

**The Little District That Could:
The process of building district-school trust**

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Paper Presented at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Meeting, April 2006, San Francisco, California

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Trust has been found to be an important component of school effectiveness, yet remains understudied especially in terms of school-central office relations. Using mixed methods in a case-study design, this research illustrates how the lack of trust, which often remains undiscussable in school reform, was surfaced and then began to be addressed by a multi-shareholder district design team. The study is significant in illustrating that focusing on building trust between districts and schools may be an essential first step in achieving and sustaining district reform.

Keywords: Trust; district-wide reform; district central office; district capacity

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Few things help an individual more than to place responsibility upon him, and to let him know that you trust him.

Booker T. Washington

Trust is an important component of school effectiveness and an integral part of positive school leadership (Daly & Chrispeels, 2005; Daly, 2004; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). Though the extant scholarship on trust in schools provides insights into effective leadership (Daly, 2004; Sergiovanni, 1992) and within-school site relationships (Geist & Hoy, 2004; Bryk & Schneider, 2002, 2003; Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Goddard, Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001) little is known about the processes by which trust is constructed between school sites and the district office.

In this case study, we argue that trust is a central element of social capital in a school system that can open clearer lines of communication, thereby increasing the likelihood of systemic change. Some scholars argue that the absence of large-scale change limits educational opportunities for some and exacerbates existing inequities in society (Apple, 2001; McLaren, 1989). Particularly in the present era of *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*, a climate of district trust needs to be established for changes to occur. In short, high levels of communication, collegiality and openness between central office and site administrators are essential ingredients of effective districts (Fullan, 1999; Leithwood, Lawrence, & Sharratt, 1998). However, the hierarchical structure of school systems may not foster simple trust relationships. Therefore much of the responsibility for initiating, building and sustaining trust falls onto those in positions of power and authority (Kochanek, 2005; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). This case study examines the process through which one district experiences this development.

This research makes an important and timely contribution to the literature by focusing on those trust-building processes initiated by a multi-shareholder team in a Southern California district. First, we discuss the literature on district-level reform, school trust, and trust research across other disciplines. Second, we describe our case-study design including methods of data collection and analysis. Third, we present our findings on the development of trust in this district. Finally, we discuss the significance of this study to the field of education.

Theoretical Framework

The role of the district central office, until recently, is generally absent in discussions of educational innovation and school reform (Bogatch & Brooks, 1994). Furthermore, the central office is often seen as an impediment to innovation (Berends, Bodilly, & Kirby, 2002; Hightower, Knapp, Marsh & McLaughlin, 2002; Bogotch, Brooks, Macphee, & Riedlinger, 1995), and the literature on educational reform generally focuses on the school site as the most effective unit of change (e.g., Hess, 1999; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). However, recent studies suggest the central office can be an active agent for systemic reform (Firestone, Mangin, Martinez, Polovsky, 2005; Elmore & Burney, 1998, 1999; Libler, 1992; Pajak & Glickman, 1989; Paulu, 1989). Studies are also showing that a prerequisite to deep and sustainable change is the development of trust between district and schools. Bryk & Schneider (2002, 2003) found that trust can influence reform efforts. Our study draws from these two bodies of literature: district reform and trust.

District-wide Reform

With only a few exceptions (Chrispeels & Pollack, 1991, Murphy & Hallinger, 1982, Coleman & LaRoque, 1990) until the late 1990s, most literature on educational reform

focused on the school site as the unit of change. Then, Elmore and Burney's (1998, 1999) seminal research on District Number Two emphasized the district's role in school reform efforts. Anderson (2003) supports this view and notes that "these cases confirmed the evidence that districts do matter, and that at least some districts 'matter' in powerfully positive ways for student performance" (p.5). McLaughlin and Talbert (2003a; 2003b) studied reforming districts in San Diego and the San Francisco Bay area and found that strong central office support has the potential to improve students' learning outcomes. A weak central office, on the other hand, will actually limit a school's reform progress. Research suggests that reform efforts are more likely to be successful when adopted district-wide and supported by district administrators.

A review of the literature reveals five key elements shared by districts that were successful in achieving reform: (1) a district-wide vision and strategy to improve instruction; (2) data-based inquiry and accountability; (3) a commitment to the development of and investment in teachers and staff; (4) collaboration among and communication between all shareholders; and (5) trust.

District-wide vision and strategy. Successful reforming districts had a district-wide vision and strategy to improve instruction. The literature suggests that effective districts created a change strategy based on instructional and curricular goals and created systems to support the change (Chrispeels & Gonzalez, 2006; Elmore & Burney, 1998; Fullan Bertani & Quinn, 2004; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003a; Togneri & Anderson, 2003; Chrispeels, 2001). They shared a vision of instructional renewal and were committed to the goal of improving student achievement (Hightower et al, 2002, p. 5). McLaughlin and Talbert (2003b) found that teachers and principals' perceptions of

district professionalism, or the district's "commitment to student learning, high expectations and professional development resources for schools, and educators' pride in working in the district", affected their "motivation, willingness, and capacity to engage a reform agenda" (p. 174). When the district maintained a focus on teaching and learning and provided instructional supports, teachers and principals were more likely to support the change (Id.).

Elmore and Burney found that the instructional improvement strategy in New York City District Number Two continuously "drives and shapes" the district's routine administrative functions (Elmore & Burney, 1998). Thus, the organizational structure of the district constantly adapts to the effort to improve instruction. Elmore and Burney argue that there are three key assumptions embedded in this concept of "continuous improvement": 1) The district must have a strategy for improving instruction; 2) the process of improvement in the district is goal-driven; and 3) the district has a system to measure progress towards goals and adjust strategy (p. 4).

Data-based inquiry and accountability. Another theme from the literature on district-wide reform strategies is that effective districts actively collect data and use it as the driving force behind their improvement plans. Elmore and Burney (1998) suggested that districts create systems for monitoring school performance and use this information to adjust their goals and strategies. A district must also pay close attention to the communities in which they are housed, as one district administrator said, "that's part of strategic planning...you do an internal and external scan... So you're creating your future, you're not reacting" (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003a, p.19). Similarly, McLaughlin and Talbert found that the districts in San Diego and the San Francisco Bay

area designed systems for data collection and analysis, set reform goals based on these internal and external assessment strategies, and assumed accountability for student achievement among all shareholders (2003a, 2003b).

Professional development. Another theme that emerges from the literature on district wide reform strategies is a commitment to the development of and investment in teachers and staff. Research on several reforming districts found that all employed some form of professional development in their reform initiatives (Hightower, et al., 2002). The most valuable professional development programs were not the traditional one-time workshop approach, but were district-wide programs, sustained over time, that focused on teaching and learning. One administrator of a successful district reported, “Professional development must be comprehensive, not just the feel-good flavor of the month... We look to address issues in depth” (Togneri & Anderson, 2003, p.6).

Collaboration and communication among shareholder. Literature suggests collaboration and communication among shareholders optimizes the professional expertise of all participants. Effective districts “have established many ways to expand and exercise their teachers’ professional expertise among colleagues as well as in the classroom” (Hightower et al., 2002, p. 5). Grade-level meetings and school leadership teams are becoming common at many sites and have been shown to be important structures for focusing the school on teaching and learning and improving achievement (Chrispeels & González, 2006; Chrispeels, Castillo & Brown, 2000). When school professionals can leave the bounds of their school sites, they create “districtwide communities of practice. These communities embrace considerable variation in expertise and perspective, which the districts can exploit as an instructional resource rather than

treating as a liability of impediment” (Hightower et al., 2002, p. 195). Furthermore, the high-stakes accountability system of *No Child Left Behind* may give many districts the impetus to share leadership and decision-making.

