

ANALYZING SCHOOL PROMOTION

A Project Presented to:  
The Faculty of the School of Education  
California State University Channel Islands

In Partial fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Masters of Arts

by  
Monica M. Romero


May 2013

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Monica M. Romero

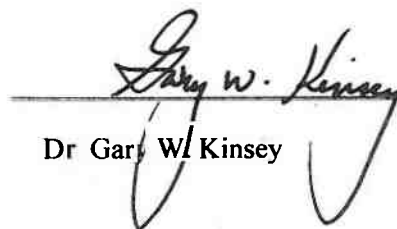
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5/14/13  
Mr James A. Martinez Date

5/15/2013  
Dr. Conrad J Rummel Date

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5/16/13  
Dr Gary W Kinsey Date

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Monica M. Romero  
Author(s) Name (Print)

Monica M Romero  
Author(s) Signature

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## Chapter 1

### **Introduction**

School promotion is an important milestone for students and their families. For this study I investigated a variety of school promotion processes and analyzed the factors that alter the construction and execution of the promotion process. According to Merriam -Webster Dictionary a promotion is, “the act or fact of being raised in position or rank or the act of furthering the growth or development of something” (The Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 1997). Throughout this paper I looked at how school promotions are viewed in education. I investigated four different schools, ranging in grades from kindergarten to 8<sup>th</sup> and plan to observe how the schools promote their students to the next educational institution. The four schools I observed vary in educational approach from a charter school to a private Catholic school. I looked at the organization, structure, human resources, stakeholder input, political, cultural, and symbolic aspects of school promotions.

The purpose of this study is to investigate and compare different types of schools to distinguish variations in school promotions for students and administration. I used Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal’s four frames of organization discussed in *Reframing Organizations* (2008) to analyze a school promotion and examine the significance. I compared how each frame is different at alternative school sites. I studied the culture and symbolism of promotions and promotion ceremonies. I also investigated the role politics plays in the process. Lastly, I inspected the structural aspects of a school promotion and the logistics to exiting a student to their next level of education.

Throughout my educational experience I have been connected to an array of schools with different approaches to education. I have found that cultural, political, human resources, and structural aspects of education can vary extensively according to the type of school and the variety of approaches to education. I have selected the process of school promotion, to analyze and compare the; culture, political, human resources, and structural frames because the momentous act of school promotion is a common thread in which all four schools share. However, each school setting contains different values and perspectives within the promotion process. I will shed light on the differences and commonalities, as the investigation continues.

According to Bolman and Deal,

Reframing requires an ability to think about situations in more than one way. We then introduce four distinct frames – structural, human resources, political, and symbolic – each logical and powerful in its own right. Together, they help us decipher the full array of significant clues, capturing a more comprehensive picture of what’s going on and what to do (Bolman and Deal, 2008, p. 6).

The school settings vary, making a comparison between traditional k-5 public school, a k-8 charter school, a private k-8 Catholic school, and a school which specializes in students with special needs ranging from kindergarten to 5<sup>th</sup> grade. All four of these schools have different populations of students and have different educational structures. The schools all have a variety of school policies and procedures to abide by. I observed how these board policies and regulations affect the implementation of school promotion and the student exiting process. I observed the roles of all stakeholders and the influences their roles play in the promotion procedure.

### **Working Definitions**

Catholic School – A school operated by or affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church or its representatives.

Charter School – Charter schools are publicly funded elementary or secondary schools that have been freed from some of the rules, regulations, and statutes that apply to other public schools, in exchange for some type of accountability for producing particular results, which are set forth in each individual school's charter.

CUM - A cumulative (CUM) file is a file of general school information. The contents usually include students' grades, attendance, discipline, health records, standardized assessment reports, and teacher comments referencing student behavior, parent involvement, and academic progress.

FERPA – Family Education Rights and Privacy Act

Intermediate School – This is another term for middle school or junior high school.

Middle School – A school educating early adolescents in the “middle” years of school between childhood and adolescence. Middle school is often referred to as junior high school; this depends on the culture and traditions of the community.

Private School – Any School not operated or directly funded by a governmental agency.

Promotion – The advancement of a student to the next higher grade in elementary or middle school, usually after achieving predetermined criteria for advancement.

Special Education – A broad range of instructional processes designed to help students with one or more mental, physical or emotional handicap. Special Education was designed for students to



obtain the maximum amount of education compatible with the student's physical and intellectual potential, in the least restricted environment.

SPED – An abbreviation for Special Education

### **Research Questions**

1. How does the culture of a school affect a school promotion?
2. What are the structural aspects of a school promotion?
3. What part does politics play in the promotional process?
4. How do human resources impact the exiting process of students promoting to the next level of education?

