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Olivia-Beate A. Franzini

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Studies in the Creation and Implementation of School Cultures:
Two New York City Stand-Alone Charter Schools

Olivia-Beate A. Franzini

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

2016

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by

Olivia-Beate Franzini

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the
Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies satisfying the thesis
requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

Olivia-Beate Franzini

Professor Susan Semel

Date

Thesis Advisor

Dr. Matthew K. Gold

Date

Executive Officer

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

ABSTRACT

Studies in the Creation and Implementation of School Cultures: Two New York City Stand-Alone Charter Schools

by

Olivia-Beate Franzini

Advisor: Professor Susan Semel

In the last thirty years the United States has seen a rise in charter school education and with that an influx of discussion over the best way to successfully educate college and career ready students. Many of these charter schools have their own unique philosophy on education and disciplinary codes to aid in the attainment of their success. The following case studies were conducted through participant observation in two start-up charter schools. At the time of study both institutions were in their second year of creation. These schools have opposing philosophies on education; the first School “A” is an independent “no excuse” charter middle school and the second, School “B,” is an independent charter high school, guided by the principles of Jim Fay and David Funk’s *Teaching With Love and Logic*. This study examines the manner in which the creation and implementation of each school’s philosophy, its corresponding disciplinary system, and other relevant structures create the culture of these institutions.

Key words: charter schools, school culture, “no excuses,” school philosophy, *Love and Logic*, participant observation, school foundation, school climate.

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SYNOPSIS

The ability to act as a participant observer over the course of four years, two consecutive years in both School “A” and School “B,” has given me a unique perspective on teaching in stand alone, independent charter schools. Unlike major charter networks, both schools in this study were created in direct response to the needs of the community, socially, economically, and culturally. Consequently, they are extremely focused on meeting the needs of the students on a deeply personal level. This commitment to each individual student and their academic and emotional growth became a tremendous responsibility that weighed heavily on me as a founding teacher. In both schools not only was I an educator and a curriculum coordinator who fulfilled daily roles and responsibilities assigned to me, but I was like a parent as well. I was in charge of building curriculum for brand new grades and developing each and every material I delivered. Having obtained my Bachelor of Arts degree 2008, I was a part of a new wave of teachers in the era of Race to the Top that were expected to pave the way for Common Core standards and place great emphasis on academic rigor. Between the long, taxing hours in start-up charter schools, trying to develop a strong culture, and the pressure of educational reform I have begun to experience dissatisfaction with the charter school system. The responsibilities that are associated with founding a charter school have inevitably led to a sense of role strain that I have found to be exacerbated by the guiding philosophies of both institutions. Both the “no excuses” and *Love and Logic* philosophies and their supporting disciplinary codes have created a school culture at the expense of the teachers in the classrooms.

THE RESEARCH

The research in this study was conducted over a period of four years through mixed methodology in two New York City charter schools. The first school, School “A,” is a middle

school serving students from fifth to eighth grade, and the second school, School “B,” is a currently developing high school serving students from ninth grade to eleventh grade. At the time of the study both schools were in their second and third years of foundation. The main method used in this study was participant observation. For outside perspectives teacher interviews were conducted both inside and outside of the schools, allowing other teachers to share the benefits and drawbacks of structures in these institutions.

AN OVERVIEW OF CHARTER SCHOOLS

Today the notion of charter schools within American education has become greatly associated with large Charter Management Organizations (CMOs) like KIPP, Knowledge is Power Program, and Uncommon Schools. These rigid, corporate-like entities of learning are far from the original intention of charter school education in the United States. When charter schools first entered the scene they were intended to be vehicles for a more progressive form of education. Additionally, they sought to improve educational opportunities for students by being decentralized and deregulated school systems.¹ The original concept was centered around the idea of autonomy, believing the schools would be stand-alone, “mom-and-pop,” institutions that were centered around the needs of the community, not necessarily what new the wave of educational policy and reform was in at the time. The community would be the central driving force for educating students and meeting their needs. However, with new presidencies and new educational programs creating cycles of failing policies, parents and teachers have grown discontent with change. Charter schools therefore could work around all the reform movements

¹ Christopher A. Lubienski and Peter C. Weitzel, “Two Decades of Charter Schools” in *The Charter School Experiment: Expectations, Evidence, and Implications*, ed. Christopher A. Lubienski and Peter C. Weitzel. (Cambridge: Harvard Education Press, 2010), 1.

and help eliminate inconsistencies in American education. Charter schools then became a part of the alternative schools movement from 1967 to 2001.²

The movement for charter education grew popular largely in part to Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers, when he championed the concept in 1988.³ Shanker believed that charter schools would be teacher and community driven and act as laboratories for testing new and innovative forms of educating students. Culturally, these institutions would also house diversity in order to benefit learning, believing that charters would be a place where, "...children of different racial, ethnic, economic, and religious backgrounds come together to learn from one another."⁴ Charter schools would theoretically be able to end de-facto segregation encouraging all students within the community to attend. Regarding faculty, Shanker believed that teachers should have autonomy in their classrooms and be able to experiment with curriculum and pedagogy in order to educate the whole student. These schools would have breakthroughs in education and produce advanced pedagogy that would support students who were not learning in traditional schools. Shanker believed these institutions should be unionized and faculty would have a hand in decision making. Shanker explained, "You don't see these creative things happening where teachers don't have any voice or power or influence." Only when teachers feel protected from the whims of administrators are they willing to take risks.⁵ With a diverse community, innovation in the classroom, and teacher participation in decision-making, Shanker's vision of charter schools was progressive in design.

² For more information regarding the alternative schools movement see Richard Neumann, *Sixties Legacy: A History of the Public Alternative Schools Movement 1967-2001*. (New York: Peter Lang, 2003)

³ Christopher A. Lubienski and Peter C. Weitzel, "Two Decades of Charter Schools", 5

⁴ Richard D. Kahlenberg and Halley Potter. "Restoring Shanker's Vision for Charter Schools," *American Educator* (2014) 7-12

⁵ Albert Shanker, "National Press Club Speech," March 31, 1988, Walter P. Reuther Library, <http://reuther.wayne.edu/files/64.43.pdf>, 11.

Today, charter schools are “... serving more than 2.5 million students in 42 states.”⁶ They are depicted as a beacon of hope and a new wave of reform in an era of blaming public schools for failing students. Combined with a message for social justice charter reform has been promoted by the Obama Administrations’ legislative action, leading to more support for their consistent growth.⁷ The large benefit of charter school education became the institution’s autonomy and ability to operate outside of bureaucratic regulations of district public schools. Charter schools are, “ focused on changing the fundamental governance and management structures of schooling: unleashing the creative potential of education and communities, nurturing diverse options for families...”⁸ These schools allowed, and still allow parents to have more choice in their child’s education and enroll them in schools that are better aligned with their own philosophical beliefs. Some charters also give teachers more freedom in the classroom to ensure students are not just learning for the sake of testing. The competition charter schools have created has affected the philosophies underlay these institutions, often pushing them farther from Albert Shanker’s original design. Being highly competitive, many charter schools seek to outperform other local public schools in test scores and results. Most of these schools now have extended days with extended time in mathematics and English Language Arts classes in order to “catch up” students in performance on standardized testing. These charter schools must perform well on standardized test otherwise their charters are revoked. These institutions are given three years to succeed in their mission and reach standardized test benchmarks outlined in their charter. However, it is important to note that many schools across the country still adhere to the original blueprint of charter school education and are greatly centered on community and progressive education.

⁶ Richard D. Kahlenberg and Halley Potter, “Restoring Shanker’s Vision for Charter Schools,” 5

⁷ Michael Fabricant and Michelle Fine, *Charter Schools and the Corporate Makeover of Public Schools*. (New York: Teacher’s College Press, 2012) 10

⁸ Christopher A. Lubienski and Peter C. Weitzel, “Two Decades of Charter Schools”, 3

Stepping back from the larger landscape of charter education across the country, charter school history in New York City has seen the greatest controversy and the most rapid development. “Since 1999, New York’s charter school movement has grown rapidly, with an average of eleven charter schools opening in New York City annually,” with currently ninety-five thousand students from all five boroughs dispersed among two-hundred and five charter schools.⁹ These schools have become marketed in low socioeconomic neighborhoods where public schools are flagged as failing. Families with children currently attending local zoned schools desperately hope their children will be pulled off the wait-list, a list that has grown to have forty-three thousand students across the city.¹⁰ The majority of these schools are turning their attention to college readiness and attainment, consequently cultivating educational philosophies that will allow them success in this endeavor, from “no excuse” charters to ones focused on environmentalism.

CHARTER MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS

As previously mentioned Charter Management Organizations (CMOs) are at the forefront of charter education and operate differently from the stand-alone charter institutions in this study. A CMO is a non-profit organization focused on reproduction and creation of a network of schools. These schools are replications of one another with the same structure and mission.¹¹ CMOs are able to overcome issues of stand-alone charter schools, such as allowing for a governance unit and the ability to generate more funding. For example, “. . . a network of schools generates a level of state funding that allows CMOs greater buying power to meet facility and

⁹ "About Charter Schools," New York City Charter School Center, last modified May 6, 2014, <http://www.nyccharterschools.org/>

¹⁰ "About Charter Schools."

¹¹ Caitlin Farrell, Priscilla Wohlsetter, and Joanna Smith, "Charter Management Organizations: An Emerging Approach to Scaling-Up What Works." *Educational Policy* (in press)

operational needs in comparison to stand-alone charter schools.”¹² These institutions also have a heavy hand in private fundraising in the form of educational philanthropy. Companies and foundations, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, have invested millions of dollars in support of these organizations, as these companies have found charter networks to be excellent sources of tax deductions. These schools thrive off of public-private relationships in order to ensure private donations strengthen the network. While stand-alone schools are able to fundraise as well, they are unable to at the magnitude of CMOs who have established a brand. These institutions need this funding to ensure that policies and management structures are put in place in order to replicate the model, structures, and best practices of the network schools themselves. A large number of these schools are known for their “no-excuse” philosophy and rigid disciplinary systems, which allow for consistency throughout all network schools. Mass teacher development training sessions are held for all teachers in the network in specific regions, where they become acquainted with the requirements of working in the network’s school.

SCHOOL “A” OVERVIEW

School “A” is a co-ed middle school serving students from fifth to eighth grade, located in a community with one of the highest felony crime rates in New York City. The building lies between two major government housing projects, notorious for their rivalries. Young officers stand on the street corners in front of bodega’s and 99cents stores near the school monitoring the students coming and going. The sidewalks on the perimeter are covered in trash from the wrappers of the free breakfasts and lunches given by the school. The school building itself is run-down, with paint chipping off the façade. The only visible up keeping of the building are the two

¹² “Mapping the Landscape of Charter Management Organizations: Issues to Consider in Supporting Replication” The National Resource Center on Charter School Finance and Governance, www.charterresource.org

sets of doors that mark the entrance of the magnet school, with theatre masks, and the large overbearing seal of “School A.” These pristine doors are symbolic of the institutions that lie within and their mission to overcome the adversity of the neighborhood and educate students more successfully than the zoned school it shares space with.