Being explicit about what constitutes effective communication and collaboration is an important process. Some leaders may point to groups working on routine tasks and joint development of conventional guidelines as evidence of a collaborative culture. While positive, these congenial norms will unlikely lead to meaningful reform that impacts student achievement (Dufour, 2003). Also, traditional top-down approaches tend not to foster collaborative relationships. Wimpelberg (1987) suggests an alternative model, where central office leaders and principals both have a hand in decision-making about academic instruction. This approach extends collaboration beyond simple professional cooperation toward a culture of genuine respect for individual expertise and members’ strengths. However, prerequisite to the broader lines of communication that build collaborative cultures is the development of trust among a district’s leadership. The subsequent sections define this concept and how it has been studied in education and in other disciplines. First, we turn to our research definition of trust.

Trust

One common conception across most definitions of trust is a notion of *vulnerability* (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). For example, Rotter’s (1967) work described trust in the communicative context viewing it as an *expectancy* that another’s word or promise could be relied upon. Those who trust others have certain expectancies and are vulnerable to broken promises. On the other hand, Mishra (1996) held trust to be one party’s belief that the entrusted possess qualities of (1) competency, (2) reliability,

(3) openness and (4) concern. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's (1998) extensive review of the literature identified five primary components necessary for studying trust. Their description observed trust as one party's willingness to be vulnerable to another, but only because they believe in the honesty, benevolence, openness, competence and reliability of the other party. Similarly, Daly (2004) conceptualized trust as one's willingness to participate in a relationship that involves being vulnerable to another person. His research used eight sub-constructs to understand trust: risk, communication, benevolence, reliability, competence, integrity, openness and respect. For this study, we employ Daly's (2004) aggregated conception of trust as a research definition because it encompasses most versions of other trust descriptions and has been used in a study of trust in several school districts.

Multi-Disciplinary Conceptions of Trust. Trust is a relatively new topic in school research with origins in other disciplines including psychology (Rotter, 1967), political science (Putnam, 2000), sociology (Coleman, 1990), and economics (Fukuyama, 1995). The empirical investigation into trust began with Rotter (1967), whose interest in individuals' trust toward various authorities such as parents, government and media led him to develop a trust scale to measure people's attitudes.

Fukuyama (1995) also recognized trust as an important feature of society. In particular, he views trust as an essential component for sustaining efficient and innovative systems, arguing that economic structures with low degrees of trust typically stifle creativity and incur substantially higher transaction costs especially for monitoring and surveillance between employer and his employee. Fukuyama considers trust to be an invaluable form of social capital that binds economic relationships and structures:

Trust is the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest and cooperative behavior, based on commonly shared norms, on the part of other members of that community. Those norms can be about deep “value questions like the nature of God or justice, but they also encompass secular norms like professional standards and codes of behavior (Fukuyama, 1995, p. 24).

Research in the area of human motivation found that employees’ trust levels were related to their sense of autonomy (Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1986, cited in Deci & Ryan, 1987). Perceptions of high autonomy support in the workplace promoted higher employee self-esteem and greater trust levels. For instance, subordinates with control-oriented managers had less overall trust in their organization than those with autonomy-supporting managers. While these researchers are careful to note the lack of *causal* findings, they maintain that interpersonal contexts are important factors for the success of entire organizations as well as the immediate environment. Other research indicates that higher degrees of trust are related to employees’ inclination to work harder for organizational goals (Kalleberg, 2002).

The theory of social capital provides the foundation for much of the available literature on trust in schools (Coleman, 1990, 1988). Social capital has generally enjoyed positive linkages to academic achievement and other school related psychosocial factors in educational research (Dika & Singh, 2002). From a sociological perspective, Coleman (1990, 1988) argues that social capital is attained in three observable ways: (1) through the development of trust (2) by the formation of group norms with sanctions, and (3) through information sharing. In particular, Coleman views what he refers to as *trustworthiness* as the implicit under girding for other forms of social capital. He suggests that “without a high degree of trustworthiness among the members of the group, the institution could not exist — for a person who receives a payout early in the sequence

of meetings could abscond and leave others with a loss” (1988, p.103). Hence, the presence of trust serves to establish an environment through which other forms of social capital may develop. Consistent with Coleman’s framework, the next section demonstrates that much of the available literature recognizes trust as a fundamental resource for generating social capital in schools.

Relational Trust. Recent inquiries into trust suggest it is an important ingredient for school effectiveness (Daly & Chrispeels, 2005; Tschannen-Moran, 2004; Bryk & Schneider, 2002, 2003). One widely cited study of school trust argues that researchers can better understand how schools function by examining those routine, social exchanges that occur within schools (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Bryk & Schneider (2002, p. xiv) note that “the character of these social exchanges is especially salient in times of broad scale change”. Using case study methods and longitudinal statistical analyses, they observed school effectiveness at more than 400 Chicago elementary sites over a ten-year period. Controlling for other factors such as race and socio-economic status, the study found a significant relationship between student achievement and schools’ level of trust.

Trust emerged as a salient issue when the authors asked Chicago area elementary school principals and teachers about how they perceived their schools with regard to integrity, respect, personal regard, and confidence. The trust developed through ongoing, daily social exchanges in schools, *i.e. relational trust*, emerged as a key variable for understanding school achievement, especially in the high-stakes educational climate in which they conducted their research. For instance, Bryk and Schneider (2003) note:

The presence of relational trust, however, moderates the sense of uncertainty and vulnerability that individuals feel as they confront such demands. When trust is strong, individual engagement with reform does

not feel like a call for heroic action. In this sense, relational trust is a catalyst for innovation (p.33).

Trust serves as a lubricant for reform and organizations characterized by high degrees of trust are better able to efficiently address and solve problems publicly. Moreover, high levels of trust allow members to collectively and voluntarily act when necessary, and sustain the ethical and moral imperatives needed to push forward the best interests of the organization (Bryk & Schneider, 2003).

Faculty Trust. Perceptions of high trust within a school have been tied to teachers' sense of a collaborative work environment, engagement in organizational citizenship behaviors, and improvement in academic productivity (Tschannen-Moran, 2004; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998). Organizational citizenship behaviors refer to teachers' willingness to exceed their formal roles, going above and beyond their job description without expectation of compensation (Tschannen-Moran, 2003). Though not directly related to positive principal leadership, Tschannen-Moran (2003) reported that levels of organizational citizenship within schools are correlated with teachers' trust in the principal. Other studies have examined within-school faculty trust at both elementary (Geist & Hoy, 2004; Goddard et al., 2001; Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001) and secondary levels (Hoy, Smith & Sweetland, 2002; Hoy, Sabo, & Barnes, 1996; Tarter, Bliss & Hoy, 1989).

Faculty trust refers to teachers' collective "willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest and open" (Geist & Hoy, 2004, p.4). Specifically, Geist and Hoy (2004) was concerned with teachers' trust in colleagues, trust in the principal and trust in parents and students. Their independent variables included teachers' perceptions of enabling

structures, teacher professional behavior and academic press (referring to a school's emphasis on academic matters such as leadership, basic skills and teacher expectations). Multiple regression analyses from a sample of 4000 teachers across 146 elementary sites found that perceptions of enabling school structures predicted faculty trust in the principal. In addition, teachers' view of academic press best predicted trust in parents and students, and perceptions of professional teacher behavior significantly predicted faculty trust in colleagues. These findings contribute to an understanding of factors that may serve to create and sustain trusting cultures within school systems.

