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ABSTRACT

Case studies of five small and isolated rural schools in the south-central United States examined their participation and success in the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program. The schools included three elementary schools and two K-12 unit schools serving 71-473 students. All were at least 50 miles from a metropolitan area and were Title I eligible. Each school was receiving approximately $50,000 per year for 3 years to underwrite CSRD costs. Site visits took place in the fall and spring of the first year. At each school, the study examined which schoolwide reform model was chosen and why, challenges and barriers to implementing the chosen model, the role of the model developer in program implementation, and how the rural context affected progress. The studies found that the funds awarded generally were sufficient for program implementation. Program developers were able to provide quality training and support despite the schools' isolation and small size. Teachers recognized the fit between the models chosen and school needs. CSRD models that were more prescriptive were implemented very quickly, and teachers observed significant pupil gains in related skills. Less prescriptive models were implemented more slowly and were subject to some teacher skepticism and indifference. State accountability systems played a major role in motivating schools to participate in CSRD. Parents and community members were minimally involved in CSRD implementation. Small school size seemed to facilitate internal communications and problem solving. Appendices contain case study details and data collection forms. (SV)

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Case Studies of Rural Schools Implementing Comprehensive School Reform Models

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Abstract

This study of five small and isolated rural schools in the Southwestern U.S. was initiated to determine the degree to which they were able to participate in the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program and be successful in implementing a comprehensive school reform effort aimed at improving the quality of education in these somewhat faraway places. Each of the schools chosen for this study was successful in receiving CSRD grants for three years at approximately $50,000 per year to underwrite the costs involved in implementing research-based programs. Two visits were conducted in the fall and spring of year one of the three-year grant period. The site visits permitted extensive interviews of school personnel, observation of implementation activities, and acquisition of related school documents and reports. Model developers, who supported the implementation of the chosen research-based programs at each of these rural schools, were interviewed to gain their perspective on the effectiveness of the schools in implementing their CSRD programs. The following conclusions are supported by the analyses reported above.

All five sites were able to make significant progress in implementing their chosen model(s). The funds awarded to these schools generally were sufficient for each school to purchase contracted services and materials needed for implementing their selected CSRD programs. Although teacher involvement in the selection of their CSR model(s) varied to some degree across the schools, teachers recognized the fit between the models(s) chosen and the needs of the school. The CSR models that were more prescriptive in nature (e.g., Success for All, Early Literacy Initiative, Accelerated Reader, Investigations in Number, Data, and Space) were implemented very quickly and teachers observed significant pupil gains in related reading, writing, spelling, and computing skills. Conversely, the CSR models that were less prescriptive (e.g., Effective School Model and Accelerated Schools) were slower in being implemented and subject to some teacher skepticism and indifference. The small size of the schools of this study seemed to facilitate internal communications and problem solving. Experienced rural teachers, who may sense the ineffectiveness of their teaching methods and materials in past, can become highly motivated to change when they are properly supported, coached, and can observe significant gains in their students' performance in a relatively short period of time. The SEAs and their accountability systems played a major role in motivating the schools to apply for grants and to implement selected CSRD programs.

Small, isolated rural schools should not be seen as limited in their capacity to implement comprehensive changes in teaching methods and innovative curricula programs. Distances from metropolitan areas should not be seen as a barrier in providing training and consultant services needed for the support and implementation of new instructional programs. The feelings of mutual respect between research-based developers and rural teachers can go a long way in enabling the implementation of needed changes. Finally, $50,000 is a significant amount of money to a small, rural school and this amount of money in one year can make possible a school-wide change process that holds promise in upgrading the academic performance of *all* their students.

Introduction

School reform efforts can be traced back to the early days of the new republic. In United States' early history as a new nation, there were attempts to transfer and copy European culture and at the same time breathe life into nascent democratic ideals (Rippa, 1992). Over a long period of time, U.S. public education has struggled with the twin demands of serving the elite, the more advantaged and wealthier members of our society, while ensuring universal education for all, often those living at or below the poverty level. This seemingly paradoxical situation has fed a conflict in the U.S. society that has taken different forms up to the present day. It has prompted many efforts at satisfying both demands, as well as other related educational issues, with each effort appearing to be the seedbed for the next. Further, our democratic milieu provides opportunities for interested groups to lobby for changes in schools that hold promise for correcting perceived social ills or failings. The net result of these conditions is a continuous flow of legislative mandates targeted at schools. A recent legislative effort at "improving" American schools and the focus of this report is the U.S. Congress's 1997 funding of the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program.

The CSRD program is a multi-year federal initiative to reorganize and revitalize schools, especially those experiencing below par performance as measured by national, state, and local standards, with a first-year budget of $150 million. The program's purpose is to provide financial incentives for schools to adopt comprehensive school reform models that are based on reliable research and effective practices, and include an emphasis on academics and parental involvement. Schools that are recipients of CSRD grants are expected to use these funds to adopt or develop research-based, comprehensive school reform models. In addition, technical support must be obtained from an external partner or developer connected with the chosen reform model. In recognition of the fact that often federal and state grants tend to have shorter time frames and promote frequent turnover of change initiatives, the CSRD grants are available for three years. Further, the granting process is being handled by state education agencies and awards are typically $50,000 per year or for a total $150,000.

The CSRD program and its unique features (e.g., a relatively long grant period; local adoption of comprehensive, research-based reform models; and involvement with an external technical assistance provider) prompted this investigation to determine the impact on small, isolated rural schools.

Background on the Study

Small, isolated rural schools have long posed a challenge to state and federal level policy makers. Often the problems facing these schools have been seen as best solved by consolidating these small schools into larger schools. Small schools were judged as too costly and ill equipped to meet the diverse needs of their students. Thus, there has been a steady decline in the number of school districts in the U.S. from nearly 128,000 in 1931 to nearly 16,000 in 1998. In the same period, the number of one-room schools dwindled from 150,000 to less than 1,000. Nonetheless, a sizable number of small schools continue to serve students in rural areas. Of the 46.5 million students attending public schools in the U.S., approximately 5 million students are educated in rural schools and approximately 1 million attend schools with enrollments of less than 450 students (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Although consolidation of small schools continues to be of interest in some states, there are practical problems of geography (terrain and distance) and politics (small school and community advocates) that preclude this effort from becoming the only solution to providing quality education in rural areas.

Small, rural schools will likely continue to educate significant portions of students in the U.S. and face conditions of limited resources, isolation, declining enrollments, aging facilities, limited curricula, and diminishing political influence. Sparsity, diseconomy of scale, extra transportation costs, and declining rural wealth further exacerbate efforts at school reform at the local rural school level. It is this backdrop that prompted this examination of how rural schools manage to overcome these barriers in implementing a comprehensive school reform program.

Research Questions

The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) in Austin, TX, proposed to study the degree to which small, isolated rural schools are able to successfully implement comprehensive school reform programs. To guide this research inquiry, four broad questions were identified:

1. What school-wide reform model was chosen by the school and why?

2. What challenges and barriers has the school faced in implementing its chosen model?

3. What role has the model developer played in its implementation?

4. How has the rural context helped and/or hindered progress?

Study Sample and Methodology

The schools that participated in this study were chosen purposefully from the rural schools that received a CSRD grant in the five-state region served by SEDL. CSRD state education agency contacts in Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas assisted in the selection of one rural school from each of their states. Criteria for the selection of schools in this study included school and community size, distance from a metropolitan area, presence of poverty, and the selected CSRD model. The small number of schools permitted an opportunity to visit and closely observe each school's CSRD program in progress.

A case study design (Merriam, 1991) guided the investigative process of this study. This methodology relies on multiple sources of information, including documents, interviews, and observations. Each school was visited twice, once in the fall, soon after initiation of its CSRD program and again in the spring, six months following the fall visit. Each visit lasted from two to three days and included interviews of all teachers and other school personnel (e.g., principal, guidance counselor, director of grants) involved in the CSRD program, pertinent classroom and group observations, and reviews of reports or curricula materials. Following the second round of visits, the respective developers working with the schools under study were queried about their involvement and perceptions of the school's progress. Information and data gathered by these visits and interviews were subsequently transformed, organized, and summarized to provide an overall impression on how these schools progressed in implementing their respective CSRD program. The results of these analyses are summarized in Appendices A - E to this report. Appendices F and G respectively include interview questions used during the two visits and a school/district background sheet that was completed for each site. This study was conducted during the 1999-2000 school year.

Table 1 provides an overview of the criteria followed in the selection of the five schools and related data for each school. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of each

school and provide confidentiality for the personnel of the schools participating in this study.

Table 1
Selection Criteria for Rural Case Study Sites and Related Data

Criteria	Copper NM	Crossover TX	Liberty OK	Sugar LA	Sumac AR
School Size	71	473	229	273	391
Grade Levels	K-5	K-12	K-12	PK-6	PK-6
Community Size	300	350	1500	1864	2482
Distance from Metropolitan Area (in miles)	167	50	50	50	150
Title I Eligible	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Percent Eligible for Free & Reduced Lunch	100	70	72	98	56
CSR Model	SFA	CAL/AS	ESM/AR	ELI	CK, INDS, & LBR

AR=Accelerated Reader
AS=Accelerated Schools
CAL=Comprehensive Accelerated Learning
CK=Core Knowledge
ELI=Early Literacy Initiative
ESM= Effective Schools Model
INDS=Investigations in Number, Data, & Space
LBR=Literature-Based Reading
SFA=Success for All

Study Findings

This chapter reports the findings of the study. The first section presents a summary of school profile data (e.g., school- and teacher-related data) for each of the five schools in this study, and permits a comparison of the schools on a number of background variables. The second section addresses each of the research questions that guided this study and ends with a summary across the five schools.

Summary of School Profile Data

Table 2 presents school-related data for each of the five schools in this study. These data were self-reported by each school and obtained from the *Rural Case Study Data Sheet* (see Appendix G).

Table 2
School Related Data for Rural Case Study Schools

Variables	Copper NM	Crossover TX	Liberty OK	Sugar LA	Sumac AR
Student Turnover Percent	5	20	35	<1	5
Average Class Size	15	25	18	15	16
Per Pupil Costs	NA	$6,375	$6,086	$4,651	$3,500
Pupil/Teacher Ratio	15:1	12:1	10:1	20:1	16:1
Percent of Budget Supported by State Aid	NA	53	22.5	82	70
Age of School Building(s) in Years	26	65/3[a]	40	42	6

[a] Middle school is 65 years old, high school is 3 years old
NA=Not Available

As can be observed in Table 2, there is considerable variability in these schools on nearly all of the variables reported. Generally the class size and pupil/teacher ratios for these schools are quite favorable. The age of the school buildings reflects a national trend of aging buildings in rural areas with Crossover's middle school building the oldest at 65 years. Liberty has the dubious honor of having to raise the highest percentage of funds locally to support its school's budget. Given the weak economy of Oklahoma generally and specifically in the Liberty area explains, in part, the greatest percentage of pupil turnover as families are forced to find employment in other areas.

Table 3 provides an overview of the five schools' status on teacher-related variables.

Table 3
Teacher Related Data for Rural Case Study Sites

Variables	Schools				
	Copper NM	Crossover TX	Liberty OK	Sugar LA	Sumac AR
Number of Professional Staff	6	29	24.5	20	35
Number of Unlicensed Support Staff	2	14	15	19	13
Average Teacher Salary	$36,000	$31,917	$30,804	$27,586	$30,000
Average Teacher Experience (yrs)	8	12	13	13	13
Average Teacher Experience in Rural Schools (yrs.)	8	6	13	13	17
Teacher Turnover Per Year	1	5	2	3	3

As reported in Table 3, the number of professional and nonprofessional staff is reflective of the enrollment in each of these schools. Sumac's elementary school has the highest enrollment. Crossover's numbers reflect a K-12 grade span. Teachers' salaries are all low given the years of experience represented in these schools with Sugar the lowest. In nearly all cases, these teachers have taught their entire careers in rural schools and, in most cases, at the school where they are presently located. On-site interviews revealed a proclivity to live and teach in rural areas that is explained, in part, by the fact that they were born and raised in rural locations and value this life style. This also helps to explain the generally low turnover of teachers at these schools.

The data reported in Tables 2 and 3 help to reinforce how rural schools can vary considerably on any number of variables.

Summary of Research Questions

As indicated in Chapter 1, four broad questions guided this study at each of the five rural school sites. In Appendices A-E, the four research questions are discussed for each of the respective schools under study. In this section, a summary is provided for each of the four

research questions. Experiences commonly shared and/or unique are discussed for each of the following research questions.

Question 1: *What school-wide reform model was chosen by the school and why?*

As reported in Table 1 above, the schools included in the study did not share a common model. Nine different models were selected across the five sites. Four of the five selected one or more models with close geographical ties near their location. Only two sites selected nationally known models with no local ties, and in only one of these was it the single model selected. It is interesting to note, however, how many of the schools included in their grant either as a primary focus or a supplementary effort—the Accelerated Reader model. Three schools included in this study (Sumac, Crossover, and Copper) selected this model and praised its features in motivating students' interest in reading and improving their reading skills. Observations at each of these sites, particularly at Crossover, revealed significant pupil motivation to read the books and take the end-of-story tests on the computer. This school's student and teacher enthusiasm for this model is due in large part to the computer-generated reports showing significant student gains. A fourth site, Liberty, also planned to implement this model at its elementary school during the second year of their CSRD grant.

It should be noted that one other school in this study (Sumac) also found that they could not accomplish all that they had planned for their first year of the grant and hoped to regain lost ground during the second year. In Sumac's case, in addition to major efforts involving Core Knowledge and Investigations in Number, Data, and Space models, they also wanted to implement a new reading intervention called Literature-Based Reading (LBR). They too were having good experiences with the Accelerated Reader model, but were feeling overwhelmed with many new initiatives and thus, postponement of the second reading model to year two seemed a wise choice.

Of perhaps more interest here is the second half of the question, why did schools select a particular model. In Liberty, the responses to this question ranged from a very practical reply, "We need the money," to a more philosophical reason, "It will help us better serve students of low esteem." Sumac's rationale also was driven by the quest for CSRD funds. Crossover, Copper, and Sugar schools were more deliberate in examining various choices and selected CSR models that best fit their needs. How they actually concluded which model was the "best" remained somewhat obscure despite follow-up questions; the choice probably reflected the wishes, instincts, and persuasiveness of local leaders (e.g., principal, classroom teachers, director of grants).

It is interesting to note that although some developers (e.g., Core Knowledge, Success for All, Accelerated Schools) required a faculty vote as an indication of teacher support, teachers involved with these program choices could not recall a formal vote. It appears that faculty support was more subtle and emerged from a general feeling of a consensus. In other words, unless strong opposition was outwardly expressed, the leadership and grant writers assumed a consensus. Or, as happens quite frequently in small, rural schools, deference was shown toward the authority figures (e.g., superintendents, principal) of the school. When these individuals expressed a strong wish to move ahead with a particular program, teachers may have grumbled to themselves, but went along for the sake of peace and harmony, important ingredients in small school environments.

It is also noteworthy that in three of these sites, CSRD grant funds were targeted at a number of school needs and not limited to a single school-wide model. Securing funds, for

example, for much needed computer technology was a high priority for two schools (Liberty and Crossover). Providing funds for teacher stipends was also considered important by all schools in order to assure teacher participation in key grant activities (e.g., preschool courses or in-service workshops and organizing curricula materials outside of normal school hours). Nearly half or more of the grant funds received were spent on contracts with developers (primarily for technical assistance) and the purchase of required instructional materials.

In summary, it seems that the selection of the particular CSR model is complicated and linked to the unique conditions and history of each school. There is little doubt that the CSRD program provided an opportunity for each school to acquire much-needed funds that could meet a number of needs. It is also important to recognize the influence of state accountability programs that established very specific student outcome standards and testing programs to measure respective schools' performance. Each of these schools (especially Crossover, Copper, and Sugar) has been identified as low performing and subject to some state education agency overview. It is evident from interviews of school personnel that there was clear concern about the school's performance on state mandated tests and the implications of low performance. The CSRD grant funds helped the teachers and administrators face these conditions more squarely and take steps to improve their situation.

Question 2: ***What challenges and barriers has the school faced in implementing its chosen model?***

To understand the challenges and barriers facing the schools, their progress in implementing their CSRD plans should be examined first. Below is a brief summary of each school's implementation of its respective plans by the end of year one.

Copper: Fully implemented all aspects of their Success for All program by late October 1999, in all grades, K-5.

Crossover: Partially implemented their CSRD plans. At the K-6 level, all components of the self-designed model (Comprehensive Accelerated Learning) have been implemented. At the secondary level, grades 7-12, implementation of the Accelerated Schools model was progressing more slowly. This is in part because of the model's developmental nature, its loosely structured components, and some faculty resistance. Other aspects of the grant, such as the Parent Center and computer technology, have been fully implemented.

Liberty: The Effective Schools Model, grades K-12, has been partially implemented. It is a long-term effort at institutionalizing a philosophy that all children can learn as well as implementing curricula and instructional practices to support this philosophy. Accomplishments to date include minimizing initial teacher resistance, creating greater cohesion among the K-12 teachers, and creating a greater readiness to address major policy, curricula, and instructional changes. The computer technology component has been fully implemented.

Sugar: Fully implemented all aspects of their Early Literacy Initiative, grades K-3, by the end of November 1999.

Sumac: Partially implemented their CSRD plans. The Core Knowledge and Investigations in Number, Data, and Space models were fully implemented, K-6, by mid-October 1999. The Literature-Based Reading model has been delayed to year two of

their CSRD grant.

Some general impressions from this checkered picture of implementation is that more prescriptive programs with specified teaching methods and required learning materials (e.g., Success for All, Early Literacy Initiative, Core Knowledge, Investigations in Number, Data, and Space, and aspects of Comprehensive Accelerated Learning like Accelerated Reader) are easier to implement. Accelerated Schools and Effective Schools Model are more process- or developmentally-oriented and less specific concerning what components need to be in place by when.