My limitation in selecting this topic, to investigate and compare school promotions, was the quantity of time spent at each school. Since I am currently not teaching at any of the school sites I am examining, I am unable to spend a large quantity of time at any of the school sites. I also feel that being an outside observer is also a benefit, permitting a fresh perspective. I also feel that a limitation is my inability to witness how each process culminates at each school. Since promotion ceremonies occur at the end of the school year, I will have completed my project before the conclusion of the 2012 – 2013 academic school year, therefore, enabling me the opportunity to view the final outcome of the school promotion.

The locations were selected because of the convenience of location and my prior communication and relationships with the administrators of the schools. One of the four schools included in this investigation is one I attended as a child and where my children currently attend, which does incur some bias. However, I do feel that my past experience of participating in the promotion ceremony and celebrations at that school has been a helpful tool while completing my

observations. Having this prior knowledge allows me insight to deeper analyze the cultural and structural aspects of the school's evolution.

## Chapter 2

### **Literature Review**

According to the Encyclopedia of American Education, the promotion of students in a school setting is the advancement of a student to the next higher grade in elementary, middle or high school, usually after achieving a predetermined minimum grade point average and passing achievement or proficient tests in the current grade (Unger, 2001). Throughout the history of education, ceremonies have taken place to celebrate the commencement of students' promotion. Harlow G. Unger, author of the Encyclopedia American Education, has researched the past traditions of promotion ceremonies and uncovered the historical influences. Unger explains, "Such awards are usually made at formal ceremonies, whose origins date back to ordination ceremonies of the theologically oriented European universities of the Middle Ages" (2001, p.480). He goes on to explain that the traditions have stayed fairly consistent over the years and have only been modified slightly to meet the needs of individual institutions.

Using the single common thread of a school promotion and analyzing the approach of executing something as simple as a ceremony, gives an internal perspective to our educational institutions. I chose to use Bolman and Deal's four frames of organization to examine school promotions because I believe it is important to investigate the variances in education. Expanding the four frames of structure, human resources, political, and cultural allows for a consistent measuring instrument to analyze the configuration and organization of the school promotion process. Using these four frames allows me to stay structured and organize the outcome of my analysis when comparing and contrasting the four different schools.

Using Bolman and Deal's four frames of organization supports the examination of four crucial aspects of a school promotion. Looking at the structure of the promotion process allows

me the ability to observe the logistics of the preparation, the planning, and the execution of the promotion process. Observation of the human resources frame of school promotions permits me to gain insight regarding the exiting process of students leaving their current school and beginning at the next level of education. The political aspects of school promotion allows me a view of additional stakeholders' involvement into the promotion of students, for example the parents, students, and community. I used the cultural lens to discover the traditional and historical influences of the school onto the school promotion processes.

Bolman and Deal discuss the influences of structure as essentially a blueprint for officially sanctioned expectations and exchanges among the internal constituents (2008). Why would structure play a significant role in a school promotion? Because there must be a "blueprint" for the constituents involved with a school promotion. The administration must orchestrate a plan for the ceremony and prepare an arrangement for the students as they conclude their educational experience at the school site and enter into a new school.

Creating a plan and organizing a structural configuration for a school promotion will allow for a level implementation for all involved in a school promotion. When people have guidelines there is often less inactivity and confusion when completing a task.

According to Bolman and Deal,

The assumptions of the structural frame are reflected in current approaches to organizational design. These suppositions reflect a belief in rationality and a faith that a suitable array of formal roles and responsibilities will minimize distracting personal static and maximize people's performance of the job (2008, p. 47).

The authors of *Reframing Organizations* create a correlation of structure to an animal's skeleton or the framework of a building. Bolman and Deal state, "Structural Frames both enhance and constrains what an organization can accomplish (2008, p. 50).

Often if there is a dilemma with structure of an event or process there may be an evolving and developing process that emerges. For example, if a structure of a promotion process is not completely working, the administration may keep the successful aspects the promotion process and change the aspects that are not working for the school. This allows for continual growth and a more conducive structural foundation. Deal and Bolman state that, "Finding a satisfactory system of roles and relationships is an ongoing, universal struggle. Managers rarely face well-defined problems with clear-cut solutions. Instead, they confront enduring structural dilemmas, tough trade-offs without easy answers" (2008, p. 73).

Human resources is a predominate piece of an educational institution. As an administrator, a leader in education interacts with teachers, students, parents, school boards, community members, and staff at the district office. Bolman and Deal express, "The human resources frame centers on what organizations and people do to and for one another" (2008, p. 117).

The human resources frame highlights the relationship between people and organizations. Organizations need people, and people need organizations (for the many intrinsic and extrinsic rewards they offer), but their respective needs are not always well aligned (Bolman and Deal 2008, p. 137).