Trusting cultures ultimately create environments that support student achievement and literature suggests that there is a powerful relationship between teacher trust and student achievement. For example, Goddard et al.'s (2001) analysis of survey data on over 400 teachers and 2,500 elementary school students suggested that teacher trust significantly predicted students' reading and math scores. Interestingly, their study also found that teacher trust appeared to be linked with students' socio-economic status- the lower the students' socioeconomic status, the lower the teachers' perceptions of trust. These findings create a strong rationale of why a district may want to build trust. Others have addressed trust's importance through its relationship with the collective efficacy of school personnel.

District-School Trust. Turning to district level analyses, Daly (2004) suggested that the absence of trust in a district's central office leadership could create conditions where people feel vulnerable and unwilling to take risks. This dissertation study examined individual administrator level trust, hypothesizing that various facets of trust have a predictive relationship with perceptions of adaptive and technical leadership. The

study's data were compiled from a survey of 292 school site and central office administrators from 4 central and southern California school districts. Findings demonstrated participants' assessment of specific trust facets — risk, competence and respect, were significant predictors of both adaptive and technical leadership. Adaptive leadership in this study refers to a fluid and pragmatic style of management, fostering creativity, autonomy and collaboration. In contrast, technical leaders tend to rely on prescribed rules and bureaucratic norms.

While trust alone may not be enough for systems to sufficiently respond to current pressures of NCLB, its absence jeopardizes any deep, long-term attempts for systemic reform. Daly and Chrispeels (2005) contend development of collective trust in educational settings is a powerful, strengths-based resource for school improvement. Furthermore, organizations entrenched in low-trust cultures are more likely to become defensive in the face of challenge, less likely to pursue new ideas, and lack sufficient capacity to accomplish difficult goals (Fullan et al., 2004). In contrast to other work with individual and school level units of analysis (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, 2001), Fullan et al. (2004, p.24) argue for building trust at the district level suggesting educators ought to create “high-trust districts in which many schools are motivated and supported to engage in demanding work, able to withstand frustrations along the way, and persistent in their efforts to make reform doable and worthwhile”.

High-trust cultures, as in those schools from Bryk and Schneider's (2002) study, maintain a strong sense of collective efficacy, thus are better able to confront challenges adaptively and with minimal defensiveness. School systems have inherent in them “*structural dependencies*” where all members involved feel vulnerable (Bryk &

Schneider, 2002, p. 20). However, the burden to initiate and model trusting behavior falls onto those in higher positions of authority (Kochanek, 2005; Tschannen-Moran, 2004; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998). As evidenced by the literature, much of the research on school trust recognizes trust's fundamental importance for change, yet a question remains; how do we build trust?

Some have theoretically addressed the trust-building process in school organizations (Kochanek, 2005; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998). For example, Kochanek (2005) believes people have a predisposition to trust those socially similar to them, but social similarities (race, religion, etc.) alone cannot create trusting relationships. Repeated social exchanges are potentially more important for building trust and that engaging members in easy, low-risk activities can contribute by establishing moments of success and laying a foundation for mutual respect (Kochanek, 2005; Paulu, 1989). In addition, recognition of vulnerabilities by those in positions of authority and a commitment to relieve tension within an organization help create conditions necessary for change (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Finally, Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) argue that flexibility, increased interaction between a school and its community, and the recognition of emotional aspects of change are also key elements in the trust building process. Unfortunately, organizational literature often presents a static view of trust, that either it exists or does not- and fails to explore the different levels and multiple facets of trust and its growth over time (Kochanek, 2005). The present study aims to fill this gap in the research literature.

The Study

The development of trust is an essential part of educational systems and its cultivation is an intuitive feature of positive school leadership (Daly & Chrispeels, 2005; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). Though the extant scholarship on trust in schools provides insights into effective leadership (Daly, 2004; Sergiovanni, 1992) and within-school site relationships (Geist & Hoy, 2004; Bryk & Schneider, 2003, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Goddard, et al., 2001), research into the process of trust building between schools and district leadership has been addressed sparingly. In this study, we fill this gap by examining how a district multi-shareholder team learns that trust between the central office and its schools is necessary to engage the staff in systematic efforts to improve student achievement.

Secondly, the majority of the research about trust in schools employed survey methods of data collection relying on Likert-scale questions. In this study, a mixed-methods approach is used to study trust as a multi-faceted feature of educational systems and contextualizes the process of building trust at the district level. A focus on trust is a timely undertaking for many school districts as their systems undergo high levels of stress under the pressures of *NCLB* (Daly & Chrispeels, 2005). Based on the review of the literature several propositions frame this study: First, districts are essential to the process of sustained and continuous school improvement and for the district to play an effective role leading improvement efforts, trust must exist between the district and its schools. Second, building trust is a time consuming process with few road maps to show the way. Third, the greater a history of mistrust, the more arduous will be the efforts to rebuild trust.

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. In what ways does the district-university collaborative partnership influence trust development?
2. In what ways is trust built between district and schools?
3. Do perceptions of relational trust become more positive as a result of district efforts to build trust?

Context

The study was conducted as part of a three-year partnership between a university and a local school district, District Y. The purpose of this partnership was to assist the district in their improvement reform efforts at all levels of the system: district, schools, classrooms and families.

District-University Partnership. In the summer of 2003, the university started a partnership with District Y. A premise of this district-university partnership was that it was essential to include all district shareholders--administrators, teachers, parents, union and board--in their systemic reform efforts. All primary shareholders in a district must actively engage in the change process for systemic reform to occur because organizational learning requires the empowerment of all members of an organization (Senge, 1990; Marks & Printy, 2002). Thus, the district was required to form an ethnically diverse team that included teachers, principals, union representatives, parents, board members and district administrators. The university center led this multi-shareholder team and school site leadership teams in several training sessions and two summer workshops. The purpose of these trainings has been to foster leadership capacity

throughout the district and to increase its ability to meet the challenges posed by *No Child Left Behind*.

District Context. District Y is a K-8 district comprised of twelve elementary schools, four middle schools, one alternative school and one community day school. The population of the community in which the district is located is rapidly growing; there has been a 20% increase in new residents since 1990, bringing the population to 130,000 people. Along with the population growth, the diversity of the district has improved greatly. Until the early 1990s the district served a majority of White and middle class students, which comprised over 70% of the total student population (12,500). The district currently serves 16,000 students, Latinos (40%), African Americans (30%), and Whites (27%) are the three major ethnic groups and about 66% are low SES. Over 16% of students are English Language Learners (ELL). District Y has been labeled as a “Program Improvement” district because five subgroups (Students with Disabilities, African Americans, Latinos, ELL and Socioeconomic disadvantaged) failed to make the Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) required by *No Child Left Behind* (CDE, 2005). Thirteen out of the 18 schools are in Program Improvement, and two of those are also monitored by the State (SAIT) for decreasing their Academic Performance Index (API) scores during the last two years.

Method

We used a case study design (Yin, 2003) to examine the development of trust between the district office and school sites. The nature of our inquiry required mixed-method techniques to draw from a variety of data sources. A case study approach allows us to use multiple data sources and methods to get an in-depth understanding of the

development of trust. We focused on the perspectives of school site leaders and central office administrators to investigate trust deficiencies and trust building in this district. Open coding of rich, thick descriptions and interview data identified themes and patterns related to the trust building process. Triangulation of data and member checking procedures were carried out to develop data trustworthiness.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection occurred over a two-year period immediately after the partnership began in 2003. During this time, data were collected from multiple sources including quantitative surveys, multiple interviews, district members' reflections, primary and secondary sources, and observation field notes.