When entering the building there is the usual loud screaming coming from the hallways of the zoned school and the louder echoes of security guards ordering students to stop running, fighting, or yelling. These halls are painted neutral beige and contain ripped bulletin boards and graffiti. As you make your way up a few floors to School “A” there is an immediate change in the mood of the environment. The halls here are filled with posters displaying positive affirmations about learning and behavior. Student work and photos line the hallways as each class displays what they are studying. Students in uniforms stand in silent straight lines while teachers are holding clipboards taking note of all behaviors upon transitions. There are posters with school conduct reminders in order to ensure all expectations are met. In School “A” there are no classroom numbers, only names of college institutions to remind students of the desired end goal. Though the hallway itself is the same beige each classroom is painted in the bright school colors of the college it has been assigned.

School “A” caters to a 82% Black, 18% Hispanic, 0% Asian, and 0% White population. Currently, 89% of students receive free lunch, 14% of students are Special Ed. and 3% of students are English Language Learners.¹³ The majority of these students enter fifth grade below reading level as a result of attending failing schools in the neighborhood. To compensate for students not being on grade level the school operates on an extended day and year schedule. Students enter the building at 7:00am in the morning for breakfast, begin class at 7:30am, and finish the day at 4:00pm. Students receive double time in English Language Arts and

¹³ “Inside Schools” *The Center for New York City Affairs*, last modified January 2015, <http://insideschools.org>

Mathematics class. The students have a rotating schedule of electives, photography, art, dance, and music, as well as gym. On Wednesdays the students have a half-day schedule with shortened core classes.

School “A” was founded by a Building Excellent Schools fellow and member of the New York City Middle Schools Task Force. The founder was a local in the community and an alumnus of the elite program Prep for Prep and Harvard University. The school was founded on the mission that all students would attend and graduate from college. The founder chose the neighborhood out of a lack of school choice for families. For School “A” to succeed it had to adopt a business model, as market theory suggests, and “be attuned to what parents and students—current and prospective—are looking for, and regularly conducting surveys and interviews...”¹⁴ Flyers were distributed among the community and community organizations advertised the school in local churches as well. Parents voiced their beliefs and the focus of the school was created and based on four beliefs: 1) High academic expectations lead to high academic achievement, 2) Learning is easiest in a safe, structured school, 3) Literacy is everything, and 4) Character counts.

School “A’s” belief is that high academic standards lead to proficiency. The mission states, “We expect every single one of our scholars to become masters of their studies; The curriculum is built to ensure a sound academic foundation for eventual expertise in all subjects.” The founder believed that the only way to obtain this success was through a movement towards a literacy focus across the content areas. The school’s mission includes the practice that students will receive two hours of literacy instruction daily. These two hours are spread throughout three

¹⁴ Jeffrey R. Henig, Thomas T. Holyoke, Heath Brown and Natalie Lacireno-Paquet, “The Influence of Founder Type on Charter School,” *Structures and Operations American Journal of Education* 111 (2005) 487.

specific classes, Reading, Writing, and Guided Reading. Beginning in 2013, all students were required to attend Guided Reading, regardless of their reading ability. Students are given a leveled text one letter above their reading level, determined by the Fountas and Pinnell benchmark assessment. Teachers work in small groups to effectively aid students in their reading fluency and vocabulary attainment. The group culminates in a discussion about the text they are collectively reading. Ultimately, Guided Reading is “an instructional context for supporting each reader’s development of effective strategies for processing novel texts at increasingly challenging levels of difficulty.”¹⁵ With the addition of Guided Reading School “A” students are receiving one hundred and thirty minutes of literacy instruction each day.

CHARACTER EDUCATION

With such high expectations for academic achievement School “A” found it necessary to also incorporate character education into the mission of the school to ensure academic success. The belief messaged to the students is that “character counts.” It is introduced to students during orientation and enforced by the merit and demerit system. The students are taught to use “PETSYS” (Please, Excuse Me, Thank You, Sorry, Your Welcome, and Smile) when communicating in class and having difficult conversations with others. Often in the halls one can hear a teacher communicating with a student, as he or she asks, “try that again, using “PESTSYS.” During fifth grade orientation (Figure 1.1 Fifth Grade Orientation Schedule) students are first introduced to the school’s character education beliefs. A large amount of character education is placed on the concept of “SLANT” (Sit up, Listen, Ask and Answer

¹⁵ Irene C. Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell, *Guided reading: Good first teaching for all children.* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1996)

Questions, Nod your Head, and Track the Speaker), which students are directly taught and made to practice through role-play and “SLANT” games, such as teachers asking their students to slouch and seem disengaged, then at a snap of a finger sit up and track the speaker. Teachers control student’s ability to follow this procedure by providing them with merits or demerits for doing it well or failing to do so.

Figure 1.1 Fifth Grade Orientation Schedule

Class	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Advisory	Friday Schedule/Schedule of the Day/ Introductions Clapping Signal	Handshakes (How to give a proper one in class to classmates)	Cleanliness	Closet	Counselor Survey
Math	Learning how to pass out paper	Math Diagnostic	Pencil Rules Class	Responding to demerits	Responding to demerits
ELA	Classroom Celebration SLANT- Tracking	Classroom Celebration SLANT- Ask and Answer Questions Sending good vibes	SLANT- Sit up straight	SLANT- Listen and Nod Silent Cheer Silent disagree	Class celebration SLANT- All together!
Social Studies	Noise Levels	PETSYS- Please	PETSYS- Excuse Me	PETSYS- Thank you and You're Welcome	PETSYS- Sorry and Smile
Science	School mission- Class of 2024	Raising your hand and non-verbal signals	Merits and Demerits	Paychecks Detention PREP Points	Bathroom and Bus behavior
DEAR (Drop Everything and Read)	Core Value: Integrity	Core Value: Integrity	Core Value: Courage	Core Value: Courage	Core Value Review

In School “A” character education is a vehicle for students to develop not only a sense of professionalism but character in terms of morality. Researchers Marvin Berkowitz and Melinda Bier, define character in this sense as, “... the complex set of psychological characteristics that enable an individual to act as a moral agent.”¹⁶ These psychological characteristics can form over a lifetime but schools can play an influential part in the process and their formation. Studies have shown that students throughout their academic career need to feel an emotional connection to

¹⁶ Marvin Berkowitz and Melinda Bier, “Research-Based Character Education.” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 59 (2004) 72-85.

their classroom and to their school in order for character education to be effective.¹⁷ It is the belief that a student's connection in conjunction with character education can promote academic motivation, which School "A" seeks to instill in its students. However, if parents are not onboard with a school's choice character traits, such as School "A's" core values of courage, integrity, determination and excellence, as well as having "manners", this type of education can become controversial. Researcher Thomas M. Rivers argues that character education should never be rooted in morality but rather intellectuality and traits associated with the academic community.¹⁸ These traits would be integrity or academic honesty, teaching the importance of avoiding plagiarism. These values are more universal in the sense that they are content specific for the academic world. Ultimately School "A" does enforce values that are intellectually based, but also instills personality traits that students may not align with, causing potential push back to this type of curriculum in the school.

THE "NO EXCUSES" PHILOSOPHY

School "A" was founded on the educational philosophy of "no excuses" believing it would aid student attainment of academic success. The school's "no excuses" model focuses, like many others, on high behavioral expectations and a strict behavioral code and system rooted in cultural deprivation theory. "Cultural deprivation theory, popularized in the 1960's suggests that working-class and nonwhite families often lack the cultural resources, such as books and other educational stimuli, and thus arrive at school at a significant disadvantage."¹⁹ Cultural

¹⁷ K. Osterman, "Students' need for belonging in the school community," *Review of Educational Research* 70 (2000)323-67.

¹⁸ Thomas M. Rivers, "Ten Essentials for Character Education." *The Journal of General Education* 53(2004) 247-260.

¹⁹ Alan Sadochnik, Peter W. Cookson, and Susan F. Semel, *Exploring Education an Introduction to the Foundations of Education*. 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013) 423

deprivation theorists like Martin Deutsch (1964) believe that the poor are incapable of achieving academic success because their familial upbringing has not aided them in acquiring the proper foundational knowledge and discipline to achieve success in school.²⁰ This fosters the belief that for this population of students they must be given compensatory education in order to be as successful as their middle class and white peers. Charter schools give students compensatory education by extending their day and emplacing “no excuses” disciplinary codes to give students amount of discipline they see lacking. Institutions therefore assume, “. . .that because of the cultural and familial deprivation faced by poor students, the schools must provide an environment that makes up for lost time. If these students are not prepared for school at home then it is the role of the [school] to provide the necessary foundation for learning.”²¹ This theory can be found underlying the “no excuses” model of School “A” and other charter schools across the nation. Essentially, the “no excuses” philosophy is centered on the belief that poverty and other socio-economic factors are no excuse for academic failure in school, and that students from these backgrounds can overcome barriers, like poverty, through high academic and behavioral expectations and a strict behavioral and disciplinary code and structure.

THE DISCIPLINARY CODE

To aid students in acquiring self-discipline is a merit and demerit system at School “A,” rewarding students who abide by school conduct codes and exude exemplary character and punishing those who do not. Both merits and demerits are marketed in the form of a paycheck in which they receive deductions as well deposits for their behavior. Merits range in dollar amounts from ten dollars to twenty-five depending on how merit-worthy the act was. The system operates

²⁰ Martin Deutsch and Associates. *The disadvantaged child* (New York: Basic Books, 1964)

²¹ Alan Sadovnik, Peter W. Cookson, and Susan F. Semel, *Exploring Education an Introduction to the Foundations of Education*. 4th ed., 423

the same for demerits, the greater the digression from expectation the heavier the deduction. Students are given a chart to place in their binder and memorize of possible digressions and their dollar deductions (Figure 1.2) The system operates as a way to manage student behavior and provide negative consequences for students who are disobedient and do not fall in line with the student character guidelines. There are both pitfalls and advantages to this system at School “A”. One advantage is that hard working students receive merits, which add up on their paycheck. At the end of the week the students with a paycheck above one hundred and fifty dollars are allowed to wear jeans on Friday. Students can save their paycheck dollars and “buy” items like colored binders, college sweatshirts, pencils, and posters from the school Victory Store.

Students at School “A” with high paychecks feel that their hard work is paying off and they receive a buy-in for their education. The top ten students with the highest paychecks in each grade attend a special field trip each month. Students feel successful and continue to work hard when receiving merits. However, this leads to pitfalls when it comes to motivation. This system has subsequently caused many of the fifth, sixth, and some seventh graders become extrinsically motivated when it comes to their education. Merits take the focus off learning intrinsically; too often students end up working for prizes and rewards.

Figure 1.2 Demerit-Worthy Behaviors

Demerits List	
If you receive corrections for any of these behaviors you have received a demerit.	
D-	Disruptive Behavior-----\$10
ED-	Electronic Device Infractions (cell phone, iPod, PSP)---- \$10
F-	Food/Gum/Candy/Drink----\$10
H-	Improper Hall or line Behavior--\$5
IR-	Inappropriate Response to a Demerit---\$10
L-	Lunch Demerit----\$5
LDM-	Lying, Deception, or Manipulative Behavior-----\$15
MAJ-	Other Demerit (major please specify)--- \$15
MIN-	Misusing Resources--- \$5
MR-	Misusing Resources---- \$5
N-	Inappropriate Noises----- \$15
NFI-	Not Following Instructions---- \$10
O-	Outburst or Calling Out----- \$15
PA-	Poor Attitude----- \$10
R-	Rude/Disrespectful.... \$10
S-	Out of Seat Without Permission.....\$10
SLP-	Sleeping or attempting to sleep...\$5
T-	Talking at inappropriate Time.....\$5
THR-	Throwing Items.....\$15
TTD-	Touching Teacher Desk or Materials w/o Permission..... \$10
U-	Untucked Shirts.....\$5
UNI-	Out of Uniform.....\$15
List of Deductions	
	Missing, Late or Incomplete Homework(or no homework turn in)....\$5
	Incomplete or Missing Agenda(no agenda).....\$5
	Pencil Deduction(no pencils)...\$5
	Missing or unsigned paycheck(no paycheck).....\$5
	Failure to return a form.....\$5
	Missing class materials-----\$10
	Unexcused Absence-----\$20
	Unexcused Lateness-----\$15
	Purchasing Replacement Materials....\$25

Thus, students struggle to intrinsically motivate themselves and rely on receiving merits for behaviors that are expected of them. They tend become angered by their paychecks at the end of the week when they feel that a teacher has slighted them and that they deserved more merits than they received. Another pitfall of the merit and demerit system is, that essentially, it is a demerit system. As students grow older it becomes harder to receive merits for doing what is expected of them. However, it never grows any harder to receive demerits for negative behavior, thus there imbalance in the ratio of merits to demerits.

