Investigation into the Development and Sustaining of Minnesota Charter Schools

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Tim, and my sons, Luke and Eli. God has blessed me with three wonderful men in my life.

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe the growth and evolution of eight established charter schools in the St. Paul/Minneapolis (MN) area. Prior to data collection and based on a synthesis of literature, a model was created that attempted to capture the evolutionary stages of charter schools from initial idea to maturity. The model proposed that a charter school moves through three life stages, with the factors of leadership, governance and resources forming the core of the charter school organization at each stage. There were also interpersonal dynamics and organizational processes continually at work within each school that affected the relationships among those three factors. As a school moved through the stages of development, the relationships changed over time.

The results of the study confirmed three definable developmental stages, Start Up, Growth, and Maturity, as well as transitional phases between the first and second stages, and between the second and third stages. Also, there were certain processes and tasks identified that served as characteristics of each stage/phase.

Data from this study also showed the importance of beginning a school with multi-skilled leaders who were collaborative, fiscally cautious and selflessly committed to the mission. A well-developed mission rallied a dedicated group of people who worked cooperatively to acquire the necessary resources and created the operational, organizational and academic systems of school. Many of these people remained at the school for a length of time, building trusting relationships, committed to doing the work necessary to deliver the education promised by their mission.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Background

Minnesota was the first state in the United States to pass charter school legislation. This happened in 1991 and the first charter school opened in St. Paul in 1992. The impetus to establish charter schools came from the belief that parents had a right to choices within public schooling for their children, and that public schools did not have to be limited to a traditional school district format (Schroeder, 2004). Charter schools were one more choice option offered to Minnesota families along with Post-Secondary Enrollment Options and Open Enrollment. Jon Schroeder (Minnesota policy analyst and founder of the Charter Friends National Network) authored a status report on charter schooling in Minnesota in 2004, for the Progressive Policy Institute. His report documents the history of the early years of charter schooling in Minnesota.

Minnesota's first charter school law allowed charter schools to exist as independent Local Education Agencies (LEAs). This meant they could hire their own teachers and receive and control public funds directly from the state. Additionally, they were given freedom from some state laws and regulations. On the restrictive side, the law said licensed teachers must be in the majority on the governing boards and there was a cap of eight schools that could be opened across the state (Schroeder, 2004).

Local school districts were appointed by the Legislature to sponsor the new charter schools. That is, a school district could grant a charter to a group of people wanting to start a school. A contract would be drawn up covering a specified period of time and must include the school's mission, academic goals and means of measuring the goals. The charter school was then accountable for meeting these goals. Sponsorship could be withdrawn and the school closed if terms of the contract were not met (Schroeder, 2004).

Since that first law was enacted, charter school advocates have been continually at work lobbying the Minnesota Legislature for improvements to the charter school law. Charter sponsors (called *authorizers* in other states) have been expanded to include public and private post-secondary institutions, intermediate school districts, and large

nonprofit organizations. The Legislature has removed the limit on the number of charter schools that can be opened in the state, and the funding of charter schools has also improved.

In Minnesota, funding for charter schools initially consisted of the state per-pupil allotment following the child from the district school to the charter school. Charter schools were (and continue to be) prohibited from issuing bonds, prohibited from using state money to directly buy a building, and prohibited from raising taxes through levies. Efforts to improve funding over the years have resulted in the addition of transportation revenue, additional money for low-income students, as well as providing per-pupil facilities funding and start-up aid. In 1995, the U.S. Department of Education first provided $6 million to states to support charter schools. That amount has increased steadily since the movement began (Schroeder, 2004).

Schroeder's report calls for more public school choice options, the expanded use of charter schools to address achievement gaps, and better documentation of individual charter school successes. He also recommends strengthening the capacity of charter sponsors and pursuing more private sector financing. His is one of several reports in recent years promoting the expansion of charter schools (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2005; Lake & Hill, 2005). However, many questions remain as to how this might be done in a way that promotes health and vitality from conception to maturity. This study seeks to delve more deeply into start-up dynamics and early practices of Minnesota charter schools that are now viable.

Charter schools are multiplying in Minnesota. The initial cap of eight schools in 1991 was gradually increased over the next few years, until it reached 40 schools. Finally, in 1997 the cap was removed (Schroeder, 2004). According to the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools' (MACS) website there were 143 charter schools in Minnesota entering the 2007-2008 school year and they enrolled 28,034 students. Fifteen more schools have been approved to open in Fall 2008 and 2009.

For the last nine years the researcher's employment institution has been sponsoring charter schools. Sponsorship was initiated for two schools during their pre-operational period of time. A third school sought sponsorship from the institution after

it had already been operating for nine years. It is this association that created the research interest. There was a stark contrast in leadership and governance between the schools that were just getting off the ground and the stable mature charter school. The researcher wondered about the growth of a charter school and what factors affected its development. An investigation of Minnesota charter schools that successfully survived the start-up and growth years would better inform the researcher in her role as a sponsor liaison. Such a study might benefit other sponsors and possibly even charter schools.

Statement of the Problem

Five of every six charter schools started in MN in the first fifteen years of the movements are still in operation. There must be some factors that contribute to a viable school start-up and hopefully sustain them for the long run. What are those influencing factors beyond the step-by-step how-to information? Can the dynamics and interpersonal processes at work beneath the concrete start up tasks be identified? Such information might be helpful to other people starting charter schools, as well as the groups who sponsor them.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the development of Minnesota charter schools that are considered examples of stable longevity by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools (MACS), and other charter school directors. Through the use of structured interviews with an array of respondents, the researcher sought to uncover and describe the actions, processes, and conditions at work during the pre-operational and early operational stages of charter school development that might have contributed to their longevity and perceived stability. This information can provide exemplars and models that may prove useful to potential charter school founders. Documentation of charter school growth may help key stakeholders, especially sponsors, monitor and reflect upon their school's progress. Literature exists describing the structural components needed for a new charter school. Likewise, studies have been done on the characteristics of charter schools considered "quality" or "successful." Little was found in the literature to describe how a charter school gets from "start-up" to "successful." The intent of this study was to delve more

deeply, to study several Minnesota charter schools, examining features, processes, and dynamics that were present during the early planning days and how they evolved to present time, bringing the school to a place of continual operation.

Research Questions

1. What happens with leadership, governance, and resources during that span of time from initial idea to mature reality that enables a charter school to be realized and to persist?
2. What are the key organizational processes and tasks that occur as a charter school is created and grows?
3. What are the dynamics among leadership, governance, and resources that affect the start-up process? How do these change over time, especially moving through the first few years of a school's existence?

Research Design

This was a qualitative study using structured, in-depth interviews with targeted informants. Questions for the hour-long interviews were drawn from the conceptual framework that grew out of the review of literature. The questions were designed to elicit the story of the charter school's creation and probe into the processes and dynamics at work in the beginning years.

Eight qualifying charter schools, determined by literature-based criteria, were included in the study. Three to five key stakeholders in a variety of leadership roles were interviewed in each school. Roles represented among the respondents included founder, executive director, teacher, parent, and board member. All informants had some governance responsibility in their school at some point.

Definition of Terms

This section provides a list of definitions of terms. Part 1 contains specific terms with established definitions within the education field, such as "local education agency." These terms are arranged alphabetically.

Part 2 contains terms chosen by the researcher to standardize different labels used by various researchers and respondents to designate similar school roles. For example, the single person responsible for conceiving of and initiating the start up of a

charter school was referred to as a "founder," "creator," "creator leader," and "founding director," by researchers and informants. These individuals rarely completed the task alone but brought in other people to assist with the start up process. For clarity and consistency of communication, the researcher selected terms to describe the various actors in the start up process. The terms and definitions are arranged by role (rather than listed alphabetically).

Part 1: Definition of Terms

Charter schools are independent public schools of choice designed and run by teachers, parents, community members, and others. They are sponsored by designated state or educational organizations, exchanging accountability for autonomy.

Critical Incidents are unplanned events or series of events and circumstances that may have a positive or a negative influence on a person, system or organization (Woloshynowych, Rogers, Taylor-Adams, & Vincent, 2005).

Dynamics are "the physical, intellectual and moral forces that produce motion, activity, and change in a given sphere" (The American Heritage Dictionary, 1982, p. 432).

General Education Revenue "A charter school earns general education revenue on a per pupil unit basis just as though it were a school district except for approximately $230 per pupil unit (4.85 percent of the basic formula allowance) for transportation expenses, which the charter school receives only if it provides transportation services. The general education revenue paid to a charter school is paid entirely through state aid. Operating capital revenue received by the charter school may be used for any purpose" (Strom, 2005, p. 74).

Licensed/certified teacher is an individual who holds a state-issued license to teach a specified content and/or grade level area. The rules for licensing vary from state to state.

Local Education Agency (LEA) is a legal identity establishing a place within the public education system. School districts are LEAs and the schools within the district are part of that LEA. The original Minnesota charter school law established that each

charter school is an LEA itself, and this legal identity carries with it certain rights and responsibilities as determined by the state education agency and federal law.

Processes are a series of actions, changes, or functions that bring about an end or result" (The American Heritage Dictionary, 1982, p.987).

Sponsor/Authorizer is an entity that grants the charter, or performance contract, to a school and holds the school accountable for upholding its mission, meeting its academic performance goals and fiscal responsibilities. In Minnesota, sponsoring entities include school districts, the Minnesota Department of Education, post-secondary institutions, and large non-profit organizations.

Part 2: Definition of Roles and Systems

Founder is a single individual responsible for having an idea for a charter school and acting upon that idea to make it a reality.

Founding group is the original group of people who came together when a school was just an idea and helped create all or many parts of the new school, including applying for the charter.

Founding board is the governance group granted the charter and legally responsible for the school, but not elected.

First school board is the group of people elected to serve on the board. Minnesota law requires that teachers in the school make up a majority of the board members.

Executive director is the title most often given to charter school leaders responsible for running the school. The executive director is accountable to the school board.

Founding teacher is a licensed teacher who became involved during the idea and/or creation phases of the school, and was involved in planning many aspects of the school (not just the academic program).

Pre-operational teacher is a licensed teacher who was hired as one of the first teachers before the school opened; planned and prepared for their own class but may have helped plan the school's academic program.

Academic systems are the curriculum and academic accountability structures created for charter schools.

Organizational systems are the governance structures of charter schools. They are concerned with designating roles and responsibilities for oversight and accountability in all areas of charter schools. Legal authority and ultimate financial responsibility resides in the organizational system.

Operational systems have to do with the administrative structure and daily workings of charter schools.

Delimitations and Limitations

1. This study is not designed to measure the success of students at the charter school.
2. This study is not designed to determine the financial success of a charter school.
3. This study is not designed to assess the range of differences in charter schools.
4. The findings of this research are limited to the school leaders who made themselves available to be interviewed.
5. The findings of this research are limited to the schools studied and with no intent to be generalized to the universe of charter schools.

Significance of the Research

Charter schooling is a relatively new public school concept, begun in Minnesota in 1991 with state legislation, and the first charter school opening in 1992. The body of research about charter schools is developing. Early work looked at the spread of the movement across the country, at what's happening nationally. After five or six years the "how to" literature began to appear outlining steps to take to start a school. Soon after that the interest turned to student achievement with the big question being: Are charter students doing as well as or better than school district students? Now fifteen years have passed and the movement appears to be strong and growing. Research interest in charter schools is expanding, also. Each new study or report released includes suggestions for further research, with these suggestions covering a wide range of topics.

One of the current topics of interest in the charter research arena is the idea of "scaling up the movement." The call is for the creation of more quality charter schools

to meet the public's demand. This study seeks to fit into that niche of charter school research. The act of starting a charter school, either "from scratch" or by replicating a proven model, is a complicated process even if there are directions to follow. What factors should be considered when growing new charter schools so they have the best chance of surviving and thriving for the benefit of students and their families?

There is a danger in rushing to create more schools. Every effort must be made on the front end, before the school opens, to ensure its success and provide stability for its children. Charter schools are about children's lives and the closing of a charter school is a serious disruption in their life. This research contributes to the body of knowledge that can help a charter school be a stable and productive place for the children of that school.

Since the beginning, charter schools have needed sponsors, or authorizers. The sponsor role has recently come under scrutiny (Office of the Legislative Auditor, 2008; Lake, 2006). In Minnesota the expectations placed on the sponsoring agency have increased dramatically since 1991. The job of sponsoring a charter school is not what it was fifteen years ago (Schroeder, 2004). Organizations need to be better informed about the complexities of charter school start-ups and growth before agreeing to the role. This research will contribute to that knowledge base.

Knowledge gained from the experiences of viable charter schools may help new charter creators avoid common problems and pitfalls. This knowledge may also help sponsors create more detailed criteria for evaluating potential charter school petitions.

Finally, a failed charter school causes damage to the public education system by the loss of tax money. A failed charter school leaves key stakeholders feeling disillusioned, maybe cheated. Charter school opponents are quick to use a failed school to detract from the movement. A failed school hurts the credibility of the charter school community. It is hoped this research will help prevent such failure.

Summary

This is a qualitative study of eight Minnesota charter schools that have achieved longevity. Structured interviews with thirty-three key informants revealed the dynamics and processes at work among the schools' organizational areas of leadership,

governance and resources. The stories shared by the respondents revealed how their schools changed from the initial idea, through the start-up and growth stages, and for some, on to maturity. Their narratives offer interesting insights into the creation of a few of Minnesota's established charter schools.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Charter schools are a recent phenomenon of public schooling in the United States. They are distinctly different from regular school districts in that they are operating under a charter, or a contract, that grants widespread autonomy in exchange for tightly defined accountability (The Center for Education Reform, 2004). Charter schools are accountable for positive academic results and appropriate fiscal practices. This accountability extends not only to the chartering entity, but also to the parents of the students in the school and the general tax-paying public.

The majority of charter schools in Minnesota have been started "from scratch." This means every aspect of designing and implementing a new organization, which is part business, part non-profit, and entirely public, rests in the hands of the founders. This requires an extensive knowledge base in organizational design and business practices as well as academic programming, all of which rests on the shoulders of the founders (frequently K-12 educators).

This chapter examines aspects of that knowledge base beginning with an overview of charter schools and continuing to look at characteristics of a well functioning charter school. The second section, organizational theory, looks at the complexities of organizational design, the initial start up phase of an organization, and successful practices of both non-profit and business organizations. The third and final section looks at leadership literature, examining how context affects leadership not only in business but in the non-profit sector and charter school arena as well.

Charter Schools

Overview

The number of charter school across the United States has been growing steadily since the first one was founded in Minnesota in 1992 (Nathan, 1996). The Center for Education Reform reports that as of October 2005 there are chartering laws in forty states and the District of Columbia. There are more than 3,600 charter schools enrolling slightly over a million students (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2006).

The most common type of charter school is the independent one founded by teachers, parents, and/or community members. It tends to be mission-driven, focusing on a particular vision of education. Another type of charter school is founded by "for profit" companies such as the Edison Corporation. The company may create a school on its own or be hired by the board of an independent charter to run the school. The conversion of a district school to a charter school is a third type of charter school, but not all states allow conversions.

Charter schools provide families with an innovative public school choice that is accountable for results, according to *US Charter Schools*, a website originated by the federal government but now maintained by a consortium of charter advocacy groups. A charter to operate is granted by a state-approved authorizer or sponsor who holds the school accountable for meeting its goals. What prompts a person or group of people to create a charter school? Several reasons are offered by the National Study of Charter Schools (RPPI & CAREI, 1997) including opportunities to: focus on an educational vision; be innovative and gain autonomy over all aspects of schooling (finance, governance, programming, etc.); serve a targeted student population; and promote teacher and parent ownership.

The progress and success of charter schools has been scrutinized closely since their inception. Student-achievement results have been the focus of many studies and articles in the last five years. Bryan Hassel (2005), a researcher for the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS) completed a meta-analysis of 38 comparative analyses of charter performance versus district performance (NAPCS website). Based on his research, he concluded "Charter schooling represents an experiment worth continuing – and refining to improve quality further over time (p. ii)."

Becoming an established charter school

There is an immense distance between having a great idea to start a school and being identified as an established charter school. What happens during that span of time, during each step of the development process? What are the dynamics at work among the individuals creating a charter school?

Since the early days of the charter movement, researchers have investigated, examined, and reported on the development and growth of charter schools. Studies run the gamut from a case study of a first year urban charter school (Leonard, 2002), to an extensive study involving visits to over a hundred charter schools nationally and interviews with thousands of charter stakeholders (Finn et al., 2000), to a federal report on the charter school state of affairs nationally (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). In preparing this review of literature, 22 data based studies of charter schools were examined as well as 8 non-data based works.

The focus of many early studies and reports revolved around school choice philosophy, state laws, charter start-up and development issues, and questions about the future of charter schools. Patterns about start-up obstacles and effective practices have emerged from an examination of this body of literature. Sarason (1998) offers a conceptual frame in which to fit these patterns.

Sarason studied and wrote about "a conceptual rationale for the creation of new settings" (p.1) in the early 1970s. In 1998 he applied his conceptual framework of features, processes and dynamics to the creation of charter schools. He says new settings have two crucial periods, the "before-the-beginning" stage and the first operational year. What happens during the pre-operational stage is a major factor in the future success or failure of a new setting. He says there are present realities that must be attended to; any lack of attention and action to "predictable features and problems" (p.24) undermines the success of the new setting. The author identifies the features of leadership, governance, and resources (both time and finances), as the biggest factors of success or failure in the pre-operational stage. He goes on to say other potential problem areas include clarity of mission and goals, external surroundings, internal dynamics, school culture and climate, public relations and parental involvement (Sarason). The author focuses most of his comments on the pre-operational stage of charter school creation rather than the operational stage.

Other researchers and writers reporting on the development of charter schools address these key features in both the pre-operational and operational stages. One of the patterns seen in the literature is that the overriding needs of a charter school in its pre-

operational stage are distinctly different from the needs after it opens, launching its operational stage (Finn et al., 2000; Fuller, 2000; Kimberly, 1984; Ley, 1998; Simon, 2001; Van de Ven et al., 1984). Sarason's (1998) framework of predictable features, processes, and dynamics will be used to organize the patterns of lessons learned and recommendations for start-ups.

The first of Sarason's (1998) features is leadership and the importance of charter school leadership was confirmed at a recent national symposium on high quality charter schools in big cities (Harvey & Rainey, 2006). Charter school founders need a unique set of skills from the education, business and finance, and organizational design fields when creating a charter school. If lacking in any area, they need access to the necessary expertise to address the key features and processes (Cornwall, 2003; Finn et al., 2000; Ley, 1998; Sarason, 1998; Sullins & Miron, 2005). Competence and commitment are better indicators of effective charter school leadership than style (Binger, 2003; Rizzo in Clinchy, 2000; Sarason, 1998).

In a report about the early days of New Mexican start-ups, most founders were not prepared for the myriad of details involved in starting a school. These include curriculum decisions, locating a facility then equipping it with all necessary supplies and materials, establishing policies and procedures, and organizing communication networks, among other things. Lack of knowledge about state rules and regulations, along with poor communication and lack of support from state agencies magnified the problems (Casey, Anderson, Yelverton, & Wedeen, 2002). These New Mexico leadership problems are similar to those described in other states (Fellowes, 2002; Finn et al., 2000; Fuller, 2002; Governmental Accounting Office, 2003; Leonard, 2002; Maranto & Gresham, 2001) and summarized in the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory's (NWREL) report of findings about leadership needs (1998).

Charter school founders are creator-leaders, and therefore distinctly different from a traditional school administrator. In addition to the multifaceted set of skills from education, finance and organizational design, a strong vision and sense of mission are needed. Complex interpersonal dynamics must be managed since a founder will need a core working group at the very beginning of the process. Another section of this

literature review will focus more deeply on leadership because of the importance of this feature in charter school start-ups.

Governance is the second critical feature in Sarason's conceptual framework (1998) and its importance appears throughout the charter school literature. Governance has to do with creating a decision-making structure, and Sarason endorses one that is collaborative and efficient and supports the mission of the school. He says it is equally important that the governing board have a clear, united focus on the vision of the school as it goes about making decisions.

Recruiting board members who have skills and expertise in key areas is critical. It is desirable to have various board members with knowledge about financial management, fundraising, academic oversight, and school law (Cornell-Feist, 2007). It is also helpful if at least part of the board have previous governance experience.

The ability to be innovative with governance models, as well as academic programs, is one of the reasons charter schools came into being (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement, 2004). The inclusion of teachers on the school boards, as well as stronger involvement from parents in the decision-making structure, is an example of such innovation. Since state rules differ about the governing boards of charter schools, this needs to be investigated early in the creation process (Nathan, 1996).

When examining published studies of charter schools, Lubienski (2003) found that they were more likely to have innovative practices at the administrative level than the classroom level. The author presumes the small size and autonomy of charter schools allows for more innovation at the administrative level than would be possible in a traditional public district. Innovative administrative practices were evident in areas such as governance, financial arrangements, employment practices, stakeholder input, and focus on specific mission.

Defining the roles and responsibilities that make up the decision-making structure is one of the biggest governance challenges of a start-up (Cornell-Feist, 2007; Fellowes, 2002; Finn et al., 2000; Leonard, 2002; Ley, 1998; Sarason, 1998). Governing boards struggle with what their roles should be. They tend to want to micro-

manage the day-to-day functions of the school. The most effective and appropriate role for a board is oversight of facilities concerns, finance and budget, raising funds, and sustaining the vision and mission of the school (Casey et al., 2002). Unfortunately, overstepping boundaries can lead to conflicts between zealous parents and teachers, or between the board and the principal/director (Finn et al., 2000). A well-developed governance system with sound, clearly described roles can help diffuse such conflicts. Because of the significance of this feature to the health and effectiveness of a charter school, another section of this literature review will explore organizational design more fully.

The third feature of Sarason's (1998) conceptual framework is resources. He chooses to include money and time in this area. In the earliest days of chartering there were no start-up funds available, no money came to a school until the students arrived. This made it especially difficult to secure an adequate facility for the school. Descriptions of inadequate physical space appear in many of the reports, books and articles examined for this review (Keegan in Maranto, Milliman & Gresham, 2001; Leonard, 2002; Ley, 1998; Shapely et al., 2005; Sullins & Miron, 2005).

In a 2002 status report on charter schools in New Mexico, the authors said all charter schools in that state began in temporary or sub-par facilities because of the lack of money (Casey et al., 2002). A report on charter start-up challenges from the Governmental Accounting Office (2003) said that two of the three greatest challenges for charters across the country were securing a facility (particularly hard in Washington, D.C.) and obtaining start-up funding. They recommended that school districts identify under-utilized school buildings and make them available to charter schools. They also said other facility-related support such as per-pupil facility allowance should be made available.

The first federal law allocating money for charter schools was passed as part of the ESEA reauthorization in 1994. Money ($15 million) for charter start-up support was included in Title X. David Leal reports that at that time, charter law enjoyed bipartisan support as well as support from both liberals and conservatives (Maranto et al., 2001). The Charter Schools Program (CSP), created by the federal government to expand the

number of quality charter schools across the country, administered approximately $217 million in competitive grant money in fiscal year 2005 (www.uscharterschools.org/pub/uscs_docs/fs/index.htm).

In some states, the per-pupil funding amount was, and continues to be, less than school districts receive (Finn et al., 2000; Nathan, 1996). The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS) Task Force, 2005, says charter students are entitled to same funding as other public school students. The University of Washington's National Charter School Research Project published its first annual report on charter school issues in November 2005. In the chapter about fiscal comparisons, Roza said there are so many ways to view revenue and cost differences between charter schools and district schools, it's hard to make "apples-to-apples" comparisons. "We therefore cannot say exactly how charter school revenues and costs compare with those of district-run schools serving similar students, but instead frame the issues for continued research and policy debates" (p.64).

In his book (1998) Sarason expressed several concerns about the resource of time in the creation of a charter school. First, creator-leaders and core groups typically have never created a new setting before, and have no conceptual frame for it. This is a source of pressure and anxiety. Second, the lack of time between the granting of the charter and the opening of the school may be short in some states. This is a problem because so many decisions need to be made by the "new group," including mission, governance, staffing, curriculum, instructional techniques, facility, admissions, finance management, and utilizing parent/community resources. A third concern is that when time is short and the emphasis is on organizational matters, adequate staff training does not happen. This can affect the quality of the educational program.

Lack of adequate planning time was a significant issue uncovered by Finn et al., in their 2000 study of charter schools. They found that charter schools often had to open the doors to students before everything was ready. Sometimes this was due to state-imposed timelines. These researchers urge founders not to underestimate the amount of planning time that will be needed. The Arizona State Board for Charter Schools recognizes the need for planning time (Carpenter, 2005). They provide 24 months

between application approval and the school's opening, allowing founders time to work out as many operation details as possible.

The three features of the conceptual framework, (1) leadership, (2) governance and (3) resources, encompass many, but not all aspects of charter school start-up issues. "Processes" and "dynamics" are aspects of new setting creation that need to be attended to (Sarason,1998). When referring to processes, Sarason includes the formation of vision and mission statements, creation of administrative systems, and the development of the academic program, which also includes the student achievement assessment systems.

Each of these processes receives attention in the charter school literature. The formation of a clear, easy to communicate vision statement is prominent in many writings (Cornwall, 2003; Lubienski, 2003; Fellowes, 2002; Fuller, 2002; Ley, 1998; U.S. Department of Education, 2004). The issue of vision creation is explored further in the organizational theory section of this chapter. Once a vision and mission have been articulated, it is important that they remain the driving force in the creation of systems and structure, and the focus when making decisions. However, while vision and mission must guide educational practice, Sarason (1998) cautions that some founders are so consumed with their vision that they do not pay attention to the practical, present organizational realities and potential problems of creating a new setting.

The creation of administrative systems is one of the areas of potential problems (Finn et al., 2000; Ley, 1998; Sarason, 1998). Ley and the NWREL researchers (1998) found that acceptable policies guiding day-to-day and long-range planning are needed but are often slow in coming. Educator-founders are often lacking in the appropriate business skills needed to create operational systems (Cornwall, 2003; Finn et al., 2000; Sarason, 1998). In her writing about the stages of development of non-profits, Simon (2001) says administrative systems include people (such as support staff), processes (including accounting and evaluation functions), and space and equipment. The timely development of administrative systems is important for stability and sustainability as well as future adaptability (Ley, 1998; Simon, 2001). Charter founders sought help from

the NWREL project to develop appropriate systems for accountability, both internally and to the public (Ley, 1998).

The development of the academic program is often rushed or short-changed, because of lack of time before opening (Sarason, 1998). Curriculum and assessment are areas identified as needing assistance in the NWREL (Ley, 1998) study of charter start-up needs. Someone must have the ability to develop an academically rigorous curriculum, true to the school's mission, and align assessments with the program. Developing appropriate academic accountability systems is important for both internal monitoring of student progress and for reporting to regulatory bodies.

In addition to the processes of formulating a clear vision and mission, and creating administrative systems and academic programs, Sarason (1998) underscored the importance of awareness of dynamics within a new setting. Potential problems in this area must be anticipated and addressed if the setting is to flourish and succeed. The internal dynamics include the manner in which the core members interact with each other and the leader, and the way the leader responds to conflict within the core group. The dynamics of the external surroundings include parent involvement, stakeholder satisfaction, and public relations.

The internal dynamics within the core members may include conflicts between founders and the teaching staff and director, or the director and the governing board (Pearlman in Clinchy, 2000; Finn et al., 2000; Fuller, 2000). The internal dynamics may also include the extent and balance of expertise within the core membership. Cornwall (2003) cautions that too much like-mindedness can be restrictive when dealing with issues and problems. He recommends the core group have a diversity of expertise so all necessary functions of a start-up are covered.

Stress and burnout of founders and the original teaching staff is another internal dynamic that charter schools need to be aware of. Creating a charter school is intense and complex work that does not fit into a regular eight-hour day.

An awareness of external surroundings is an important dynamic, and parent involvement can be a significant factor in this area. First, parents must be convinced to send their children to a school that is not even open yet. They must make a conscious

choice to send their child to a charter school. This gives them a certain level of investment. The importance of sufficient enrollment is not to be underestimated because of the financial implications.

A particular challenge is defining the role of parent involvement especially when parents are part of the founding group (Sarason, 1998). Generally, finding meaningful involvement for parents is a challenge (Casey et al., 2002) and often difficult for charter schools in the start-up stage. The U.S. Department of Education (2004) reports that the successful charter schools they studied found authentic and meaningful ways to involve parents at multiple levels.

Stakeholders are people in both the internal and external environments. Internal stakeholders include the founders/board, the teachers and staff, the director/principal, and parents. But parents can also be considered part of the external environment, too. Other external stakeholders include the authorizing/sponsoring body, the State Department of Education, the landlord, and the community leaders. An applied research project funded by the U.S. Department of Education and conducted by the Center on Education and Work (CEW) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, surveyed charter high schools about important issues with their start-up experiences (2004). Several reported that building coalitions among supporting groups was an important survival technique against detractors and negative attacks.

Public relations are an external dynamic related to stakeholders. Satisfied stakeholders, especially parents, contribute to positive public relations. Investigators found that charter schools need to reach out to community members who might think the charter is taking money away from the traditional schools. The NWREL study (Ley, 1998) determined that charter leaders need community and public relations skills to deal with controversy, work with the media, and to develop positive relations with community interest groups such as the local district, school board, and teachers union.

Indicators of a Quality Charter School

A quality charter school targets and produces student achievement, according to a task force composed of charter school founders and leaders that was assembled by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS) in January of 2005. It was

charged with drawing on its combined experiences and providing recommendations for future growth of high-quality charters. It said a quality charter school must have high student achievement as a priority and an outcome.

When the U.S. Department of Education wanted to study successful charter schools in 2004, the first criterion for choosing schools was student achievement – schools meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for 2003 and showing three years of increased standardized test scores. Other criteria for selection included stable leadership, parental involvement and satisfaction, and a good relationship with the authorizer.

The NAPCS task force (2005) gave internal and external accountability, such as academic assessment systems and organizational monitoring systems, as another principle of quality chartering. Also, the ability to adjust quickly to changing circumstances was a characteristic of a high performing school. Internal accountability was a common feature of the eight charter schools considered "successful" and included in the U.S. Department of Education (2004) study. Internal accountability meant there was regular, ongoing assessment to assure academic goals were being met. If needed, quick programmatic adjustments could be made to assure student achievement.

A positive, productive school culture that is mission-driven was noted as a characteristic of successful/quality charters in the two reports cited above. The importance of a clear, focused vision and mission was a finding of smaller, more limited studies as well (Fellowes, 2002; Fuller, 2002; Ley, 1998; Lubienski, 2003; Sullins & Miron, 2005).

Financial stability, including adequate resources, funding equal to that of district schools' per pupil funding, as well as facility support, is another principle of quality chartering (Fellowes, 2002; NAPCS, 2005; Schroeder, 2004; Sullins & Miron, 2005). A lack of funding, as well as other financial issues, was often cited as problematic for charter schools (Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000; Shapely, Vicknair & Sheehan, 2005).

Stable leadership was a criterion when screening charter schools for inclusion in its study of successful charters in 2004 (U.S. Department of Education). The NAPCS

task force lists appropriate leaders and teachers as one of the principles of quality charters, adding that recruitment, mentoring, and evaluation of personnel was essential.

Finally, stakeholder satisfaction is a characteristic of a quality charter school. Stakeholders include parents, children, teachers, administration, authorizers/sponsors, and even the community (U.S. Department of Education, 2004; NAPCS, 2005). Sullins and Miron (2005) propose that because charter schools are an embodiment of the school choice philosophy, market accountability, especially parent and student satisfaction, is an essential indicator of charter school success.

Summary of Charter School Literature

Quality charter schools have strong mission-driven cultures that focus on student achievement. They have internal and external systems of accountability to monitor achievement, organizational goals, and regulatory compliance. They are flexible and responsive to changes as needed. They are financially stable. They have strong, consistent leadership capable of running the school. The stakeholders are positive and supportive of the school.

Organizational Theory

The creation of a charter school is the creation of a new organization, distinctly different from opening a new school within an established school district. This section of the literature review examines the complexities of organizational design, organizational start-ups, and organizational practices from both non-profit and business perspectives.

Complexities of Organizational Design

From the first creative idea of a founder, through the structured steps of planning, to the involvement of many stakeholders, to the actual opening of operations, organizational start-ups are complex endeavors. There are many ways of viewing all that is happening with a start-up. Van de Ven, Hudson, & Schroeder (1984) examined new business startups through three diverse lenses: organizational, entrepreneurial, and ecological. Each lens offers a different focus on the organization, on the level of analysis, and uses a different methodology.

The organizational view focuses on the period of planning before the opening of the business. Van de Ven et al. (1984) measured and analyzed specific planning activities to determine what and how they related to a successful startup. They looked at the total hours spent in planning, the depth and richness of the feasibility study, the level of detail in the business plan, and the number and make-up of business plan reviewers. Other factors affecting performance that were examined include personnel stability, scale at startup, management structure, and management practices.

The entrepreneurial view focuses on the founder and the characteristics or attributes this person brings to the organization. Van de Ven, et al. (1984) used data from twelve case studies of educational-software companies to generate a list of characteristics that appear to be related to success. Expertise and background, such as education level, years of work experience, etc. was first on the list. Next was the person's risk orientation (internal locus of control; strategies to reduce risk; low levels of perceived risk). Another characteristic was the business idea or vision, including its soundness, clarity, breadth, and source of the original idea. The final characteristic was the founder's motivation and commitment of both time and money.

Lastly, the ecological view focuses on the big picture, the larger industry context in which the business is situated. The authors thought this view seemed most applicable to government and large corporations, yet it could be useful when considering the political aspects of a new organizational start-up (Shoichet, 1998). Van de Ven et al. (1984) used two ecological models to examine these same twelve cases. The population ecology model (Aldrich, McKelvey, & Ulrich, 1984 in Van de Ven et al., 1984) can be summarized as "survival of the fittest." The collective action model (Trist, 1981; Van de Ven & Astley, 1981 in Van de Ven et al., 1984) is based on cooperation and interdependence in a symbiotic network. The data suggested that businesses in the competitive, population ecology model were more successful than the businesses in the nurturing, collective action model. These three views of start-ups as (1) organizational, (2) entrepreneurial, or (3) ecological, are a hint of the complexity of the literature on organizational design.

Handbooks for starting and running a nonprofit organization offer basic, "how to" information. Hummel (1996) has written one that begins with a checklist of required activities and actions. Subsequent chapters provide detailed explanations of the key actions and activities that must take place to get a non-profit up and running. These details are essential for creating the structure, or the form, of such an organization.

Jeffrey Cornwall applies his knowledge as an entrepreneur to the issue of starting a school in his book, *From the Ground up: Entrepreneurial School Leadership* (2003). He begins by outlining the four phases of the life cycle of an entrepreneurial venture. They include the preventure or prelaunch phase, the start-up phase, the growth phase, and the transition phase. He provides an overview of the actions and activities that need to be done in each phase.

Each book has a directed guidance approach to creating an organizational structure, but Cornwall's book differs from Hummel's in that Cornwall includes the importance of a feasibility study and a business plan, defining what each is and what it should include. Cornwall (2003) takes a business orientation to a start-up organization, encouraging the entrepreneur to spend time first determining whether or not a new venture should be initiated. Hummel's (1996) guide makes the assumption that the decision to create a non-profit organization has been made and here's what needs to be done.

Goold and Campbell (2002) studied successful companies and reviewed the literature on principles of organizational design. Based on their findings, they constructed a framework of tests (essentially probing questions) that can be used when creating a new company or can be applied when evaluating an existing company. The purpose of the nine tests is to determine if an organization is well designed. Tests one through four are "fit" tests, initial screens for design alternatives and to determine if a company's strategies, available workers, and situation are sufficient for that design. One might say they are a type of feasibility test, although the content of the screening is different from that proposed by Cornwall's (2003) feasibility study. Tests five through nine are "good design" tests. These tests help address potential problems in the areas of governance, company structure, culture, and systems. These are similar to the structural areas that Cornwall (2003) addresses in his description of preparing the business plan.

These authors (Cornwall, 2003; Goold and Campbell, 2002) advise that this is an iterative process. Developers should go through the feasibility study, revise the design, then go through again to be sure the changes have not caused new problems. It's a complex progression so developers should not lose sight of the big picture as they work through the process of testing alternatives.

The complexities involved in designing an organization, be it non-profit or for-profit, are investigated by Shoichet (1998). The result of his study was the creation of a three-dimensional model, the *3 Delta Model*. Production, planning, and politics make up the three dimensions. According to Shoichet, the typical two-dimensional models for organizational design (planning and production), are not adequate, therefore, a third dimension is needed. The importance of the third party in non-profits, the stakeholders, creates the essential third dimension – politics. Shoichet makes the case that positive stakeholder relations, both internal and external, are as important to non-profit organizational success as planning and production.

A concern for relationships is mentioned by Goold and Campbell (2002), but is not a major consideration in their tests for a well-designed organization. The last of the nine tests, the final "fit test," addresses internal and external relationships. Developers are told to consider potential constraints early in the design process, including government regulations, stakeholders, information systems, and corporate cultures.

Kimberly highlights the importance of relationships in his article, *The Anatomy of Organizational Design* (1984). He contends that the popular "design/implement/evaluate" approach to organizational design is too simplistic to adequately describe what really happens. In his opinion, the term "design" is too mechanistic and doesn't acknowledge the humanistic aspects of an organization such as relationships and quality of life. This mechanistic model implies a thoughtful, carefully controlled process. It doesn't appear to allow for the influence of history, context, politics, or personality in the creation of an organization. Kimberly suggests that organizational design is really about the relationship among environment, people, and technology. He identifies dynamics that affect organizational design. These are the

organization's past history, the personalities of the people in the organization, the internal and external politics, the sense of pragmatism, and chance.

As an organization grows and develops, there are a number of organizational devices, systems and procedures, which affect the environment, people and technology. These include defined levels of authority and responsibility, information flow, task-relevant units and processes, the incentive structure, and people/staff issues. Kimberly (1984) advises that the creation of a new organization requires careful consideration of how the dynamics interact with the organizational devices to influence and affect the environment, people and technology.

Relationships and politics are dynamics that interact with the organizational structures (devices) being created and must be considered when designing a new organization (Kimberly, 1984; Shoichet, 1998). While not using the same terms, Anderson examines this conceptual interaction between relationships (dynamics) and structure (devices) in his article, *Organizational Design: Two Lessons to Learn Before Reorganizing* (2002), and comes to a different conclusion. He says the structure, or the form, of an organization determines its lines of authority and the division of labor (which comprise one type of organizational relationship). This is the hierarchy of the organization.

The hierarchy, or design, of the organization is not to be confused with the bureaucracy which describes how an organization functions. Andersen (2002) says that function has to do with the activities of the people in the organization, what they do and how they behave. Success, such as meeting goals, depends on how the organization functions not on how it is structured. According to Andersen, there is little empirical research on the relationship between design (form) and function and how it affects the performance of an organization. It is his opinion that the structure of an organization (devices and systems) has only a slight effect on its function (what people do and how they behave) and performance.

Andersen (2002), Kimberly (1984), and Shoichet (1998) agree that people's behavior and relationships affect the performance of an organization. However, they are

not in agreement on the significance of the interaction of structure and dynamics on the design of the organization.

Simon (2001) offers a larger picture of non-profit organizations, covering their life from birth to death in her book. She has identified seven arenas of organizational life that need to be examined and analyzed. The arenas include governance, staff leadership, staffing, financing, administrative systems, marketing, and products and services. Unique patterns for each life stage are created when these arenas interact with five other factors (age, size, growth rate of the industry, external environment, and primary leader characteristics). Simon's model contains a relationship and political strand through each life stage.

The creation of an organization requires many concrete structural tasks that can be clearly defined (Andersen, 2002; Cornwall, 2003; Goold and Campbell, 2002; Hummel, 1996; Kimberly, 1984; Shoichet, 1998; Simon, 2001). Some researchers insist that organizational design is made complex by inescapable relationships and politics (Kimberly, 1984; Sarason, 1997; Shoichet, 1998; Simon, 2001). They advise that these are as much a part of the design as the structural features and must be considered when starting a new organization.

Organizational Start-ups

In the literature, organizations have a "life" that passes through phases. These phases have been labeled life stages (Simon, 2001) or lifecycles (Cornwall, 2003; Stevens, 2001; Ward, 2003). Despite the differing labels, each model presents key people involved in doing key tasks with a fair degree of consistency from stage to stage.

During the earliest phase, a founder and/or founding group brings the idea of a new organization to life. One of the first tasks in this phase is the creation of a vision statement. Operational planning soon follows this. Both of these tasks are complex and critical to the future success of the organization.

Many writers underscore the importance of creating a vision statement (Collins, 1997; Cornwall, 2003; Drucker, 1990; Hummel, 1996; Meyer, 1995; Pfeffer, 1998; Simon, 2001). The terms vision statement, mission statement, and goal statements appear to be used interchangeably by some writers, however Cornwall states a well-

developed vision statement has four parts: core values, purpose and focus, mission, and goals and aspirations. Cornwall's definition helps define the relationship of these terms and their importance to the organization. First, the core values are the morals and ethical principles upon which the culture of the organization is built. Second, the purpose and focus are a simple, clear statement of the organization's reason for being; they must be compelling, providing motivation for all the stakeholders of the organization. The purpose and focus should be consistent with the actions and activities of the organization, and have continuity over time. The people may change, but the purpose and focus of the organization should stay the same. Next, the mission statement further refines the generalized purpose statement and makes it more explicit. It states what is done, for whom, and possibly even how it will be done. The goals and aspirations are more general and focused on the future. Finally, Cornwall advises that a vision statement be simple and easy to communicate.

Core values and purpose along with the importance of challenging goals are the focus of Collins and Porras in their book *Built to Last* (1997). They defined a vision as a combination of a core ideology, which includes core values and a core purpose, and an envisioned future, or ambitious goals, for the next ten to thirty years. Similar to Cornwall (2003) the core values describe what an organization stands for and the core purpose tells why it exists. These aspects of the organization should never change. Collins and Porras are more explicit about goals than Cornwall in saying an organization must have a changeable dimension. The "envisioned future" describes aspirations, dreams, and challenging goals on which the organization is focused (p. 221).

Drucker (1990) shares his accumulated wisdom about starting a non-profit organization. He also interviews other industry leaders who agree with the importance of organizational mission and goals. One of the interviews is with Philip Kotler, an expert in marketing for non-profit organizations. Kotler emphasizes the importance of having a clear mission and goals that motivate all stakeholders. He says this is one of the elements that make marketing effective.

In the earliest phase of creation, planning the structure of the organization must begin soon after the visioning (Cornwall, 2003; Simon, 2001; Stevens, 2001). Meyer (1995), an expert in the organizational structures of information systems, makes the case that structure, based on principles and participation, is the foundation for high performance teamwork and an entrepreneurial culture. When creating a new structure, first there needs to be a vision shared by all stakeholders, then there needs to be a clear definition of roles and responsibilities. If possible, the staff needs to participate in the design process at all levels, which will foster the sense of ownership, a crucial dimension. Without a sound structure, even the best employees cannot be successful.

The structure of an organization is what Hummel (1996) and Cornwall (2003) describe in their respective books. Meyer's call for stakeholder involvement in the creation of a new organization intersects with the perspectives of Kimberly (1984) and Shoichet (1998) on the importance of relationships and form.

There are several basic components of an organizational structure. Various writers (Cornwall, 2003; Hummel, 1996; Kimberly, 1984; Ley, 1998; Sarason, 1998; Simon, 2001) have given this grouping of components different category labels, but the mandatory components of an organizational structure are consistent. They include governance, financing, administrative systems (management), leadership, marketing, and products and services.

Governance has to do with the board of directors, who are the people responsible for all functions of the organization – financial, legal, and moral (Hummel, 1996). They are the ones who put the operating systems, processes and procedures into place (Simon, 2001). Assembling an appropriate board of directors is an important task. Cornwall (2003) says an entrepreneur needs to assemble a team of experts covering a wide range of knowledge and skills. He provides information for determining what these needs might be for all phases of the life of an organization. He offers a skills assessment list as well as specific details about the areas of expertise the team should include. Specific skills needed for the board of directors of a new school at the pre-operational stage include financial management, administration and curriculum

expertise. He advocates for diversity and warns that too much like-mindedness on the board can be restrictive when dealing with issues and problems.

Responsibility for the creation of the operating plan generally falls to the founder, or executive (Cornwall, 2003). Details of an operating plan include a timeline, cost of facilities, staffing needs, systems for administration, transportation, and purchasing. If the organization is a school, an academic program needs to be planned. At the pre-operational stage, board members may be assisting in the creation of these things. Once operative, however, the responsibilities of the board shift away from day to day operations to policy and strategic planning (Drucker, 1990).

Drucker (1990) cautions that non-profits boards tend to be very committed and very involved, which can cause problems if they don't know (and stick to) their job. It is common for a board to micro-manage, interfering with the work of the executive and the staff. He says it is the role of the executive to educate the board members and help them achieve the balance of commitment and appropriate responsibility.

The importance of defining the decision-making structure of the organization, as well as defining roles, should not be underestimated (Goold & Campbell, 2002; Meyer, 1995; Sarason, 1998). Lack of attention early on to governance issues, especially clear job descriptions, leads to major problems later. Cornwall (2003) says when key leaders have multiple roles, such as board member and faculty/staff, clarity about the roles and corresponding responsibilities should help minimize conflicting behavior.

Just defining the jobs may not be enough to avoid problems in this area, according to Stephen Block (2004). He found the issue was more a matter of communication in which assignments and expectations were not clearly communicated, or it was contradicting other information. He also said it could be that the recipient had trouble understanding or absorbing the information.

Aligning systems and operations with the organization's vision is important and underscored by several writers. Collins and Porras (1997) found it to be a hallmark of the highly visionary companies they studied. They uncovered two key processes, a creative one and an analytic one, at work in the alignment task. It is the creative process at work when new strategies, based in the core values and purpose, are crafted to allow

the organization to move toward the envisioned future. Any misalignments that would be inconsistent with the core ideology or prevent forward progress are discovered through the analytic process. The authors found that alignment also meant new hires had a predisposition to share the core ideology; they were not converted or forced. Those people who didn't fit with the ideology did not stay long.

The earliest phases of an organization's life, Stevens (2001) calls them the idea and the start-up stages, include framing a clear, easy-to- communicate vision statement, and creating an organizational structure that puts basic systems into place to enable the organization to function. These are pre-operational tasks that can set an organization on a path to success or failure.

Successful Organizational Practices

Once operations begin, the organization moves into the growth phase of life with different needs and different issues. Performance, stability, and expansion are essential in the growth phase and greatly influenced by goal setting and decision-making, all of which require more sophisticated systems in place. However, Cornwall (2003) warns that entrepreneurs must remain focused and diligent during this time because equal numbers of new ventures fail during the growth phase as during the start-up phase. This can be due to ineffective leadership, lack of attention to building the organizational culture, and slow development of systems, including processes and procedures.