Interviews. Interviews comprised a significant portion of our data. Over the course of the partnership, our center conducted three rounds of semi-structured interviews (Patton, 1990) that centered upon individual and team learning, district culture and trust. We conducted individual interviews with members of the district multi-shareholder team at two different points during the partnership: in the Fall of 2003 and in the Spring of 2005. The first series of interviews were designed to understand the etic culture of District Y during the early period of the partnership. The protocol used in the second round of interviews asked open-ended questions about leadership, district changes and other practices that related to the partnership. Specific questions about trust were not included in either interview guide, however, two participants mentioned issues of trust in the first interview and 9 mentioned trust in the second interview. After the interview data were analyzed and trust emerged as one of the main themes, a follow-up interview protocol was designed to get an in-depth understanding about the process of building

trust in District Y. Ten schools (8 elementary and 2 middle) were purposefully selected for the follow-up interviews: we conducted focus group interviews with 7 School Leadership Teams (SLTs) and three individual interviews with school principals in February of 2006. The SLTs were composed of teacher leaders and the principal, who were participating in four leadership trainings per year as part of the partnership with the university center. The three principals selected for the individual interviews were randomly selected from a total of 11 schools that were not participating in the training. Two principals were absent during the focus group interviews. Furthermore, the teacher leaders in the focus groups indicated they did not know about trust building activities between district and school administrators; and the principals were the main respondents. Interviews lasted approximately one hour and were audio-taped and verbatim transcribed. Because our study is mainly focused on trust between district and school administrators, we only analyzed the responses from principals. Therefore, our final analysis of the follow-up interview data included responses from 8 principals: 5 in focus groups and 3 individual interviews.

Observations and Document Analysis. Ethnographic observations of the multi-shareholder team's work throughout the partnership increased our understanding of the team's discussions and behaviors at different phases of trust building. From 2003 to 2005, our team of researchers observed and videotaped the district multi-shareholder team at the two university summer learning labs, team meetings in the district, administrators' retreats, and training sessions for seven school leadership teams that participated in professional development with the university partner. Field notes and video data were collected to analyze the members' interactions and discussions around

trust. In addition to these observations, a variety of documents were collected and analyzed to corroborate the interview and survey data. Documents collected included meeting minutes and agendas, power point presentations, charts and team member reflections from various meetings. Central office participants also provided our center with other relevant materials such as internal district trust surveys and district trust report cards discussed in management meetings. These documents were helpful in providing a more contextualized understanding of the trust-building process and represented tangible evidence of activities.

Surveys. Survey data from previous studies in this district (Daly & Chrispeels, 2005; Daly, 2004) were analyzed to triangulate the quantitative and qualitative data. An 80-item trust survey was administered twice. In the Spring of 2004, the survey was administered to 23 school administrators and 15 district administrators; it was readministered to 11 school administrators and 8 district administrators in the Fall of 2005. A 5-point Likert scale (1=never, 5=always) was used to measure different facets of trust within sites, and between district and schools. District administrators were asked to rate their own engagement in the behaviors identified with the trust facets (“self”) and rate how they perceive the engagement of site administrators (“other”). Site administrators were also asked to rate themselves (“self”) and the district administrators (“other”). The survey was validated in previous studies in four school districts (Daly, 2004). A factor analysis yielded eight facets of trust: openness, reliability, respect, integrity, risk, communication, benevolence and competence, showing high factor loadings and alpha reliability coefficients (see description of the trust facets in Table 1).

The differences in the administrators' perceptions of "self" and "other" were analyzed using T-tests for independent means.

[Table 1]

Data analysis was part of an ongoing, recursive process (Marshall & Rossman, 1999) by the team of researchers over a two-year period. Our initial reading of the data involved an inductive approach that would allow other important themes to emerge (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Transcripts of these interviews were content analyzed to reveal similarities and variations among participants. After trust clearly emerged as a significant topic, we mined these sources for evidence of trust-related behaviors and designated codes according to each of the eight facets described by our research definition of trust (Daly, 2004). Throughout our analysis, it was "not the words themselves but their meaning that matters" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.56). Hence, our investigation was primarily concerned with the general presence of trust and its specific features as exemplified by behavior and less concerned with their mention. Trust facets that most frequently appeared were used to create trust themes. Member checking procedures were carried out as themes were shared with participants (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Results

Our qualitative and quantitative data yielded several important themes that will be fully discussed in this section: the history of relational trust between district and sites challenged by demographic changes in the community, how district leaders came to recognize the importance of trust, the most salient facets of district-school trust, the emergence of trust as a district focus, how district personnel went about developing trust

between central office and school sites, and how site administrators are responding to initial efforts from the central office towards trust building.

A History of Trust and Mistrust

Emerging from the interviews, documents, and observation data were trust themes of communication, risk and openness between site administrators and central office leaders. While the superintendent referred to the focus on trust as a “serendipitous” emergence, trust appeared to be on the minds of district Y leaders for some time. In fact, issues of trust in the district were early introduced in interviews prior to the beginning of the partnership. For instance, one multi-shareholder team member described a lack of trust among the members of the team.

Further interviews, document reviews and observations also revealed that the lack of trust between district and schools was fueled by the rapid demographic changes in the community. The central office was unable to address the facility and instructional needs of the schools to serve the incoming student population, which was a majority of Latinos and African Americans. The rapid growth required the district to adopt a four-track year round schedule, which requires $\frac{1}{4}$ of the staff and students to be off-track at any one time. This system, as other research shows, confounds communication and professional development schedules (Chrispeels & González, 2006). While the lack of trust between district office and schools was evident in the preliminary interviews, it was not fully recognized as a main issue in the early work with the university. Indeed, trust was fully surfaced and further embraced by the district team in the summer of 2004.

Emergence of Trust as an Issue

Trust became one of the district's foci in the summer of 2004, when the university center held a three-day learning lab for its four partner districts. The purpose of this workshop was to present diverse research-based models to the multi-shareholder teams and assist them in the challenges posed by *No Child Left Behind*. District Y attended this workshop, sending a team comprised of one district administrator, four school principals and one assistant principal. Dissimilar to other participating districts, District Y's Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent for Educational Services did not attend. During this event, the university center debriefed the results of Daly's (2004) trust study, as referred to in the literature review. The survey used in this study indicated that there was a lack of trust between site and district administrators in all of the partner districts, including District Y. The evidence of the lack of trust between school sites and district office resonated with District Y's team. As one of the site administrators suggested, "the biggest issue is between schools and the district office". There were substantial differences between how site and district administrators rated themselves and how they rated others in the central office or school sites (Daly, 2004). For example, both principals and central office administrators tended to rate themselves higher the other, with the largest perceptual differences occurring in the area of risk.

The principals on the leadership team described feeling "isolated" from the district office: they could not be open about asking for help because they were afraid of reprisal (Summer Forum 2004, 02.2.23).

In every meeting that we've had whenever we discussed the barriers to student achievement, the idea of communication has come up or lack of it, or problems with it. Whether that is at the school level or between site and district. Whether it be among administrators. That issue of communication has always come up.