This practice can be damaging to students who find themselves always receiving demerits, unable to adhere to this rigid structure. When a student receives a large amount of demerits their paycheck begins to dwindle. Students with extremely low paychecks are placed in “Isolation” during lunch. These students are not allowed to sit with their peers during lunch and must sit off to the side an isolated table. They are not allowed to speak or interact with anyone, enforcing the notion of negative behavior resulting in the loss of a privilege. This practice is one similar to that of KIPP-Houston in which students who break the rules are sent to “the porch.” Students then “...wear their KIPP shirts inside out and cannot talk to or eat with their classmates. They become, in other words, social isolates, separated from their all-important peer group.”²² School policy also dictates that students with negative paychecks are to be suspended and students with paychecks below one hundred dollars are to be in detention. With the system as it is now too many students are in this bracket and the latter consequences often are not followed through with. Innovation in regard to discipline and culture remains stagnant and teachers are told to just use the merit and demerit system and simply “log everything.”

²² Abigail Thernstrom and Stephan Thernstrom, *No Excuses: Closing the Racial Gap in Learning*. (New York: Simon and Shuster Paperbacks, 2004) 55.

The “no-excuses” model and coordinating management systems are not only detrimental to the students but to the educators as well. Educators end up teaching in a culture of fear and lose sight of the fact that many behaviors considered disruptive are likely to have deeper roots. For example, many instances of students acting up can be attributed to curriculum deficiency. Thus, negative behavior can be rooted in the curriculum not making sense to the student, or the curriculum being trivial, or lacks a connection to the learner.²³ However, many “no excuse” charters neglect to acknowledge this human side of education as major CMO charters promote hard work and discipline. School “A” is therefore aligned with the ideas of political scientists Abigail and Stephan Thernstrom that, “At good schools’ the day is organized for nonstop learning, and the children generally go home with hefty homework assignments.”²⁴ This belief keeps students in what may seem to some as an oppressive environment throughout the day. Increasingly, many educators of these institutions have advocated for more rigidity in schools, educator Rafe Esquith explains, “Kids need to work much harder than they’ve been working, much longer than they’ve been working, and with more discipline than they’ve been working.”²⁵ These sentiments are those that drive the philosophy of School “A” as well.

SCHOOL CULTURE

Each morning students enter the building and shake hands with the principal of the school or another administrator who asks the students, “Why are you here today?” Each student has been trained to respond in either two ways, “I am here today to learn” or “I am here today to go to college.” If students do not answer in a complete sentence, they are asked to “Do it again”, a common sentiment that is echoed at the school when students do not meet behavioral

²³ Stanely Curtis Coy, *Discipline: There Are Alternatives! A Handbook for Elementary Teachers and Principals* (Dublin: Print Press, 1980) 3.

²⁴ Abigail Thernstrom and Stephan Thernstrom, *No Excuses: Closing the Racial Gap in Learning*, 58

²⁵ Abigail Thernstrom and Stephan Thernstrom, *No Excuses: Closing the Racial Gap in Learning*, 57

expectations. This practice is one that was influenced by North Star Academy as “a daily reminder of the student’s membership in [the] culture...”²⁶ to which they must adhere. Once students cross the threshold into the building they accept their long, strenuous days. It is the parent’s belief that this institution will give their child a leg up in comparison to their district-zoned schools. In the first three years of the school there was a low attrition rate of students, with no more than five or six students withdrawing from the school. In most cases, these were the students who were unable to align with the culture of the school. Once students are admitted to School “A” it takes months of adjustment time to be able to become acquainted with school policy and procedures, predominately the enculturation system. For many students who have never been to a charter school the switch to a “no Excuse” charter it can be extremely frustrating to become accustomed to. The transition between the public school and charter school is culture shock for many students. Students who never found themselves in trouble for misbehaviors in their old school suddenly find themselves faced with demerits. Being middle school students as well it is difficult to understand the purpose of such rigid rules and why they are put in place.

From 2012-2014, the educators in School “A” felt that they were more than just instructors in the classroom, and were able to aid in their student’s comfort in the classroom, creating positive relationships between teachers and students. In return these students looked to their teachers for guidance and support. They found their teachers to be mentors, parents, friends, comedians, and counselors, which counterbalanced the culture of “no excuses.” Those teachers who chose to close their classroom doors to administration and find a balance between the rigid nature of the school and compassion created the culture during those years. At the end of the 2014 school year one student wrote to their teacher, “ I was never confident in my ability to answer questions out loud, but after you constantly encouraging me I am getting better. I never

²⁶ Abigail Thernstrom and Stephan Thernstrom, *No Excuses: Closing the Racial Gap in Learning*, 71

had a teacher I cared so much about until I met you. I love you.” Another student wrote in their teacher’s yearbook, “ You are like a second mother to me and I thank you for supporting me through the beginning of my career.”²⁷ Culture was fostered through compassion; not as a result of any one rule outlined in the Student Handbook.

Trust in the classroom during this time period was crucial to the students and teachers at School “A” because majority of students arrived one to two grades in below fifth grade proficiency in both reading and mathematics. Many of the school’s students have been passed through the education system unprepared and behind in basic foundational skills. Even students from School “A’s” first class, now graduated, were prematurely pushed forward to the next grade because of political complications. Essentially, there weren’t enough students on the waiting list to backfill. In order to get the numbers the school’s charter demands, School “A” has moved up students who weren’t ready. In the past it had been so detrimental to the students that when leadership changed in 2014, a decision was made to retain thirty percent of the current 7th grade. Leadership was forced cease pushing students through the system.

In regards to parental involvement many of the students’ parents and guardians are unable to be as active in the school community because they work long hours or have multiple jobs to support their families. School “A” did try to combat the lack of involvement by putting in place a Family Partners in Education Committee (FPEC), which is similar to a PTA organization. The committee was responsible for coordinating events. An added benefit of joining the organization was being entitled to participate in health and wellness programs the school coordinates, such as fitness instruction night or job fairs. However, over the last few years, with the constant change of administration the program fell apart. Parent involvement had also been considerably thin when looking at report card conferences over the last three years. Parents have

²⁷ Inscriptions by School “A” students to their 7th grade English teacher in her 2013-2014 Yearbook.

grown increasingly discontent with the school as the teachers they considered “great” have left because of administration. On the 2014-2015 survey only 33% of parents said they “would recommend this school to parents/guardians seeking a place for their child,” and zero parents said they would “strongly” recommend the school.²⁸

ADMINISTRATION

In the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year, it was brought to the attention of the staff that the founder and director of School “A,” had “stepped down” from his position. The board informed the staff that they were not at liberty to discuss the conditions of the decision. Prior to then, the school founder had made all major decisions in regards to daily operations of the school. To act as Interim Director a former board member and Vice Chair was brought into the school to fulfill the position. His past experiences include teaching and coaching math as a New York City Department of Education teacher and starting up a tutoring company, as well as Principal Intern at NYC Department of Education. Overall, his leadership experiences were limited and this was a completely new role for him. His first priority coming into the school was to tighten up cultural procedures and discipline. The addition of an inexperienced Interim director took a large toll on the culture of the school. “The principal’s personality traits, attitudes, and behaviors have a crucial influence on school culture and, through school culture, on teacher culture, especially its atmosphere.”²⁹ The influence this director had was very little, as teachers felt slighted by the board and their decision to place inexperienced director in the school. This sent a message that the necessity of knowledge leader was not taken seriously. Teachers

²⁸ “New York City Department of Education Survey,” <http://schools.nyc.gov/OA/SchoolReports/>

²⁹ Hsin-Hsiang Lee and Mao-neng Fred Li, “Principal Leadership and Its Link to the Development of a School’s Teacher Culture and Teaching Effectiveness: A Case Study of an Award-Winning Teaching Team at an Elementary School,” *International Journal of Education Policy and Leadership*. 10 (2014) 1-17.

neglected to see the director as a leader and paid little attention to the decisions made during that school year, more preoccupied with the education of their students.

With an unknowledgeable Interim Director during that school year a large responsibility weighed heavily on the Administration Team. This team is comprised of the Director of Operations, Lead Guidance Counselor, the Special Education Coordinator, head Dean, Director of Curriculum and Instruction and the Math and ELA department heads. This team acts a decision-making body within the school, making policy decisions and then brining them to their own respective teams. Teachers had little voice or intervention which lead to dissatisfaction, as it has been studies that, "...organizations learn more about employees' competencies and competency models may well contribute to an increase in their work performance..."³⁰The Interim Director finished out the school year before a new director was hired, having twenty-two years of experience in the field of education as a teacher, dean, and principal. The school has now rebranded itself with a new and improved "2.0" slogan. Despite the change in administration the school does not operate with the positions of either principal or vice principal, still with all the weight solely on the director and department heads. On the 2014-2015 New York City Department of Education Survey, only 39% of teachers agreed that, "The principal at this school is an effective manager who makes the school run smoothly."³¹ Even more alarming is that only 28% of teachers believed, "The principal has confidence in the expertise of the teachers at this school."³²

³⁰ David D. Dubois and William J. Rothwell, *Competency-based human resource management*. (Palo-Alto: Davies Black, 2004)

³¹ "New York City Department of Education Survey," <http://schools.nyc.gov/OA/SchoolReports/>

³² "New York City Department of Education Survey," <http://schools.nyc.gov/OA/SchoolReports/>

TEACHERS

At first the teachers at School ‘A’ were relatively young and new to teaching. The majority of teachers were in their early 20’s to early 30’s and on average had two to three years of teaching experience. There was little diversity among the staff with majority of teachers being female and predominately white. However, in recent years this has changed greatly. Now, the majority of teachers average five years of experience and range in degrees from masters to doctoral degrees. The faculty is also comprised predominately of African American teachers, however, still predominately female. Teachers at School ‘A’ are expected to be knowledgeable in their content area and be equipped with strong classroom management skills. It becomes evident to candidates, especially in demonstration lessons, that strong discipline practices are equally important as content knowledge at the school. Though, at times it being a “no excuse” charter, it has felt as if management skills have been emphasized over content knowledge. Prospective teachers are expected fit the mold of the school’s culture and be extremely dedicated and hardworking.