Drucker (1990) says the mission defines the performance goals of an institution. Non-profit organizations have the added complexity of many constituents who also help define performance goals, but these goals may be different for each constituency. Shoichet (1998), also writing about non-profits organizations, offers tools and strategies for dealing with the dimensions of politics, planning, and production, intersecting with the elements of community, structure, and culture. Some of these strategies include stakeholder mapping, needs assessment, and strategic planning exercises.

Long-term goals, however, must be the same for all stakeholders. Drucker (1990) counsels that the executive must be able to take each constituent's vision and integrate it into the mission and long-range goals of the organization. The mission

drives the performance goals of the organization. Collins and Porras (1997) identified the driving force of visionary companies as the combination of preserving core ideology while moving forward with growth producing goals. To accomplish this, these companies put concrete structures and processes in place that would preserve the core ideology while at the same time allow growth, change, and progress. These tended to be risky but provided motivation and tended to promote commitment from employees.

According to Drucker (1990) there are basic rules for formulating performance goals. Decision-making is a major part of this process. When making decisions, the end result needs to be considered first, one must be mindful of how the decision helps meet the goals and further the mission. Clarity of vision and adherence to core values help contribute to sound decisions (Cornwall, 2003; Sarason, 1998).

There need to be alternatives in mind as part of the decision-making process (Cornwall, 2003; Drucker, 1990; Goold & Campbell, 2002; Sarason, 1998). Drucker offers that there is more than one way to innovate and if a strategy does not work, try another approach. He cautions against innovators who are unwilling to adapt their ideas. The companies in *Built to Last* (Collins & Porras, 1997) embraced alternatives and weren't afraid of risk. Experimentation and creativity were expected. Some things worked, others didn't. They felt discovery led to new paths. Shoichet (1998) advises non-profits to use creative problem solving strategies to keep flexibility in the decision-making process.

Even with sound decision-making practices, the reality is that not everyone will agree with or be enthusiastic about a decision. Drucker (1990) says that dissent is healthy as long as it is productive. Different viewpoints are worth considering because they contribute alternatives. Dissent helps resolve conflict because people feel they have the opportunity to be heard. Fighting and feuding are not healthy, but compromises can be crafted when differences are verbalized. Meyer (1995) says fighting over conflicting interests is an indicator of structural dysfunction. The executive must consider if the structure serves what was, or serves what is and what the organization is becoming.

Clear, concrete high standards are needed in organizations. They should be ambitious but attainable (Drucker, 1990; Meyer, 1995). Pfeffer's study (1998) of

successful organizations found that high standards began with the hiring process. These companies had extensive screening systems that typically involved a variety of high level people. They looked for candidates with cultural fit and an appropriate attitude for success, as well as the desired skill sets.

Another common practice of successful companies is ongoing support for training (Drucker, 1990; Pfeffer, 1998). The benefit for them is building skilled and motivated workers who tended to remain at the company. A related practice was high compensation contingent on performance.

In the highly visionary companies they studied, Collins and Porras (1997) found that there was no such thing as "good enough." There was always an expectation of self-improvement. This perpetuated the strengthening of core competencies that were aligned with core ideology. Another aspect of this was developing the talent within the company as part of a "leadership continuity loop" (p. 174). Growing their own leadership was another way these companies preserved and perpetuated the core ideology. This continuity of vision is the reason that Cornwall (2003) recommends an entrepreneur groom a successor from the start of a venture.

Communication and information flow are essential to the successful performance of an organization. Pfeffer (1998) found in his study, that successful organizations share information. Knowledge is power and sharing information, especially related to achieving the common goals of the organization, diffuses power. Drucker (1990) suggests that an executive needs to ask, "What information do I need to do my job and what information do others need to do their jobs?"

Decentralization is a feature of successful companies (Meyer, 1995; Pfeffer, 1998). In Pfeffer's study, self-managed teams emerged as another dimension of an effective, high-performance system. Peer control is more effective, allowing managers to use their time in other, more productive ways. Reduction of status differences is a dimension closely related to self-managed teams and decentralization. This dimension speaks to the cultural aspects of an organization by addressing labels, language, physical space, attire, and wages. Successful organizations value all employees equally, making all members feel like important contributors.

Successful organizational practices generally are seen in established companies and institutions. This time of organizational life, which Stevens (2001) labels Stage Four: Maturity, can be one of financial and leadership stability and growing productivity.

Collins and Porras' advice to those creating or building an organization is to concentrate on "clock building" (1997, p. 89). By this they mean that it is critical to focus on building well-aligned systems and structures that guard the core values and ideology. This investment of time and energy allows companies to stimulate growth, change and progress.

Summary of Organizational Design Literature

The literature explores the complexities of organizational design from many angles and through the various stages of life. Many researchers found the consideration of people and relationships when designing a new organization to be valuable. Most researchers agree that a clear vision statement, including core values and purpose, and challenging goals are priorities when starting an organization. Thorough planning that includes the establishment of systems and defining roles and responsibilities needs to happen in the start-up phase and continue during the growth phase. Investigation of organizational practices from both non-profit and business perspectives shows that aligning structural systems with the vision and goals of the institution increases effectiveness.

Leadership

Common Characteristics of Effective Leadership

Leadership is one of the basic components of an organizational structure. Leadership has been targeted as an important feature of charter school quality (Harvey & Rainey, 2006). There is extensive literature on leadership, but this review will focus on the common elements and characteristics that emerged when examining the arenas of charter school, traditional school, nonprofit, and for-profit business leadership.

Elements/Characteristic of Effective Leadership	*Charter school*	*Traditional school*	*Non-profit business*	*For-profit business*
Visionary, goal oriented, mission driven	X	X	X	X
Good communication skills	X	X	X	X
Combined leader and manager skills	X	X	X	X
Empowering others	X	X	X	X
Productive relationships and networking (internal & external)	X	X	X	X
Commitment to organization more than self	X		X	X
Resource acquisition	X		X	X
Governance knowledge and skills	X		X	
Educational programming responsibilities	X	X		

Figure 2.1. Common Characteristics of Effective Leadership Found in Four Arenas

The first five elements of effective leadership listed on the matrix were found in all four arenas (see Figure 2.1). It is difficult to rank order according to importance, because several of these characteristics are overlapping and intertwined. Also, the designation of priorities varies from writer to writer. "Visionary," "goal oriented" and "mission driven" appeared as the primary characteristic most consistently seen throughout the four arenas. Traditional school literature emphasized developing a shared vision by involving and empowering others (Fullan, 2000; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Murphy, 2000; Patterson, 1993) more so than did the literature in the two business arenas (Bennis & Townsend,1995; Collins & Porras, 2001; Cornwall, 2003; Drucker, 1990; Greenleaf, 1977; Kotter,1999; Kouzes & Posner, 2003).

A model of leader as servant was proposed by R. K. Greenleaf in 1977 in his book, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*. Greenleaf says a servant leader has a vision and a goal that is supported by intuition and a conceptualizing ability. These skills allow the leader to see the big picture and have an awareness of a broad context. They see a path to the goal and invite others to come along on the journey. Their speaking skills are such that they can persuade, rather than coerce, others to change and help others understand the goals being pursued. Servant leaders' power comes from persuasion and example, not domination and manipulation. They create autonomy and empower others. Greenleaf's ideas appear to be the forerunner of a new and different way to think about leadership,

structure, and decision-making in institutions (Spears, 2004). Many others have continued to study and write about the philosophy and practices first proposed by Greenleaf.

Kotter (1999) calls his approach to leadership, "new century leadership." As with Bennis and Townsend (1995) and Drucker (1990), Kotter says leadership is about creating a vision and then strategies to achieve the goals of the vision. These leaders have excellent communication skills, so others are drawn into the vision and embrace the dreams and goals. These leaders are also risk-takers who learn from failure and success, always seeking opportunities to change and improve. These skills are particularly important in the creation of the culture of a start-up organization (Schein, 2003).

The importance of sharing a vision and empowering others to act are two of the five practices of exemplary leadership uncovered by Kouzes and Posner (2003) in their research. The other three practices include modeling the way, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart. By uncovering these patterns of action, they conclude that leadership is about practice, what leaders do, not personality that determines who leaders are. Within these five practices, the authors identified behaviors that support the practices.

Dual Roles

The literature in all four arenas is clear that given the complexities of organizations today, skills previously designated "leadership" and "management" need to be embodied in one person. This is especially true for school leaders, in both the charter and traditional arenas. While there are many skills attributed to leaders and managers, interpersonal skills and dispositions that enable a leader to have productive working relationships and the ability to empower others to act, rose to the top throughout the literature.

Sarason (1998) observes that charter school creator-leaders may have a vision for a unique approach to schooling, but might not have the appropriate personality and skill set to lead the planning and operation of the school. His research found that lack of attention early on to governance issues, especially role definitions and decision-making

structures, leads to major problems later. Other predictable problems are lack of resources, both time and money, impacting the creation of a healthy school culture, development of a sound educational program, and adequacy of a facility.

Deal and Peterson (1994) focus on the school principal in their book, *The Leadership Paradox:* Balancing *Logic and Artistry in Schools*. The term "paradox" speaks to the tension experienced by many school principals to be all things to all people. The authors address the notion that there are distinct differences between leaders and managers as it applies to the principal of a school. It is their opinion that a balanced school needs a "bifocal principal" who can "manage people, time, and instruction while at the same time infusing a school with passion, purpose, and meaning" (p. 39).

Deal and Peterson (1994) acknowledge there are two views of what is important in an organization. They refer to these as the rational/technical view and the symbolic view. The rational view of the school focuses on technical aspects, structural issues, goal-oriented objectives, results and efficiency, as well as managerial tasks. The roles of technical leadership include: planner, resource allocator, coordinator, supervisor, disseminator of information, jurist, analyst, and gatekeeper.

The symbolic view of school focuses on core beliefs and values, shared meaning, rituals, ceremonies, organizational culture, development of internal cohesion and commitment, faith and meaning. The roles of symbolic leadership include visionary, historian, anthropological detective, potter (shape school culture), actor (shift roles to reinforce culture), poet (communication skills), and healer (keep social fabric whole).

A bifocal principal is one who can combine both the technical and symbolic leadership roles. The authors admit this is challenging and also leads to a principal giving out mixed signals because of the dichotomous nature of the roles. This dissonance may include things such as looking for both creativity and precision, delegating imaginative and factual tasks, creating balance and unity, and advocating spontaneity and orderliness. Bifocal principals may encounter other paradoxes about

things such as role expectations, performance, problem perception, and maintaining control by letting go.

A bifocal principal has the best chance of operating a school that can balance the tensions of the technical, structural needs with the symbolic, cultural needs. Both of these sides need constant attention and frequent support. Deal and Peterson (1994) give examples of what this balancing act looks like. It is the task of planning being used as a cultural event, and the responsibility of supervision being viewed as a cultural reinforcement. Hiring becomes an initiation ritual while retirement is an anointing. Communication is used as cultural signals, how the communication happens shapes the culture. Also, the principal builds cultural networks through coordination efforts.

To achieve this balance, the authors note the principal must have technical capabilities, symbolic sensitivities, and be able to use a rational event to deal with symbolic issues (or vice versa). The principal is a change agent, a technical problem solver and a symbolic culture shaper.

Bennis and Townsend (1995) describe a new paradigm of leadership in their book, *Reinventing Leadership: Strategies to Empower the Organization*. They say this new paradigm is one of empowerment and flexibility that contrasts with the old paradigm of "command-and-control." One of the indicators of flexibility is the lack of distinction between the leader and manager. Within the new paradigm, these functions are not separate, because effective leaders do it all, even the managerial tasks.

Bennis and Townsend (1995) offer an extensive list of characteristics and traits of an empowering leader. These include being goal oriented and driven by the organization's mission. Personal ambition is another trait mentioned, but it is ambition under control and focused on making progress toward the goals. An empowering leader has a servant attitude that includes a strong sense of self but with humility, not arrogance. This leader is concerned with coaching subordinates and helping them achieve the organization's goals, then giving them credit for the accomplishments. The authors go on to say this person has excellent communication skills, is articulate, especially about the vision and mission of the organization, and is a good listener, actively seeking feedback.

These leadership characteristics from Bennis and Townsend (1995) were similar to those presented by Drucker in his book on managing the non-profit organization (1990). Drucker believes that leadership is a set of skills that can be learned by most people. The most effective leaders think of the mission, the task, the organization, and the workers, not of themselves. Therefore, there needs to be a fit between the strengths of the leaders and the tasks and expectations of the organization.

Bennis and Townsend (1995) offer insights on a variety of leadership tasks and how an empowering leader might approach them. They are similar to the competencies outlined by Drucker (1990) and Schein (2003). They include visioning and goal setting, trust-building, assembling a capable team then empowering them to meet the goal, leading transformation, risk-taking, dealing with mistakes, and overcoming a crisis. Schein (203) and Cornwall (2003) say a secondary role of the leader is to absorb the stress and anxiety of people during stressful times. Schein says this is a difficult role for founders, but an important one in a start-up organization.

A major challenge of leadership is to maintain balance (Drucker, 1990; Schein, 2003). This includes finding the balance between the long-term, big picture perspective and the short-term, detailed reality. It is discovering the balance between focusing resources on one goal and putting them into diversification. It can also be a balance between caution and risk-taking.

Bennis and Townsend (1995) acknowledge the paradoxes in this approach to leadership. The leader must be patient while communicating a sense of urgency. They need to be available but not needed. The tasks to be done need to have a profound simplicity which means the leader must understand its complexity in order to make something simple.

Kotter (1999) summarizes the work of a new century executive as a blend of management and leadership that involves a complicated web of relationships, rather than a top to bottom hierarchy. The tasks to be done must be balanced between maintenance and change. He says a manager's role involves hierarchy, degrees of control, and the responsibility to keep a system running efficiently and effectively. A leader's role is to envision the future and inspire and empower others to effect change.

However, like Bennis and Townsend (1995), he acknowledges that changes in the world (such as a flattening of hierarchy systems) require a blending of the roles. Leaders need management skills and managers need leadership skills. Power and control no longer dominate; rather good working relations and dependency within networks take precedence when trying to bring about change. Kotter (1999) says the most important role of a leader is to effect change that is useful. It is accomplished by creating coalitions, then empowering an appropriate network of people who share the vision to effect change. The leader must be an excellent and thorough communicator with this network of people.

Productive Relationships

The ability to foster productive relationships was noted as one of the skills needed by leader/managers in the above section. Its frequency of appearance throughout the four arenas warrants a closer examination of this element.

An executive must be able to foster productive relationships and networks both inside and outside of the organization. The complexity of the world requires executives to be able to view these contexts from multiple perspectives. Bolman and Deal (1997) have investigated leadership skills and processes and what's needed to lead different aspects of organizational life. They created four "frames," or perspectives from which to view organizational life. These include the structural, human resource, political and symbolic frames. Each frame represents an organizational context and the authors provide a descriptive lens for viewing each context. They also suggest leadership practices for operating within each frame successfully. Understanding how to operate within each frame will help a leader develop productive working relationships.

Bolman and Deal have applied their concept of four frames to school leadership (2002). When referencing school leaders, they do not limit it to administrators, but include teachers as well. The key concepts associated with each frame are applied and adapted, when needed, to a school setting.

The structural frame views the organization as a rational system. Hierarchy, assigned roles, goals, rules and procedures, are all part of this context. Structural leadership skills and practices include analysis, detail knowledge, ability to see and

communicate goals clearly then implement procedures to attain those goals. It is related to the governance and administrative aspects of a school. A leader's ability to clearly communicate tasks, clarify roles, and define expectations is important within this frame. It includes designating specific, measurable goals as clear, reachable targets. The authors add that these actions contribute to successful group work within the faculty and staff.

The human resource frame considers the people and relationships of the organization as its most important resource. Effective leadership skills and practices within this frame include a strong and demonstrated belief in the worth and value of the people in the organization, as well as the people served by the organization. Productive relationships founded on trust and confidence must be fostered (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). This extends to the practice of encouraging the heart, meaning leaders offer encouragement and show others they care. They communicate appreciation for work well done and promote a tight-knit community. This is evident by the leader's visibility and accessibility in the workplace. Delegation and empowerment are key practices. Bolman and Deal (2002) say these practices are no different in a school setting.

The political frame is concerned with an organization's power brokers and the allocation of resources. When expanded, this context includes coalitions and alliances, conflict and conflict resolution. Political leadership requires practicality, the ability to discern what's possible from what's desirable. Analytic skills are applied to the distribution of power and interests within a situation. Relationship building with key stakeholders is important. Leaders in a political context understand and scaffold the levels of pressure, moving from persuasion to negotiation before resorting to coercion. Key players and coalitions are integral aspects of the power structure of a school. Bolman and Deal (2002) advise that teachers or administrators new to a school should make an effort to identify and learn about the political structure. Strategizing and networking are important skills in the political frame.

Herman and Heimovic (1994) found that effective nonprofit executives are able to enlist these political frame strategies based on the early work of Bolman and Deal.

These strategies proved useful to acquire resources and to accomplish the organization's mission.

The symbolic frame encompasses the cultural and historic systems of an organization. The beliefs, values, stories, ceremonies, and traditions are part of this organizational context. The use of symbols to call attention to an issue is a leadership skill in this context. Other skills include vision communication and interpreting experiences based on an understanding of the constituents. In a school setting the symbolic frame has to do with the culture, the need for ceremony and celebration as a form of solidarity. The leader must be able to communicate the vision of the school, maintain its history, serve as a role model, as well as a change agent.

The ability to recognize the frames and use them to gain clarity and understanding of a complex situation makes a leader more effective. Bolman and Deal (2002) say school leaders can be more effective in viewing challenges and issues if they employ the tools of reframing. The four frames allow leaders to change perspectives when viewing a situation and see things previously overlooked. It provides flexibility in posing solutions to complex problems such as building productive relations and networks both inside and outside of an organization.

Herman and Heimovics (1994), studying and writing about executive leadership in non-profit organizations, focus on the relationship between the chief executive officer (CEO) and the board of directors and what's required to make it a productive relationship. They conclude that the role of the executive is a complex task of integrating mission, strategy, and resource acquisition. These three areas, that they've labeled "realms," are interactive and interrelated within a non-profit organization. The executive needs to understand these relationships when making decisions in one realm because there will be implications of that decision in the other realms. These investigators report it is the responsibility of the CEO to train and develop the board and steer them through their duties and they offer strategies on how to accomplish this. These strategies are the result of their comparative study of effective nonprofit executives and a comparison group of executives.

Before discussing specific strategies, Herman and Heimovics (1994) present the concept of "executive psychological centrality" (p. 140). Legally, a non-profit board is responsible for the organization's activities and behavior, at all levels and the executive works at the will of the board. Based on their study, the reality is that the CEO is responsible for the organization. This is the executive centrality. The authors say there are two implications of this reality: an executive can accept the responsibility and run with it, or, they can work with the board to enable them to function appropriately and effectively. Herman and Heimovics note their research shows effective executives choose the latter course of action.

Drucker (1990) notes that a positive relationship between the board chair and the chief executive is essential to the healthy functioning of the board and the organization. Herman and Heimovics' study (1994) offers insights into how effective non-profit executives accomplished this.

Organization Before Self

The integrity of a leader is displayed in the way the needs of the organization are put above personal needs (Bennis & Townsend, 1995; Drucker, 1990; Evans, 2000; Schein, 2003), even to the point of leaving the organization when a different set of skills would better serve the needs of the institution. Collins elaborates on this trait of leadership in his book, *Good to Great* (2001). When studying exemplary companies he discovered that all the companies had leaders who combined strong ambition for the organization with personal humility. The author called them "Level 5 leaders (p. 21)." Level 5 is the top of a pyramid that describes (and labels) a hierarchy of leadership behaviors. In his research, a Level 5 leader always put the needs of the organization first and personal needs second.

The exemplary leadership behaviors discussed by Collins (2001) are similar to the behaviors described in Stages Four and Five of Hagberg's continuum of personal power (*Real Power*, 1994). In trying to understand power and the use of power in an American organization context, Hagberg has created a developmental model that goes beyond a traditional understanding of power as "control, influence, or the capacity to act (pg. xvi)." This continuum of personal power has six stages. The first three stages

are externally-oriented and tend to describe organizational power, not personal power. The emphasis is on the individual trying to get ahead within an organization. Stages four through six are internally oriented, focused on inner resources and reflective power of the person. The focus is on helping others get ahead, for the sake of the organization. It is these last three stages, but especially Stage Four, reflection, and Stage Five, purpose, that synchronize with the new paradigm of leadership described by others (Bennis & Townsend, 1995; Collins & Porras, 1997; Greenleaf, 1977; Kotter, 1999; Kouzes & Posner, 2003).

Leadership Needs of Charter Schools

Sarason (1998) applies concepts from his earlier work on the creation of new settings (1972) to charter schools. The essentials of his concept are that new settings have two crucial periods, the "before-the-beginning" stage and the first operational year, and what happens during the pre-operational stage is a major factor in the future success or failure of the new setting. He observes that most creator-leaders are so immersed in the future possibilities of their vision that they don't pay adequate attention to the present realities. This lack of attention and action undermines the success of the new setting.

In this book, Sarason (1998) is a supporter of charter schools but he is concerned about the problems of implementation. His impression is that most charter founders have never been involved with the creation of a new setting. He says they lack the conceptual road map to assist such an undertaking. He wonders where the help is so charter schools have a fighting chance of being successful. He decries the lack of attention from state and federal agencies to assist charter schools on the road to a successful start-up, especially since they provided the opportunity to create charter schools. Without assistance, Sarason feels charter schools are another flawed educational reform.

Interestingly, the same year Sarason's book was published (1998) the U.S. Department of Education published a first report from a project it sponsored through the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (NWREL). The purpose of the project was to determine the leadership needs of charter school founders and detail potential problems

and obstacles they might encounter in the start-up and early operational stages. This first report was the findings about leadership needs. NWREL subsequently produced *Charter Starters Leadership Training Workbooks* to provide assistance to people starting charter schools.

The researchers, directed by Dr. Joyce Ley (1998), found that the leadership needs can be categorized into five core content areas. These five core content areas were distilled from current literature and case studies about the barriers and obstacles of charter founders. The first area, start-up logistics, includes building a strong organizational and leadership vision, acquiring a facility, establishing a legal entity, and acquiring necessary start-up funds.

Another area is governance and management. Within this area researchers found that a strong vision needs to serve as the guide for a sound financial plan but there also needs to be an awareness of fiscal realities. The development of a governance body and policies guiding day-to-day and long-range planning are needed but are often slow in coming. The timely development of this area is important for stability and sustainability as well as future adaptability. The team of experts added that the leadership needs of the pre-operational schools are different from those of the operational schools when it comes to governance and management.

Regulatory issues, such as knowledge of state and federal regulations applying to charter schools, are a third area. These issues include special education, health and safety regulations, liability issues, marketing issues, etc. Charter schools are exempt from some, but not all regulations, and the leaders need to be current on this information.

Another leadership area needing expertise is community and public relations. Skills in this arena include dealing with controversy, working with the media, and developing positive relations with community interest groups such as the local district, school board, and the teachers' union.

Curriculum and assessment are the final areas of leadership identified as needing assistance (Ley, 1998). The investigators determined that someone in the start-up group must have the ability to develop an academically rigorous curriculum, true to the

school's mission, and aligned with program and assessment. Also, developing appropriate accountability systems is important for the entire organization, not just in the academic area.

In a smaller, more localized study, Fellowes (2002) examined visionary leadership as well as the importance of a vision and mission, in three charter schools in New Jersey. The investigator also researched the obstacles that blocked vision realization. Among them, the founders represented three different constituent groups, teachers, parents, and community leaders.

The results of the study showed that all three schools had identified a mission and goals. The school founded by a teacher and community activist, both experienced leaders with educational expertise, had a successful opening with full enrollment, an adequate facility, an appropriate academic program for the targeted learners, and a good relationship with the local school district. The school founded by a community leader had an experienced administrator, adequate facilities, full enrollment, a well-designed academic program, and community partnerships with a variety of organizations. The school founded by parents had an inexperienced administrator, board members who micromanaged, and difficulty securing a facility because of a negative relationship with the hosting school district. They had not identified clear academic goals and they did not have full enrollment.

Fellowes' (2002) conclusion based on this small sample is that a start-up charter school will benefit from leaders who are experienced and have educational expertise and can communicate a clear vision and mission. It is also beneficial to have adequate resources, and a well planned, comprehensive academic program.

Summary of Leadership Literature

The importance of leadership in organizations is made clear by many investigators and studies. Five common elements or characteristics emerged from a review of effective leadership literature in the arenas of charter and traditional schools, for-profit and non-profit businesses. These commons elements are being visionary, goal-oriented, mission driven; having good communication skills; combining leader and manager skills; empowering others; building productive relationships internally and

externally; and placing the organization before self. There was consensus that knowledge and skill is a better indicator of effectiveness than any particular style of leadership. Leading an organization is a complex endeavor that requires competence and a high degree of commitment.

Summary of the Literature

Sarason (1972) identified two crucial periods in the life of new settings, which he called the pre-history stage and the first year of operation. He determined that what happens during the pre-history stage is a major factor in the future success or failure of the new setting. He observed that most creator-leaders are so immersed in the future possibilities of their unique vision that they don't pay adequate attention to the present realities. This lack of attention and action undermines the success of the new setting. The "present realities" include what Sarason called "predictable features and problems" (1998, p. 24). These predictable features and problems are largely related to leadership, governance and resources.

Sarason (1998) warned that each of these features has predictable problems as well as processes and dynamics that need to be attended to. Leadership problems may include founders with a unique vision but lacking appropriate skills and/or a conceptual road map to bring the vision to life. The founders may also lack awareness of external constraints, so fail to plan for them. Governance problems include inadequate role definitions and decision-making structures early on. The lack of resources (both time and money) impacts the creation of a thriving school culture, the development of a sound educational program, and often the adequacy of a facility.

The features of leadership, governance and resources highlighted by Sarason (1998) were echoed in the organizational literature (Hummel, 1996; Kimberly, 1984; Ley, 1996; Simon, 2001) as essential components of a new organization. Even more evident in all three areas of this literature review was the confirmation of what Sarason called "predictable problems" within leadership, governance and resources.

Two potential problems of leadership are 1) lack of the appropriate skills to bring a vision to reality and 2) having a different skill set for leading the next successive stages of organizational life (Cornwall, 2003; Drucker, 1990; Finn, Manno, &

Vanourek, 2000; Ley, 1998; Sarason, 1998; Schein, 1992; Van de Ven, et al., 1984). There are other leadership needs that if lacking could be problematic. The need to be conscious of the external environment, including potential constraints, speaks to a leader's need for political awareness (Andersen, 2002; Bodilly, 2001; Bolman & Deal, 2002; Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000; Herman & Heimovics, 1994; Kimberly, 1984; Sarason, 198; Shoichet, 1998). These potential leadership problems need to be considered because the impact of poor leadership can have far reaching effects on the development of an organization (Bolman & Deal, 2002; Collins, 2001; Drucker, 1990; Hagberg, 1994; Kouzes & Posner, 2003).

Governance problems revolving around inadequate decision-making structures and role definition, and the impact on organizational dynamics, were a frequent theme in the literature (Andersen, 2002; Drucker, 1990; Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000; Fuller, 2002; Goold & Campbell, 2002; Herman & Heimovics, 1994; Hummel, 1996; Kouzes & Posner, 2003; Ley, 1998; Meyer, 1995; Pfeffer, 1998; Sarason, 1998).

The impact of insufficient resources of time and money was more evident in the charter school literature than in the organizational design and leadership literature. The most frequent resource-related problem for new charter start-ups was that of inadequate facilities (Fellowes, 2002; Ley, 1998; Leonard, 2002; Maranto, Milliman, & Gresham, (Eds.), 1998; Nathan, 1996; Sarason, 1998; U. S. General Accounting Office, 2003). However, lack of resources impacting the development of both a sound educational program and healthy school culture was also evident.

Researchers defined stages of organizational life (Cornwall, 2003; Simon, 2001, Stevens, 2001; Ward, 2003) but the span of time was separated and described differently from researcher to researcher. The more defined categories, such as Steven's non-profit lifecycles, provide a continuum to help sort and describe the potential problems related to the features of leadership, governance and resources. Sarason (1998) and Cornwall (2003) felt that the pre-operational and early years of life were the two most crucial periods for start up organization. That was when they were most fragile and vulnerable.

Conceptual Model

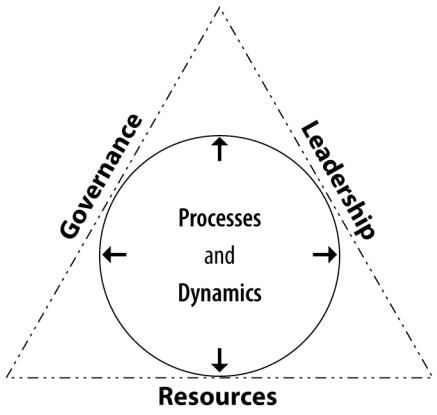
Driven by the research questions and the information within the review of literature, a conceptual model has been created to depict the evolution of a charter school through three stages: start up, growth and maturity (see Figure 2.2). A new setting, or organization, begins as an idea or vision in the mind of a person or core group. From this initial idea begins the pre-operational phase of the ***Start Up Stage***. The literature suggests that in this stage, the basic structure of the organization must include Leadership, Governance and Resources. These three structural features are needed to give strength and structure to the developing organization. The loss of any one of them could cause the dissolution of the start up. Processes and dynamics are internal factors that put pressure on the start-up of the new organization. This pressure may work against the coming together of the essential three features of Leadership, Governance, and Resources—making it a fragile structure. Eliminating one of those three features will likely cause the structure to fail.

Once opened, the school is an operational structure that still needs to develop and strengthen the basic systems, but it also now exists in the center of a greatly expanded cohort of stakeholders. In this new ***Growth Stage*** the organization is subject to the dynamics and processes generated by the stakeholders outside the structure, while still experiencing internal pressures (dynamics and processes) generated by stakeholders within the structure. The start up features of Leadership, Governance, and Resources are continuing to be in need of expansion and stabilization but there is constant pressure from without and within on the still fragile structure. Difficulties with one of the three key elements may cause distress to the structure, and ultimately, may lead to its collapse.

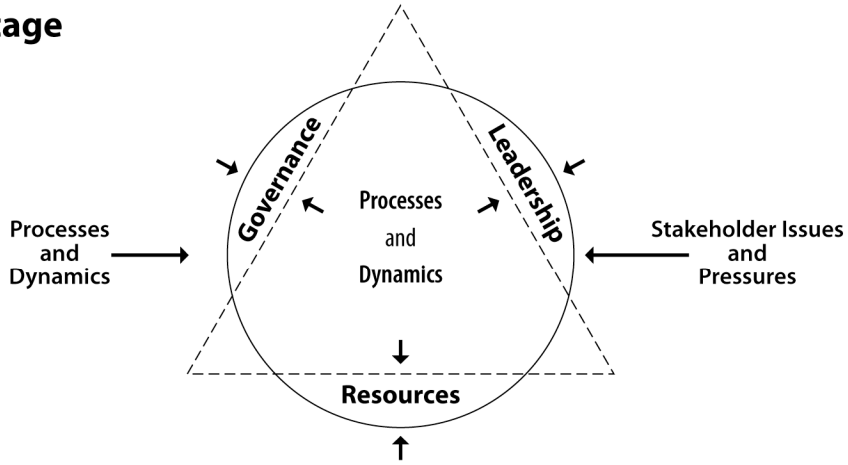
The challenge is to survive the growth stage, possibly as vulnerable as the start-up stage, and move into maturity. By the ***Maturity Stage***, the organization is less fragile, more stable and established. The three features of Leadership, Governance, and Resources have connected forming a stable, solid core and therefore are more able to respond to problems and pressures without experiencing damage.

Start Up Stage

Pre-operational Phase
and Operational Phase



Growth Stage



Maturity Stage

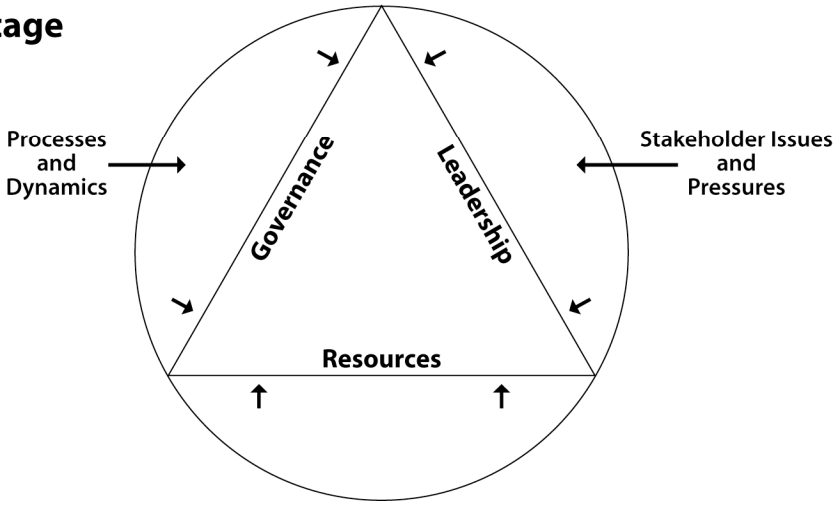


Figure 2.2 Conceptual Model of Charter School Development

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Background

Charter schools are multiplying in Minnesota. During the 2007-2008 school year the 143 Minnesota charter school enrolled over 28,000 students according to the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools' (MACS) website. Fifteen more schools have been approved to open in Fall 2008 and 2009. These charter schools are all sponsored by a school district, non-profit organization, higher education institution, or the Minnesota Department of Education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine several Minnesota charter schools that are considered examples of stability and longevity, looking beneath the outward façade to uncover the dynamics and processes that were at work among the founders and early leaders during the Start Up and Growth Stages of the school. The review of literature around charter schools, organizational design, and leadership led to a conceptual framework based on life stages of nonprofit organizations (Simon, 201; Stevens, 2001; Ward, 2003) and Sarason's work on the creation of new settings (1972) applied to charter schools (1998).

When applying his theory to charter school creation, Sarason said, "The process and dynamics of creating a setting requires description, analysis, and conceptualization" (1998, p.3). This study seeks to do just that, describe, analyze and conceptualize the processes and dynamics at work during the beginnings and growth of eight Minnesota charter schools, which are now at or nearing a mature point in their life.

Research Questions

The research suggests the basic structure of an organization must include leadership, governance and resources. These three structural features are needed to launch a charter school. The dissolution or absence of any of these three features could cause the demise of the school. There are also factors (dynamics and processes) that contribute to a viable school start-up and hopefully sustain them for the long run. This study sought to

investigate the three structural features of leadership, governance, and resources, and how dynamics and processes interact with them over time.

The research questions for this study include:

1. What happens with leadership, governance, and resources during that span of time from the initial idea to mature reality that enables a charter school to be realized and to persist?
2. What are the key organizational processes and tasks that occur as a charter school is created and grows?
3. What are the dynamics among leadership, governance, and resources that affect the start-up process? How do these change over time, especially moving through the first few years of a school's existence?

Research Design

This was a qualitative study. Since this study seeks to explore the individual experiences of people engaged in the processes of starting and growing a charter school, a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis appeared to be appropriate. Qualitative research provides a way to focus on social phenomena, to explore the phenomena in its natural setting, through the people who have experienced the phenomena. Merriam (1998) says, "Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p. 6).

There are many types of qualitative research that one can utilize (Cresswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). The characteristics attributed to basic or generic qualitative research seem to fit this study. Basic qualitative research focuses on identifying patterns, such as themes or categories, which recur in the gathered data. The data of this study yielded patterns of both themes and categories related to the stages of development of charter school leadership, governance, and resources as well as dynamics and processes, all areas suggested by the conceptual framework.

Since there is a conceptual framework being used for this study, the grounded theory type of qualitative research, which seeks to build theory from the data gathered in the field (Cresswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002), is not applicable. This

study doesn't fit the research category of "case study" because eight different schools were included. While many informants were interviewed at their schools, there was not an extended period of time spent immersed in each site. It was not the purpose of this study to examine the current culture of the school; therefore it is not an ethnographic study. After considering the various types of qualitative research, this study seems to be what Merriam (1998) refers to as a "basic or generic qualitative study" (p.11).

This study fits Merriam's (1998) characteristics of a basic qualitative study in that 1) data was gathered through interviews, 2) the findings presented are both description and analysis, 3) the analysis was initiated by ideas from the conceptual framework, and 4) recurring patterns were identified within the data as a result of the analysis. However, some of the analysis strategies used (and detailed below) were similar to certain grounded theory procedures described by Charmaz (2004).

The researcher used semi-structured, in-depth interviews with thirty-three targeted informants from eight targeted schools. This study was interested in tapping into the experiences of the founders and founding group members, the insiders of established charter schools, who were there from the beginning. In order to be responsive to the informant and their story, the researcher was the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. This gave the researcher flexibility to respond to an informant or situation immediately, to probe more deeply, or pursue a change of topic.

Merriam says the end product of qualitative research is rich with descriptive language conveying what the investigator has learned about the setting, context, and participants (1998). This study has produced a richer, more detailed picture of the charter school development journey from idea phase to maturity stage, than is typically found in published reports.

Participants

The thirty-three informants were engaged in in-depth interviews lasting from 65 to 100 minutes. The interviews were digitally recorded then transcribed. By using an interview guide (Patton, 2002), containing a list of topics and issues drawn from the theoretical framework, the interviewer was able to explore and build conversation within the topics. This positivistic approach helped the interviewer cover the important

topics within the allotted time and created a system to maintain focus when interviewing many people.

Purposeful sampling, one of the distinguishing characteristics of qualitative research, was used in this study. The criteria (gleaned from the charter school literature) for selecting charter schools for this study included: 1) met federal AYP requirements, 2) had internal and external systems of accountability that satisfied the MDE, 3) had financial stability validated by a yearly external audit, 4) had stable leadership characterized by longevity, and 5) reported stakeholder satisfaction (most often through a yearly satisfaction survey). Two other criteria added by the researcher were that the schools had been in operation for six or more years and there was access to at least one founder.

A chart of candidate schools based on years in operation was created from a list of all operating Minnesota charter schools published on the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools' (MACS) website. There were 58 charter schools six years or older in Minnesota as of spring 2007 that made up the initial pool of candidates.

The first five criteria listed above could be determined from the detailed annual reports all charter schools were required to file with The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). The staff in the Charter School Office is responsible for collecting and reading the charter school annual reports as well as working with the charter schools throughout the year. One of those staff people was consulted about the 58 schools in the initial pool. This person, based on their professional experience with the annual reports, was asked to indicate schools that did not have all five criteria of stable leadership, finances, systems of accountability, and stakeholder satisfaction. Thirty schools were eliminated from the list of 58, leaving a priority list of 28 schools.

The researcher examined the latest available annual report for each of the twenty-eight schools that made up the priority list of candidate schools. Each charter school's AYP information and length of time in operation, was verified on the MDE website. Information about a charter school's financial stability, accountability structures, longevity of leadership, and stakeholder satisfaction were verified from the

yearly reports either on line or hard copies filed with the MDE. A list of potential informants for each school was compiled from the documents as well.

Recruiting schools to participate in the study began in June 2007. Six schools were chosen from the priority list of 28 based on proximity to the researcher. These schools were labeled "First Round Contacts." Letters were sent via U.S. Postal Service (USPS) to the directors of those six schools.

The six directors were contacted a week later. Follow-up phone calls were made to ascertain willingness to participate in the study. Consent forms were sent to directors who agreed to participate. A second phone call was made to consenting directors to set up an interview time and request recommendations of three to four other informants from that school including a founder, a board member, a teacher, and a parent. Frequently the names recommended by the directors coincided with names already on the "Potential Informant" list assembled from school documents prior to recruiting.

A list of potential participants was assembled for each school with a consenting director. Recruiting letters were sent to the recommended individuals on that list. Follow-up phone calls were made to determine willingness to participate, consent forms were sent, and a second phone call was made to set interview appointments (see Appendix D for copies of recruiting and follow-up letters and scripts). All contact methods and dates as well as response dates were noted on a tracking chart.

The first recruiting round of six directors produced three willing participants as well as an appropriate cadre of informants for each of the three schools. The procedure described above was repeated two more times throughout the summer of 2007. In total, the three rounds of recruiting efforts contacted 18 schools and yielded nine charter directors willing to participate in this study. Subsequent recruiting letters and follow up phone calls to recommended informants reduced the number of participating schools to eight.

Four to five key stakeholders in six schools were interviewed, while there were only three respondents for the other two schools. The stakeholders included founder/directors, founding teachers, founding board members, and longtime

parent/staff members. Additional detailed information about the schools and the informants at each site is included in Chapter 4.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher intended to use a standardized open-ended interview format for consistency, as suggested by Patton (2002). Each question was fully scripted so all interviewees could be asked the same thing, in the same way, in the same order (see Appendix E). The intention was to ensure that the interviews from all eight sites could be compared because the interviews are the primary source of data for this study.

Questions for the hour-long interviews were drawn from the conceptual framework (Figure 2.2) to explore the informants' experiences of starting and growing a charter school, especially focusing on leadership, governance and resources. The opening prompt, "Please tell me the story of your charter school," proved to be an effective overarching central question that encompassed the entire study, such as is suggested by Cresswell (1998). His suggestion for following up with two types of subquestions was considered when creating the list of interview questions. Topical subquestions were created to collect descriptive information about the creation and development of the governance system, the skills and role of leadership, and the accessing and use of resources at each charter school. The questions were focused and time ordered as suggested by Patton (2002) to elicit specific desired information. Issue subquestions were created to probe more deeply into the area of dynamics. This was especially helpful in uncovering subcategories within "dynamics," specifically leadership dispositions and relationships, and within "processes," such decision-making and conflict resolution.

The investigator was able to conduct a field test of the interview protocol at a non-participating charter school that met the criteria of the study schools. This school was familiar to the investigator. Three key stakeholders at this school agreed to participate in the field test. The field test allowed an examination of timing and question appropriateness. In the field test, the questions provided the desired data in the targeted amount of time, so no adjustments were made to the interview protocol. The data from the field test were not included in the study.

The interview protocol was used for the first school. After the four interviews in this school were completed, it was noted that the carefully prepared questions ended up serving as an interview guide. The first question, "Tell me the story of your school," proved to be so encompassing that many questions from the list were answered in the process of the informant telling the school's story. The storytelling nature of the first question resulted in long narratives from the respondents. These narratives frequently included the descriptive information desired about each topic and provided issue information as well. When needed, a topical or issue subquestion elicited the missing information.

The thickly detailed narrative response to the first prompt meant that the questions of the interview protocol became more of an interview guide. The questions provided a means of tracking the topics that needed to be covered and helped bring the conversation back into focus when it wandered off track.

The telling of a school's experience as it moves through life stages is a natural story chronology, which is why the topics were often addressed without the questions being asked. Information about leadership, governance and resources emerged from each informant at each site. Comparable data was attained from informants at each site as well as between sites. While the standardized open-ended interview format was anticipated to be the best means of obtaining useful information for this study, the interview guide format emerged instead.

Interviews were recorded with both a digital recorder and a mini-cassette recorder by the researcher. Hand-written notes were also taken as respondents spoke. Transcriptions of the recordings were made as soon as possible after the interviews. The interview recordings and transcripts were burned onto cd's are stored in a locked cabinet.

Data Analysis Procedures

Qualitative analysis is about making sense from a mountain of data. The work of Miles & Huberman (1994) provided helpful guidelines, suggestions, and exemplars for dealing with the extensive amount of data generated by the thirty-three interviews of

this study. First, a coding system was created for the three features: leadership, governance, resources, and the two factors: dynamics and processes.

Recommendations from Miles & Huberman (1994) about viewing analysis as an ongoing three-stranded process (data reduction, data display, drawing and verifying conclusions) were useful. The coding system was used with data from the four respondents in the first school. The codes were applied to the hard copies of the interview transcripts.

Next, an initial attempt was made to create categories within each of these five areas to further sort and focus the data into workable chunks. A "working list" of categories was maintained and revised as the database grew. The review of literature was consulted several times for possible category labels.

Breaking down the feature of "resources" into categories was the most straightforward and consistent among the schools. The data showed that all schools dealt with money, facilities, expertise and time.

The feature of "leadership" was first sorted into the categories that reflected the characteristics of effective leaders described in the literature review. As the number of respondents grew it became obvious that "leadership" extended beyond the executive directors to include members of the founding groups in most of schools. Not all characteristics were emerging from the data for all the leaders; therefore, the leadership categories were reduced to reflect those characteristics that appeared most consistently throughout the data. These included commitment, knowledge, and skills.

The data showed that the different levels of knowledge and skills among the executive directors was important and had a definite effect on the development of systems within the Start Up Stage. A means of comparing the levels of leadership skills among the schools was needed. The Four Frames of Leadership (Bolman and Deal, 2002) provided a way to make this comparison.

The data about governance was sorted into categories of "active board members" and non-active board members." However, as more data was collected additional categories of "role," "experienced," and "non-experienced" were added.

Matrices and charts provided useful ways to organize, display, and compare the data. This means of organizing the data in a graphic manner is the second strand of the analysis process. Using a matrix to organize the governance data into the categories described above helped underscore to inadequacies of those categories, causing the investigator to reconsider them. The many matrices and charts generated over the course of the study, proved to be essential to the analysis process, especially for comparing data between sites.

Drawing and verifying conclusions, as recommended by Miles and Huberman, felt presumptuous with data from just one school. Some interesting ideas about leadership and governance emerged from the data of that first school, but it seemed that more data was needed from additional schools before drawing and verifying conclusions, the third of the three analysis strands, was feasible.

After conducting interviews at three schools it was easier for the researcher to interpret the data, tease meaning from it and check its plausibility against the raw data (Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Miles & Huberman). Some categories chosen early in the analysis process were changed after more data was available. This was especially true for the areas of "dynamics" and "processes."

The review of the literature had suggested that dynamics and processes have important influence on leadership and governance, but there was little detail about what these dynamics and processes were or how they worked. After interviews were concluded in three schools it was possible to see patterns emerging in the areas of dynamics and processes. Distinct dispositions and patterns of relationships (both categories of "dynamics") were evident in the respondents. Also, the creation of systems and communication patterns (categories of "processes") were also identifiable. When these elements were isolated and organized on matrices their relationship to leadership became more visible.

A warning to be alert to potential problems during the start up was offered by Sarason (1998). During the analysis of the data it became evident that each school experienced one or more incidents during the Start Up and Growth Stages that had the potential to be stressful or traumatic in the life of the school. The investigator labeled

these events as “critical incidents.” They were one of the pressures within processes and dynamics at work on the core structure.

Common patterns clustering within the area of governance at the different life stages of the schools were difficult to label. A new monograph about charter school governance provided helpful categories for analysis. The new categories related to school board competencies allowed the interaction of dynamics and processes within governance structure to be seen.