And then when we fine tune that and look at it more closely, the trust issue comes up under the communication piece. But we haven't had open, honest communication. We don't trust each other as much as we should, but we are afraid of retribution if we say something to the wrong person—then maybe we won't get what we need from that department. (District administrator #1, 2nd NCLB interviews, 7).

The team also described feeling like district administrators were “giving tasks but not support”. For example, one principal of a low performing school believed the district office did not “take responsibility; it is my job on the line” encouraging feelings that “it is our sole responsibility to improve”.

During the summer workshop, a middle school principal commented, “Our district prides itself on non-confrontation rather than what is best for our kids.” Another district administrator noted that “If you don't have trust then people aren't working together collaboratively”, which was perceived as potentially affecting student achievement. These comments were confirmed by the survey data, which suggests that poor communication and risk-taking were central to the trust issue. The university consultants working with the team during the summer learning lab, helped the team formulate a plan that could begin to address communication, trust and coherence and support achievement (video data, 6/04). The plan proposed that the superintendent and assistant superintendents would adopt schools and make regular site visits to foster learning communities through networking and coaching. The team hoped that these regular site visits would enable principals to share needs and gain the support of the district office. The following comments from a district administrator illustrates these feelings:

So that [district administrators] get involved in the learning process and so that some dialogue could happen. We don't currently have a structure where trust can be expressed. There would be modeling and coaching and professional dialogue

between the central office and the school. Superintendents will have better knowledge about the needs of the sites....So we will leave here with a plan to increase communication so that we can raise student achievement through instructional supervision processes that improve trust and coherence.

The team determined that the site visits “will be about learning... Their [superintendents’] presence there will benefit morale” (school principal, Summer Forum 2004). Adapting the book title “The Little Engine that Could,” the team put together a power point presentation for the administrative retreat that was to be held in August 2004 to present their plan for the district office to conduct regular site visits. The feelings of trust/mistrust were not actively raised in the presentation, but the plan to improve communication and visit sites was readily accepted by the superintendent and assistant superintendents.

Central office becomes aware of trust as an issue. In the Fall of 2004, the university reported the results of the first trust survey to the central office administrators, including the superintendent, who had not attended the summer learning lab. Results of survey data indicated higher levels of trust within schools (4.21 total trust mean) than those between district and schools (3.54 total trust mean). As can be seen in Tables 2 and 3 below, these findings were consistent across all trust facets (openness, reliability, respect, integrity, risk, communication, benevolence and competence).

[insert tables 2 & 3]

Interview and observational data indicated that the survey data surprised some members of the district management team who perceived themselves to be acting in more trustful ways than the results of the survey indicated. One central office administrator shared,

And I remember when that first time out I was sitting with these people day after day, year after year supporting them as many of the complaints that come out of the schools end up on my lap and I try to resolve them and I call them and communicate frequently. How could they not trust me?

One district administrator responded that the results of the survey “validated what a lot of us already felt”. Another district administrator reported, “We apparently had our heads in the sand because we were shocked”. Despite these mixed reactions, the district administrators agreed with the multi-shareholder team that the lack of trust in the district was a barrier to the district’s goal that all children can learn and they pledged to address the issue. The central office accepted the plan of the multi-shareholder team and committed itself to the process of formally developing trust in the whole district. The following section analyzes this process.

District Actions to Improve Trust

District Y engaged in a year-long effort to build trust after the lack of trust between site and central office leadership surfaced as a barrier to improving student achievement. Once trust emerged as an issue in the district, the superintendent assigned the responsibility of developing trust to two assistant superintendents. The data suggests three major shifts in their approach to relationships with schools were particularly salient in District Y’s effort to build trust. The first was a shift in the content of management meeting activities (e.g., grand conversations, trust report card, “kudos”). The second was increase in central office visits to the school sites. The third was the implementation of district-wide summits.

Management meetings. The district office dedicated all of the district’s administrative meetings (attended by central office administrators, principals and

assistant principals) to building trust. Traditionally, management meetings were used to disseminate administrative information and discuss routine policies of the district, but the central office used these meetings as a forum to discuss different areas of trust in the district while communicating other administrative information through memos. One site principal describes these meetings in this way:

We've been having discussions about leadership in our management team meetings about trust and communication. So we're engaging in ongoing norm setting and defining responsibilities.

Grand conversations. During the meetings, specific facets of trust were discussed. For example, central office personnel, principals, assistant principals, and classified managers were divided into small discussion groups to engage in conversations on what explicitly was lacking in the district. For example, in what ways was the district not encouraging risk taking, as evidenced by survey results? Also, what could improve communication between school sites and the central office? For District Y, the issue of trust was framed as a barrier to student achievement because principals were too distrustful of district administrators to ask for help (District administrator #1, 2nd NCLB interviews, 7). In the course of the management meetings, “open and honest communication” emerged as an area that needed work in the district. The district determined that they would create norms around “open and honest communication”. One of the norms the management team created in this area is “care enough to confront” which holds that when conflict arises, district members will communicate with one another professionally, rather than ignoring conflict, gossiping, or otherwise acting in an unprofessional manner (*Id.*).

Making the grade. A significant activity early in this process was a District Y trust report card. Site administrators engaged in conversations about the different aspects of trust that characterize their district and came to consensus in groups about what grade the district earned for different aspects. A trust report card was developed in the eight areas of trust from principals' perceptions of trust district-wide. Three of the lowest trust grades, open, communication and risk were identified and became the focus of subsequent management meetings.

Kudos. At the beginning of each monthly meeting, the central office made efforts to recognize the contributions and effectiveness of an individual administrator each month. Here, a "kudos" bar is given by one member to another in appreciation of the person's contribution in the district. The recognized administrator is then responsible for passing the candy bar onto another individual at the following meeting. The first person that the assistant superintendent recognized was the leadership team member who was the most instrumental in bringing the trust issue to the table. The assistant superintendent's choice to recognize this person was a particularly strong symbol of the district office's dedication to improving trust in District Y.

Central office site visits. The district office supported the leadership team's plan to conduct regular visits to the school sites in order to mentor the principals. The superintendent and three assistant superintendents divided the district's schools into clusters for regular visits. The primary goal of these visits was to "minimize the disconnect" between central office and schools. Specifically, visits were designed to initiate and sustain frequent contact and improve communication between central office and school sites. One district administrator reported, "I think one of the real goals is to be

far more active in mentoring and working with the principals who in turn will work with their staffs and be visible for the staffs, too.” The central office wanted to be a more supportive presence district wide. During these visits, district administrators and site leaders discussed curricular and logistical issues at their site. Superintendents also observed classrooms, spoke with teachers and other personnel and modeled staff meetings. Each school is visited for a minimum of two hours a month by a central office administrator.

District summits. One important consequence of District Y’s focus on trust were district-wide summits. In these events, each school brought a team of administrators, teachers and parents to discuss issues affecting students in the district. Participants were divided into groups to examine district needs and practices and set district wide as well as school level goals. Furthermore, a middle school summit was held to address the particular issues affecting the district’s middle schools. These summits improved communication across the district and gave all shareholders in the district a chance to collaborate. One site administrator reported, that parents and teachers “were honored by that and respected by that. And their input was actually valued” at the summits.