As I looked into the human resources involved in school promotions I quickly identified the interaction of humans and the fulfillment of their needs. I observed the correlations between the school sites exiting and entering the promoting students to the next level of education. This

relationship between the schools, meeting the students' needs, and ensuring a smooth transition from school site to school site is a key component to human resources.

Bolman and Deal express a very honest view on politics. "When you ponder the word politics, what images come to mind? Are any of them positive or helpful? The answer is probably no" (2008, p.189).

The political frame stresses that the combination of scarce resources and divergent interests produces conflict as surely as night follows day. Conflict is not viewed as something that can or should be tamped down or stamped out. Other frames view conflict differently. The structural frame, in particular, views conflict as an impediment to effectiveness. (Bolman and Deal, 2008, p. 206)

The political frame in the school promotion is the involvement of powers within the school. There are many stakeholders who contribute to a school promotion and often opinions and ideas of differing parties do not always coincide. According to researchers Kirby and Swem, given the emotional and social significance of school promotions, it isn't surprising that there is considerable litigation over graduations and school promotion issues. The high stakes make it imperative that principals adhere to common sense, school rules, and legal procedures established by district, state, and federal law (Kirby and Swem, 2007).

Therefore consider, "At every level of organizations, alliances form because members have interests in common and believe they can do more together than apart. To accomplish their aims, they need power. Power can be viewed from multiple perspectives. This also is applicable in a school setting. Stakeholders of a school create alliances to sometimes maintain or gain power. This may occur with teacher, parents, or even students. In contrast, human resources

theorists place less emphasis on power and more on empowerment (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Block, 1987).

School promotion ceremonies are historical traditions that have been a rite of passage for students. Historically, cultures have relied on ritual and ceremony to generate order, precision, and predictability. The distinction between ritual and ceremony is elusive. As a guideline, rituals are more of an everyday occurrence while ceremonies are more episodic – grander and more elaborate convened at times of transition or special occasion (Bolman and Deal, 2008).

Schein's formal definition of culture is,

a pattern of shared basic assumption that a group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relations to those problems (1992, p.12).

Deal and Kennedy (1982) portrayed culture more concisely as “the way we do things around here” (p.4). Throughout my investigation of school promotion each school's traditions, history, and culture have played a large role in what the promotion process and ceremony look like today at the varying school sites. The importance of school promotion and the value of this accomplishment altered because of the school sites' past rituals and significance held by each school community. As a symbolic act, ritual is a routine that “usually has a storable purpose, but one that invariably alludes to more than it says, and has many meanings at once” (Moore and Meyerhoff, 1977, p.5).

Bolman and Deal (2008) express “Culture is both a product and a process. As a product, it embodies wisdom accumulated from experience. As a process, it is renewed and re-created as newcomers learn old ways and eventually become teachers themselves” (p. 269). I believe this

is how the evolving tradition of school promotions has become a long standing practice and each school culture's past stakeholders have embraced what is good and embodied the constituents with meaning and significance.

In *Graduating to Middle School*, author John Arnold discusses traditions in school principals' speeches during school promotions. Arnold's article expresses that principal's speeches should focus on areas of psychological and physiological changes students will experience, what to expect at their next school, and secrets for success and happiness. He advises that promotion ceremonies are a momentous time for not just the students, but for the parents to advise students to concentrate on building character, good relationships, working hard, and having high expectations. Arnold believes these important messages should be integrated into school promotions to help students in their future endeavors into their next school and to help build gaps in parent and student relationships (1993).



### Chapter 3

#### **Process and Action Plan**

Bolman and Deal's four frames of organization provide an excellent framework for this research. Once again, the four frames analyze the school promotion process (at four different schools) are: human resources, cultural, political, and structural.

Table 1

Four Frames and Meanings:

<b>Frame</b>	<b>Meaning and correlation to my analysis</b>
Structure	Organization, guidelines, configuration, skeleton, rules, goals
Human Resources	Relationships and Needs (relationship between current and next school)
Culture/Symbolism	Ceremony, rituals, traditions, inspiration
Political	Powers involved

Adapted from: Bolman and Deal, 2008

The schools I selected to incorporate into my investigation vary in approach to education. I evaluated a variety of schools, using the common thread of school promotion, to observe the effects of approach to education and school influence on the promotion process. The four types of schools I selected are a charter school, a private catholic school, a traditional public school, and a special education school. All schools are located in a suburb of the Los Angeles area. I analyzed schools with students progressing from 5th grade into Middle School and 8th graders promoting to High School. I give a brief history of each of the schools I explored. I selected these four schools because of the vast differences in each school's approach to

education. The schools range in criteria and methods, parent involvement, school setting, teacher - student ratios, and legal policies. I changed the names of the schools and administrators for the purpose of preserving anonymity.