Organizing the data into separate matrices for each category within the three features (leadership, governance, resources) and two factors (dynamics and processes) helped clarify ideas, identify patterns, make comparisons, and draw conclusions. A list of codes used for the transcript analysis and templates for each of the matrices are found in Appendix F.

Researcher Background

For the last nine years the researcher’s employment institution has been sponsoring charter schools. The researcher serves as the liaison to one of those schools. It is this association that created the research interest. The researcher has taken care to bracket her beliefs while developing the conceptual model, conducting the investigation, and analyzing the data.

Chapter Summary

Thirty-three key stakeholders in eight charter schools operating for at least six years participated in this investigation. All the schools are located within the St. Paul-Minneapolis metropolitan area. Some of the interviewees at each school are founders or members of the founding group. All of the interviewees have some experience with the governance of their school.

A conceptual framework was synthesized from a review of literature about charter schools, organizational design and leadership. Questions based on this framework formed the guide for the in-depth one-hour interviews conducted with each participant. Data from these interviews provided insight into each school’s journey from the initial idea through the start-up and growth stages, and beyond. The interplay of processes and dynamics on the development of leadership, governance and resources

within each school was identifiable in the data. Matrices proved to be useful tools to organize and compare ideas found within the data and then verify conclusions.

CHAPTER 4

THE CHARTER SCHOOLS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that have contributed to the longevity of some charter schools. The eight charter schools included in this study are all located in the metropolitan area of Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota. They have all been in operation at least six years, and half of them have been operating for over ten years. At a minimum, three people were interviewed at each school, in most cases four or five people were interviewed. At least one of the interviewees in seven of eight schools was a founder. The schools are referenced with numbers to help preserve their anonymity. To further mask identity, the size of the schools will be referred to as small (10 – 99 students), medium (100 – 499 students), and large (500 plus). The data from the individual schools is reported in this chapter. A cross-analysis of the eight schools is presented in Chapter 5.

Data from the informants show that schools do indeed develop in stages. Stakeholder interviews provide evidence of dynamics and processes at work within the schools affecting the areas of leadership, governance and resources, as suggested in the review of literature. Characteristics and markers of each stage, gleaned from the literature, and used to determine a school's stage of development include:

- Start-Up Stage:
  a) pre-operational: founder key player; creating more than managing; extensive problem-solving; start-up board; tight finances

  b) first operational year (s): systems in place; delegation of responsibilities; adjust structure to meet demands; low budget
- Growth Stage

  Elected board in place; maintain mission; decentralized structure – control moves to coordination creating a management challenge; develop/refine internal systems; resources begin to stabilize
- Maturity Stage

Mutual sense of ownership among board, executive director, teachers, families; internal stability; financial stability; recognized in, and responsive to, the marketplace; founder identity separate from organization;

Within each stage of development the three large areas of leadership, governance and resources are presented. Each of these three areas is further deconstructed into the topics described below.

Leadership. Describing school leadership is complicated by the fact that most schools had more than one leader. All significant leaders are discussed for each school. Comments about school leaders are sorted into four categories based on elements and characteristics of effective leadership found in the review of literature. These categories of leadership include:

- Vision
- Commitment
- Knowledge of
    - Business
    - Nonprofit
    - Education
- Skills
    - Communication
    - Management
    - Interpersonal

Leaders of the charter schools are responsible for many processes, which are affected by particular dynamics. For this reason, discussion of processes and dynamics are included in each leadership section.

In this study, these processes have been sorted into two categories, each with three subcategories. The process categories are 1) communication, which includes information flow, decision-making, and conflict resolution, and 2) systems, including organizational structure, operations, and academic programming. These processes are discussed under each leader, at each stage, as applicable.

Woven throughout the processes used by charter school founders are a variety of dynamics, forces that influence activity. Identifying these dynamics was one of the goals of this study and several broad categories of dynamics emerged that can be applied to every school. The dynamics include dispositions, mission fidelity, facets of trust, relationships among stakeholders, and stakeholder issues or pressures. The specific dynamics revealed within each category were similar, but not exactly the same for each school. Dynamics influence the leader(s), who control the processes, so sometimes there appears to be an analytic overlap among the areas of leadership, processes, and dynamics. As with the processes, the dynamics are also discussed under each leader, at each stage.

Resources and governance. Information gathered about resources and governance revealed an equally strong influence from the leadership/processes/dynamics trio. However, the results for governance and resources are discussed separately, within each stage of organizational life. The governance area is analyzed for information about school board effectiveness based on research disseminated by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers. There are four school board core competencies discussed. They include preparation, capacity and composition, structure, and clarity (Cornell-Feist, 2007).

In considering the area of resources, the data is examined for information about the following.

Money

- Revenue
- Expenditures
- Budget: operational and fund balance

- Facilities
  - Acquiring a location
  - Improving it
  - Funding it
- Expertise
  - On the board

    - In the staff
    - From outsiders/consultants
- Time
    - Available
    - Lacking
    - Inhibiting

Within this chapter the findings for all eight schools are reported. Within each individual school report, the data is organized chronologically by stage of organizational growth, beginning with the start-up stage, moving to the growth stage, and finally the maturity stage, if applicable. It should be noted that not every school had data for every topic. A cross-school analysis is done in Chapter 5.

Individual School Results

Charter School 101

Charter School 101 (CS101) is a secondary school of medium size, located in a suburban area. It has been in operation for more than ten years. The school mission emphasized high expectations for students as well as for the teachers who run the school. The curriculum of the school had a focus on two content areas. There have been three executive directors during the school's life and the school board had a teacher majority. The school facility was a relatively new building. CS 101 was sponsored by a state agency. People interviewed at this school included the third and current executive director who was also a founding teacher (FT1 & ED3), the current board chair (BCh), and two founding teachers (FT2 & FT3) (see Figure 4.1).

	Role(s)	Yrs at school	Yrs on board	Expertise on the school's board
CS 101				
Exec Director (FT1 & ED3)	Third director, founding teacher	Entire time	Entire time	Administration, teaching, governance
School board chair (BCh)	parent	5	3	Business
SB vice chair (FT2)	Founding teacher, former board chair Current vice chair	Entire time	All but 2 years	Board governance, school financing, bus mngmnt, teaching
Board member (FT3)	Founding teacher, founding & 1st school board member	Entire time	Entire time	Curriculum, school operations, teaching

Figure 4.1 Description of interviewees at Charter School 101

Start-Up Stage: Leadership

Leadership –the founder. Charter School 101 (CS 101) has had three executive directors in its 6 plus years of operation. The founder of the school was the first Executive Director (F/ED1). He had experience as a teacher, but none was reported in the areas of business or nonprofits. It was noted that he was visionary. He had a vision of computer-based learning where all curricula were delivered to students via the computer, and teachers were there to monitor the student work. Furthermore, according to one of the founding teachers, he dreamed of a string of such schools, with this first one being corporate headquarters. His focus for the school was on the use of technology and two particular content areas. Toward this end he had classrooms wired for technology as they were being built. He networked with adults working in the focus content areas, arranging for them to come to school to talk to students about the practical application of that content in the "real world." He was committed to making his vision a reality. Founding Teacher 3 (FT3) said, "He was a big picture guy."

The three founding teachers interviewed said they had other ideas about the mission of the school. None of them envisioned computer learning, but rather technology used to support classes led by teachers. Once the school opened and students arrived, parents were in agreement with the teachers. Founding Teacher 1 (FT1) said, "So the original vision of doing [computer-based learning] didn't necessarily fit with what the school turned out to be. The teaching method needs to come from teachers, not computers."

Respondents reported that networking with people in the financial world appeared to be a strength of the founder, since he was able to raise bonds to fund the building of the school facility. They also remarked that he was able to "sell" his vision, because the school opened with adequate enrollment. These leadership traits are among those ascribed to the political and symbolic frames.

Two of the founding teachers report F/ED1 had a distinct lack of skills in the areas of management, communication, and relationship building. FT3 said about founder's management skills, "He was a micro-manager... He was a difficult man to work for." FT3 went on to say, "In the beginning… [he was] dictating, 'You are gonna do this, this, this, and check in this way, at this time.' Very much top down and that is not part of the mission."

Founding Teacher 2 (FT2) said, "He had no experience in running a school and we had a lot of school type things we didn't even know we were supposed to be doing… We didn't satisfy a lot of requirements and the kids and parents ultimately complained." FT3 said, "I know he made false promises to [a] particular parent and said we are gonna get [special education services]. He was appeasing people so it wouldn't surprise me if he was appeasing the state… [He] didn't communicate that kind of thing to us. He might have pushed it under the rug and forgot about it and hoped the state wouldn't realize it."

About his communication skills, FT3 said, "He knew what he wanted [but] sometimes didn't make it clear. . . . We never really knew what he wanted. We needed a crystal ball."

His lack of business skills was of concern to several respondents, "The business side was probably [his] shortcoming. He spent money faster than it was coming in," shared FT2. However, noted FT2, finances were being closely monitored by two "financially savvy" business women on the school board. They took over spending and created a spreadsheet system to track expenditures. FT3 reported they hired a business manager early on, and commented, "We went through a few of them because they butted heads with [the founder] pretty bad."

The founder left the school at the end of the first operational year. FT2 says, "He decided that starting schools was more fun and more of his skill level than running a school, so he took off… and in hindsight, that was probably a good thing."

Processes. When looking at the performance of the founder, as reported by the three founding teachers, he did not facilitate a good flow of information, he did not establish a system of decision making, but rather made decisions about things he cared about and passed other tasks off to the school board, teachers and staff. The establishment of the school's organizational structure fell to the board and especially FT2 who was the first board chair. The founding teachers report they created the scheduling and attendance systems, saw to purchasing materials and supplies needed for the curriculum, which they were in complete control of planning, and two school board members created budget spreadsheets to monitor expenditures. None of the interviewees commented on implementing state reporting systems. Several respondents remarked that the founder had difficulty handling conflict. They said he tended to ignore problems and hoped they'd go away.

Dynamics. Examining the data provided by the founding teachers, the dispositions of the founder did not synchronize with those he hired. There is no evidence that he put the needs of the school before himself. Reports from several respondents indicate his top-down approach did not promote collaboration, nor was he fiscally careful. He reportedly operated autonomously, to the point of neglecting state requirements.

The founder's style of leadership did not work well to develop trust within this school, according to respondents. The founder's communication was not at all open, as reported by the three founding teachers. At least one founding teacher questioned his honesty, while another described events that implied at least a lack of integrity. All founding teachers commented on his incompetence, his lack of business and administrative skills, and found him generally unreliable. Nothing was said related to benevolence.

Teachers and parents embraced only parts of the founder's original vision, but not all of them. This may explain why "There was a bit of friction with [the founder and

the board]," according to FT2. This mission tension would not be resolved until after the founder left the school. Based on the data, it appeared that the founder had a rocky relationship with many people in the school. "So there was a mutual parting of ways," according to FT1.

Leadership–Founding Teacher 2, the first board chair. FT2 came to CS 101 with experience in the military, in business management, and in local politics, having served on a town council. It was his opinion that, "They hired me not just because I was a… teacher… they intended that I… be their first chairman." FT2 is being included in the leadership section because the founder's reported lack of experience and skills made it necessary for FT2 to assume a heavy load of governance work. He said, "Especially the first year, as a board, we met twice a month, every other week, just because things would come up." This was along with his heavy load of teaching six different classes. His commitment is illustrated by this comment, "There were people who believed I slept here because my vehicle would be in the parking lot one, two o'clock in the morning. Not every night but regularly. It was difficult."

The official school board was elected in June, before the school opened in September. FT2 was, in fact, elected as the first board chair and has served on the board, in some capacity, for all but two years. It was reported that FT2's skills in governance and business were critical in assisting the school's creation of organizational systems. FT3 said this about FT2, "[He had] an amazing non-educational background that was priceless. He ran this ship… like a business." FT2's strong business and governance skills correspond to those described in the structural frame.

Processes. When discussing communication, FT2 said, "The biggest thing that I pushed when I was the chair, and it's continuing to be pushed, is that you have got to be able to talk about [things]. If you let [disagreements] well up, that's when it begins to become a bigger problem. If the communication is there and the effort to get people to talk is there, as long as you continue to keep communicating you will do okay… and realize we are never going to please everybody - ever… But you have to be able to agree to disagree to serve on the board."

FT2's previous town council experience equipped him to establish many of the organizational systems the new school needed. He said the town council had taught him the importance of using committees. He was responsible for establishing board committees right away, so the workload was spread out and decision making accomplished more efficiently. He said he drew on his former military experience to make sure that someone was clearly in charge and accountable on each committee.

Dynamics. FT2 shared several common dispositions with the other founding teachers. One key disposition is collaboration. Since all three founding teachers served on the first school board, and it is such a collaborative group, they are all included in this analysis of dynamics. Referring to collaboration, FT3 said, "That is one of the dynamics–drawing people together who have the skills and the assertiveness to get something off the ground, and then work well together over the long haul." FT1 said, "A cooperative model works very well in this size environment." They all made reference to "luck" that brought them together. The phrase "agree to disagree" was mentioned by all three of the founding teachers as an important ingredient of collaboration.

The founding teachers all admit to being strong individuals and value the autonomy afforded them in a charter school. FT1/ED3 sums up what this autonomy looks like: "The staff that we have hired, either by fortune or design or happenstance, are all very good at owning their curriculum and owning their teaching methods, and working with parents when there's an issue."

As teachers and members of the school board, they were able to put the needs of the school before their personal needs. FT1/ED3 said, "You have to be able to look at a larger picture… because you are representing an entire entity." Getting more personal, FT3 said, " We are all very driven people. None of us, that were originally here, would accept failure." FT2 said about the early days, "I can't believe I did it or what possessed me to try it. Ignorance, I had to try it . . . . It was extremely difficult on me and why I did it, I have no idea. I should have quit that first year but I was caught in the flow."

Leadership–Executive Director 2. Executive Director 2 (ED2) was a retired public school administrator. None of the founding teachers made any comments about him being visionary, or mentioned his view of the school's mission.

Those interviewed said the second executive director brought school administration knowledge and expertise to CS 101 in its second year of operation. He knew all about what had to be reported to the state and got those systems in place. He also acted as a liaison between the school and the Minnesota Department of Education, mending fences broken down by the founder. Several respondents commented that at about the same time, a front office person was hired. She knew how create and implement a student records system, along with all the other minutiae involved with running a school. FT2 said, "Minutiae truly is just a small piece of the whole puzzle, [but] if you are missing it, someday it's going to come back to bite you!" Referring to these two people, he went on to say, "They really got us on the right track for the bureaucratic side." FT3 offered the same observation. From these accounts, the Executive Director 2 operated from a structural perspective, and his intervention with the State Department of Education indicates a somewhat political perspective.

Executive Director 2 (ED2) had other skills in sharp contrast to those of the founder. FT3 said this about ED2's communication and interpersonal skills, "He was laissez faire, kind of afraid to stand up, and with a group like this, and it's not that we were disrespectful. We are too professional to act like that, he never pulled it together. So there it was, kind of like, teachers really running the school, with his name on the paper. . . . He was very non-confrontational, laid back, reluctant to take a stand, wouldn't 'pick a fight.'" After a pause, FT3 reconsidered and said, "Whether he was just so non-confrontational and hands-off, or whether he was able to take a step back and say, we were people who probably were not going to be pushed around, whatever his approach, it was probably good for us, because there would have been a lot of head-butting. I don't know if he saw that, or if it was just his personality."

Little else was relayed about the second executive director. He fulfilled the very important role of getting some operational systems into place, then left. FT3 speculated, "I truly believe he realized he was not the right fit for the school."

Processes. When it came to communication skills, nothing was mentioned about ED2's promotion or inhibition of information flow. FT3 said the laid back style of ED2 allowed teachers to make many day-to-day type decisions, but not everyone appreciated his avoidance of conflict. FT3 said some parents wanted a director who would take a stand and follow through, and said some teachers expressed this sentiment, too.

The second executive director was the one who saw to it that the special education needs of the students were being addressed, according to FT3. This was an essential additional to the academic programming of the school because the absence of Special Education services was an issue with parents during the first year of operation, according to the founding teachers. FT3 said, "When we opened, we didn't have a Special Education teacher, and no one thought about that." During this period, FT3 reports that teachers organized professional development sessions. They decided to study one topic in-depth each year. Aside from his previously discussed contributions to the operational systems of the school, nothing more was reported about ED2 adding to the organizational systems.

Dynamics. The founding teachers said little about ED2, related to the various categories of "dynamics." His laid back personality allowed him to support the autonomy of the teachers. FT3 said, "He had what we needed at that time… I think we were just glad that somebody was going to let us express ourselves. There were challenges, yes, but not like with [the founder]."

Start-Up Stage: Governance

Governance has to do with controlling the affairs of the school. FT1 recalled, "They created a temporary board of directors [the Founding Board] to make decisions and put everything in motion." FT1 remembers it was a group of teachers and parents that worked to create the charter. They had difficulty finding a school district sponsor, so they appealed to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) for sponsorship. MDE approved and continues to sponsor the school. The three founding teachers said they were hired after the charter was approved but became a nucleus of the group creating the structures of the school.

FT3 gave an account of how governance-related events unfolded in those early days. The Founding Board was involved with hiring the first four teachers, then those teachers were involved in hiring other teachers throughout the summer. The first school board was elected in June, before the school opened. All three founding teachers interviewed for this study were elected to the first school board, with FT2 elected as chair of the board. Teachers made up the majority of the nine voting members, as prescribed by state statute, and the founder/executive director served on the board as an *ex officio* member.

Preparation. As board chair, FT2 said he accepted the responsibility for governance mechanics. He said his background prepared him in the use of Robert's Rules of Order, the establishment of committees and accountability within those committees.

A common belief in, and understanding of, the mission of the charter school is an important attribute of school board effectiveness (Cornell-Feist, 2007). Several of the interviewees reported that none of the founding teachers agreed with the founder's vision of computer-based instruction, but did embrace his emphasis on excellence and rigor, and a focus in two particular content areas. FT1 said that many of the parents in the founding group had a vision of the school that was specific to their own child, not the school as a whole.

Capacity and Composition. The make-up of the board, in terms of skills, expertise, objectivity, and diversity, is another important attribute of effectiveness (Cornell-Feist, 2007). FT3 said, "It was [a] very diverse, a strong group of people with good background." The skills and expertise of FT2, voted in as the first board chair, has already been reported. Other skilled people mentioned by FT3 included FT1, with twenty years of previous classroom experience, and a parent who was an accountant. FT2 mentioned the board had several business people on it.

Structure. Committees created early in the process included policy, personnel, and budget. FT2 said he knew it was important to get small committees working so decisions could get made as efficiently as possible. FT3 said, "For the first three years all we did was approve policy."

As the first board chair, FT2 said he created an appropriate formal structure with parliamentary procedure and Robert's Rules of Order. However, FT3 said not all board members were comfortable with such formality, so a middle point was found. "We can do things lock step with Robert's Rules or we can just agree to do what works best for us, and if we can't agree, then we'll default to Robert's Rules," reports FT1.

Clarity. A final attribute of board effectiveness is a clear understanding of the differing roles of governance and management, and the ability to keep those roles separate (Cornell-Feist, 2007). FT3 sums up the situation at CS 101, "[The founder] was a micro-manager. But once he was out of the way, the board understood their place, their position–big picture [and] policy." FT3 also remarked about how surprised the founder was at the end of the first operating year, that the board was so strong and operating independently of him. She said, "He chose to resign."

Start-Up Stage: Resources

Charter school resources include money, facility, expertise and time. Informants discussed all four aspects.

Money. Schools cannot run without money. Acquiring it and planning how to spend it are tasks that take up much time during the start-up stage of a charter school. Since 1998 charter schools receive a federal start-up grant administered through the MDE. Beyond that, school starters are on their own to seek additional funding through grants, or other innovative means. In the case of CS 101, FT1 reports that lawyers created a business plan which "was pitched and sold to a bond house. The bond house sold it for bonds. Money was put in the bank."

Once school opens, money comes from enrollment. FT1 said, "Banks and bond companies are willing to loan you as much money as you want, and if you say, 'I have 500 kids coming in', then you have to deliver those 500 kids." Proper enrollment projection is an important skill for charter school leaders. FT1 said, "You need to be fiscally conservative or you're going to get caught, and then you are never going to get out of it." He also reports the first year they chose to start with fewer grades, then added grades and students, for each of the next two years until they reached their goal.

It has already been reported above that the founder was quick to spend money, therefore the school board had to intervene. FT3 reported that, in addition to the board, the teachers were much more professional and realistic about spending than the founder, saying, "if someone says to us, that's not in the budget, we all walk away going, okay, it's not in the budget." FT1 reported, "[In the beginning] we were living week to week, and budgeting monthly, and living hand to mouth." Even so, according to FT2, the school board decided from the very beginning that teacher pay comparable to traditional district pay was important to attract qualified, experienced teachers.

Facility. Finding a suitable facility to house a charter school is often a challenge. FT1 explained that the founder, working with lawyers, was able to have a school facility built by a non-profit building corporation. CS 101 then leased the building from them. He added that having a new facility that looked like a school, as opposed to a made over factory, was helpful in attracting students and families. However, FT2 said when they got into the building, "We realized this was a terrible design. The guy had never built a school before. . . . It was designed to fit in as an office building and that was one of the requirements as it was being built, so… [it could be] broken down and turned into office space should we not be in it forever."

Expertise. Creating a charter school is a complex endeavor that needs people who bring skills and knowledge about business, non-profits, and education. Besides looking to the founder/leader for such expertise, this resource of knowledge can be found on the board, on the staff, or hired as consultants. The lack of expertise in the founder has been discussed in the Leadership section. The variety of expertise in the CS 101 school board was reported above in the governance section.

Those interviewed made comments about the exceptional operational skills and knowledge of key staff people they were able to hire, including a business manager and a front office person. When asked how they found these people, FT2 responded, "By sheer luck!"

Sprinkled throughout the interviews were random references to outsiders who provided services during the start-up period. These included lawyers, business people, and retired school administrators.

Time. The only comment offered about time, by any of the interviewees, was about the construction delay on the new building. FT1 said, "We didn't get in until Thanksgiving. We actually opened [school] in a warehouse, but that was just a small glitch in the program."

Growth Stage: Leadership

Leadership –Executive Director 2. ED2 was the leader responsible for completing the operational systems and academic programming structures needed at CS 101. In so doing, he moved the school from the Start-Up Stage into the Growth Stage while he was there. FT2 said, "[Our second director] spent three years here really helping us get done what schools need to get done, just the bureaucracy of a school."

Executive Director 3. Executive Director 3 (ED3) assumed the leadership position in the early phase of the Growth Stage. He had been a high school teacher in a large suburban school district before being hired to teach the same content area at CS 101. As described above, he was one of the founding teachers (FT1), so he had been with the school since before it opened. He served on the founding board and was elected to the first school board, serving as a voting member until he became the executive director, then continued to serve on the board as an ex officio member. FT3 said the teachers strongly encouraged FT1 to apply for the director vacancy. They were adamant [to the board] that they wanted him hired. The board chair said that when FT1/ED3 assumed the position it marked the start of a new period for the school, "more operations-oriented, more stability [which] was important for the school."

The third executive director was visionary, but in a different way than the founder, as can be seen in his observation about the school's vision and mission. He said, "Everybody had, it seems like, their own personal agenda… you want to start a school that you want… [The parents] were unhappy with the education their children were receiving in the traditional district, so their agenda was to create a school for just their kids. What everybody discovered in the end, once the school was up and running, is that, no, you create schools for groups of kids, not just your kid. That is still a struggle on occasion, on day-to-day kinds of things where somebody wants the school to be just for their child. Well, it's not!"

ED3's commitment to the school was evident in several ways as he talked about the school. As one of their peers for four years, he understood and supported the autonomy of the teachers, "Some teachers just love to develop their own curriculum and their own scope and sequence. That was one of my major attractions. For the people who want that kind of autonomy, this is a great environment for that." He prepared himself for the director position. He said he obtained his administrative license before becoming the executive director, and after he started in the position, he returned to school to work on a doctoral degree in educational administration. His responses to the interview questions conveyed an understanding of all the various needs and functions of a charter school. The school board chair said this about ED3, "He is comfortable taking charge of operations, and… he is the only one with the bigger picture."

Data from his interview indicated ED3 was able to view the school through each of the four frames, as needed. From a structural perspective he was knowledgeable about roles and responsibilities within the organizational and operational systems of the school. His concern about resources and financing charter schools led him to networking and seeking alliances with external stakeholders, indicating his political perspective. He communicated strong support for the revised mission of the school, the teacher/parent ownership of the charter, and a commitment to moving this school into its next stage of life. These speak to his symbolic perspective. His human resource perspectives were reflected in his comments about empowering the teachers and parents. He said, "My role is to make sure that the parents and teachers get what they need to do school, because that is the definition of charter school–a parent and teacher run school." The only conflicting data about this perspective came from the two other founding teachers who said ED3 could sometimes be rather headstrong causing conflict with teachers or parents.

Processes. Communication is a priority for ED3. The board members interviewed all agreed that there is a good flow of information, but one FT thought it could be better. ED3 is especially concerned about the parent board members. He said, "If I don't consciously work to keep parents in the loop, then I will be accused of trying to keep them out of the loop." The interviewees, all board members, agreed that

decision-making is done after a lot of talking on the board. FT2 said if a board member is not happy with a final decision, the talking must continue to avoid building conflict. He said, "You can't just shut down…You have to be able to voice your opinion and feel it's valued." Concerning decision making and conflict resolution, ED3 summed up sentiments expressed by the others when he said, "You have to be able to not look at your own personal vested interests on occasion and say, 'What is going to keep the school operating at its best?'"

During this growth period, more attention was given to offering athletic opportunities to the students, according to the board chair, as well as expanding the music program. He said that some parents thought these were positive outlets for their children and others thought they were distractions from academics.

Dynamics. The strong dispositions of collaboration and selflessness present during the start-up stage among the founding teachers, continued to be evident under the third executive director. The board chair talked about the efforts within the board to work well together. He also commented that, "People know when they are going into this, that this is kind of a mission." He said they come into teaching [in a charter school] knowing they won't make much money, but they have a passion for it."

Growth Stage: Governance

Preparation. The mission of the school was clarified during operational year 3. FT3 related how she led the teachers and board through a mission clarifying exercise as part of her graduate program. She said, "They have evolved [but] the original goals, the small school and the additional requirements in [the content focus], are still there." FT2 said this about the evolving mission, "The main mission is them [the kids], so you do things, not at the expense of the kids. You wanna make sure it's helping them."

Capacity and Composition. With the excitement of starting a new school over, ED3 reported that sometimes it was challenging to get parents interested in running for the open board positions. He said, "Some of it comes down to the fact. . . . we're not really having any difficulties and we don't have any major problems or issues."

FT2 said the board noticed that the same teachers tended to get elected over and over, so the board made a policy that all teachers' names would appear on the ballot

each time there was an election. If a teacher got elected, they had to serve a one year term. FT2 said, "We needed to get some fresh blood in there."

Structure. It was FT2's idea to depart from parliamentary procedure and have a parent chair the board, rather than a teacher. He thought by doing so, the parents would feel more a part of running things, since the teachers were a majority on the board. The board chair interviewed said after consideration, he thought it was a good idea, as long as a teacher served as vice chair. So the change was made into policy.

ED3 noted that new school board members receive training on the roles and responsibilities that come with the office. This happens every year.

FT3 reports that during years four and five the board began to add sub-committees, which helped share the workload and get more parents involved. It also reduced the number of board meetings.

Clarity. ED3 said he understands his role as a guide and serves the school board, "I have to make sure that the board functions properly. They have to have the information they need in order to make a right decision. They have to have guidance in order to be able to decide something." He also expressed concern that, "The hardest thing for the parent board members and the teacher board members to understand is that when you're sitting on the board, you're representing the school. . . . It doesn't matter what you think personally, but what matters is what you believe the effect will be on the program."

Growth Stage: Resources

Money. As mentioned above, enrollment is a charter school's main source of revenue. ED3 reported that by the third year of operation they had reached their enrollment goal and had a waiting list. The board chair explained that they use conservative enrollment targets, and "have a rigorous budget process, and [are] very conservative and realistic about money." He said that approach allowed them to build up a surplus in the general fund.

When discussing enrollment, the balance of attracting and losing students, FT2 said they were prepared to lose students because of the academic rigor. What surprised

them was losing students because of the social aspect. Some kids wanted a larger school with more social opportunities, especially at the high school level.

In discussing materials and supplies, ED3 said the teachers prepare and submit budget requests. If they are approved by the board, teachers are able to spend the money, and are responsible for the paper trail that goes with that spending. FT3 said, "We run a tight ship, but we also have luxuries. Rarely does someone say, no, you can't have that, [but] we are mature professional people that won't request a piece of equipment that's $12,000."

Facility. No comments were made about the facility that applied to the Growth Stage.

Expertise. No comments were made about expertise that applied to the Growth Stage.

Time. No comments were made about time that applied to the Growth Stage.

Maturity Stage–Leadership

Executive Director 3 continues in the leadership position, facilitating the move from the growth stage to the maturity stage, which is marked by a mutual sense of ownership among the board, the executive director, the teachers, and the families. At this point in time ED3 said his major responsibility is managing the budget to assure accuracy. The board chair said ED3's responsibility extends to managing the expectations of teachers and parents about what's reasonable and doable.

Processes. Communication is an area that some of the respondents think needs some attention. One of the founding teachers expressed a wish that some of the teachers could be more open about their opinions at the staff meetings, rather than complaining later. Another explained the need for a better system to resolve conflicts. Some teachers are very straightforward, wanting to discuss an issue or disagreement face to face, as soon as possible, others find that confrontational and shy away from it. The desire expressed was for the executive director to play a bigger role in helping resolve such conflicts.

The respondents report that the organizational and operational systems are well established and running smoothly. Those interviewed discussed the academic

programming area. The Executive Director described how teachers reviewed the course objectives each year, considered comments from parents, and then the board approved them. The board chair mentioned the issue of sports offerings, and if they had enough variety of too much for a small school.

Dynamics. Respondents relayed that the dispositions of collaboration and selflessness continue, even in the mature stage. The board chair said, "There is some discernment about how we all live together, and there is some focus on that. This year we did [an] off-site teamwork kind of thing." The sense of autonomy is still detected in FT3's statement, "It is a community-run school… We would be resistant to top down leadership."

Discussion about relationships in this stage had more of a focus on parents/director and parent/teacher relationships, and especially expectations of the various stakeholders. The board chair thought the executive director should be more engaged in managing the relationships of the whole community, not just the those of the staff. He also talked of "a bit of tension… some parents want to push the teachers harder in some areas, [the teachers] want to push back with personal responsibilities, and that of the kids." FT3 remarked about the parents, "The biggest flaw is that some are overly involved now. . . . Their entire fist is in the pie. They gotta be here all the time, and that's challenging." The board chair warns that staff needs to be responsive to parents, "because those are the people who vote on your success. If they walk, there goes your state funding and the school." The chair also mentioned that the biggest controversy at the school now involved the extra-curricular policy, with some parents for and some against strict participation rules.

Maturity Stage–Governance

Founding Teacher 3 remarked, "The evolution of the board could best be summed up by saying it is a board that has been refining itself for a long time, and it's been a slow process, and a long process. You go and you learn, and you make it better."

Maturity Stage–Resources

Money. ED3 reported that they had a waiting list equal to their enrollment and a very healthy fund balance, but, "Money is still going to be an issue; it will always be an

issue." The problems they were facing, he said, included rising operating costs, including salaries for experienced teachers, but declining revenue from the state. More students would bring in more revenue, but the building is full.

Facilities. They cannot afford to build or add on to the building, so he said they have to look for other options to get money. FT3 remarked that they were in a poorly designed building that was too small for their needs, "This is a bad building for the money and for us." FT2 said, "We can't do levies… I think it will be a huge challenge to stay operating for another ten years."

Expertise. Adding to the financial challenge is the dynamic of an aging teaching faculty. FT3 reports that there has been very little teacher turnover during the life of the school. She adds, "Many of us have consciously chosen to make the sacrifice to be here, and that includes a lower salary." The board chair said, "They see month in and month out where the fund balances are… if we vote ourselves a 5% increase, we won't be able to pay the electrical." But another founding teacher said, "As much as I like this place, and I hate to leave it as a personal thing, I probably have to do that and think of it relatively soon. I think we are gonna lose senior faculty… and that will hurt initially, but then it will bring in new blood. Finances will be a little bit easier, and in the long run it will help the organization."

Time. No comments were made about time that applied to the Maturity Stage.

A final quote from FT3 closes the analysis of Charter School 101:
"I really think a lot of the success of the school has been the result of who we hired. The whole staff is very dedicated and type A personalities and really motivated. Failure was never an option for us."

Charter School 102

Charter School 102 (CS 102) was a large K-12 school. Their facility, a renovated and expanded former parochial school building, is located in the core city. The executive director has been with the school for its entire 10-plus years. The school board has a teacher majority. The mission of CS 102 is to focus the curriculum and

school activities on the whole person while preparing the culturally and racially diverse student body for productive adult lives. A public school district sponsors the school. The people interviewed at this school include the a co-founder/executive director (CF2 & ED), an administrator who began as a teacher at the school (A1), and a second administrator who also began as a teacher at the school (A2), a member of the founding group (FG1), a second member of the founding group (FG2), and the current curriculum facilitator (CF) (see Figure 4.2).

	Role(s)	*Yrs at school*	*Yrs on board*	*Board Expertise*
Exec Director (CF2 & ED)	Co-founder	Entire time	Entire time	Administration, academic programming
Board member, ex officio (A1)	Administrator, former CS 102 teacher, former voting board member	10+ yrs	10+ yrs	Administration, teaching
Former board member (A2)	Administrator, former CS 102 teacher, former board chair	8 yrs		Teaching, mission orientation
Former board member/chair (FG1)	Founding group, community member, 1st board chair, grandparent	Since the beginning	9yrs	Diversity trainer, community contacts
Former board member (FG2)	Founding group, community member, elected board member, staff member, parent	Entire time	3 yrs	Non-profit org training and experience
Curriculum facilitator (CF)		7 yrs	0 yrs	

Figure 4.2 Description of interviewees at Charter School 102

Start-Up Stage: Leadership

Leadership -The Co-Founders. Charter School 102 was created by two co-founders, one of whom shared the story of the school's creation. The idea for starting a charter school was initiated by Co-Founder 1 (CF1), a non-profit administrator, who contacted Co-Founder 2 (CF2), a school administrator, to join him. CF1 went on to assemble a founding group and tried to raise start-up money. When the fundraising failed, the plan was abandoned, and the founding group disbursed.

Three years later, CF2 said she felt it was time to leave her administrative position and wondered what to do next. At about the same time, she noted, CF1 decided to again try to start a charter school. He contacted CF2 for a referral to a potential

school administrator to join the new founding group. CF2 said she was interested and available. This time fund raising was successful and Charter School 102 was created.

The shared vision for CS 102 was an academically rigorous school that served students in an economically disadvantaged neighborhood, noted CF2. She went on to say that for her, the vision extended to include a strong sense of community and relationship building, and a curriculum that educated the whole child and included character education and ethics.

Roles and titles between the two co-founders were determined in the very beginning, according to CF2. CF1 had non-profit, business, and lobbying experience and was therefore comfortable handling all the financial and legal aspects of creating the school, using his structural perspective. CF2 said her educational administrative experience equipped her to set up the academic programming, as well as the operational and organizational structures for the new school. Because of this experience, she said she requested the title of Executive Director, and CF1 graciously agreed.

Leadership -Co-Founder 1. CF1 was well known, with local networks in the parochial school and educational reform communities, reported CF2. Also, his experience as a non-profit executive director equipped him with knowledge about operations and governance in that type of organization. CF2 notes that his fund raising efforts were much more successful this time around, and he obtained several substantial grants. A member of the founding group, now a staff person at CS 102, reported that CF1 was the person in charge of all the financial tasks during the start-up process.

CF1's political perspective served them well, remarked CF2. Aware of public scrutiny of the early charter school movement, one of the grants CF1 obtained allowed them to hire an outside evaluator to create and implement a school evaluation to be done annually with stakeholders. The results were shared with staff and used for school improvement efforts.

Processes. As the planning proceeded, CF2 said that the financial and legal work done by CF1was really the type of work an executive director performs. The only exception to that was that she had complete control of hiring, supervising, and dismissing staff (usually a function of an executive director). CF1's governance and

executive director experience was with non-profits. CF2 said that what was required in a charter school was a mixture of both the non-profit and the education worlds, and CF1 found that troubling, especially the state requirement of a teacher (employee) majority on the elected school board. She reports that he had a difficult time with the board not following his guidance, and didn't seem to understand that as teachers and parents they had a very different perspective than he did.

CF1's knowledge of academic programming was limited to familiarity with one particular curriculum, about which he was passionate, reports CF2. She, however, was the one in charge of academic programming, and said she did not share his passion about that curriculum. During the planning year, CF1 was also unable to convince the board to embrace that curriculum, though he tried, said CF2. She went on to say that during the second year, when the board declined to support his desire to start a second school, he resigned.

CF2 referred to CF1 as a, "critical person . . . because he did so many things right." She cited the grant for evaluation, which meant, "We have been able to be in a proactive position from the beginning, and that is not common in charter schools." She also mentioned a $50,000 federal grant he obtained and used for technology, "to get us up and running with the Internet and e-mail right away."

Dynamics. There were few comments made about dynamics related to CF1. The Founding Board chair (FBC) discussed the earliest days of the Founding Group getting together at CF2's house. He said, "[CF2] was the person that was able to touch base with these resources and people . . . she connected herself with the right people – for example, that guy we had as a consultant those first two years - I can't remember his name." Further probing revealed he was referring to CF1. "She made some good contacts such as [CF1]."

CF2 recalls, "[CF1 was] very conservative, which served us well, because he was thoughtful and conservative in budgeting, and all of that business part of it, which you absolutely have to be." She closed with, "I have always felt a certain sadness that this was . . . his idea, to found this school, but it didn't work for him to stay."

Leadership-Co-Founder2/Executive Director. CF2 was a visionary, mission-driven leader. When speaking about CF2 and her symbolic perspective, one of the teachers interviewed said, "I've never separated her as a leader from the mission of the school that she created."

Her commitment to establishing a mission-driven school was seen in two of the ways she said she spent her time during the planning year. She said that since she was no longer a fulltime school administrator, she served on accreditation teams that evaluated non-public schools. She credited that experience with crystallizing her beliefs and values related to governance, namely, that successful governance equals a successful school. She said that became a priority for her with the new charter school. In addition, she said, "[I] started my doctoral studies in June and opened the school in September . . . on purpose, because I wanted to be very thoughtful and reflective about this." One of the respondents commented, "She leads by her continual commitment to what she believes is right. And she leads by example." One teacher interviewed said, "[CF2] is a very committed leader, and I didn't say 'strong leader' intentionally. Although she is that, but there is nothing autocratic about her leadership style . . . . She works very hard. She has a lot of energy . . . but everything she does is in a pretty quiet and . . . unassuming way."

CF2 said this about management, "I determined right away, with this kind of a structure, where [teachers] control the board and the board is my boss, it has to all be completely collaborative." She added, " [Even so,] you have to realized that the buck does stop with you," which means sometimes decisions just have to be made. Another respondent confirmed that this was how CF2 approached management. She added, "she is good about delegating things [to] . . . other people and saying, 'You take care of this. If you need help come see me, but it's your problem to solve.'"

CF2 said she believed that education happened in relationships. "CF2's focus, and this is true with the mission of the school . . . is on relationships," according to a respondent. This person continued by describing how CF2 worked to maintain positive relationships with the staff, the parents, and the students. Another respondent noted that

all staff members, no matter what their position, "Feel a pretty strong connection to her."

CF2 frequently mentioned the importance of communication throughout her interview, as did the other interviewees. The nature of the comments consistently had to do with communication as a process at the school and will therefore be covered below.

Processes. One of the teachers emphasized, "Communication has been a strong point, a strong suit of the school." To build and maintain productive relationships, CF2 said it was very important to share information, to maintain what she called, "a transparent system." She commented, "I felt in the beginning that it was so fragile. You really had to be very intentional about everything you did, everything you said, everything you taught, and the way you treated people." The Founding Board chair (FBC) said, "We relied on [CF2] for a lot, and she had the information or would go out and find it." The Founding Board member (FBM) interviewed, confirmed this.

FBM added that since information was communicated so thoroughly, disagreements were not difficult to resolve. CF2 elaborated on this, "A lot of things that seem problematic to other boards have not really been problematic to us, and I think it is because of a very well informed board."

This flow of information extended to the staff as well. CF2 explained that since the start of the school the teachers have had representation on all committees, and teams of people met regularly. She added, "We have been able over the past many years to maintain a pretty high level of trust."

As mentioned above, CF2 had a structural perspective because of her experience with school organizational systems. She also had definite ideas about school governance and its importance to the success of a school. CF2 indicated both co-founders were involved in recruiting community people from diverse ethnic groups to serve on the Founding Board.

CF2 notes that her frame of reference for the role of an executive director was from an educational perspective, and the role of "principal" was often integrated with executive director in a freestanding (non-public) school. She said her accreditation work revealed that there was often conflict when the role of executive director was

separate from the role of principal, which was why she wanted the roles to be combined in this new school.

Hiring was the operational system that dominated the interviews. Four of the respondents said that teachers were hired based on their commitment to the vision and the mission. Several people shared that the application and the interview process evaluated this commitment. CF2 added that she was also looking for people who were willing to be entrepreneurs.

Recruiting families for the school was an operational process that drew on the connections of the Founding Board members, who according to CF2 represented many of the ethnic communities in the area. FBM said, " I had a chance to spread out the information about the new school through my meetings, and through churches, and through group meetings. A lot of parents [were] interested to see the new vision." CF2 said, "During the planning year we visited. There were some meetings where people could come and listen to us talk . . . it was a real challenge in the beginning . . . because you don't have that solid history."

CF2, along with a core group of pre-operational teachers, planned the academic program for the school. CF2 said she had strong guiding principles from which the group worked so that the academic program supported the vision and mission of the school. Another priority, she said, was to use the same tests as their school district sponsor, to add credibility to the academic achievement of the CS 102 students. A particular challenge was special education. "That was unbelievably difficult . . . to be a brand new school and have people expect you were going to provide special education services within that little school," remembers CF2.

Dynamics. The strength and clarity of the vision and mission dominated all the interviews conducted for this school. One of the original teachers said, "You have to have a mission and vision that is realistic and that is definable not only in words but in action. That's what you have to grow around." Another respondent explained, "The vision . . . is about educating the whole person and has clear behavioral, moral and ethical components," and added that everything they did was embedded in those values. CF2 remembered, "With faculty and with parents . . . we had some big challenges

trying to convey [the vision and mission] in those early years. . . . Now . . . the vast majority of our staff really get it." She explained that in order to develop community relationships and help parents understand the vision, "We did home visits each fall . . . [to] explain to parents how things work about mission, philosophy."

The presence of trust was the other dynamic that emerged in all six interviews conducted for CS 102. The Founding Board chair said, "That's hard to say how it happened, but the group of people we started with, even the teachers, there was a level of trust there that gave us the ability to grow. Even though there was a lot to do, because of the group of people that were there in the beginning, that was one piece that we didn't have to work so hard on. That's hard to identify when you bring people together. But, here again, [CF2] was able to bring people together that she could trust and we could trust each other very quickly, and that allowed us to get down to the nitty-gritty. And she's good at that." FBM said they have always been open with the community and have built trust with the community.

The Founding Board chair reports that CF2, "Had the connections and brought people in that eventually began to make the difference." Not all the relationships in the start-up school were satisfactory, according to CF2. She said when the board failed to support CF1's suggestions and recommendations he became more and more discontent. He departed at the end of the second year of operation.

Start-Up Stage: Governance

CF2 was an experienced school administrator who said she understood the importance of governance for the new school. CF1 was an experienced executive director of non-profits who also knew the importance of governance. They decided to start with a founding board of themselves and three other individuals. Two of the three Founding Board members were interviewed, including the Founding Board chair.

Preparation. The Founding Board chair (FBC) said that from the first meeting, CF2 was clear about her dream and vision for the school, and the other board members had no problem embracing the vision. Furthermore, he said, "It hit a chord with parents." He also said he knew how important financial management and good leadership were and he had confidence CF2 could do both well.

Capacity and Composition. CF2 recalls that she and CF1 wanted representation from various ethnic communities in the area, with the idea that the founding board members would help recruit students and families. She also said they chose not to have any teachers on the Founding Board. The Founding Board member (FBM) said he had some business training from a local university as well as experience working with non-profits.

Structure. The Founding Board members both said they understood their role was to help plan and organize the new school and recruit students to come to the school. The FBM said he had extensive contacts throughout his community and was able to talk with many families about the school. He said the response to the school's vision was very favorable.

The Founding Board chair said all board members helped raise money for the start up. He recalls, "We just got out there and beat the bushes. Some people said yes, some people said no. It worked. It got us over that hump. . . . to the place where we could get federal funds."

Clarity. The Founding Board chair recalled many times when he and the two co-founders talked about governance issues, and CF1 had helpful ideas and suggestions. Later, he said, "I remember at some of the board meetings we had to decide whether this was our business or did it belong somewhere else. There were occasions that we had to learn by trial and error."

Start-Up Stage: Resources

Charter school resources include money, facility, expertise and time. Informants discussed only three of these aspects. No comments were mad about *time*.

Money. CF2 reports that her colleague, CF1, did most of the fund-raising, recounting several of the grants obtained in the start-up years. She said there was a large sum that came from a federal grant for each of the first three years, which was used to build a technology infrastructure, among other things. She reported that a foundation grant was used to hire a consultant to establish an accountability structure via yearly satisfaction surveys with stakeholders.

FBM mentioned that they were very careful how they spent their money in those first years. He said the students and facility came first, then staff compensation.

Facility. FBC remembers they had difficulty finding a facility in their desired part of the city. CF2 reported she and CF1 used their contacts in parochial school circles to locate an unused parochial school building that could be leased. She said they ended up in a location they had not previously considered. She said that after their first year in the building CF1 started talking with people about financing the building, but nothing worked out.

Expertise. CF2 was aware of the importance of expertise when trying to create a charter school. She said, "I think that it is really important that the charter school director be an educator, because even though it is like running a small business it is totally, totally education." She noted that the teaching staff was probably "greener than we should have had," but she wanted people who had an entrepreneurial spirit along with a mission fit. She said, "Out of the people that I would credit most with the success of the school, beyond the teachers, would be [the] outside people that we have contracted with."

FBC remarked about CF2's connections and relationships. He said she had an uncanny ability to find the right people with the right skills at the right time.