Even with the apparent successful implementation efforts at the schools in this study, there still were challenges and barriers that surfaced in the interviews and on-site observations include the following:

Teacher-Related

- apprehension and self-doubt about capability to implement new methods;
- resistance;
- overload caused by too many new initiatives; and
- insufficient time for planning, preparation, and teacher collaboration.

Instruction-Related

- acquisition of necessary instructional materials;
- past history of moderate to limited success at implementing changes; and
- ambiguity of tasks and expectations associated with CSRD model.

Student-Related

- low self-esteem and motivation; and
- meeting unique needs of students at both ends of the learning continuum.

Community-Related

- parental indifference and lack of involvement in supporting school's initiatives;
- garnering parent understanding and support; and
- lack of community involvement.

Each of the schools met these challenges in a variety of ways. To help teachers feel confident to tackle the task before them, all of the models have built in a professional development component with follow-up and on-site support and spent concentrated period of time orienting teachers and administrators to the nature of their new program and related instructional strategies. In some cases, it was a summer workshop and, in others, it involved a graduate course offered by a nearby university, often on-site. In all cases, there was provision for on-site technical assistance and coaching, although the length and frequency of contacts varied. All of the developers were generous in announcing their availability via telephone, e-mail, and Web sites, and delivered on their promises.

To provide teachers with common planning time, schools rearranged their schedules. For example, Copper and Sumac arranged their special subject periods in such a way that teachers had mutual planning time. Other schools did not have the luxury of sufficient special subject classes (or none at all as in Sugar) to permit teachers to collaborate except before or after school and/or during planned in-service. One teacher's comments captured the spirit of many rural schools in prevailing against tough conditions when she said, "We'll do what we have to do."

Each of the schools faced their share of challenges and barriers. It appears, however, that these were not allowed to become stumbling blocks. Sufficient collaboration occurred between and among partners (i.e., teachers, administrators, model developers) to minimize trouble spots. This is not to say, however, that all problems have been solved. There is still much to work on before these CSRD programs are fully implemented. Many of the barriers will continue to challenge the implementation of the respective models, especially the more ambiguous and long-term models (e.g., Accelerated Schools and Effective Schools Model).

Question 3: ***What role has the model developer played in the implementation of the CSR program?***

Given the rural and isolated nature of these five schools, there was some concern whether developers would or could provide effective and sufficient support to ensure successful implementation and improvement of student performance. The results of the study seem to suggest, in at least the first year and nearly across the board in all five schools, a very affirmative "yes." As noted above, four of the five selected CSR models with local ties which, in turn, likely facilitated the provision of assistance. Each of the developers took a slightly different approach. The majority of teachers shared very positive feelings toward the developers and their support personnel and attributed their success in large part to the developers' involvement with each of the schools.

Below is a brief description of the main components of the developers' involvement with their respective schools.

Copper

- Preschool workshop conducted by three representatives from Education Partners located in San Francisco, CA and associated with Success for All.
- Follow-up visits of Education Partners' team members that involved further training, classroom observations, coaching, and demonstrations.
- Education Partners provided training and support to a full-time internal facilitator.
- Education Partners responded to all phone inquiries with minimal delay.

Crossover

- At the elementary level, the regional educational service center provided technical assistance and on-site training in a number of areas.
- At the elementary level, the Institute for Academic Excellence provided a workshop and assistance in implementing the Accelerated Reader component of the Reading Renaissance model.
- At the secondary level, school improvement team members attended Accelerated Schools training sessions sponsored by the Texas Center for Accelerated Schools in Austin.
- A part-time external facilitator spent a full day, once a week at the school. This person was responsible for coaching the teachers and providing technical assistance to the respective AS committees.

Liberty

- The Phi Delta Kappa Center for Effective Schools, housed at the University of

Oklahoma, provided training and technical assistance related to the Effective School Model.
- The Liberty leadership team attended a training sessions at the PDK Center.
- PDK Center personnel conducted an orientation and monthly in-service meetings at the school related to the Effective School Model.

Sugar

- K-3 teachers participated in a graduate course held at another parish school. The course included a two-week summer session and two all-day follow-up sessions held during the school year.
- As part of the course requirements, teachers conducted action research projects, engaged in study groups at their school, kept reflective journals, and conducted peer coaching.
- An external facilitator visited the school once a week to provide technical assistance, coach teachers, and conduct classroom demonstrations.
- Course instructor and prime developer of the Early Literacy Initiative made occasional visits to the school and responded to e-mail and telephone inquiries.

Sumac

- Core Knowledge provided orientation and training in implementing the model prior to the start of school. The developer reviewed the Core Knowledge Web page and how to download curriculum guides and lesson plans.
- A Core Knowledge staff person made one visit in the spring semester to observe and report progress in implementing elements of the Core Knowledge program.
- Investigation in Number, Data, and Space was introduced to the faculty in a graduate course offered at the school, with follow-up visits and coaching sessions by the instructor.
- Literature-Based Reading was also introduced by a course, but implementation was delayed to the second year of the grant.
- Subsequent courses to be offered at the school were being planned for Investigations in Number, Data, and Space and Literature-Based Reading during year two.

Both Crossover and Sumac each had the benefit from a full- time, on-campus computer technician who provided support to classroom teachers and kept equipment in running order. All five sites had computer labs. With the exception of Sugar, each classroom in these schools had at least one computer dedicated for Internet use and up to two additional computers for students' use. These computers were paid for by CSRD, Title I, or local funds.

Each of the schools received significant input and involvement from the respective model developers and/or their representatives. In feedback from teachers and administrators, there was high praise for the quality of services they received and the importance of this support to the successful implementation of the respective CSRD initiatives.

Question 4: *How has the rural context helped and/or hindered progress?*

It was initially anticipated that the rural context would influence the implementation of the schools' respective CSRD plans, and most likely in a negative way. The rural context, at least during the first year of the CSRD grant, did not play a major role.

On the negative side, it was anticipated that the conservative values and feelings of inadequacy, often common in rural areas, would drag down the schools' efforts to address the academic needs and aspirations of their students. Although Liberty and possibly the secondary level at Crossover were sensing this influence, the other schools were not. This may be explained in part because the schools are in the first year of their respective programs and community and parent involvement has been minimal. However, as these schools move into their second year and need to involve parents more directly to support their efforts, the conservative values of the community might play a more significant role. To some degree, Copper was sensing this and recognized its limited success to date in gaining the support and involvement of parents. It is probably too early to speculate whether rural conservatism, often anchored in sparse resources, will play a constraining role once the CSRD funding has run its course.

On the positive side, it was anticipated that the desire for closer control and informal accountability, often associated with rural school innovative efforts, would play a major role as well. Again this does not seem to be the case. It appears the communities' lack of involvement generally suggested apathy and/or some comfort with what was going on in each of the schools. For example, it seems quite evident that the teachers' enthusiasm and sense of success at Copper, Crossover (particularly at the elementary level), Sugar, and Sumac spilled over to the students who became the ambassadors of good tidings to the parents. These early successes helped in gaining parent acceptance if not outward displays of support.

Also on the positive side, the small student enrollment of these schools seemed to play an important role in facilitating their respective interventions. As is often the case, small schools and ruralness tend to go hand-in-hand and this was no less true with the five schools of this study. Their small size enabled teachers to have frequent face-to-face dialogues at which time they could and did share ideas, concerns, and suggestions. Teachers at the elementary level in these schools spoke of frequent in-the-hallway conversations and consultations before and after school. It was evident from the interviews that the teachers knew what was going on in their peers' classrooms and how the children, even those not directly assigned to them, were progressing socially and academically. At Copper, for example, the nature of the Success for All program required close cooperation between the teachers and the teachers shared how much they valued this. Size, however, cannot ensure that its potential advantages are exploited. In these schools, there seemed to be evidence that the teachers were able to take advantage of the ease to communicate with one another and in doing so, kept many hindrances to implementation under control.

In summary, the rural context in this first year of the grant did not play either a major positive or negative role in the implementation of the CSRD grants. This may change in year two. It appears the schools' isolation was easily handled by the developers' consultants and in some cases, technology played a part in providing teacher support. The CSRD grants provided sufficient funds for the schools to cover the costs of the training and consultation services of the developers. Without these extra funds, no doubt the developer services would have been nonexistent or sharply curtailed.

Analysis of Study Findings

This study was designed to better understand how small, isolated rural schools engage in school-wide, comprehensive change. Each of the schools studied were recipients of CSRD grants designed to provide additional funds with which to implement a school-wide, research-based intervention that would positively impact the learning needs of their students. The five rural school cases of this study permitted a close-up view of how these somewhat typical rural schools engaged in the implementation process in the first year of a three-year grant period. The five schools experienced varying degrees of success in putting in place the various components of their chosen programs. Prior implementation studies suggest several variables that seem to play a role in explaining how implementation efforts are influenced. Apthorp (1999) identified eight categories of variables from her review of implementation studies. These variables are: (1) implementation success, (2) implementation sequence and costs, (3) model characteristics, (4) school preparation/readiness, (5) school leadership/management capacity, (6) organizational capacity, (7) district context, and (8) state and regional context.

Implementation success. According to the five schools' respective CSRD proposals, on-site observations and interviews, and interviews with the model developers, these schools had put in place, by the end of the first school year, most of the components of their particular CSR programs. In fact, Sugar and Copper schools were successful in a very short period of time in implementing all components of Early Literacy Initiative and Success for All respectively. Sumac reduced its first year effort to two models (Core Knowledge and Investigations in Number, Data, and Space); this adjustment reduced the workload of their teachers and helped maintained a commitment to implement the Literature-Based Reading model in year two. Liberty and Crossover's secondary schools moved at a slower pace in implementing the Effective Schools Model and Accelerated Schools respectively. These models, by design, are more process-oriented and less prescriptive about the nature of their desired outcomes and when certain components need to be in place. These last two models will require the full three years of the grant before a significant percentage of these models' components are in place and staff and students can begin to sense their impact.

Another dimension to implementation success is the fidelity of model implementation. That is, the degree to which the chosen program is implemented in accordance with the developer's master design. In all cases, it appears that the schools are following the developers' plans to exacting detail albeit moving at a slower pace than desired at Liberty (Effective School Model) and Crossover's (Accelerated Schools) secondary school.

The final dimension is the degree to which members of teaching staff are engaging in the innovation. Again the level of use at Sugar, Copper, and Crossover's elementary school appears to be nearly 100 percent. At Sumac, there are a few faculty members still resisting Core Knowledge, but a 100 percent level of involvement with the Investigations in Number, Data, and Space model. Part of the delay in implementing the components of Effective Schools Model and Accelerated Schools at Liberty and Crossover secondary schools can be attributed to staff resistance or indifference, waiting to see if the new programs are worth the effort.

Implementation sequence and costs. Again all the sites are following the developers' game book carefully and proceeding in a very sequential manner. Except in one site, the grants provided ample funding to cover the expenses associated with putting in place the respective program components and ensuring ample in-service and technical assistance. It appeared that the developers' were more interested in assuring the successful implementation of their respective programs than a strict accounting of consultant time and costs. Liberty faced some

budget problems and was not able to have a part-time, external facilitator on-site to assist in implementing the Effective Schools Model.

Model characteristics. Some models are more complicated than others in terms of the number of components involved, required changes of behavior by staff, and their level of prescription. The CSRD models represented in this study provide some variability in required changes and prescription. For example, Success for All at Copper and the Early Literacy Initiative at Sugar have strict teaching protocols and terminology that the teachers were expected to follow and use. Some teachers initially were concerned about the models' prescriptiveness and their lack of freedom to use more familiar and comfortable teaching methods. Once they began to sense the progress their students were making in reading, writing, and spelling, they no longer objected to following the required teaching methods. There was a similar response to the Investigations in Number, Data, and Space model at Sumac. Parents and some teachers were concerned about this text-free curriculum, the required protocols, and teaching methods that were unfamiliar. However, witnessing children's progress at levels never experienced before convinced parents and teachers to stay the course.

The Accelerated Reader model implemented at Crossover is also very prescriptive and tightly controlled by accompanying software and computer programs. Once the teachers were able to put the various model components in place (e.g., independent reading books, access to computers) and train the children on required procedures, they were able to step back and watch the children operate at a high level of self-motivation and independence. And once more, the students' motivation and level of success became a motivating factor for the teachers to fully commit to Accelerated Reader's use and implementation.

From the teachers' perspective, the Core Knowledge model at Sumac seemed easier to implement than the Investigation in Number, Data, and Space model. They found the Core Knowledge's teacher curriculum guide very explicit concerning content, the Web page provided daily lesson plans which they could download, and the grant provided ample funds to order supplemental teaching materials. Teachers felt implementing Core Knowledge was more a matter of getting agreement among the teachers as to who would be responsible for what, at what level, and when should it be taught. In previous years, teachers were left to make their own choices regarding curriculum content and Core Knowledge removed these choices; however, teachers recognized that better curriculum coordination and alignment needed to take place and thus did not resist the proposed changes subsumed within Core Knowledge.

School preparation/readiness. All the rural schools included in this study were very aware of their at-risk, low performing students and were looking for school-wide models and/or programs that would hopefully raise their level of performance. Copper, Sugar, and to a lesser degree Sumac engaged in a careful search for a CSR model, reviewed past student performance on state level tests, and encouraged teachers to provide the leadership in selecting their final choice. Their respective CSRD proposals also were able to justify their CSR model(s) by linking their choices to the needs of their students. Although the selection of the Effective School Model at Liberty was essentially the decision of the superintendent and librarian, who wrote the grant, there was some support by principals and teachers who felt that the model was a good match with the needs of their students. This top-down approach had been used fairly successfully in the past in garnering outside funds and staff members seemed to accept it as a way of obtaining needed outside resources. At Crossover, the picture is a bit more complex. At the elementary level, the principal and teachers worked together to analyze test results and support services available from a regional educational service center and mutually agreed on the direction of their CSR changes. At the secondary level, it appears it was

primarily the principal's decision to pursue Accelerated Schools. He argued, and to some degree some of the teaching staff went along with his position, that the Accelerated Schools model would provide the opportunity to address a number of instructional and curricula issues. This model has a strong participatory process as part of its implementation process that ensures teachers, as well as students and parents, the opportunity to identify needs and to plan relevant changes.

School leadership/management capacity. The five sites approached the leadership and management of the change process in very different ways. At Copper, the principal played an active role in writing the CSRD grant proposal, along with the director of grants and superintendent, but once the Success for All infrastructure was in place, the internal facilitator provided the leadership and management of the program. The teachers gave this person high marks and credited her for the early and successful implementation of Success for All. The principal operated more in the background and supported the internal facilitator's role in implementing the grant. At both Crossover and Sugar, the elementary principals were seen as key and effective persons in guiding their respective implementation efforts. At Sumac, the principal and the grant administrator shared the leadership/management functions and met together with the teachers on a regular monthly schedule. Although some teachers were critical of how effective these meetings were, they were generally seen as needed and provided a forum in which to address implementation issues. At Liberty and Crossover's secondary school, leadership was emerging from committees. Liberty had a leadership committee that included the librarian (grant writer), principals, and representative classroom teachers. As the grant year progressed, this committee assumed more responsibility for guiding the Effective School Model implementation. Crossover also used a committee structure that included the high school principal, internal facilitators (classroom teachers), and the external facilitator; the committee was responsible for the overall implementation of Accelerated Schools model. During this first year the external facilitator, who visited the school once a week, attempted to keep the Accelerated School model moving forward, but seem to be having only modest success. The other members of the steering committee were less visible and distracted by other pressing needs (e.g., successful passage of the Texas state-level tests).

Organizational capacity. The CSRD proposal process forced each of these schools to articulate and clarify school goals and related outcomes. Although the governance structures varied across the schools, there was a shared perception that the students' test scores on state mandated tests had to improve or these schools faced greater state level oversight. Local school people took very seriously the threat of state control and allocated additional resources (e.g., Title I and local funds) to meet this challenge. Crossover adjusted their K-12 teaching schedule for the four months preceding the state test so that they could devote a half hour every day to coaching its students on skills related to the state tests. This targeted effort paid off and demonstrated the school's capacity to meet a real threat and have positive results. The other schools in this study showed a similar capacity to face comparable threats and the CSRD grants are seen as part of a process to improve students' academic performance.

District context. The district role in the respective schools of this study varied considerably, from a minor to a very active role. Sugar is one of several schools in its school district (or parish), and except for a district elementary school supervisor, there has been little involvement at the district level. Ironically, however, because of the success Sugar Elementary School is having, some interest has been expressed in exporting this program to other elementary schools in the parish. At Liberty and Crossover, both single, K-12 school districts, the superintendents were more active in the beginning of the grant process and implementation but have generally deferred to leadership teams and/or building principals. At Copper, which is

part of a multi-school district, the district's grant director and the superintendent of schools were active in the grant proposal process but left the implementation of the grant to the school staff. On the active end of the continuum would be Sumac with the district's grant administrator and principal sharing leadership/ management responsibility for the CSRD grant and the superintendent who played an influential role in prompting the elementary school staff to consider CSRD funding and the Core Knowledge program.

It also should be noted that the typical hierarchy of school governance in rural, isolated areas is quite often flat. That is, there is a superintendent of schools who oversees one, K-12 school organization and has a skeletal central office staff. This is the case in Crossover, Liberty, and Sumac. Copper and Sugar are located in districts that cover larger geographical areas and the district staffs are larger and more specialized. It appears that regardless of the respective governance system of the schools in this study, generally the district context played a minor role in the implementation of the CSRD programs.