Principals’ Reactions to Trust

In the Winter of 2006, the trust survey was readministered and nine principals were interviewed to assess perceptions about trust and the central office’s efforts to build more trusting relations. As trust became the district’s main focus, we predicted that the gap between perceived levels of trust in the district would narrow due to the trust-building initiatives implemented by the multi-shareholder team. We compared the results of the first and second surveys to learn how the various facets of trust changed as a result of

these initiatives. The T-test analysis indicated no significant differences in how site administrators perceived themselves to be acting in 2004 and 2006. However, significant differences were found across all facets in how site administrators perceive the district office to be enacting trust. Furthermore, the mean scores in each facet indicate that site administrators perceived themselves at almost the same levels as the district office. Table 4 below displays the results of the survey administered to site administrators.

[Insert Table 4]

The surveys to district administrators indicate that, similar to the site administrators, the district office does not perceive themselves to be acting in significantly different ways. However, they perceive the site administrators to be acting significantly differently for all facets except risk. These results suggest that the district's actions towards trust-building may have positively changed the perceptions of the sites toward the central office. Table 5 below shows the findings from the district administrators' surveys. The response rate on the second survey was disappointing and we are careful not to over-interpret these results, however, the data are directional across the board. There were no significant differences in how they perceive themselves to be acting, but they do see "the other" acting in a more trusting way, suggesting the survey is sensitive to changes in practice.

[Insert Table 5]

Two salient reactions to District Y's focus on trust emerged from the data. One primary finding suggests district leaders recognize that building trust between the central office and schools is an important and worthwhile endeavor. For example, one elementary school principal perceived that building "an environment of trust and

integrity” is an important and timely first step for improving district-site relationships. A second theme suggests that while district leaders understand the need for trust development, many expressed doubts about progress made. Unfortunately, site and central office administrators characterize District Y as an organization that has lacked trust for years among its leadership and that its schools consequently often work in isolation. Such conditions require sustained efforts by both parties if meaningful change is to occur district-wide. These mixed reactions are captured by an elementary principal and a middle school principal in the following quotes, respectively,

I think that by digging [trust] out and bringing it to the surface and saying, this is a problem and we need to focus on it, I think that was the biggest part right there, just getting it out there and getting it in the open, and then once everybody was honest about it, then we can start working on it.

I still only trust the same people I trusted two years ago. I’m sure, at least it hasn’t gotten any worse so that’s good you know? And I think they’re making strides but you know when you hadn’t had it in years its hard to just say “ ok in the next two months we’re going have this trust and its all going be perfect.” Life doesn’t work that way you know.

In spite of the initiation of the site visits, interviewees also feel that the central office still plays a mostly peripheral role in relation to school sites. School leaders tend to keep to themselves and often feel isolated from other schools and the district office. Site administrators suggest a more collaborative spirit could be nurtured if central office administration took steps to develop deeper, more personal relationships with their school-level administrators. One middle school principal expressed the need for the central office to take a more personal interest,

I think they’ve all forgotten a human.... because we’re all so busy and its all about education but it starts with people. But I think you need to know your people before you can have the trust. I don’t think they take the time to get to know the people that work with them and for them. If you’ve ever worked with them, like (a

district administrator) I think he's wonderful and I respect him and I trust him but it's because I worked for him at the school as a teacher under him and has the person who took me out of his office to become an administrator. So we have a relationship and I don't think you can have trust without a relationship.

As the above quote suggests, school leaders believe trust should start with the district office initiating less rigid relationships, which confirms the importance of relational trust identified by Bryk and Schneider (2003). This relationship would be different from current central office and site interactions, which often resemble a business-like, employer to employee relationship. Moreover, many site leaders perceive a district culture that does not yet encourage multiple perspectives of leadership in spite of what central office leaders promote at various events. School leaders believe that only select members' voices in the district with established relationships to the central office are heard. Some of the interviewees do not perceive District Y as an organization that allows voices to be heard. These beliefs in turn lead to a culture that discourages openness and risk taking. One site administrator shares her thoughts on this issue,

They talk at us, not with us. They'll give maybe two or three minutes to discuss what it is they want you to discuss but you're not getting a whole lot of relevancy out of it. Specifically, on the trust issue. That what we were...we did disseminate all the information that came from that on trust and we graded our district, we gave them A, B, C, D or F and then we picked a target area, then we brainstormed about what to do about the target area and within that target area. I don't know how valid the thing we came up with was. I know I kept my mouth shut.

Unfortunately, such perceptions narrow essential lines of communication between site and central office leadership and discourage the risk taking that is prerequisite for trust and necessary for genuine change.

On the other hand, many site administrators perceive the groundwork initiated by the central office as a positive step toward more trusting relationships as evidenced by the

results of a LEAD meeting survey about the district's focus on trust. During the middle of the school year, central office administrators developed a survey asking site leaders to anonymously share whether or not these trust activities should continue. The responses overwhelmingly favored proceeding with more activities that address trust. Some open-ended comments include,

This is a very necessary conversation. We cannot continue with the elephants in the room. Thank you for your skill and caring.

I would like to see more team/trust building activities so that we can actively recognize each others' strengths, contributions to (District Y).

I feel that it has been a valuable experience for LEAD to work together in creating the norms for the different areas. It allows us to get to know each other more at a personal level.

The trust of the (District Y) is important. Even though these activities can be difficult at the end of the day, I enjoy the small group meetings and the laughter. Thanks!

Data suggested that over the course of the school year, District Y's trust activities had some impact on how school and central office leadership perceived one another. For example, one elementary principal commented that after acknowledging trust as an issue, conversations tend to seem "less surface" and "more sincere".

The action that received the greatest support from principals appeared to be the central office site visits. Site leaders seem pleasantly surprised by these visits. Through these visits, school leaders felt they were able share with the central office unique issues at their site. They practice indicated respect and support for their positions in the district and felt that the central office showed concerns for their needs. School leaders took these opportunities to share with central office leaders problematic conditions at their schools

(e.g., plant facilities, equipment) as well as positive aspects of their school (e.g. innovative teaching). A middle school principal shares her support of these visits,

It's worked out well. I think its important that the teachers know that the upper administration is interested and wants to know what's going on and have more of a visible role on campus. Sometimes its hard coordinating your schedule because they come over differently but the plan is for them to come over.

Similarly, an elementary principal expresses his views on the site visits,

I just had a visit two days ago. Coming through and checking on our programs and talking to our staff and giving feedback to what they have viewed. I just love that because I think it's important. You don't want one sector of the district to be so isolated that they don't know what's happening on the campuses. And for a district of 16,000 which is a large elementary school district, I think that it's a great part of motivation for staff to see these people here.

These findings related to central office site visits are consistent with previous research supporting that more frequent contact and proximity between parties help build and sustain trusting relationships in school organizations. Our data suggest that a shift, albeit gradual, has taken place after district leaders in positions of authority shouldered the responsibility for initiating trust building through acknowledgement of school-level administrators as individuals, modeling risk-taking and recognizing their own vulnerabilities.

Discussion

Role of the Partnership in Surfacing Trust

Our first research question asked in what ways have the partnership brought the trust issue to the foreground. Findings from this study suggest that trust is often an under-the-surface issue, as revealed in several initial interviews. The evidence also indicates that the surveys and the presentation of the results in an aggregated format to all the multi-

shareholder teams at the summer learning lab pushed the issue to the surface in this district. The learning lab provided a safe forum for the issue to be openly discussed, for feelings to be vented, and for the teams to develop plans of actions to address their concerns. The presentation of trust survey data to the central office administrators by a neutral third party, the university, also allowed the administrators who had not attended the summer session to approach the data more openly, even if some were surprised by the findings. The data indicate that if trust is an issue, an external partner can help to surface an undiscussable in a way that allows some resolution. The trust survey allowed a 360 degree perspective (site to district, district to site) and also played a role in framing the issues for principals and administrators in a more objective way.