Growth Stage: Leadership

Leadership-Executive Director. When CF1 left at the end of the second year of operation, CF2 said she took over all the tasks he had been doing. This marked a transition into the school's next stage of life, the growth stage. CS 102 opened with just elementary grades, but then continued to expand grade levels, according to one of the teachers interviewed. Throughout the growth period, CF2 said the mission and goals remained the same. A teacher respondent (T1) said, "[the] mission and vision [are] such a core component to driving the direction of the school, and that has never wavered."

Processes. CF2 reports that after CF1 left, she assumed all of the executive director tasks he had been doing, including preparing packets for the board meeting, overseeing the budget, and taking care of facility related issues. CF2 recalled that

through a recommendation from the school's auditor they were able to find and hire a business manager.

Good communication flow continued to be important as the school grew, said one of the teachers interviewed. Another teacher respondent and a staff respondent both said that clear communication minimized conflict.

Dynamics. Collaboration continued to be a part of the CS 102 culture. One of the teacher respondents (T1) said, "In working directly with her, I observe it all the time. It's a collaboration. I think that's been a core component." He also said another important aspect of the school was trust. CF2 confirmed this, "We have such good people . . . the level of trust is very high because we have a very good caliber of people."

CF2 acknowledged that the school was not a good fit for all people, and after direct, open discussions, some teachers decided to leave. A second teacher respondent (T2), who came to CS 102 during the growth stage, said he was aware of just a few teachers who did not embrace the mission wholeheartedly, nor have the same level of trust toward CF2 that the majority of teachers did. He said these teachers decided not to stay at the school, adding, "I think that in another environment, those teachers, that small group, may have been able to gather a certain amount of strength or maybe pull in some other teachers into their kind of negative place. I don't think they were ever able to gain any strength to their negativity because of the general contentment or satisfaction of the rest of the staff."

The spirit and practice of collaboration was not always apparent during this stage. T2 said many teachers felt like curriculum decisions were being made top down. He conceded, "I think the reality is probably that we did have discussions prior to that as a staff. We did have the 'heads up,' and we tend to forget all that when the reality hits you a little harder."

Upon further reflection, T2 added, "In retrospect, there probably were other ways the whole situation could have been handled, and yet, maybe that was the best way to have handled it, to have a new person come in that really doesn't have any personal relationships to speak of, and at the same time, they're not in charge of hiring

and firing. They're not part of the administrative structure . . . simply an academic specialist, and it really did jump start everything. It worked, from an academic standpoint, it worked. And to my knowledge . . . in all honesty, as a member of the staff, it wasn't easy. The stress did create some unhappiness at the time. I know that didn't come as a surprise to her [CF2]."

T2 finished his report on that period, "So how did we pull out and be stronger? I think it was that open communication and [CF2's] leadership throughout that period, as well as continuity of that leadership. If you had had a turnover at that time, in leadership, then my goodness, I can't imagine that."

Leadership-Assistant Principal. T1 noted that as the school grew to include 7th and 8th grades, "An assistant was needed to assist [CF2] in doing the day-to-day duties and responsibilities, and because discipline can become such a monster and it really takes up a lot of time." So the first Assistant Principal was hired. During this time, T1 reported that he began working on an administrative degree.

Growth Stage: Governance

Preparation. No comments were made about preparations that applied to the Growth Stage.

Capacity and Composition. The board moved from a Founding Board to an elected board during the second or third year of operation, CF2 couldn't remember exactly which it was. When teachers joined they became the majority on the eleven member board.

Structure. T1, who served as board chair for a term, said there were various parent committees, such as facilities, salaries and benefits, and curriculum, and board members were asked to serve on these committees, too. He said, "Anytime a decision is made . . . when things are presented that are going to cost money, before the board makes a decision, the question asked by each of the board members [is], 'How will this affect the budget? What does [the business manager] say?'"

Clarity. One of the things CF2 initiated after CF1 left was training for the school board members. One of the teachers, a former board chair, reported that CF2 found an

in-service book designed for training non-profit boards, but it covered all the essentials, so it was used for the CS 102 board.

The Founding Board chair was elected to the school board. He reported that he and CF2 didn't always agree on issues related to the growth of the school, but they always discussed their differences and understood each other. He said, "She had a broader outlook on how to manage that than I did . . . what we disagreed on more than anything else, was the financial aspects of growing and growing too fast, and getting into financial problems. But she had the necessary resources and the broader outlook than I did, and that carried us through. . . . She was right and I was wrong. She had a broader insight than I did."

Growth Stage: Resources

Money. No comments were made about money that applied to the Growth Stage.

Facility. CF2 recalls, "After [CF1] left, I really became serious about facilities." She said she used her networking skills to find knowledgeable people to consult about facility financing and expansion, who "began working on the possibility of using tax exempt bonding" to fund the school's first addition. She added, since that first project, the same people have helped them ever since. T1 recalled that when the addition was being planned, the staff had opportunity to discuss what should be done with the new space. He said, "It was just really neat, some of the things you would mention were included, and oftentimes that doesn't occur."

A second building expansion was needed a few years later, according to Teacher 2 (T2), with funding handled by a brokerage firm. The same architect and construction company did the work, noted CF2.

Expertise. As mentioned above, it was during this growth stage that a business manager was hired. CF2 said he is her primary financial advisor. "He has put together a budget model for us that automatically projects itself out about 20 years. Anytime there is a major financial decision being made . . . we plug the numbers into the model and see what the impact is going to be, and take it to the board."

The Founding Board chair said in the beginning they did not have an auditor, but as the school grew, it became a necessity. He added, "That piece has taken a lot off

the plate of the board and the school itself, the management, the staff. They are good, they give us plans and make us think ahead. They also have the expertise to give us information on what to be concerned about and what not to be concerned about."

Around the school's sixth or seventh year, respondents couldn't recall exactly, an instructional facilitator (IF) was hired to assess the academic program because the school was on the state's list for not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The IF said, "They were concerned about their test scores not going up and worried about the consequences of all that."

T2 reported, "A lot of people weren't too happy about someone else coming in and doing our curriculum and telling us what to do. She . . . took a lot of heat. It's hard to come in a make really big changes and they needed to happen very quickly." He remembered that teachers went as grade level teams to discuss the changes with CF2, who listened to the complaints and tried to explain why the changes had to be made. He recalled, "She just laid it out there saying this is the sad political reality we're living in right now. We have to do something about it, so where can we back off so that you can manage this?"

Time. T2 reported on events at CS 102 during the growth stage. He said, "There were just too many things going on for maybe a two or three year period, any one of which was enough, and all of them together tended to create a lot of demand on teachers, so there was a certain amount of stress and pressure." Besides the facility expansion reported above, the IF noted the curriculum needed alignment, instructional techniques needed to be refined to better differentiate for the varied student needs, and the ESL program required extensive revision. To accomplish this, IF said teachers were asked to change their lesson-planning format, change their lesson delivery system, and modify their curriculum choices to create more consistency from grade level to grade level. She also reported that this pressure to raise achievement scores caused the teachers to give up looping, a practice of teachers keeping students for two years, because it involved too much curriculum responsibility.

The Instructional Facilitator shared that decisions about the curriculum were, "Never decided by fiat . . . but, it is with a lot of meetings with small groups of teachers

to talk about the benefits of that and how to make it work. It is never done without consultation with the people involved."

Maturity Stage- Leadership

After more than 10 years, CF2 said the school's mission and goals remain the same. She added, "People can see that this works when you really commit to this. We do have a dedication day each fall where we revisit the mission and vision very straightforwardly." FBC said it has been constant, because they "have not wavered from the belief and direction," but it has also evolved. He explained that they have been able to do a better job getting the high school students to live out the goals through service activities in the community.

As reported above, CF2 felt strongly that the executive director and the principal roles needed to be combined in one person. However, she said, "It is almost impossible to do both jobs the bigger the school gets. In fact this [past] year for the first time . . . I've had an assistant principal at the high school and an assistant principal at the grade school. This coming year I am turning over the principalship of grades 7-12 to [Teacher 1]. [Teacher 2] will be the assistant principal of grades 7-12. I'm not sure it's the wise thing to do, if it weren't for the fact that it is right for us. Because of these two men being here and because of their relationship with each other and their abilities and all of that." When asked if her style has changed over the years she said, "I think I have had more and more opportunities to practice servant leadership and collaborative leadership."

One respondent addressed the eventual retirement of CF2. He said the board was working on a long-range plan for that situation. It is hoped that someone in the school will take over. He said it is desired to have someone grounded in the school's vision and mission, and understands the history of the management of CS 102.

Processes. CF2 reiterated the importance of open communication and collaborative decision making for CS 102. T1 added that, "As you grow, it's sustaining those communication lines and maintaining those open communication lines [that's challenging]." He said it is important to model to the students what is being taught, so when disagreements arise they follow the same steps of conflict resolution that they are

teaching. He added, “It’s a very high standard that disagreements are addressed appropriately.” Two respondents spoke of the time it took to practice open participation and open communication. They said it was difficult to find the time, as they grew larger.

Dynamics. “I think there is a very high level of trust and I have said, when that goes away, we will have lost everything,” noted CF2. This trust theme was echoed by all interviewed. One person said, “Trust, it comes back to that, and such a strong belief system. How could you argue it when there is the success we are having.”

Maturity Stage – Governance

CF2 continued to be attentive to the importance of governance. She said, “I do try to keep the board very well informed about everything. I do try to give them . . . the packets . . . the Friday before the week of the board meetings so we have plenty of time to review them. Rarely do I give the board anything that I haven’t had the opportunity to really, really think through. I try to give them rationale and pros and cons to think about, and any supporting documents that I have - I give to them.” One respondent expressed a concern that the board rarely contradicts CF2, but then speculated that it was because “they really do trust her to make good choices. If they didn’t, they would probably get rid of her. ” Another respondent said that the current board is supportive of CF2, but would change to more closely scrutinize matters with a different executive director. He added that the board is happy with what CF2 does, and all her actions are transparent.

CF2 spoke about the challenge of recruiting parents to serve on the board. She said, “We have good parent representation right now . . . We don’t get too many people who have that much experience on boards and non-profit boards so [one experienced parent in particular] has been wonderful.” She went on to say, “I do try very hard to make things clear for the parents. I think a lot of our parents are not readers, in the sense they are going to necessarily sit and quarrel over everything either. Our board chair suggested that I meet with the parents. I should probably meet with the parents prior to the first board meeting.”

Maturity Stage – Resources

Money. Revenue is generated by student enrollment. Teacher 1 reported they have had waiting lists each year. However, this is not taken for granted, he said, adding, "We are constantly looking at that. If we start to lose enrollment, what are we doing?"

CS 102 was launching a new program in the coming year. CF2 expressed concern about the tight budget because the program would not produce revenue immediately. She said up until this point, teachers had been generously supplied with teaching materials, but that might have to change.

Teacher salaries were a topic mentioned by several respondents. One person said the cost of salaries and benefits was the biggest budget challenge facing the board. CF2 agreed, "If people start demanding higher salaries, then the board will have to make hard decisions about – 'what about this, and what about that?'" She said family health coverage was another big issue. A third person mentioned that several teachers have left in the past few years because they couldn't afford to work there anymore.

Facility/Expertise. A third facility expansion was in progress at the time of the interviews. CF2 said that they again had the same architect and construction company doing the work. She said, "So these people that have come, pour their hearts into this, just like the rest of us."

Time. No comments were made about time that applied to the Maturity Stage.

A final quote from CF2 closes the analysis of Charter School 102:
"I believe with all my heart, looking back on all of this and even today, to this moment, that goodness attracts goodness."

Charter School 103

Charter School 103 (CS 103), a medium sized school, has been in operation in the core city for less than ten years. The renovated former Catholic school building houses a program for kindergarten through eighth grade. The school is growing under its fourth executive director, providing the culturally and racially diverse students with a

challenging academic program that also seeks to develop positive interpersonal skills. Teachers are the majority on the school board. A non-profit organization serves as the sponsor for CS 103. People interviewed at this school include the current (and fourth) executive director (ED4), the current board chair (BCh), a teacher/board member (T1), a second teacher board member (T2), and a parent/community leader (CP) (see Figure 4.3).

	Role(s)	Yrs at school	Yrs on board	Expertise on the school's board
CS 103				
Exec director (CED)	Fourth director, former curric director at CS 103	6 yrs	5 yrs	Teaching experience
Board chair (BCh)	parent	5 yrs	3 yrs	Community knowledge & contacts, other board experience
Board member/ secretary (T1)	Pre-operational teacher at CS 103	Entire time	4 yrs	Volunteer Corp experience
Board member (T2)	Current teacher	3 yrs	2.5 yrs	Board experience, financial business experience
Parent (CP)	Parent when school opened, community member	Entire time	0 yrs	On the edges of all the pre-op planning; volunteers

Figure 4.3 Description of interviewees at Charter School 103

Start-Up Stage: Leadership

Leadership -The Co-Founders. CS 103 has had five executive directors throughout its more than six years of operation. The first Executive Director (F/ED1) was the founder of the school. She started the school to support a community vision of choice in public schooling, according to the current leader. It was noted that the founder had experience as a teacher and charter school creator. One of the original teachers (OT) at CS 103 said there was a young man, as well as some parents from the community, working with the founder to create CS 103. Another interviewee, a community member and parent of students at CS 103 confirmed this. He said he was marginally involved in the earliest days when planning was happening. He recalls that there were two people, a woman and man, working on this school creation. F/ED1 was the more public and vocal person of the pair of founders. He noted that she was bilingual which was an asset in

that community, and she was quite engaging and enthusiastic as she presented the vision of the school to the community. Two other respondents who knew the founder/executive director also said she was a visionary person.

The parent interviewed said the young man co-founder was more behind the scenes, doing a lot of research in the community, seeking opinions of community members and looking for a facility in which to locate the school. After the school opened, the original teacher said, the male co-founder was not a teacher but assisted with discipline and had other student-related duties. She added that he left in the middle of the first year of operation, for another job opportunity.

Leadership - Founder/Executive Director 1. The current executive director (CED) referred to the founder as "a visionary founder person." She went on to say that the founder was the one who understood how to structure the school organization and financial systems. She said, "I think she had that business sense. She knew that there were certain things that needed to be done, and she did them." However, she continued, "Everything was in her head, there are no documents. We don't have a lot from those first two years, because everything was literally in her head." The original teacher also remembered the founder had "everything in her head . . . everything was at her fingertips."

"[The founder] knew she didn't want to sustain all the paperwork and all that reporting stuff," the current executive director said, so she stepped aside as executive director. The then-curriculum director took over school leadership responsibilities for the rest of the second year, becoming the school's second leader (L2). The current executive director (CED) came to CS 103 to fill the vacated curriculum position during that time. This was part of what the CED called, the founder's "transition out." The current executive director said she had a good working relationship with the founder and served as a liaison with the staff.

The original teacher (T1) recalls that the founder left at the end second year (as did the curriculum director-turned school leader). She said there was no particular incident; it just felt like the founder had done what she came to do and it was time to go. The CED said of the founder, "She was smart enough to know that she needed out –

because she just couldn't –the vision was complete, because the school was running, doing well. She knew she couldn't keep running the school with all the stuff in the bag."

Processes. The current executive director said she thought the founder did a good job of communicating the mission and vision of the new school to the community because, "There were lots of meetings and lots of communication with parents at the beginning, and I do think they understood [the mission] and embraced it." None of the other people interviewed had anything to say about the communication flow or decision- making or conflict resolution practices while the founder was in charge. Their communications-related comments had to do with the founder's presentation style (as noted in descriptions above).

The founding board was made up of parents and the two co-founders, recalls CED, who thought the first school board was elected during the first year of operation, with teachers making up the majority. T1 said she was elected to the first school board, and thought that didn't happen until the third year of operation. She recalls that the original by-laws were taken from templates offered by a charter school association. The CED said when she took over as the director, there was a policy handbook with policies for teachers and parents. There were also pamphlets and brochures that contained other information about school policies.

The academic programming was one of the parts of the mission of the school that was attractive to parents, said the parent interviewed (CP). The founder spoke of a rigorous academic program, the use of a particular style of instruction, and an approach to curriculum that held great appeal for many parents, including the one interviewed. T1 recalls being sent to training for the primary instructional method they would use and going to a conference about the curriculum program. She also remembers that there was a curriculum person who prepared the scope and sequence for the new teachers.

Dynamics. CP reported that he thought the mission for the new school was to provide a community-based school with strong parent involvement, using a specific nationally-known curriculum with a particular style of instruction. T1 said she thought the mission of the new school was to provide parents of the area with a choice – a school that had rigorous academics and high expectations.

Leadership-Executive Directors 3 and 4: The principals

A licensed principal was hired to take over school operations as CS 103 entered its third year of operation, said the current executive director. That principal (ED3) left mid-year and another licensed principal was hired. The CED said the second principal (ED4) left at the end of the third year. She recalled that these traditional school principals, one from a rural district and one from a core city district, "didn't work out . . . [and] it's really not what we wanted to be in this role."

Processes. After losing two principals in one year, the current executive director said the board decided they needed a non-traditional leader, and preferably someone from within the school. She said the board asked her to serve as an interim director while they looked for someone.

Dynamics. No comments were made related to dynamics that applied to Leadership.

Start-Up Stage: Governance

Preparation. The founding board was made up of parents who wanted some choice in public school options. They supported the vision of academic rigor for their children.

Capacity and Composition. There were conflicting reports from two respondents about when the first school board was elected. After the first election, teachers were in the majority on the board. The parents who served were committed to bringing a parental perspective to the board.

Structure. The original teacher, who was elected to the first board, recalled, "The first couple of years there was a lot of intense, a lot of management stuff [the board] needed to deal with, just because there was so much stuff to do." The original teacher also said that the board chair has always been a parent. Another respondent said that having a parent chair the board is healthy and promotes positive public perception of the school's governance.

Clarity. The original teacher reported that those on the first school board were rather clueless about what they should be doing. She didn't feel that the executive director offered much guidance to them.

Start-Up Stage: Resources

Money. Several respondents reported that the school received a planning grant after the charter was issued, then a federal start-up grant was received during the final planning year. The parent interviewed recalled that the school applied for and received a substantial foundation grant during the first year of operation. The current leader thought there had been more than one foundation grant received during the first year, but couldn't verify it. She just knew there was quite a bit of money in the savings account when she came to the school in the middle of the second year of operation.

Processes. The original teacher shared that, "[State reports] weren't getting done the first couple of years and we were starting to lose funding, because if you don't get the right numbers in at the right time, then you don't get your money." She also said that money was probably tight those first years, but she, as a teacher, never felt that it was because they had adequate supplies and materials.

Dynamics. The current executive director said the founder was, "Stingy, not stingy, but . . . very smart in the beginning about not going crazy to spend the money, because she knew that it was going to be hard to sustain it in [the future]." The CED also said the founder was hard to pin down about money and, "Nothing is written down in the early years about money."

Facility. Finding a facility in a particular neighborhood in the core city was a priority, reported the current executive director. She said the founders located a parochial school that was not being used and were able to lease it from the church.

Expertise. When discussing why she was hired, the original teacher said it might have been because of her work recruiting volunteers, which she did before looking for a teaching job. She also reports that there was a curriculum person on staff from the very beginning. The parent interviewed expressed disappointment that there weren't more teachers of color hired for the new school.

Time. Both the original teacher and the parent remarked about the fact that the founder/executive director took time to do research and got to know the community, their visions and dreams for a school. They both thought this contributed to the success of the school because many details were well thought through before the school opened.

When discussing the founding of the school, the current executive director said the research process began in one year, the charter was not granted until the next year, and the school was opened the following year. This confirmed the original teacher's remark that the founder/executive director did not rush to get the school up and running.

Growth Stage: Leadership

Leadership-Executive Director. The transition of the second curriculum director into the interim director position, for Year 3, marks the start of the school's growth stage. The current executive director reported that after that year, the board asked her to remain as the director, which created stability in the leadership position.

The current executive director noted she worked with a couple other charter schools before coming to CS 103. Her background was in teaching and curriculum, she said, not administration. She noted she has learned "on the job" how to handle the administrative duties.

The original teacher (OT) said the current executive director is committed to the school, to the point that she takes working maternity leaves. The OT commented on the CED's ability to oversee the finances. The board chair confirmed this. Both of these respondents remarked about the current executive director's overall competency in running the school.

The current executive director said that one of her strengths is building relationships. Besides fostering positive relationships within the school, she said she makes an effort to network with other charter school directors. The original teacher commented on the CED's ability to create a family feeling at the school, especially among the staff members. The board chair, when referring to CED, said, "Dealing with parents, there's a different perspective."

The current executive director said she believes in empowering others, and tries to always see the positive in people before the negative. The original teacher commented that the CED's mantra was, "Focus on the positives, we'll work on the negatives."

Processes. Respondents indicated that there was good information flow at CS 103, both among staff members and on the board. The board chair said, "This staff

pretty much says what it thinks." A second teacher interviewed (T2), said, "I feel we're all heard." Speaking of the board, the current executive director said, "We're very open and honest with each other." The original teacher said, "If we're having a discussion, we make it an e-mail discussion so everybody can be a part of it . . . we do make an effort to include everybody."

The current executive director said she believed in shared decision-making. The original teacher said the people affected by the outcome made curriculum decisions. She also said, "Sometimes [the board] just takes the decision to the whole staff." T2 offered as an example that after a board retreat to generate new goals, they took the draft to the staff for reaction before the board took final action. She said "We're pretty careful if we have a big decision to make, to get a second opinion about it." T1 said in the early days the board was quick to approve whatever the director recommended. Now, she said, "We have really gotten better about hearing what [the CED] has to say, then discussing it, deciding if that's what's best for our students."

Most respondents reported that conflicts were minimal because they do a lot of discussing about issues. The current executive director said there were never any split votes on the board, it was always unanimous, and that "we do a really good job of compromising." The board chair concurred and said at the board meetings, "we disagree then we usually just talk it out."

T1 said this ability to work well together as a board was especially useful one year when a staff member/board member/ parent had to be fired. She said this person brought a group of 20 supporters to the board meeting to speak on her behalf. She said everyone who wanted to speak was allowed because, "There's this race thing going on, whether you recognize that [or not]." She noted that the board agreed about a process to handle the difficult situation, banded together, and saw it through. She added, "It was one of those things that could have been something that brought [our school] down very easily."

Two respondents discussed communication weaknesses at the school The board chair said she tries to discuss disagreements with CED but feels like she doesn't get

anywhere, so ends up just dropping things. T2 said there is racial tension between the white teachers and black staff members, but it is not talked about.

Dynamics. T1 reported that the teaching staff is mostly white and the students and support staff are almost all people of color. She said, "We struggle with that…which can be rough. It can be difficult." CED acknowledged the issue of racial tension. She said one of the decisions made by the board was to hire a school social worker whose job would include working on staff relations as well as working with students. She said, "[The new social worker] will work with the teachers and help them instead of blame them for their lack of experience in this community." T1 said the board has, "Rallied behind our educational assistants that are going for their teachers' license. We offer them tuition reimbursement and give them flexible schedules."

T2 admitted that CS 103 was a challenging place to teach. She said, "Not everybody should teach here . . . you really have to understand your motivation . . . [is it] because your heart and passion is to teach here, and what does that look like – to parents, to students, and to other staff?" She went on to say, "I love it . . . I'm not going to say it's not hard working here . . . but there was never a day . . . I couldn't wait to get up the next morning to teach. So I think it's a passion."

CP reported that, "Last year [the school] seemed like the dumping place for a lot of kids who couldn't make it, or…had problems in other public schools." He added, "Given the variety and complexity of the issues and attitudes and behaviors of kids, it's a really challenging place."

CED remarked about how they had to be flexible and willing to change. "Because, as much planning as you can do, the kids that walk in the door in September are different than you thought they were going to be. Every single year there's always different challenges."

Growth Stage: Governance

Preparation. The CED said they did quite a bit of governance work with a consultant during the past year which included a revisiting of the school's vision, mission and goals. BCh, T1 and T2 all spoke about the work done on the school's

mission. T2 said, “Part of our mission was based on our curriculum at the time, and we’ve found that curriculum wasn’t the answer to a lot of the issues that our kids were dealing with.” She also said the original mission was based on a lot of parent involvement, but after the school was going they had to change the expectations they had of families, who participated in ways they could. She added that, “We got bogged down . . . and we didn’t really look at [the mission] anymore.”

Capacity & Composition. The original teacher said that once [the board] started getting trained they functioned better, then eventually they got some people who had board experience. One such person was T2 who reported that she was quite experienced in board work from her previous non-education career. BCh [a parent], said she brought previous board experience to the table, as well as a parent’s view of situations.

The school’s first sponsor was only willing to renew for two years, citing low student achievement scores, reports the CED. She said because of the strained relationship, the board decided to seek a new sponsor. They have a good relationship with their second sponsor, she reported, but wished there was more assistance from them.

Structure. CED said one of the first things she did when she took over as director was gather together all the bits and pieces related to policy and by-laws and sent it all to the school’s lawyer. The lawyer, she said, created legal documents for the school’s by-laws and policies.

The board chair said she was unhappy about the teachers having a majority on the board. She added that she understood it was the state rule.

Committees have been created since CED has been in the position. She said the committees include personnel, curriculum, and events, and there is a board member on each committee. The board chair noted that there was not a finance committee, but the CED prepares the budget and brings it to the board for approval.

CED reported that she instituted board training when she started in the director position. She said the training especially focused on role separation for the board members, “So I think we do a really good job of saying, ‘yeah, I do want this, but let’s

look at what we need for our kids.'" The board chair said, "[It's rewarding to know I've] helped keep the focus on students, not so much on personal gain."

Clarity. T2 reported that the board members are clear on their role and responsibilities. She said, "Without exception on the board right now, everybody is easily able to . . . come in here and say, 'OK, this is not going to be the best thing for me as a teacher, my class right now – maybe – but for the school as a whole, where we're going, this is the best thing for us to do." The CED reported that the board was very conscientious about money and resources. She said they always made the best decisions. T2 said the board pays close attention to the budget and spending with the help of the business manager and the accounting firm.

The board chair expressed concern that the CED set the agenda for each board meeting and was present at all times at each meeting. T2 noted that the "lines are a little blurred" for the role and responsibilities of the executive director, but attributes that to the fact they are a small organization and "she kind of drives [it]."

When asked about micro-managing, the CED said that was not a problem. She added that it has never been a problem while she's been at the school.

Dynamics. "In the beginning, with the original mission, we weren't looking at that . . . to drive our decisions," said the CED, "Now this one is more real and we have a vision. Now we are using that to create strategic planning and following it." BCh said she felt good knowing they had created a new, accurate mission statement. She noted, "It says what the school is and holds teachers accountable. That was important to a lot of the board." T2 said, "We really narrowed down what we are about and where we are going."

As described above, relationships are important at CS 103. T1 said the board "works really well with [the CED]." T2 explained that, "We're all friends, we're all close to each other. When we come here to the board meeting, though, it's like we switch on, with professional hats on, and we're professional."

BCh thought the board got along well as a group, but said, "The teachers look at things a little different than the parents. I know there's been tension because I've said a few things. So we have a different point of view altogether." The CED talked about the

parents who serve on the board. She said, “They bring a dynamic . . . there hasn’t been any weird dynamics, but definitely – dynamics. But, they’ve been good.”

Growth Stage: Resources

Money. CED, as well as the teacher/board members interviewed, reported the school had a large fund balance and that putting money into the savings account is a priority of the board. T2 said, “We have been very sound financially, I think we’re fairly conservative in how we spend.”

CED noted that they always base the budget on conservative enrollment projections, however they were struggling to recruit students to meet their enrollment goals. She said they had to hire two recruiters who both reported how difficult it is to get new students to come to the school. T1 said they often struggle with fluctuating enrollment, “That’s the thing you’re fighting every summer, ‘are we going to have the numbers to sustain our budget?’” The CED said it was stressful. In addition, she said the board voted to take on the huge expense of providing their own transportation so they could be more flexible with their programming.

The school received a substantial grant to improve sustainability of operations, according to the CED. She said the money is used to pay a consultant and other expenses related to the board retreats and all day meetings.

Facility. Several of the respondents shared that the school had received a facility renovation grant. CP interviewed noted that the building needed renovations to be more appealing to prospective families. He said he was excited about the planned improvements. T1 agreed that the building was not welcoming and didn’t attract new students. She also said that it needed to be improved to meet to federal code.

Expertise. CED noted that around the same time she took the position the board also hired an outside firm to handle the accounting tasks and submit state reports that needed to be filed by certain dates. Several respondents made reference to a lawyer who consulted with the board on occasion.

CED said that after much deliberation, the board recently decided to hire an experienced social worker as a fulltime staff person (as described above). T2 expressed appreciation for having a curriculum director on staff because it makes it easier for

teachers, but some new teachers, “Felt like they weren’t being supported with what’s going on.” Therefore, she said, when the curriculum director left they decided to replace her with two Master Teachers who would have mentoring roles with the classroom teachers.

Time. No comments were made related to time that applied to the Growth Stage.

Dynamics. When discussing resources, several respondents expressed concerns for the future. CED said that even though they had a healthy fund balance she is concerned about how hard they have to recruit every year now, to make enrollment – even with the budget based on low projections. T1 wondered what they were going to do about health care costs. She wondered if they were going to be able to keep teachers who had been there for ten years. She was concerned that in the next few years there was the potential to start losing their experienced, long time teachers.

Several respondents discussed teacher turnover. BCh said there was a feeling of instability because two teachers asked to job share, another teacher was moving from the classroom to a mentoring position, and they again lost their art teacher. T2 spoke of the same changes but added that it was the average turnover, just different circumstances. T1 confirmed that they lost two to three classroom teachers each year.

Several respondents expressed frustration with their landlord, the church, for a variety of reasons. T2 said the church still demands access to the gymnasium for funeral-related functions, which creates scheduling conflicts for the teachers and students.

A final quote from CED closes the analysis of Charter School 103:

“My favorite part of this job is to see the parents feeling comfortable coming into our school, saying how they feel, just seeing that reluctant parent at the beginning of the year that hated school, and then at the end of our year being part of our family. That is just huge.”

Charter School 104

Another medium sized school in the core city, Charter School 104 (CS 104) leases space in a municipal building. The school's mission is to help secondary students embrace learning and develop positive habits of mind to carry them into adulthood (preferably with a high school diploma). A director/teacher, who has been with the school for its entire 10 plus years, facilitates the program for the culturally and racially diverse students. Teachers make up the majority on the CS 104 school board. An institution of higher learning sponsors the school. People interviewed at this school included a co-founder/director/teacher (DT), a co-founder/teacher (T), a staff/board member (SBM), and a co-founder/staff member (S) (see Figure 4.4).

	Role(s)	Yrs at school	Yrs on board	Expertise on the school's board
CS 104				
Director/teacher (CF1)	Co-founder	Entire time	Entire time	Non-profit experience, small business experience, teaching experience
Board member (CF2)	Co-founder, teacher	Entire time	Entire time	ALC teaching experience
Board member (SBM)	Former CS 104 student, current staff member	3 yrs/student 6 yrs/staff	5 yrs	Both student & staff experience at CS 104
Former board member (CF3)	Co-founder, current staff member	Entire time	Several years	City employee – recreation, community contacts

Figure 4.4 Description of interviewees at Charter School 104

Start-Up Stage: Leadership

Leadership-The Co-Founders. A team of three people founded Charter School 104. All three are still working at the school and were interviewed for this study. Co-Founder 2 (CF2) said each person brought particular skills to the project of starting a school. Co-Founder 1 (CF1) took on the administrative tasks of the school according to CF2, so she was referred to as "the director." CF2 said he viewed his role as a support to the director, especially to keep the pressure from overwhelming her. Co-Founder 3 (CF3) said his role was recruiter and community expert. All three co-founders worked with students in some capacity or another, as evidenced in their interviews.

The school was created to help at-risk students succeed. This mission came through clearly from each of the co-founders. The director said, “We are student focused. We have not seen a need to change it. We have revisited it. I think it stands pretty solid.” CF 2 said, “The students have always been the first thing. The goal is to meet the needs of the kids.” CF3 said the mission hasn’t changed over all the years the school has been there. “Our mission, it’s embedded in me,” he added, “Every year I look forward to that mission. I’m always thinking about the mission.”

CF1 said she was teaching with CF2 in an alternative high school in a core city. They noticed that certain students were not being successful through the programs being offered. She said they felt there were other ways to do things to help these students. The two of them tried working with the local school district to offer more alternatives, she said, but it was too slow and there were too many roadblocks. They finally decided to try the charter school route, she remarked.

“We believe the root of [the mission] is relationship,” said CF1. CF3 noted, “We care about our kids like it’s a family environment.” He added, “It’s not about me, it’s about the students getting what they need so they can be productive.” CF2 continued to illustrate the level of commitment displayed by those interviewed when he said, “It’s always been - the needs of the students outweigh the needs of the staff.”

Leadership-Co-Founder 1, The Director.CF1 said her background equipped her with a lot of the skills needed to create a charter school. She said she had 15 years of non-profit board experience that ranged from local to state to regional level and gave her experience with federal funding. She felt that her small business experience was quite useful in starting a charter school. She thought her international teaching experience helped her learn to deal with multiple cultures. Finally, she felt that growing up in a large family that emphasized learning shaped her life values. “I like to think that all of that comes forward to and is a part of what we’re trying to do here,” she said.

In commenting on CF1’s skills, CF2 shared that she had a wide reaching network and was well connected with many different kinds of professional people. He said she had excellent communication skills, was able to tailor her talk to specific

audiences, and she was persuasive. He said these were all valuable when they were trying to gather support and help to start the school.

CF3 noted that CF1's communication skills extended to students, too. He said, "She could take a kid that doesn't even think that they are anything and next thing you know they are on top of the world because she gives them that motivation and that confidence to be a leader, to make a difference and give them opportunities and hope."

When asked about CF1's management skills, CF2 said, "Everything works really smooth. I just can't say enough on how important it is to have somebody like [CF1] that oversees everything."

Her colleagues affirmed her interpersonal skills, her human resource perspective. CF2 commented several times on her connections throughout the community and her ability to persuade people to help. "Those connections were really important in the beginning," he said. A former student, now staff person said, "She really cares about the students and the staff members."

Leadership-Co-Founder 2, The Teacher. CF2 said his background was that of a teacher, he had been teaching in an alternative school for two years before he moved and met CF1. He worked with CF1 in two different schools before they started CS 104. CF3 said, "[CF2] was a big part of our staff because he is able to do a lot of things. He is just a jack-of-all-trades."

When asked if he and CF1 created the vision and mission of the school together, he said they have always both operated from a similar philosophy, a passion to help all kids succeed. He said, "[We] never really sat down and determined what are the goals, because they were pretty universal . . . where it went without being said . . . the school came first, the kids came first . . . the goal is to meet the needs of the kids."

CF2 said he and CF1 had, "A kind of symbiotic relationship because we had things that we did separately. . . .it was divided up by the need. I would ask if there was anything else I could do. My goal was never to overwhelm [CF1]. I always asked if there was anything she needed done because somebody has to do it and if nobody does it, [CF1] ended up doing it all."

Leadership-Co-Founder 3, The Community Expert. CF3 said he was running a recreation center for the city when his supervisor said two teachers were looking to start a program for dropouts and wanted someone from the city recreation system to help. He thought it sounded like a good idea, so he joined them. Besides his recreation experience and community contacts, he reported business management experience, too.

CF3 said he worked for both the city and the school for 15years. He remarked, "It was good because it created a positive bond with the city and [the school]." He added, "Working with [CF1 and CF2], they are probably two of the best people I have ever worked with in my life."

Processes. Three of those interviewed commented on the open flow of information at the school. CF1 said, "The communication isn't always formal. We have all our decisions, they are very open." A staff member said, "We always keep the communication open . . . around here, everyone's opinion is important." CF2 remarked, "If you can't tell everybody, you probably shouldn't do it."

CF2 said they had a site committee that was a committee of the board that was charged with making big decisions. He said this was comparable to a principal in a traditional school. Another respondent said there was a lot of discussion and talking things through when decisions had to be made. CF3 said CF1 talked to people, gathered their opinions, "But when all was said and done, she did the decision making." CF1 confirmed this approach. She said, "This is where the buck stops…then we have a discussion and a board recommendation."

CF1 said they established a problem solving process early on. She said it was mostly consensus. CF2 confirmed this, "It's not as if somebody has to win or lose. We discuss and come to consensus." CF3 mentioned they have had misunderstandings, but not many incidents because they talked through situations.

CF2 noted that the three co-founders divided the work to be done in the earliest days, according to each person's skills, which was why CF1 was CF1. He said she established the operating systems and had always done the paperwork for the school. He said, "At one point we used to write checks here at school but we stopped that because it was not a good way. It just felt wrong to be writing [them]. . . . we changed that years

ago to where we don't have access to a checkbook here." He said they contracted with an accounting firm to take care of those duties.

CF2 said the first board "set up everything", in terms of the governance system. A more detailed description is included below in the "governance" section.

Co-Founders 1 and 2 initially created academic systems, noted CF3. "Our curriculum has always been based on what the state has as the standards, but it really develops from the needs of the students in both delivery and content," reported CF1. "The teachers are responsible for the curriculum," noted CF2, and he added that CF1 monitored the curriculum for adherence to state standards.

Co-Founders 1 and 2 both spoke about the advisory system used and how important it was for the accountability of student progress. They said each adult in the school, licensed or not, had a group of 8-10 students as advisees. They said an advisor was responsible for knowing their advisees, tracking their attendance, supervising their goals, class selection and test scores. They both emphasized the importance of the advisor-advisee relationship.

CF1 said the Special Education program was created to be a Level 5 program. She also said that most of the students who came to CS 104 had Individual Education Plans (IEPs). She noted they had Special Education teachers who wrote the plans, but they didn't use federal money for that task.

Dynamics. Several interviewees reported the importance of financial integrity and a conservative approach to the budget. CF1 explained their philosophy of accepting money, "We try not to take any money that isn't tied to what we're doing. That might take us off our focus." She said they especially don't like to take federal money because it has so many rules with it, and they won't follow the rules if it hurts the students. One of the other respondents explained further, "There are a lot of things attached to get that money [from the federal government]. Measured out, it didn't seem worth it." "We have always been very, very conservative with our finances," reported CF1. Another respondents said they tried to save money in some areas so they had money to pay for other things like free breakfast and lunch for every student, with no strings attached.

All people interviewed at CS 104 conveyed a strong sense of school before self. One staff member summed it up when he said, "The attitude . . . of working in a charter school is you have to go above and beyond. . . . it's just like a 'must' to help [the students] and try to do the things you can for the school."

Start-Up Stage: Governance

Preparation. CF1 said her past experiences had prepared her to create an appropriate governance system for the school. She said it was important that all board members understood that the mission drove all the decisions they made. She noted that their first board chair made certain the school's mission and goals were clearly articulated when the school began.

Capacity and Composition. Each of the co-founders served on the founding board and each had different expertise to bring to the process, said CF2. One of the decisions made early on was to keep the board small, said CF1. She noted they had three staff members and two community members. One thing they wanted from the beginning was a community business person to chair the board, she said. CF2 said that having an "outside person" chair the board added accountability to their school organization.

Structure. CF1 said she agreed to do director-like tasks, but didn't want to be viewed as the exclusive decision-making person, therefore they created a site committee within the board. CF2 said he and CF1 were both board members, but they were also part of the site committee.

Clarity. CF2 said the site committee had authority to make decisions together. He gave an example, "When we get into bigger expenses like a new computer system etc., the site committee meets and determines what we buy and what we don't buy. Big expenditures - we always have a meeting to make sure everyone is on the same page." CF1 said she took responsibility for creating the budget, but the board had to approve it.

Dynamics. The importance of serving with a professional attitude and keeping roles separate came through from all the board members interviewed. CF2 said, " It's important as a board member to step back and remember it can't be personal, but has to be what is best for the school." CF1 acknowledged the challenge of having a teacher

majority on the board. She said teachers need to be able to "switch hats" when they serve on the board, "This is a community hat, it's not about me."

Start-Up Stage: Resources

Money. CS 104 began before there was federal start-up money available. Securing some funds to help them get started was a challenge, said CF1. "Early on there was some big money that was possible, but would have been redirecting what we were doing, and that didn't make sense." She reported that they finally secured a loan to cover their first six months of cash flow. She added that later the loan was forgiven; they didn't have to pay it back. She commented that in the early days they got in the habit of underestimating revenue and overestimating expenses. She reported they continue to operate that way.

Facility. During their planning period, prior to opening, they decided to create a partnership with the city, said CF1. She said they asked the city if there was space somewhere that wasn't used during the day that they could use for their program. They were allowed to use two rooms in a city-owned building. This was sufficient for the first year since they began with only twenty students, commented CF2.

The second year of operation saw more students and more staff, and the need for a larger space, said CF2. The city found a location with more space. They were there one year, than moved to their present location, said CF2.

Expertise. Aside from the range of skills represented within the founding group, CF1 said they had some assistance from an executive in a local corporation during the start-up stage. CF2 said the partnership with the city was helpful in locating suitable facilities. He also said it was important to the integrity of the school to have hired an accounting firm early on.

CF1 said early on they had a psychologist on staff, thinking the students would need such services. She said it turned out the staff needed it more, to help get through the pressure of the school start-up and to oversee assessment. She added that the students really didn't want to interact with the psychologist.

Dynamics. The neighborhood location of the second facility proved to be unwelcoming, commented CF3. He said there were some incidents and the

neighborhood blamed it on their students. He believed the accusations were unfounded and racially motivated. He said CF1 and CF2 tried meeting with the neighbors to resolve the conflict, but in the end, they asked the city to find a new place for them.

Growth Stage: Leadership

Leadership-The Director. CF3 said that as the needs of the school changed, CF1 changed her tasks to meet them. He said she was always able to provide what the school needed.

Processes. CF1 noted that after several years they revisited the mission. She said it just needed a little tweaking, but overall, there was no need to change it. The mission drove the growth and development of the school, she remarked. When new things or changes were proposed, she said, the question was always asked, "Why would we do that? . . . If it didn't help in improving the student, it wasn't a priority."

Their mission and goals forced them to keep the enrollment low, said CF1. She noted that once the school was up and running, they never had to recruit students. She said they had a waiting list equal to their enrollment, almost from the beginning. "We always undershoot [our projection]. We always know we will have more students than we project," she added.

Co-Founders 2 and 3 both said they were careful about who was hired. CF2 said there was an interview process and then the candidate taught there for a week to check for "fit." "There is nothing worse than somebody who interviews really well, but doesn't have the same values that we have here at the school, as far as putting students first, or how we work," he said.

Good systems of communication took time to develop, said CF1. She remarked that the mindset many teachers had from being successful in traditional school was sometimes difficult to change to meet the needs of students who weren't successful in traditional school. She spoke of a period of time when staff meetings became big blame sessions. She said the psychologist on staff helped facilitate an alternative approach. She said, "Anytime someone had a problem they would bring it to the table, to a person, and [also bring] at least one solution. It might not be THE solution, but it would be part of the solution. That's been a very healthy thing that we have."

CF3 said CF1 didn't like to get into conflict with people. She always worked to find a compromise. CF1 said she approached conflict resolution with the same process, whether with staff, students or parents.

Dynamics. One of the staff members interviewed was a former student during this stage. He said, "[When I came as a student] the staff seemed like they cared about what was going on."

Growth Stage: Governance

Preparation. No comments were made about preparation that applied to the Growth Stage.

Capacity and Composition. No comments were made about this area that applied to the Growth Stage.

Structure. No comments were made about structure that applied to the Growth Stage.

Clarity. CF1 said that some teachers had a hard time serving as a board member. She remembered one teacher who wouldn't vote on an insurance policy because it would have affected her adversely, but would have been beneficial to others. She commented that that person should not have been on the board if she couldn't separate her board role from her personal interests.

Growth Stage: Resources

Money. CF2 said they always underestimated their enrollment when planning the budget. He said that at one point the Department of Education told them not to estimate so low, but get closer to reality. He didn't indicate if they followed this advice.

Facility. The size of the facility limited the size of the student body, according to CF1. She said during their growth stage they expanded slowly until they reached their maximum. She added that their mission demanded the maximum be kept low.

Expertise. CF2 said that when the board chair left after a few years another executive from the same corporation replaced him. This chair worked in Human Resource and brought a slightly different perspective to the position, he said.

Time. CF1 reflected back on the first five years and said she probably spent one to two hours a day getting the administrative work done. She said the rest of her time was spent with students.

Maturity Stage: Leadership

After several years of slow, planned growth, CS 104 reached capacity. Stable leadership and stable finances provided indications they had entered the Maturity Stage.

Leadership-The Director. The former student who became a staff member had the utmost respect for CF1 and two other co-founders. He said, "[CF1] really cares about the students and the staff members." CF2 said that while the mission remains student-focused, he thought they were changing, adding another layer to it. He said they were encouraging students to think about 'What can we do for the community?' then act on it.

Processes. CF1 said she was sometimes asked about expanding or starting another school. She said that was impossible because, "It's not a franchise, it's much more like a family and having relationships."

Dynamics. Both CF1 and CF2 commented on the collaborative disposition of the staff. They said it was exemplified in the way teachers work together on interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary teaching. The staff member said they were a team and "everyone just works together."

The importance of relationships came through in all the interviews. The staff member said if one of his advisees prefers to talk to another advisor, that's OK because the needs of the student are most important. CF2 added, "Everybody [staff] connects with somebody [students] here at school." "We all care about each other," said the staff member. "It's a trust thing, too. Lots of trust [here]," he noted. CF1 said, "It has taken years to develop the culture [of the school]."

Another type of relationship several respondents spoke of was networking. CF3 said, "We are willing to network with anybody that is willing to work with us." The staff member said, "As a staff member, we are encouraged to network and meet people. It's always networking, always some kind of partnership." CF2 mentioned that their relationship with their sponsor is positive and like a partnership.

Maturity Stage: Governance

Preparation. No comments were made about preparation that applied to the Maturity Stage.

Capacity and Composition. No comments were made about this area that applied to the Maturity Stage.

Structure. No comments were made about structure that applied to the Maturity Stage.

Clarity. "The board has become very mature in its role and it's not a micro-managing board," said CF1. "It's very valuable that the majority on the board are teachers because most of the discussions and consensus reached in the board are about staff," she added. The staff member said he was pleased to serve on the board because he could offer a student's perspective as well as a staff perspective.

CF2 said, "Some teachers have a really hard time with 'what is good for the school vs. what is good for me.' It really is important to separate yourself." The staff member said, "Sometimes you have to withdraw personal feelings in order to make a decision for the school." CF1 speculated that this ability to separate roles might be a trouble spot in other charter school boards. She also wondered if they should be doing a better job of informing candidates "up front [that] this is a big piece of [charter school life]."

Maturity Stage: Resources

Money. CF1 commented, "We never had a situation where the staff has recommended anything that has been detrimental to the program, even with things like supplies. It's always, 'Can we afford this?'" The staff member confirmed this, "We try to stay within the budget."