State and regional context. Although there is little evidence of a regional influence of any note upon the schools of this study (except possibly at Crossover and the use of a regional education service center), the state education agencies and their accountability systems are major players in the implementation of CSRD programs. First and possibly most important, each of the states, by virtue of their accountability systems and policies, has forced these small, rural, and isolated schools to give significant attention to their students' academic performance. This is the "stick" approach to public policy. On the "carrot" side, the states are responsible for awarding and monitoring CSRD and other grants designed to supplement local and Title I funds targeted at low performing and at-risk students. Each of the schools is required to submit annual reports and detail plans for years two and three. Meanwhile, the SEAs will continue to monitor test performance which may necessitate other actions by the state in the event schools do not make progress in elevating test scores.

Conclusions

This study of five small and isolated rural schools in the Southwestern U.S. was initiated to determine the degree to which they were able to participate in the CSRD Program and be successful in implementing a comprehensive school reform effort at improving the quality of education in these somewhat faraway places. Each of the schools chosen for this study was successful in receiving CSRD grants for three years at approximately $50,000 per year to underwrite the costs involved in implementing research-based programs. Two visits were conducted in the fall and spring of year one of the three-year grant period. The site visits permitted extensive interviews of school personnel, observation of implementation activities, and acquisition of related school documents and reports. Model developers, who supported the implementation of the chosen research-based programs at each of these rural schools, were interviewed to gain their perspective on the effectiveness of the schools in implementing their CSRD programs. The following conclusions are supported by the analyses reported above.

- The funds awarded to these schools generally were sufficient for each school to purchase contracted services and materials needed for implementing their selected CSRD programs.

- The developers and their associates were able to provide quality training and on-site support to these schools despite their isolation and small size.

- Although teacher involvement in the selection of their CSRD model(s) varied to some degree across the schools, teachers recognized the fit between the model(s) chosen and the needs of the school. By the end of year one, most of the teachers' resistance had waned.

- The CSRD models that were more prescriptive in nature (e.g., Success for All, Early Literacy Initiative, Accelerated Reader, Investigations in Number, Data, and Space) were implemented very quickly and teachers observed significant pupil gains in related reading, writing, spelling, and computing skills.

- Conversely, the CSRD models that were less prescriptive (e.g., Effective School Model and Accelerated Schools) were slower in being implemented and subject to some teacher skepticism and indifference.

- Two out of the five schools used portions of their CSRD grant funds to upgrade and install computer technology with classroom Internet connections. (The other schools in this study had similar computer technology already in place.)

- The SEAs and their accountability systems played a major role in motivating the schools to apply for grants and to implement selected CSRD programs.

- Parents and members of the community thus far have been minimally involved in the implementation of the CSRD programs in their rural school.

- The small size of the schools of this study seemed to facilitate internal communications and problem solving.

- Experienced rural teachers, who may sense the ineffectiveness of their teaching methods and materials in past, can become highly motivated to change when they are

properly supported, coached, and can observe significant gains in their students' performance in a relatively short period of time.

In conclusion, small, isolated rural schools should not be seen as limited in their capacity to implement comprehensive changes in teaching methods and innovative curricula programs. Distances from metropolitan areas should not be seen as a barrier in providing training and consultant services needed for the support and implementation of new instructional programs. The feelings of mutual respect between research-based developers and rural teachers can go a long way in enabling the implementation of needed changes. Finally, $50,000 is a significant amount of money to a small, rural school and this amount of money in one year can make possible a school-wide change process that holds promise in upgrading the academic performance of *all* their students.

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Appendix A
Copper Elementary School
Copper, NM

This summary provides an overview of the CSRD program in Copper, NM. The description includes information and data about the community, nature of the schools, and its involvement with the CSRD program.

Copper Community

Copper is located in the southwestern region of New Mexico, high up in this mountainous region known for its copper mines and cattle ranching. The community of Copper is situated in a broad river valley including wilderness and a desert plain. There are a few residential buildings scattered around the Copper Elementary School. A national forest district office, volunteer fire department, senior center, and two post offices are in the community. Retiree, religious, ranching, farming, mining, artist and "intentional" communities form a total population of 600 people in the Copper River Valley. Because of its isolation and sparseness, many children must travel up to 25 miles to the school, which is at the center of social enclaves that stretch along a valley running 50 miles.

The community is nearly split between Hispanic and Anglo backgrounds. The median per capita income is $7,300 with an average income of $17,400. The unemployment rate varies from 6-12 percent depending on the price of copper. There are four major copper mines in the area that are at various stages of production or closing. Copper mining employs 50 percent of the area's labor force. In January of 1999, 500 persons were laid-off by the mines resulting in families moving away or relying on public assistance for their sustenance. More than half the population receives some type of public assistance.

Copper Elementary School

Copper Elementary School is located on a tertiary road, a short distance from a state road that bisects the mountain range and meanders around rocky ledges and through small hamlets. The school building sits back a short distance from the road with a gravel parking lot out front bordered by a chain-linked fence and a setback front entrance framed by gray windowless walls; somewhat suggestive of the adobe architecture seen throughout the area. The school was built in 1973 with a single floor plan including eleven classrooms, a gym and kitchen on the perimeter, and library/media/computer center and office space for principal, secretary, and nurse at the core. Two new classrooms were added and in late fall, 1999. For a building nearly 30 years old, it is clean, brightly lighted, and well maintained. The playground is located to the rear of the building on a dirt surface. Arid climate conditions preclude much greenery or landscaping.

Copper Elementary has Kindergarten through grades five and a special education class with a total enrollment of 71 students. The ethnic breakdown for the students is 52 percent Hispanic and 48 percent white; 19 percent is limited English proficient; and a female heads approximately 53 percent of the families. Seventy-one percent of the students are eligible for free and reduced lunch. Copper's enrollment is declining (129 students in 1997-98), resulting in a favorable average class size of 12 students, and a combination grade 1-2 in which only four-second grade students are enrolled. Average daily attendance is 93.2 percent.

The professional staff at Copper numbers 12 plus five-support staff. Average teaching

experience is eight years and average salary is $36,000. The school has experienced some turnover. In the past two years, two principals and three staff members have left.

Student test scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) from 1995-1997 resulted in the school's placement in Title I program improvement status. Copper Elementary School's performance to date has been marginal at best and below par in several academic areas. California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) student scores in reading, math, language and total for 1997-98 were below the national average. The 1998 New Mexico Writing Assessment for fourth grade indicated that all students have strong deficiencies in sentence formation, mechanics, word usage and development. The Copper Mountain Consolidated School District decided that the Copper Elementary School's improvement plan to increase language arts and math skills throughout all grade levels had not been met. Past efforts at improvement have borne little results. With the hiring of a new principal and the availability of CSRD funds, Copper seems poised to make a commitment to elevate their students' performance, especially in reading and language arts.

Research Questions

Four broad research questions guided the gathering of data and information from the respective rural schools. A summary is provided below of the information gleamed during the two site visits to Copper Elementary School.

Question 1: *What school-wide reform model was chosen by the school and why?*

Copper Elementary School improvement efforts date back to 1995 when staff and parents worked on school-wide plans in conjunction with Goals 2000 planning. The school board adopted new goals and student outcomes in February 1996. In August of 1998, the Copper Elementary School board reviewed and refined their short-term goals. A subsequent needs assessment and consensus building process resulted in specific measurable objectives in student achievement, attendance, school safety, discipline, and parent/community relations. A newly appointed School Improvement Team aligned the revised school goals and plans with district plans and statewide accountability indicators. A new mission statement was developed as a first step in building a common focus and shared purpose.

The School Improvement Team or selected team members played a central role in exploring CSRD program alternatives, attending state informational meetings, narrowing the choice to two programs, arranging visits to schools using Success for All, guiding staff's final choice, and preparing the CSRD grant proposal. The federal grants coordinator for the Copper Mountain School District provided input on alternative choices, gave a strong recommendation for Success for All, and helped write the CSRD grant. Teachers had an opportunity to voice their opinions, visit nearby schools using Success for All, and learn from other teachers' experiences with the program. Eventually the teaching staff bought into the idea of adopting Success for All with some teachers being more convinced that others. The latter group took more of a "wait and see" attitude.

Success for All proved to be the final choice for their CSRD intervention for several reasons. First, reading was seen as a critical area for raising student performance. Second, Success for All is a very prescriptive program that teachers and administrators felt was necessary. All teachers must agree to follow a strict protocol of procedures, techniques, and language, and set aside 90 minutes of uninterrupted time for reading instruction coordinated across all grade levels. Third, there was strong research supporting the effectiveness of the

Success for All program including Hispanic background children. Fourth, there was a sense that Success for All could benefit both kids and teachers. Finally, Success for All opened the potential for greater parent involvement in supporting their children's progress in school. As one teacher observed, "Success for All is so specific, very structured, provides training, and has a relentless approach to prevent failure."

Question 2: *What challenges and barriers has the school faced in implementing its chosen model?*

The Success for All model requires significant changes in how teachers teach reading and work together to implement the various components. These changes represented the greatest challenges to the staff once they bought into the Success for All model. Fortunately they had some history of working together and a commitment to push forward with the full program. The teachers felt it was a lot to absorb in a short period of time, and some had doubts as to their ability to pull it off. Many teachers voiced concerns about Success for All, including the feeling that the program's prescriptiveness precluded their own creativity, that it was hard to cover the curriculum, and that it was too fast paced. Although the teachers initially felt overwhelmed, they seemed to adapt to the program's demands, felt there was some immediate payoff for their efforts, and observed, "The kids had no problem adjusting to the program."

Another challenge facing the staff was sufficient personnel to meet the needs of their students. The reading assessments identified 14 reading levels and each required its own teacher. This problem was addressed by having teachers manage more than one reading level at a time and support staff members (i.e., an internal facilitator, media center staff member) provide direct instruction or tutoring. The original plan was to have a cadre of trained tutors to work with children who were slipping behind in their reading progress. This failed to materialize even though the grant provided funds for tutors and some individuals were trained for the task. Parents also resisted or were unable to find time to listen to their child's reading at home, an important component of the program.

A consequence of the greater demand on the teachers' time in implementing the Success for All components was the diminished time available for other subject areas' preparation and teaching. Several teachers spoke of social studies and science having to take a back seat to Success for All.

Toward the end of the school year, the capacity of Success for All to meet the diverse reading developmental needs of the students at either end of the learning continuum became another challenge. For example, a second grade student had been observed in an upper level reading group of fourth and fifth graders during the first visit and working alone at a computer during the second visit. The school was not able to accommodate this student's advanced learning needs within the Success for All framework. Teachers expressed concerned about having advanced level materials (beyond the fifth grade level) to meet the needs of readers as they make even greater gains. On the other end of the continuum, some very low performing students received considerable attention and seemed to be making only marginal progress. This finding raises the question as to the degree to which the Success for All framework and the skills of the teachers are sufficient to address the needs of more dysfunctional readers.

Anticipating that concentrated periods of time would be needed for planning and preparation in implementing Success for All, the staff explored different options. The plan they suggested necessitated scheduling all their special periods (e.g., physical education, art, music, and life skills) on Fridays. They were able to secure approval from the special teachers, other

schools in the district, and the superintendent's office to implement this plan. On-site visits and interviews with the teachers generally supported the use of this time to address a variety of related teaching tasks. However, a couple of teachers reported that they needed some breaks during other times of the week and that special events had precluded the availability of the time as planned for Fridays. It was one teacher's perception that this plan was not working.

SEDL surveyed all CSRD schools in its region. Copper's responses provide some further insights of the challenges and barriers faced by the elementary school staff in the early stages of their CSRD plans. Seven persons responded to the survey. The following comments reinforce or contrast observations surfaced by site visits and interviews. The survey results revealed the following:

- The teachers, principal, and district administrators were the chief stakeholders in planning and implementing the CSRD program.
- Students, parents, and representatives for the Success for All model made a positive contribution to the implementation of CSRD plans, although to a lesser extent.
- Encouragement to participate was given to all of the above stakeholders, except for the school board and community and business leaders.
- Some differences of opinion existed concerning the school's vision for the CSRD program. In contrast, on-site interviews revealed unanimity regarding Success for All's contribution to increasing the academic performance of their students.
- A similar schism existed concerning the positive role of district and school policies to support CSRD plans.
- Communications were seen from good to excellent between teachers and principal, principal and district staff, and teachers and district staff.
- Materials and equipment were not a problem in the implementation of the Success for All model.
- The perceived primary leader was divided between "teacher" and "other." Since Copper relied very heavily on an internal facilitator, no doubt, this person was seen as the person in charge of the program. The support for the perceived primary leader is very positive and on-site interviews supported the positive contribution of the internal facilitator.
- The Success for All consultants conducted the majority of professional development activities, all of it occurred at the school, and the activities were viewed very positively.
- External program support was rated positively, although it was not provided as arranged on a prescheduled basis.
- The CSRD program and student progress were strongly linked.
- The context for change ratings indicated that they were ready to undertake the proposed changes, the changes addressed school needs, the changes were occurring in a

coherent and comprehensive way, and the plan was being revised to accommodate new challenges. On-site observations and interviews support this positive outlook.

- Prior efforts at change at Copper were seen as good.

- The majority of the teachers were seen in support of the CSRD program, felt it has value, and would like to see it continue.

Although the first year of implementation of Copper's CSRD plan has been challenging, a positive attitude exists toward the potential payoff of the Success for All model. This sense of potential payoff seems to contribute to the motivation to find ways around some challenging implementation problems.

Question 3: ***What role has the model developer played in its (selected CSRD model) implementation?***

Education Partners out of San Francisco, CA is the organization that has been contracted by Copper Elementary School to provide training and consultant services in the implementation of the Success for All program. The first year of the CSRD grant covered travel and training expenses for three consultants and four three-day visits to Copper. Additional grant monies were identified for salaries of teachers to attend three days of training in August 1999, hiring of tutors, supplies and materials to support the Success for All model, and travel costs of three Copper staff members to attend a national conference on Success for All in San Francisco. A Copper School staff member was hired as the internal facilitator and is being paid out of local sources and Title I funds. The Education Partners team members have varying degrees of expertise to support the Copper teachers in Success for All methods, tutoring strategies and techniques, and building family support.

The teachers spoke highly of the Education Partners team members. They viewed them as very knowledgeable, effective communicators, very supportive, and most importantly, modeled appropriate and helpful teaching methods in their classrooms. They also received a lot of credit for training the internal facilitator and serving as her backup for staff concerns and questions. The internal facilitator spoke highly of their availability, their help, and their quick turnaround regarding her questions. She has made extensive use of telephone calls particularly during the first semester. She indicated that teachers' questions or concerns seemed to fade during the second semester.

Based on the feedback from the Education Partners' consultants, teachers felt that they are progressing well in their implementation and, in spite of their limited size and staff, able to meet the learning needs of their students. Some concerns were raised about providing ample tutors for students experiencing some difficulties and in gaining parent cooperation in serving as listeners to their children's reading on a daily basis. These two areas have been tagged for greater attention during the second year of implementing the Success for All model.

Test results are not yet available for their first year of the program. The teachers have been advised that in the first year there are typically little or no apparent gains. This should change after years two and three. The principal raised some concerns about this because of the school's weak test performance in the past and the increasing reliance of state level tests for measuring and classifying local schools.

It is clear that Copper was up and running with Success for All in a very short period of

time in spite of staff members' feelings of being overwhelmed by the demands of this new model. On-site observations revealed a high fidelity to the Success for All model and each teacher remaining fully committed to its implementation. Much of the credit to the successful and rapid implementation of Success for All goes to the hard work of the teachers supported by the internal facilitator and Education Partners consultants.

Question 4: *How has the rural context helped and/or hindered progress?*

The geographical location and isolation of Copper clearly supports it being labeled as rural. This, in turn, proves to be problematic and in some ways beneficial to its CSRD initiative. On the problematic side, overnight mail takes 72 hours and Internet service is inconsistent and more often than not, the system is down. Fortunately phone service is reliable and fills the gap in many ways. Distance from the school for many families that attend Copper Elementary School makes consistent contact with parents very difficult. Economic conditions and the number of single parent families further exacerbate maintaining close contact with teachers at the school. Many families are uncertain about their employment and are forced to move or search for alternative sources of income, thus reducing school matters to a much lower priority. The nearest commercial center and larger community are a thirty plus minute's drive and Copper does not have a so-called center to which residents of the valley might feel a closer identity. Thus, having consistent parent and community involvement with the school is a formidable task.

The Success for All program has a Family Support Team component that involves persons like the principal, social worker, counselor, teachers, and parent volunteers. They are expected to work closely with students, parents, and the community, and conduct activities that help parents play a more active role in their child's education. For example, parents are expected to reinforce their child's reading progress by actively listening to their child's reading on a daily basis. To date, the school staff feels it has only had a modicum of success.

In spite of isolation and some families residing long distances from the school, the school has its loyal faithful. For example, many parents and retirees have volunteered to receive training as tutors, substitute teachers attended Success for All training for which they were not paid, and parents have volunteered as "listeners." As a teacher stated it, "Once the community gets behind something, they are strong willed and determined to succeed 'all the way'."

There is a dark cloud lurking behind the tall mountains surrounding Copper and that is the threat of being closed because of low enrollment and poor academic performance. This is a real fear although no one seems to talk about it in a public way. There is hope that the enrollment decline will bottom off around 65 students and that the CSRD efforts will result in higher test performance. In the meantime, many persons inside and outside the school are committed to producing better results and supporting the school during this difficult period. This close identification with their school is a rural phenomenon and provides the motivation to overcome conditions that might tarnish its image or in this case, may result in shutting it down.

Summary of Copper's Year One Progress

The U.S. Department of Education has identified nine criteria for comprehensive school reform. Presumably, a successful comprehensive school reform program should integrate, in a coherent manner, all nine of the identified criteria. An assessment of the degree to which Copper has addressed each of these is provided below.

(1) *Effective, research-based methods and strategies:* Success for All has been widely researched and its underlying theory and methods subject to multiple evaluations in a variety of educational settings. The results of these studies and comparisons with other programs have significantly favored Success for All programs. On average, Success for All students performed better than their cohorts at the end of fifth grade; the model has been replicated in more than 750 schools in forty states.