School ‘A’ in the past has relied heavily on teachers from Teach For America (TFA) program to fill their co-teaching positions.³³ During the 2013-2014 school year fifty percent of teachers were current TFA core members. School ‘A’ developed a system in which TFA core members were placed in the classroom as a cooperating teacher with a lead teacher. They believed through this role they could grow and develop to eventually become lead teachers themselves and one day take on their own cooperating teacher. Theoretically this was an ideal system within the institution. However, a closer examination indicated that during the 2013-2014 school year, the majority special education teachers School ‘A’ had on staff were first

³³ For more information regarding Teach For America see Wendy Kopp, *One Day, All Children: The Unlikely Triumph Of Teach For America And What I Learned Along The Way* (New York: Perseus Books Group, 2001).

year, inexperienced TFA teachers who had not yet been certified. There were no experienced special education teachers on staff to help with modifications and teachers were left on their own to differentiate lessons and assessments with no support. These TFA core members were also unready for the challenges of classroom management and the dire help the students needed. The placement of TFA core members in positions they were not ready for also was detrimental to the wellbeing of students, fellow staff members, and themselves.

When policies are developed that allow uncertified teachers in the classroom it most hurts the teaching profession by reducing the number of quality teachers.³⁴ Students coming into School “A” could not afford to receive an education from teachers who were not prepared, and some researches have labeled this act as “class warfare.”³⁵ Linda Darling-Hammond, Professor of Education at the Stanford Graduate School of Education explains, “Most criticism of a corps member's teaching behavior (classroom management) was the greatest area of concern, followed by insufficient knowledge of the fundamentals of teaching and learning”³⁶ Placing inexperienced teachers in a classroom with a rigid disciplinary system proved to be taxing on the teacher, having to ensure all students were in line. Another concern is that many of these Teach For America core members leave the profession of teaching after their commitment of two years, resulting in their teaching experience being unable to serve as any value to future students.³⁷

Dissatisfied with the support received during the year as well as the multiple roles assigned to teachers resulted in a high rate of teacher attrition in the 2013-2014 school year. This continues to be a major issue at the school, as during the 2015-2016 school year, four teachers

³⁴ Robert Roth, “The university can't train teachers? Transformation of a profession.” *Journal of Teacher Education*, 45(1994) 261-268.

³⁵ Ildiko, Laczko-Kerr and David C. Berliner. “The effectiveness of ‘Teach for America’ and other under-certified teachers on student academic achievement: A case of harmful public policy,” *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 10 (2002) 37.

³⁶ Linda Darling-Hammond, Chung, R., & Frelow, F. “Variation in teacher preparation: How well do different pathways prepare teachers to teach?,” *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(2002) 286-302.

³⁷ Ildiko, Laczko-Kerr and David C. Berliner. “The effectiveness of ‘Teach for America’ and other under-certified teachers on student academic achievement: A case of harmful public policy,” 35

left before 2016. Sociologist Richard Ingersoll, describes teachers as people "in the middle," "caught between the contradictory demands and needs of their superordinates—principals—and their subordinates—students."³⁸ Feeling trapped between an administration that has struggled to learn the needs of its teachers and a lack of pedagogical support teachers at School "A" see no other option. During the 2013-2014 school year to combat this issue a Director of Curriculum Instruction (DCI) was hired and introduced to the structure. The intent of this DCI was to aid teachers in their development of curriculum and continually support them through observation and feedback. However, this idealistic portrait of support did not come to fruition due to the lack of teaching experience a large majority of teachers had. The DCI then had to turn their attention towards the struggling teachers and all other deemed competent were left alone without the feedback and guidance to develop their craft.

Another factor in teacher turnover was and continues to be the desired culture of the school. Many teachers struggle with the "no excuses" disciplinary system, whether on a personal and philosophical level or in regards to the difficulty of classroom management. For many teachers it was extremely difficult to work in an institution that praised compliance and order. There was no joy to having to instruct students repetitively on walking in a silent, straight line in the hallway. While some students were becoming more obedient others rebelled, yet neither one of these groups was excelling academically no matter how straight they sat in their seats. The focus on compliance bred a group of students who did not think for themselves but simply listened, copied, and regurgitated information. This environment took a toll on many teachers who yearned for more creativity in the classroom. It was also extremely difficult for first year

³⁸ Richard M. Ingersoll, *Who Controls Teachers' Work? Power and Accountability in America's Schools* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 211.

teachers to remember all the demerits they were supposed to be assigning, which in turn created inconsistency among the classes.

During the 2013-2014 school year teachers had no say in a large amount of decision making that went on in the school and it further aggravated the situation. Teachers then had become vocal of these issues with administration, they were disregarded creating a distinct tension of “us verses them” between teachers and administration. At one point during the 2013-2014 school year the dean was quoted in the minutes of a board meeting stating there are “poisonous” teachers at School “A” spreading negativity.³⁹ During that same board meeting department heads brought to the attention of the board that an estimated that sixty percent of the staff would not be returning for the 2014-2015 school year which in fact at the end of the year became a reality.

CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENTS

At School “A” teachers have autonomy of the curriculum and what they choose to teach. Each group of teachers for each content team divides up the units they wish to teach for the year. Teachers are responsible for producing a Common Core aligned unit that is created through backwards planning. Lessons are expected to prepare the students for the New York State Exams, as the results are to act as a benchmark assessment of student success within the school. It is also expected that lessons are to be orderly and aligned to the behavioral standards of the school. During lessons, any student that is not in compliance with school code should be given a demerit for their indiscretion. Teachers are responsible for submitting their lesson plans to their department heads a week prior to teaching for any feedback on content or questions about how

³⁹ For the purposes of this research the identities of the school are confidential. This quote can be found on the School’s website under the section titled “Board Meeting Minutes.”

classroom management will play out during instruction. Since the school does not use any type of textbook in the classroom teachers are responsible for creating packets for each day that must include a Do Now, Notes, “I Do,” “We Do,” and “You Do” or independent practice section.

Teachers find that there are both setbacks and drawbacks to this format. Not having textbooks allows teachers to build curriculum that is tailored to the needs of the students. However, the time consuming nature of not only teaching but developing curriculum further adds to the role strain experienced by the teachers of School “A.” To combat this teachers borrow from other teachers on websites like BetterLesson.com or have made friends with other charter schoolteachers who share curriculum, but the majority of teachers continue to spend a lot of time reinventing the wheel and straying away from “boxed” curriculum. The idea is that students will be more successful if teachers are able to scaffold the material they receive and make sure it is appropriate for their abilities. Yet, the stifling structure of how the lessons are laid out leaves little room for activity and engaging learning opportunities.

To hold students accountable for all the work they are assigned and expected to complete, each aspect of it is graded. During the 2013-2014 school year the breakdown was as follows: 25% homework, 25% tests, 25% quizzes, and 25% exit tickets. It has become evident from data analysis that homework counting for 25% of a student’s grade was actually keeping some students from failing who aren’t actually mastering the material. Homework in this sense inflated their grades so that they are able to pass. It was also illogical to place the same weight on a major assessment as homework. Students needed to be held accountable for their learning but in a way that was fair and logical. Since then the school has continued each year to change the way it assesses students, as new groups of staff members place their voice into the conversation.

Looking specifically at assessments, students take weekly quizzes in all of their subjects. At the end of each unit students take a unit test to see what skills and content they mastered.

School “A” is also part of the Achievement Network, a nonprofit organization that helps schools strengthen their use of data and analysis of Common Core standards. The Achievement Network administers standardized tests every two months or so that are similar to the New York State Test. Students take these assessments in order to see what standards they are mastering and what standards teachers need to teach or reteach. The assessments also act as an indicator of how students will do on the state tests. The network’s goal is to mirror the state exam by incorporating fiction and nonfiction passages with multiple-choice questions. There are twenty-five other schools in the network that the school is able to compare their results to, creating an air of competition among the school leaders. As a result, a large amount of emphasis is placed on testing as the students take three Anet assessments a year as well as the New York State Exam. This pressure falls on both the students and the teachers to have them test ready, despite all other factors that play into testing and the way it impacts a student. The school is so focused on the NYS Exams that one month before the state tests classes turn focus to test preparation. Students in Math and ELA are doing constant test preparation work, whether reading and annotating passages or writing short response questions. Essentially, all regular forms of instructions stop and every day, each day the focus is on testing until the exam.

SCHOOL “B” OVERVIEW

School “B” is a co-ed stand-alone charter high school currently serving students from ninth to eleventh grade. It is located in an urban New York City community that is currently undergoing gentrification. The beauty of the colorful murals that adorn the sides of businesses and other artworks around the area are beginning to attract a younger generation of people into a traditionally Latino immigrant community, causing a great deal of social and economic tension.

Bodegas and small food stands are wedged in between “new age” coffee shops with signs for “organic” and “gluten-free” products. The school itself is characteristic of the neighborhood with a colorful mural marking the entrance doors to the building. The halls of the zoned school are a cool blue and student work hangs from the walls. Tiles in colorful patterns are arranged on some of the hallway walls.

As you make your way up a few floors to School “B” the doorways become lime green and electric yellow. The hallways are brightly painted with colors chosen by the students through Publicolor, a non-profit organization that allows students with the help of city volunteers to paint the walls of their school buildings. Here the students have ownership of their school, as it is a place they help create. Murals line many of the major hallways with original artwork not only painted by the students but designed by them as well. Murals titled “Pangaea” take up over ten feet of space, livening up the school. Bulletin boards are assigned to teachers in each content class to display student work or advertise current units of study. A list on honor roll students takes over one of the major hallways and also displays another list of students who are Office Hours “Rock stars.” Overall, there is a feeling of warmth and positivity in the school, which is further established by the attitudes of the students and faculty.

School “B” caters to an 18% Black, 74% Hispanic, 1% Asian, and 2% White population. Currently, 93% of students receive free lunch, 17% of students are Special Ed. and 13% of students are English Language Learners.⁴⁰ The majority of these students enter ninth grade below reading level as many of their peers in the community. To combat the knowledge deficit of the students, the school operates on an extended day and year schedule. The school day runs from 9:00am to 4:37pm with a shorter day on Wednesdays, in attempt to mirror more of a “work day”.

⁴⁰ “Inside Schools” The Center for New York City Affairs, last modified January 2015, <http://insideschools.org>

The school prides itself on its average daily attendance being at 96%.⁴¹ With STEM sciences on the rise in the United States, the institution was founded with a focus on mathematics, engineering, and the sciences, in attempt to give students a more hands-on and project-based science experience in the classroom. Research has indicated that schools with a STEM focus may actually be attracting higher achieving students.⁴²

School “B” was founded by a Harvard Law School and Columbia Teacher’s College graduate, and is jointly run by the principal, who also is a Columbia Teacher’s College graduate with administrative and teaching experience. Both the founder and principal had spent a lot of time researching stand-alone charter schools to find an inspirational model school to draw from. As they had both previously worked in “no excuses” schools, they sought to create a more positive and vibrant school culture. The two spent the majority of their time observing charter schools in California and collaboratively put together the school’s charter. The founder’s take on the school’s culture today is that, “It’s not a punitive culture: no demerits, no uniform, but we do have a dress code, khaki pants, shirts with collars. Teens have some freedom to express their personalities. Rigor is not sacrificed for warmth. We don’t have silent passing in the halls, but it’s not chaotic.”⁴³ The ultimate goal was to give both students and staff a place they could be themselves and form tight-knit family unit. Over the years School “B” has begun to become known for it’s quirky vibe, a weirdness that is valued and embraced among the majority of both students and staff.