### **Holy Heart School**

Holy Heart School is a Catholic, private school and opened in September of 1980 with about 40 students in kindergarten and first grade classes under the guidance of the founding Monsignor. In January of 1981 the Sisters of Notre Dame agreed to assume administration of the school until June 1997. Later, educational leadership was implemented by a trained layperson in educational administration.

Classes at Holy Heart School are self-contained in grades kindergarten through grade five and departmentalized in grades six, seven and eight. The teachers follow the California Standards in all academic subjects and teach Religion daily. In addition to the use of a computer lab and library, physical education, music, and art classes enrich the core curriculum. There are teacher assistants in grades kindergarten through fourth that work with students on academic tasks daily and there is a math assistant for grades two through eight.

The students attend mass every Friday and participate in service projects for a variety of causes throughout the school year. Students who graduate from Holy Heart School attend local high schools with great success. Parent involvement is crucial to the mission and vision of the school and all parents are mandated to complete a set number of service hours annually.

Holy Heart School continues to realize the vision of the founding Monsignor, a vision of the school as a leader in the parish, supplementing and supporting parents/guardians in the all-important role of educating all aspects of the child.

**Super Charter School**

Super Charter School was approved by a local union high school district as an independent charter school and opened in September for the 2007-08 school year. The school currently resides at a leased, school structure. Super Charter School serves students in grades k-8. The mission of Super Charter School is to foster global, independent, creative thinkers who feel confident in themselves, are willing to take risks, and work cooperatively. Together the parents, students, and teachers create a progressive environment that sparks imagination, ignites a love for learning, and encourages each individual to be and do the best that he/she can; enabling pupils to become self-motivated, competent, and life-long learners equipped for the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Ortega Elementary School**

Ortega Elementary School is the second oldest school in its district. This school is a traditional public school currently serving students from Kindergarten to 5<sup>th</sup> grade. The school opened in the fall of 1956 with eight classrooms as a K-8 school. Ortega Elementary school's motto is "Achieving New Heights." The school was built in several phases to its current twenty classrooms, a library, auditorium, and computer lab. The auditorium was added in 1959 in honor of Mary Jones and her dedication to education as a principal and superintendent.

Ortega School has a traditional approach to education based on a broad curriculum in an academically focused, orderly, positive, and supportive learning environment. It strives to create the desire for lifelong learning in a style that will enhance self-esteem and impart a feeling of the past, as well as a vision for the future. Ortega Elementary was named a California Distinguished School in April of 2002.

**Pen Douglas**

Pen Douglas School is a special education program serving moderate to severe students from preschool through 5th grade. Students participate in a Functional Skills Curriculum (FSC) which is supported by standards-based state adopted core curricular materials. The FSC focuses on the development of skills in the areas of functional academics, communication, mobility and social or emotional development. These skills are taught within the environmental fields of self-care and independent living, recreation/leisure, vocational, and community access through Community Based Instruction.

Academics are based on the state standards requirements and taught within these domains so students learn functional skills that maximize their independence. A strong importance is placed on teaching the student appropriate behaviors and on improving communication skills. Instruction is designed to meet the individual needs of each student. As for California Standardized Testing and Reporting, the 2nd grade through the 5th grade students participates in the California Alternate Performance Assessment.

Students have opportunities for interaction with their typically developing peers during assemblies, lunch, recess, physical education and with peer tutors who work in the classrooms. Additionally, some students may integrate into regular education classrooms for academic and social education opportunities. A functional mobility component to the curriculum is available for students with physical disabilities to develop skills of sitting, standing, and walking while participating in their school activities.

Services include speech and language support, occupational therapy, intensive behavioral intervention, and access to non-disabled peers in natural environments. Most information is delivered to students through visual structure. Students use pictorial, photographic, or object schedules depending on their capabilities. The campus has a library and

sensory/mobility room and most students participate in weekly scouting, art and science activities.

My goal for this development is to find commonalities and differences threaded between an assortment of styles to education. Although the approach to educating students may differ, I am interested in the comparisons of the school traditions, cultures, stakeholder involvement, structure of the promotion process and preparing and exciting students into the next level of education. I am hopeful that the outcome sheds some light on the similarities and the differences that schools have and broadens my perspective on the influences of politics and religion on students and their educational experiences.

## Chapter 4

### **Implementation**

In the month of March I met with the administrators of four schools. I discussed with them their school promotion process and analyzed each approach to exiting the promoting students to their next school placement. I created a list of interview questions for the administrators at the four school sites. The exact same topics were discussed with all school administrators in order to stimulate consistent responses. The questions are categorized into four themes; symbolic, human resources, political, and structural. The symbolic questions are: how does the culture of a school affect a school promotion, how much input does faculty, students, and parents have in the preparation and the execution of the promotion. The human resources questions are: how is the exit process handled, CUMS, transcripts, how is the paperwork distributed to the next school the student will enter into. The political questions are: What part does politics play in the promotional process, how FERPA plays a part in the process. And the structural questions are: Who is responsible for arranging the promotion at your school site, who is responsible for the communication of all information between all stakeholders in the process, when does this promotion process begin, what are the structural aspects of a school promotion.