(2) *Comprehensive design with aligned components:* Much thought has gone into the design of the Success for All model to address the key components of a school's operation to ensure a comprehensive approach to reading instruction. It has very clear procedures regarding instructional methods, periodic student assessment, classroom management, professional development, parental involvement, and school administration. To present, Copper's staff has followed these procedures diligently. There is still more work to be done to align their instructional emphases with the emerging statewide standards of New Mexico, having a sufficient number of trained tutors, and gaining wider parental support.

(3) *Professional development:* Copper School has committed time and money to supporting teacher professional development and training. Workshops and on-site visits by Success for All consultants have been viewed of high quality and extremely helpful in supporting teachers need for information and effective methods. The internal facilitator has proven valuable in keeping the Success for All model on track, responding to teachers' instructional concerns, and demonstrating effective teaching methods in the respective classrooms. It is clear that the professional development efforts at the school have contributed greatly to their successful implementation of the various components of the Success for All model.

(4) *Measurable goals and benchmarks:* Copper School is very carefully monitoring their students' progress and has set an overall benchmark to determine their ultimate success. Every eight weeks the internal facilitator conducts a reading assessment of each child, grades 1 - 5 to determine her/his progress and determine who is in need of one-on-one tutoring and/or reassignment to a different reading level. There is a strong commitment to allow no child to fall behind and this requires careful monitoring and appropriate interventions. As to their overall measure of success, the school has set the standard that "by third grade all children will be reading on grade level or higher."

(5) *Support within the school:* There is near unanimity of support for the Success for All model by the teachers, principal, support staff, and school district administration. The significant student progress has won over the few skeptics who were resistant to the prescriptive nature of the model. Their support, however, will be contingent on the continued success of their students, especially those who are experiencing some difficulty in developing their reading skills.

(6) *Parental and community involvement:* The Success for All model prescribes an important role for parents to play in reinforcing the school's reading program and parents are shown how to perform this role. Some parents have welcomed these ideas and are cooperating with the school in the expected manner. There are a sizable number of parents who are not supporting the program as expected. This component of the model is to receive greater attention during the second year of the program.

(7) *External technical support and assistance:* Success for All teachers and administration speak very highly of the external support and assistance they have received from

the Education Partners' consultants. They have been responsive to teachers' needs, given a quick turnaround to queries, and modeled appropriate teaching methods in teachers' classrooms, and have conveyed a supportive and mutually respective attitude toward the teachers. Their competence and commitment to Copper's success have been greatly appreciated by the teachers.

(8) *Evaluation strategies:* Copper's evaluation of the successful implementation of their CSRD grant seems to turn on two factors. First, every eight weeks the students are assessed regarding their reading progress and adjustments are made when student progress does not match expectations. This is to ensure that no child falls behind. Second, the Success for All model is so prescriptive and well articulated that any discrepancies between expected and actual performance can be quickly observed. This allows for quick adjustments and use of problem solving strategies. Also, annually each student's progress is to be evaluated by CTBS/Terra Nova state required tests. Additional documentation is to be gathered on attendance, discipline, and school environment. To date these results have not been available for review.

(9) Coordination *of resources:* Other resources used by Copper Elementary School to support the CSRD funds have been Title I funds and local general funds. Title I funds helped to underwrite the funding of the internal facilitator position and local funds have been used to supplement staff development activities.

Copper's CSRD first year program efforts have been very successful. The Success for All model was up and running in a very short period of time, enjoys wide support, the internal facilitator allayed many apprehensions in the early going and has continued to lead the program's implementation in a competent manner, the model consultants have been effective in aiding the teachers' growth and competence in implementing the program, and early impressions suggest the students are making progress in their reading abilities and interest. There are still challenges facing the teachers but momentum is in the positive direction and there are high expectations for future success.

Appendix B
Crossover Elementary and Secondary Schools
Crossover, TX

This summary provides an overview of Crossover, Texas. The description includes information and data about the community, nature of the schools, and its involvement with the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program.

Crossover Community

Crossover is approximately 60 miles north of the city of Houston, Texas. It is located just off a major north/south interstate road responsible for heavy truck traffic moving goods between Houston and parts of the Midwest and eventually all the way to Chicago, Illinois. The center of Crossover has approximately 350 people and there are an additional 3,000 people within a five-mile radius. The countryside is very forested, mostly pines, and lumbering is a major source of economic support. Crossover itself has only one restaurant and one industry, a company that refurbishes boxcars. The lack of a robust local economy has resulted in a community of modest income and a large percentage of low-income families. The household median income is $24,645 and more than a third of the families earn less than $15,000. In addition, the educational attainment reflects similar trends. That is, nearly 40 percent of persons older than 25 years old have less than a high school education. At the other end of the spectrum, just less than 10 percent has four years or more of a college education. Housing values in Crossover are modest with a median worth of $40,000. This might help explain a high turnover of households with 23 percent new comers and 63 percent having moved in the last five years. It appears those wage earners must commute some distance for employment. For example, the president of the school board works at an oil refinery in the Houston area. In general, Crossover is a community made up mostly of low to modest income families and nearby employment opportunities are very limited.

Crossover Elementary and Secondary Schools

Crossover's campus is located a short distance down a tree-lined side street from the main road that cuts the town into two parts. Rather sizable oaks offer considerable coverage and shade to the front entrance to the oldest section of the middle school facility. This old section dates back to 1934 when the auditorium was built as part of President Roosevelt's WPA program. The auditorium is currently being restored to its original condition after many years of neglect. Considerable care is being taken to restore this space to its earlier appearance. To either side of the auditorium are traditional rectangular classrooms, wooden floors, and high ceilings that house middle level grades. Much of the building is in need of repair (e.g., broken or cracked window panes) and paint. Further to the left and connected to this older section is a newer addition that houses the primary grades and principal's office. Behind the main building is another building housing the cafeteria that serves all grades and just a short distance along a covered walkway is the original gymnasium use by the elementary and middle grades. And further beyond the old gym is the newest building on campus, built in 1996, which houses the high school classrooms and gym. This facility is a sharp contrast to the middle grades; it is well lighted and has brightly colored hallways and classrooms. The construction of this building was made possible by a lease-buy arrangement since the voters would not approve a bond issue for this much needed facility. The school board arranged a mortgage with a Houston bank with a favorable interest rate to be paid from the general budget. This same plan was used to build the relatively new primary grade wing as well. There are other plans to replace the library building located in front of the old main building and combine it with a new art facility. Slowly needed

facility improvements are being addressed by rather creative funding arrangements.

In addition to upgrading the exterior of the old buildings, part of the grant money from the state and private sources is being used to rewire the entire facility with fiber optic cable and provide two computer labs with Internet connections. Also, two small houses across from the school's main building have been renovated to accommodate the superintendent of schools and accountant in one and a parent center in the other.

The overall enrollment at Crossover is 473 students with 135 students in grades K-5 and 338 students in grades 6-12. Slightly more than 10 percent of the students receive special education services. The student body is 33 percent African American, 16 percent Hispanic, 1 percent Native American, and 50 percent Caucasian. Seventy percent of the students are eligible for free and reduced lunch. The district experiences an annual turnover of 20 percent of its student population. Average class size is 25 students and pupil/teacher ratio is 12:1. Fifty-three percent of the school's operating budget is supported by state aid.

The number of professional staff members is 29, unlicensed support staff members number 14, and an additional 8-10 volunteers recruited and coordinated by the new Parent Center. The average teachers' salary is nearly $32,000 and average teacher experience is 12 years. The average turnover rate of teachers per year has been five. Historically, Crossover has experienced a constant turnover of school administrators, some staying only a short period of time. The present administrators have been in place for two years (including the current school year) and intend to stay on board for the long haul.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has ranked crossover as a "low performing school" for the past three years, based on student test scores on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). As a result, a state monitor has been assigned to provide general oversight of the Crossover's efforts at improvement and help teachers and administrators focus these efforts. If test scores do not improve over the next two years, the school could be taken over by TEA.

Crossover schools face some significant challenges as it initiates its CSRD plans. These include TEA's classification as a "low performing school," very old facilities, shrinking enrollment, weak local economy, high mobility of families, and limited educational backgrounds of parents. These conditions set a context for Crossover's CSRD grant proposal and establish worthy targets for the future.

Research Questions

Four broad research questions guided the gathering of information during two visits to Crossover Elementary, Middle, and High schools. A summary of this information is provided below.

Question 1: *What school-wide reform model was chosen by the school and why?*

Texas allowed schools to apply for CSRD funds under the Improving Teaching and Learning program. Crossover submitted two grants, each for $93,000 or for a total of $186,000, to be targeted at school-wide improvements. Two campuses were identified for these funds: K-5 (elementary grades) and 6-12 (middle and secondary grades). The proposal included requests for funds for personnel, computers, instructional materials, consultants, and teacher in-service. The elementary grades developed a home-grown comprehensive reform model called

Comprehensive Accelerated Learning and the middle and secondary grades adopted the Accelerated Schools model as their intervention strategy. The two levels worked independently in the formulation of their respective plans.

At the elementary level, the elementary school principal worked very closely with classroom teachers in formulating the components of Comprehensive Accelerated Learning. An earlier accreditation visit and report by the TEA and TAAS test scores provided the basis for identifying student learning needs. According to the grant proposal, there was a "need for a consistent reading, writing, and discipline program and an increased emphasis on a hands-on math program." The proposal also discussed the need to expand the use of volunteers, to create a parent center, and to increase the use of computer technology.

To address these concerns, several components were identified. The first of these was Reading Renaissance, which provided a framework for integrating reading and writing instruction with the use of computers and volunteers. The initial effort was to be targeted toward the acquisition of the Accelerated Reader books and software, a major component of the Reading Renaissance program. To address the issue of discipline and to ensure greater engagement of sometimes reluctant learners, the Phi Delta Kappa program, Teacher Effectiveness and Student Achievement (TESA), was identified. The acquisition of computers and the establishment of a parent center to assist in the recruitment of volunteers also were seen as essential efforts. Teacher professional development funds were requested to support these initiatives.

At the middle and secondary grades, a different strategy was employed to improve the academic achievement of all students. The Accelerated Schools model developed by Henry Levin is seen as providing a framework for enabling "a comprehensive, integrated, well-planned program to evolve." Accelerated Schools is seen as addressing curriculum alignment and promoting teamwork and cooperation among staff members. In addition, efforts were proposed to incorporate elements of Reading Renaissance in order to provide some consistency in K-12 reading instruction, make greater use of computers and instructional assistants, and train teachers in Gifted and Talented and English as a Second Language teaching strategies.

Although the school-wide improvement plans differed between the two levels at Crossover, they do share some common goals and improvement of student performance, as measured by TAAS.

Question 2: *What challenges and barriers has the school faced in implementing its chosen model?*

Crossover has been a school district that historically has faced enormous budget constraints and turnover of school administrators. Teachers shared stories from the past of receiving a meager supply of paper, pencils, paperclips, rubber bands, etc. and having to get by for the rest of the school year. For some teachers, this meant buying supplies for their classrooms out of their own pockets. These conditions were not helped by the frequent turnover of superintendents and building principals. The CSRD and other grants have created a healthier budget situation where teachers have greater access to instructional materials than ever before. Also, each of the school administrators has indicated the intent to remain in the district long-term.

Challenges and barriers remain to be addressed. During the first visit to Crossover, teachers voiced a high level of tension and were overwhelmed by having to increase student

academic performance in order to meet state test standards. Even the superintendent of schools was feeling frustrated by the state's requirement to include learning disabled students' test scores in Crossover's performance on the TAAS. This resulted, in his opinion, in Crossover being identified as a low-performing school and instigating state oversight, visitations, monitoring, and the threat of eventual takeover if the situation does not improve. The stress this placed on all members of the school staff was very evident. As one teacher expressed it, "We are under tremendous pressure and we're not use to it."

This new condition led to a flurry of grant applications to garner substantial external funds including the CSRD grant. This also led to teachers feeling overwhelmed and being unsure that the grants were addressing priority needs. For example, elementary teachers were confronting several changes at once. Not only were they looking at new curricula materials in reading and math, but they also had to reexamine their teaching methods using the Teacher Effectiveness and Student Achievement techniques and these demands had to be squeezed into the only remaining open times in their teaching schedules, normally reserved for parent/teacher conferences and instructional preparation. At the secondary level, the nature of the Accelerated Schools model caused some teachers to feel too much time was being devoted to dialogue while more basic classroom needs for teaching supplies and equipment were being overlooked. Further, the CSR models necessitated time for in-service training and classroom visits by consultants, resulting in a time crunch to fit all of these things into very limited time.

Teachers also were puzzled at its limited success with students, in spite of their investments of significant attention, often on an individual basis. They did not understand the unique learning styles of many of their students. This coupled with increased student mobility and the loss of higher performing students added to their feelings of frustration. Nevertheless, teachers were determined to succeed and pursue whatever teaching method and/or instructional materials would prove successful. As the superintendent put it, "We can no longer rely on 'excuses' for lack of student success. We must find a way to succeed." To make this a reality, he felt the grants and consultants should provide the stimulus to find different ways of succeeding with their students.

SEDL surveyed all CSRD schools in its region including Crossover. Crossover's responses, limited to elementary school staff only, provide some further insights related to the challenges and barriers faced by the staff in the implementation of their CSRD plans. Eleven persons responded to the survey. The following comments reinforce and contrast observations surfaced by the site visits and interviews. The survey results revealed the following:

- Nearly all respondents felt involved in planning the CSRD proposal and made positive contributions. On-site interviews reinforced these positive feelings of the teachers in contributing to their CSRD plans and implementation. The elementary principal was given praise for her encouragement of input from the teachers.

- Except for one respondent, all agreed that the school's vision has been articulated, is supported, guides the implementation of the CSR program, and is linked to outcomes. A similar unanimity surfaced concerning the positive effect of school policies to facilitate CSRD plans.

- Communications between all parties were seen as good to excellent.

- Acquisition of materials and equipment was appropriate and available in a timely fashion.

This contrasted, of course, to the lament of some middle and secondary level teachers, as surfaced in the interviews, of not acquiring more basic and needed materials and equipment.

- Funds were not seen as being a problem.
- The principal was seen as the primary leader in charge of implementing CSRD plans.
- Respondents expressed positive support for the principal's leadership behaviors.
- The principal, state personnel, and consultants were seen as conducting professional development activities.
- Few negatives were expressed concerning professional development activities. Some slight exceptions to this were: having sufficient time to develop desired expertise and the absence of monitoring teacher performance.
- External support was seen as ongoing and timely. There were some dissenting voices as to whether they received sufficient support.
- All respondents agreed that Crossover's CSRD program linked directly to desired student outcomes, promoted success in desired content areas, encouraged regular review of student performance data, promoted attendance, and promoted student learning. Some felt that it had not promoted a decrease in discipline problems.
- The respondents viewed the context for change very positively.
- One to two other programs, not related to CSRD, were being implemented at the same time. Interviews suggested that these other efforts have added to the feeling of attempting too much at one time.
- Prior efforts at implementing change at Crossover were viewed from poor to good.
- Teachers supported the CSRD program, felt it was of value, and would like it to continue.

It seems evident that the barriers and challenges, especially at the elementary level, are balanced by a positive attitude to the proposed CSRD program. This bodes well when it comes to facing and overcoming these challenges. This was not true to the same degree at the middle and secondary levels.

Question 3: *What role has the model developer played in its (selected CSRD model) implementation?*

Three developers were identified and used to support Crossover's CSRD plans. At the elementary level, two organizations provided support. The regional educational service center assisted the staff with in-service needs and consultant visits in several areas: Gifted and Talented and English as a Second Language techniques, meeting the needs of diverse student populations, teaching at-risk students, classroom management, aligning district curriculum with TAAS objectives, evaluating writing programs, hands-on problem solving in math, and conducting practical parent training. New math textbooks were acquired and the service center

provided a day a month hands-on training. Teachers expressed positive feelings toward this regional educational service center. They felt the staff were quite competent, responsive, and can be easily contacted. As one teacher expressed it, "The regional contact person puts you right through to the right person."

In addition to the service center's support, the Institute for Academic Excellence assisted the elementary staff in implementing the Accelerated Reader component of the Reading Renaissance model. They conducted a workshop in June 1999 and the school then ordered and installed the necessary software and computers to permit individually, self-motivated reading and testing to take place. Teachers reported how well their pupils had taken to the Accelerated Reader component and student progress was beyond their expectations. During the installation of the fiber optic cables, the computers were unavailable and there were considerable complaints by students wishing access to the computers. Observations of the students in the computer lab supported the enthusiasm and self-direction reported by the teachers. The librarian reported the acquisition of 3,000 books to support the Accelerated Reader component and how impressed she has been with students' interest in reading and eagerness to acquire books. The teachers seem very committed to the Accelerated Reader component. In addition, the regional educational service unit is providing on-site training and classroom consultations in using yet another reading approach, Read Well, which is being funded under another grant.

At the middle and secondary school levels, the Texas Center for Accelerated Schools connected with The University of Texas at Austin is the main provider of training and technical assistance. Part of its support has included site visits in September 1999 and February 2000. These are designed to assess progress in following the Accelerated Schools stages of development and to offer advice to keep the process moving. In addition to these oversight visits, the CSRD grant supports a part-time (one day a week) Accelerated Schools coach or external facilitator. His task has been to support the various committees formed to address different components of the school's program, offer suggestions, provide one-on-one classroom teacher support, and work with the internal facilitators. During the second visit, the Accelerated Schools coach and a vision committee composed of parents, teachers, and students were observed developing a vision statement for Crossover's secondary school. It was apparent that this task was somewhat overwhelming. The student members had prepared a prevision statement that provided some input into the process. By the end of the day, the committee had developed a statement that was satisfactory to the group. A subsequent interview with the Accelerated Schools coach revealed some frustration with the lack of progress made in implementing this model. He attributed much of this to the ambiguity of the tasks and modest to little interest by the teachers. He has supported teachers' attendance at workshops in power teaching techniques but sees little application in the classrooms. He spoke highly of the training and support he has received from The University of Texas at Austin, but feels hampered by a lack of experience in facilitating the model's planning process. It appears that this model does not have the level of teacher support nor has it progressed as well as the interventions at the elementary level.