The mission of the school revolves around college attainment and career readiness through hard work and perseverance. It is the school’s mission to provide a rigorous education

⁴¹ “Inside Schools” The Center for New York City Affairs, last modified January 2015, <http://insideschools.org>

⁴² Eugene Judson, “Effects of Transferring to STEM-Focused Charter and Magnet Schools on Student Achievement,” *The Journal of Educational Research*, 107 (2014) 255-26

⁴³For the purposes of this research the identities of the school are confidential. This quote from the school’s Founder and can be located on the school’s website.

that equips students with the ability to succeed in life endeavors. The mission states that students will develop a passion for science, technology, engineering and mathematics and, through an intensive college readiness program, develop critical thinking and self-advocacy. The school's objective for its students is to "internalize the connection between academic excellence, perseverance, and economic opportunity,"⁴⁴ believing that this understanding will allow students to assert control over their own lives academically and professionally. The institution wishes to educate the whole student, not only focusing on academics and therefore emphasizes four core values, pride, empathy, purpose and courage.

PHILOSOPHICAL BELIEFS: *LOVE AND LOGIC*

With the founding staff having negative experiences with the "no excuses" philosophy in their previous schools, there was an immense pressure to do right by students and faculty and create a warm, loving environment that would create a school community that teachers would want to be a part of, that fostered their own happiness, and a space where students could enjoy their education. There was a desire to create a culture that was uniquely School "B" and embraced all personalities in an environment that was not dictated by rigid rules and routines. The school then turned to the ideas of *Love and Logic*, a methodology for working with adolescents developed by educator Jim Fay and child psychiatrist Foster W. Cline, M.D. The theories in this text were later developed into multiple versions, such as Jim Fay and David Funks' *Teaching with Love and Logic: Taking Control Over the Classroom*, which School "B" had adopted. The text revolves around concern of power in the classroom and how it can often lead to power struggles that may be avoided. The authors argue that by showing empathy and love in the classroom when delivering logical consequences these struggles can be avoided. The

⁴⁴ This quote can be located on the school's website under "Mission Statement"

teachings seek to aid students in forming their own inner discipline rather than being influenced by external factors and preserve their own dignity. Fay and Funk explain, “When we offer kids a choice instead of making a demand, no power struggle ever begins... Given a range of choices, a child has endless opportunities to choose wisely.”⁴⁵

To develop an empathetic culture, School “B” has adopted Fay and Funk’s “Four Key Principles of Love and Logic.” These core principles are “The Enhancement of Self-Concept,” “Shared Control,” “Consequences with Empathy,” and “Shared Thinking.” The idea of enhancing a student’s self-concept is derived from the ideology that it takes a village to raise a child. Fay and Funk argue that parents who solve problems for their children that the children could have done themselves consequently raise children who are likely to give up early. It is the goal of the parents, educators, and school community to therefore allow the child to struggle and not only praise them for their accomplishments but model the proper behaviors. This principle is about how “people who model appropriate behavior, and by the very way they think, speak, and act, affect who that child turns out to be.”⁴⁶ Here it is the teacher’s job in the classroom to model professional behavior and provide students with acceptance and respect when they are struggling.

“Shared Control” is about giving students control over their learning and even their consequences in the classroom. This principle is about switching over from command in a classroom to cooperation. Fay and Funk argue that by giving away control in the classroom or the perceived idea of control students are more willing to work with the teacher, resulting in less behavior management issues. Examples of giving students a sense of control is allowing them to choose the order in which to do a lesson or choosing a topic to study from multiple options. In a

⁴⁵ Jim Fay and David Funk. *Teaching with Love & Logic: Taking Control of the Classroom*. (Colorado: Love and Logic Press, 1995), 130.

⁴⁶ Jim Fay and David Funk. *Teaching with Love & Logic: Taking Control of the Classroom*, 135.

writing class this could look like asking students if they want to either edit their paper or a peers. In this sense students feel as if they have ownership over the class as well as their learning, this grants both power and autonomy. Fay and Funk discuss this principle as a way to mitigate students rebelling in the classroom through the “The Cycle of Defiance.” Students feel that a teacher’s demand is a “threat” and then negative behaviors erupt, however is a teacher offers shared control through options the student then feels as if they have gained back control.⁴⁷

The third principle is focused around the value of empathy and the importance of admitting wrongs. “Consequences of Empathy” asks the teacher to react to student discretions with empathy and kindness. Fay and Funk believe if a teacher responds with empathy it makes it difficult for the student to transfer the blame to the teacher and pushes them to make a decision about their own behavior.⁴⁸ This is where the ideal of logical consequences comes into play. “Consequences of Empathy” suggests that the teacher give students a penalty that acts as a logical consequence or incorporates “Shared Control” by giving the student options for consequences and letting them choose or having them state the logical consequence. This gives the child the opportunity to be involved in the decision making process, instills them with problem-solving strategies, and leads to empowerment.⁴⁹

The final principle of *Love and Logic* is “Shared Thinking” which promotes students being accountable for their actions when given the space to consider actions. Fay and Funk believe if students are given enough time to reflect they will come to the same conclusions as adults. The authors suggest using phrases like “How do you feel about...?” and “On a scale of 1-10, how good of a decision do you think that is.” By having a conversation in this manner, the teacher further demonstrates all three other principles as well.

⁴⁷ Jim Fay and David Funk. *Teaching with Love & Logic: Taking Control of the Classroom*, 153.

⁴⁸ Jim Fay and David Funk. *Teaching with Love & Logic: Taking Control of the Classroom*, 162.

⁴⁹ Jim Fay and David Funk. *Teaching with Love & Logic: Taking Control of the Classroom*, 165.

These principles guide School “B’s” culture and teachers are educated on them upon entering the school. It is believed that if teachers are influenced by these ideals the culture of the school will therefore be positive, loving, and supportive. One teacher notes, “Thinking of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, *Love and Logic* provides a culture where student and teacher vulnerabilities can be shared in a safe environment to address student needs and make learning accessible. The assumption that all students are good and trying to be better is at the core of my understanding of *Love and Logic* and the only way I can start every new day with a clean slate.”⁵⁰ From this teacher’s standpoint school culture is kept positive because the essential understandings of its principles remind teachers and students that every day is a new beginning. When students have an understanding of this logic they feel empowered to return to school the next day and work harder. It’s important to note that other educators at the institution feel differently about this philosophy worrying that the culture may create a “bubble” of safety for students, especially minority students, that does not reflect the realities of society. One teacher explains, “ *Love and Logic* is a noble guide in providing teachers with insight in working with their student body. However, it is a form of academic common sense that teachers should already be aware of. In truth, all educators should strive to work and be kind to all those they teach, but further ideas need to be establishes as the culture that exists inside a school (under this mode) does not parallel the world they will enter as adults.”⁵¹ From this perspective, the philosophy is empowering for the students while their in School “B” but is concerning for when they graduate.

⁵⁰ Quoted from a School “B” Earth Science teacher during an interview on September 12, 2015

⁵¹ Quoted from a teacher in the Science Department during an interview November 13, 2015.

DISCIPLINARY SYSTEM

While the philosophy behind *Love and Logic* aids in the development of quality teacher-student relationships and how to avoid negative behaviors, it does not lend itself well to creating a disciplinary system. At School “B” there is no concrete ladder of consequences, based on the belief that fair and logical is not always equal. The founders believed that having fixed consequences for all common infractions would appear too punitive and too close to the “no excuses” philosophy it wanted to escape. Instead, the focus is placed on a few behaviors thought to be detrimental to the school culture; lateness, cursing, disrespect and send outs. Lateness is taken very serious at School “B” as the founders continuously emphasize the importance of the students “showing up” and the teachers being there to guide and support them through their educational journey. If a student arrives to school late, they are to phone home to their parent or guardian and receive a lunch detention, in which they are unable to attend lunch in the cafeteria and instead stay in the detention room to eat. On average there are about four to five students from each grade in lunch detention for lateness.

The consequences for lateness and cursing infractions are rooted in deterrence theory, which, “states that punishment is the most efficient way to control student behavior...”⁵² This utilitarian theory in School “B” influences students to make the rational choice to arrive to school on time or know that they will receive a “punishment” or consequence for their lateness. This zero-tolerance policy assists in making sure students arrive to school on time in order to ensure they are in class and learning, as well as refraining from using unprofessional language in school, keeping it a space where all students feel safe. Ultimately for these discretions, “students choose to obey rules and teachers because they fear the consequences associated with

⁵² Ashley M. Mayworm and Jill D. Sharkey, “Ethical Consideration in a Three-Tiered Approach to School Discipline Policy and Practice,” *Psychology in the Schools* 5(2004) 694-704.

misbehaviors”⁵³ While these infractions may not promote *Love and Logic*, they do mirror the real world, which values punctuality and professionalism.

For the infractions of cursing, disrespect, and send outs there is a more severe the more severe consequence of Friday detention for an hour and a half after school. It is also expected however that teachers are to “rebuild” the relationship any time they write a student up for disrespect or sent out of the class. Teachers must meet with the students before they return to class the next day and discuss what happened and how to proceed going forward in order to build back trust and support in the classroom. It is expected that the teacher is also to call home in more egregious situations in order to loop in the parents as well. There are smaller infractions, which teachers are responsible for as well, such as Dress Code violations, disruption in the classroom, hallway behavior. For these infractions teachers are expected to give a Teacher Detention, a reasonable amount of time students have to come after school to carry out their consequence, discuss their behaviors with teachers, and repair the relationship. Students who spent the class calling out and being disruptive may sit in silence, while someone who tried to sleep may make up the work they did not do in class. This is a great opportunity for the student and the teacher to compose their feelings and thoughts in order to have a professional conversation. In most cases, students have had a lot of time to cool off from being given the consequence and are able to be a lot more honest and accepting. During this time, teachers too are able to take a step back and perhaps apologize for how they approached the situation if necessary. Outside of the major infractions, the majority of the ownership of discipline is placed on the teachers to take care of business in their classroom, rather than the deans being seen as the authoritative power figures. As psychologist George G. Bear notes, “punishment teaches students

⁵³Sandra Way, “School discipline and disruptive classroom behavior: The moderating effects of student perceptions,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 52 (2001) 346 – 375.

what they are not supposed to do and that it is important not to get caught, but fails to teach them what they should do.”⁵⁴ Therefore, by teachers having these discussions with students through the lens of *Love and Logic* they are able to help students in understanding the behavior and promote self-discipline.

The only difficulty with a Teacher Detentions does not lie in theory put practicality, and at times unsustainability. Being that teachers are in the building for a strenuous ten hours a day, having students stay after for a private detention is tiresome and may interfere with a scheduled meeting other obligations. Students have to be tracked down if they don't remember and can be aggravated being that they want to leave themselves. Students who are repeatedly given Teacher Detentions for negative classroom behaviors no longer take the consequence seriously. The next step, being to call a parent may not always have the desired effect, as some parents are at a loss regarding how to aid the teacher. Parents may eventually come in for meetings, but that is as far as it usually goes for students who are disruptive or refusing to do work. Often the sentiment of “log it” in regards to behaviors in class is echoed, without any follow through.