After the data was collected I created a chart to analyze and study the outcome of the interviews and to keep a concise record and organized source of data. Below I have included the table for a detailed overview of the collected data.

Table 2

**Four Frames of Organization and School Correlations:**

<b>School Sites</b>	<b>Structural</b>	<b>Human Resources</b>	<b>Cultural</b>	<b>Political</b>
<b>Super Charter k-8th grade  Charter School</b>	New school and still evolving structure of the promotion process	Parent request is submitted to release cumulative files to the students' next school	New school evolving and growing cultures and traditions	School board and board policies have a large impact on the promotion
<b>Holy Heart k-8th grade  Private Catholic School</b>	Traditional and structural aspects are intertwined	Majority of students exit to the same high school, but H.R. waits for parent requests to be approved before release of cumulative files	Enormous influence of rituals, culture, and symbolism	Flexibility with the policies and procedures but a large parental impact
<b>Ortega Elementary k-5<sup>th</sup> grade  Traditional Public School</b>	The structure of the promotion process is aimed to stay consistent so that all students exiting the school will have the same experience	Not as formal or strict as middle school. Students attended zoned neighborhood school. Cumulative files are boxed and delivered to the zoned middle school, unless notified that the student is moving or other exceptions	Not as strict guidelines as the middle schools	Financially sustainable community, therefore, the parent influence is large and a powerful influence
<b>Pen Douglas Preschool - 5<sup>th</sup> grade  Moderate to Severe Special Education School</b>	The ceremony is simple and exiting process is the most structured aspect of the promotion process	Year long process to exiting students because of individualized learning needs Updating IEP and FERPA play a part in the exiting process	The culture is strongly influenced by students sense of excitement and accomplishment	Special Education – exiting to next level of education

What does each frame mean and what is the significance to the selected schools? The four frames of organization I am using to analyze the school promotion process are: structural, political, human resources, and cultural. What do these components mean and what is the importance in the evaluation? The overview of the four frames shows that each has its own lens on reality. Learning to apply all four frames deepens your appreciation and understanding of organization. Multi-frame thinking requires moving beyond narrow, mechanical approaches for understanding organization (Bolman and Deal, 2008).

The structural frame is the configuration, organization, goals, rules, and the skeleton of the organization or practice. For example, the structures of a school promotion are the outlines, guidelines or steps that are used in the execution of the promotion ceremony.

The human resources component is the relationships between people and needs. In the case of school promotions, I will be using the human resources facet to observe the people that connect promoting students into their next level of education. This is a significant piece to look at because, as a school administrator, there are school policies and procedures that need to be followed. This detail will show how each school's approach to education affects the exiting process of school promotion.

The cultural and symbolic elements of the four frames are the ceremonial and ritualistic aspects of the promotion process. Tradition and inspiration are crucial constituents to this frame as well. This frame is like the heart and purpose of the frames. The culture is the why we do what we do, the motivation, the spirit, and drive. The term includes beliefs, customs, capabilities, and habits acquired. This is an important frame because it is frequently the "driving force" behind traditions.



Lastly, the political frame will assist in analyzing the powers involved in the school promotion. Because of the variety of schools taking part in the study, there are many different powers. At some of the school sites, the power is the administration of the school; at others it is the school board, the parents, teacher or even the students.

After examining the variety of frames Bolman and Deal discuss in *Reframing Organization*, it is also important to point out that that there are times that the frames may overlap multiple frames in one component of the promotion procedures.

Using a variety of schools for my investigation was a purposeful action. I selected an array of schools with a variety of approaches to education to observe which affects and influences these factors have on the promotion process, ceremony, and exiting of students into the next school environment. Using these components to compare and contrast the schools will help to create a cohesive and consistent correlation from the frames to the schools.

Holy Heart School was originally chosen to be a part of this study because of the strong religious and traditional aspects the school. Parent involvement is a key facet to the school and I was interested in the parental influence into the promotional process for students. I was also engrossed in the variation in the school policies, procedures and guidelines. I felt these factors would influence the promotion process and change the structural characteristics of the promotion ceremony.

Ortega Elementary School was selected to represent a traditional, self-contained, classroom based setting. The elementary school represents a public school in California. Since my training and education is based on a traditional, California based public school system, I felt that this school would help to represent the majority of schools in the state and what most of us in California and Education consider the “norm”.

Super Charter School was picked to be a part of this analysis because of the unique self-governing educational system. Charter schools operate under contracts between the school's organization and the sponsors. In this case the board is compiled of teachers, parents, and community members. I was curious to see the influence of the school board on the graduation process.