An additional resource emerged to help in focusing Crossover's improvement efforts in preparing its students for the upcoming TAAS tests. As a result of being classified a low-performing school, TEA had assigned a "state monitor" to Crossover. This person was assigned in January and has been working with the administrators and teachers in narrowing the focus of their ambitious campus improvement plans and in committing a targeted effort in preparing their students for the TAAS. This had resulted in devoting 30 minutes every day, teaching specific skills including test-taking skills, and tutoring one-on-one where needed.

Secondary teachers spoke of this as a significant effort for them and their students that resulted in a shared desire to meet the state standards on the TAAS. Just prior to the second visit the secondary level had been informed of their outstanding performance with 80 to 90 per cent of the students successfully passing the TAAS. One teacher described the student cheering and displays of high fives when informed of their success. This teacher felt this effort did much to bolster school spirit and morale.

There are two other components to Crossover's CSRD plans. These include the installation of computers, printers, and fiber optic cables and the establishment of a parent center. Although no outside developers were used to support these efforts, they did move forward by hiring a computer technician who oversaw the installation of equipment and a director for the parent center. The computer related installations have progressed very well and the entire school campus is networked, allowing computers to tap into a CD tower, printers, and Internet connections. The parent center has moved at a slower pace. A former house has been renovated and is slowly being equipped with furniture and computers that will also be available for loan. GED and ESL classes have been begun for parents and self-help reading and related educational materials have been ordered. The center has been successful in recruiting a cadre of 20 volunteers who have provided up to 1200 volunteer hours. The volunteers have helped support the reading program and TAAS preparation sessions. Besides the normal daytime hours, the center is open one evening in the week for parents to meet, use the computers, and to check out materials.

As previously mentioned, the percentage of students successfully passing the TAAS items has increased remarkably. A summary of test score results for all students shows that at the elementary level, between 1998 and 2000, the percentage of students successfully passing the TAAS reading test rose from 59.6 percent to 87.8 percent. A similar picture is reflected at the secondary level where the percentage rose from 59.4 percent to 87.5 percent, again for all students. Similar gains for both school levels are reported for math and to a lesser degree in writing at the elementary level. Additional good news is that when the scores are disaggregated for African American, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged students, similar gains are observed. Although it would require some very sophisticated analysis to sort out what caused these phenomenal gains in approximately two years, it is clear that the Crossover staff, from the superintendent down, made a significant investment of time, money, and materials to ensure that students were acquiring the necessary skills to successfully perform on the TAAS. No doubt the focused effort since January 2000 devoted to tutoring students on a one-to-one basis must have had some impact. In addition, older students have come to recognize the importance of their successful performance on the TAAS. In this case, as much as anything else, it appears the media was the message.

Question 4: *How has the rural context helped and/or hindered progress?*

The rural context of Crossover has helped move forward its CSRD plan. There is a positive tone between the community and the school, even in spite of its low performing status. Attendance at a school board meeting during the first visit provided a window on the nature of community/school board and staff relations. The tone was generally very positive and there was considerable evidence of the board supporting the school administration's initiatives. There were also a sizable number of parents in attendance. Time was provided on the agenda for members of the school staff to share information about their respective programs. Open houses have had a good turn out of parents. There has been a good response to the call for volunteers and GED and ESL offerings. The establishment of the parent center and the renovation of a house to provide it with its own space further symbolize the importance of the community to the

future success of the school.

The positive school/community relations are facilitated, in part, by its small size. Although size alone can not ensure good relations, it seems to be working to Crossover's advantage. Teachers speak of the ease with which they can communicate with one another and with parents. Parents feel, in turn, that they have little difficulty in maintaining contacts or gaining access to teachers. Teachers speak of being able to personalize the educational experiences of the students, which has been aided to a large extend by classroom aides and volunteers.

To aid with communications with the community, a Web page for the Crossover schools has been developed by the computer technician hired by the CSRD grant. It provided, among many things, updated information on ongoing events and the names of the staff with their respective e-mail addresses. Again this sends the message that the school is sensitive to community needs and welcomes communications from them.

There are some down sides to this rural community as well. It does feel somewhat isolated, has a large number of families at the poverty level or below, and little local economic base to support needed programs or facilities. The school has had to rely heavily on external funding sources and creative financing to provide adequate facilities. This may be problematic if the economy experiences a down turn.

In spite of these challenging fiscal conditions and a high percentage of students requiring special attention, the district reflects a spirit of being able to overcome these problems. The recent success in raising TAAS scores no doubt is reflective of this "can do" spirit and gave the school and community a much-needed boost. As one teacher expressed it, "There is a strong feeling that we are here for the children." And this feeling is beginning to pay off.

Summary of Crossover's Year One Progress

The U.S. Department of Education has identified nine criteria for comprehensive school reform. Presumably, a successful comprehensive school reform program should integrate, in a coherent manner, all nine of the identified criteria. An assessment of the degree to which Crossover has each addressed each of these is provided below.

(1) *Effective, research-based methods and strategies:* Each of the interventions being pursued at the elementary and secondary levels has been well researched and has potential to address the needs of students. Already they are seeing the impact of the Reading Renaissance especially its Accelerated Reader components. Although Accelerated Schools has been extensively researched and demonstrated its potential in aiding students from low-income backgrounds at the middle and secondary levels, it has not yet exhibited this potential and thus will require more time.

(2) *Comprehensive design with aligned components:* Many of the components suggested for an effective comprehensive design are present in the implementation of Crossover's CSRD plans. They include attention being given to: instruction, student assessment, classroom management, professional development, and school management. Each of the plan's components is being directed to meet the needs of low-income children and those with limited English proficiency. The degree to which these components are working in a coordinated manner is less clear. At the secondary level, there is a sense of less alignment.

(3) *Professional development:* There is a strong commitment at Crossover for ongoing professional development and training with a regional education service center providing much of the training and on-site consultation. With the Accelerated School model, a part-time (one day a week) external facilitator provides teachers with support and ongoing training.

(4) *Measurable goals and benchmarks:* Crossover has articulated very specific, measurable benchmarks that are tied to their students' successfully passing the items on the Texas statewide exam. In year two of the grant, all but one of the elementary and secondary benchmarks have been met or exceeded.

(5) *Support within the school:* At the elementary level there is widespread support for the CSRD program components. At the secondary level, many teachers are taking a 'wait and see' attitude and are dubious about its payoff. The recent effort by the secondary teachers to ensure their students' success with the TAAS may breathe new life into the implementation of the Accelerated School model.

(6) *Parental and community involvement:* The implementation of the CSRD program has not involved large numbers of parents and other members of the community. They have been targeted, however, to benefit the parent center component. Parents and community members are being recruited to volunteer as tutors, classroom aides, and participants on Accelerated School committees. The Crossover staff indicated they are looking for additional ways to directly involve parents and community members in a much more significant way.

(7) *External technical support and assistance:* The regional education service center, Reading Renaissance staff, and the Accelerated Schools staff at The University of Texas at Austin are supporting the implementation of Crossover's CSRD plans. This support appears to be ongoing and appreciated by the school staff. The use of an external facilitator under the aegis of the Accelerated School unit at The University of Texas at Austin provides a regular presence and support at the school site level.

(8) *Evaluation strategies:* The benchmarks tied to the state standards on the TAAS tests in reading, math, and writing will play a major role in evaluating the success of CSRD plans. In addition, other performance indicators include student drop out rate, student attendance, students enrolled in advanced courses, student's retention rate, parents participating in campus activities, discipline cases, alternative education program placement, student assaults, vandalism, and community volunteers.

(9) *Coordination of resources:* It appears that funds garnered through other grants, Title I, and local funds have played a complementary role in sustaining Crossover's school reform effort. Exactly how this occurred was not clear.

Crossover has made significant strides in overcoming its poor test performance on the statewide assessment tests. This has been no small feat. It is a reflection of a commitment by many members of the school staff and student body to achieve this goal. The elementary level has been successful in implementing its improvement plans. The middle and secondary schools' implementation of the Accelerated Schools model is moving more slowly but is still supported by some of the staff, students, and community participants.

Appendix C
Liberty Elementary and Secondary School
Liberty, OK

This summary provides an overview of Liberty, OK. The description includes information and data about the community, nature of the school, and its involvement with the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program.

Liberty Community

Liberty, OK is located approximately 50 miles south of Oklahoma City in a rolling and sparsely settled landscape. This area has been known for its productive oil fields, although hard times have recently fallen on oil producers and the economic impact is evident. In the small community of Liberty (approximately 1,500 citizens), one can observe closed and boarded up buildings. The economic condition has impacted not only this blue-collar community but the school as well. Liberty school experienced a 50 percent decline in its enrollment over the last ten years. The average household income is $17,796, the poverty rate is 25 percent, and Title I student eligibility is 72 percent. The Oklahoma Office of Accountability places Liberty in the E2 community group. The "E" represents the smallest districts in the state and "2" reflects socioeconomic characteristics that fall below state averages. These economic indicators explain the financial hardship facing Liberty and its school. This is particularly the case since the school district receives only 22.5 percent state aid, leaving the rest of its funding to be raised locally.

Liberty Elementary/Secondary School

The Liberty district campus is divided by a paved local road with the secondary building located on one side and the elementary (which served as the high school at one time) and middle school buildings located on the other side. An active small oil pumping station is situated on the school property but unfortunately contributes very little to the school budget. The schools' physical facilities are about 40 years old, experiencing some wear, and in need of updating and maintenance. Some recent maintenance efforts include a new floor and bleachers for the gym located in the elementary school building, a new roof, and air conditioning for the high school auditorium. Because of its reduced enrollment, the school does have some empty classrooms presently used for storage.

The Fall 1999 K-12 enrollment including special education students was 229, 27 less than in the fall of 1998. The racial make up of the student body is 91 percent Caucasian, 2 percent Asian, and 7 percent Native American. The school enjoys an average class size of 17.6 students and a pupil/teacher ratio of 10:1. Enrollment and budgetary constraints necessitate the principals to perform other duties. The elementary principal teaches a social studies and a science class. The high school principal also serves as the school's guidance counselor.

The school (K-12) has a professional staff of 24.5 teachers and 15 unlicensed staff members. The average teacher's salary (including fringe benefits) is $30,804. The average years of teaching experience are 13 years and the same is true for years taught in a rural school. The annual turnover of teachers is two.

Student test performance at grades 5, 8, and 11 indicates that the school is not meeting the performance benchmarks in all subject areas on the Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests. This benchmark requires at least 70 percent of the students to score satisfactory in each tested

subject area. Benchmarks not being met in geography and the arts at the fifth grade; reading, history, constitution, government, geography, and the arts at the eighth grade; and math, reading, and geography at the eleventh grade. Approximately 30 percent of Liberty's graduates go onto higher education (Oklahoma College) and of those, 55.6 percent took a remedial course in their freshman year.

Research Questions

Four broad research questions guided the gathering of data and information from the respective rural schools. Each of the questions is restated here with a summary of what was found during the site visits to Liberty.

Question 1: *What school-wide reform model was chosen by the school and why?*

Student performance data presented above explains in part the school's selection of the Effective Schools Model as their school-wide, K-12 intervention strategy. Half of their grant funds ($25,000) were committed to the Phi Delta Kappa satellite center at the University of Oklahoma that agreed to provide technical assistance and training to support Liberty's implementation of the Effective School Model. In addition, the CSRD proposal requested funds for teacher training stipends; the purchase of classroom materials, calculators, keyboards, chemistry and physical science curricular packages; and the acquisition of ten Internet computers and five printers.

When staff was queried about their CSRD proposal, many saw the Effective School Model as providing a framework and philosophy for pulling together the varied curricular and program changes. Several persons also saw the grant as an opportunity to secure needed funds for materials and computer technology. Teachers were not involved in the choice of the model or in drafting the proposal. It was the decision of the superintendent and the librarian and it was left up to the librarian to write the CSRD grant proposal. Teachers acknowledged their lack of involvement in choosing the particular model, but many felt that it fit the school needs and generally supported it. As the superintendent stated, "Maybe we went about it the wrong way in leaving the teachers out but it is the right model, it's a good fit, and will take us where we want to go." There was no indication that other school-wide reform models were considered.

The Liberty staff members, during the first round of interviews, articulated their desire for the following changes:

Student Changes

- Improve reading performance by 3 percent;
- Improve math performance;
- Increase aspirations for attending college;
- Increase pride in the school;
- Increase self-esteem and school spirit;
- Increase motivation to learn;
- Improve attendance and decrease dropout rate;
- Increase awareness of choices following high school; and
- Reduce teenage pregnancies.

Teacher Changes

- Increase teacher communications K-12;
- Build an effective leadership team;
- Build commitment to the Effective School Model, including facing the school's problems and gathering needed information;
- Develop higher expectations for student performance; and
- Develop new techniques to encourage student attendance

School Changes

- Establish a tighter and more aligned curricula, K-12;
- Enable each classroom to have a computer with an Internet connection;
- Create two advanced placement courses and five or six honor courses;
- Implement school-wide programs successfully; and
- Increase use of technology in each classroom.

Parent Changes

- Increase parent involvement and support.

The CSR model selected by Liberty helped establish some general and specific outcomes. However, very few identified changes seem to stem directly from a thorough understanding of the model. Rather, this model's selection seems to stem more from a general understanding or belief of its potential for rallying the Liberty School staff in addressing some of the debilitating influences of poor economic conditions upon student and faculty aspirations. The Effective School Model sets in front of the Liberty staff members a high standard for addressing the needs of their student body and ensuring their success.

Question 2: *What challenges and barriers has the school faced in implementing its chosen model?*

The Liberty staff identified numerous challenges and barriers. As suggested above, tight finances exacerbated by a very weak local economy permeated many of the comments. Finances seem to also influence parents' and students' aspirations according to the teachers. Many felt that the students do not value their educational opportunities and hence put forth minimal effort. Teachers seemed concerned about overcoming resistance to engaging in the new CSR effort, whether they could learn to work together, and whether they could be successful at implementing needed changes. Some shared comments were:

> Staff members are not tuned in...resistant to change.
>
> Getting the staff to see the need to change and feeling they can be successful.
>
> It is going to be hard to get the teachers to participate, many have a wait and see attitude.

By the second visit to Liberty, the staff shared the perception that a great deal of progress had been made in building a team spirit, K-12, which did not exist before.

When queried about having time to engage in planning for and implementing the Effective School Model, many recognized this as a problem. State mandated staff development time was seen as the best source for freeing teachers to engage in planning and implementation work. But most admitted not having a solution for this problem and as one teacher put it, "We will have to just do it."

SEDL surveyed all CSRD schools in its region and Liberty's responses provide further insights about the challenges and barriers faced by the staff in the early implementation of their CSRD model. Thirteen persons responded to the survey. The following comments reinforce or contrast observations surfaced by the site visits and interviews. The survey results revealed the following:

- Greater teacher involvement in "planning for implementation" than was suggested in on-site interviews. Acknowledgment that there was minimal involvement of students and parents.
- Approximately two-thirds of the respondents viewed district and/or school policies as promoting communications that facilitated the implementation of the CSRD program.
- Over half of the respondents viewed the openness of communication between teachers and principal(s) or district staff as either poor or fair.
- Slightly over half of the respondents viewed the superintendent as the primary leader for implementing the school's CSRD program. This contrasted with the on-site observation that the librarian was the prime mover of the CSRD program.
- The vast majority of respondents generally viewed the superintendent as displaying favorable leadership behaviors.
- Professional development activities related to CSRD received mixed reviews. On the positive side, professional development activities was seen as relevant, guided by a vision, attended by a majority of teachers, conducted by the same person(s), conducted by highly competent person(s), and provided opportunities for collaboration.
- A split and in some cases a majority of respondents disagreed that professional development activities were promoted with incentives, supported by adequate resources, allowed enough time to develop expertise, included sufficient training for the use of CSRD-related materials and equipment, included sufficient training prior to the implementation of the program, and included monitoring of teacher expertise in implementing the program.[1]
- Respondents rated external support positively and this was supported by on-site interviews.
- Survey respondents revealed a desire to develop a close linkage between the CSRD program and student progress in a number of areas outlined earlier. On-sites interviews supported this desire.

[1] It should be noted that in regard to this latter observation, Liberty was not able to arrange in their contract more frequent on-site visits by the Oklahoma University personnel. This option will be revisited for the second year of the grant.

- Respondents differed about whether the CSRD program "prescribed changes for which my school was unprepared," and nearly half was not that sure that the program can "accommodate new challenges that arises."

- Liberty's CSRD program "is addressing school needs as outlined in the school's plan" and was supported by on-site interviews.

- There was support for the program, they felt it was of value, and wanted it to continue.

Liberty has had its share of challenges and barriers to overcome and to take into consideration as it moves forward with it CSRD implementation plans.

Question 3: ***What role has the model developer played in its (selected CSRD model) implementation?***

The Phi Delta Kappa Satellite Center for Effective Schools at Oklahoma University was selected as the "developer" to provide consultation, training, and assistance in implementing the Effective School Model. This group's selection was attributed to its nearby location and administrator first-hand knowledge of the Center. During the 99-00 school year, the Center provided a combination of off- and on-site training. Off-site training was primarily provided to Liberty's leadership team whereas on-site training targeted the total school staff. A before-school year workshop was held in late August and introduced the entire school staff to the Effective School Model concepts. These contacts provided the staff a basis for judging the Center's services. Most comments by the staff were positive including words like "very professional," "displayed lots of enthusiasm," "very energetic," "seem knowledgeable," and "displayed a caring attitude." There were a few dissenting voices that felt "they did not get much from the presentations."