CF1 is the primary grant writer for the school. She said they have received a variety of grants over the years. She added they were selective about which grants they apply for, "We don't do it if we can't afford it without extra money, but that would be nice!"

The board is concerned about state revenue keeping up with mounting expenses, said CF1. "[Funding for charter schools] still isn't equal and there isn't the flexibility,

that when you do hit the changes, like with utility costs and other things, there aren't resources to fill the gaps." The staff member said, "Every year you've got to fight to stay open."

Facility. "One thing we're constantly battling is the building…we've been able to save some money because we partner for the building, but then you look at the benefits of having your own building, too," said the staff member. CF2 added that they had outgrown their facility. CF1 spoke about the difficulty of being a small school in regard to facility acquisition. She said they would like to own their own building, but there is not enough money. "To stay this size, even with some reasonable lease aid that is there, it's not enough [to have our own building]. . . . There just is a lot of things that don't reward small, don't even reward success," she said.

Expertise. CF3 said, "Our staff . . . is phenomenal because we all come from different backgrounds, we all bring something different to the table." CF2 said, "As a school, we do action research every year as part of our staff improvement, staff evaluation." He also mentioned that most of the teachers on the staff have earned their Masters degrees through the partnership with their sponsor.

In terms of outside expertise, CF3 mentioned that they have a professional theatre group that comes in to work with their students about social issues. He said this is an effective way to deal with such issues for their students.

Time. CF1 commented that in the early days paperwork took one to two hours a day. She said she now spent up to four hours a day on administrative tasks. "And we don't even do the federal stuff," she added.

Dynamics. Staff stability was an important factor for CS 104. CF1 said that the majority of the staff had been there for at least 75% of the school's life. She added that most want to stay there forever. CF3 said that when staff had left, it was usually because of life circumstances, like a family move.

A final quote from an interviewee closes the analysis of Charter School 104: "We'll all choose self-sacrifice over the sacrifice of the building, because we know how important the school is to so many other people."

Charter School 105

The largest of the schools in this study, Charter School 105 (CS 105) provides education for culturally and racially diverse students in grades K-12. The school has multiple facilities in the core city and is sponsored by a non-profit organization. The executive director has been in charge of this school for the 10 plus years it has been in operation. The mission of CS 105 is to help students be prepared for life beyond high school through one of several academic programs. The school board has a teacher majority. People interviewed at this school included the founder and executive director (ED), a co-founder/ curriculum director/board chair (CD/BCh), and a staff/board member (SBM) (see Figure 4.5).

	Role(s)	Yrs at school	Yrs on board	Expertise on the school's board
CS 105				
Exec director (ED)	Co-founder	Entire time	Entire time, but last 4 years as ex officio	Previously started another charter school, political experience, financial expertise, educational admin exp
Board chair (CD/BCh)	Co-founder, curriculum director	Entire time, but only last 3 years full time	Entire time	Academic programming
Board member (SBM)	Original parent, current staff member	Entire time	Entire time	Community expertise, parent perspective

Figure 4.5 Description of interviewees at Charter School 105

Start-Up Stage: Leadership

Leadership-The Founders. Charter School 105 (CS 105) was created to offer an alternative program for high school students using a particular curriculum and instructional method, to prepare them for adult life, said Co-Founder 1(CF1). A group of six or seven people gathered to discuss starting a charter school, he said. The group included five politically active community members, an education professional, and him, he noted. Everyone in the founding group had some type of expertise that would contribute to a school start-up, said Co-Founder 2 (CF2). The intention of the community people was just to help get the school up and running then turn it over to an

elected school board, said CF2. Within a year, said CF1, several of the community people had drifted away and the remaining two served on the founding board. CF1 said it was just the two educators left to complete the development of the school.

Leadership-Executive Director. A variety of professional experiences prepared him to create and lead CS 105, said CF1. He said he was a high school teacher, an alternative program administrator for a school district, and even an elected city official for a time. He was one of the founders of another charter school as well. CF2 commented that CF1 had extensive understanding of educational finance, which she didn't have. Another respondent said CF1 was skilled at handling resources – especially money and facilities; she referred to him as "the financial brains" of the school.

CF1 admitted he tended to be bossy. He said working with underserved students was his life mission. He noted that because of this passion he could be "a mad man" with new ideas and plans for helping students be successful. Another respondent agreed that CF1 was an idea person, but could eventually let go of ideas when there was no support from others.

Other respondents described CF1 as "a micro-manager." One said CF1 had his finger on the pulse of school operations at all times. Another respondent felt he had good qualities but his style of management was archaic – bureaucratic, and too emotional and intense.

Leadership-Curriculum Director. Co-Founder 2 said she had been invited to the founding group because of her expertise in curriculum and instruction. After the school opened she was hired to be the part-time curriculum director.

She commented that CF1's leadership style was very different from her own. To create balance, she said, she tried to be almost the opposite of CF1. She described herself as fair, forthright, and always tried to be objective. She said that she was a listener, honored confidentiality, and had become "the voice of the people" to CF1.

A staff member described CF 2 as a collaborator, the administrator who promoted consensus. CF2 was the one who made sure the academic program met state requirements, she noted. The staff person said that CF2 was, "All about the kids . . . and the teachers."

Processes. CF1 said in the early years he talked ideas over with the other members of his administrative team. When they didn't agree about things they kept talking until there was a resolution, he said. CF2 said they had weekly administrative meetings.

The staff member said the board meetings were "very public." She commented that in the beginning, if parents wanted to know what was happening at the school, they went to the board meetings, and those meeting were well attended.

Even though she was a collaborator, CF2 said that there were times when arriving at consensus was difficult. She said in those instances, she gathered input from everybody, and then just made the decision herself.

The staff member said CF1 was the person in charge of business and finances. She thought he made most of the final spending decisions.

CS 105 was a top-down structure, noted CF1, but the elected board supplied checks and balances. CF2 said that since the core group founding the school shared a common mission, they "thought we knew how to carry that out."

CF1 had administrative experience as well as previous charter start up experience. The staff member said he was responsible for getting the operational systems in place. CF1 said they began with hand-written records for student enrollment. He mentioned a computer program they tried that wasn't satisfactory. This method prompted scrutiny from the MDE after a couple years, said CF1. He said they came in and did an audit, particularly scrutinizing the enrollment figures.

The academic programming was up to CF2 to get in place, said the staff member. The school opened in the summer so the program could be piloted, said CF2. She added that she was the only teacher for the forty K-12 students who came but it was a successful summer. The academic program initially envisioned for the school proved to be unrealistic in September, commented CF2, because the students who came for the school year were not the same students from the summer program. She said their needs were very different.

Dynamics. CF1 recognized it was often up to CF2 to control his "madness" through informal and formal means. CF2 said, "Sometimes [CF1] has to be told what he

needs to be told – what I'm worried about or I like or I'd like to see changed. And I think because I am chair of the board, and I am a founder, and . . . [curriculum director], it's pretty difficult for him to get rid of me." She added that, "It's not that one [style] is better and one isn't, it's the combination of the two of us being honest with each other, and living through it." She said that even though they were very different, she and CF1 had respect for each other and understood each other.

The staff member reported that there was a third administrator in charge of human resources (HR) who was a rules-oriented person. She thought CF1 represented one end of a spectrum with his free flowing sometimes wild ideas and the HR person represented the other end, structured and an enforcer. She said CF2 was the bridge and balance in the administrative team.

CF2 said when the academic program changed right away to meet the needs of the students enrolled, one of the parents from the founding group chose to leave the school because, "He wasn't happy with the direction of the school." CF2 said the mission wasn't so much about a particular program or curriculum as it was meeting the needs of the students. CF1 said that while he favored a particular approach to learning he was more passionate about "going where kids aren't being served." In reflecting back on that start-up time, CF2 said, "There's not a balance oftentimes of charter school vision and the reality. The perception and the reality are not equal. If you can – adjust. These are our kids. These are it."

Start-Up Stage: Governance

Preparation. It was during the first year of operation that they elected the school board, said CF2. She commented that in the beginning there was a core of people on the board who knew and held onto the mission. She thought everyone was moving in the same direction.

Capacity and Composition. Many of the founders were elected to the board, said CF1. In subsequent elections, he said, a founder left the board and was replaced by either a teacher or parent. In that way they reached the state mandated teacher majority on the board.

One of the parents elected to the first board later became a staff member at the school. She continued to be elected to the board term after term, added CF2. She had first hand knowledge and understanding of the kinds of students they were looking to serve, noted CF2.

Structure. CS 105 had a nine-member board that gradually became a teacher majority over three years time, said CF1. He explained that board training was essential and conducted from the very beginning.

Clarity. No comments were made about clarity that applied to the Start Up Stage.

Start-Up Stage: Resources

Money. CF1 said the founding group obtained the $50,000 federal start-up funds and also borrowed $25,000 to get the school off the ground. Lease aid came after they had been open a couple of years. One of the things they did from the beginning was offer performance pay for the teachers, said the staff member. They thought this was necessary to be competitive with the salaries paid to the city teachers.

CF2 said CF1 kept tight reins on the budget and the spending. The staff member reported that CF1 had no problem saying, "We can't do that . . . because it will cost this much money and we don't have it. We can't do that because it's not financially feasible.'"

Enrollment was small for the first summer program, but then ballooned in September, said the staff member. It continued to grow each year, she said.

Facility. The school opened in a storefront with its summer program, said the staff member. That building was not large enough, so they found a church basement to rent, she said, and moved the K-8 students there. Enrollment continued to increase each year, said CF1, so they found a building for sale that could be fixed up. The school board connected with a non-profit group willing to buy the building and lease it to the school, reported CF1.

Expertise. Various types of expertise were present in the founding group, said CF1. There was a college administrator, business people, a marketing consultant, and political activists among the members, he said.

CF1 directing the financial affairs, CF2 in charge of teaching and learning, and a Human Resources Director, handled the administration of the school reported the staff member. The staff member said she started as a lunch lady in the elementary program, but by the second year she was working in the high school office.

Time. No comments were made about time during the Start Up Stage.

Growth Stage: Leadership

Leadership-Executive Director. The entrepreneurial tendencies of CF1 pushed the school enrollment higher and higher, said CF2. As the student population and student needs grew, the number and variety of academic programs increased, too, reported CF2. More programs attracted more students, she said.

Processes. CF2 thought there should be a better flow of information among all the stakeholders. She especially thought that budget information should be made accessible to more people, like the program directors.

CF1 was frequently pursuing new ideas and programs, CF2 said, so the board's role was important to help keep school growth under control. All new programs had to receive board approval, said CF1. He added that all the board members did not always agree with him and many asked him challenging questions.

Some of the operational systems did not keep pace with school growth, said the staff member. Enrollment was still being tracked by hand, she reported, and all programs were contained within one budget, rather than a separate budget for each.

However, every new program did get a director. CF1 said they promoted from within so almost all the directors had been teachers in the school first. The directors met weekly with the administrative team, reported the staff member, otherwise most communication was done with email. She expressed frustration about some people who were not good about checking their messages.

Dynamics. The communication style of CF1 was intimidating to many people, reported CF2. She said he was prone to outbursts and then people would just withdraw. She said over time she learned to not back down when this happened.

Growth Stage: Governance

Preparation. "We have been able to provide board members that hold [to the] mission," said CF2. CF1 said the board was committed to the vision of serving the community.

Capacity and Composition. The board had a good balance of multi-term people and new members, commented CF2. She thought it was important to have the consistency of some founders as well as the fresh perspective of new people. CF1 thought most of the leadership on the board during this time came from the staff people on the board, rather than the parents or community people.

Structure. Two respondents commented on the importance of training for new board members. CF2 said training was done every year after elections. She added that the board meetings were very systematic. All program directors were required to attend the board meetings and give a monthly report.

Clarity. CF2 said the board understood its role in generating policy and overseeing finances. She added that they kept a close eye on the monthly financial statements.

Growth Stage: Resources

Money. CF1 said that the Minnesota Department of Education expressed concern about their rapid growth and conducted an audit of their enrollment data. He admitted that they might have forgotten to report the numbers to the state one year, a totally innocent mistake. He recalled the state told them not to worry about it, so they didn't. The next thing he knew, "They came out and audited us," he said, "and that's when we went through a three year war [with the Minnesota Department of Education]." CF1 said the state came back and did another audit the next year. After the second audit, the school board chose to appeal the findings, he said. That legal action cost the school quite a bit of money, but it was worth it, he said, because they won the appeal.

Facility. The rapidly expanding enrollment during this time prompted CF1 to acquire new facilities to house the students and programs, said CF2. The staff member

said CF1 was very good at finding buildings and negotiating favorable terms. Facilities were financed through lease aid, she said.

Expertise. Sometime during those three years, CF1 said they found a computer program that worked to handle the enrollment data. They also hired a person to be his secretary, he said, who handled all that data and generated reports for the state. CF2 said they contracted with an accounting firm to track the budget, and cut the checks. The chair of the board worked closely with the accountant to monitor spending, she said.

Dynamics. "We learned our lesson," commented CF1. "You always learn the hard way. We thought we could get by with going in and filling out the forms at the end of the year." The staff member commented that after the first audit they fixed the cited problems and they were no longer an issue when the auditors came back the second time.

Maturity Stage: Leadership

Leadership-Executive Director. CF1 continued to serve as the executive director of CS 105. He still looked for students and new programs to serve them, reported CF2, but the board has become more vigilant about capping entrepreneurial endeavors.

Processes. CF2 said the communication system at CS 105 was "emotional based," and not always productive. "I really like to listen to what people are saying and give them a safe, this is corny, a safe environment for them to say, 'That's crazy. It's a crazy idea,'" commented CF2. She thought that was healthy discourse and regretted that it was not that way at CS 105.

The administrative team had discussed a succession plan, said CF1, because he was not going to be there forever. "We have a succession plan, but it's [CF2]…then after that, there is no succession plan . . . that's a real problem. I think after the founders are gone, then what do they do?"

Dynamics. When asked if the skills of the administrators changed to meet the differing needs of the school as it aged, CF2 said, "I think the organization has adjusted to the leaders' needs, which is translated into our mission." She said even though programs had changed over the years, "Our focus to provide effective programming for these kids to transition them into adulthood-it has stayed steadfast."

Maturity Stage: Governance

Preparation. No comments were made about preparation that applied to the Maturity Stage.

Capacity and Composition. No comments were made about this area that applied to the Maturity Stage.

Structure. The board had a robust election system, according to CF2. Information was published about each candidate, she said, and they got a chance to speak at the annual meeting. She noted that they always had more people running than positions available. Both the Human Resource Director and CF1 were board members until a few years ago. They were changed to *ex officio* status.

Clarity. No comments were made about clarity that applied to the Maturity Stage.

Maturity Stage: Resources

No comments were made about resources that applied to the Maturity Stage.

A final quote from the staff member closes the analysis of Charter School 105: "We have changed to meet the needs of who we get, rather than shut down because we weren't getting who we directed at in the first place. We started out to meet the needs of kids who were underserved. We do that – but who our clientele is today is not who we had [when we started].

Charter School 106

Charter School 106 (CS 106) is located in the core city. The executive director is the fourth one to serve this medium sized K-8 school in its more than10 years of operation. The school board has equal representation of teachers, parents and community members, reflecting part of the school's mission of partnering and networking. The mission and curriculum also seek to help students embrace the culturally and racially rich school community while working toward academic excellence. CS 106 is sponsored by a public school district and is housed in a renovated former parochial school building. People interviewed at this school include the current

(and fourth) executive director (ED4), a co-founder/staff member and former board member (SF), a staff member and former board member (S1), and a teacher/board chair (T/BCh) (see Figure 4.6).

	Role(s)	Yrs at school	Yrs on board	Expertise on the school's board
CS 106				
Exec director (ED4)	Fourth director	8 yrs	8 yrs	Administration, facility expansion
Former board member (SF)	Co-founder, current staff member	Entire time	3 yrs	Community expertise
Current staff member (S1)	Original parent, Former board member	Entire time	4 yrs as member, 6 yrs as recording secretary	Community expertise
Board chair (T/BCh)	Current teacher	7 yrs	3 yrs	Board governance, teaching, administration

Figure 4.6 Description of interviewees at Charter School 106

Start-Up Stage: Leadership

Leadership-The Founder. A parent founded Charter School 106.He said he wanted a school where children could learn more about world languages and cultures and he received technical assistance from a non-profit organization to accomplish the task. A current staff member and one of the first board members (SF) said this non-profit group was very instrumental in forming the founding group, getting the paperwork done, obtaining the charter, and hiring the teachers. The founding parent said they hired a woman to be the director and he thought she had some association with the non-profit organization, but he wasn't sure. She was the first of four executive directors to lead the school in its first four years of operation according to the board member. Also, it was the fourth executive director who finally pulled things together, and put appropriate systems in place so the school could function and thrive.

Leadership-Executive Director 1. Information about the first executive director (ED1) was minimal from respondents. The best source was the current staff member (S1) who was a first board member, a parent, a volunteer worker for the first six months of operation, then a paid staff member. She continues to work at the school as a staff member.

Nothing was mentioned about the first executive director's vision of the school. S1's impression was that ED1 was an inexperienced administrator and not a good manager. She said they got into financial difficulty the first year, "It was not mismanagement intentionally at all. It was just lack of experience." S1 recalls that there was someone from the non-profit organization trying to help with financial matters but "They had some sort of relationship going on so it was really convoluted . . . . He would say, 'OK, this is what we need to do,' and she would turn it around somehow. I can't really explain it, it was just bizarre." ED1's communication style was horrible, according to S1. "[ED1] would snap at people and she was very unapproachable and arguing and yelling matches sometimes. It was not healthy. People were afraid to approach her."

The founder parent said the board fired ED1 at the end of the first year because she was away from the school, taking off too much time. S1 recalls that while ED1 was out of the country during the summer, they decided to replace her.

Leadership-Executive Director 2. The board asked one of the language teachers at the school to step into the leadership position. S1 said this woman and her husband had previously served as administrators in a private international school, so the board thought she could handle this position. S1 speculated, "I think she felt obligated to take the position. I feel like had we had other options at the time, she probably wouldn't have, but she was really committed to making the school go forward."

It was S1's impression that Executive Director 2 (ED2) lacked knowledge and understanding of the Minnesota rules and regulations, and the Minnesotan educational system, in general. S1 said that once again, they were in financial trouble and required reports were not getting done.

The founder parent said ED2 was not handling the transportation services well. He said children were picked up late and sometimes, not at all. It appeared to him that she could not work things out with the bus company.

S1 reported that ED2 was in the director's position until the middle of operational year three. She was then asked to leave.

Leadership-Executive Director 3, an interim leader. S1 said they were able to get a retired district administrator, who had been consulting with the school about special education, to serve as the Interim Director. She said his main task was to help them find a new executive director, which he did. She recalled he said about the applicant pool, "I think there is only one candidate that will be able to save the school at this point, who has the experience and the knowledge." She remembered he wouldn't say who it was because he didn't want to influence the hiring process. After they made their choice he acknowledged that was his choice, also. S1 made this comment about the fourth executive director, "I give her a lot of credit because she came into a mess."

Leadership-Executive Director 4. The fourth executive director (ED4) said she had a background of administration in a traditional school district. Her experiences, she said, included management, finances, curriculum, governance, and building projects. She said when she accepted the job she knew the school was in trouble, but had no idea the extent of the problems.

ED4 said she realized within the first month that the school was out of control and she would have to "take the reins" and be assertive if the school was going to stand a chance of surviving. The sponsor had already informed the school that their contract was not going to be renewed, said S1. "We hired somebody who had some knowledge, and background, and what she didn't know she figured it out. . . . being in education for as many years as she did, she had the contacts," she remarked.

ED4 said she was accused of being intimidating and too controlling, but felt that the condition of the school when she came in warranted a strong hand. S1 recalled that some people viewed ED4 as unapproachable and strong willed. She, however, thought ED4 was strong, intelligent and had high expectations for staff and students. She added, "We could not continue the way we were going. It wasn't going to work." ED4 said even though the school was entering its fourth year, it was like starting from scratch.

Processes. The founder parent said it was the job of ED1 to create the policies and handle the finances. This did not happen. ED4 and S1 both recalled that when ED4 arrived there were no policies, no coherent curriculum, and no systems in place. This was something ED4 had to do, they both said.

There was no governance system established. S1 reported that in the middle of the school's third year the board chair tried to go through personnel files without permission and was stopped. That night the school's main computer disappeared from the office. She said the next day the chair was back and going through the personnel files and later that week there was a meeting to discuss the dismissal of ED2. "Part of the reason it was so hard is that everyone was so loyal because we had all been here. When you go through the growing pains you just want to succeed and we kept saying what are these families going to do that are so dependent on the services that we provided them. It was ugly," she remembered.

When the school started, curriculum was the responsibility of the teachers, reported S1. No comprehensive, school-wide system was created. She said, "There was an effort [to coordinate the curriculum] but then it just felt like things started falling apart. They would order something and then there would be no training and it would kind of fall apart and everybody would do their own thing once again. So there was nothing from year to year." ED4 said she knew she had to do something right away about the curriculum. They bought a reading/language arts and a math curriculum for all the teachers to use, so there would be consistency from grade level to grade level.

Without leadership and functioning governance system the school was ready to implode. Two respondents said that starting in January of the third year, the conflict on the board escalated. The board was factionalized and in crisis. ED4 said during her first month there, one half of the board secretly voted the other half off – much to their surprise – and replaced them with new members.

Even though governance and leadership were both a mess, S1 said, "The communication was so good between the parents and the teachers, communication was really good. Teachers were very committed to these kids. There were a lot of reasons to stay. I knew it could be something really good but just needed the right thing." The tension of the governance conflict resulted in half the teachers leaving the school at the end of the third year, said ED4.

After the disastrous first board meeting, ED4 said she went back to the interim director [ED3] seeking information. She asked him, "What's been happening here, because this is too bizarre?" She said he filled her in on what he knew.

S1 said that ED4's first few years were really hard because there were so many policies and systems that needed to be put into place. ED4 said she decided she needed to take charge and try to direct things. She said it took about three years to get things under control.

ED4 said enrollment was good for her first year at the school. She said she considered it to be a successful year. She also reported that enrollment continued to increase each year after that, but she was careful to keep her projections low.

Dynamics. The school attracted families from four particular ethnic groups, said S1. The school's mission helped shape the academic program, assisting English Language Learners to be successful, she said.

S1 recalled the struggles during the first year, "It was so hard . . . [ED1] kept saying things like, 'well, if everyone wants to get a paycheck,' which was really starting to scare the staff."

S1 remembered when the second executive director was fired. She said, "Everybody had good intentions but just looking at it and being a parent and being a staff member, I think there were issues with the board make up. I feel like it is hard to expect a staff person to run a board and to vote on issues. It was really hard for people, I don't care what kind of a person you are, it is really hard to separate [roles] and it felt like everyone was in it for their own best interest."

When asked why she stayed at the school through those beginning years, S1 demonstrated a selfless dedication to the school. She said, "When [ED2] came in I thought I could not leave now, because I thought if I go down, I go down with the ship. At this point who cares. I could not just leave her. I would never have done that to her. When [ED4] came . . . I felt like, one more year, what's it going to kill you? It just ended up turning around. So I thought about, OK, who's going to do the MARS reporting and who is going to do. . . because people were afraid to work in charter schools and I don't blame them. And ours didn't have a real good reputation out there."

Within the first month on the job, ED4 said she realized she needed to develop a positive working relationship with the office manager (who was a parent and staff member). The office manager (and staff member) said she was thinking of quitting, "I can't go through another administrator, I can't, and she looks really up tight." But, she said, ED4 convinced her to give it one more year.

ED4 remembered that the last of the original parents had left the board by her third year at the school. She said this made things much better.

Start-Up Stage: Governance

Preparation. S1 said ED1 did not make an effort to put the governance system into place. She added that none of the parents or teachers on the board had any experience with creating governance systems either. No references were made to the development of the vision/mission statement.

Capacity and Composition. The founder parent reported that he served on the first school board for a two-year term. He said he chose not to run again because it was too much work and very complicated. S1 reported that she was not on the planning board, but was on the first elected board, the first operating year, and served two terms. She said none of the parents really had any background or expertise for serving on the board.

It was the opinion of the founding parent that most people on the first board lacked leadership experience. He also thought they didn't accurately represent the community.

Structure. ED4 said when she arrived the board did not know how to conduct a proper meeting; there was no agenda, no rules of order, just chaos. She said she had the first meeting together adjourned because inappropriate discussions were going on. She realized that a lot of training needed to take place, which she began with the very next meeting. She also said there were four months during that third year, before she arrived, when no minutes or notes were taken for any meetings – including the ousting of half the board.

Clarity. S1 said that those early staff members did not understand their roles and responsibilities. She reported, "People [on the board said], 'I hired you and I can fire

you' [to the new fourth director] just inappropriate things, and that goes back to the board make-up."

Dynamics. The founding parent commented on the fighting that was going on between teachers and parents [in the founding group]. He said that after the board was elected the fighting continued there because everyone had different ideas and couldn't agree on things.

Start-Up Stage: Resources

Money. S1 said ED1 over-estimated the enrollment for the first year, resulting in overpayment by the state. She said ED2 contacted the state and worked out a repayment plan. ED4 reported that the money had been paid back to the state by the time she came to the school.

The founding parent recalled that recruitment efforts had been successful for the opening of the school. He said they had to turn some parents and children away.

Facility. The founding parents recalled that a couple of people from the non-profit organization found an old, unused parochial school and convent in an accessible part of the city. The school leased this as their first facility. S1 said the convent was used for the school offices. She described both structures as "dingy, dark old rundown . . . buildings. . . . The ceilings were falling down in the offices." She also remembered that they had started a small addition onto the school building so the offices could be within the school. She said that ED4 came just as the addition construction was beginning.

During the third year, ED2 had begun to seek investors so the school could be bought from the church. ED4 said when she arrived she was suspicious of the legality of the methods being used to seek financing.

ED4 reported that as enrollment continued to increase after she arrived, they needed to expand the facility. She said beside the addition for office space, the basement area was remodeled for classrooms and student space.

Expertise. The lack of expertise of the first two directors and the people on the school board has been described above. None of the respondents commented on the experience level of the first teachers hired for the school.

S1 said a consultant was hired to write the annual report for the state. She said they also had a special education consultant and contracted with a service to handle the finances. The school had an attorney they consulted when needed, said ED4.

Time. No comments were made about time during the Start Up Stage.

Dynamics. The conflict among staff members was kept quiet by all on the board because they didn't want to scare off the potential investors, said ED4. She commented that the ousted staff members were so committed to the school they kept quiet because they didn't want to create any obstacles to acquiring the building.

Growth Stage: Leadership

Leadership-Executive Director. ED4 considered herself to be a big picture person and more of a starter than a sustainer. This structural perspective was needed at CS 106 when she took the position. She said her style was to be pretty direct, and that might not always be well received.

Once the structure of the school was in place, ED4 said they looked at how the school should grow. The grade levels were expanding and student enrollment was solid, she said, they even had a waiting list. S1 referred to ED4 as a visionary person who pushed the teachers and the kids as far as she could. S1 admitted, "Sometimes we don't all like it, but she does that with the school, too. . . . Just how much can we do for the community? How much can we accomplish this year?"

Processes. During ED4's first few years new teachers were hired to replace those who left and to accommodate the expanding enrollment, she said. This allowed her to implement new systems of communication and teacher collaboration, she reported. "The teachers have a lot of input . . . we meet on a biweekly basis with staff. . . . Our teachers all meet in teams, and the clusters have prep together . . . they actually set team goals . . . can earn compensation based on team goals, based on student achievement."

An experienced teacher (T/BCh) hired during this stage shared his perspective about decision-making and autonomy at CS 106. He said ED4 gave teacher teams lots of power to make their own decisions. "That's how you end up with distributed power and that is how you end up with teachers who control the curriculum and the pedagogy,

because she gives you it and tells you, 'You have to do it,' and guides you and then says, 'Do it.' Once again this isn't the curriculum office making the decision - it's we decided the direction."

T/BCh went on, "There are some people who sometimes say, 'Why doesn't she just make a decision?' Because it is not hers to make. We are the ones who implement it. Therefore, we are the ones who have to make a decision."

ED4 said she hired an assistant principal to handle the day-to-day tasks of the school with students and teachers. She mentioned that the addition of a school social worker to handle the special education and special services completed the administrative team. She said she spent more time on the oversight of the school as a whole, and handled all the business and financial matters. She felt the team worked well together.

Dynamics. T/BCh remarked that the executive director is, "Faithful to the mission and whether a person agrees or disagrees with her style, the faith to the mission is much more important."

Growth Stage: Governance

Preparation. T/BCh revealed himself to be a mission-oriented person. He spoke about the school mission more than any other respondent. He said, "I'm the vision keeper even though I didn't start the school or I wasn't in charge of the philosophy or anything like that. But I have a sense of the vision and what I try to return people to is – 'What did out founders want?'"

Capacity and Composition. ED4 said the remaining remnant of early staff members finally left. One of the new teachers hired (T/BCh) had extensive governance experience. He was readily elected to the board at the first opportunity.

Structure. ED4 said she believes board development needs to be done at every meeting, whether formal of informal. She said the school's legal counsel comes in yearly to remind the staff members of their fiduciary responsibilities and conflict of interest issues.

After her fourth year at the school, ED4 said the board decided to change its composition from teacher majority to equal numbers of teacher, parent, and community

members, and add one staff representative. T/BCh said the impetus for the change came from the parents, not the teachers, who said this would be more reflective of the original vision of a family-centered school. ED4 said this change required a waiver from MDE.

ED4 also recalled two long-serving parent staff members said they were intimidated by the teachers on the board and tired of having every meeting be about the teachers. According to her they said the meeting should be about the kids and their needs. She added, "I think that started, for the teachers on the board, to start to look at how it might change."

Clarity. The issue of conflict of interest is one that ED4 said she brought up to the board frequently. She said, "It's one of the things I think charters have to come to grips with, is staff on school boards." She said at CS 106 they made it a practice that teacher staff members cannot vote on their salaries. ED4 said she needed to keep reminding the board that their role was to take care of the policies of the school, not the day-to-day operations. She said maintaining this distinction was difficult with the board comprised of teachers and parents.

Dynamics. ED4 spoke about her relationship with the school board. She said, "I do think as an administrator it's hard because they see me as just trying to control it, rather than to get them to - do the right thing! – to follow protocol. I'm not doing this because I want to be controlling, I'm doing this because this is how it should be. 'You are policy makers.'"

Growth Stage: Resources

Money. ED4 reported that with growing enrollment and careful budgeting and spending, they were able to start building a fund balance. She added that even though enrollment was growing she was pretty conservative projecting the numbers for the coming year.

The teacher/board chair said ED4 put the budget together, brought it to the board for discussion. He said it was the board's role to approve it after making desired changes.

Facility. During this stage, ED4 said they built a second addition. She said it was self-funded.

Expertise. The addition of an assistant principal and school social worker were described above, as was the hiring of an experienced teacher with extensive governance knowledge.

Time. No comments were made about time during the Growth Stage.

Maturity Stage: Leadership

Leadership-Executive Director. ED4 said her style of leadership was "pretty direct . . . I set a direction and turn it over. . . . once I can see it going in a direction, then I'm pretty much hands-off." She said experience had taught her to set a direction and stay the course, and that's what she's done at CS 106. She said since she's been there they have had great consistency in curricular approaches, and that has yielded positive student results.

T/BCh said, "A charter school has to have a really strong director . . . someone who can wear a variety of hats." He believed ED4 fit that description. He said she was good about saying no to things that were not in line with the school's mission and curricular focus, which were decided by the faulty and approved by the board. However, she was very supportive of things that were aligned with the mission and curriculum. He noted that she was definitely mission-driven when it came to spending money.

S1 noted that ED4 "wants the school to be healthy. It is about the school, it really is."

Processes. ED4 explained that the board had recently been engaged in long range strategic planning. She said communication was a part of the long range planning. She said, "Teachers still feel that sometimes they don't get the information." She noted it was a challenge to "keep everybody in the loop, so that everybody knows." The teacher/board chair remarked that he thought ED4 did a good job of promoting communication. He said, "Before the school year [starts] we attend a two-day retreat talking about all this stuff – governance, curriculum, and who decides. [ED4] distributes lots of power."

The board did a lot of discussing before making decisions, according to the teacher/board chair. He said the director brought issues and topics to the board and they

discussed them. He said decisions were tabled if the board felt they needed more information. Once they were better informed, they would discuss again. He said this usually resulted in unanimous votes. He noted they talked as long as they needed to reach consensus.

S1 said that in contrast to the early days, "Disagreements are now handled through whole systems." She said the board had policies and procedures to deal fairly and appropriately with conflict.

Another thing on the long range planning agenda, said ED4, was consideration of the administrative structure of the school for the future. She's not going to be there forever, she remarked.

Dynamics. ED4 explained that another area of discussion in the long range planning was revising the school's vision, mission and philosophy statement. She said they were evaluating the changes that have been taking place in the student population, and trying to anticipate the demographics of students to come in the future. This has prompted them to broaden their mission statement a bit, she said.

The teacher/board chair spoke about the type of mindset a person needed to teach at this charter school. He said, "[They] have to be willing to pitch in. If you don't have that kind of attitude, the school is not going to be successful and you are not going to be happy."

ED4 said when parents came to interview her about CS 106 she made a point of stressing that the school needs to be right for the entire family. She said it was not the best place for all students, or all teachers. She said she works with everyone to be sure the school is a "good fit."

Maturity Stage: Governance

Preparation. The teacher/board chair said the staff members were all going in the same direction. He added, "governance works quite smoothly because we are in sync."

Capacity and Composition. No comments were made about this area during the Maturity Stage.

Structure. No comments were made about structure during the Maturity Stage.

Clarity. The teacher/board chair reported, "[We have a] good board who has worked together cooperatively and collegially." He added that the collegiality extended to the professional relationship with ED4.

ED4 commented, "The teachers who've been on the board over the last five years have been much more objective, and I think that goes back to . . . 'what's a conflict of interest' with staff. . . . it has to be out on the table."

S1 said the board did its part in monitoring the budget. She noted, "Anything over $5,000 is definitely a board decision, between $1000 and $5000 it depends on what it is. Building repairs would once again go to the board."

Maturity Stage: Resources

Money. In terms of revenue and enrollment, T/BCh said they were always cognizant of parents' satisfaction with the school. He said, "You have to have family support to continue. If we weren't serving our populations as they would like, they voted with their feet once, they could do that again." S1 reported that they had waiting lists for every grade level.

T/BCh noted that the director was very careful with money so, "We are not going to be in statutory operating debt ever." ED4 commented that the Department of Education periodically complained about their large fund balance. Her conviction was that they needed to be prepared for any crisis or emergency.

Facility. The founder parent said they would like to add the high school grades onto the school. Unfortunately, he said, there was no room for expansion of the facility, and they did not want to move to a new location.

Expertise. ED4 said they recently added a business manager to take on the financial tasks she had been doing. She said this was part of the administrative restructuring with an eye toward the future.

Grant writing was done "in-house" according to the teacher/board chair. He said both he and ED4 were experienced and fairly successful grant writers.

Time. No comments were made about time during the Maturity Stage.

A final quote from one of the respondents closes the analysis of Charter School 106:

"We've become very desired by the community. Neighborhood people want their kids here. Our neighborhood population has increased dramatically, that's part of it, which is scary. . . . It's changing the make-up of the school. It changes what is important to the parents of the school. . . . I think whatever road we go down, if we can stay true to the core of the mission of . . . what we set out to do as a school, we'll be fine."

Charter School 107

Charter School 107 (CS 107) is a medium sized school with multiple campuses in the core city. The mission of this culturally and racially diverse K-8 school is to build excellence in academics and character for each student. The school, sponsored by a public school district, has been in operation for less than ten years and is led by its second executive director. The board has a teacher majority. People interviewed at this school include the current (and second) executive director (ED2), the founder and first executive director (ED1/F), and a co-founder and former board chair (CF/BCh) (see Figure 4.7).

	Role(s)	Yrs at school	Yrs on board	Expertise on the school's board
CS 107				
Exec director (ED2)	Second director	4 yrs	4 yrs	Administration, teaching, business
Former exec director (ED1)	School founder	5 yrs	5 yrs	Started another charter school, non-profit experience, financial experience
Former board chair (FG/BCh)	Founding group, community member	0 yrs	6 yrs	Curriculum expertise

Figure 4.7 Description of interviewees at Charter School 107

Start-Up Stage: Leadership

Leadership-The Founder. CS 107 was the second charter school created by the founder (ED1). He said his vision was to provide "a private school atmosphere for public school kids . . . in the inner city . . . who could never think about private school."

He said he was drawn to traditional curriculum, careful structure and discipline. He remarked that he wanted the curriculum to focus on fundamentals, not the new things that progressive educators were trying.

Toward this end, ED1 enlisted the assistance of a friend who had expertise in a particular nationally based curriculum that was appealing to him and seemed to fit his vision. This friend became part of the founding group, and later the first board chair (FG/BCh). His vision was even broader than ED1's. He said, "The idea was to provide a top notch education for a certain number of kids who might not other wise receive it. Also to set an example to the state and the nation, of what can be done if you have [this particular] curriculum and dedicated teachers that love teaching and love students and love learning."

FG/BCh said ED1 was committed to seeing his vision become a reality; he didn't take a salary during the planning year and later during the third year, postponed getting paid until the end of the fiscal year. ED1's commitment to his vision was made evident as he told the story of the first three years of CS 107. He said a board member who wanted the school to move in another direction challenged his vision and mission. ED1 said he persevered and they eventually had to call in a mediator. He noted that compromises were reached, but his original mission remained intact.

ED1 explained that his background was in the non-profit area and he had business experience as well as previous charter school experience. He expressed the opinion that, "Leadership within [a charter school] is much closer to a business model [than a school model]." FG/BCh confirmed the strong business and non-profit skills of ED1, including the area of non-profit governance. He added that ED1 did not have education skills, so that's why he [FG/BCh] was brought onto the founding committee.

All the respondents mentioned the strong management skills of ED1. FG/BCh said, "The staff knew that [ED1] knew what had to be done and he knew how to do it, and that inspired confidence." He also noted that ED1 was highly respected by the staff. The current director (ED2) referred to ED1 as "a benevolent dictator, which is not all bad when something is starting up." He added that the school was "really solid after those first five years."

When describing himself, ED1 noted that he could be very stubborn, and sometimes he wasn't very diplomatic when dealing with people. FG/BCh said ED1 "had very high standards and was a perfectionist." He added that ED1 didn't like surprises and always wanted to be on top of things.

ED1 spoke of an area that caused him problems in the early years. He said he wasn't prepared for the magnitude of cultural differences that presented themselves after the students had been enrolled. He noted that 80% of the school population was from one ethnic group and he had no knowledge about the cultural distinctives of this group, nor did he have any advisors. He attributed the problems of the early years to his cultural misunderstandings.

Processes. ED1 reported that a big part of the cultural problem in those early years revolved around communication. He said he made assumptions about some parent board members understanding his comments, when that wasn't the case at all. He said the parents heard the comments through their cultural filter and derived a totally different meaning than what was intended. The problems escalated from there, he said, "That was where my ignorance got me into a huge problem. … I have to take responsibility for it."

ED1 said he tried to address the escalating problem with a parent board member through different strategies. Finally, when he approached the principle opposition member to talk and resolve the conflict, the offered plan was viewed as a bribe. He said at that point he turned to a mediation service to resolve the crisis.

FG/BCh reported that there was good communication flow from ED1 to the staff. He said there were weekly staff meetings, as well as weekly letters home to parents. He said ED1 maintained an open door policy to staff and parents alike.

FG/BCh said he did not recall any teachers complaining about decision-making, even though it was top-down. He does recall that there were some disgruntled parents who didn't like how controlling ED1 was.

When asked about how communication regarding the crisis between ED1 and board parents was handled, ED1 said the teachers knew exactly what was going on because there were teachers on the board. He reported that he sent a letter to all parents

at the end of the year. “We did not deal with [the crisis] as open communication, with the parents as an open audience,” he said.

Operational systems were created by ED1, said FG/BCh. He added, “[ED1] tended to do everything himself.” ED1 said the first board had the state required teacher majority, but after mediation the board was restructured to include an equal number of teachers and parents, and a lesser number of community members.

ED1 said he, as the executive director, was responsible for finances. He felt that the budget was, “The single most important policy tool the institution has.” ED2 noted that ED1 led the school from a business manager perspective; he was on top of the finances all the time.

ED1 reported that the school was designed to have an executive director and two principals, one was hired immediately and a second one would be hired when they expanded to include a middle school. ED2 said ED1 had no teaching in his background so that was probably why he hired a principal right away to take care of the academic side of the school. FG/BCh said he worked closely with the first principal to be sure she received training in the chosen curriculum and supported its use.

ED1 did all the hiring in the beginning. He said he was concerned about hiring people who would embrace his vision and work toward the mission. He said his criteria for hiring teachers included intelligence, verbal ability, and commitment to positive values. FG/BCh felt, “The principal should really have the final say about staff.” However, ED1 said he was reluctant to let the principal do the hiring because he did not have confidence in her ability to hire teachers who would support and promote the vision and mission.

ED1 noted that from the very beginning there was a policy in place for teacher bonus pay. He said he tried to implement other innovative compensation practices, but the teachers were not at all enthusiastic about them. He added that the principal didn’t support these practices either.

As described above, ED1 and board chair decided on a nationally based curriculum for the academic program. What they hadn’t planned on, according to FG/BCh, was the large number of students who had limited English speaking ability.

He added that many of the kindergartners spoke no English at all. He said this meant they needed a strong English as a Second Language program, which was not in their original planning. Another unanticipated problem was the limited English-speaking ability of parents, which meant students could not get help with their schoolwork at home. FG/BCh commented, "The student achievement was not what we expected because of the language problem."

Dynamics. ED1 made statements throughout the interview that he was highly committed to his mission and maintaining that mission for the school. When he referred to the crisis with the school board parent he said, "We had to fight to keep our mission." He also made statements that he was uncertain about mission consistency in the future of the school. He thought if he gave up control of hiring, the principal wouldn't necessarily hire people committed to the mission. He said, "Even if you have dedicated, strong leadership, it doesn't guarantee mission clarity and continuation because at some point you begin to involve others in that process."

ED1 talked primarily about events that involved the start up and running of CS 107. He said relatively little about the dispositions of the teachers. He did make a generalization about teachers falling into two basic groups. He labeled them entrepreneurial and security loving. He felt that the majority of the teachers he hired were in the security-loving group. When that characteristic combined with a teacher majority on the school board, he added, it was no surprise that he was prevented from implementing some of his innovative compensation ideas.

When asked what effect the crisis between him and the board parent had upon the teachers he said the school suffered loss of morale, energy and spirit. He said some teachers left at the end of the third year because of the stress.

Stability was an issue for some aspects of CS 107 from the very beginning. FG/BCh said, "We tried to have a diverse founding committee . . . there was almost constant turnover. We would get people who would come to some meetings and then lose interest and we'd replace them with other people." On the other hand, ED1 reported that he postponed retirement until the end of Year 5 to insure stable leadership,

especially after the crisis. FG/BCh said he stayed in his board position through Year 6, and then retired.

Start-Up Stage: Governance

Preparation. As described above, ED1 and board chair were mission-driven. FG/BCh commented that the parents who served on the board did not have the same commitment to the mission, some even disagreed with it.

Capacity and Composition. ED1 reported, "I've always tried to insist to the board that we should be seeking out people who understand who we are, agree with who we are, and support who we are. They didn't all agree with that and they wanted that [community] representation thing. It made life difficult, and made it inefficient with board activity." He added that it was a struggle from the beginning to keep parents on the board.

FG/BCh said many of the teachers were reluctant to serve on the board because they were busy enough preparing to teach the new curriculum. He understood that the first couple years were overwhelming for teacher preparation.

Structure. ED1, according to FG/BCh, created the governance structure. "[ED1] was so thoroughly prepared for this and on top of all the rules and regulations that neither I nor the rest of the board had to do an awful lot," he remarked. They had a teacher majority board, as required by law, said ED1. As a result of the mediation at the end of the crisis, they had to apply for a waiver from the state to remove the teacher majority he added.

ED1 elaborated upon one issue that fed the third year crisis. He said the by-laws had no provision to remove somebody from the board. So he thought it was fortunate that the demanding, disagreeing parent board member was up for re-election that fall, because if he had not been they wouldn't have had the opportunity to replace him and would have been there another year. This parent was not reelected said ED1.

Clarity. FG/BCh said he thought the role of the board of a pre-operational school was task-oriented, but then that needed to change to oversight once the administrator was hired. "I didn't notice that shift at all at CS 107, probably because

[ED1] was the driving force during the founding period and then the executive director," he said.

ED1 stated, "The board's role is to provide consistency and dedication to the mission." He added that some parents, "Wanted to have personal control of things, and that is where the controversy came."

Aside from the antagonistic parents during the period of crisis, ED2 said that the board closely followed ED1's directions and did what he suggested. FG/BCh said some parents accused the board of "rubber stamping", but he denied this was the case.

Dynamics. At the annual meeting and board election Year 3, ED1 said several parents were working hard to get the adversarial parent board member reelected. He said by then it was clear the parents were interested in having community representation on the board and they were not necessarily supporting the original vision and mission of the school. He reiterated how strongly he was against this and it pushed him to take immediate action. "I made the decisions that I was going to speak against [electing that parent]. It was probably highly irregular and maybe even an improper thing to do. . . . I just believed it was too risky."

Start-Up Stage: Resources

Money. FG/BCh recalled that when CS 107 was being developed there was not a lot of start-up money available. He said ED1 obtained a $50,000 grant. As mentioned above, the chair said ED1 postponed taking a salary during the planning year and again for the second six months of the third year, until he was sure of the school's financial stability.

ED1 reported that he was very conservative in budgeting for expenses as well as estimating enrollment. He said that after the first two years of operation they had a good reserve.

Having the reserve was critical in the third year, he remarked, because they lost 20-25% of their enrollment when the dissatisfied parents left and convinced other families to leave, too. "It really did damage to our reserve, but the money was there," he said. ED1 added that they made drastic budget cuts and by the end of the year the loss

of reserve funds was far less than the lost revenue. FG/BCh said, “Thank goodness we had this reserve fund. That got us through the year.”

Facility. FG/BCh reported that they found an unused parochial school in a desirable part of the city. He said ED1 formed a property company that issued bonds, purchased the building, and leased it to the charter school. The chair said the building need complete refurbishing, and they added a new gymnasium. ED1 said they opened a second building nearby in Year 3 to house the middle school grades. FG/BCh said this building, too, needed a gym and had a complete refurbishing.

Expertise. The business and non-profit expertise of ED1 was discussed above, as was FG/BCh’s expertise in the curriculum of choice. The first principal that was hired lacked administrative expertise, according to ED1, because this was her first principal position. He said she was there for only a couple of years because “she was in over her head.” He added that despite all the stresses of a charter school start up, she had a good relationship with teachers.