Pen Douglas School was selected to participate in this evaluation of school promotions to get the perspective of how students with special and individualized needs are met during the promotion process. Since this particular school is a preschool – 5<sup>th</sup> grade school I was interested in the exiting process for the students into middle school. Many of the students at Pen Douglas School have attended the school since they were three years old. I was interested in the process for students and parents as their educational journey continued.

The process in which I used to research school promotions and ceremonies was a bit more challenging than I expected. I used many tools and resources to support my investigation. I was not as successful as I hoped to find an extended and detailed amount of information about school promotions.

My review process began with a preliminary literature search through Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) using the John Spoor Broome internet library connection for California State University, Channel Islands. I used the keywords such as, school promotion, the history of promotions, awards in education, culture, structure, and politics. I also went to the City of Camarillo Public Library and used their search engine to find both in house books and educational journals. E-source is Camarillo library's online searching tool that allows access to thousands of online resources. E-source targets include, California Lutheran University Library, World Cat, and Free College Courses Online, to name a few.

## Chapter 5

### **Results and Personal Reflection**

After my interviews with the four administrators of Holy Heart, Ortega Elementary, Super Charter, and Pen Douglas Schools, I was able to make a complete analysis of school promotions using the measurement of Bolman and Deal's four frames of organization. The outcomes of the four schools varied and the input from the four administrators was greatly insightful into the four frames of organization at each school site.

As I met with Ms. Kris, the principal of Holy Heart School, we began to discuss the school promotion process. Since I attended this school many years ago, I already had insight into the promotion process, but was interested to see how the promotion process has changed and evolved over the past 20 years. Ms. Kris started off by expressing that the promotion process at Holy Heart is a "Team Effort". The 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, with assistance from the other middle school teachers, room parents, students, participating priest, and most importantly the students, all carried the responsibility of the communication, ceremony, and preparation for the promotion. Ms. Kris said her responsibility within this process is oversight and support. She said that all communication, flyers, emails, and handouts are reviewed by her before public distribution. The preparation for the promotion process begins during the start of the second trimester of the school year, usually near the end of February or beginning of March. Ms. Kris mentioned that some of the celebratory aspects of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade promotion began as soon as the academic school year started, for example, reservations for the annual Magic Mountain trip and ordering of diplomas and presidential academic awards.

Ms. Kris said that the culture, tradition, and structural aspects of the school promotion are, historically speaking, a large part of the promotion process and have been since

the school opened. The celebratory facets of the promotion process lasts for three days. Day one is a school celebration. There is a mass and luncheon with the students at Holy Heart School. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade students enjoy each other's company by signing yearbooks and later end the evening with a middle school dance. The evening ends early, and the day after is a dedicated trip to Magic Mountain for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. On day three, the students celebrate with families. The families attend a family mass on the evening of the third day. The priest of the Holy Heart parish is responsible for the message delivered at mass and the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students take a large role in participation with the mass. The students wear gowns and all teachers participate in the ceremony. Following the mass, the principal and all teachers help to pass out diplomas and awards to promoting students. Most of the kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers have taught and participated in educating the graduating class. For this reason, passing out of the diplomas, for them, is a very exceptional and memorable moment.

In regards to the political aspect of the promotion process, the school policies vary a great deal from the traditional public school. Ms. Kris stated that there is much flexibility with the promotion process and there is only one requirement for the ritualistic aspect of the ceremony. The local Catholic Archdioceses requires that the school administrator recite a statement similar to the following: All students of the graduating class of Holy Heart School have completed all necessary requirements for promotion to the next level of education.

Other political influences involved in the school promotion process are the parents. From time to time, since Holy Heart is a private school in which parents pay a substantial tuition fee, parents can occasionally convey a sense of entitlement. Since the parents play a great role in the promotion process this "sense of entitlement" can sometimes cause a small amount of a power struggle. Ms. Kris stated that in order for students to have an impartial experience with school

promotion at Holy Heart, it is important for her to reinforce structure and tradition. This structure will insure that exiting students will have a similar promotion experience year after year.

The exiting process for students leaving Holy Heart School is similar to the traditional public schools. Holy Heart students all have cumulative files, with information about the student's academics. Most students attend the same private Catholic high school following the 8<sup>th</sup> grade culmination. However, the human resources staff is responsible for holding onto the cumulative files until a request from the subsequent high school is received. Once the school request is submitted to Holy Heart the cumulative file is released to the following school and the exiting process is completed.