As a direct result of these in-service workshops and related consultations by the Oklahoma University personnel, school staff members reported some progress between September 1999 (first visit) and April 2000 (second visit). During the first visit, those interviewed were asked to identify what had been accomplished since the start of school in late August. Although this was a short period of time in which to expect any observable changes, it was evident that the Effective School Model, its meaning and implications, were not well understood by the staff. The quote that seems to reflect this confusion was, "What should we be doing?" The staff essentially had only been introduced to some of the model concepts at the before-school year workshop and clearly had not given them much thought since.

A telephone interview of the person in charge of providing staff development to Liberty Schools indicated that implementation of the Effective School Model requires at least three years and the first year is devoted to raising the awareness of staff of the Effective School Model. In the early stages, the consultants focused on the expanded administrative team that included teachers and eventually became viewed as the leadership team.

The second visit surfaced a major change in the attitude of the teaching staff at Liberty. More teachers understood the Effective School Model and that thought their participation could make a difference concerning what changes needed to be addressed. The principals observed there was a breakdown of typical grade level divisions and more conversing across elementary, middle, and high school levels at their once-a-month meetings of the total staff. A classroom teacher observed, "We seem to have better communications between the high school and elementary grades; there now exist a feeling of 'our' versus 'their' school." Much of this change

of attitude could be attributed to the processes and group exercises that the consultant team used during the on-site in-service meetings. These exercises addressed school-wide issues associated with the Effective School Model and teachers worked in cross-grade level groups.

The librarian, titular head of the CSRD project, felt "teachers were displaying a greater willingness to get involved and became more responsible for the direction that the Effective School Model should take." For example, the kindergarten through fourth grade teachers, on their own, met and discussed how they could align the curriculum between their grades. They also just recently visited a school where they observed the use of the Accelerated Reader program and planned to lobby strongly with the administration to allocate funds for next year to fully implement this program.

On the technology side of their CSRD grant, they have been successful in wiring each classroom to connect to the Internet with a dedicated computer. A classroom observation of a third grade displayed how the Internet computer could be used in real time with students studying the weather and whales. Teachers were generally appreciative of having this technology in their classroom, although one computer was seen as very limiting. Their computer lab is scheduled all day for Title I instruction.

A self-administered assessment of the leadership team members in April 2000, revealed their perception of progress to date in implementing each of the Effective School Model's correlates using a five-point scale where one indicated low impact and five indicated high impact. The results of this informal survey were:

Safe and orderly environment - 3
Mission - 1
Instructional leadership - 3
High expectations - 2
Opportunity to learn - 2
Monitoring student progress - 2
Enhanced communications - 1

The leadership team members felt that the school, in part because of its small size and ruralness, provides a safe and orderly environment. The principals also reported that the faculty, especially at the elementary grades, is taking a more active role in examining and supporting efforts targeted at improving instruction.

Feedback from the Effective School Model consultant team indicated that Liberty's progress to date was about in the middle of the pack of schools with whom they were presently working. A second interview, following the second visit, with the person heading up the consultant team indicated, "Liberty is not where we would like them to be but things are starting to fall in place, revealing considerable readiness to address areas of needed change." An all day meeting was coming up in April at which time the total faculty was scheduled to identify areas that were in need of change and to develop plans to address these during the coming school year, 2000-2001. The Effective Schools Model consultant indicated that they planned to have curriculum mapping for all grades completed in April; to disaggregate the test scores in May; and to help plan professional development for the next school year based on an analysis of the test results.

Question 4: *How has the rural context helped and/or hindered progress?*

The rural context of Liberty has both benefited and constrained the school's progress. The benefits include easy access to members of the community and school personnel permitting close connections, frequent and informal interactions between school and community members, significant impact by a few persons resulting in getting others involved, a school board viewed very positively, and a feeling of parent support for the teachers. The staff also mentioned the ease of networking with other small schools in Oklahoma and recruiting parent volunteers as resource persons (e.g., computer technology).

On the down side, negative attitudes and feelings cannot be ignored in a small town and a few negative parents, for example, can cast a pall that reduces staff motivation to address issues of student achievement. Garnering parent participation and more active involvement has been challenging because of the isolation of some families and difficulty of getting to and from the school. Little pride exists in the community and this manifests itself in limited regard for outward appearances of the school and community buildings.

Summary of Liberty's Year One's Progress

The U.S. Department of Education has identified nine criteria for comprehensive school reform. Presumably, a successful comprehensive school reform program should integrate, in a coherent manner, all nine of the identified criteria. An assessment of the degree to which Liberty Schools has addressed each of these is provided below.

(1) *Effective, research-based methods and strategies:* The Effective Schools Model places a strong emphasis on data-based decisions and model correlates are research-based. To date, however, Liberty has not had the opportunity to apply these characteristics in any significant way.

(2) *Comprehensive design with aligned components:* Alignment of the curricula at Liberty is well underway. However, since Liberty is in the earlier stages of comprehending the Effective School Model and just beginning to examine its correlates in greater detail, a comprehensive design is not in place.

(3) *Professional development:* It is generally felt that the 1999-2000 professional development activities provided by Effective School Model personnel have been very well received and effective in building a school team orientation and readiness for subsequent planned changes.

(4) *Measurable goals and benchmarks:* Presently, the Oklahoma Education Oversight Board and Office of Accountability issue an annual School Report Card. The report card displays the degree to which each school meets the state performance benchmarks for Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests (math; science; reading; writing; history, constitution & government; geography; the arts) at fifth, eighth, and eleventh grade levels. Considerable attention is planned for examining 1999-2000 results and developing future measurable objectives. Interviews of staff have surfaced an objective of increasing reading scores by 3 percent. It is unclear, however, how this will be determined and the degree to which it is a shared goal by the teachers.

(5) *Support within the school:* In the main there seems to be wide spread support for Liberty's CSRD program. There are, however, a few dissenting voices who feel that thus far

this program has been more about "words and than action."

(6) *Parental and community involvement:* At present, there is little evidence of parental and community involvement.

(7) *External technical support and assistance:* There is strong evidence to qualifications and capability of the Effective School Model consultants in providing effective and relevant assistance to Liberty in their implementation of this model.

(8) *Evaluation strategies:* At present, there is no evaluation of the implementation of the Effective School Model and student results. The latter will most likely be monitored by the Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests.

(9) Coordination *of resources:* The Liberty School District is involved in a number of grants to support its instructional program. It is not clear how these other efforts will be coordinated within the framework of the Effective School Model. However, part of the rationale in selecting this model was the hope that it would provide a way of meshing other efforts.

Liberty has made some progress in implementing its CSRD plan and is poised to take on more targeted changes in the coming year. This past year has helped them to build readiness and school unity is addressing the model correlates in more tangible ways.

Appendix D
Sugar Elementary School
Sugar, LA

This summary provides an overview of Sugar, LA. The description includes information and data about the community, nature of the school, and its involvement with the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program.

Sugar Community

Sugar has a population of 1,864 persons that sits in the flood plain of the Mississippi River, surrounded by sugar cane fields that provide the major source of employment in the region. The community itself is located just off a state highway where there is a smattering of small white wood framed buildings and a church. The town is known for low property wealth and a poverty level existence. The median household income in Sugar in 1989 was $15,878 and 130 households have less than $5,000 in income. The school provides the only apparent structure of any note and the children attending the school are transported by bus from a larger attendance area outside of Sugar. A vast majority of the residents in this parish are descendants of slaves and have lived here or nearby for many generations. Approximately 50 percent of the people living in Sugar are African-American, 1 percent is Hispanic, and the remainder is white. Approximately 25 percent of the adults in Sugar have less than a ninth grade level of educational attainment and another 25 percent do not have a high school diploma. A considerably large percentage of the residents of Sugar and in other parts of the parish rely on public assistance.

Sugar Elementary School

Sugar Elementary School is part of a parish school district of five other elementary schools and a 7-12 high school. The enrollment at Sugar is 261 students, pre-Kindergarten through grade six and a special education class. These classes are housed in a 42-year-old building formerly used as a secondary school with much wear and tear. One wing of the building, that is not being used, has unfinished plywood nailed over the windows. The three remaining wings, which are attached by covered walkways to the school cafeteria, have walls made up of mostly windows as was the trend in school architecture prior to the energy crisis. These windows are covered by blinds to shield the interior from the hot sun but seem more effective in covering cracked glass and spider webs. In each room there is a rather sizable window air conditioner that has been jury-rigged to temper the hot, humid conditions that seem ubiquitous in this area for a large part of the school year. The school has a sizable piece of acreage covered by lawn and bounded by a chain-linked fence with two openings permitting buses to enter and leave with reasonable ease. Covered walkways protect the children from inclement weather while moving to or from buildings or school buses. Classrooms make effective use of wall space including the blinds to display students' work and instructional aids. In some classrooms, the children's furniture reflects different time periods and shows the effects of long-term use.

Of the 260 or so students, approximately 88 percent are African American, 11 percent are white, and 1 percent is Hispanic. Average class size is 14.5 with a student/teacher ratio of 20:1. The percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch is 98 percent. Average daily attendance is 94 percent and the percentage of pupil turnover is less than 1 percent. Tracking Sugar's students in high school reveals a significant drop out rate at grades seven and eight. For example, a recent class of 36 students, only nine went on to graduate.

Approximately 100 students that live in Sugar attend private schools.

The number of professional staff members is 20 with a backup of 19 unlicensed staff. Average teacher salary is $27,500 and average teaching experience is 13 years. Annual teacher turnover is three. Approximately 45 percent of Sugar's faculty has a Master's degree or higher (state average is 40 percent). The faculty-adopted school rules require students to walk to the right in single file, observe a no-talking rule when entering and exiting the building, and wear a school uniform (khaki shorts or pants and blue or white polo shirts).

According to the Louisiana Department of Education's 1998-99 School Report Card, Sugar has a School Performance Score (SPS) of 33.9 which places them in the second lowest performance category: "Academically Below Average." There are three parts to the SPS: (1) LEAP 21 Tests (English Language Arts and Math), (2) Iowa Tests, and (3) attendance. At grade four on the LEAP, 72.3 percent of the students in math and 46.8 percent in language arts performed unsatisfactory. On the Iowa Tests, the students scored in grades 3, 5, and 6 between the 23rd and 27th national percentile rank. The state average is at the 45th national percentile rank. Sugar is expected by the state to raise their SPS to 45.4 in 2001 and in ten years, 2009, to 100. This appears to be a long haul.

Sugar is under considerable pressure to improve its academic standing. Grants, like CSRD, may provide the necessary resources to overcome hardships that the school's community and students are experiencing at the present time.

Research Questions

Four broad research questions guided the gathering of data and information from the respective rural schools. Each of the questions is restated here and a summary of what was revealed during the two site visits to Sugar Elementary School follows.

Question 1: *What school-wide reform model was chosen by the school and why?*

Prior to submitting its CSRD proposal, the faculty carefully investigated different options. Attendance by a committee of teachers and the principal at a state-sponsored conference helped in becoming familiar with a range of reform models. Some of the models considered were: Core Knowledge, Accelerated Schools, Reading Recovery, and Early Literacy Initiative. Reading Recovery has been used in the school for three years and some students have shown exceptional gains by third grade. A first grade teacher at Sugar had taken a graduate course related to the Early Literacy Initiative and was using these methods in her classroom. She made a presentation to the faculty who coincidentally were observing the impressive progress her students were making, not only in reading skills but also in spelling and writing. They were not happy with their existing reading program, and the Early Literacy Initiative offered an opportunity to extend the benefits of the present use of Reading Recovery with a small number of very poor readers and make better use of the diagnostic results obtained from the required state's Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) for grades 1-3. The teachers unanimously voted to adopt the Early Learning Initiative Project. It was the consensus view that the model fit best with already existing instructional programs.

Question 2: *What challenges and barriers has the school faced in implementing its chosen model?*

An initial challenge facing the teachers at Sugar included gaining confidence that they

could switch to a new reading program, K-3, on very short notice. Sugar was not notified until July of 1999 of the CSRD grant award and the Sugar School District had to advance funds for a two-week summer institute for teachers to attend that was offered by a nearby university. This university provided the training within the framework of a graduate course and was willing to wait for its tuition money. Fortunately the one member of the teaching staff who had already been exposed to the Early Literacy Initiative teaching methodology and materials helped alleviate some of the teachers' initial concerns. The teachers also faced delays in receiving materials and books needed to support the Early Literacy Initiative. Several teachers were hired part time after school to inventory the new books and catalog them into the library. Even though it took five to six weeks to obtain their materials, teachers were seeing positive results by Thanksgiving.

Teachers had some concerns about shifting their entire reading, writing, and spelling instruction to the Early Literacy Initiative. Some teachers continued to rely on their existing basal series. During a second visit, the teachers spoke more enthusiastically of the literacy model and depended less on their basal series. One teacher, who did not take part in the Early Literacy Initiative graduate level course and training, was being coached on its methods by her fellow teachers and has been persuaded to pursue the training in the next school year.

As expected, time to plan and interact among the teachers regarding their individual use of Early Literacy Initiative methods and material was a major obstacle. This was further exacerbated by the absence of special subject teachers and required duties (e.g., bus and noon hour). Teachers have had to find time on their own for preparation and dialogue with colleagues. Some of the planning had been facilitated within the context of the two-week summer course and follow-up all-day sessions in the fall and spring. The principal is aware of this problem and is trying to find ways to free up some time using early dismissals, half-day in-service, and substitute teachers to provide release time.

SEDL surveyed all of the CSRD schools in its region. Sugar's responses provide some further insights to the challenges and barriers faced by the elementary school staff in the early stages of their CSRD plans. Nineteen persons responded to the survey. The following comments reinforce or contrast observations surfaced by site visits and interviews. The results of the survey revealed the following:

- Some differences existed concerning involvement of stakeholders in the planning for and implementation of CSRD plans. These disagreements centered on the involvement of students, school board, and community members. Interviews during on-site visits revealed a high level of teacher involvement.

- Nearly all respondents felt that the vision for the CSRD program was clear and supported by the primary stakeholders. On-site interviews support this view as well.

- Some disagreements were revealed over whether district or school policies facilitated the implementation of the CSRD program with district polices garnering more negative responses.

- Communications between teachers and principal and principal and district staff were seen as good to excellent. Communications between teachers and district staff were viewed less favorably.

- An overwhelming level of support was expressed regarding materials and equipment

needed by their CSRD program. Some respondents experienced a delay in obtaining the materials and on-site interviews supported this initial lag.

- Most respondents agreed that funding was sufficient and coordinated with local funding.
- Although the survey results are difficult to interpret regarding who was the primary leader in charge of the school's CSRD program, on-site interviews clearly supported the principal in this role. In addition, the principal is seen as providing very positive leadership to the project.
- Professional development rested mostly with the Early Literacy Initiative representatives.
- Professional development was delivered both at the school and out of town. It was seen as occurring after school, during planning periods, and in the summer. On-site interviews revealed an absence of any scheduled planning periods and thus it was difficult to understand why four respondents identified this.
- Some small disagreements surfaced concerning aspects of the overall effectiveness of the professional development activities with time being seen insufficient by four individuals.
- External support was viewed positively with some disagreement that it is only available on a prescheduled basis. Teachers did report during interviews that they accessed external support by phone and in graduate course sessions.
- An overwhelming support existed for the linkage between the CSRD program and student progress.
- Strong agreement was expressed concerning Sugar's CSRD program and its relevance to school needs, its implementation in a coherent and comprehensive way, and revisions to accommodate challenges. Respondents rejected the notion that the school was unprepared for the program's prescribed changes.
- Strong support was seen for the CSRD program, its value, and its continuation. On-site interviews reinforced this widespread support for the program.

After a delayed start in being awarded their CSRD grant and acquiring necessary funds to order needed materials, the Early Literacy Initiative has been fully implemented with considerable support from the Sugar Elementary School staff. Even teachers who were reluctant to abandon their basal reading series have come to appreciate this model and its potential for ensuring initial reading, spelling, and writing skills. Spring 2000 results on the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) are promising at grade one with half the children scoring above level and only 18 percent scoring below level. At grades two and three, the same distribution across performance levels was obtained as in the fall 1999 DRA scores, suggesting little measurable changes over the school year in these two latter grades.

Question 3: ***What role has the model developer played in its (selected CSRD model) implementation?***

The Early Literacy Initiative at Southeastern Louisiana University offers schools a professional development model for addressing early literacy teaching and learning, with support for maintaining and extending literacy acquisition for students into the upper elementary grades. The model addresses the prevention of early reading failure by emphasizing strong instruction through a balanced literacy approach. Some features of the Early Literacy Initiative include:

- A graduate course (six credits) that involves a ten-day summer institute with follow-up sessions during the school year;
- A site coordinator who visits the school on a regular scheduled basis to coach teachers on early literacy teaching methods and to respond to concerns of teachers in implementing the model's features;
- School-based study groups;
- Reflective journals;
- Professional book talks or discussion groups;
- Action research projects within the framework of the graduate course that involves systematic collection of student performance data and subsequent analyses;
- Video or audio taping of at least three literacy teaching lessons;
- Peer coaching;
- Electronic networking and use of a Web site for facilitating communications between developer and classroom teachers engaged in projects; and
- Teacher portfolios in which classroom-based problems are subject to a systematic reflection process.

In addition to a school site coordinator, the Early Learning Initiative director made periodic visits to participating schools to witness first hand the school's progress in implementing aspects of the model and to respond to queries by classroom teachers.

Sugar Elementary School staff praised the support they received in the graduate level course from the school site coordinator and the model's director (who also is the graduate-course instructor). Each of these components has measured up to the stated promises, and teachers have obtained the assistance needed to fully implement the early literacy model.

It appears that the developer, following a comprehensive staff development strategy, has met the expectations and needs of the teachers at Sugar. There is little doubt that the approach followed by the developer has been very effective in allaying teachers' concerns of implementing a new reading program and bolstering their confidence for the potential payoff of the Early Literacy Initiative.