Since there was a large segment of the school families that didn’t speak English, ED1 said he hired a fulltime parent coordinator. He said this man served as a translator as well as a source of information about what was happening in the community.

From the very beginning, ED1 said they hired an accountant to take care of tracking the finances. They went through several individuals, he said, before they contracted with a firm that specialized in working with charter schools.

ED1 said it was necessary to retain legal counsel during the crisis. He felt they received good advice from their attorney.

Time. No comments were made related to time during the Start Up Stage.

Dynamics. ED1 said the first accountant they hired was a new graduate who didn’t understand public finance, especially school finance. He recalled that he was dismayed to discover after six months that she had made little progress with her tasks. He said she didn’t know what to do and didn’t ask for help, and continued to get farther behind. He said he fired her and had to find someone else to get the books brought up to date.

Growth Stage: Leadership

Leadership-The Founder. ED1 considered Year 4 to be a new beginning for the school. He said the crisis was over, the principle players in the conflict had left the school, taking with them a quarter of the students. Rebuilding enrollment was the main task that summer, he recalled.

ED1 remarked that when he started this school he had planned to get it up and running, then retire after the third year. He said the crisis they encountered changed his plan. During the fourth year they started looking for a principal who could then move into the executive director role after a year or two. They hired a young woman with minimal administrative experience, he said.

Processes. To boost enrollment, ED1 said they tried several recruiting strategies including billboards, targeted mailings and the offer of free transportation. He said that by the time the fourth year began, enrollment was back up – not to capacity, but significantly improved.

One of the requirements imposed by the mediator during year 3 was to hire more teachers of color. ED1 said they tried diligently to do this, but the pool of candidates was very small and they had minimal success. ED1 mentioned that during these two years he turned over the hiring responsibility to the principals.

During that fourth year, ED1 said it became obvious that the new principal would not be able to handle the executive director role, so he started to look again for his successor. ED1 commented that it was important to find a new director who would support and continue the mission of the school. Finally, during Year 5, he said they found his replacement.

Dynamics. ED1 said it was very difficult for him to give up the hiring of new teachers because he was afraid the principals would not look for people who embraced the mission. He said this was exactly what happened. He added, "As turnover continued I think you lose what we had at the beginning, which was some dedication to [the mission]."

Another thing that distracted from mission consistency, he said, was trying to provide too many options, to be broadly appealing to attract enrollment. He said he

should have asked sooner rather than later, “What are we going to give up and what is the cost of doing it?”

Leadership-Executive Director 2. ED2 said his style of leadership was much different than that of ED1. He explained that his background was that of a teacher and then he worked in the business world as a manager for a number of years. He said he went back to graduate school to get school administrative certification.

This position at CS 107 was his first school administration job, noted Executive Director 2 (ED2). He said he had needed to make some adjustments moving from a managerial role in the business world to an administrator in the education world. He said he had to learn to be more collaborative in the school setting. He also said that his communication skills with the staff have improved over the years. He referred to himself as, “A hands off kind of leader and manager, but work closely with the people that report to me so that I do know what is going on.”

Processes. ED2 reported that communication was very open. He said he maintained an open door policy. He noted that a lot of staff members felt free to stop by to talk with him in his office.

ED2 said they discussed everything as a staff if it was something that directly affected them. He added, “It still ends up being management’s decision but we make certain everyone is still included and has the opportunity to be.” When it came to hiring teachers he said they typically form a committee of teachers, the principal, and sometimes even a parent or paraprofessional. He said he left those hiring decisions in the hands of the principals. He said he took charge of the committee if they were hiring a new principal. He added that a board member or two would be included on such a committee.

The administrative structure has been changing under the leadership of ED2. He said when he came there were two principals. When one principal left a couple years later they tried not refilling that position, but it didn’t work, he noted. So the following year they added a junior high behavior specialist he said.

The executive director said he worked with the principals to put together a preliminary budget for the new fiscal year. It was then sent to the board’s finance

committee for a first pass, and then it went back to him for revising. The revised budget went back to the finance committee for their approval then finally to the full board for approval.

Dynamics. ED2 said the mission of the school was to serve economically disadvantaged children with lots of needs and move them to grade level as quickly as possible. He did not talk much about the academic program except to say the principal was in charge of it.

Growth Stage: Governance

Preparation. No comments were made related to preparation during the Growth Stage.

Capacity and Composition. Both ED1 and ED2 said they had difficulty getting parents to serve on the board. They noted that the teachers were not particularly eager, either.

Structure. ED1 recalled they instituted several changes as part of the mediation agreement. One was to change the school board composition so there was no longer a teacher majority. ED1 said he was happy about this change because, "We were able to create a nice balanced authority that nobody could push the other group around."

ED2 said when he came he instituted training for board members to help them understand their roles and responsibilities. He added that they created several committees that had not existed before.

Clarity. ED2 noted that the board needed to go through some significant changes when he came, "there was a need for things to be turned over to the board to be the governing body, let me be the management side of things. . . . We've had our rocky times, [it] wasn't always easy but people kept working at it." He said at first he was pretty much doing what ED1 had done, and the board looked to him for all the direction.

After getting some training, ED2 said the pendulum swung in the other direction. "There were members on the board that really felt that they should be making all the decisions and not just governance and policy decisions but management decisions," he said. There was one board member who had a strong agenda and the

others followed, he said. That particular person was asked to resign, he noted, and most of the others left the board at the end of the same year, choosing not to run for reelection.

Dynamics. The executive director was asked how this board turnover affected the faculty that work together. He said, "We have had enough staff turnover in the last five years that some clique kind of small groups don't exist like they did before . . . then we would have had groups getting together to try to push through their agenda . . . . but I think the power those groups can have doesn't exist anymore."

Growth Stage: Resources

Money. ED2 reported that they had been successful in obtaining some good sized grants while he has been there. One was a federally funded literacy grant, another was a grant that help them update their facility.

ED2 noted that student recruitment was always an issue for them. The population in their area tended to be rather transient which made accurate enrollment predictions difficult, he said.

Facility. All facilities were in need of improvements in lighting, heating and air conditioning, and soundproofing. The new grant will allow these renovations to be done, said ED2.

Expertise. The school continued to contract with an accounting service, said ED 2. He said he is like the business manager who worked closely with them.

Time. No comments were made related to time during the Maturity Stage.

Maturity Stage: Leadership

Leadership-Executive Director 2. ED2 said he will stay at the school for two more years, and then he would like to retire. There was no mention of a plan of succession.

Processes. ED2 said he was quite encouraged in the direction the school was going since the new board was installed. He thought the communication flow between him, the board, and the staff was excellent.

There had been discussion of adding the high school grades, said ED2, but they have decided it was too financially risky. They are lacking adequate facilities for a high

school, he continued, and it was expensive to build, which then put a lot of pressure on recruiting students and maintaining enrollment.

Dynamics. ED2 noted that he had a good relationship with the board and with most teachers. He said there were one or two relationships he continues to work on. He commented that the relationship between the teachers in the two different buildings had some we/they elements and a little bit of friction. "When we all get together there is pretty much two groups . . . the good thing is we have our specialists that do go to both buildings and I think that helps the whole situation."

Maturity Stage: Governance

Preparation. No comments were made related to preparation during the Maturity Stage.

Capacity and Composition. ED2 said there was a major turnover in the board after the last election. Only one person remains on the board from when he arrived at the school. He commented that things have really improved and are moving in the right direction. They want to be trained, they want to be involved in appropriate things, and are willing to listen to his input, he said.

Structure. Since they had a difficult time finding parents and community members to serve on the school board, said ED2, they were returning to a teacher majority board. They did not ask the Department of Education for another waiver for the board composition.

The current board chair is a teacher, noted ED2, as are all the other board officers. He said this could be potentially dangerous if they ever wanted to push something through the board, however, he didn't anticipate that happening with these particular people.

Clarity. The teachers that are on the board now want what is best for the school, said ED2. "It is difficult for them to take their teacher hats off at times, but when reminded of the fact that this is one body . . . they come to an agreement," he said. He added that the new board chair, a teacher, was working hard to help the board maintain the distinction between board responsibilities and administrative responsibilities.

Maturity Stage: Resources

Money. Projecting student enrollment for budgeting purposes continued to be one of the greatest challenges at the school said ED2. Because of the transience of the families, they are never sure who will show up n the first day of school and how many will stay for the year. For this reason, he said, they always project low.

ED2 expressed concern that the charter market might be getting close to saturated in the urban area. He said this made it tougher to get students because they have so many choices.

Facility. Having renovations completed on their buildings means they can offer more comfortable learning environments. This was especially true for the summer programs, said ED2.

A final quote from one of the respondents closes the analysis of Charter School 107:

"You need to spend those three years looking at what that board needs to look like and what is going to serve the school best in terms of what you see as its goals, and obviously find people that buy into that. It will change over time and whether it is a charter school, public school or private school, you got to find the right people."

Charter School 108

The final school, Charter School 108 (CS 108), is a secondary school whose mission is to engage students in non-traditional ways of learning, and also make a contribution to the community. This is a medium sized school that has been leasing space in the core city for less than ten years. The director/teacher has been with the school for its entire time of operation, and teachers make up the majority of the school board. An institution of higher education sponsors CS 108. People interviewed at this school include a founding teacher and first executive director (FT1), a founding

teacher/current co-director (FT2), a founding teacher and current business manger (FT3), a teacher/co-director (T1) (see Figure 4.8).

	Role(s)	Yrs at school	Yrs on board	Expertise on the school's board
CS 108				
Former director/teacher (FT1)	Founding teacher, former director	5 yrs	5 yrs	Administration, technology, independent and public school experience
Co-director/teacher (FT2)	Founding teacher, current co-director	Entire time	Entire time	Human resource experience
Board member (T1)	Pre-op teacher, current co-director/teacher	Entire time	Entire time	teaching
Business manager board member (T2)	Pre-op teacher, current business manager	Entire time	Entire time	Financial expertise

Figure 4.8 Description of interviewees at Charter School 108

Start-Up Stage: Leadership

Leadership-The Founding Parents. The initial idea to start Charter School 108 (CS 108) came from a group of parents who had children attending an urban middle level charter school, according to Founding Teacher 1 (FT1), a teacher member of the founding group. She said the parents wanted a highly academic high school for their children. Various parents came and went as part of the founding group reported FT1, except for two families who "stuck it out."

Two of the parents worked for a charter start-up company and knew of state and federal money as well as grants available to fund charter start-ups, recalled FT1. The founding group got a local private institution of higher education to sponsor them on the condition that the charter school was organized with an innovative governance system. FT1 said the parents didn't have any particular thoughts or preferences about governance models, so they agreed. The parents recruited teachers for the founding group because they thought the state required teacher majority even on the founding board, noted FT1.

Leadership-The Founding Teachers. FT1 said she joined the founding group right after they had secured a sponsor. She noted that she brought administrative, private school, and curriculum planning expertise to the project, and believed her ability to see the big picture was essential to the success of the project. After just a short time with the group, she said she got very excited about the innovative governance system they were considering as well as the educational models that were being explored. She eventually applied for a teaching position and was hired by the founding board, she said. She took on many administrative tasks, along with her teaching preparation, so she was the lead teacher, the designated "director" of the school for external communication purposes. She said, "I really don't like the model of one person as the head, making all the decisions."

Founding Teacher 2 (FT2) joined the group after FT1 but before the grants had been received, according to FT1. FT2 said her career was in one of the large suburban school districts and she had no charter school experience. Another respondent noted that FT2 had Peace Corp experience. FT2 liked the academic program and governance model that were being developed, so she also eventually applied for a teaching position and was hired, she said.

Founding Teacher 3 (FT3) was working at a neighboring charter school. He joined the founding group around the same time as FT2, said FT1. His knowledge of charter school start-ups was very helpful according to FT1. She said he chose to stay with his current position and did not come work for CS 108.

Processes. The founding group applied for two large national charter school grants, said FT1, and received both of them. She said the grants carried stipulations for a particular instructional approach and a specific innovative type of governance. By accepting these two grants, she said, the decision was made about the models of academics and governance that would be used.

The parents ran the founding board, recalled FT2. There was one man in particular, she said, who had previous board experience and really took the lead in setting up the governance system, policies and procedures. Other than him, FT1 thought

the founding parents didn't really know what was needed to run a school because they all had business backgrounds and no school experience.

This founding board member convinced other board members to contract with him for the school start-up tasks, noted FT2. "It all got a little tricky," she said, because their work moved from volunteers on the board to paid service providers. FT1 provided more details about the situation. She said under the contract, this man and his wife would do all the office work and get everything ready so the teachers just had to "walk in and start school." She said she and the other teachers on the founding board were not comfortable with this, but were talked into it by the parents on the board.

FT2 said the contracted parents did not remove themselves from the board immediately; it was a major conflict of interest. The teachers on the board were united about the impropriety, and FT2 said the couple finally removed themselves from the board after the sponsor intervened. The situation became extremely messy, reported FT2, when the company they contracted with ran out of money and were no longer providing services. She said they had to hire a lawyer, and ultimately, "We kind of paid off the contract to end the relationship and the services."

After a year of planning and the acquisition of two major grants, the founding board decided it was time to start hiring the first employees of CS 108, recalled FT2. Both she and FT1 were hired to be teachers along with a few others, she said, several months before the school opened. The parents on the board did the initial hiring, recalled one respondent. The new teachers then joined the interviewing team for subsequent hiring said FT2, and sometimes students were a part of the hiring team. FT1 said that they were cautious about the number of teachers they hired since they didn't know exactly what their enrollment would be. She said they preferred to err on the conservative side. She recalled that a core group of teachers were hired at the start of the summer and they hired others at the end of the summer.

FT2 said, "[The core group of teachers] worked together that summer to put together the curriculum and all the details of the school." The teachers embraced the instructional approach mandated by the grant they received, said FT1. The parents were not very enthusiastic about it, she said, and tried to dissuade them from fully

implementing that particular approach. “Since they hired me as the lead teacher, I kind of forced the issue,” she said, adding that the teachers won that disagreement.

Operational systems were created by the teachers; each teacher chose a non-teaching role or set of tasks to be done, according to one of the pre-operational teachers (T1). She said other charter schools that were using this form of governance mentored them, supplying forms, documents, and advice. Seeing it work in other places, she said, “We knew we could make it work.” FT1 said that T1 shared some of the administrative tasks with her; taking over the human resource related ones.

Another pre-operational teacher (T2) volunteered to handle the financial matters. He said he came into this charter school job hesitantly and wanted to know that the school was going to be financially sound; he didn’t want any surprises. “It turned out that [T2] is extremely detailed oriented and extremely business savvy, so we lucked out,” noted T1.

FT1 said this model of governance required lots of communication. She said emailing was essential so the non-teacher members of the board were kept informed. Teacher 3 noted that weekly staff meetings and weekly teacher meetings kept the information flowing. “One thing that is really important to us is that people talk and bring up issues, then sit down and try to figure out how to make it better,” said FT1. “In the beginning, nine of us would meet everyday and talk for hours and make very few decisions,” recalled FT2.

“There’s a front office, but decision making is all flat,” said Teacher 3. “You can have somebody do the paperwork, but the important thing was making decision making flat,” she added. Teacher 3 explained that everyone on the payroll had a voice and a vote at the weekly staff meetings. She said they did a fist-to-five vote, seeking consensus. FT1 clarified that they made all major decisions together this way. Teacher 3 said the Monday meetings for teachers were to discuss academics, curriculum and testing.

Dynamics. FT2 expressed the opinion that the founding parents agreed to the innovative, teacher-run governance model to get the grant. She thought the parents intended to be the ones in charge of the school through control of the school board. She

thought the strong, collaborative group of teachers who were hired and took the teacher-control model seriously surprised them.

"The group of teachers really worked well together, hit it off really well, and we became this force," recalled FT1. She said the parents "were kind of upset about [the close relationship of the teachers] because the decisions – we outnumbered them." "We lucked out – we had a great – you have to think of it as an entrepreneurial business mind set – it worked out that's who we attracted, people who wanted that ownership, and were willing to work at it and create it," noted Teacher 3.

FT2 recalled the tension that occurred between the contracted start-up people and the teachers because of the consensus decision-making model. She said, "They weren't as interested in making those consensus decisions." The other tension, she said, came because the contractors thought they were hired to do everything, get it into place, but the teachers felt like they needed a hand in everything if they were going to be taking it over eventually.

One of the founding families left the school midway through the first year of operation, said FT1. She added that the other family left at the end of the first year.

Not many respondents spoke of the vision and mission of the school. Teacher 3 said they regarded challenging academics as only part of the mission. She remarked that the teachers felt they should also "model engaged citizenship for [the students] so they can look at how adults can make cooperative decisions and work together." She said their alternative form of governance allowed the adults to model that and students got to apply those ideas through their own student congress.

FT2 commented that in the early years they were mostly concerned about numbers, getting the student enrollment up, rather than admitting students who truly wanted to this alternative form of learning.

Parental support and enthusiasm were essential in launching the school, said FT2. It doesn't take many, even just two or three parents can have a big effect commented T2. He recalled that one mother was responsible for bringing 60 families into the school.

Start-Up Stage: Governance

Preparation. CS 108 accepted sponsorship and grant money that required an innovative form of governance – a teacher-run model, as described above. FT1 said the teachers who were part of the founding group took this model quite seriously, even if the parents in the group did not.

Capacity and Composition. FT1 reported that the founding parents were the people with the business expertise and even some charter school expertise, while the founding teachers were experienced educators, but lacking business experience. None of them had experience in the innovative governance model, she said, but the teachers were open to implementing it even though it meant extra work for them.

Structure. FT1 said the founding board made plans to move to an elected board during the first year of operation. They did this to avoid founders' syndrome, she said a problem encountered by some charter schools where directors are inappropriately controlling. Another thing they decided early on, she said, was that the board chair should always be a parent or community member, never a teacher. FT1 also said she created information books for new board members so they would understand their role and responsibilities.

Clarity. FT2 explained the teacher majority board understood its role was to oversee finances, create the by-laws and policies, and make sure student achievement was on course. She said the board didn't direct things in a top-down manner, but saw their place as one of supporting the staff and the school. Regular board training for new members was important.

Start-Up Stage: Resources

Money. CS 108 received the state and federal start-up funds available at the time, reported FT1. They also applied for and received grants from two different national foundations. She said they really ended up with a lot of start up money and were careful about how they used it. She added that they were conservative with their spending, put money into a savings account, and were committed to a transparent budget process.

FT2 said they started the school with a "famine mentality." She explained, "We're not going to spend a lot of money. We're not going to have super high salaries. We'll work, but we're not going to receive all these benefits and these other things."

Facility. T1 said they leased part of a large building located in an urban area. Initially they attracted a diverse student body. She noted that there were other charter schools nearby.

Expertise. FT1 said she had previous school board experience, so governance was not new to her. She said she did research; reading and talking to other people in teacher-run schools helped her prepare.

Initially the board contracted with service providers, one to handle the office work of a start-up (as described above), and another to handle financial and accounting matters, said Teacher 4. FT1 said they found it necessary to hire a lawyer when the start-up company could not fulfill its contract but still expected to get paid.

Time. The planning of CS 108 took about two years, according to FT1. The school opened for grades 9-12 with thoughts of adding grades 7 and 8 later.

Growth Stage: Leadership

Leadership -The Teacher Leaders. By operational Year 3 the teachers were starting to experience burnout from the combination of teaching and running the school, recalled both FT1 and Teacher 3. FT1 said they had many meetings to discuss the issue, set priorities, and determine their future direction. "What we did was look at the servant leader model and what we do is make major decisions together," she said, "but otherwise, Teacher 4 and I had to take care of the business." Teacher 4 thought the decision to "release" two teachers to do administrative tasks fulltime was a good one for them.

Teacher 3 commented about how much work everyone was doing in those first three years, "I don't know what we were thinking!" She then added, "You work really hard to make sure the money touches the students."

Processes. FT2 recalled that some teachers worked to create a process and format for staff meetings to maximize productivity. She said they were able to come up with a fairly streamlined process for decision-making so they only had to meet once a

week. All major decisions were made at these staff meetings added FT1. She said the weekly teacher meetings were continued and that was where 'learning decisions' were made.

Committees, including administrative and personnel, were created to handle school business, said FT1. She said teachers and staff members were on these committees and were authorized to make some decisions. In other things, such as hiring and firing Teacher 3 noted, the committee made a recommendation for the whole staff to vote on.

Conflicts are resolved through discussion, compromise, and if necessary, mediation, said Teacher 3. She added that the personnel committee got involved sometimes if it was a relationship conflict.

When the school was organized all teachers were advisors of 18 students, said Teacher 3. The advisors were responsible for knowing everything about their students, planning their academic program and monitoring their progress, she said. When they decided to restructure she said advising was separated from teaching classes, so some people could teach classes and do administrative tasks, but not be advisors. She added that everyone who was an advisor still had some administrative task, "So everyone is still involved in keeping the school going, and certainly everyone is an owner and does a lot of extra work on top of teaching."

FT1 said in the beginning they tried to screen candidates looking for an appropriate mind set for this school. She said they especially tried to look for collaborative and entrepreneurial dispositions. After a few years they weren't as careful to do that, she said, then found it necessary to create teacher mentors and an induction process.

Dynamics. Reflecting on the decision to create administrative positions, FT1 said, "If it would have been in the hands of the wrong people, it could have been the end of it. But I really believe you have to give up power in order to gain power."

FT2 commented on the staff at CS 108, "The people who succeed are self-directed and take on tasks and responsibility themselves, but if you can't do that, then it

gets overwhelming." Teacher 3 said they had great people who were committed to the idea of the school.

"There have been people who just want to be a teacher," said FT2. She said they tried to make the responsibilities very clear during the hiring interview and people agreed to those conditions when hired. After they actually started working at the school, she continued, they decided they just wanted to teach and not have to have the other responsibilities, which then put pressure on other staff to fill the gap. She added that those people tended not to stay very long. "The last several years of hiring we've been really lucky. I don't know if it's luck. We've hired really key people for our team members and leaders who want to take on programs," said FT2.

FT1 commented that school is about relationships and ran better once those relationships were established. She commented that students were an important component of the relationships and had valuable insights to offer about the school and what happened there.

Growth Stage: Governance

Preparation. No comments were made related to preparation during the Growth Stage.

Capacity and Composition. FT2 commented on the people recruited to run for board election. She said, "We've gotten better at seeking out parents who have certain skills, or community members that have certain skills, to get them on the board. But I think we've just been lucky in having real talented, dedicated staff members who have served on the board."

Structure. The school board worked on a strategic plan for the future, said FT2.

Clarity. "Big decisions and policies were up to the board, like starting a middle school. That was with the board's help. Input and final decision was with the board," said FT1. Prior to that, she said, she and the staff had discussed the idea and prepared a proposal to take to the board.

Growth Stage: Resources

Money. Three years after opening the school, FT2 said they added the seventh and eighth grades. She said this not only increased their student enrollment and revenue,

but also increased the staff numbers. The start-up of this program was largely funded by a grant from a national foundation, said T2, but they also used some of their reserve funds.

Facility. The school expanded to half of another floor of the building to accommodate the added grade levels, said FT2. Some of the grant money was used to make renovations to that floor, said T2.

Expertise. FT2 and T2 expressed concern that they lost the special education teacher each year. They thought the overload of paperwork required of special education contributed to burnout because several of the teachers left special education totally.

Dynamics. One family with a special needs child had been repeatedly unhappy with the school and its services, commented FT2. She expressed the opinion that it was that one family that had driven the special education teachers away.

Maturity Stage: Leadership

Leadership-The Teacher Leaders. FT2 said they arrived at another governance crossroad last year. She said she thinks the staff can't get any larger or the "decision by consensus" won't work. Echoing the opinions of the other founding teachers, she said, "There was not a whole lot of desire in a good proportion of the staff to take on administrative duties."

T2 said no one was interested in doing or even helping with finance or budget. He said he's tried to get input from others but gets no response. Now, he said, "I really don't even search out the input. I just sort of do it and say, 'Here it is.'"

FT2 said she and T1 and T2 engaged in extensive discussions about what to do. She said they wondered if they should just keep going with the way things were or should they force more of the administrative tasks back onto the rest of the group?

Processes. The administrative team decided to make a list of leadership and ownership tasks that needed to be done and presented it to the staff, said FT2, and asked who will do what. She said she was pleasantly surprised to come back to school in the fall and see that people had really taken ownership and completed the tasks.

When asked about the decision making relationship between the board and the staff, FT2 explained that most policies were generated from the staff, discussed at a staff meeting, then sent to the board for approval. She acknowledged that within the governance system of CS 108 there was potential for abuse by unethical, power-hungry people. She added that CS 108 had, "A very ethical team who's always making sure all our T's are crossed and I's are dotted, so we've been above board all the time, and there's nothing shady going on."

Dynamics. FT2 expressed frustration about the seemingly two types of people who work at CS 108. She said one group had an attitude of, "I can take on anything and I can make it work." She said the attitude of the other, smaller group was, "I'll help you with that; you have to show me what to do." She said she hoped people understood what it meant to work at CS 108 when they accepted a position and were prepared to follow through.

"We were very lucky, and we continue to be lucky," FT2 said, "Of that first team . . . four of us are still here." All the founding teachers interviewed agreed that the level of collaboration they had achieved was extraordinary. Several of them repeatedly described it as lucky. T2 said, "It's a 'teacher mentality,' in it for the job you do, not the money you make."

T1 said they revisited the mission statement this past year. The revised one, she said, was similar, "We wanted to make sure we added the 'hope' and the 'citizenship.'" "I wonder about the students we're drawing in," said T2, "Does the program serve its purpose? Does it serve students well, better than other educational models?"

Both FT2 and T1 were concerned about the lack of racial and ethnic diversity at CS108. They said their type of program seemed more attractive to white middle class families. They said they had economic diversity, and greater turnover among students from lower socio-economic homes. FT2 said it was harder to recruit students from financially challenged homes because they tended not to have email or even phones, which were prime follow-up tools for CS 108.

Maturity Stage: Governance

Preparation. No comments were made related to preparation during the Maturity Stage.

Capacity and Composition. The current board chair was a parent who had board and non-profit experience, said T1. She noted that the previous chair was also excellent and still served on the board.

"I think we're able to eye up who is in our community and who we might invite in. And [T1] is probably the one who is brought in some of the key players, through her connections in the community. We've been real lucky with our board members, that they've been extremely – the non-teachers – that they've been extremely dedicated and willing to put up with quite a bit of stress," shared FT2.

Structure. T1 said that running the school board was "another thing we had to do as teachers." But now, she said, they had some really involved non-teacher board members who were doing a great job. She explained that they kept the governance process going, kept the board focused on the strategic plan, and asked a lot of good questions.

FT2 shared that for the first time ever there were multiple candidates for limited spots in the last board election. She thought this indicated great interest among the stakeholders and also thought it held board members to a high performance standard.

To help maintain focus on board responsibilities and not stray into management tasks, the board agenda always listed the areas that the board oversees, said Teacher 3. The board included oversight of the administrative model being used, to make sure it is still working appropriately as the school staff numbers grow, she added.

Clarity. FT2 said, "The board has changed to a point where it's doing some good things as far as supporting the staff and really thinking about what it can do, rather than just being a rubber stamp, but being a group of people who are helping the school function better." In the last year, said FT2, the board asked the staff to develop a job description of the teacher governance model, so the board could hold the teachers accountable to it.

Dynamics. Rather than being offended by this, FT2 said the staff was supportive. She added, "I think we have an ethical team that would be willing to say, 'for the greater good of the school I'm going to save the community. This [teacher-run governance] needs to go and we need to replace it with something else.'"

Maturity Stage: Resources

Money. "Finances – it is always an issue," said FT1. T1 said T2 had done a great job managing the financial and business affairs of the school. "He has maintained a fund balance, even in difficult times, it is amazing. We've been lucky," she added.

T2 said he consistently projects low for their enrollment, especially because they have a high student turnover rate. He added that they considered each purchase carefully before it's made, but unfortunately an unexpected legal issue had required them to withdraw money from the fund balance. He added that he was glad they had money in reserve.

CS 108 had a high number of special education students (24%), said FT2. She commented that the staff did such a great job addressing the needs of these children that word spread among parents and they got more special needs children. FT2 wondered if they would continue doing a great job with the special needs students if their numbers continued to grow.

Facility. FT2 said they struggled with the decision of expansion or contraction. She said they currently leased a floor and a half of the building but the landlord wanted them to occupy only whole floors. She said the growth necessary to expand carried many implications for their style of governance. She added that decreasing to only one floor meant eliminating grade levels, which had implications for programming, and staffing.

Given the model of instruction they use and the type of people who are attracted to work at CS 108, T1 said they seemed to remodel or rebuild the space every year. She said people are always looking for ways to improve the program and the learning experience for the students.

Expertise. “Special education is a challenge for charter schools,” said T1. She noted that they had two special education teachers and were likely going to need a third for the coming year.

Dynamics. Teacher 3 recalled a conversation she had with T2 who said, “’Isn’t it funny how naïve we were . . . at the beginning, and now we are much more on top of [things like] compliance. We were just a bunch of idealist.’”

A final quote from one of the respondents closes the analysis of Charter School 108:

“I think of charter schools as a place for innovation . . . a smaller community . . . and choice. The traditional model is so ingrained in our society and in what we do. [When] we try to do something different, it is hard.”

CHAPTER 5

CROSS- SCHOOL ANALYSIS

Leadership, governance, and resources are the three major features needed to establish a new setting, such as a charter school (Hummel, 1996; Kimberly, 1994; Ley, 1998; Sarason, 1998; Simon, 2001). Processes and dynamics are factors at work within each of these three features, influencing a school as it moves through stages of development. A conceptual model of charter school development was created based on a synthesis of the literature reviewed and as a response to the research questions. Chapter 5 revisits the model and presents revisions based on the findings of this study. This is followed by a more detailed discussion of the relationships and interactions of leadership, governance, resources, processes, and dynamics across the eight schools and how they change over time. A Summary of Findings concludes this chapter.

The Conceptual Model Revisited

The data confirms that charter schools do indeed develop in stages. There is an evolution of leadership roles, system needs, and resource requirements as the schools progress from the initial idea to a stable, fully functioning school. There are dynamics such as leadership skills and dispositions that affect the rate of change and quality of development of the school systems. These will be discussed below.

Similarities of leadership roles, state of system development, and resource priorities at different times in the life of the schools could be seen in the data. It was these similarities that helped characterized each stage or transitional phase between stages.

The original conceptual model (Figure 2.2) has been revised to reflect the findings of this investigation (see Figure 5.1). A stage-by-stage discussion of the revised model follows. This discussion will, by necessity, cover findings about leadership, governance, resources, processes, and dynamics but in the context of the conceptual model.

Start Up Stage

Data from this study creates a slightly different picture of the Start Up Stage than the one suggested by the original conceptual model. The original model gave equal weight and importance to the features of leadership, governance and resources. The reality of the Start Up Stage seen in these schools was that leadership was the most important feature of the three, especially during the pre-operational phase. Also, "leadership" was something bigger than just a single founder leader with an idea, a vision for a school. Leadership came from a group of founder leaders generating an idea and vision together. Sometimes a founder enlisted other people very early in the creation process to help with the myriad of tasks (processes) that needed to be done. After these schools opened, members of the founding groups often stayed as teachers or board members.

The original model has dynamics and processes as factors that put pressure on the coming together and strengthening of the three features of the core structure (leadership, governance, and resources). The data from this investigation defined and clarified what those dynamics and processes were. Dynamics related to leadership included the founder/leaders' skills, experiences, dispositions, and relationships. These were important influences on how well the creation of the school proceeded. The skills and experiences of the founding group were also an influencing element in getting the systems established. The presence of skills (for-profit and non-profit management, financing, and school administration) within a school's leadership enabled the creation of systems in a suitable timeframe within the pre-operational phase. The absence of those appropriate skills within the leadership slowed the creation of systems, putting pressure on the entire core structure, preventing its timely development.

Critical incidents, or tipping point events, that occurred during the Start Up Stage most often involved leadership and internal dynamics. For example, founding group members disagreed with goals and directions of a founder (CS 101, CS 108). In another instance, founding teachers experienced rapid turnover of directors for the first several years, creating feelings of instability and vulnerability (CS 103, CS 106). Such

incidents confirm the dominant role of leadership during this Start Up Stage and the pressure exerted by internal dynamics.

Processes were another factor that put internal pressure on the coming together of the three features of the core structure. The processes defined by the data were the creation of systems (operational/administrative, organizational/governance, and academic) and the use of communication needed to run a charter school.

Governance, identified in the literature review as one of the three essential features of an organization, didn't take a key position in the pre-operational phase of the Start Up Stage for the schools in this study, as suggested by the early model. Rather, operational/administrative and academic systems were more prominent processes than the organizational/governance process. Members of the founding groups reported they were more occupied doing the tasks required to get the schools functioning and open for students then establishing the governance structures. For some of the schools in the study, more attention was given to the governance structure after they moved into the operational phase of Start Up because the academic and operating systems were functioning (CS 101, CS 102, CS 104, CS 105, CS 107, CS 108). Schools that struggled to get the academic and operating systems established also struggled to put the governance system into place (CS 103, CS 106). This was an internal pressure that contributed to the fragility of the core structure and prolonged their time within the Start Up Stage.

Communication was a process that linked leadership and system creation. The data showed that founders and other leaders who promoted and maintained a strong flow of information and practiced mission-guided decision-making (CS 102, CS 104, CS 108) were able to establish systems more quickly than the schools that lacked those communication processes (CS 103, CS 106). The pressure of poor communication processes was another factor that slowed the development of the core structure during the Start Up Stage and added to its vulnerability.

The third feature of the core structure in the conceptual model is resources. When discussing resources, most founders brought up the challenge of raising funds to open their school. One founder (CS 102) worked for several years to get adequate

funding before opening, and two founders (CS 104, CS 105) reported that the schools had to take out loans to cover start up costs. Whatever amount of start up money a school obtained, all but one (CS 106) reported a conservative approach to budgeting from the very beginning. Members of the founding groups appeared to embrace the necessity of minimal spending for the sake of the schools' futures. This disposition of financial caution was another leadership dynamic defined by the data. It was a positive factor in the development of these schools.

The clarity and completeness of the *vision/mission* played a role in the coming together of leadership, governance, and resources as the schools moved from the pre-operational phase to the operational phase of the Start Up Stage. In this study there were three schools (CS 102, CS 104, CS 108) that had well-developed visions/missions articulated before the school opened. All or most members of the founding groups (not just the founder) of those schools embraced and endorsed the vision/mission. It became part of the developing school culture and played an important role in the collaborative decision-making process of putting systems into place, including how money was spent. A clear mission along with open communication flow appeared to assure that people understood why things were being done the way they were. A clear mission facilitated the recruitment of appropriate teachers and students for the schools, so there was a match between vision and reality.

These three schools appeared to move seamlessly into the operational phase of Start Up after students arrived. Positive factors that contributed to the ease of progression included dispositions of collaboration and selflessness, and the skills and experience of the founding group. The academic and operational systems were functioning as desired and attention was placed on developing the organizational (governance) systems of the school.

During the pre-operational phase, the five schools that reported a vision but under-developed mission (lacking goals and core values) also reported having a top down decision-making structure with the founder at the top giving directives (CS 101, CS 103, CS 105, CS 106, CS 107). The founders were the ones responsible for getting systems into place in these five schools and there was no sense of collaborative

ownership of the creation process reported among the founding group members. The founders of three of these five schools (CS 103, CS 105, CS 107) had previous experience and appropriate start up skills, as well as fiscal cautiousness. They put systems into place but ran into trouble when students came because the academic programs planned did not match the skills and abilities of the students. The reality did not match the vision for those schools. This mismatch caused the mission to be put aside and not figure prominently in the decision-making process after the schools were opened. The revision of the academic system and the reconsideration of the mission took time and attention so it slowed the schools' transition from pre-operational phase to operational phase within the Start Up Stage, slowing further development of the governance system.

The skilled and collaborative board of Charter School 101 convinced the founder/director to leave at the end of the first operational year. This change allowed the board to hire a new, skilled and experienced director who could complete the creation of systems and do it in a collaborative manner. The replacement of the founder/director allowed this school to move forward more quickly through the Start Up Stage.

What the data did confirm about the early conceptual model is the pressure that processes and dynamics put on the developing connections among leadership, systems/governance, and resource. The broken lines of the triangle represent the tenuous connections between leadership, governance, and resources. The pressures (or lack of pressures) within the organization (shown inside the triangle) affect the establishment of strong bonds. These internal pressures include:

- Processes - assembling a skilled founding group; creating the school systems, including a well-developed vision and mission; establishing good lines of communication and procedures for decision-making and conflict resolution to assist the creation project;
- Dynamics - building working relationships given the individual characteristics of the founding group (dispositions being just one); sustaining commitment to the vision and mission of the school.

The data offered further confirmation about this pressure from processes and dynamics. Critical incidents that occurred during the Start Up Stage involved leadership, internal dynamics, and other factors such as incomplete systems (special education, curriculum, governance). One school almost collapsed because of the intensity of this type of pressure.

The data revealed that not all eight schools emerged at the end of the first year of operation in the same condition, with all systems up and running. For the schools in this study the greater the pressure from internal dynamics such as relationships and dispositional compatibility, the more difficult it was for the areas of leadership, systems and resources to coalesce. The lighter the pressure, the easier the uniting of these areas.

Transitional Phase

A transitional phase does not exist in the early conceptual model. The graphic just shows three distinct stages. The journeys of the schools examined were not so clearly defined. There appeared to be a transition time as schools moved from the Start Up Stage, with its focus on leadership and systems creation, to the Growth Stage.

Two key factors, both related to governance roles, seemed to signal a school's transition into the Growth Stage. The first appeared to be the ability of the founder to change roles and shift from creator/entrepreneur/person-in-charge to nurturer/administrator/collaborator. This new role required different skills of the founder than those previously needed. The second factor was the shift of the governing body from start up working partners to an elected board responsible for oversight. The dynamics of dispositions and relationships affected the ease or difficulty of both of these transitions.

Among the eight schools, three gave evidence of making this transition from Start Up to Growth Stage at the end of the first year of operation (CS 102, CS 104, CS 108). Three schools (CS 101, CS 105, CS 107) took three to five years of operating to get their systems established or revised before they gave evidence of the governance transition.

Two schools (CS 103, CS 106) struggled tremendously their first three years to get established. It was not until their fourth year, and with a fourth director, that they

repeated many tasks of the Start Up Stage and moved through the process of establishing solid systems. It took two to three more years before they gave evidence of transitioning into the Growth Stage.

Growth Stage

The model continues to function almost as originally presented. "Systems" has been used in place of "governance" because all the systems were still being developed and refined as the student body increased and different skills were required of the leaders. The lines connecting the three major areas were stronger but still not totally connected and solid because the data showed pressure was being exerted on leadership, systems, and resources from external sources as well as internal ones.

Continuity of leadership was an internal dynamic of this stage. Respondents of six schools (CS 101, CS 102, CS 104, CS 105, CS 107, CS 108) reported the least amount of turnover in leadership. The leaders of four of these schools (CS 101, CS 102, CS 104, CS 108) were said to have collaborative, servant-leader dispositions. These were positive dynamics that contributed to the schools' movement from Start Up Stage to Growth Stage.

In four cases (CS 101, CS 102, CS 103, CS 106) there were hierarchical founders who left their schools during the operational phase of start up. Two of the schools, CS 101 and CS 102, had other committed collaborative founding group members who stayed and brought the schools through the Start Up Stage into the Growth Stage. The pressure of poor leadership was so strong for two schools, CS 103 and CS 106, they couldn't even proceed the through the two phases of the Start Up Stage. These two schools did not move into the Growth Stage until strong, skilled leaders had been in place for several years and "restarted" the schools, establishing full functioning systems.

Two schools (CS 105, CS 107) had the continuity of skilled founders but experienced pressure from the dynamics of a hierarchical disposition and a struggle with role transition. They also experienced a mismatch of students/academic program/mission. These schools also had less experienced board members who were

directed by the founder/directors. These leadership and process dynamics slowed the development progress of these two schools in the Growth Stage.

The expanding student population during the Growth Stage put pressure on the other systems for most of the eight schools. Refinement of the academic system was a big part of the Growth Stage for most of the schools. Some changes to the academic system were initiated by accountability demands from external stakeholders such as parents, sponsors, and the Minnesota Department of Education. These pressures brought the academic programs under scrutiny, and in some cases caused changes.

Schools must have income (resources) to keep operating. During the Growth Stage the primary source of income is enrollment. Informants from all eight schools reported that they opened the school with a small number of students then expanded grades levels and number of classrooms over several years' time. Expanding the enrollment increased their income, but most said they were conservative in reporting enrollment projections to the state, preferring to budget for a smaller number of students. They indicated this gave them a financial cushion and the ability to build a fund balance. This was evidence of the internal dynamic of fiscal caution that had a positive effect on strengthening the connections between leadership, systems and resources.

Schools reported fewer critical incidents during the Growth Stage. Of those few recorded, the majority had to do with external pressures, from parents, neighbors, and accountability agencies. This confirms the external pressures represented on the early conceptual model.

Transition Phase

The early conceptual model presents a third stage, maturity, again without a transitional phase leading into it. The data did not point to any particular event that would signal a move to maturity. Rather it seems to be a lessening of "new" or "revised," and a security in what's working. There was a time for the schools where some of the systems are firmly in place, but others were not. The revisiting of the vision and mission statements at this time was seen in the data for several of the schools.

Maturity Stage

The hallmark of this stage is stability. Several of the oldest schools appear to be well into this stage of development (CS 101, CS 102, CS 104). The leaders are stable (founding directors and teachers are still there) and the data indicates they have good relationships with the board, staff, and parents. Their governance systems are operating smoothly with appropriate roles and responsibilities being observed by directors and board members, including teacher/board members. Finances are stable, there are positive fund balances reported for each school. The schools all have waiting lists of students wanting to enroll. So while they are stable, they are also active.

Their systems are not only established but also running smoothly. Mission fidelity is a strong internal dynamic. Their mission continues to be consistent among stakeholders and important in decision-making. Informants in these three schools all commented on how they looked for ways to communicate the importance of the mission to new faculty and families.

The constant building activity of start up and the expansion activity associated with growth is no longer apparent in the Mature Stage. In fact, all three schools are at maximum student capacity and in facilities that will not allow any more expansion.

A new process to emerge at this stage is planning for succession when the founders leave. One school has begun to implement a succession plan. One school voiced a need to think about it and plan for it. One school acknowledged the reality of it but has chosen not to address it yet.

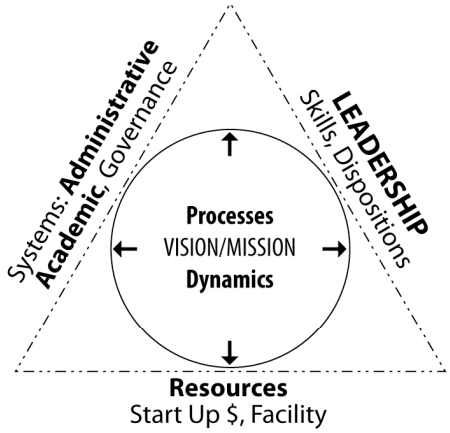
Stakeholder pressures on the mature schools are both internal and external, creating a secondary defining characteristic of this stage. Financially, the schools worry that the state funding is not keeping up with economic conditions. All schools express concern about the rising costs of utilities, transportation, health benefits, and providing salary increases for teachers who have served the school for a long time. Since none of the schools have any more space to expand, enlarging enrollment to increase income is not feasible, so the pressure is where to find additional funds. Two of the three schools also expressed concern about meeting external academic accountability demands because they have many students with special needs.

In thinking about the future, no one in these mature schools speculated about how things might change under new leadership, or if they decided to move to a new facility. Aside from their financial concerns, the respondents of the three mature charter schools were very satisfied in their present stage of maturity.

Four other schools appear to be entering the mature stage (CS 105, CS 106, CS 107, CS 108), but not quite arrived at a place of total stability. Two are still unsettled about facility and student body size, one still seeks a workable administrative structure, and one continues to feel pressure from leadership dispositional issues.

The evolution of leadership roles, system needs, and resource requirements as the schools moved forward was influenced by dynamics such as leadership skills and dispositions that affected the rate of change and quality of development of the school systems. The data presented similarities of leadership roles, state of system development, and resource priorities at different times in the life of the schools that helped identify and describe each stage or transitional phase between the stages.

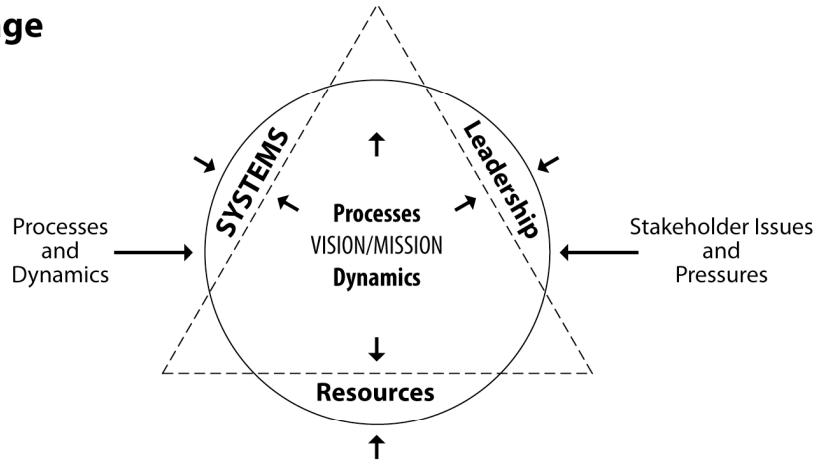
Start Up Stage
Pre-operational Phase
and Operational Phase



TRANSITIONAL PHASE

Governance Transition
Entrepreneur Founder → Collaborative Administrator
Working Founding Group → Elected Oversight Board

Growth Stage



TRANSITIONAL PHASE Some areas are stable, some areas are not yet at that place of stability.

