 57 who replied to the second survey.

A one-way analysis of variance was used to investigate the following null hypotheses:

1. There will be no significant differences between mean scores concerning degree of support on the Community Opinion Inventory of those persons surveyed before the strategic planning process and those surveyed after its completion in "general support climate."
2. There will be no significant differences between mean scores concerning degree of support on the Community Opinion Inventory of those persons surveyed before the strategic planning process and those surveyed after its completion in “program awareness.”

3. There will be no significant differences between mean scores concerning degree of support on the Community Opinion Inventory of those persons surveyed before the strategic planning process and those surveyed after its completion in “responsiveness to community.”

4. There will be no significant differences between mean scores concerning degree of support on the Community Opinion Inventory of those persons surveyed before the strategic planning process and those surveyed after its completion in “equality of opportunity.”

5. There will be no significant differences between mean scores concerning degree of support on the Community Opinion Inventory of those persons surveyed before the strategic planning process and those surveyed after its completion in “resource stewardship.”

The literature reviewed concerning the process and outcomes of strategic planning confirmed the value of the plan as well as the importance of broad-based involvement by the many constituencies in the community. The primary benefit of the plan itself is in the formulation of a vision for what the school administrators aspire the school to be. The researchers have consensus on the fact that
involvement of the stakeholders in the planning process greatly enhanced community support.

Previous research was examined to determine successful methods of enhancing community support. The literature revealed a wide range of projects and programs for which schools were enlisting support. The common theme of the successful ventures was the involvement of the various stakeholders at all stages of the project.

The literature was reviewed to determine the existence of a substantial link between public support and the availability of adequate funds to support the functions and programs of the schools. All the literature, including legal mandates, points to an irrefutable bond between the degree of public support a school has and the amount of accessible funds.

Findings

The examination of the null hypotheses was done using a one-way analysis of variance. Descriptive statistics in the form of mean ratings and standard deviations were examined to reveal additional information.

The analysis of variance applied to the null hypotheses does not reveal a statistically significant difference in any of the five areas. Therefore, the null hypotheses cannot be rejected and the research does not confirm any effect on community support as a result of the completion and implementation of a strategic plan.
Examination of the descriptive statistics associated with the analysis of variance show uniformly high mean scores and relatively little variation in responses. General support climate mean ratings of 3.981 and 3.862 are very high. The lowest mean ratings were for resource stewardship, and these were both greater than 2.9. Such high mean ratings can account for the difficulty in achieving a statistically significant increase in scores through a treatment. The variation in responses was very limited as indicated by the highest standard deviation being .809 and a lowest being .459.

Conclusions

The negative results from the statistical analysis of the data are in conflict with literature representing current opinion on the value of involving community members in school functions and, thereby, invite some inspection of the methodology used. The relatively small number of respondents might indicate a sample which was not representative of the population. However, this argument seems to be overcome by the very small standard deviations both within and between groups.

The negative results of this study are not only in conflict with current literature, but also at odds with trends in the community where the project was done. Prior to 1990, the public rejected three bond proposals and initiated a tax rollback election. Since that time, the community has passed three bond proposals totaling $45 million and
increased the local tax rate from $.83 to $1.45 with no major opposition (Burgamy, 1995).

A critical review of methodology is necessary to explain results which are so clearly at odds with all other factors. A post-study analysis of the structure of the report reveals little to indicate serious flaw. The design is a classic pretest, posttest study with five research questions stated in standard null hypothesis form. The population was sampled using appropriate systematic random processes. The survey instrument used had been validated and successfully utilized in other studies. The statistical analysis of the data was done with the latest version of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences and all data collection and tabulation verified.

Many forces are at work at any time in a community, and the inability to control the effect of forces other than the one being studied is a serious limitation in an experimental study. The district examined for the purposes of this study experienced many changes during the time the surveys were being done. After the rejection of three bond issues and the calling of a tax rollback election, but prior to implementing the first survey, district officials employed new leadership in the district, elected new board members, and, in general, began moving in a completely new direction. The conclusion is that the community was on a Hawthorne effect high which led to the generally very positive pretest mean scores. The reality is that the scores on the first administration of the survey
made it almost impossible to attain a statistically significant gain on the second survey.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, recommendations are made to those in school governance as they seek to find ways to improve their programs and functions. Second, recommendations for further research are given.

The following recommendations are made to school administrators and Board of Trustees:

1. School district administrators must have in place a long-range plan for school districts which is driven by immediate implementation of action plans. The need for any organization to plan intelligently is critical. Because of the political nature of public schools, it is very difficult to plan, but doubly important. The impending degree of accountability and the aggressive nature of the competition infers that survival is at stake in this effort.

2. Involve the various constituencies making up the district in the business of the school. The accumulation of public support is crucial to the operation of a school system. The survival of the public schools requires the support of its stakeholders. The best method of insuring this support is to involve them in the processes of the district.
It is recommended that further research be done into the link between planning and public support. It is suggested that such research meet the following criteria:

1. The planning efforts serving as the independent variable should be less than a strategic plan so that more than one experiment may be conducted.

2. A survey instrument be developed and utilized which tests opinion in a more restrictive definition of community support.