Steps for Trust Building

The second question, we explored was what steps the district took to build trust, an area previously understudied in the trust research literature. The literature on trust in schools suggests some ways in which trust can be cultivated between the adults in the school environment (Tschannen-Moran, 2004; Bryk & Schneider, 1998). However, as most researchers note, building trust takes time, a resource that educators often fall short of in these times of accountability and higher needs from their clientele – students and parents (Young, 2004).

An interesting finding from this study is the pro-activity of the central office once the issue of trust emerged. A critical step taken by the central office was to refocus monthly management issues from primarily information meetings to *grand conversations*. Research on high performing districts suggests that effective district wide communication was critical to improved performance (Hightower et al., 2003), which

suggests that implementing the grand conversations was an appropriate first step. In addition, the district realized it needed to actively recognize its site leaders for their work, hence the implementation of the *kudos awards*. The district was also willing to solicit ongoing feedback from site administrators and implemented a trust report card as a way of enhancing communication and monitoring progress. What may be lacking based on district studies, is the lack of programmatic coherence and therefore, the lack of consistent communication across this site. Examining the relationship between perceived lack of communication and district programmatic coherence represents an area worthy of further study.

Overall, findings from both qualitative and quantitative confirm the findings of Tschannen-Moran (2004) and others that trust between district and schools is multifacetic and multidirectional, and it is critical for the success of district-wide improvement initiatives. As Tschannen-Moran argues, trust requires “one’s willingness to be vulnerable to another based on the confidence that the other is benevolent, honest, open, reliable, and competent” (p. 17). As the findings from this study indicate, some site administrators still feel vulnerable and are not yet willing to trust fully. Yet others are willing to be more open and recognize the efforts being made by the central office staff to reach out.

Importantly, our study reveals that building trust is not just complex and multifacetic, it also involves collaborative practices between sites and district staff at multiple levels, not just isolated practices by certain offices (e.g., assistant superintendents). The presence of these collaborative practices has been confirmed as one of the hallmarks of effective districts (Togneri & Anderson, 2003; Hightower et al.,

2002). Tschannen-Moran (2004) argues that “because of the hierarchical nature of relationships within schools, it is the responsibility of the person with greater power to take the initiative to build and sustain trusting relationships” (p. 35). However, she acknowledges that trust can only occur when *both* parties are willing to accept the personal risk and vulnerability that trust entails. Also important are sufficient opportunities to engage in collaborative work, which can help to build trust.

Our study found that once the central office was perceived to be untrustworthy, initial attempts to build trust sometimes produced mixed reactions among the interested parties, confirming our hypothesis that building trust would be an arduous task. As Young (2004) notes, distrust has a tendency to be self-perpetuating and parties in an untrusting relationship can become suspicious of even the most benign words or actions. Tschannen-Moran (2004) stresses that it is easier for school leaders to build trust than to restore trust that has been broken. In this case study, many factors seemed to have influenced the lack of trust between the schools and the central office. Fostering relational trust will require authentic attempts and different structures that bring the active participation of schools with less control from district leaders. A close examination of the most salient facets of trust found in our study may provide another perspective to understand how trust can be constructed in this particular district.

Unfinished Business: The Challenge of Addressing the Multifacetic Aspects of Trust

Finally, this study focused on how participants, especially site administrators responded to the trust building efforts. From their responses, three facets of trust emerged as most salient in this study: communication, respect and risk. Each facet seemed to be affecting trust between administrators in this district, and these facets may be affecting the

successful functioning of the schools. Tschannen-Moran (2004) believes that school leaders need to seek authentic levels of trust, which can only happen as relationships develop and mature over time. She recommends that school leaders pay specific attention to the facets of trust when building relationships. We believe that, if leaders in this district want to engage in systemic reform initiatives, they will need to continue to pay close attention to these three facets and create the necessary structures for building optimal levels of trust (Wicks, Berman & Jones, 1999).

The Communication Challenge

All participants interviewed recognized the importance of having open lines of communication within the district. However, these data suggests the lines of communication between site and central office leadership still appear to need development. Site administrators tend to see central office leadership as “others” and still do not fully see central office as effectively understanding and supporting work at school sites. In addition, site administrators often attribute insufficient communication to the lack of common time. As one principal commented,

There are two big issues that are a challenge not just for us but for all organizations. One is trust so that people feel like they can share something without reprisal or recrimination and the other is communication and part of our struggle with communication. I know at the site level and the district is that we're fragmented in terms of that calendar [year-round schedule] and that has created challenges for us.

More frequent communication with central office may encourage increased risk taking from the sites. In the words of a site administrator, “communication in this district is a challenge... Give me a chance to say something nice”. Interview data reveal that site leaders want more open dialogue with central office administrators as well as involvement and explanation for district-wide decisions.

Respect

In short, a number of site leaders do not feel that they have a genuine voice in important decisions that impact their schools. They perceive the central office as engaging in much “lofty talk” but some are not convinced that the district will move beyond rhetoric. As one principal remarked, “The challenge is you can say something at the meeting and it can be warmly received but you don't really have the authority to move it forward”. He shares that while his opinions are warmly received in district meetings, his voice does not translate into authentic input. Lack of follow-through seems to be a reoccurring theme raised in interviews and is a critical component of the trust facet of integrity. These sentiments are supported by another principal’s remarks,

It just seems to me that there are some really simple things and it doesn't matter how many times we talk about them, some of the things just never seem to change, and maybe for good reason. But tell us what those good reasons are.

Willingness to Risk

These data indicate that, perhaps a consequence of insufficient communication, site administrators in District Y are generally not willing to take risks. Interviews and survey results indicate that the district’s culture may still discourage risk taking that could lead to genuine change. Some interviewees manifested a fear of “lingering resentment” and “repercussions”. People not willing to be vulnerable, perhaps due to prior understanding or district history. The lack of risk taking is consistent with a district leadership that is perceived to be short on communication and openness. As one central office administrator commented,

What the survey pointed out was a lack of security of our site people and willingness to take risk. If you are not willing to take a risk, that must

mean you are afraid to take a risk. And if you are afraid to take a risk, it means that you don't trust those that are above you to not have repercussions for the risks that you'd be taking and it came down to that whole issue of trust.

Since as Tschannen-Moran (2004) indicates both sides need to be willing to engage, it is not sure that sufficient collaborative work has been undertaken that would allow increases in willingness to be vulnerable. Moreover, central office administrators are charged with the task of opening up lines of communication and encouraging site leaders to more fully be honest and communicative. The district's grand conversations seem to be opening up possibilities, but it appears that most critical is central office's continuance and follow through on ideas shared and providing enough practice for both groups to modify previous perceptions.

Concluding Thoughts and Areas for Further Research

Given that mistrust has been developing over time, we are cautious in drawing definitive conclusions about the state of trust in the case district. However, some tentative lessons are suggested. First, the initial steps taken by the district are drawing positive responses, but seem unlikely to be sufficient to accomplish the task of restoring significant trust between sites and districts. Second, trust could be significantly enhanced if any of the ideas brainstormed during grand conversations were quickly followed-up by district staff. Actions must follow words if trust is to grow. Third, greater transparency in the decision-making process seems needed. The principals in this district do not seem to be clamoring for decision-making authority as much as they are asking for decisions to be made more openly and the thought process behind decisions articulated. Finally, the district may need to expand the conversations not just to aspects of trust, but also to the other components of effective districts. It could be that exploring principals' perceptions and

gaining their input into the district's vision for improvement, professional development needs, developing a data inquiry district and then taking action on their ideas could be the concrete actions that site administrators need to see coherence in communication that will lead to trust.