Currently, there are several students in the school who are consistently committing both the egregious and minor infractions every week, they are the same students in detention every Friday, the ones who have had parent and teacher meetings and yet they are still in class every day. These students drastically affect the culture of their class with their disruptive behavior. Some of these students refuse to do work each and every class and simply show up. The school's only two, over-worked counselors meet with these students in effort to try to support them. The lack of change creates a frustration among staff as students are rarely ever suspended for behaviors rooted in disrespect and disruption. Rather, the only behaviors that merit suspensions

⁵⁴ Way, Sandra M. “School discipline and disruptive classroom behavior: The moderating effects of student perceptions.”

are those that involve students physically putting their hands on another student or coming in to school under the influence of alcohol or other substances. There have been two cases this year of students threatening teachers, insinuating that they would find a way to hurt them, and the only consequences have been mediation meetings and discussions with the student and teacher. It is important to note that this is only a small group of students causing this unrest, but it leaves teachers wondering if the education of one student is more important than the larger group of students and their education, when they are evidentially so affected by the disruptions. It also takes a toll on the teacher having to manage the same behaviors daily which also impacts the culture of the class.

Overall, the discipline system allows for teachers and students to communicate with each other while preserving the dignity of each party. It may entail a large amount of effort and energy on part of the teacher, but the relationships that form with the students are worth it. The majority of students love coming to school and can say they have a strong relationship with at least one or more of their teachers, feeling safe and respected. The students who are consistently known for their disruptive behavior have been “adopted” by some of the administration who will be personally responsible for checking in with them.

SCHOOL CULTURE

The warm and inviting feeling of the institution is cultivated from the first day of school as freshmen have an orientation week to themselves. When they first step foot in the halls of the school large, colorful painted murals draw their attention. The halls are filled with murals painted by students, symbolizing that School “B” is a place where the students have ownership of their school. Teachers line the hallways welcoming the new freshman class and introducing

themselves. Students remark that, “everyone here is so nice!”⁵⁵ They all file into the auditorium, silent and nervous and are introduced to the founder and principal who explain to the students, “You are the founders of this school, this can be a good school only if you choose to make it a good school.”⁵⁶ This yearly speech proves to be a testament to the school’s desire for the students to feel ownership over the school and foster a desire to take care of it. On the New York City Department of Education yearly survey School “B” received a score of 95% positive responses in the overall category of “Trust,” surpassing the city average of 89% and scored a 91% positive responses in the overall category of “Supportive Environment,” surpassing the city average of 83%.⁵⁷ Most importantly, 95% of students said they felt safe “in the hallways, bathrooms, locker rooms, and cafeteria of this school.”⁵⁸ Besides the positivity of the staff and administration and safety, the school has other systems in place that help create a positive and professional culture, such as Advisory, Dress Code, and E-scores.

Each teacher is assigned a group of eight or nine students for an advisory period. These students meet in the teacher’s room each morning for five minutes for Homeroom and then return later for Advisory period for thirty-five minutes after lunch. Homeroom is a time to take attendance and ensure students are dressed professionally in Dress Code and prepared for the day ahead. Advisory is a great space to have conversations with students and get to know them on a deeper level, especially since advisees and advisors stay together throughout the four years at their school. Advisory therefore acts as a vehicle for personalization, “that is, tightening connections between students and their learning environments”⁵⁹ “When schools make an effort

⁵⁵ Quoted from incoming freshman at School “B” during the first week of orientation

⁵⁶ Quoted from School “B” Founder during Freshman Orientation

⁵⁷ “New York City Department of Education Survey,” <http://schools.nyc.gov/OA/SchoolReports/>

⁵⁸ “New York City Department of Education Survey,” <http://schools.nyc.gov/OA/SchoolReports/>

⁵⁹ Larry McClure, Susan Yonezawa and Makeba Jones, “Can school structures improve teacher-student relationships? The relationship between advisory programs, personalization and students’ academic achievement,” *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 18(2010) 1-18.

to “personalize” they create a feeling of connectedness within the institution. “Personalization matters because young people who are engaged emotionally, cognitively and behaviorally in their education are less likely to show signs of alienation and more likely to be connected to school”⁶⁰

Deep and meaningful bonds are formed between students who normally might have never spoken to one another. Each student has their own strengths that they bring to the small family that the advisory becomes. Throughout the trimester students continue to form relationships with one another as they work together on projects in advisory. For example, trimester one revolves around the theme of advocacy in which each advisory picked a cause to support and raise money for through bake sales or collections. These activities help strengthen the ideals of community, togetherness, and giving back. Students also use the time for a study hall session and an opportunity to unwind and collect themselves before their final two classes for the day. Each advisory inevitably forms a close and unique bond among each other as well as the teacher. This relationship between advisor and advisee is so critical throughout the year as this relationship is leveraged in any time of distress or difficulty. If something is going on in any of the students’ classes the advisory teacher is the first contact in order to solve any predicament.

Dress Code is an important aspect of culture as well at School “B,” it sends a message that professionalism should be valued on a daily basis not just in behavior but in the way one presents themselves. The philosophy behind dress code is that it aligns with the ideals of *Love and Logic*, by allowing the students freedom and expression as opposed to a uniform, which can appear stifling and emphasize compliance over individuality. The founders believed it was important for students to be able to be themselves while also being professional. Boys are

⁶⁰ Larry McClure, Susan Yonezawa and Makeba Jones, “Can school structures improve teacher-student relationships? The relationship between advisory programs, personalization and students’ academic achievement,” 7.

required to wear khaki or cargo pants and any shirt with a collar that does not have writing or graphics on it. Girls have more creative license, as their only limitations are no sleeveless shirts, graphics, or short dresses and skirts. In regards to shoes, both boys and girls are to wear black, brown or grey shoes.

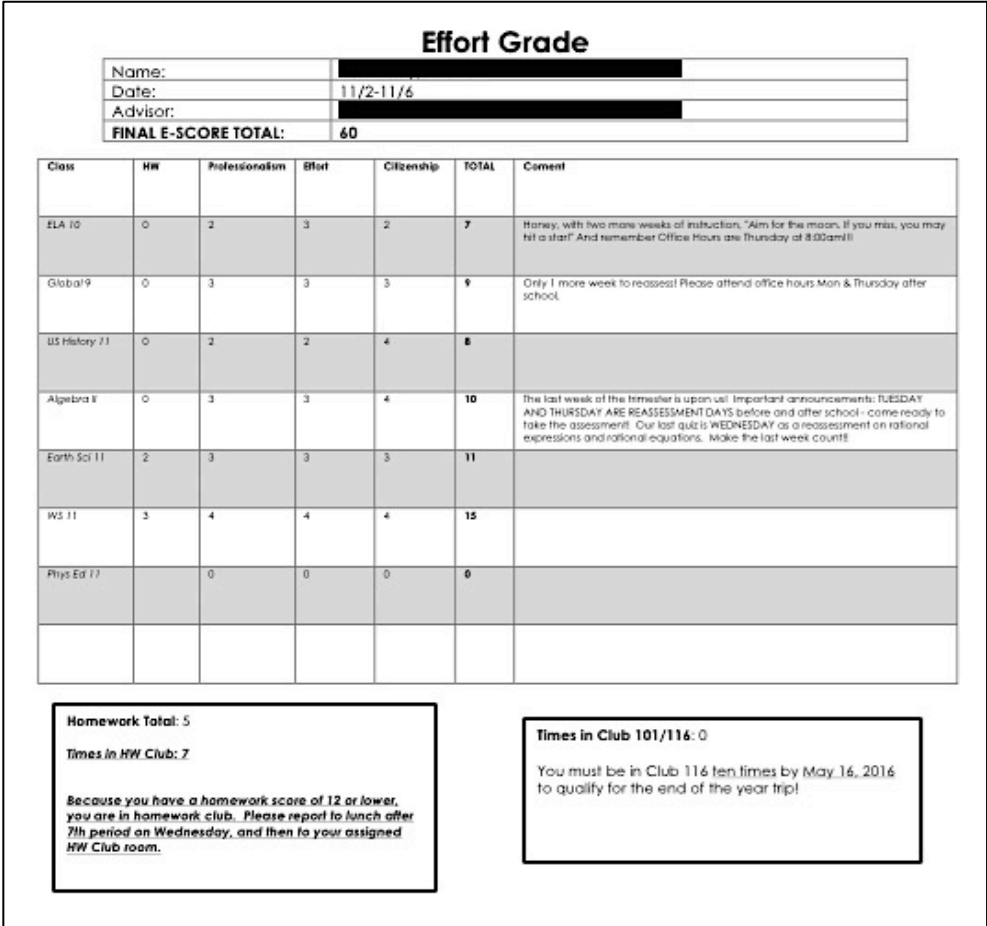
In most institutions, the dress code policies act “as a symbol of school membership, which conceals status and promotes conformity to organizational goals.”⁶¹ However at School “B,” students are not only preparing themselves for the school day but for college and career ready professionals who are able to carry themselves with grace and confidence. If students do not arrive to school in dress code they are sent to the deans office where they are outfitted in what the students call the School “B” uniform; khaki pants, a black polo shirt, and black Crocs, facetiously nick-named “Air-School B's.” Boys will be given a belt and expected to have their shirts tucked in. Despite the growing nature of the school, Dress Code is extremely successful. It is always a constant battle to get the boys to have their shirts tucked in throughout the day, or to get students to take off their sweatshirts when it begins to get colder, but the students know what is expected of them and understand the philosophy behind Dress Code even if they don’t quite enjoy it. There is some flexibility for students at the end of the week when they adorn their flashiest sneakers. To mirror the work place, in some professions, students who do not receive any consequences for lateness or other infractions are allowed to wear sneakers and jeans on Friday. This is not a dress down day, rather a day to still look professional while balancing casual.

⁶¹ Amy King, Linda Walker, and Denise Minor. “A Study of Dress Codes/Uniforms in Kentucky,” *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin* 68(2002) 52-56

E-Scores is a system in place to support for a positive, professional, and accountable school culture at School “B.” E-Scores, or Effort Scores, are used to track and monitor the students’ progress in each class in regards to professionalism, effort, community and homework.

Teachers track throughout the week the students’ behaviors and participation in class. Students are given a score from one to four in each category signifying their effort in each of their classes. A score of sixteen is a perfect score in a class and students are able to earn up to one hundred and eight points. Student successes are logged as well as any concerns about behavior or academics in the comment section. By Saturday evening teachers log student scores into a

Figure 2.1: Student Effort Score Report



Google Doc. spreadsheet and have the option of leaving them personalized comments as well. This is then generated into a report that students receive on Monday during advisory E-Score conferences (See Figure 2.1). Teachers review the scores with the students and discuss both areas of growth and improvement. Students with high scores are admitted into a high achievers club that allows them to go on trips throughout the year. Students who are admitted into this club at least ten times during the year are invited to go on the overnight trip at the end of the year to

Boston or Philadelphia. Students who receive a score of twelve or lower in the homework category are mandated to attend Homework Club in order to make up homework. This once was a homework detention, which has been rebranded to homework Office Hours where teachers now sit and work with students, rather than manage silence in a room of students working independently. Homework Club is also a major variable for student athletes who wish to play during games. If a student athlete is mandated Homework Club they are benched the next game, placing academics before athletics.

With E-Scores being so high-stakes, teachers maintain consistency by organizing with their grade guidelines for how students can earn points in each category and incorporate it into sessions during orientation weeks, in that each grade has its own form of re-orientation (See Figure 2.2).