3. Reasonable control of the environment must be exercised.
COMMUNITY OPINION INVENTORY
PART A

The purpose of this inventory is to assist in learning more about your school(s)' instructional programs. Your opinions and attitudes are of vital importance in this assessment. This is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. The answers you give will be completely confidential. Do not sign your name or identify yourself in any way.

Remember that your opinions and attitudes are important because they will assist school personnel in making better decisions regarding improvements in your school(s).

Directions

The following statements describe a wide variety of conditions related to the operation of your school(s). We want to know to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement. Therefore, indicate your opinion by marking each statement as follows:

Check the SA if you STRONGLY AGREE with the statement:
A if you AGREE but not strongly
U if you are UNDECIDED
D if you DISAGREE
SD if you STRONGLY DISAGREE

(NOTE: If you have been given an answer sheet, make these marks with a No. 2 pencil as described on the answer sheet; if not, you may mark the letter to the right of each statement.)

Example: I am aware of the effectiveness of our schools.

SA A U D SD

In this case the respondent AGREES with the statement, but not strongly, so A was marked.

Turn to the next page and begin.

The Community Opinion Inventory, Part A, is packaged separately and may be purchased in quantity from the National Study of School Evaluation.

NATIONAL STUDY OF SCHOOL EVALUATION
5201 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, Virginia 22041

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COMMUNITY OPINION INVENTORY
PART A

Circle the SA if you STRONGLY AGREE with the statement.
A if you AGREE but not strongly
U if you are UNDECIDED
D if you DISAGREE
SD if you STRONGLY DISAGREE

1. In general, our teachers are competent.  
   SA A U D SD

2. I understand the mission of the school(s) in our community.  
   SA A U D SD

3. The goals of the school(s) are consistent with the local values.  
   SA A U D SD

4. Public statements by school officials are consistent with the school(s)' programs.  
   SA A U D SD

5. School discipline is appropriately maintained.  
   SA A U D SD

6. There are problems with drug and alcohol use among students.  
   SA A U D SD

7. The drop out rate is too high in our school(s).  
   SA -A U D SD

8. All students have equal access to education in our community.  
   SA A U D SD

9. All students have an equal chance to be in activities (clubs, musical groups, sports, etc.).  
   SA A U D SD

10. Transportation of students to and from school(s) is not a problem.  
    SA A U D SD

11. Parents are informed in what is going on in our school(s).  
    SA -A U D SD

12. I know fairly well what the school(s)' curricula covers.  
    SA A U D SD

13. Our students are motivated to do their best work.  
    SA A U D SD

14. All things considered, students are learning about all they can from their school experiences.  
    SA A U D SD

15. There is enough attention given to teaching the basic skills (G K's, etc.).  
    SA A U D SD

16. Bulletin board in society gets too little attention in our school(s).  
    SA A U D SD

17. Funding of programs appears equal across all our school(s).  
    SA -A U D SD

18. The community gets all the information it needs about the school(s)' programs.  
    SA A U D SD

19. The total educational expenses offered to students is of high quality.  
    SA A U D SD

20. The community turnaround begins when school achievement rates decline.  
    SA -A U D SD

21. The achievement level is appropriate for our students.  
    SA A U D SD

22. The proportion of funds given to institutions (e.g. managers, maintenance, sports, etc.) is appropriate.  
    SA A U D SD

23. The school(s)' programs are broad enough to meet the educational needs of all students in this community.  
    SA A U D SD

24. Our schools are preparing students to be effective participants in the world economy.  
    SA A U D SD

25. The programs for special children (physically/mentally handicapped, talented, etc.) are appropriate.  
    SA A U D SD

26. Building facilities (work space, furnishings, etc.) are adequate to support the instructional program.  
    SA A U D SD

27. Citizenship is effectively taught in our school(s).  
    SA A U D SD

28. For the most part, I am satisfied with our school(s).  
    SA A U D SD

29. Teacher salaries are appropriate in our school(s).  
    SA A U D SD

30. Teachers are well respected in this community.  
    SA A U D SD

31. Our school(s)' facilities are well maintained (class, building, etc.).  
    SA A U D SD

32. Our school(s) are conveniently located in the community.  
    SA A U D SD
33. School facilities have been planned so as to get the most for the expenditure.
SA A U D SD
34. School officials welcome classroom visits from members of the community.
SA A U D SD
35. I am only interested in school programs when they increase taxes.
SA A U D SD
36. If I wished, I could easily get a school administrator on the telephone.
SA A U D SD
37. School administrators give high priority to getting good values for every dollar spent.
SA A U D SD
38. School board members represent our community well.
SA A U D SD
39. I wish I were better informed about school issues.
SA A U D SD
40. School board members are easy to contact on any school issue.
SA A U D SD
41. On all issues, school boards give attention to community input.
SA A U D SD
42. Schools are appropriately available for community functions.
SA A U D SD
43. Our school(s) have a positive impact on community property values.
SA A U D SD
44. School sports and co-curricular programs (athletics, clubs, dramatics, teams, etc.) are important features in our community.
SA A U D SD
45. This community can well afford school improvements.
SA A U D SD
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The patterns in our social fabric are changing: Here they come, ready or not. (1986, May). *Education Week, 14*, 16-27.