It is important to note that the findings from this study come from a single district case and are not generalizable to other districts. However, our study has found some concepts of trust that can inform theory and guide future research on trust between district and school leaders. Research is needed that focuses specifically on the trust constructs that we have elaborated here drawn from Daly (2004), Tschannen-Moran (2004), and Bryk and Schneider (1998). Further studies may deepen understanding of how the various facets of trust play out in other districts and broaden knowledge of their applicability to fostering trust between central offices and their schools, which will ultimately impact improvement reform efforts. Longitudinal studies are also needed to see if sustained efforts to build trust can yield positive outcomes in changed perceptions among adults and in actual gains in achievement gains for students.

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Table 1. The Eight Facets of Trust

Facet	Definition*	Trust survey measured how well self and others:
Risk	Willingness to risk is the degree of confidence one has in a situation of vulnerability.	Support risk taking in others, encourage others to continually learn and seek new ideas, acknowledge the vulnerabilities of others, and acknowledge and share vulnerabilities of self.
Competence	The possession and use of a level of skill; executing an individual's formal role responsibilities.	Set high standards for oneself and others, and complete tasks with a level of competence.
Reliability	In a situation of interdependence, when something is required from another person or group, the individual can be counted on to supply it.	Follow through on tasks, honor agreements and commit to stated goals.
Integrity	An acceptance of responsibility for one's actions, and a consistency between what we say and do.	Maintain congruence between words and actions, demonstrate behaviors that are consistent with beliefs, value honesty, take personal responsibility for actions/decisions and maintain levels of confidentiality.
Benevolence	The confidence that one's well-being or something one cares about will be protected and not harmed by the trusted party.	Remain aware of individual needs of staff, demonstrate understanding of others, engage in active listening and support new staff.
Communication	An act of interaction between individuals or groups in which a message is being transmitted.	Maintain open and effective lines of communication with staff, make self easily accessible to staff and establish norms that support respectful communication.
Openness	The extent to which relevant information is not withheld; it is a process by which people make themselves vulnerable to others by sharing personal information with others, a giving of oneself.	Encourage a climate safe for difficult situations, adjust for different communication styles and encourage staff to discuss feelings, worries and frustrations.
Respect	Exchanges marked by genuinely listening to what each person has to say and by considering those views, and recognizing the important role each plays in the system.	Ensure voiced concerns are addressed, reach out to other stakeholders in a meaningful way, feel the respect of staff and incorporate outside views into further action.

*Definition from Bryk & Schneider (2002, 2003); Daly (2004); Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2000).

Table 2. Trust survey, Site administrators, District Y, 2004

Trust Facet	N	Mean: Self		Mean: Other		Difference Between Means
		(Site Admin.)	Standard Deviation	(District Office)	Standard Deviation	
Benevolence	23	4.26	.35	3.47	0.62	0.79***
Communication	23	4.35	.54	3.59	0.72	0.76***
Competence	23	4.49	.46	3.93	0.67	0.56**
Integrity	23	4.57	.36	3.64	0.65	0.93***
Open	23	4.14	.63	3.09	0.88	1.05***
Reliable	23	4.45	.49	3.84	0.58	0.61**
Respect	23	3.92	.42	3.37	0.67	0.55**
Risk	23	3.95	.35	3.09	0.58	0.86***
Total Trust	23	4.27	.32	3.49	0.57	0.78***

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. The survey used a 5 point scale, 1="never", 5 = "always"

Table 3. Trust Survey, District office administrators, District Y, 2004

Trust Facet	N	Mean: Self		Mean: Other (Site Admin.)	Standard Deviation	Difference Between Means
		(District Office)	Standard Deviation			
Benevolence	15	4.04	.49	3.57	.53	0.47*
Communication	15	4.16	.43	3.62	.45	0.54**
Competence	15	4.40	.31	3.87	.56	0.53**
Integrity	15	4.59	.22	3.84	.58	0.75***
Open	15	3.96	.52	3.31	.57	0.65**
Reliable	15	4.38	.45	3.89	.67	0.49*
Respect	15	3.87	.36	3.51	.41	0.36*
Risk	15	3.67	.43	3.27	.63	0.40*
Total Trust	15	4.13	.27	3.61	.44	0.52***

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. The survey used a 5 point scale, 1="never", 5 = "always"

Table 4. Trust survey, Site administrators, District Y, 2004 and 2005

Trust Facet	N (2004)	Mean: 2004	Standard Deviation	N (2005)	Mean: 2005	Standard Deviation	Difference Between Means
Benevolence							
self	23	4.26	.35	11	4.22	.50	-0.04
other	23	3.47	.62	11	4.21	.39	0.74***
Communication							
self	23	4.35	.54	11	4.29	.51	-0.06
other	23	3.59	.72	11	4.38	.60	0.79**
Competence							
self	23	4.49	.46	11	4.29	.45	-0.20
other	23	3.93	.67	11	4.38	.33	0.45*
Integrity							
self	23	4.57	.36	11	4.68	.35	0.11
other	23	3.64	.65	11	4.48	.48	0.84***
Open							
self	23	4.14	.63	11	3.88	.53	-0.26
other	23	3.09	.88	11	3.67	.44	0.58*
Reliable							
self	23	4.45	.49	11	4.48	.39	0.03
other	23	3.84	.58	11	4.50	.53	0.66**
Respect							
self	23	3.92	.42	11	3.81	.48	-0.11
other	23	3.37	.67	11	3.88	.44	0.51*
Risk							
self	23	3.95	.35	11	3.86	.49	-0.09
other	23	3.09	.58	11	3.65	.47	0.56**
Total Trust							
self	23	4.27	.32	11	4.21	.36	-0.06
other	23	3.49	.57	11	4.14	.35	0.65***

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 5. Trust survey, District Office, District Y, 2004 and 2005

Trust Facet	N: 2004	Mean: 2004	Standard Deviation	N: 2005	Mean: 2005	Standard Deviation	Difference Between Means
Benevolence							
self	15	4.04	.49	8	3.96	.67	-0.08
other	15	3.57	.53	8	4.21	.47	0.64**
Communication							
self	15	4.16	.43	8	4.29	.51	0.13
other	15	3.62	.45	8	4.38	.15	0.76***
Competence							
self	15	4.40	.31	8	4.29	.51	-0.11
other	15	3.87	.56	8	4.38	.18	0.51**
Integrity							
self	15	4.59	.22	8	4.68	.91	0.09
other	15	3.84	.58	8	4.48	.46	0.64**
Open							
self	15	3.96	.52	8	3.88	.92	-0.08
other	15	3.31	.57	8	3.67	.27	0.36*
Reliable							
self	15	4.30	.45	8	4.48	.64	0.18
other	15	3.89	.67	8	4.50	.14	0.61**
Respect							
self	15	3.87	.36	8	3.81	.48	-0.06
other	15	3.51	.41	8	3.88	.34	0.37*
Risk							
self	15	3.67	.43	8	3.86	.29	0.19
other	15	3.27	.63	8	3.65	.42	0.38
Total Trust							
self	15	4.13	.27	8	4.21	.59	0.08
other	15	3.61	.44	8	4.14	.19	0.53***

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.