The next principal I meet with was the administrator at Super Charter School. Since Super Charter School is only 6 years old, the promotion process is an evolving and changing process. Ms. Ellen, the current director of the school, stated that the promotion procedures are a collaborative effort. She said she is responsible for supervision of the promotion process, but she does not play a large role in the preparation. The teachers, 8<sup>th</sup> grade students and the school board plays the largest roles with assistance from the administration and the parents. The preparation for the promotion begins in March and more detailed logistics take place in April and May. Both the culture of the school and the promotion are continually evolving. Because the school is still so new, much of the process has been trial and error. Ms. Ellen said, "We keep the things that work and improve on things that did not work".

One of the structural aspects of the promotion ceremony that have been successful and have flourished over the years is the participation of the 7<sup>th</sup> grade students in assisting the 8<sup>th</sup> grades. "It is a rite of passage and the 7<sup>th</sup> graders really look forward to helping the promoting

students” said Ms. Ellen. The 7<sup>th</sup> grade students help with the celebratory parts of the promotion process, they decorate the hall, prepare for the ceremony, and are responsible for the snacks and refreshments after the ceremony is finished.

The ceremony begins with the pledge of allegiance, and afterwards, the students enter into the staged area where the ceremony is held, wearing graduation gowns. As the promoting students enter into the staged area, each individual walks into their preselected, “theme song”. In the month of May, all students select a song that represents them and this song is played as they enter into the promotion ceremony. After all student have entered, a representative from the school board speaks, followed by the school administrators. Next, the school board calls out the promoting students’ names while the school administrators pass out certificates of completion. Following this, the students celebrate in the hall with cake and refreshments prepared by the underclassmen. Another special tradition at Super Charter School is the signing of caps by all promoting 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Since the students wear a gown as their ceremonial garment they do not wear the caps. The cap and tassel are saved as a piece of memorabilia. The students pass the caps to their fellow classmates to sign and keep.

Ms. Ellen spoke of the political components of Super Charter School. She said that as the director of the school she tries to be proactive with this aspect of the promotion process. Although she does not play a significant role in every detail of the promotion process, she is more of a mediator. Ms. Ellen stated that she tries to make sure that every stakeholder’s voice is heard. In her experience, when everyone feels heard there seems to be less of a power struggle or hurt feelings when decisions are made. Ms. Ellen also tries to be proactive with student behavior and student discipline. She tries to not leave much room for students to get in trouble for dress code or behavioral misconduct. She said, “It is heart breaking when students are unable

to participate in the school promotion, I always try to be a step ahead of the students that may get themselves into trouble”.

As for the exiting process, this is all handled by the administrators and office support staff. Super Charter School’s charter is sponsored by the high school district in which students promote into. Most students enter into one of the two high schools in their neighborhood zoned area. This high school district sends release forms to Super Charter and the cumulative files are separated according to the two high schools of intended attendance. After preparation, Ms. Ellen hand delivers the cumulative files of students to either high school and the students are prepared for their next level of educational institution.

Mr. Meyer is the principal of Ortega Elementary School, a K-5<sup>th</sup> grade, self-contained, traditional, classroom based public school. Mr. Meyer said there are many components to the promotion process at Ortega Elementary. A committee is created, made up of Parent Teacher Association (PTA) parents, 5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers, and school administrator, Mr. Meyer. This committee is responsible for the structural aspects of the promotion and the ceremony. The preparation of the promotion starts in February and is finalized by the end of March. All communication is overseen by Principal Meyer and the school administrative assistant is responsible for the distribution of all information and website postings.

There is a lot of parent involvement at the site. The promotion celebration begins the week of promotion and the parents are responsible for “The Week of Fun” leading up to the promotion ceremony. Mr. Meyer tries to keep things consistent from year to year, to allow equity for all students promoting out of Ortega School. Because Ortega Elementary School is in an affluent neighborhood, frequently, parents will try to surpass promoting classes from prior years by adding monetary additions to enhance the promotion ceremony or “Week of Fun”. Mr.

Meyer believes setting guidelines and boundaries for the “Week of Fun” helps to keep things from getting “out of hand”. “The Week of Fun” usually has daily activities and special “spirit day” events with a culmination of a school fair for all students to participate in and to help the promoting class celebrate.

Mr. Meyer said politically speaking, guidelines from the school district are not very strict at the elementary level. The largest power struggle comes from within the school community and parental input. An example given by Mr. Meyer was a struggle between the parents and teachers. The parents really wanted to create a slideshow of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. Teachers said that there is often an injustice with students that are not as involved with activities and are only in one or two pictures, while other students are in every slide. The compromise, to resolve this issue, was that the parents could still make the 5<sup>th</sup> grade slideshow, however the slideshow will be sent home to be watched in the privacy of the students’ homes on DVD.

The promotion ceremony is simple; the students dress in “nice” clothes and are recognized as a group, and not as individuals. The promotion ceremony is more of a way to celebrate exiting elementary school and entering into middle school. At the ceremony the principal and teachers recognize the group for their hard work and accomplishments. The ceremony is followed by cake and refreshments in the school auditorium. As the students conclude their elementary school experience, the administrator and administrative assistant begin to prepare completed cumulative files, past assessments, and health records to be sent to the zoned neighborhood middle school where the students will attend.