Maturity Stage
(Stable, but active)

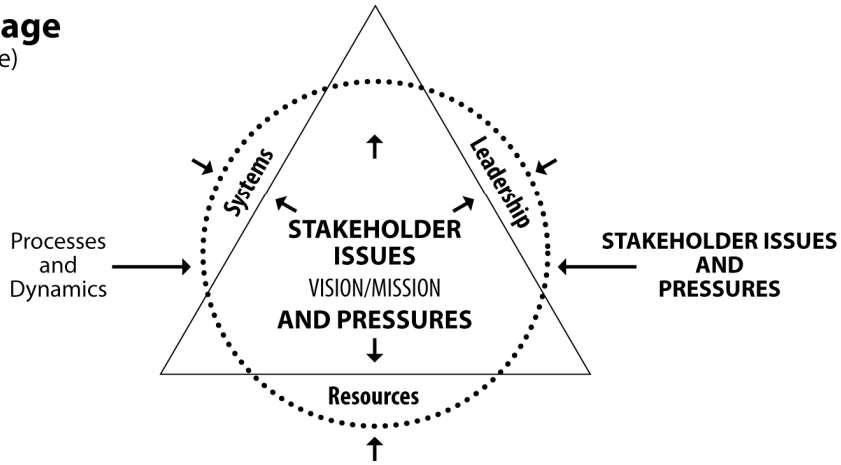


Figure 5.1 Revised Conceptual Model of Charter School Development

Leadership

The data of this study showed that leadership is extremely important to the creation of a charter school, confirming the findings of other researchers (Harvey & Rainey, 2006; USDE, 2004). The essential elements and characteristics of effective leadership revealed in this study, as well as the review of literature, included visioning, commitment, knowledge, and skills (Bennis & Townsend, 1995; Collins & Porras, 1997; Collins, 2001; Cornwall, 2003; Drucker, 1990; Evans, 2000; Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000; Greenleaf, 1977; Hummel, 1996; Ley, 1998; Meyer, 1995; Pfeffer, 1998; Sarason, 1998; Schein, 2003; Simon, 2001; Van de Ven, et al., 1984).

Comparison of these leadership elements of visioning, commitment, knowledge, and skills across all the schools in this study is complicated because these elements do not exist in a vacuum but in relationship to the people, structures and processes within each school (Kimberly, 1984). During the data analysis phase the researcher found that the use of Bolman and Deal's Four Frames of School Leadership (2002) facilitated comparison of leadership elements and characteristics by adding some organizational context to the data.

Bolman and Deal (2002) chose four aspects of organizational life to contextualize leadership elements and called them "frames." The four frames are "symbolic," "structural," "human resource," and "political." The leadership elements of visioning, knowledge, and skills are embedded within all four frames. The symbolic frame encompasses the beliefs, values, and culture of an organization, as well as its vision and mission. The clarity of a charter school's vision and mission, and the leader's fidelity to them, are an important aspect of this frame. The structural frame is concerned with governance and administration, systems and roles, as well as organizational goals. A leader's knowledge and skills within this particular frame made a critical difference in the charter schools studied. The human resource frame focuses on a leader's skill and ability to work with the people and relationships of an organization. A leader's knowledge of and attention to power, resources, coalitions and alliances are the targets

of the political frame. Bolman and Deal's description of each frame's characteristics and the leadership skills operating within each frame is summarized in Figure 5.2.

Frames of Leadership	Characteristics	Skills
Symbolic	be a role model, change agent	communicate vision, interpret experiences, maintain history
Structural	analysis, command of detail knowledge	communicate goals clearly then implement them through systems
Human Resource	accessible, exhibiting trust, confidence, appreciation, encouragement, and caring	strong, positive interpersonal skills; delegation, empowerment
Political	has a power related agenda	analysis, discernment, political relationship building; differentiated pressuring; strategizing, networking

Figure 5.2 Bolman & Deal (2002) Four Frames of Leadership

The leadership data gathered in this study is compared below using the Bolman & Deal (2002) Four Frames of Leadership to organize the discussion.

Symbolic Frame

A founder's ability to develop and communicate a strong vision for the charter school is at the heart of motivating others to join the project, thus making this an important category of skills. Cornwall (2003) says a well-developed vision statement contains core values, purpose and focus, mission, goals and aspirations for the school. Under-developed vision statements are missing one or more of these components. Vision development and communication skills are related to a charter school founder's symbolic perspective.

Within all eight schools of this study, there was a founder or member of the founding group who had a vision for the charter school (see Figure 5.3). However, not all visions were as well developed as advocated by Cornwall (2003). Across the schools the respective leader's ability to develop and communicate the vision varied.

Founders in four of the eight schools (CS 102, CS 104, CS 105, CS 107) had specific, well-developed visions as they set about creating their schools (see Figure 5.3). In two schools (both currently over ten years old), the initial vision was still strong and

consistent at the time of the interviews. All the respondents in these schools frequently referred to their school's vision and mission throughout the interview. In the other two schools the purpose and mission needed to be adjusted after a different student population enrolled than had been anticipated.

Founders in two of the remaining four schools (CS 101, CS 108) had under-developed visions that were taken in new directions when founding teachers were brought into the planning process. The changed visions created by the founding teachers were more developed than the original ones suggested by the founders.

In the final two schools (CS 103, CS 106) the original visions were weak, each one missing several of the key components of a well-developed vision (core values, purpose and focus, mission, goals). Neither the founder nor anyone in the founding groups appeared to have the skills or expertise to bring them to life.

Clarity of mission and goals is one of the potential problem areas Sarason (1998) says founders must attend to. The data shows that to be the case in this study. Leaders with well-developed vision/mission statements appeared to make easier progress through the Start Up Stage. Lack of clarity of mission proved to be problematic for some schools, lengthening their time in the Start Up Stage.

	CS 101	*CS102*	*CS103*	*CS104*	*CS105*	*CS106*	*CS107*	*CS108*
Visioning skill person	Founder/ Exec Dir 1	Co-Founder 1 and Co-Founder 2	Founder	Co-Founder 1 and Co-Founder 2	Co-Founder 1	Founding parent	Founder	Founding teachers
Vision completeness	Under developed then changed	Well developed	Under developed	Well developed	Well developed	Under developed	Well developed	Under developed then changed

Figure 5.3 Symbolic Frame Leadership Summary (Start Up Stage)

Structural Frame

Creating systems – operational (administrative), organizational (governance), and academic – is the major task of the founders. Sarason (1998) says processes such as establishing administrative systems, developing the academic program and student achievement assessment systems are aspects of crafting new settings that creator-leaders must attend to.

Six of the eight schools studied (CS 101, CS102, CS104, CS105, CS107, CS108) had a founder or member of the founding group with the structural knowledge

and skills to put appropriate organizational, operational, and academic systems in place during the start-up stage (see Figure 5.4). The founders of the other two schools (CS 103, CS 106) failed to establish the sound systems needed in a fledgling charter school. These two schools struggled for three to five years before they hired executive directors who had the necessary skills and knowledge to create solid structures for the schools. (Further analysis and comparison of the systems of the schools will be addressed in the "Process" section below.)

The skills contained in the Structural Frame are essential ones for charter school start up leaders to posses. The data showed that it made no difference in the establishment of systems whether the skills were present in one person or distributed among a group of people.

	CS 101	*CS102*	*CS103*	*CS104*	*CS105*	*CS106*	*CS107*	*CS108*
Systems knowledge & implementation skill person	Founding Teacher 2 & two founding board members	Co-Founder 1 and Co-Founder 2	Founder (bare minimum)	Co-Founder 1 and Co-Founder 2	Co-Founder 1 and Co-Founder 2	Executive Director 1	Founder	Founding teacher1 and a Founding parent

Figure 5.4 Structural Frame Leadership Summary (Start Up Stage)

Human Resource Frame

Founders planning to start a charter school generally gather a small founding group together to help with the myriad of tasks that need to be done before opening day. This establishes a human resource arena in the earliest stage of the charter school creation. Sarason (1998) considers the gathering of the core group and relationships that develop to be critical and potential problem areas. He says the founder needs to convince people with a variety of expertise to join the project by clearly articulating the vision and mission of the school. The founder must model and inspire commitment as well as develop productive working relationships with the founding group to move the project forward.

In this study six of the eight schools (CS 101, CS102, CS104, CS105, CS107, CS108) had someone in the founding group with strong, positive interpersonal and communication skills (see Figure 5.5). In each of these six schools those people understood the importance of collaboration, delegation, and building trust. More than

one respondent at three of the eight schools specifically mentioned the importance of building and maintaining positive relationships.

Respondents in the remaining two schools (CS 103, CS 106) reported that their founder had poor interpersonal and communication skills and no one else in the founding groups filled that niche. The respondents at these two schools also noted that there was a lack of necessary skills and expertise for starting a school within the core group. (Further analysis and comparison of relationships will be addressed in the "Dynamics" sections below.)

The presence of human resource skills in leaders, especially the ability to foster positive, collaborative working relationships, appears to be an important factor in the development of these eight charter schools. Some informants reported a strong relational aspect to their school culture.

	CS 101	*CS102*	*CS103*	*CS104*	*CS105*	*CS106*	*CS107*	*CS108*
Interpersonal & communication skills person	Founding teachers	Co-Founder 2	No one	Co-Founder 1 and Co-Founder 2	Co-Founder 2	No one	founder	Founding teachers
Relationships important in school culture		X		X				X

Figure 5.5 Human Resource Frame summary (Start Up Stage)

Political Frame

Creating a charter school requires a seemingly never-ending stream of decisions, many of them political. For instance, the determination of roles and responsibilities when creating the administrative and governing systems establishes areas of power and influence that affect relationships (Kimberly, 1984). Decisions such as these, and the leaders making the decisions, are viewed through the political frame. Sarason (1998) warns that external and internal dynamics are potential problem areas. He points out the importance of external surroundings and encourages founders to develop networks outside the core group.

There were founders or founding individuals in all eight schools in this study that demonstrated political skills to some extent (see Figure 5.6). Some leaders made a point of designating roles and responsibilities early in the start up process and were

cognizant of the implied shared authority and control. This was most obviously seen in the composition of the school boards, all of which had a teacher majority.

The distribution of power and authority was also seen in the leadership styles of the founders. Leaders with a collaborative style created systems of shared power in four schools (CS 101, CS 102, CS 104, CS 108). Leaders with an authoritative style created hierarchical systems (with the founder at the top) in four schools (CS 103, CS 105, CS 106, CS 107).

Coalition building was evident in the start up stories of four schools (CS 101, CS 102, CS 107, CS 108). In all four cases it involved the vision and mission of the schools. For two of the schools (CS 101, CS 108) during the pre-operational phase of start up, the founding teachers developed a vision and mission that deviated from the original held by the founder. The teachers all supported the changed vision/mission and their version became the reality, according to informants.

In the other two schools (CS 102, CS 107), the founders encountered opposition from the board to parts of the mission and certain goals. The disagreements occurred after the schools had begun operating. In one of those cases, the founder chose to leave because a co-founder was aligned with the board and did not support him. In the other case, the single founder fought to maintain the original mission and goals because the opposition was only coming from a small group of parents and their support was not widespread. It appears that the founders' decisions to retreat or persist depended on the size and strength of the coalitions.

The skills associated with the Political Frame were found among leaders of all eight schools. The way in which these skills impacted the development of school systems depended on the style of leadership. The collaborative leaders created cooperative systems that tended to share power. The authoritative leaders created hierarchical systems with power concentrated at the top.

	CS 101	*CS102*	*CS103*	*CS104*	*CS105*	*CS106*	*CS107*	*CS108*
Political skills person	Founder/ Executive Director	Co-Founder 1 and Co-Founder 2	No one	Co-Founder 1	Co-Founder 1	No one	Founder	Founding parents & Founding teachers
Coalition building evidence	X	(in early operational phase)					(in early operational phase)	X

Figure 5.6 Political Frame Leadership Summary (Start Up Stage)

The Spectrum of Leadership Skills in the Founders

Examination of the data in this study revealed that the founders of the eight schools ran the gamut from strong to weak in leadership skills and knowledge (including visioning). At the "strong" end of the continuum, two of the founders (CS 102, CS 104) exhibit leadership skills and characteristics outlined in all of Bolman and Deal's Four Frames (see Figure 5.7). These two founders are attentive to their symbolic functions. They have strong, well-developed visions for their respective schools and are articulate and persuasive in communicating the vision, mission and goals. These are people who know how to establish necessary organizational, operational, and academic systems for their schools, all structural tasks. They also seek others with expertise to advise and assist with structural tasks. From a human resource perspective, the relational skills of these founders are strong and positive, both internally and externally. They are collaborative (with staff and the board) and empower their faculty to share in decision making, reflecting their political orientation. These two founders became the first executive directors of their schools and continue in that role at the time of the interview.

The founders of another two schools (CS 103, CS 106) were weak in all the leadership skills and characteristics outlined in the Four Frames (Bolman & Deal, 2002). Even more detrimental to the schools, no other leaders emerged in the founding group. The founders did not stay long after the schools were up and running. These two schools limped along for four years, enduring a succession of minimally skilled executive directors and hovered on the brink of closure. Finally, by Operating Year Five

each school had competent and committed executive directors who remained in those positions at the time of the interview.

In each of these two schools (CS 103, CS 106), the current executive directors report they have had to fulfill structural roles. In effect, they have taken their schools through the Start Up Stage again. They have had to create organizational and operating systems, and work with the teachers to develop cohesive academic programs. They both understood the human resource challenges of establishing productive working relationships with all stakeholders while engaged in these huge structural tasks. Politically, they say they have recognized the issues related to the changes that had to be imposed on their schools and sought experienced mentors for themselves. Their commitment to their schools was and is monumental. After several years with their schools, they reported that they facilitated the revisiting of the schools' vision, mission and goals with their respective boards. Both of these leaders recognized the importance of this symbolic action but said it had to wait until the infrastructures were in place and the schools' systems were operating before they could give attention to revising the vision and mission.

Between these two ends of the leadership skill continuum lie four more schools (CS 101, CS 105, CS 107, CS 108). The data on these four schools show that the essential leadership skills and characteristics outlined by Bolman and Deal (2002) were evidenced in a variety of people within the charter school, not just the founder or executive director.

One of these four schools (CS 108) did not have a solo founder, but rather was begun by a group of parents who had no education experience and a vague vision of the school they wanted. They quickly sought to include several teachers in the founding group, reported one respondent. As the planning proceeded, she said it was the founding teachers who emerged as the leaders. Among the group of teachers there was evidence of all the leadership skills and characteristics outlined in all Four Frames (Bolman & Deal, 2002). The Founding Teachers embraced their leadership roles from the beginning, according to several respondents. They were especially attuned to sharing decision-making power and an equal distribution of operational responsibilities among

the staff. For these reasons, CS 108 is placed closer to the "strong" end of the continuum (see Figure 5.7).

Three schools had solo founders (CS 101, CS 105, CS 107). These solo founders all had a strong political perspective. According to those interviewed, they were all successful in establishing external networks that led to financial resources for their schools. It was noted by informants that these three founders also preferred a hierarchical form of governance with themselves at the top holding the most decision-making power. All three solo founders had fairly well-developed visions for their schools and were able to attract some skilled people to be part of the founding groups and initial boards.

In these three schools, founding teachers or board members became the leaders in creating the academic program. In one of the three schools (CS 101), informants reported that people other than the creator-leader handled structural responsibilities. They said a founding teacher created the school's governance system (he had been a city councilman) and two founding board members established the financial system and provided financial oversight (they were business professionals). It was reported that operating systems were patched together until an experienced school secretary was hired and she put those into place.

In another one of the three schools (CS 105) a founding board member not only developed the academic program but also took on human resource roles. She reported that she recognized the potential problems of a controlling, authoritative founder/director and set herself up as a buffer and mediator between him and the faculty. Respondents indicated that she became the champion of the school's mission, drawing it into the decision-making process, thus fulfilling a symbolic role for the school.

The founder of the third school of this group of three (CS 107) was reported to have very strong structural skills for organizational and operational systems, but depended on a member of the founding group to take care of establishing the academic systems. He had a strong vision, but his ability to communicate the vision and engage the commitment of others to his vision was weak, according to informants. They said he

had difficulty sharing power with others. For these reasons, CS 107 is placed closer to the weak end of the continuum than the other four schools in this "middle group."

In summary, while skills are evident in all the leaders of the eight charter schools, it is also evident that the degree of ability varies significantly. The style of the leaders also affects how the skills are used and what the results are.

	STRONG →			→		→		WEAK
	CS102	*CS104*	*CS108*	*CS 101*	*CS105*	*CS107*	*CS103*	*CS106*
Symbolic: Visioning skill person	Co-Founder 1 and *Co-Founder 2*	*Co-Founder 1* and Co-Founder 2	Founding teachers	Founder/ Exec Dir 1	Co-Founder 1	Founder	Founder	Founding parent
Structural: Systems knowledge & implementa-tion skill person	Co-Founder 1 and *Co-Founder 2*	*Co-Founder 1* and Co-Founder 2	Founding teacher1 and a Founding parent	Founding Teachers & Founding Board members	Co-Founder 1 and Co-Founder 2	Founder	Founder	Executive Director 1
Human Resource: Interpersonal & communicatio n skills person	Co-Founder 2	*Co-Founder 1 and Co-Founder 2*	Founding teachers	Founding teachers	Co-Founder 2	Founder	No one	No one
Political: power building knowledge & skills person	Co-Founder 1 and Co-Founder 2	*Co-Founder 1*	Founding parents & Founding teachers	Founder/ Executive Director	Co-Founder 1	Founder	Founder	Executive Director

Figure 5.7 Continuum of Leadership Skills (Start Up Stage)

Summary of Leadership Findings

The leadership elements of visioning, commitment, knowledge, and skills were in evidence in varying degrees across all the schools in this study. The full complement of leadership elements was evidenced in the founders of two schools (CS 102, CS 104). These essential leadership elements appeared to be distributed among the group of founding teachers in two other schools (CS 101, CS 108). A common dynamic among the leaders of these four schools was a disposition of collaboration. Respondents from these four schools also highlighted the open, transparent communication process at

work, especially between the executive director and the board. This was consistent from the very beginning of the planning process and on through the Growth Stage.

While the entire range of leadership elements was evident in the founder of CS 107 and within the founding group of CS 105, the disposition of collaboration was not evident. Rather, respondents characterized the founders as controlling and hierarchical. When discussing the Start Up Stage, the communication systems were described as top-down and founder-driven, but moved toward a more collaborative model as the schools moved through the Growth Stage.

A common leadership dynamic among the six schools described above was a conservative approach to fiscal matters. Respondents in these six schools emphasized how careful and transparent their leaders were in financial dealings. All had accountability systems in place early on.

The founder responsible for starting CS 103 and CS 106 was described as minimally equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to get a school open and keep it running. Respondents reported there were poorly developed systems and there was poor communication from the founder-director. Informants said their respective sponsors threatened both schools with closure. New skilled and knowledgeable directors recreated each school, breathing new life into them. The new directors also proved to be more collaborative than the founder and both had an open communication style.

Many of the leaders of the schools in this study exhibit the characteristics of effective charter school leaders described in the review of literature. They are vision-driven and have well-rounded appropriate skills for starting a charter school. They are fiscally conservative, employ an open communication system and operate in a collaborative manner.

Governance

Governance is the second most important factor, after leadership, contributing to the success of a charter school, according to Sarason (1998) and other charter school researchers (Cornwall, 2003; Fellowes, 2002; Finn et al., 2000; Ley, 1998). Governance

has to do with creating a decision-making structure focused on the vision and mission of the school. Recruiting board members who have skills and expertise in key areas of charter school creation is critical. It is desirable to have various board members with knowledge about financial management, fundraising, academic oversight, and school law (Cornell-Feist, 2007). It is also helpful if at least part of the board has previous governance experience.

Defining roles and responsibilities that make up the decision-making structure is a start-up challenge faced by most charter schools (Fellowes, 2002; Finn et al., 2000; Leonard, 2002; Ley, 1998; Sarason, 1998). The board, the most common decision-making structure, is charged with sustaining the vision and mission of the school, monitoring the academic progress of students, and providing oversight of finances, budget, and the facility (Casey et al., 2002; Cornell-Feist, 2007).

The ideal board is collaborative and efficient working within their defined roles (Sarason, 1998). In the pre-operational phase founding groups are work groups participating in the practical tasks that need to be done to get a school up and running (Cornell-Feist, 2007; Cornwall, 2003). Once a school is in operation, the role of that founding group is drastically different, transforming from a "founding group/board" to an official "school board." Micromanaging is a common flaw where boards over-step their boundaries. This often leads to conflict between the board and the executive director or the parents and teachers (Drucker, 1990; Finn et al., 2000). Researcher report that the executive director plays a significant role in helping board members understand their roles and responsibilities, especially as they change from the pre-operational stage to the first year of operations (Drucker, 1990; Herman & Heimovics, 1994).

Comparison of the governance of the eight schools in this study is structured around four core competencies identified by Cornell-Feist (2007) as indicators of effective charter school founding boards. The competencies and selected descriptors within each indicator that are being used include:

- *capacity and composition*: board members have the skills and expertise to govern,

- *structure*: by-laws provide guidelines by which the board will operate and gives job descriptions for governance positions,
- *clarity*: clear definition of authority and the responsibilities of the board, executive director, teachers, parents, and students has been created,
- *preparation*: board members wholeheartedly embrace the vision and mission of the school and use it to drive decision-making.

Capacity and Composition

Capacity and composition have to do with who is on the board, especially the skills and expertise they bring to the governance role. Respondents from six of the eight study schools (CS 101, CS 102, CS 104, CS 105, CS 107, CS 108) reported the presence of appropriate skills and expertise within the founding group (see Figure 5.8). Intentional recruitment of founding group members with specific skills was reported in these six schools, reflecting the best practices described in the literature.

The founders of four of these six schools (CS 102, CS 104, CS 105, CS 107) were skilled educational professionals, with prior governance experience, who consciously sought to reinforce certain areas of expertise. Among these four cases, two founders wanted board members with curriculum experience (CS 105, CS 107), one looked for a community person with business/finance skills (CS 104), and one founder (CS 102) recruited community activists who represented specific ethnic groups to help with student recruitment.

The founders of the other two schools that did intentional recruitment (CS 101, CS 108) sought founding teachers who could fulfill dual roles as educators and board members. In one of these schools it was the founding parents, with no educational experience, who specifically sought teachers because they thought that was required by law to apply for a charter. In the other case, the founder was an educator with no governance experience, so he looked for teachers with knowledge or experience in that area to add to the group of people who were already involved.

The two schools that did not do intentional recruitment (CS 103, CS 106) enlisted parents interested in the school, and newly hired teachers, to serve as the first board members. Respondents from these schools reported that there was little relevant

expertise or prior governance experience on those first school boards. Neither, they said, was the founding executive director of their school particularly skilled in several important areas, especially governance. Both of these schools struggled to get systems established and the governance system was the weakest of all.

	CS 101	*CS102*	*CS103*	*CS104*	*CS105*	*CS106*	*CS107*	*CS108*
Governance system	FT1, FT2	CF1 CF2		CF1	CF1, CF2		F	FP
Financial management	FT1, FT2	CF1, CF2	F	CF1, FB	CF1		F	FT1
Administration		CF2	F	CF1	CF1, FP		F	FT1
Academic curriculum	FT1, FT3	CF2		CF1, CF2	CF2		FB	FT1-3
Public rel. & Student recruit.	F	FB	FP	CF3	CF1, FP	FP	F	FP

CF=Co-Founder F=Founder FB = Founding Board FP = Founding Parent

FT = Founding Teacher

Figure 5.8 Founding Group Skill Mix Summary

Structure

Structure has to do with the size, make-up, positions, and parameters of the board as described in the by-laws of the school (Cornell-Feist, 2007). In this study the size of the school boards runs from small to large (see Figure 5.9). The smallest school boards have seven voting members while the largest board has 11 voting members. The five remaining boards are clustered in the 8-9 voting member ranges. Seven of the eight schools have a teacher majority on the board. One school (CS 106) started with a teacher majority but received a waiver from the state several years ago to have three teachers, three parents, and three community members.

One other school (CS 107) changed its board composition after a few years. That school increased the number of parent members to equal that of the teacher members (having received a waiver to do so) only to decrease the parent numbers several years later because of the difficulty involved with getting parents to serve on the board.

Among the schools in this study four boards are chaired by teachers (CS 102, CS 105, CS 106, CS 107; three boards are chaired by parents (CS 101, CS 103, CS 108), and one board is chaired by a community member (CS 104). The schools with parents as board chairs all report that it was a deliberate decision designed to maintain a check-and-balance because of the teacher majority on the board.

Respondents in four of the eight schools (CS 101, CS 102, CS 105, CS 106) reported that board training was conducted with the first elected school boards. Informants from the other three schools recalled that board training began by their fifth year of operation. Currently, seven of the eight schools report they have yearly board training.

The chart below (see Figure 5.9) summarizes the structure data about the eight boards. The information is arranged from largest board to smallest.

	CS 102	*CS101*	*CS105*	*CS106*	*CS107*	*CS108*	*CS103*	*CS104*
Voting members	11	9	9	9	9	8	7	7
Composition of the board	6 employees 5 parents	5 teachers 4 parents	5 teachers 1 parent 1 staff 2 commty	3 teachers 3 parents 3 cmmty	5 teachers 3 parents 1 cmmty	5 teachers 2 parents 1 cmmty	4 teachers 2 parents 1 staff/prnt	3 teachers 2 staff 2 cmmty
Board chair	Teacher	Parent	Teacher	Teacher	Teacher	Parent	Parent	Community person
Training At start-up?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	NA
Training currently?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	NA

Figure 5.9 Summary of School Board Structure Data

Clarity

Founding boards are charged with defining the responsibilities of the board, the executive director, the teachers, parents, and any contractors hired. They are also responsible for establishing a clear definition of authority, especially between the executive director and the board. The competency of clarity is discussed in this section.

Researchers underscore the importance of defining roles, particularly the decision-making structures, early in the start-up process (Cornwall, 2003; Goold & Campbell, 2002; Meyer, 1995; Sarason, 1998). People in the founding groups frequently have multiple roles such as faculty/staff and board member. Clear lines of authority may minimize conflict during the pre-operational phase (Cornwall, 2003) but effective executive directors work with their boards to enable them to function appropriately and efficiently (Block, 2004; Drucker, 1990; Herman & Heimovics, 1994).

These ideas about role clarity were observed in this study. Among the eight schools, six (CS 101, CS 102, CS 104, CS 105, CS 107, CS 108) reported that the definition of roles and responsibilities and lines of authority were established early in the Start Up Stage. The founders of four of these six schools (CS 102, CS 104, CS 105, CS 107) were experienced in governance and understood the importance of putting the schools' organizational systems into place early on. Respondents in these schools reported that the decision-making process worked well during the pre-operational phase of the Start Up Stage, particularly between the executive director and the founding board. These informants attributed the lack of conflict to the executive directors' high level of expertise, collaborative approach, and positive flow of information. The executive directors of these schools remained in their position for at least five years (some even remained at the time of the interview). Also, the membership of the founding group in these four schools was stable throughout the start-up stage.

The other two schools (CS 101, CS 108) in this group of six early role definers had founders who were not very experienced with school governance. There were, however, founder-teachers experienced enough with governance to facilitate creation of the organizational systems. In both cases strong, collaborative start-up boards emerged and then the founders had problems with the established lines of authority. Informants in these schools reported that frequent conflicts occurred between the founders and the start-up boards. They said the conflicts were most often over inappropriate decisions made by the founders that were then overturned by the board. They cited the founders' lack of knowledge and poor communication as contributing to the conflicts. This

finding is similar to Block's (2004) research on nonprofit directors. In both of these schools the founders left after the first year of operation. The membership of the founding groups remained stable.

One person was involved in the creation of the two remaining schools (CS 103, CS 106). The founding group members in both schools were a combination of parents and teachers, none of which were experienced with governance, according to the informants. In the first school (CS 106), this person was hired as the executive director right after the founding group received their charter. The director was charged with setting up the school. Respondents said that roles and responsibilities were not clearly defined during the pre-operational phase. Several informants reported there was little communication between the executive director and the founding group, but there was a lot of conflict. Fiscal mismanagement occurred and the board asked the director to leave at the end of the first operational year. During the second year, conflict among the board members and inappropriate actions on their part ensued. One half of the board members took it upon themselves to remove the other half from power. This school was on the brink of being closed by its third year of operation. At that point a second director had come and gone, and there was huge turnover of staff and board members.

Several years later, the former director of CS 106 went on to start another school (CS 103). Informants reported that the founder put the financial and school organizational systems into place and hired a curriculum director to take care of the academic program. None of the respondents spoke of conflict between the founder and the board, nor within the board itself. A teacher/board member commented on the collaborative nature of the board from the beginning. Informants said the founder chose to leave after the second operational year, feeling that the start-up job was completed.

All eight schools in this study began with a teacher majority on the first elected school board. Respondents in all eight schools acknowledged the potential conflict of interest this duality presented. People in three different schools used the term "switch hats" to describe their responsibility to remain objective in their board roles. What came through strongly in the interviews at all schools was the current solid understanding of the need for teachers to maintain objectivity when serving as a board member. People in

three of the eight schools (CS 102, CS 104, CS 108) mentioned that when teachers had a hard time functioning in dual roles they tended to leave the school.

Informants in five of the six schools (CS 101, CS 102, CS 104, CS 108) that had early definition of roles and responsibilities said their leaders conducted training sessions each year when new board members were elected. These leaders made a point to especially remind teachers of the need for objectivity in yearly training sessions. This leader behavior mirrors that of effective nonprofit executive directors described by Herman and Hiemovics (1994).

Preparation

Board members who embrace the school's vision/mission and use it to guide their decision-making are considered well prepared for their role and responsibility (Cornell-Feist, 2007). The literature reviewed for this study emphasized vision and mission-driven decision making as a trait of effective governance and boards (Collins & Porras, 1997; Drucker, 1990; Goold & Campbell, 2002; Meyer, 1995; Sarason, 1998).

Schools must have well-developed vision/missions before board members can be expected to endorse and use them. The eight schools in this study showed a great range of completeness of their school's vision, the consistency of its use, and the importance of the vision and mission in the decision making process. This variance among schools is best illustrated by placing each school on a vision/mission continuum that runs from "weak" to "strong" (see Figure 5.10).

Weak/fuzzy vision & mission		Strong vision & mission
CS106, CS103	CS101, CS105, CS107	CS108, CS102, CS104

Figure 5.10 Continuum of Vision/Mission Strength (Completeness)

The two schools on the "weak vision" end of the scale in Figure 5.10 had visions and missions that lacked clarity. Their original missions were vague and general. For both of these schools, the academic programs were a prominent part of the founding vision and mission. After students were enrolled they found that to be too narrow a

focus for a mission. For one of the schools (CS 103), informants said it became obvious that the mission could not be met after the school opened, but no action was taken by the board to change the mission. A respondent from that school stated, "We didn't really look at it [the mission statement] anymore." Another respondent from that school acknowledged the mission played no part in the board's decision making in the early years. Yet another respondent said, "[The] curriculum wasn't the answer to a lot of the issues that our kids were dealing with. So, a curriculum is not going to solve all of our issues." Both of these schools also had the same director in charge of starting the school. Each school had inexperienced teachers and inexperienced school board members.

The three schools in the middle of the scale all had visions/missions that centered on a particular type of the school structure and environment. The founders also had particular academic approaches in mind but these were not included in the mission statement. All three schools experienced the need to change the mission after school opened. Two of them (CS 105, CS 107) changed because of the needs of the students who attended. One respondent said, "We have changed to meet the needs of who we get, rather than shut down because we weren't getting who we directed at in the first place." Another interviewee from the same school said, "There's not a balance oftentimes of charter school vision and the reality. The perception and the reality is [sic] not equal. If you can, adjust. These are our kids. . . . These are it."

One of these schools (CS 101) changed the mission because the first teachers who were hired didn't agree with the instructional approach favored by the founder. The founding teachers interviewed said they could not accept the "gimmicks" the founder had in mind, but the original curricular focus envisioned by the founder was still there in a revised form.

The respondents of these three schools acknowledged and embraced the changed mission early in the start-up stage. The decision makers in these schools indicated they thought about the mission when facing big decisions, but everyone interviewed did not regard the importance of the missions equally. These three schools had founding groups

with a strong, fairly complete array of start up skills and experiences. The founders of two of the three schools (CS 105, CS 107) had previously started other charter schools.

The three schools at the "strong" end of the vision/mission scale had clear visions and missions that were detailed but succinct. The visions/missions of these three schools (CS 102, CS 104, CS 108) were about preparing students for life beyond academics. Each person interviewed in those three schools wove references to the mission throughout their responses, indicating the importance of the mission.

Two of the schools (CS 102, CS 104), begun by co-founders, had clearly articulated visions/missions that were communicated easily to others, and attracted a like-minded founding group. One of the interviewees said, "First and foremost you have to have a mission and vision that is realistic and that is definable not only in words but in action."

The third school of this group (CAS 108), initiated by some parents, had almost no specific vision or mission until teachers joined the founding group. They received two grants that helped establish a focus and purpose as well as a particular instructional model. One interviewee said the founding teachers took it from there and developed the mission statement for the school based on the grant requirements.

These three schools also had a strong, fairly complete array of start up skills and experiences within the founding groups. The founder of one of the three schools (CS 102), and the founding teachers of the other two schools (CS 104, CS 108) are still at the schools. All three schools have revisited and slightly revised their mission statements over the years.

Respondents in all three schools acknowledged that their schools work for some people and not for others. "Here is our philosophy and mission and this is what the school is about. Not every program will fit for every individual," said one interviewee unapologetically. This statement applied to families, students, and staff alike. Respondents in all three schools mentioned that teacher candidates were screened for their "fit" with the school mission. Another informant said, "There is nothing worse than somebody who interviews really well, but doesn't have the same values that we have here at the school, as far as putting the students first, or how we work."

A distinguishing factor that set these three schools (CS 102, CS 104, CS 108) apart from the other five was dedication to a set of core values. One respondent summed it up saying, "The vision that we're working from is just more about those values and grounding everything we do in those values. Clearly we're there to serve the academic needs of our students, that's our first priority, but everything is embedded in those values." This characteristic aligned the three schools with the highly visionary companies studied by Collins and Porras (1997).

Summary of Governance Findings

There are identifiable, research-based competencies for start up school boards. They include capacity and composition of the individual board members, structure of the board itself, clarity of responsibilities, and preparedness to make mission-based decisions. Some of the schools in this study gave evidence of meeting all four of these competencies. Other schools were weak or lacking competencies.

The most common weakness affecting the governance process appeared to be narrow and under-developed visions/missions. Respondents from such schools said they often felt like they were wandering, not certain of their direction. The schools with weak visions/mission statements were also schools with inexperienced board members.

In contrast, respondents from schools with strong, clear visions/missions said they knew what they were about and what needed to be done. They said their missions guided their decisions and actions. The schools with the strongest visions/missions also had board members who were skilled and experienced.

Resources

Obtaining adequate resources is an issue for most charter start-ups. Sarason (1998) includes money, facility and time under the umbrella of "resources." The acquisition of a facility and start-up funds was one of the top concerns uncovered by a Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (NWREL) study of charter schools (Ley, 1998). Unpredictable enrollment, therefore unpredictable income, was a concern described by Sullins and Miron (2005) in their study of charter schools.

This section will discuss the availability and acquisition of resources including money, facilities, and time. The planning and management of finances will be briefly covered here in the *money* section and again later in the sections on processes and dynamics.

Money

State or federal grants for charter school planning and start up costs did not exist in the earliest days of the charter school movement. However, foundation grants were available. This increased the challenge of starting a new school. Two of the schools studied were begun during this time (their identity is being withheld to protect anonymity).

One school received several start-up grants from foundations, then after opening it received a sizeable federal grant. An informant from the other school said they would not apply for grants that imposed requirements leading to conditions contrary to the school's mission. That school obtained a loan from a local company to finance the start up. The loan was later forgiven.

The other six schools in this study received start-up money from the federal and state governments. Two of the schools reported that those grants were all they had for start-up expenses. Two schools said they also took out loans, and two other schools stated they applied for and received foundation grants in addition to the government grants (see Figure 5.11 for a summary of funding sources).

Start Up Funding Source	*School*
Loan	CS 104
Foundation grant	CS 102
Federal grant	CS 106, CS 107
Federal grant & loan	CS 101, CS 105
Federal grant & foundation grant(s)	CS 103, CS 108

Figure 5.11 Sources of start-up funding

For most charter schools the main source of income, once it is opened, comes from the state of Minnesota. They receive what is called *general operating funding*. It is the average per pupil general revenue paid by the state for each enrolled student. Charter schools are also eligible to receive other state grants and categorical funding

(such as for transportation and lease aid). They are not eligible for funds generated by a local excess levy referendum (Schroeder, 2004).

A respondent from one of the earliest opened schools reported that it took almost six months into the first year of operations for the general operating funding from the state to arrive. The school found it necessary to take out a cash flow loan to survive during that time.

Charter schools report that predicting enrollment is a challenge (Sullins & Miron, 2005). Since enrollment is the primary source of income for a charter school, accurate predictions are critical to the budgeting process. Only one of the schools in this study overestimated their opening enrollment and spent the next two years paying back the overpayment. Seven of the remaining eight schools said they underestimated their opening enrollment figures and continue to do so, creating a financial cushion. The strategy was summed up best by one respondent, "Under-estimate revenue and over-estimate expenses."

One of the schools (CS 103) did a poor job of filing the annual state reports in the early years and an informant from that school said, as a result, they started to lose state funding. Another school encountered repeated enrollment record disputes with the state until they implemented an electronic system.

Overall, the majority of the founders and founding boards adopted an attitude of fiscal caution. They took pains to create transparent systems of accountability such as hiring an accounting firm that wrote all the checks. Maintaining financial integrity was reported to be a high priority among the schools in this study.

Facilities

Facility acquisition was challenging for some of the schools in this study, but not for others. No one reported that it was an extreme hardship to the point of delaying the opening of the school. Only one school (CS 101) opened operations in a new building built exclusively for its use, through the sale of bonds by a nonprofit corporation. One school (CS 104) partnered with a city and leased space in a municipal building. Two schools (CS 105, CS 108) opened in leased commercial buildings. Four

schools (CS 102, CS 103,CS 106, CS 107) leased former parochial school buildings. This data is summarized in the table below (see Figure 5.12).

New building	CS 101
Leased municipal building	CS 104
Leased commercial buildings	CS 105, CS 108
Leased former parochial schools	CS 102, CS 103, CS 106, CS 107

Figure 5.12 Facilities Acquired by Schools (Start-Up Stage)

Five schools have experienced facility changes over the years (CS 102, CS 104, CS 105, CS 106, CS 107). Four schools have worked with non-profit corporations who purchased the buildings being occupied and leased them to the schools (CS 102, CS 105, CS 106, CS 107). These four buildings have all undergone significant remodeling and expansion. The school in the leased municipal building has moved three times, mostly to acquire more space, but always in municipal structures.

Five of the eight schools chose to start small and add grades each year until their full range was met. One school reported there was a waiting list from the day school opened. Another said they had a waiting list by their third year of operation. The other six schools said they were always recruiting students for their schools.

Expanding the student population meant expanding the facilities for six of the eight schools (CS 102, CS 104, CS 105, CS 106, CS 107, CS 108). Of the two remaining schools, one (CS 101) said it would like to expand but it is physically hemmed in and has no place to grow without totally relocating. They felt this restriction stymies their desire to expand their program and student enrollment. The other school would also like to expand but can't afford to do that without more revenue and they can't generate more revenue through student enrollment in the present facility.

Facility issues with these eight schools did not appear to be at a level of seriousness reported in the literature by other charter schools. A trend seen among the older, more established schools in this study was that of partnering with a non-profit corporation who bought the facility occupied by the school. The building was then leased back to the school for their exclusive use.

Time

While some charter school studies reported that lack of time to adequately prepare for the opening of school was a problem (Carpenter, 2005; Finn et al., 2000), no one in this study expressed that sentiment. There was only one time related comment, and it had to do with a facility not being ready for opening day.

CS 101, the school having a building constructed expressly for their use, reported that they ran into construction delays. They were forced to rent another facility for several months while their building was being completed. They moved into their new facility in November of their first year.

Summary of Resource Findings

At the time of the interviews, all schools reported that even though they were financially stable they remained vigilant and fiscally cautious. Six of the eight schools specifically spoke of their healthy fund balances.

While most of the schools were content with their present facilities, the school that began in a custom built building was the least satisfied. Now that they had lived in it for a number of years they felt its shortcomings. It had served them well upon opening, but not after the program grew.

Time as a resource (or rather lack of time) was a non-issue for the respondents in this study. None of the informants recalled feeling pressed for time when preparing curriculum for the opening of the school.

Processes

Creating a charter school is a series of actions leading to the opening of the school. Sarason (1998) points out that there are many processes that need to be attended to and it is the role of the founder to be aware of what they are and responsible to see that they get done. The formation of vision and mission statements, the creation of administrative (operational) systems, and the development of the academic program proved to be the most important start up processes for schools in this study, just as Sarason suggested. Other charter school researchers echoed the importance of these processes as well (Finn et al, 2000; Ley, 1998; Simon, 2001).

Who created the systems, and were the systems effective (did they get the job done) were questions explored in this study. The findings for those questions are

presented in this section. The creation and implementation of systems in each school cannot be discussed without including references to leaders, even though leadership has been discussed already.

The development of the organizational (governance), operational (administrative), and academic systems is facilitated by another process: communication. Researchers point to information flow, decision-making, and conflict resolution as important aspects of communication when creating an organization (Drucker, 1990; Meyer, 1995; Pfeffer, 1998). Informants in this study were asked about these three aspects of communication in conjunction with the creation of the systems needed to get their school up and running. The discussion of findings about the communication processes of information flow, decision-making, and conflict resolution will include references to governance (the decision-making structure) and leadership (the people responsible for decision-making) because these three areas are so intertwined.

Systems

Researchers have found that effective organizations align their systems with their vision (Collins & Porras, 1997; Drucker, 1990; Sarason, 1998). They say it is especially important to make decisions based on a well-developed vision, which includes the mission, goals, and core values.

Before examining the system and communication data, it is helpful to look at an analysis of the vision/mission statement of each school. Creating the vision/mission statement IS a process for the founders of each school, but the data revealed it was an uncompleted process for many of them.

Vision/Mission Statement

Interview comments about each school vision and mission yielded evidence of the statements' clarity, consistency, and importance (or lack of them). Four patterns emerged regarding the original vision/mission statements created by the eight charter school founders (see Figure 5.13). The vision/mission statements were:

- strong, well communicated, and embraced by key stakeholders (2 schools)
- changed by founding teachers who had other ideas (2 schools)

- changed after students arrived because of a mismatch between vision and reality (3 schools)
- under-developed, and no founding group members skilled enough to expand it (1 school).

Two schools had strong, articulate vision/mission statements (CS 102, CS 104). These were schools with the most experienced and skilled leaders in this study (see Figure 5.6). All respondents interviewed from both of these schools referred to the vision and mission repeatedly. There was high mission consistency among all these respondents. It was evident in both schools that the mission played an important role in decision-making.

A founder's original vision/mission was not always embraced once others were brought into the start up project. Two schools reported that the founding teachers were not in total agreement with the founder about the mission of their schools (CS 101, CS 108). Founding teachers in these schools were able to exert enough pressure to change the vision and mission of their respective schools. In one case (CS 101), the vision of the founder was totally clear, but rejected by the founding teachers. In the other case (CS 108), the vision cast by the founding parents was extremely vague and lacking detail. The founding teachers determined a direction, clarified a more fully realized vision, and established a mission.

For other schools, the enrollment reality did not always fit with the pre-operational vision. Three schools reported that even though there was a distinct vision and mission created during the pre-operational phase, it didn't work well with the students who enrolled when the school opened (CS 103, CS 105, CS 107). In all three cases, respondents reported that they spent several years addressing the realities of their students' needs before revising the mission statement. This state of affairs not only affected mission clarity, but consistency and importance, as well. Informants indicated that a mission that didn't fit with the student population created tension (because of lack of consistency) and was not an important consideration in decision-making.

Lastly, some visions are under-developed. The final school in the study (CS 106) had a specific vision but no accompanying mission or goals. The founders and original

teachers of this school lacked experience and skill to develop these components. The evidence suggested that stakeholders embraced the vision but the lack of leadership skills prevented the vision from being fully developed and realized.

strong, well communicated vision/mission created by founders and embraced by key stakeholders; embodied the attributes of clarity, consistency, and importance	CS 102, CS 104
founding teachers had different vision than founder and changed it; tension around vision/mission clarity, consistency, and importance until founders left Year 2	CS 101, CS 108
original vision/mission didn't hold up to the reality of the enrolled students and later was changed; lack of clarity, consistency, and importance first few years until new vision/mission articulated	CS 103, CS 105, CS 107
under-developed vision/mission, no founding group members skilled enough to expand it; lack of clarity, consistency, and importance until fourth executive director came	CS 106

Figure 5.13 Summary of Vision/Mission Characteristics Matched with Schools (Start Up Stage)

Organizational structure

The organizational structures, or the governance systems of the schools have been compared in detail earlier in the "Governance" section. Specifically, capacity and composition of the board, governance structure, clarity of roles and responsibilities, and importance of the vision in decision-making were discussed. This section examines who was responsible for creating the operational system and the effectiveness of the systems. It is those governance attributes discussed earlier that were used to determine if the structures were effective or ineffective in the analysis discussion to follow.

When examining the data about who created the organizational structures of the study schools, it appeared that the responsibility for that process fell to either the founder (who later became the executive director) or a founding teacher (who later assumed a leadership role beyond teaching). Five schools fell into the first category of founder/executive director as creator of the organizational structure (see Figure 5.14). In three of the five schools (CS 102, CS 105, CS 107) this was done effectively. The governance system was detailed through the by-laws of the school. Various roles and responsibilities were clearly spelled out. In two of the schools (CS 103, CS 106) the structure created was ineffective, one of them to the point of dysfunction. Informants from these schools said in the beginning the by-laws were few and sketchy. Roles and

responsibilities were not clearly detailed and board members often overstepped their boundaries into operational (administrative) tasks.

Three schools (CS101, CS 104, CS 108) had their governance structures created primarily by founding teachers. Among these three schools additional assistance came from other sources – community board members or another administrator. According to the informants, the governance process was effective in these three schools. From the beginning by-laws were written, roles were defined, and responsibilities communicated and understood.

The absence of governance knowledge and skill within the founding group was detrimental to the start up project.

Person Responsible for Creating the Governance Structure	*Effective*	*Ineffective*
Founder (later became the Executive Director)	CS 102, CS 105, CS 107	CS103, CS 106,
Founding teacher (later assumed leadership role in addition to teaching), some assistance from others	CS 101, CS 104, CS 108	

Figure 5.14 Creation of Organizational Structure (Start Up Stage)

Operational Systems

The creation of the administrative processes (the operational systems) fell into patterns similar to that of the organizational structures, either the founder (who later became the executive director) or a founding teacher (who later assumed a leadership role beyond teaching) was responsible for creating the systems (see Figure 5.15).

Six schools could be grouped into the first category of founder/executive director responsible to create the operational systems. Three of these six schools (CS 102, CS 105, CS 107) had effective systems, according to the people interviewed. These were also the schools that had skilled and experienced founders (refer to Figure 5.6).

Two of these six schools (CS 103, CS 106) had ineffective operational systems, according to their informants. These were the same schools that also had ineffective governance structures. The founders of these schools were the ones mentioned earlier (Figure 5.7) who lacked of experience and skill. One of these schools (CS 106) was so poorly operated they were on the brink of being closed after three years.

The sixth school (CS 101) depended on the founder/executive director to create the operational systems. When that didn't happen, and the founder/executive director

left after the first year, the board specifically hired a new executive director, as well as a school secretary, with skills and expertise to put the administrative systems in place.