Question 4: ***How has the rural context helped or hindered progress?***

Sugar is located in a very rural, isolated setting and does not enjoy the benefits of some rural areas in attracting persons to reside in its immediate community and to commute to work in a nearby metropolitan area. Due to the lack of and seasonal nature of the jobs in the immediate area, there is a heavy dependence on state and federal programs to provide much needed income and other services. The combination of isolation and a weak local economy presents a special challenge to this small rural school. Efforts have been made to draw parents to the school and get them involved in supporting their children's learning. This has been moderately successful to date. There is a sense, however, of parent support and appreciation for the renewed effort under the Early Literacy Initiative and to many parents, an apparent change in their children's school performance. In fact, the parents have responded to the school's desire for their involvement by rejuvenating a lapsed parent organization associated with school. The principal has indicated that supporting this budding organization will be a high priority during the next school year.

It appears that the ruralness of Sugar has not hindered the implementation of the CSRD plans. Difficulties in gaining parent and community involvement notwithstanding, the school has been able to overcome its isolation by participating in a graduate course offered nearby, having a site coordinator visit the school on a regular basis, and by making good use of the telephone when in need of immediate answers to their concerns. This combination of thorough training and on-site backup has ensured successful implementation of the Early Literacy Initiative.

Summary of Sugar's Year One Progress

The U.S. Department of Education has identified nine criteria for comprehensive school reform. Presumably, a successful comprehensive school reform program should integrate, in a coherent manner, all nine of the identified criteria. An assessment of the degree to which Sugar has addressed each is provided below.

(1) *Effective, research-based methods and strategies:* The Early Learning Initiative is based on reliable research and promotes a balanced literacy approach addressing reading and writing through effective, research-based strategies and proven methods for student learning and teaching, and school management. Suggested methods include, but are not limited to the following: reading aloud to children, phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, shared writing, guided reading, independent reading, and spelling development. Replication of this early literacy model at Southeastern Louisiana University was recognized and validated by the Louisiana State Department of Education in1998. The statewide project resulted in project replication in each of the eight regions in Louisiana by either an individual school district or a regional service center.

(2) *Comprehensive design with aligned components:* The Early Literacy Initiative fostered a comprehensive design in reading, writing, and spelling that addresses the following components: instruction, assessment, professional development, classroom management, parental and community involvement, and school management. Most of these components have been addressed by the Sugar staff, with parental and community involvement and some aspects of the professional development model (e.g., study groups) not being fully implemented.

(3) *Professional development:* The Early Literacy Initiative includes a comprehensive approach for providing professional development to classroom teachers and its various components have been closely followed. As mentioned earlier, the project was initiated with a

ten-day summer institute followed-up by a job-embedded professional development approach within the school setting. This involved a school site coordinator utilizing prescheduled visits to the school at which time she: (1) provided feedback to teachers regarding any aspect of teaching or learning, (2) coached teachers regarding particular teaching techniques, (3) conducted in-classroom demonstration lessons, and (4) worked with school teams. Other features of the job-embedded approach included: reflective journals, grade level networking, literacy management team meetings, action research projects, video critiques of teaching, and study groups. The action research projects were viewed by the course instructor as particularly outstanding and helped document the impact of the model on student achievement.

(4) *Measurable goals and benchmarks:* The Louisiana Department of Education closely monitors student achievement at the local school level. Each school is assigned a school performance score (SPS) based on LEAP 21 criterion referenced tests for grades four and eight; the Iowa Tests scores for grades 3, 5, 6, 7; and attendance for grades K-8. In addition, a Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and the Yopp-Singer are state mandated K-3 reading assessments. The DRA is administered in the fall and late spring of the school year providing evidence of student gains during the current school year. Each school is assigned school growth targets for 2001 and 2009 and 1999 provides a base line score. As previously mentioned Sugar's SPS for 1999 was 33.9, its 2001 target is 45.4, and its 2009 target is 100. The 2000 SPS results should be forthcoming soon and will provide some early signs of progress towards their 2001 target score.

(5) *Support within the school:* Interview and survey results document a high level of support for the Early Learning Initiative by the staff at Sugar. This enthusiasm is reflected in a comment of one teacher who stated: "It's given me a new lease on teaching."

(6) *Parental and community involvement:* The Early Literacy Initiative recognizes the value of parental and community involvement in supporting the potential payoff of this program. The Sugar staff conducted a parent's night focused on the early literacy model and experienced a modest response. There was interest, however, by the participating parents to organize a parent group. It is the intention of the staff to nurture this group as they move into year two of their CSRD program. The teachers and principal did speak of receiving favorable comments from parents who reported observing their children's greater interest in reading and a marked improvement in writing and spelling skills.

(7) *External technical support and assistance:* The support and direct assistance of the model developer team, including the school site coordinator, have had significant and positive impact on the implementation of the early literacy model at Sugar. In addition, the teachers and principal extol their competence and timely input. There is little doubt that Sugar's success to date in implementing this model is owed to the model developer team and the thorough, comprehensive approach that it has followed in assisting this school.

(8) *Evaluation strategies:* Sugar has identified an overall goal of 80 percent of the students who participate in the Early Literacy Initiative for five or more years will read and write on or above grade level by the year 2004. In addition to this overall goal, student progress is being closely monitored on a continuous and annual basis. The Louisiana State Department of Education testing program plays a significant role in determining student gains.

(9) *Coordination of resources:* Other funding sources are being used to help support the learning outcomes of the Early Literacy Initiative. In particular, Title I funds support a Reading Recovery Program that is a very intensive one-on-one instructional approach and targets

children whose progress lags their peers. Sugar's grant proposal demonstrates and illustrates the use of some multiple sources including private donations to address the learning needs of their students.

Sugar's progress is noteworthy and can be attributed to a careful selection of their CSRD program focus, excellent support received from the model developer team from Southeastern Louisiana University, the strong commitment of the school staff, and the leadership of the principal. Teachers are sensing the success of the Early Literacy Initiative by witnessing student progress at the first grade and this bodes well for the future.

Appendix E
Sumac Elementary School
Sumac, AR

This summary provides an overview of Sumac, Arkansas. The description includes information and data about the community, nature of the school, and its involvement with the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program.

Sumac Community

Sumac, AR is located approximately 100 miles south of Little Rock, not too far from the Louisiana state line. The countryside is mostly forested with large pines that belie the former boom of oil wells in the region. Oil plays a role in the local economy but fortunately its economy has become more diversified. Besides oil and petroleum products, the region is known for timber, poultry production, and chemical plants. Sumac has a population of 2,200 and is mainly a bedroom community supported by a small commercial center. In the center of town are a number of businesses that include clothing stores for men and women, general hardware store, auto dealership, and a motorcycle shop that finds doing business in the neighboring states (Mississippi and Louisiana) quite profitable as potential customers try to outwit the retail tax man. There are also a number of empty storefronts that suggest a once viable local economy. Outside the commercial center, which has a non-operating oil pumping station in the middle of the main street, are residential homes of modest size but appear well maintained. In general the community seems a pleasant place for families raising children and whose surroundings provided ample outdoor opportunities to hunt, fish, and picnic.

Sumac Elementary School

Sumac Elementary School is located on a campus that includes the high school, cafeteria, preschool, and special education facilities. The exterior of the building is brick and is pleasantly landscaped with green grass and modest bushes and scrubs. The backside of the building includes a typical play area, well worn from thousands of little feet running, jumping, and crawling on its surface over time. The elementary school building is six years old and appears to be well cared for, both inside and out. It is an "L" shaped building designed by a former principal who wanted to be able to stand outside the main office in one location and observe activities up and down both hallways simultaneously. The interior appears very clean, well lighted, and spacious. Besides the classrooms, there are rooms for art, library, computer, and teachers' lounge and workspace. The main office provides space for a secretary, principal, conference room, storage and workspace for teacher aides, and an office for a full-time computer technology specialist. The classrooms seem ample in size with each having a sink and drinking fountain. Schools typically found in rural areas tend to be much older and reflect a fair amount of neglect to the physical facilities. This is not the case at Sumac. Its physical plant is very pleasant and reflects a lot of care and expense.

The 1999-2000 pre-Kindergarten through sixth grade enrollment is 392 students. Of this enrollment, 13 percent is special education and there are 50 students enrolled in the pre-Kindergarten program. Fifty-six per cent of the students are eligible for free and reduced lunch, 24 percent are of minority background (African American), and a 5 percent turnover exists annually. The average class size is approximately 16 students and per pupil cost is $3,500. The elementary school employs 31 teachers and nine aides. The demographic make-up of teaching staff includes two males, two African-Americans, and the remaining staff members are Caucasian females. The pupil/teacher ratio is 16:1 and state aid support is 70 percent of the

local budget. Average teacher salary is $30,000 and average teacher experience is 12 to 14 years. There is a shared perception expressed by many of the teachers that this is a desirable school to teach in, as compared to other schools in the area, and those who work here, feel fortunate to have been hired.

Student achievement has been measured by the Stanford-9 Achievement Tests for grades one through six and the Criterion Reference or Benchmark Exams of the State of Arkansas for grade four. Results from the Stanford for years 1993-1998 show an average percentile rank for each grade that falls in between the 30th and 50th percentile range. On the Arkansas Benchmark Exams in 1998, 42 percent of the students scored below grade level in literacy (reading and writing) and nearly 70 percent scored below grade level in math. These test scores have resulted in the school being placed on the state's academic distress list in mathematics. In analyzing Sumac's test scores, it was concluded, "There was a correlation between low income (free and reduced lunch) and low achievement scores. There was also a correlation between minority students and low achievement test scores." Test results clearly set the stage for participation in the CSRD program.

Research Questions

Four broad research questions guided the gathering of data and information from the respective rural schools. Each of the questions is restated here and a summary of what was revealed during the site visits to Sumac Elementary School follows.

Question 1: ***What school-wide reform model was chosen by the school and why?***

The school conducted a needs assessment process developed by the Arkansas Department of Education and used the resulting information to develop its CSRD plan. The process included analyses of test data and survey data from teachers, parents, and students. A committee of administrators, teachers, students, parents, community leaders, and non-certified staff reviewed the data, identified the four needs listed below, and presented these to the school faculty:

- To coordinate the curriculum and assessment both vertically and horizontally;
- To provide training and assistance on how to integrate the use of technology in all curriculum areas;
- To improve curriculum with an emphasis on the math and reading programs; and
- To improve assessment methods.

They, in turn, prioritized the needs and proposed the following three components for the CSRD plan: Core Knowledge; Investigations in Number, Data, and Space; and Literature-Based Reading.

The Core Knowledge program is a K-8 curriculum based on the work of E.D. Hirsch, Jr. Its focus is on teaching a common core of concepts, skills, and knowledge that characterize a "culturally literate" and educated individual. Core Knowledge offers a progression of detailed grade-by-grade content of knowledge in history, geography, mathematics, science, language arts, and fine arts. Instructional strategies are left to the teachers to develop. It is viewed as providing 50 percent of a school's curriculum.

The Investigations in Number, Data, and Space program was developed by the National Science Foundation and recommended by the Arkansas Statewide Systemic Initiative. This

math program places an emphasis on mathematical reasoning and problem solving in a true sense. That is, it emphasizes that students must learn to describe, compare, and discuss their approaches to solve problems. Alternative strategies are valued and communications about mathematics are central. In several units, students use computers to explore geometry, measurement, and coordinate grids. Other features include the use of cooperative learning groups and embedded and ongoing assessment activities. And much to the surprise of parents, there is no student text.

The Literature-Based Reading program, under the direction of a reading professor at Southern Arkansas University, provides a skills checklist correlated with the performance standards on state-level tests and emphasizes ongoing assessment. Four other features include: reading infused in all subject areas, student progress at individual rates, writing included as a literacy skill, and Accelerated Reading books and software.

It should be pointed out that both the math and reading programs' choices were outgrowths of graduate courses offered at Sumac by professors from Southern Arkansas University and attended by nearly the entire faculty. These courses were arranged and financially supported by the Sumac School District. The Core Knowledge choice came as a surprise to some staff members and was the choice primarily of the superintendent of schools and the federal projects and grants director. Although teachers were informed of these programs prior to submission of the grant, there was a feeling that they did not have much opportunity to consult over these selections and it was very difficult to vote against them. Interviews during the first visit in October 1999 revealed a residue of dissatisfaction over having little voice in the selection of the programs. On the other hand, the needs were apparent and these choices were affordable within the $50,000 grant limitation per year for three years. Teachers expressed their feelings in the following ways:

> The handwriting was on the wall.
>
> Didn't know what we were voting for?
>
> Would have felt more accepting of the proposal if more fully informed.
>
> The math course helped us realize we had to do something.
>
> We will do it in spite of it.

The principal decided to implement the Core Knowledge and mathematics program across all grade levels. This caused some consternation by faculty in the upper grades, particularly in mathematics, since it necessitated teaching the program to students without any prior background. Although this decision presented a significant challenge in the first year for all teachers and students, the principal felt that the opportunity to be exposed to a "better" program outweighed not having the entire faculty involved from the very beginning. By the second site visit, many of the complaints of implementing these programs, especially in mathematics, were more subdued.

As part of the projected budget for the CSR program, an additional $40,000 was captured from district and Title I funds. These extra funds ensured that sufficient funds were available for in-service training stipends, consultant fees, materials, and additional supplies.

Question 2: ***What challenges and barriers has the school faced in implementing its chosen model?***

As expected, many challenges and barriers surfaced. Based on the preceding comments, many teachers resented not being treated as professionals in selecting the CSR models. Some of the teachers' resistance stemmed from "feelings of too much to do, too much on our plate," as one teacher observed. It will take time to "overcome the feeling that the changes were handed down," was also expressed. It is interesting to note that few teachers reported difficulty in planning and interacting with other teachers at the same grade level, as was often the case in other schools. This is true, in part, because the teachers at each grade level have a common planning time and classrooms were relocated so that they were in close proximity to one another. Nevertheless, teachers spoke of the need to remain late at the end of the day or return on weekends in order to keep up. Most were optimistic that their second year of implementing the Core Knowledge and mathematics curricula will be easier given the preparation done in this first year. It was decided to lighten teachers' load by postponing any school wide effort in implementing the Literature-Based Reading component until the next school year (2000-2001).

To soften to some degree the feelings of having the decisions handled down, the principal allowed the teachers at each grade level to determine how the new programs would be handled. That is, if the teachers wish to specialize (e.g., Core Knowledge or mathematics) and teach this choice to all the children at their grade level, this was permissible. Thus, for example, one teacher at grade one taught the new mathematics program to all the first grade students. This approach reduced some of the time pressure felt by all the teachers.

Another barrier to overcome was having ample materials and getting the instructional program organized. Having the district budgeting ample funds for materials and encouraging teachers to order "whatever they want" allayed this concern. The teachers were also given time during the Core Knowledge workshops (before school opened) to download lesson plans and units of instruction from the model's Web site. The teachers found this to be very helpful in getting organized and prepared in a short period of time, and minimized their anxiety and anger at this early stage of implementation.

A further challenge was obtaining parent understanding and support for the proposed changes. This was particularly true in the implementation of the mathematics program. Parents were concerned that the program did not use a textbook and thus had difficulty monitoring their children's progress. A special parent night meeting was held to inform parents about the new mathematics program and to answer their questions. The mathematics consultant for this program also participated.

SEDL surveyed all CSRD schools in its region and Sumac's responses provide some further insights of the challenges and barriers faced by the staff in the early implementation of their CSRD models. Twenty-one persons responded to the survey. The following comments reinforce or contrast observations surfaced by the site visits and interviews. They revealed the following:

- The major stakeholders identified by the survey respondents for implementing the CSRD plans are teachers, principal, and district administration. Students, parents, and community and business leaders were less involved. The on-site visits confirmed these survey results.

- Slightly less than half of the respondents indicated they either didn't know or disagreed with the notion that the school's vision for its CSRD program "is supported by the majority of the stakeholders." On-site interviews detected this dissent, but to a lesser degree during the April visit.

- School policies facilitated implementation of its CSRD plans.

- Fifteen to 25 percent of the respondents view openness in the communications between the teachers and principal or district staff from poor to fair.

- A vast majority of the respondents view the availability of materials and equipment very favorably, and this was reflected in the interviews during on-site visits.

- A large percentage (53 to 74 percent) selected the "Don't Know" choice when queried about funding for the CSRD program and may be symptomatic of the lack of openness in communications on this matter.

- An even split emerged regarding the identification of the "primary leader" in charge of CSRD program implementation; some thought it was the principal and some thought it was central/district office staff. This is an understandable confusion since the principal and the director of grants do appear to be working as a team. For example, they meet together with grade level teacher groups on a monthly basis to discuss implementation progress and issues.

- A very high percentage of survey respondents "agree" or "strongly agree" that the primary leader(s) displays effective leadership behavior.

- The respondents confirmed the on-site observation that professional development is provided mainly by CSR model/design representatives and consultants, offered during summer and planning periods, and conducted at the school.

- A majority of respondents rated professional development activities positively. Those aspects drawing some criticism are: lack of incentives, insufficient time for development or monitoring of expertise in implementing the program, and insufficient training prior to implementation.

- More than 50 percent of the respondents indicated "Don't Know" as to whether external program support provided for the school's CSRD program is: ongoing and timely, highly competent, and regularly available. At the time the survey was completed, only the mathematics consultant was providing ongoing support. The Core Knowledge consultant conducted a workshop before school started but made no follow-up visits and the Literature-Based Reading program had been postponed.

- The CSRD model is seen by 85 percent of the respondents as linked to student outcomes, primarily in reading and mathematics. However, it appears a fair number of respondents are less sure about linkages to other student data such as attendance and discipline.

- Favorable responses were expressed for the items related to the context for change. For example, the school's CSRD program was viewed as addressing identified school needs, which was also confirmed in on-site interviews.

- Nearly 90 percent of the respondents saw prior efforts to implement new programs at Sumac as fair to good and only 10 percent saw them as excellent.