E-Scores have definite pros and cons in regards to their place in the culture system. The majority of students are extremely motivated by their scores each week and strive to make the 108 Club and be eligible for trips and other rewards. Parents also enjoy being able to see their student’s progress in each class and read the comments teachers provide. This acts as a great way to loop parents into the student’s progress so that student,

Figure 2.2: Effort Score Rubric

E-SCORE RUBRIC FOR 10th GRADE	
The following rubric was introduced to you during Summer Vista. These are the expectations for you in ALL classes including ELA.	
Homework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Completing assigned homework on time in a complete and professional fashion -- Completing in-class work that was not completed should be done at home; especially if the task was difficult -- Studying for all exams -- Ensuring that all preparation is done for following day
Professionalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Getting right to work without being reminded before the start of the bell -- Coming to class on time and prepared -- Being ready with all materials needed for class time by the start of the bell -- Exiting the classroom and leaving area ready for next group of colleagues to come in -- Being professional in all classroom interactions -- Coming prepared with homework in a punctual fashion -- Taking responsibility for missed class time by notifying teacher and following up on missed work -- Following protocols and norms for Office Hours and Classroom Procedures -- Ensuring that attire (way you are dressed) reflects MESA's dress code standards -- Having all necessary materials including learning from the week prior -- Coming into class on time and prepared with all necessary materials including homework as well as required texts -- Meeting in-class deadlines -- Showing independent maturity by putting one's best self forward
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Taking responsibility for one's actions and choices in the classroom -- Demonstrating respect to classroom space, classmates and teachers -- Sharing your knowledge with peers -- Collaborating by listening and contributing to the ideas of others -- Reinforcing classroom community by being enthusiastic and respectful -- Using good judgment to ensure success of self and others -- Being cooperative and productive member during group tasks
Effort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Always being on-task during class time, working independently towards achievement -- Displaying organization and neatness in one's notebook or binder -- Working at a rigorous and steady pace during class time -- Taking ownership over one's production and submitting QUALITY work -- Striving and desiring to improve one's self -- Seeking help when needed -- Attending office hours, even if one is NOT mandated

parent, and teacher are working together. Students are also held accountable for their learning and behavior to an extent. The shortcoming of this accountability is that Homework Club does not always run regularly or consistently every Wednesday, as events come up. Students know when there is no Homework Club for the upcoming week and will intentionally not complete homework, as homework does not count towards their grades. Not all students are motivated by E-Scores, and the numbers on the page become meaningless when they are consistently below satisfactory. There are no consequences currently for low scores in regards to professionalism to hold students accountable. And lastly, E-Scores take a lot of time on the part of the teacher. Each teacher has on average one hundred students, to take the time to track, enter, and comment on all students' scores can be a burden and feel like one more responsibility on their plates.

ADMINISTRATION AND TEACHERS

When the founder and principal opened up the doors of School "B" in 2013 they quickly went to work hiring knowledgeable school leaders to support teachers and staff. Most of the daily operations are over seen by the principal who is on top of everything from supporting teachers to being up to date with high needs students. Below the principal are department heads that are responsible for observing the teachers within their content and providing them with lesson plan feedback. These department heads are teachers' first line of support with both curriculum and classroom management. Department heads on average are in the classroom once a week, providing low inference notes to the teachers. A few days following the observation a debrief meeting is held to discuss the lesson as well as anything the classroom teacher feels they need support with. If a teacher is looking for more help with classroom management there are two deans on staff as well as a Head of School Culture. These three individuals make up the culture team and are there to support teachers with best practices, student mediations, and overall

management. Also, on the administration team are the English Language Learner Department Head and the Special Education Department Head. Both of these individuals are able to schedule meetings with teachers in order to support either of these two populations in the classroom. They are also there to give support and feedback on curriculum and how to shape it to individual student needs. The only setback with having these individuals as support systems is that they are also classroom teachers as well and scheduling meetings can be challenging at times, though the willingness and ability to offer support is always there. School “B” also offers a program for new teachers run by the two Directors of New Teacher Development. These two admin members are responsible for the ten to twelve teachers on staff who are in their first two years of teaching. These teachers are a part of a New Teachers Initiative (NTI) program in which they are responsible for attending weekly classes focuses on developing their craft and troubleshooting issues in the classroom. These teachers are only responsible for teaching four classes a day and receive consistent coaching in the classroom to aid in the development of their craft. With these administrative members in place there is a concrete system for receiving support.

The current teaching staff at School “B” is considerably diversified in regards to race and age, however classroom teachers are predominately female. The majority of teachers have an average of three to five years of teaching experience. Teachers are responsible working from eight thirty in the morning to four thirty-seven in the afternoon and teaching five classes a day, unless a NTI teacher. Teachers are responsible for developing the curriculum and materials for their fifty-five minute classes and given two prep periods a day. They must also hold Office Hours once a week and twice a week when they are assigned to monitor Homework Club. A teacher may hold Office Hours in the morning prior to school or after school depending on the teacher’s preference. Office Hours is essentially “extra help” in which teachers tutor students for thirty-five minutes on the topics they are struggling with. Other responsibilities of teachers

include lunch duty or bathroom duty every three weeks, which has been rebranded to “Lunch Opportunity,” positively viewing this time as an opportunity to chat with students and continue to build relationships

Each Wednesday teachers receive professional development in the morning prior to school. These development sessions vary in content and topic, everything from mandated reporting to grade team meeting. One popular session for professional development at School “B” is Critical Friends Group®. Once every two weeks staff breaks out into their Critical Friends Group® or CFG. This is a procedure put together by the National School Reform Faculty in order to engage in critical thinking and deep reflection among teaching peers. The “critical” aspect of Critical Friends is derived from “‘critical care units’ in the hospital: the circumstances dealt with in CFG® meetings are incredibly important, essential to the health of [the] school, oftentimes urgent, and sometimes work-life-threatening.”⁶² Each CFG® group is devised of six or seven teachers from different content areas who come together to assist one another by troubleshooting issues in the classroom or discussing better methods for providing instruction. There is a precise protocol that each group follows in which the presenter presents their topic and then the group asks probing questions. Next, the group discusses the topic and the presenter cannot make eye contact, but must take down notes. After the group discusses, the presenter provides feedback on their ideas and finally the group debriefs on the process. One teacher remarked that CFG© is a space where teachers come together, “to acknowledge that we all have areas for growth and to have the space in time as well as physical dimensions creates a level of comfort because no one is too experienced to seek advice and no one is too novice to provide insight.”⁶³ Teachers are

⁶² “What Is Critical Friends Group?” Harmony Education Center, accessed November 23, 2015 <http://www.nsrffharmony.org/about-us/faq#What is a CFG and how is it different than a PLC?>

⁶³ Quoted by administrator at School “B” during an interview on January 4, 2015.

also required to observe another teacher's class with one or two members from their group each trimester to further observe and discuss multiple teacher practices within the school.

Teachers at School "B" also have another large responsibility during the year called Intersession, a program that is unique to the school. During the February break or the extended April break teachers are required to work four days of the break in which they teach essentially an elective class on anything they are passionate about. The students come to school during break from nine to two and take classes like boxing, flag football, Gender in Film, The Art of T-Ball, and other teacher designed enrichment activities. Teachers are responsible for receiving pre-approval on their Intersession class and order necessary materials. They have the flexibility of staying in the confines of the school or venturing out into the city for exploration. This program provides teachers with a unique opportunity to spend time with their students in a more relaxed environment. Teachers really get to know students and their passions better. Teachers are required to teach three sessions each day in whatever topic they choose.

CO-TEACHING

At School "B" two to three sections of each subject are integrated co-teaching classes (ICT) that support a diverse population of general education students, special education students, and English Language Learners (ELLs). One special education teacher is paired to work with the general education teacher in order to develop lesson plans and materials that are appropriate for all learners in the classroom. In order to form cooperative co-teaching relationships the school uses Bruce Tuckman's Team Development Model developed from his work "Developmental Sequence in Small Groups"(1965) to foster communication and strengthen the partnership. Author Carol Wilson, teaching coach, describes the four stage model as "...how the team members first comes together, welcoming, polite...and how they descend into conflict while

establishing their positions, how the boundaries are eventually and sometime tortuously established and, if all goes well, how the team reaches a place of stability where it can perform to the best of its combined abilities”⁶⁴

In Tuckman’s first stage of Forming the general education teacher and special education teacher discuss their teaching philosophies and their strengths and weaknesses in the classroom. They discuss “non negotiables” that each has in the classroom, pet peeves, and daily procedures they have implemented in the past. To guide this initial conversation the Special Education Coordinator sends out a Google Survey to complete with these Norming questions. Completing this survey can be awkward but it is important that each teacher voice concerns in order to feel they are equal and valued in the new partnership. During this stage, “There is likely to be some baggage regarding the way people have been treated in the past, which might result in some clinging to the old ways, if their experience was positive, or suspicion and apathy if it left scars”⁶⁵ This stage is very important at School “B” because of its beliefs in teaching with the values of love and logic, therefore the school is committed to cultivating a staff with strong relationships and open communication to support the needs of the students. After this session teachers then focus on ways to implement co-teaching models into the classroom, such as Parallel Teaching or Station Teaching. It is up to the teaching pair to decide how they will share responsibilities, emphasizing that both teachers are responsible for planning, producing materials, and modifying. At School “B” this looks like teachers dividing lessons and materials and meeting once a week to make these decisions and checking in daily about the needs of individual students.

⁶⁴ Carol Wilson, “Bruce Tuckman’s Forming, Storming & Norming Team Development Model,” *Culture At Work* (2010) 3

⁶⁵ Carol Wilson, , “Bruce Tuckman’s Forming, Storming & Norming Team Development Model,” 4

When co-teaching pairs have been given time to form their teaching relationship another Google Survey is sent out for Tuckman's second stage of Storming. Here teachers are given the space to voice concerns or frustrations associated with an imbalance of power, differences in teaching styles, or general discomfort. This conversation can be extremely uncomfortable, but School "B" pushes teachers to have what has been coined "difficult conversations." Teachers then express their emotions and how they are feeling about the last few months. Department heads guide the co-teaching pairs to have honest conversations that form new hopes and goals for their relationships. At this stage in Tuckman's model the focus is still centered on the relationship of the co-teachers. When co-teaching pairs reach stage three Norming, at the end of the first marking period, the attention falls to the Special Education and English Language Learner students. The teachers are asked, through another survey, to focus on the learning goals that these students struggled with as a whole and action plan steps on how to better support these particular students through co-teaching models, modifications, and scaffolds This stage focuses on student needs and allows the teachers at School "B" to strengthen the co-teaching relationship by enforcing their common goal.

The last stage the co-teaching pair focuses on is Tuckman's stage of Performing, and again teachers place emphasis on how all students, especially Special Education and English Language Learners are progressing at the end of the second trimester. Here teachers discuss learning goals that should be reexamined and skills students are succeeding with and those that need to be cycled back into lesson plans. While, teachers at School "B" focus on their performance, this stage in Tuckman's model may not always be attained. During Performing both parties should be able to work independently yet come together and problem solve

effectively, ultimately resulting in productivity.⁶⁶ When this stage is genuinely met there is clear trust in the co-teaching relationship with little hesitancy. Here, “There is unity: group identity is complete, group morale is high, and group loyalty is intense. The task function becomes genuine problem solving, leading toward optimal solutions and optimum group development. There is support for experimentation in solving problems and an emphasis on achievement”⁶⁷ There is a lot to expect from teachers to reach this level of partnership, which most co-teaching teams have the ability to in School “B.”

School “B” acknowledges that there is an aspect of difficulty with co-teaching and that these relationships are crucial to school culture and the development of both students and teachers. To combat this Tuckman’s model is used as a vehicle for addressing concerns and the difficulty of the task at hand. The school succeeds in giving teachers a platform to work from to establish healthy relationships and satisfaction within the classroom.

CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENTS

At School “B” all classes are New York State Regents aligned to prepare students for these examinations. In order to achieve this alignment teachers use the Common Core Standards to create learning goals, similar to learning targets. The students are therefore measured on their ability to master the learning goals through Standards-Based Grading. This is “a grading system in which students are evaluated based on their proficiency in meeting a clearly-articulated set of course objectives.”⁶⁸ The theory is that if students are solely being graded on these targets then they are given valuable feedback on how to achieve in their classes and what they need to

⁶⁶ “Five Stages of Group Development,” *Florida State University College of Medicine*, accessed December 25, 2015, http://med.fsu.edu/uploads/files/FacultyDevelopment_GroupDevelopment.pdf

⁶⁷ “Five Stages of Group Development,” *Florida State University College of Medicine*

⁶⁸ J. McTighe and Tomlinson, C. A. *Integrating differentiated instruction and understanding by design: Connecting content and kids*. (Alexandria: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development. National Council of Teachers of English 2006).

understand to do so. This type of grading is criterion referenced scoring, which allows an assessment to indicate a student's capabilities on a particular skill or standard. For this system to be successful teachers, "...must identify what they want their students to learn and be able to do and what evidence they will use to judge that achievement or performance. Grades based on clearly stated learning criteria have direct meaning and communicate that meaning"⁶⁹ Students are able to better comprehend their assessments of these standards through the use of a rubric scale from one to four with the score of a four indicating proficiency.

With Standard-Based Grading used at School "B," the school policy is that students are not graded on their homework, but rather it is factored into their Effort Scores. This policy can be difficult for many teachers who feel that grading homework is the incentive for students to give their best, complete the homework, and turn it in. However, other teachers in the field have found "... students who were clearly learning sometimes earned low grades because of missing work. Conversely, some students actually learned very little but were good at 'playing school'"⁷⁰ Rather than homework being an assessment the school felt that students would be more intrinsically driven to do their homework if they saw the direct correlation between the homework and the learning goal, and the concept that the homework would help them practice in order to achieve success rather than feeling like "busy work." The homework students receive is therefore preparation for each assessment associated with the learning goal.

Throughout each trimester students are actively taking assessments on the target learning goals designated for each unit. However, when it comes time for students to receive their grade for these learning goals they are not averaged together, but rather students are graded by the method of most recent grade. A student who has failed six of their seven last assessments but

⁶⁹ Thomas Guskey, "Helping Standards Make the Grade," *Educational Leadership* 5 (2001) 1-20

⁷⁰ Patricia L. Scriffiny, "Seven Reasons for Standards-Based," *Educational Leadership* (2008) 70-74

scores a four on the final assessment receives the score of a four, rather than an averaged score. It is the school's belief that students should not be penalized for their lack of proficiency in the past but be fairly graded on what they know currently. While Standards-Based grading at School "B" has really allowed students to excel through meaningful feedback, it has also allowed for students to manipulate or "game" the system, especially in regards to the policy of most recent grade. Students may choose often not to consistently keep up with a learning goal that is constantly measured. For example, the learning goal "SWBAT independently read a text and recall major plot points" is one designated to students independently reading a text in English class at home on their own as assigned each night. Students know this is an assessment given regularly and may not keep up with the reading until the end of the novel when they take the last assessment in which they score a four indicating proficiency. In this case the grading system is flawed because the student had not proficiently been keeping up with the reading. School "B" does acknowledge that no grading system is perfect and allows for grades to be changed if not indicative of a student's work and capabilities. However, for many students who do struggle on their way towards mastery the system does not penalize them at the end but rather showcases their current knowledge.

Teachers at School "B" are expected to cycle in old learning goals throughout the year and give students the ability to reassess even with the unit. These learning goal reassessments are crucial to gauge the students' understanding and even influence the way lessons are planned. When the students as a whole fail a learning goal it is indicative that re-teaching and reassessing must occur. However, students at School "B" are afforded even more opportunities to reassess. It is the school's policy that a student may attend Office Hours and request to reassess a learning goal from the unit they are currently studying. If a learning goal is reassessed in Office Hours a teacher is then to change their current grade to that of the reassessment. This is a luxury afforded

to the students at the school that is not always taken advantage of, or is and therefore puts extra work on the teachers.

Many teachers at the institution feel a sense of frustration when they offer students the ability to better their grades through Office Hour reassessment and they do not take it. However, a larger frustration for teachers is the policy itself. Most teachers have structured strict parameters around the policy of reassessment in their class, indicating the time period in which they may reassess, how many tutoring sessions they must attend before being able to reassess, and even signing up when they are to come to Office Hours and what particular standards to reassess. This was the result of a large number of students showing up to Office Hours and demanding the privilege of reassessing months after the assessment had been given, particularly only a few days before the end of a trimester as a last minute attempt. It is also difficult for teachers to constantly reproduce new reassessments for students when they do not know who is coming to Office Hours and students show up requesting to reassess. At times teachers have felt like reassessment was a crutch rather than a tool for developing mastery. Life does not always give second chances and students must be prepared to “get it right” the first time. One teacher remarks, “I feel more often than not, students see the opportunity to re-assess as a chance to slack off the first time and it is not until they see their grade that they realize they need to reassess.”⁷¹ The use of reassessment is one that each course is still developing in order to support the true mission of aiding students in achieving mastery.

⁷¹ Quoted from School “B” Global teacher during an interview December 9th 2015 on the topic of reassessment.

CONCLUSION

While the cultures of School “A” and School “B” are driven by two opposing philosophies both schools share the same end goal of equipping students with the disposition and academic ability to master standardized exams. With school charters mandating that students pass standardized exams in order to keep their doors open, the curriculum of these institutions has strayed away from John Dewey’s ideals for educating the whole student. When stripping away the guiding philosophies of these schools, they ultimately impart the same curriculum upon their students. Both schools drift from “developmentalist” curriculum, which is related to the needs and interests of the student rather than the needs of the society. This curriculum originated from the aspects of Dewey’s writing related to the relationship between the child and curriculum.⁷² This curriculum is focused on the needs of the student in accordance to where they are developmentally. “This curriculum stresses the importance of a connection between school and life, allowing for the teacher not to just impart knowledge on the students but be a facilitator of growth.”⁷³ However, emphasis is placed more on testing in both of these institutions. Thus, they focus on a mimetic tradition of teaching, believing that the purpose of teaching is the transmission of knowledge. The most common method for this form of teaching is through didactic method, which uses lecture as its dominant form of communication as the teacher is the source for knowledge and the students are empty vessels in which to fill. In both institutions students can be seen sitting in rows in the classroom taking notes as the teacher lectures with a PowerPoint.

And while teachers in both institutions may not feel that they are the sole source of knowledge the manner in which they are instructed to teach is ultimately mimetic, especially

⁷² John Dewey, *The child and the curriculum*.(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1902)

⁷³ Alan Sadovnik, Peter W. Cookson, and Susan F. Semel, *Exploring Education an Introduction to the Foundations of Education*. 4th ed., 284

when preparing for state tests and Regents exams. This becomes the default style of teaching because, "...the mimetic model stresses the importance of rational sequencing in the teaching process and assessment of the learning process."⁷⁴ This is reflected in the manner in which School "A" conducts classes and constantly seeks to gain data from its students. And in School "B" this is demonstrated through the emphasis placed on learning goals and assessments that align to Common Core standards and Regents exams. Albert Shanker once questioned, "Can we come up with a plan for a school which doesn't require kids to do something that most adults can't do, which is to sit still for five or six hours a day listening to somebody talk?"⁷⁵ He intended for charter schools to be institutions of experiment, however these schools fall guilty to not facilitating knowledge and growth.

Though School "B" uses the mimetic style of teaching it seeks to also educate students in a more progressive-like manner in regards to discipline. Both institutions seek to develop character in their students but the way in which they do so greatly differs. School "B" seeks to help shape students in a more implicit way. This is what theorist Basil Bernstein calls invisible pedagogy. Invisible Pedagogy is what Bernstein argued was present when there are looser authoritative practices in the classroom, compared to visible pedagogy of strict, authoritative practices.⁷⁶ This invisible pedagogy is seen in School "B" through the philosophy of *Love and Logic*. The guiding principles of *Love and Logic* allow for students to have shared control in the classroom, or perceived autonomy. The teacher in School "B" is taught to be empathetic rather than authoritative, allowing students to be participants in decision making in regulating their own behavior. Students are unaware that by being given options in regards to

⁷⁴ Alan Sadovnik, Peter W. Cookson, and Susan F. Semel, *Exploring Education an Introduction to the Foundations of Education*. 4th ed., 284

⁷⁵ Albert Shanker, "National Press Club Speech," March 31, 1988, Walter P. Reuther Library, <http://reuther.wayne.edu/files/64.43.pdf>, 11.

⁷⁶ Alan Sadovnik, Peter W. Cookson, and Susan F. Semel, *Exploring Education an Introduction to the Foundations of Education*. 4th ed., 298

consequences and choosing ones they find logical they are in fact being educated on how to practice self-discipline. When teachers use the strategies of *Love and Logic* as common practice students then internalize the discipline and are more likely to act in a mature manner.

School “A” operates conversely using visible pedagogy in which the teacher is the authoritative figure in the classroom. The teacher rewards and punishes students with merits and demerits based off of the school’s disciplinary codes. Here there is a desire for all facets of the day to managed and become an institution that, “ places the maintenance of order, discipline, time on-task, and pure content coverage over any kind of critical thinking, disagreement, difficult dialogues, or creative and courageous action.”⁷⁷ Students are constantly given explicit rules and regulations that they are unable to use self-discipline and instead push back on the overwhelming amount of authority present on a daily basis. The philosophy of “no excuses” further exacerbates the negativity students’ feel about the institution and themselves. Educator Alice Ginsberg echoes this sentiment, stating, “When we teach children there are “no excuses” for failure, we are implying that substantial obstacles that perpetuate social inequality are, in actuality, trivial and can be pushed aside or ignored.”⁷⁸ Poverty, racism, homelessness, and other physical, social, and mental issues do affect students and that must be accounted for.

While both schools share commonalities in their mission for students to achieve a professional disposition and academic success, it is the culture of School “B” that sets it apart from School “A” and attributes to its success. School “B” has succeeded in creating a school climate that embraces diversity within the school and celebrates individualism. Through structures such as advisory, where tight-knit groups are formed between teacher and students and

⁷⁷ Alice Ginsberg, *Embracing Risk in Urban Education: Curiosity, Creativity, and Courage in the Era of 'No Excuses' and Relay Race Reform*. (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Education, 2012).

⁷⁸ Alice Ginsberg, *Embracing Risk in Urban Education: Curiosity, Creativity, and Courage in the Era of 'No Excuses' and Relay Race Reform*. (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Education, 2012).

students with one another, the school greatly differs from the oppressive nature of School “A.” Structures such as Dress Code also aid in students being able to express themselves, while School “B” students are in uniforms and single-file lines. Where there is silence in the halls of School “A”, students in “School “B” walk to class chatting with their friends and teachers. The ideal of empathy in School “B” creates a culture where it’s okay to make mistakes and failure means the opportunity to learn and grow. Students do not fear the institutions rules or the faculty that enforces the code of conduct, which creates an environment of trust. School “B’s” focus on compliance only creates a culture that may feel like subjugation. Ultimately, a successful culture of a school is fostered through faculty, curriculum, pedagogical practices, and disciplinary codes that support the development of the student as an individual in context to their society.

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