My final visit was with Principal Fields at Pen Douglas School. Pen Douglas School is a school which specialized in serving moderate to severe special education students. The school serves students from preschool to 5<sup>th</sup> grade. “The school promotion process is not too



complicated” says, Mrs. Fields. The 5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers plan the ceremony and it is very modest. Principal Fields gives full oversight to communication involving parents or outside recipients of information. The school follows all district and school policies. This includes no integration of prayers into the ceremony. The ceremony is held in the school auditorium. The students enter into the auditorium; the pledge of allegiance is recited by promoting students and visiting guests. Afterwards, the school principal speaks to the promoting class then the 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher hands out awards to the students. The students conclude the ceremony with a skit or musical performance.

“The exiting process is more complicated and extensive than the promotion ceremony,” says Principal Fields. Because the students at Pen School have special educational needs and most students have attended the school for 7 years, preparing the students, along with parents, to enter into a different learning environment is a more predominate task. Mrs. Fields explained that this process starts very early in the students’ final year at Pen School. At the start of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade year, special education teachers from the neighborhood middle school, begin observing and participating in the students’ educational practices. This interaction continues with constant and regular collaboration with students, teachers, and parents at Pen School. In March students and parents take a field trip to the local middle school, which will serve the educational needs for the students of Pen School. Mrs. Field said that she has observed an easier transition into middle school with this “overlap” of school programs.

After the promoting 5<sup>th</sup> grade students have completed their educational experience at Pen Douglas School, all cumulative records, health records, and Individualized Educational Plans (IEP) are transferred to the local middle school serving Pen School students. Since this transition into the middle school is such a long process, all parents at this point, have been as an

important constituent as the teachers (from both schools), administration, and students. Mrs. Fields reinforces how collaborative this effort is in promoting students into middle school. Mrs. Field also discussed the extensive amount of paperwork involved in supporting students with special needs. The principal shared The Student Transition Forms (in appendix) which must be completed for all students. Along with the continual observation from the special education teachers this form is more detailed information to assist the students' special needs.

All four schools and administrators' diversity altered the final influences and outcome of the promotion process. These intricate variations are exactly what made each school unique and special. Just like every person or family is different, so are the cultures and traditions of school's practices and ceremonies.

Gathering data and studying the variations in school promotions has allowed me to realize and understand many similarities and differences between these vastly different school sites and distinctions in educational approaches, methods, and styles of educating students. The deviations in variables between school sites altered the final implementation of the promotion process and ceremonies. However, there are definitely some commonalities which make an easy comparison across the spectrum of all four schools.

In comparing the four school sites, some of the common correlations between the schools are the stakeholders. All school sites have an insightful and knowledgeable school leader. Each leader is aware of the culture of their school site and the factors to be attentive to as the promotion process is implemented. I believe as a school administrator, one cannot always predict all outcomes involving stakeholders, but it is important to be aware of the population you serve and the needs of the school and students. Another important commonality is the "team effort". In an educational institution, no matter what approach to education, I feel it is important

for students to have the support of the entire school community and the parents as well. This is a factor in which I observed at all school sites. Common connections between the schools in the political frame are the influencing powers from the parents. Although this is not an issue in all schools, the sites I observed, all had a strong parental influence and voice. There are many differences between each school. The most prominent dissimilarity is the culture and history. The history of the each school influences the culture of the schools. Some of the older schools had an influential culture with more reinforcement of tradition and ritual, while the newer schools are still evolving and trying to build their history.

After analyzing the school promotion process, the cultural frame seems to be the strongest impact on school promotion. The cultural frame intertwines all of the other frames into it. As mentioned before, Deal and Kennedy portrayed culture more concisely as “the way we do things around here” (1982, p.4). Over the years, each school creates a way to do things and although stakeholders may alter a portion of the way things are done, a part of the culture seems to stay while another piece may evolve to meet the needs of the new school administrator, parents, teachers or students. The “how we do things around here” links all four frames together to create the existing outcomes at each school.

As a future leader in education, I will take all that I observed during this process into consideration as I begin my experiences at a school site. I will be aware of the school’s culture, politics, human resources, and I will try to keep a consistent and resilient structure. I plan to take into consideration all stakeholders and most importantly supporting the students’ learning needs. I plan to use this project as a guideline for implementing school promotions at the school site I lead as well as in other areas of educational leadership. I will continue to use the four frames of organization as a tool to analyze and help improve areas of weakness within the school I serve. I

believe that using Bolman and Deal's four frames of organization is a helpful instrument to implement a well-rounded and cohesive school program.

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