- From 65 to 75 percent of the respondents reported that the majority of teachers support the CSRD program, feel it is of value, and would like the program to continue. The second on-site visit in April would suggest strong support exists for the mathematics and Core Knowledge models.

Question 3: *What role has the model developer played in its (selected CSRD model)* implementation?

Three developers or consultants were to be used in the first year of implementing the curricular changes. The Core Knowledge Foundation agreed to provide a five-day, before-school opened workshop in August of 1999, conduct school site visits during the school year, and provide additional support via the phone, e-mail, and Web page. The workshop was reviewed favorably in spite of noticeable frustration expressed by the Sumac teachers. The workshop leaders were praised for their skill and methods. The site visits, one in the fall and one in the spring, were expected. For some unknown reason the fall visit did not take place. A spring visit for two days took place on April 10 and 11, 2000. The visit included meetings with the principal, the director of grants, and teachers; observations in each classroom; and conversations with students. The visit surfaced much progress to date but also raised some concerns regarding the uneven implementation of the Core Knowledge across grade levels. The observations were shared with the principal who reported that she followed up on some areas needing attention. Teachers were positive about the Core Knowledge Web page and information they were able to download. It does not appear, however, that any use was made of phone or e-mail communications. When teachers were queried about whether more contact would have been desirable, they generally said no, that the implementation of Core Knowledge was not much different from existing curricula and hence the biggest concern was having ample resources for new content areas of the Core Knowledge. There are plans for a summer workshop to be conducted by the Core Knowledge staff at which time the teachers will evaluate the first year's implementation.

The mathematics curriculum relied heavily on a graduate course and summer workshop to provide the background needed to implement the new math curriculum. The summer workshop leader (professor from Southern University of Arkansas) was hired to deliver this workshop and to conduct visits to the school during the school year. She proved to be very accessible between visits via the phone and e-mail. Teachers reported contacting her quite frequently during the first semester, in part because of their concerns over the new curriculum and their uncertainty about how timely or appropriate their progress was. Several teachers spoke of how helpful this professor was in answering their questions and demonstrating effective techniques in their classrooms. Plans are to offer a course next spring of 2001, at which time they will explore additional instructional strategies and background on mathematics concepts.

As mentioned earlier, the Literature-Based Reading program received minimal attention during this school year and a course is planned for next fall to provide teachers the necessary knowledge and skills to implement the program.

As a direct result of the in-service workshops, graduate courses, and related

consultations by the Core Knowledge team and the mathematics professor, some progress was reported by school staff between two visits, October 1999 and April 2000, an approximate lapse of six months. During the first visit, staff talked about the new mathematics curriculum with excitement and some frustration. The Core Knowledge experience at this time was seen as having potential but demanding considerable effort to organize. Some residue of anger still existed over being left out in making the choice of Core Knowledge and being coerced to attend a preschool workshop with Core Knowledge trainers. The third component, Literature-Based Reading, had received little attention and thus teachers adopted a wait and see attitude.

The new mathematics curriculum clearly generated the most attention and energy during the first visit and to a lesser degree during the second visit to Sumac. The teachers who were most directly involved in teaching the program were excited about how much their students enjoyed the material, the alternative ways they seem to come up within solving problems, and how well they could articulate in writing their understanding of the methods they were using to solve the problems. There was an early inkling that the program had potential for motivating students to participate in the mathematics exercises and to produce extraordinary results in a short period of time. A first grade teacher who is responsible for math instruction to all first graders was extolling the progress she had observed, as early as October. She reflected that she had not seen such progress in understanding mathematics concepts by her students in the past and it made her wonder about what her students have missed and how much she underestimated their potential for growth.

Several teachers at higher-grade levels expressed a sense of being overwhelmed teaching the new math program with little background themselves or their students. They sensed the excitement of their students and with the supportive guidance of their mathematics consultant, were optimistic that things would work out. The second visit confirmed the continued optimism, and observations of classroom instruction revealed how much the students were enjoying the new mathematics experience. Several techniques seem to contribute to this, including paired and group learning arrangements, encouragement by the teacher to use alternative and creatively different ways to arrive at the same answer, and the use of personal spiral notebooks in which to do their calculations. There was a sense of controlled disorder, high energy and noise, leading to positive results. Both the principal and the mathematics consultant indicated that there were fewer problems than expected and that the new mathematics curriculum "is the star" of their CSRD program efforts for this year.

During the first visit, Core Knowledge was receiving some begrudging support and teachers were attempting to implement its various components to varying degrees. The second visit revealed less resistance and greater appreciation for the Core Knowledge content, especially among the fine arts' teachers (e.g., art and vocal music). Teachers pointed out that Core Knowledge was viewed as providing only 50 percent of their subject matter and they had considerable latitude to emphasize content outside of Core Knowledge. They were also discovering some overlap between Core Knowledge content and content they had taught in the past. The generous offer and opportunity to acquire much needed instructional materials to support the introduction of new content found in Core Knowledge greatly obviated teacher frustration. It was generally felt that Core Knowledge "offers more variety of content and is spaced out better." Other benefits to the new curriculum identified by teachers during the second visit included more cooperation and communications within and across grade levels, and an increase of their own knowledge or background as a result of using Core Knowledge. As one teacher expressed it, she was able to answer many of the questions asked on the TV show "Who Wants to be a Millionaire?" as a result of being exposed to Core Knowledge content.

A telephone interview in late April, and subsequent information received from Sumac's Core Knowledge consultant, suggests the general impression that the teachers are: (1) enjoying what the students are learning, (2) becoming more familiar with the content, (3) being well supported regarding teaching materials, (4) finding time for scheduling the content, and (5) engaging in cross-grade communications and coordination of what is being taught. Sumac's progress seems on target and comparable to other schools in their first year of implementing Core Knowledge. Areas that seem to need more attention are: a process for gathering resources and updating library resources, using a variety of student assessments, addressing parent/community involvement, and employing more group work in the classroom. In general, Sumac is off to a good start and with the planned summer workshop, should be able to make further progress toward the full implementation of Core Knowledge.

As previously mentioned, the Literature-Based Reading program was more or less placed on hold for this first year of the CSRD effort. Teachers did mention receiving a new reading word list that is more sequential and defined for each grade level. In the past, the vocabulary words were selected on a hit and miss basis and not coordinated by grade level. A new multicultural reading and thinking program, which is not part of their CSRD plans, was introduced this year and Core Knowledge has reinforced the role of literature in exploring related content. It was generally felt that there was enough going on with math and Core Knowledge, and it is expected the new reading program will emerge from next fall's reading course to be offered at the school. This will be more timely since the teachers have recently selected a new basal series and will continue using the Accelerated Reader program.

Sumac's CSRD grant identifies five general needs to be addressed by the reform models. For each of the needs shown below, except the fifth one, Core Knowledge, Investigations in Number, Data, and Space, and Literacy-Based Reading models are seen as dealing with these needs. The last need statement is seen being addressed by the Core Knowledge program:

- To use achievement data to change and improve curriculum and instruction with a reading and math emphasis;
- To improve assessment methods used in the classroom;
- To coordinate the curriculum and assessment both vertically (across grade levels) and horizontally (within grade levels);
- To increase positive involvement of parents; and
- To integrate the use of technology into all curriculum areas.

As the grant has been implemented during this first year, it appears the stage has been set to achieve these outcomes. It was clear from conversations with the principal and guidance counselor that state and Stanford tests' results will play a very central role in determining the degree to which student performance has been increased and where it has not. The Arkansas tests are criterion-referenced which provide an opportunity for item analyses and this will help in providing classroom teachers with specific feedback on students' progress on each learning objective. It is anticipated that the results will be carefully scrutinized. The new mathematics curriculum provides ample opportunity for the teachers to assess student progress on a daily basis. As part of the instructional process, students are required on a regular basis to spell out in writing what method or ways of thinking they followed in arriving at their answers. It is not enough to have the right answer; they must explain how they got that answer. There has been some visible resistance by students, particularly in the upper grades, to doing this exercise repeatedly but the teachers find it very helpful in monitoring their students' understandings of

math concepts.

Implementation of the Core Knowledge program is seen as providing a means for aligning the curriculum across grades and between grade levels. Most teachers spoke very positively about this and have felt this has been needed for some time.

During this first year, there is less evidence of increasing parent involvement beyond what currently exists. Presumably this will receive more attention the second and/or third year of the grant.

Question 4: *How has the rural context helped or hindered progress?*

The rural context offered both assistance and hindrance in moving forward on the CSRD program. Some positive aspects include the small size of the community and the relative ease of connecting with various groups or programs in the community. Some examples of volunteer support that existed prior to the CSRD grant included:

- a parent center that made manipulatives for the new mathematics program;
- parent volunteers that come to the school once a week for an hour to listen to children read;
- Senior Citizen Center volunteers who talk to children and organize an antique show and excursions;
- community members who make generous donations or give special awards (e.g., the mayor gave $100 for the purchase of books);
- PTO underwriting of programs;
- Chamber of Commerce financial support; and
- community resources people who are frequent guests to the Gifted and Talented program.

On the down side, there are the usual naysayers who cannot understand why schools have to provide so many activities and costly equipment. Often heard is the remark, "When I was in school, the old were good enough for me." Even the landscaping in front of the school has received its share of criticism. People question these added expenses presumably because they may have limited or fixed incomes and are concerned with rising school taxes.

There's little doubt that Sumac School is viewed as very central to the community's health and many civic-minded citizens have gone out of their way to provide moral, financial, and volunteer support to the school. The school enjoys a good reputation in the area and the superintendent stated that they hope to increase enrollment in the future by virtue of the school's reputation.

Summary of Sumac's Year One Progress

The U.S. Department of Education has identified nine criteria for comprehensive school reform. Presumably, a successful comprehensive school reform program should integrate, in a coherent manner, all nine of the identified criteria. An assessment is provided of the degree to which Sumac has effectively addressed each of these below.

(1) *Effective, research-based methods and strategies:* The three interventions incorporated in Sumac's CSRD program are linked to research studies that have demonstrated their effectiveness. Of the three at present, the mathematics curriculum is fully using these methods. To a lesser extent, Core Knowledge has not been fully utilized. The reading intervention has been stalled but a forthcoming course in reading (Fall, 2000) offers promise of

linking their reading methods and strategies to current research studies.

(2) *Comprehensive design with aligned components:* There seems to be an instinctive effort to bring various components together to impact student achievement. How the various components (e.g., instruction, assessment, classroom management, professional development, parent involvement, and school management) are linked in achieving desired outcomes has not been articulated.

(3) *Professional development:* It is clear that Sumac in the past and at present has committed significant resources to staff development. They appear to have made good use of nearby university faculty and their contract with Core Knowledge staff requires summer workshops. These opportunities have been provided at the school and teachers have received strong encouragement to participate. Second year plans call for two courses (reading and mathematics) and Core Knowledge workshops thus ensuring continued staff training and growth.

(4) *Measurable goals and benchmarks:* The thorough test analyses conducted by Sumac in preparation for writing their CSRD proposal is indicative of the importance of test data in determining the success of its plans, particularly for low income and minority students. Sumac has identified the following assessments and benchmarks for the first year of implementation:

- Stanford 9 Achievement Test, 95 percent of students will increase individual test scores in reading and mathematics, 63 percent of students will score at or above grade level (a 10 percent increase).

- Arkansas Benchmark Exam, 75 percent of fourth graders will score at or above grade level (a 20 percent increase).

- Student Checklist, students will master 95 percent of the skills on the skills' checklist at each grade level.

To date the above outcome analyses have not been conducted.

(5) *Support within the school:* Generally speaking the mathematics and Core Knowledge interventions have overall teacher support. There are some dissenting voices and skeptics who are convinced that these interventions will neither work nor endure. Reading program plans are yet to be developed and hopefully the planned course for the fall at Sumac will permit a consensus on the nature of the reading intervention. There is an anticipated change occurring in the superintendent's position and although the best predictions at present are that this will not change the direction of the CSRD plans, only time can tell.

(6) *Parental and community involvement:* The community has demonstrated its support in a variety of ways. To date, the CSRD program has not clearly articulated its plans for parental and community involvement.

(7) *External technical support and assistance:* Progress to date has been dependent on external support in the form of workshops, on-site courses, and consultant visits to the school. In the mathematics curriculum, a professor from a nearby university played a significant role in its implementation. This was a very important accomplishment given the nature of the program and the decision to implement it simultaneously in all grades, K-6. Implementation of Core

Knowledge was enhanced by a Web site that permitted downloading of lesson plans and units of instruction in addition to a before school opened workshop.

(8) *Evaluation strategies:* Sumac's CSRD program clearly outlines, as stated earlier, desired benchmarks and assessments for year one of the grant. Results are not yet available. In addition, monthly meetings with the classroom teachers and principal and director of grants provided an opportunity to exchange information about progress and to provide support to the teachers in resolving any obstacles to success.

(9) *Coordination of resources:* Sumac's CSRD proposal indicated a plan to tap local funds and eligible Title I funds to help underwrite the costs of implementing the identified new curricula. Local funds are being used to support a quarter of the grants director's time to oversee the CSRD program. Title I funds are being used to provide supplies and materials for K-4 grades.

Sumac has made significant progress in implementing its CSRD plans. The mathematics and Core Knowledge curricula are essentially in place. Teachers are looking forward to the second year feeling all their hard work this first year should make it easier to continue to the implementation of these new curricula. Plans are in the making to revisit the Literature-Based Reading program with a course in the fall at the school. Test results should be forthcoming that will help the Sumac staff to gauge their first year's impact. It seems reasonable to expect that those teachers who are critical of the CSRD plans will soften their resistance as more evidence regarding their success accumulates.

Appendix F
Interview Questions
(Visits 1 & 2)

Interview Protocol
(First Visit)

Name _____ Date/Time _____

School _____ Position _____

Introduction

Do you have any questions about the study presently being conducted?

Background

Years in education: _____ Years at this school:_____

Years living in a rural community: _____ Years living in this community:_____

What attracted you to this school and/or community?

What experience has this school had:

a) in undertaking large-scale, complex school improvement efforts?

b) in undertaking small-scale, classroom oriented improvement efforts?

Selection of School Reform Model

What role, if any, did you play in the selection of your school's reform model?

What prompted the school's decision to move forward with a CSR model at this point in time?

Did you consider other options?

Why was this particular CSR model selected? What needs did you hope would be met by this model?

Assuming the model will be fully implemented, what do you hope will be accomplished at that time?

Relationship with CSR Model Developer

How are the funds being spent or will be spent to support the implementation of your CSR model?

What kind of relationship do you have with the CSR model developer at this point in time?

Anticipate in the future?

How helpful has the CRS model developer been thus far in implementing your chosen CSR model?

Implementation

What has been accomplished thus far in implementing your model?

What challenges and barriers have you faced thus far? Is time a factor and how have you dealt with it?

What seems to be working well thus far in implementing your model?

Are you optimistic about being able to fully implement your model? Why or Why not?

Do you have an evaluation plan with goals and benchmarks to aid your implementation efforts?

What, if any, role has technology-based strategies helped in the implementation of your model?

Affects of Being Rural

How has the rural context of your school and community helped and/or hindered progress?

Has the community or members of the community helped or hindered your program?

What role has the district office, intermediate service units, or the state education agency played?

How have other organizations contributed significantly to this effort?

Interview Protocol
(Second Visit)

Name _____ Date/Time_____

School _____ Position _____

Scope of CSRD Program

From your position, what is the present scope of the CSR project?

Is the present scope in keeping with your understanding of the original plans and/or your expectations?

Accomplished Since Last Visit

What specifically has been accomplished since my last visit to this school?

Where would one best observe the changes that have occurred to present?

Interviewee's Role

What role have you played in the implementation of the CSR plans?

Are you satisfied with the part you have played to present?

Implementation Factors

What factors have contributed to progress and/or lack of progress to date?

Developer's Role

What role has the developer played to present in implementing your CSR plans?

Remaining Issues

What issues still remain unresolved and have and will have a continuing influence in the implementation of the CSR? (e.g., time, overload, resistance, fragmentation of efforts, lack of funds, rural isolation, low aspirations, accessible technical support, up-to-date computer technology, lack of community support)

Future Plans

What are the next logical steps for implementing your CSR plans in Years 2 & 3?

Interview Goals

- Reconfirm scope of CRM components/plans
- Ascertain what has been accomplished since last visit
- Determine what role, if any, the interviewee played
- Surface factors that contributed to progress and/or lack of progress
- Ascertain what role, if any, the developer has played in progress to date
- Determine what, if any, significant issues remain in implementing CSR
- Determine what remains to be done and future plans (Yrs. 2 & 3)

Appendix G

Rural Case Study Data Sheet

Name of School: _____ Date: _____

Telephone #: _____ Fax #: _____ E-mail: _____

Principal: _____ Superintendent: _____

School Related Data

Total School Enrollment (99-00): _____ Enrollment by Grades (99-00): _____

P/Kdg: ____	Grade 4: ____	Grade 9: _____
Kdg: _____	Grade 5: ____	Grade 10: _____
Grade 1: ____	Grade 6: ____	Grade 11: _____
Grade 2: ____	Grade 7: ____	Grade 12: _____
Grade 3: ____	Grade 8: ____	Special Ed: _____

Percentage of pupils eligible for free and reduced lunch: _____

Percentage of pupil turnover in a school year: _____

Average class size: _____ Average daily attendance percentage rate: _____

Per pupil expenditure: _____ Pupil/Teacher ratio: _____

Percentage of school budget supported by state aid: _____

Age of school building: _____ Any major upgrading of facilities?: Y N Year: ____

Teacher Related Data

Number of professional staff: ____ Number of unlicensed support staff: _____

Average teacher salary: _____ Average teacher experience: _____

Average number of years devoted to teaching in rural schools: _____

Number of teachers that turnover per year: _____

Community Related Data

Population of community: _____ Principal source(s) of income: _____

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

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