Founding teachers were responsible for creating the operating systems in the remaining two schools (CS 104, CS 108). Those teachers were skilled and had previous administrative experience that contributed to the effectiveness of the systems they created.

The patterns of who created the organizational and operational systems are similar, but not exactly the same. The same is true for the patterns of effectiveness.

	Effective	Ineffective
Founder(s) responsible (later became the Executive Director)	CS 102, CS 105, CS 107	CS 101, CS103, CS 106,
Founding teacher responsible (later assumed leadership role in addition to teaching)	CS 104, CS 108	

Figure 5.15 Creation of Operational Systems

Academic Programming

For seven of the eight schools, either the founder/executive director or some member of the founding group handled the creation of the academic program. The one exception was the school that hired a curriculum director for this process (CS 103).

Founder/executive directors were responsible for creating the academic program in three of the schools (see Figure 5.16). There were mixed results in the effectiveness of those programs, as reported by the informants. One school (CS102) shared that the original teachers were trained before the school opened and the teachers felt prepared for the students who arrived. Informants in the second school (CS 105) said a pilot program was run in the summer and all went well, but the students who arrived in the fall were very different students and the academic program was not appropriate for the fall enrollees. They had to do a lot of scrambling to revise the curriculum. The final school in this group of three (CS 106) reported that even though it was the responsibility of the executive director, there was no curriculum to speak of the first three years. Teachers just did whatever they wanted to. One respondent reported that new materials were abandoned after the first year because there had been no training in how to use them.

Academic programs created by some member of the founding group, other than the executive director, faired slightly better in their results. Three of the four schools in this group (CS 101, CS 104, CS 108) reported that the curriculum was planned by the founding teachers and worked well for the students who enrolled in their school. A founding board member planned the curriculum for the fourth school (CS 107) in this group. He reported that the original principal and teachers were sent to training sessions for the rigorous nationally known program before the school opened. However, the students who enrolled the first year were not prepared for the difficulty and challenge of the program. Respondents reported that revisions were made to the curriculum to better meet the students' needs.

The final school (CS 103) hired a curriculum director to prepare the academic program. They reported the same issue of a mismatch between the curriculum prepared and the students who enrolled. One of the informants said no curriculum could address the problems that their students brought to school, so they shifted their focus from the program for which they had been trained to meeting the immediate needs of their students.

The three schools that included specific academic programming in their vision and mission statements and were the same three that had to revise their academic programs after the students arrived (CS 103, CS105, CS 107). Responsibility for the creation of the curriculum lay with different stakeholders in each of these schools, and each of them had previous curriculum experience. Still the mismatch between the vision/mission and the students occurred.

Four of the eight schools (CS 101, CS 102, CS 104, CS 108) thought their academic program was effective and reported there was a good match between the students who enrolled and the curriculum used. The vision and mission of each of these schools focused primarily on preparing students to be productive, healthy adults, not on an academic program. Several respondents said their school mission was based on values, not curriculum.

Person Responsible for Creating the Academic program	*Effective*	*Revision needed*	*Ineffective*
Founder(s) responsible (later became the Executive Director)	CS 102	CS 105	CS 106
Member of the Founding group (NOT the Executive Director) responsible	CS 101, CS104, CS 108	CS 107	
Curriculum Director hired to do this		CS 103	

Figure 5.16 Creation of Academic Program

This section analyzed data related to who created the organizational, operational, and academic systems, when the systems were developed, and the system effectiveness (how well did the systems work). The development of the vision/mission statement was also included as one of the processes because it affects the development of all the other systems. As a way of summarizing, the results for each system in each school are combined to give a broader view of the patterns that became visible during the analysis (see Figure 5.17). Viewing this bigger picture allows the patterns of leadership skills and system effectiveness to be seen across all eight schools.

Individual leaders were responsible for creating the systems in five of the eight schools studied (CS 102, CS 103, CS 105, CS 106, CS 107). Four of these five schools had a founder or co-founders (CS 102,CS 103, CS 105, CS 107) put the vision/mission, organizational, operational, and academic systems into place. However, in one of these schools (CS 103), a curriculum director was hired to create the academic program. A founding parent conceived the idea for one school (CS 106) and then an executive director was hired early in the pre-operational phase to create the systems. Founding teachers were responsible for creating the systems in the other three schools (CS 101, CS 104, CS 108).

For the five schools with individual leaders (CS 102, CS 103, CS 105, CS 106, CS 107), the vision/mission was present in the idea phase of the schools' development. Only one of those schools (CS 102) had a well developed and consequently enduring vision/mission. One school (CS 106) had only a limited mission statement and lacked other components of a well-developed vision statement such as core values, purpose/focus, and goals.

	Vision/mission statement	*Organizational structure*	*Operational systems*	*Academic programming*
CS 102	Co-Founder 2 primary, Co-Founder 1 secondary; Idea phase	Co-Founder 2 primary, Co-Founder 1 secondary; Pre-operational phase	Co-Founder 1: financial, Co-Founder 2: administrative; Pre-operational phase	Co-Founder 2; Pre-operational phase
effective?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
CS 105	Co-Founder 1; Idea phase	Co-Founder 1; Pre-operational phase	Co-Founder 1; Pre-operational phase	Co-Founder 2; Pre-operational phase
effective?	Reality didn't match vision; Modified over time	So-so: Modified over the years by Co-Founder 2	So-so: glitches had to be worked out Years 4 & 5	Continual modification over the years to meet student needs
CS 107	Founder; Idea phase	Founder; Pre-operational phase	Founder; Pre-operational phase	Founding Board chair; Pre-operational phase
effective?	Reality didn't match vision; Challenged by parent/board member Year 2	For the most part, until parent/board member challenge -Year 2	Yes	Reality didn't match vision; Modified during first operational years
CS 103	Founder; Idea phase	Founder (minimal); Pre-operational phase	Founder (minimal); Pre-operational phase	Curriculum Director; Pre-operational phase
effective?	Reality didn't match vision; Modified during Growth Stage	No	No	Reality didn't match vision; Modified during Growth Stage
CS 106	Founding parents; Idea phase	Executive Director 1 (minimally); Pre-operational phase	Executive Director 1; Pre-operational phase	Executive Director 1; Pre-operational phase
effective?	Partially: too vague	No Dysfunctional until Executive Director 4 took over, Year 4	No Dysfunctional until Executive Director 4 took over, Year 4	No Dysfunctional until Executive Director 4 took over, Year 4
CS 101	Founding teachers modified the Founder's original; Pre-operational phase	Founding teacher 2; contracted lawyer; Pre-operational phase	Exec. Director 2, 1st Administrative Asst.; Years 2 & 3	Founding teachers 1,2, and 3 did the curric; Exec. Director 2 did Sp Ed and MDE accountability system; Years 2 & 3
effective?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
CS 104	Co-Founders/teachers 1 & 2; Idea phase	Co-Founder/teacher 1; Pre-operational phase	Co-Founder/teacher 1; Pre-operational phase	Co-Founders/teachers 1 & 2 Pre-operational phase
effective?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
CS 108	Founding group, mostly the teachers; Pre-operational phase	Founding group: teacher 1 & a parent; Pre-operational phase; years 1-2	Founding group, mostly the teachers; Pre-operational phase	Founding group, but dissension between the parents & teachers; Pre-operational phase
effective?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, teachers prevailed

Figure 5.17 Systems Created for a New Charter School: Person(s) responsible, Phase created

Three of these five schools (CS 103, CS 105, CS 107) experienced a mismatch between the original vision/mission and the students who enrolled when the school

opened. The mission statement for each of these three schools included the use of specific curriculum materials or instructional techniques to support a rigorous academic program. The mismatch occurred when the materials or techniques were not appropriate for the students who enrolled. Informants in these three schools reported that the vision/mission statement was basically set aside for the first few years of operations while the teachers and administrators scrambled to meet the academic and social needs of their students. Respondents from all three of these schools reported that the vision and mission statements were revised years later to better reflect what was actually happening in their schools.

Analysis of the three schools that were developed by a group of founding teachers, showed that the vision/mission took longer to emerge in two of the three schools (CS 101, CS 108). In these cases, the originators of the charter school idea had their visions in mind, but when the founding teachers were brought in, they had different visions in mind. In both cases the teachers prevailed so that their vision appeared in the pre-operational phase. For CS 101, the founding teachers' ideas were a variation of the founder's idea. For CS 108, the founders' idea was barely a vision but closer to a limited purpose. The founding teachers created a well-developed vision statement that included values, purpose/focus, mission, and goals. The third school of this group (CS 104) was conceived by the founding teachers who knew exactly what they wanted to do and had a well-developed vision from the very beginning.

Organizational structures have to do with the governance and the decision-making systems of a school. The creation of the organizational structures occurred during the pre-operational phase in all eight schools. However, the informants said that not all systems were functional or effective. Two schools (CS 103, CS 106) reported that boards were created, but roles and responsibilities were not clearly defined. They also said that the people serving on the boards were inexperienced and really had no idea what they should be doing, so they didn't question the actions of the executive director, the person in charge of creating the systems. This later proved to be very detrimental to the school, they said.

Respondents in three schools (CS 102, CS 105, CS 107) reported that the founder/executive director who created the system, had previous governance experience and took a strong controlling role in the first years of operation. Informants from CS 102 said this was not a problem because the board members were inexperienced and the executive director was training and guiding them and keeping them well informed about everything that was happening.

Informants from CS 105 said the board members eventually reacted to the executive director's controlling behavior and sought to modify that behavior as they gained experience. They also said that many parents attended the board meetings and that contributed a measure of accountability to the governance process.

A parent member of the board challenged the governance system, established by the founder of CS 107, during the school's second year of operation. The director's strong control was challenged as well. The end result of the yearlong dispute was a compromise that changed the composition of the board, eliminating the teacher majority. However, the parent board member left the school anyway and the executive director continued on.

Governance systems created by founding teachers (CS 101, CS 104, CS 108) appeared to have few problems, according to the informants from those schools. In all three schools the founding teacher charged with the task of developing the system had previous governance experience. (A lawyer was contracted to help with the by-laws for CS 101.) The systems established in these three schools were very collaborative. The informants said everyone was kept informed and had a part in the decision-making process. It was also mentioned by informants in all three schools that no one person sought to be "the controller."

Operational systems included areas such as finances, human resource, student records, and assessment data, among others. These were the "nuts and bolts" administrative systems for running a school. Informants in four of the schools reported that their operational systems were put into place during the pre-operational phase and worked quite well. In two of these schools (CS 102, CS 107) it was the founder responsible for this, and in two schools (CS 104, CS 108) it was a founding teacher

responsible. In all four cases, the responsible individuals had previous experience with operational systems.

Informants in the third school of the "founder teacher group" (CS 101) reported that the executive director had been expected to put systems in place, but he didn't. Since none of the founding teachers felt they had adequate knowledge in this area, especially in relation to state accountability systems, they looked for someone with that experience when hiring their second executive director.

The two schools dependent on the inexperienced founder/executive director (CS 103, CS 106) stumbled along, operationally, for three years, according to informants in those schools. Each school finally hired an experienced executive director who then had to create operational systems for the schools. These were the same schools who had minimal, poorly functioning organizational structures and weak vision/mission statements.

The founding teachers in the three schools in that group created the academic programming. Informants reported that each teacher was responsible for his/her own curriculum, but they worked collaboratively to ensure it was cohesive and state standards were covered. Two of these three schools (CS 101, CS 108) encountered difficulty meeting the special education needs of the students who enrolled the first year. Respondents said they worked hard the second year to address the issues.

Among the other five schools, the academic programming was the responsibility of various individuals: a co-founders in two of the schools (CS 102, CS 105), a founding board member in CS 107, a hired curriculum director for CS 103, and the executive director for CS 106. Within this group of five schools, three of them (CS 103, CS 105, CS 107) experienced a disconnect between the curriculum planned and the students who enrolled the first year.

One school (CS 106) did not devote adequate time and training to the curriculum, according to informants, and every teacher started doing their own thing. They said the first executive director gave them little guidance. Informants said the curriculum lacked cohesiveness until the fourth executive director was hired.

One school (CS 102) said the teachers had extensive training before school started and felt relatively prepared. They added that the curriculum appeared to be appropriate for the students who enrolled.

Respondents from two of these five schools (CS 102, CS 105) mentioned that providing appropriate special education services was challenging for a new school just getting started. These comments came from two experienced people who had the responsibility for the academic programming.

In summary, the data appears to suggest a pattern whereby skilled leaders create effective systems when starting up a charter school. The schools that were developed by experienced founding teachers (CS 104, CS 108), working together collaboratively, reported having their systems in place and working effectively when school opened. The three schools that had a founder or co-founder responsible for developing the systems that most matched their areas of skill and expertise (CS 102, CS 105, CS 107) also reported their systems worked well when school opened. The one school (CS 101) that had an inexperienced founder with limited skills, but an experienced and involved group of founding teachers and board members, worked steadily to get all their systems into place through the first two years of operation. The two schools (CS 103, CS 106) that had inexperienced, unskilled directors and inexperienced founding board members said they opened with weak systems and floundered for their first three years until they got new, experienced directors.

Communication

Researchers point to information flow, decision-making, and conflict resolution as important aspects of communication when creating an organization (Drucker, 1990; Meyer, 1995; Pfeffer, 1998). Informants in this study were asked about these three aspects of communication in conjunction with the creation of the systems needed to get their school up and running. The findings for these three subtopics of communication are covered in this section.

Information Flow

Knowledge is power, and successful organizations share information, according to Pfeffer (1998). He also found that self-managed teams added to the effectiveness of

high-performance systems. Analysis of the data concerning the flow of information in the eight schools revealed three patterns:

- information was controlled at the top by the executive director, who determined "what was shared when,"
- information was shared freely in an organization structured as a cooperative (self-managed teams),
- information was shared freely by the executive director who was in charge but believed in collaboration.

Four schools (CS 103, CS 105, CS 106, CS 107) reported that during the Start Up Stage the information flowed from the top down, with the executive director controlling the flow. Respondents said the staff depended on the executive director for information, especially about financial matters (see Figure 5.18). Informants from two of these four schools (CS 105, CS 107) said they received information of the executive directors' choosing. Two schools (CS 103, CS 106) said their director had poor communication skills and they received little information.

Three schools described structures that were very cooperative and inclusive when it came to information flow. In those schools (CS 101, CS 104, CS 108) different people had different responsibilities and active circulation of information between everyone was important. One school (CS 102) had a strong executive director who valued collaboration and worked to keep all communication and decisions transparent and accessible.

Seven of the eight schools described active school boards that kept the teachers informed during the start-up stage. CS 106 was the exception. That early school board was reported to have been secretive in many of its actions. Executive directors in three of the schools (CS 102, CS 104, CS 108) acknowledged that maintaining an open flow of information was important from the very start. Informants from seven of eight schools reported that regular staff meetings were held as a means of keeping them informed. Respondents from CS 106, the one exception, said communication between the executive director and staff was terrible in the early days. They added that communication between the teachers and the parents, however, was very good.

Once they moved into the Growth Stage, respondents in all eight schools indicated there was good information flow. There was a slight shifting of who initiated the information flow (see Figure 5.17). However, informants in the schools where the executive director controlled the information indicated that more information was forthcoming than in the Start Up Stage. In three of these schools (CS 101, CS 103, CS 106), there were new executive directors in place during the Growth Stage.

Initiator of Information Flow	*Start-Up Stage*	*Growth Stage*
Information controlled at the top by Executive Director, various degrees of sharing	CS 103, CS 105, CS 106, CS 107	CS 105, CS 106, CS 107
Collaborative/cooperative model of sharing information	CS 101, CS 104, CS 108	CS 101, CS 104, CS 108
Executive Director in charge but collaborative in sharing information	CS 102	CS 102, CS 103, CS 107

Figure 5.18 Information Flow Process Summary

Decision Making

Examination of the data showed three different scenarios of decision-making in the study schools:

- the executive director took primary responsibility for decisions, leading and informing the board,
- the board took primary responsibility for decisions, directing the executive director,
- a collaborative/balanced model of decision-making occurred between the board and executive director.

During the Start Up Stage, respondents in four schools indicated that the Executive Director was the primary decision maker (see Figure 5.19). Two of these schools (CS 102, CS 107) said the executive director was conscientious about guiding inexperienced board members through the necessary steps to make decisions, but the boards were definitely dependent on the director for information and direction. The other two schools (CS 103, CS 105) said their director made many decisions without the board's involvement. This changed when the schools moved into the Growth Stage.

During the Growth Stage only one of the four schools (CS 102) still remained in this category of director guiding the decisions. A respondent explained that the board

was not so dependent on the director anymore, but just very trusting of the director's ability to make good decisions. One school (CS 105) moved into the category of the board taking primary responsibility for decision-making, even though the founder was still the executive director. One informant said that after 10+ years the board was trying to reign in and control the director's entrepreneurial tendencies. Two schools (CS 103, CS 107) moved into the category of a collaborative, balanced model of decision-making during their Growth Stage.

Two schools were in the category of boards in the position of strong control over decision making during the Start Up Stage. One school (CS 101) had skilled and knowledgeable board members who compensated for an unskilled founder/executive director. This board continued to be strong and in charge during the transition into the Growth Stage with the second executive director. By the time the third executive director was hired, systems were well established and the board and director worked in a balanced, collaborative relationship with each observing their appropriate roles and responsibilities.

Both the board and executive director of the other school in this category (CS 106) were minimally skilled and experienced. The board, however, outnumbered the director and took charge during the Start Up Stage. Unfortunately the board's inexperience was reflected in poor decisions that hampered healthy growth. Informants said it wasn't until they hired their fourth executive director, who was skilled and knowledgeable, that basic systems were put into place and the school was turned onto a path of viability. At that point, they said, the school needed a strong, assertive director, which is what they got. Respondents indicated this director had to re-do the start up tasks, such as creating operational systems, teaching the board about governance, and establishing a cohesive academic program, before the school could move on.

Two schools (CS 104, CS 108) fell into the category of a collaborative, balanced approach to decision making from the beginning of the Start Up Stage. They continued to operate that way into the Growth Stage. Respondents from these schools said they engaged in lots of dialogue and decisions were by consensus.

Initiator of Decisions	*Start-Up Stage*	*Growth Stage*
ED takes primary responsibility, leading the board	CS 102, CS 103, CS 105, CS 107	CS 102, CS 106
Board takes primary responsibility, directing the ED	CS 101, CS 106	CS 105
Collaborative/balanced model of decision making	CS 104, CS 108	CS 101, CS 103, CS 104, CS 107, CS 108

Figure 5.19 Decision Making Initiator Summary

Researchers point out the importance of keeping the mission and goals of the organization in mind when making decisions (Cornwall, 2003; Drucker, 1990; Sarason, 1998). This approach to decision-making was seen in the data in the context of informants discussing the importance of the vision and mission in the daily life of the school (see Figure 5.20).

Four of the eight (CS 101, CS 102, CS 104, CS 108) schools said that the schools' missions/goals were considered when decisions were made, both in the Start Up Stage and the Growth Stage.

	Start Up Stage	*Growth Stage*
CS 101	Yes	Yes
CS 102	Yes	Yes
CS 104	Yes	Yes
CS 108	Yes	Yes
CS 105	Yes: Co-Founder 2 Sometimes: Co-Founder 1	Yes: Co-Founder 2 Sometimes: Co-Founder 1
CS 107	Yes: Executive Director1 No: principal	Yes
CS 103	No	Yes
238CS 106	No	Yes

Figure 5.20 Are decisions made with the school's mission and goals in mind?

For two of the schools (CS 105, CS 107) respondents reported some tension was experienced during the Start Up Stage because one founder felt a strong commitment to considering the mission and goals when making decisions, but that was not always the case with other leaders/decision makers. This tension continued in the Growth Stage for CS 105, but not for CS 107, who had a new executive director by that time. Finally, respondents in two schools (CS 103, CS 106) reported that mission and goals were not considered when making decisions during the Start Up Stage. However, during the Growth Stage, with new executive directors in place, that changed.

Among the eight schools in the study, three models of decision-making were seen. First, the strong executive director took primary responsibility for decisions, leading and informing the board. Secondly, a strong board took primary responsibility for decisions, directing the administrator. Lastly, a collaborative/balanced model of decision-making existed between the board and executive director.

Conflict Resolution

Dissent is said to be healthy as long as it is productive (Drucker, 1990). One means of facilitating healthy dissent is by establishing procedures to resolve conflict, allowing the dissenting parties to be heard and compromise to be crafted. Examination of the data showed that the schools in this study fell into one of two groups in this regard, those with established procedures to resolve conflicts or those without such procedures. In the Start Up Stage, only three schools (CS 102, CS 104, CS 108) had established conflict resolution procedures (see Figure 5.21). These three schools continued to use the conflict resolution procedures in the Growth Stage.

Half of the schools (CS 103, CS 105, CS 106, CS 107) did not have such procedures in the Start Up Stage but did put them into place by the Growth Stage. One school (CS 101) did not have conflict resolution procedures in place, even in the Growth Stage. Several respondents from this school mentioned that established procedures were needed.

The most common approach to resolving conflict was dialogue, especially dialogue starting at the lowest level, closest to the conflict. Seven of the eight schools mentioned this approach, with five of the seven (CS 102, CS 103, CS 104, CS 106, CS 108) specifically saying consensus was sought. Informants at the eighth school (CS 105) said that conflict at the board level was resolved by "majority wins." Non-board conflicts in that school followed the "chain of command," and ultimately a grievance could be filed with the board, if necessary. Consensus was never mentioned or inferred as a strategy at that school.

	Start-Up Stage	*Growth Stage*
Established conflict resolution procedures in place	CS 102, CS 104, CS 108	CS 102, CS 103, CS 104, CS 105, CS 106, CS 107, CS 108
No established conflict resolution procedures in place	CS 101, CS 103, CS 105, CS 106, CS 107	CS 101

Figure 5.21 Conflict Resolution Process Summary

Communication is key to system development and lack of communication can be a detriment to development. The slow development of systems is one cause of failure in new ventures, warns Cornwall (2003). Informants were asked about communication procedures in place at their schools. The three aspects of communication - information flow, decision making, and conflict resolution -were analyzed for the formal procedures evident at each school, first in the Start Up Stage, then in the Growth Stage (see Figure 5.22).

During the Start Up Stage, six of the eight schools reported there were monthly board meetings. This was a formal means of passing along information between the executive directors and board members (a majority of whom were teachers). Of the two schools that did not report monthly board meetings (CS 103, CS 106), one of them (CS 103) recalled there were "lots of meetings" but no one specifically commented on monthly board meetings. By the Growth Stage, all eight schools had monthly board meetings. Only three schools (CS 102, CS 107, CS 108) mentioned regular staff meetings in the Start Up Stage. By the Growth Stage seven of the eight schools reported regular meetings, be they staff, site council or directors meetings. (Only CS 101 did not mention this.)

Five of the eight schools (CS 102, CS13, CS14, CS107, CS108) thought there was good information flow occurring informally from the executive directors in their school during the Start Up Stage. Three schools (CS 101, CS 105, CS 106) said their executive directors were not good about sharing information even informally.

	Information Flow		**Decision Making**		**Conflict Resolution**	
	Start Up Stage	*Growth Stage*	Start Up Stage	*Growth Stage*	Start Up Stage	*Growth Stage*
CS101	Monthly board meeting	*Monthly board meeting; Parent meetings twice a month*	Nothing formal described	*Info to board one month, decisions made the next month*	Nothing formal described	*Nothing formal described, but the need was mentioned*
CS102	regular staff meetings, monthly board meetings	*Monthly board meetings; entire staff meets regularly; small groups meet on specific issues*	Major decisions made by the board. ED2 will make other decisions after consultation.	*Major decisions made by the board. ED2 will make other decisions after consultation.*	Seek to resolve at lowest, individual level. Move to mediation, if needed.	*Seek to resolve at lowest, individual level. Move to mediation, if needed*
CS 103	Lots of meetings and communication with parents	*Monthly board meeting; regular staff meetings*	Board approves Executive Director's recommenda-tions	*Major decisions made by board after extended dialogue to reach consensus*	Nothing formal described	*Board dialogue, consensus, occasional compromise*
CS 104	Monthly board meetings; site committee meets regularly	*Monthly board meetings; site committee meets regularly*	Site council makes big operational decisions by consensus; board makes recommenda-tions	*Site council makes operational decisions by consensus; board makes recommendations*	Problem solving process established, consensus is desired	*Problem solving process established, consensus is desired*
CS 105	Monthly board meetings; budget info not shared	*Weekly director meetings, monthly board meetings*	Top down, ED1 leading board	*Top down, board leading ED1*	Discussion among top administrators;	*Board: majority wins Others: chain of command; file grievance with board if needed*
CS 106	Nothing formal described	*Monthly board meetings; biweekly teachers' meetings*	Nothing formal described	*Board engages in lots of dialogue about big decisions; teaching teams empowered to make smaller decisions*	Nothing formal described	*Procedures established to deal with disagreements*
CS 107	Top down from ED1; Monthly board meetings; Weekly faculty meeting; Regular newsletters home	*Monthly board meetings; weekly faculty meetings*	Top down, from F/Exec Dir, opportunity for staff input	*Board makes big decisions; management makes operational decisions*	Dialogue first, contracted services of a mediator to resolve conflict	*Dialogue & consensus*
CS 108	Board: monthly meetings; Teachers/Staff: weekly meetings Teachers: another weekly meeting	*Board: monthly meetings; Teachers/Staff: weekly meetings Teachers: additional weekly meeting*	"flat" teacher/staff cooperative board suggests, authorizes, affirms	*"Flat" teacher/staff cooperative; board suggests, authorizes, affirms;*	Dialogue & mediation	*Serious matters handled by Personnel committee*

Figure 5.22 Summary of Communication Processes, Formal and Informal

The formal approaches to decision making during the Start Up Stage were varied as described by informants in six of the eight schools (CS 102, CS 103, CS 104, CS 105, CS 107, CS 108). Respondents in two schools (CS 101, CS 106) were not certain exactly how the decision- making worked in their schools during that stage. They pointed to the poor communication skills of the executive director as a big problem in the early years. However, by the Growth Stage, informants in each of the eight schools could explain how the formal decision- making occurred at their site.

Informally, three schools (CS 102, CS104, CS108) indicated that during the Start Up Stage teachers were included in lots of discussion before decisions were made. This increased teacher input during the Growth Stage was indicated by seven of the eight schools (not CS 101).

Formal approaches to conflict resolution have been discussed above (Figure 5.21). Informally, respondents in four of the eight schools (CS 101, CS105, CS106, CS107) made note of the conflicts that occurred during the early years. Four of these five schools were ones that reported there were no formal procedures for resolving conflicts at that time.

As the schools matured and more of them reported adding conflict resolution procedures, fewer respondents mentioned conflict difficulties. The one school (CS101) that reported it still did not have a formal process for dealing with conflict did describe a routine that happens informally when conflict arises.

Summary of Processes

The creation and implementation of systems in the schools of this study had to be discussed in connection with leadership and governance. These three areas are closely intertwined but create different "who (leaders)/what (processes)/why (governance)" scenarios depending on the dynamics at work. Each of the eight schools is sorted into one of three scenario groups. Group 1 contains schools with skilled leaders who create strong mission-driven systems that tended to be collaborative. They experienced relatively smooth start-ups and openings. The schools in Group 2 also have skilled leaders, though more hierarchical than collaborative. The pre-operational phase of start up proceeded in a timely manner, but the schools experienced difficulties after

they opened so the operational phase development slowed. Finally, Group 3 includes schools with minimally skilled leaders, poorly developed systems that crippled their start up stage.

Group 1. Six of the eight schools had founders or founding group members with skills and experience needed to start a charter school. Within this group of six, three of the schools (CS 102, CS 104, CS 108) stand out as being particularly strong across all categories examined. This confirms researchers' findings that leadership competence and commitment are indicators of effectiveness (Binger, 2003; Cornwall, 2003; Rizzo in Clinchy, 2000; Sarason, 1998) as is decentralization (Meyer, 1995; Pfeffer, 1998). The respondents in these three schools revealed they were ready to go when the doors opened to the first students (see Figure 5.23). Key systems were in place, including organizational, operational, academic, and communication. Informants from all three reported their schools had a clear vision and mission that drove decision-making. Even though the leadership configuration was different in each of these three schools, all reported the communication systems were collaborative.

	Leadership	Vision	Gov/Org systems	Operating systems	Academic program	Inform. flow	Decision making	Conflict resolution
102	Founder/ExDr skills in all 4 frames	Clear, consistent, important	Founders created; effective	Founders responsible; effective	Founder/ED responsible; effective	Founder/ExDr in charge but collaborative.	Founder/ExDr guides the board to collaborative	Established procedures
104	Founding Teacher/ExDr skills in all 4 frames	Clear, consistent, important	Founding Teacher created; effective	Founding Teacher responsible; effective	Founding Teacher responsible; effective	Collaborative/ cooperative model of sharing	Collaborative/ balanced model	Established procedures
108	Founding Teachers embody skills in all 4 frames	*Disagrmnt at the idea phase;* Founding Teachers prevail – then clear, consistent, important	Founding Teachr created; effective	Founding Teacher responsible; effective	Founding Teacher responsible; effective	Collaborative/ cooperative model of sharing	Collaborative/ balanced model	Established procedures

Figure 5.23 Process Summary - Group 1 (Start Up Stage)

Group 2. Another three schools (CS 101, CS 105, CS 107) also had leaders with skills and experience. Like the first group, they too, put workable governance systems into place before the schools opened (see Figure 5.24). However, unlike the first group, the decision-making processes of these schools were not collaborative but dominated by

either the founders (CS 105, CS 107) or the board (CS 101). Also, there were no conflict resolution procedures in place.

Two of the schools (CS 105, CS 107) had operating and academic systems in place before school opened. Their flow of information was dominated and controlled by the founders. Their visions and missions were clear before the schools opened, but both schools experienced a mismatch between the curriculum-focused mission and the students who came the first year. Both schools reported having to rethink their missions and curriculum after opening.

CS 101, the third school in this group, had a founder with limited skills, but they also had founding teachers and board members who contributed to the skill pool, making up for some of the founder's deficits. One area that still fell short was the operational area. Operational systems were not in place when school opened. It took another two years and a new executive director to get the operating systems into place. The teacher-majority board took a strong leadership role, at times dominating the first two executive directors. They were responsible for revising the founder's original vision, and developing and using it more fully.

	Leadership	Vision	Gov/Org systems	Operating systems	Academic program	Inform. flow	Decision making	Conflict resolution
101	Founder/ ExDr political & symbolic skills; Founding Teachers organizational, academic, and HR skills	*Disagrmnt at the pre-operational phase;* Founding Teachers prevail then clear, consistent, important	Founding Teacher created; effective	Founder responsible; ineffective	Founding Teachers responsible; effective	Collaborative/ cooperative model of sharing	Board directs Founder/ ExDr & ExDr2	NO Established procedures
105	Founder/ ExDr skilled in 3 frames (not HR); Founder2 academic & HR skills	Faltered when students came	Founder created; effective	Founder responsible; effective	Founder 2 responsible; revised	Founder/ ExDr controlled	Founder/ ExDr leads the board	NO Established procedures
107	Founder/ ExDr skilled in 3 frames (not HR)	Faltered when students came	Founder created; effective	Founder responsible; effective	Founding Board member responsible; revised	Founder/ ExDr controlled	Founder/ ExDr leads the board	NO Established procedures

Figure 5.24 Process Summary –Group 2 (Start Up Stage)

Group 3. The same person began both the remaining two schools of the eight studied. Data from informants revealed this leader had minimal skills to get a charter school up

and running so systems were either slow to develop or non-existent (see Figure 5.25). There were no written records found at either school from this person's time in charge. Informants from both schools reported that all systems information was kept in the director's, even the financial information.

This person was hired as the executive director to develop CS 106, but fired by the board after a disastrous first year. The lack of systems was glaringly apparent at CS 106. The governance system was not developed and the board was dysfunctional, according to respondents. The opening enrollment for CS 106 was over-estimated resulting in an operating deficit at the end of the first year. An informant said the school's administrative systems were left up to the secretary to create. Curriculum materials had been purchased, but no training was provided to the teachers. When the second executive director was unable to move the school forward, the board fired that one, too. By the end of the third year, the sponsors were prepared to close the school.

Some lessons from the CS 106 experience appeared to have been later applied to the founding of CS 103. One of the CS 103 informants reported that the school had a healthy fund balance at the end of the first year and thought this was due to saving some of the start up money and underestimating the enrollment. A curriculum director was hired for CS 103 and responsible for creating the academic program and training the teachers, said informants.

	Leadership	Vision	Gov/Org systems	Operating systems	Academic program	Inform. flow	Decision making	Conflict resolution
106	Founding Parent Symbolic; ExDr1 Political & minimal Structural (no one HR)	Founding Parent created; incomplete, ineffective	ExDr1 & ExDr 2 responsible; ineffective	ExDr1 & ExDr2 responsible; ineffective	ExDR 1 & ExDr 2 responsible, Under-developed	ED1 controlled; secretive board	Board directs ED1 & ED2	NO Established procedures
103	Founder/ ExDr minimum skills in Political & Symbolic frames (no one Structure or HR)	Founder created; incomplete, ineffective	Founder responsible; ineffective	Curriculum Director responsible; revised	Curriculum Director responsible, Faltered when students came	Founder/ ExDr controlled	Founder/ ExDr leads the board	NO Established procedures

Figure 5.25 Process Summary - Group 3 (Start Up Stage)

However, problems occurred when the students couldn't handle the rigorous curriculum that had been planned as part of the school's vision and mission. Another part of the vision for CS 103 was a high level of parental involvement. When it became apparent during the first year that students couldn't handle the curriculum and parents were not able to participate as had been envisioned, the original mission was set aside. Informants reported that teachers banded together to determine how best to meet the students' needs, but the vision and mission were not considered when making decisions.

The struggles of these two schools (CS 106, CS 103) confirm the warnings of Cornwall (2003) that new ventures will fail to thrive if there is ineffective leadership and slow development of systems. The chart below (Figure 5.26) shows all eight schools arranged as presented above, with the strongest first and the weakest last.

	STRONG		→		→		→	WEAK
	Leadership	*Gov/Org sys*	*Vision*	*Academic program*	*Operating systems*	*Inform flow*	*Decision making*	*Conflict resolution*
102	F/ED skills in all 4 frames	Fndrs created; effective	Clear, consistent, imprt	Fndr/ED responsible; effective	Fndrs responsible; effective	F/ED in charge but collab.	F/ED guides the board to collab	Established procedures
104	FT/ED skills in all 4 frames	Fndg Tchr created; effective	Clear, consistent, imprt	Fndg Tchr responsible; effective	Fndg Tchr responsible; effective	Collab/coop model of sharing	Collab/balanced model	Established procedures
108	All 4 frame skills among FTs	Fndg Tchr created; effective	Disagrmnt at the idea phase; FTs prevail	Fndg Tchr responsible; effective	Fndg Tchr responsible; effective	Collab/coop model of sharing	Collab/balanced model	Established procedures
101	F/ED pol. & sym skills; FTs org & ac, HR skills	Fndg Tchr created; effective	Disagrmnt at the start; FTs prevail	Fndg Tchr responsible; effective	Fndr responsible; ineffective	Collab/coop model of sharing	Board directs F/ED & ED2	NO Established procedures
105	F/ED skills in 3 frames (not HR); F2 acad & HR skills	Fndr created; effective	Faltered when students came	Fndr 2 responsible; revised	Fndr responsible; effective	F/ED controlled	F/ED leads the board	NO Established procedures
107	F/ED skills in 3 frames (not HR)	Fndr created; effective	Faltered when students came	Fndg Brd mbr responsible; revised	Fndr responsible; effective	F/ED controlled	F/ED leads the board	NO Established procedures
103	F/ED min. skills in Pol. & Sym. frames (no one struct. or HR)	Fndr created; ineffective	Faltered when students came	Curric Dir responsible; revised	Fndr responsible; ineffective	F/ED controlled	F/ED leads the board	NO Established procedures
106	F/Prnt sym; ED1 Pol. & min struct. (no one HR)	Fndr created; ineffective	Under-developed	ED1 &2 responsible; ineffective	ED1 & 2 responsible; ineffective	ED1 controlled; secretive board	Board directs ED1 & ED2	NO Established procedures

Figure 5.26 Process Summary-Start Up Stage -Putting the Pieces Together

Dynamics

People's behavior and relationships affect the performance of an organization. This is referred to as "dynamics" in the organizational literature (Anderson, 2002; Kimberly, 1984; Sarason, 1997; Shoichet; 1998; Simon, 2001). Analysis of the data gathered for this study revealed several overarching patterns of dynamics including:

- dispositions in key people,
- mission fidelity,
- relationships developed at the governance level,
- emerging issues and pressures,
- longevity of the adult stakeholders,
- luck.

These dynamics (dispositions, mission fidelity, relationships, key issues, longevity, and luck) combine with a school's processes (communication and systems) to form a web that creates connections between the areas of leadership, governance and resources. This is similar to Kimberly's description (1984) of the interaction of dynamics and processes and the resulting effect on an organization's environment and people. Each of these six dynamics is discussed in this section. As with the previous discussion of the process data, some aspects of leadership, governance, resources, and processes will need to be included.

Dispositions

Several dispositions emerged from the data, including being dedicated, fiscally careful, collaborative, entrepreneurial, and autonomous. The dispositions were most frequently attributed to the charter school founders and members of the founding groups. In schools where these dispositions did not apply to the founder, that founder did not remain at the school for very long. These schools eventually did hire executive directors who possessed these dispositions. Each of the five dispositions is described in this section. These dispositions, according to informants, are ways of thinking that influence action taken by leaders.

Dispositions: Organization Before Self

This disposition was apparent either directly or indirectly in the data of all eight schools, both in the Start Up Stage and the Growth Stage. An informant at CS 101 offered a direct comment saying, "The whole staff is very dedicated and type A personalities and really motivated. Failure was never an option for us."

An example of an implied indication of dedication came from a founding group member of CS 104 who said, "It's not about me, it's about the students getting what they need so they can be productive." Many of the comments about organization before self, such as this one, implied a level of commitment beyond loyalty to servant hood and self-sacrifice. A former student and current staff member of one of the schools said, "The attitude . . . of working in a charter school is you have to go above and beyond. . . . it's just like a 'must' to help [the students] and try to do the things you can for the school. We'll all choose self-sacrifice over the sacrifice of the building because we know how important the school is to so many other people." A teacher from another school said, "Some of our best teachers come out of business and industry, and say, 'Wait a minute, am I willing to take less money?' You have to have a passion for this."

Another aspect of "organization before self" that emerged had to do with the dual role of teachers serving as board members. It was recognized and specifically mentioned in six of the eight schools (CS 101, CS 103, CS 104, CS 106, CS 107, CS 108) that teachers had to be able to set aside their classroom perspective and assume the broader school/governance perspective. A teacher/board member respondent at CS 103 said, "This is maybe not going to be the best thing for me as a teacher, my class right now maybe, but for the school as a whole, where we're going, this is the best thing for us to do." One of the founding teachers from CS 104 said, "It's important as a board member to step back and remember it can't be personal, but has to be what is best for the school."

Dispositions: Fiscal Caution

A second disposition that emerged in seven of the eight schools (all except CS 106) for the Start Up Stage, then in all eight schools in the Growth Stage, was fiscal caution. It was the founder/first executive director that was identified as fiscally careful

in five of eight schools (CS 102, CS 103, CS 104, CS 105, CS 107). Comments from respondents in those schools referred to the founder as "very thoughtful and conservative in budgeting," "careful about spending the start up money," and "ran a tight ship."

Two of the schools (CS 101, CS 108) identified someone other than the founder as monitoring the start up finances and exercising caution with money. Respondents at CS 101 reported that "financially savvy" board directors squashed the founder's extravagant spending habits early on and took control of the budget. They also reported that subsequent directors were more conservative in their handling of the finances. Informants from CS 108 reported that budgeting was a cooperative task, "We've always done very conservative budgets. . . . We started this school, on the mentality of famine – we're not going to spend a lot of money." Eventually, one of the teachers took on the business manager tasks at CS 108. An informant said, "He is extremely detail oriented and extremely business savvy . . . he has maintained a fund balance, even in difficult times."

The remaining school, CS 106, found itself in statutory operating deficit after Year 1 because the first executive director over-estimated the enrollment. It took the next director two years to get that money paid back to the state. The fourth (and current) executive director "is careful with money" according to a respondent.

Dispositions: Being Entrepreneurial

The third disposition to appear in the data was being entrepreneurial. It was most often used to describe an individual founder, rather than be applied to a founding group. This was true for five of the eight schools (CS 101, CS 103, CS 105, CS 106, CS 107).

One additional school, CS 108, reported that they hired people with an entrepreneurial mindset. A respondent from that school said, "That's who we attracted, people who wanted that ownership, and were willing to work at it and create it."

Dispositions: Collaboration

A fourth disposition was the collaborative nature of the founder and/or founding group. Four of the eight schools (CS 101, CS 102, CS104, CS 108) described themselves as collaborative. The founder/executive director of CS 102 said, "I think I

have had more and more opportunities to practice servant leadership and collaborative leadership." A respondent at CS104 said, "it's really a team . . . everyone just works together." A member of the CS 101 founding group said, "a cooperative model works very well in this size environment."

Two schools (CS 106, CS 107) were not described as collaborative in the Start Up Stage, but became that way in the Growth Stage, under different executive directors. ED2 of CS 107 said he had to learn to be collaborative, which was a change from his behavior in the business world.

Respondents described the founders of two schools (CS 105, CS 107) in ways that implied an autocratic disposition. They were said to take complete charge, be directive, and not promoting a positive flow of information. In one school, CS 105, another administrator said she went out of her way to be collaborative, to try to create a balance in the environment.

Dispositions: Autonomy

The disposition of autonomy appeared in the data from several schools (CS 101, CS106, CS 108). It was applied primarily to the teachers. The current director (and a founding teacher) of CS 101 said, "The staff . . . are all very good at owning their curriculum and owning their teaching methods and working with parents when there's an issue . . . . For people who want that kind of autonomy, this is a great environment for that." An informant from CS 108 reported, "The people who succeed are self-directed, and take on tasks and responsibility themselves, but if you can't do that, then it gets overwhelming."

Several people, members of founding groups, recognized that both collaboration and autonomy were needed to get and keep a charter school going. One respondent offered, "That is one of the dynamics of drawing people together who have the skills and the assertiveness to get something off the ground and then work well together over the long haul."

Dispositions: Summary

The chart below (Figure 5.27) summarizes the dispositions in evidence in the key leadership people in both the Start Up Stage and the Growth Stage. The dispositions

are most consistent from Start Up to Growth Stages in the schools with little or no change in directorship (CS 102, CS 104, CS 105, CS 108). The founding teachers in CS 104 and CS 108 sounded less entrepreneurial as the school entered the Growth Stage, but otherwise dispositions remained the same.

For schools that changed directors over time (CS 101, CS 103, CS 106, CS 107) the biggest difference in dispositional traits was the departure of an entrepreneurial, non-collaborative founder to be replaced by a director with a more collaborative disposition. Three of these four schools (not CS 103) specifically hired a replacement with a collaborative disposition. In the case of CS 103, informants from that school spoke about how well they all worked together on the board and with the current director, but none of the respondents ever used the term "collaborative" in the interviews.

	Start Up Stage	***Growth Stage***
CS101	Founder: entrepreneurial, visionary Founding Group: autonomous; dedicated-school before self; collaborative; fiscally careful;	Ex Dir 3 and Founding Group: dedicated-school before self; collaborative; fiscally careful; autonomous
CS102	Co-Founders 1 & 2: trustworthy; collaborative; fiscally careful; dedicated – school before self; directive Founding Group: trustworthy; collaborative; fiscally careful; dedicated – school before self	Co-Founder 2 and other Staff Respondents: trustworthy; collaborative; fiscally careful; dedicated – school before self
CS103	Founder/Exec Director1: entrepreneurial, visionary, fiscally careful. First Teacher group: Dedicated to school	Exec Director 4 and other staff respondents: dedicated – school before self; fiscally careful; passionate to serve poor, minority students
CS104	Founding Group: Dedicated – school before self; collaborative; fiscally careful; entrepreneurial; integrity	Founding Group: dedicated – school before self; collaborative; fiscally careful; integrity
CS105	Founder/Exec Director: entrepreneurial, fiscally careful; autocratic Founding Group: dedicated to student needs	Founder/Exec Director: entrepreneurial, fiscally careful; autocratic Founding Group: dedicated to student needs
CS106	Exec Director1: entrepreneurial, autocratic; Stakeholder respondents: dedicated to the school;	ED3: collaborative, directive, school before self, fiscally careful; Stakeholder respondents: dedicated to the school
CS107	Founder/Exec Director: entrepreneurial, fiscally careful, hierarchical Stakeholder respondents: dedicated to school	ED2: collaborative, fiscally careful Stakeholder respondents: dedicated to school
CS108	Founding Teachers: collaborative, cooperative, entrepreneurial, autonomous, dedicated – school before self, fiscally careful	Founding Teachers: collaborative, cooperative, dedicated – school before self, fiscally careful

Figure 5.27 Summary of Dispositions in Key Leaders within the Charter Schools

Mission Fidelity

Mission fidelity has to do with how true to the mission a person is and the extent to which the mission drives the decision making for an organization. As reported earlier in the Process section of the Cross-School Analysis, two schools (CS 102, CS 104) had strong, fully developed vision and mission statements that were an important factor in the decision making process. This was true for the Start Up Stage as well as the Growth Stage.

Two schools (CS 101, CS 108) experienced mission tension in the Start Up Stage because the founding teachers had different ideas about the vision and mission than the founders. In both cases, the founding teachers were united and their preferences won out over the founders. By Year 3 of operations, mission-driven decision-making was evident in both of these schools.

Changing the original vision was also the case for three more schools (CS 103, CS 105, CS 107) but for different reasons than those explained above. In the case of these schools, the vision and mission for each school included a certain type of academic program that did not match well with the students who enrolled. Respondents reported that the missions were virtually ignored for several years, playing no role in the decision making process. This has improved during the Growth Stage. For CS 105, one interviewee said that since she became the board chair she has been consciously trying to connect the mission to decision making. The other two schools reported that new missions have been created and have taken on importance in decision-making.

The final school, CS 106, reported that it had a limited vision and under-developed mission when the school was started. Respondents said the vision played no role in the decision making process. When the fourth executive director was hired, she said creating functional vision and mission statements was on the long list of tasks she had to do. Another respondent acknowledged that the fourth director was mission-driven. He said, "[The director] is faithful to the mission and whether a person agrees or disagrees with [the leader's] style, the faith to the mission is much more important."

Relationships

The "relationship" dynamic was easily identified in the data and is discussed below. Informants commented about the general state of relationships among key stakeholders. They also spoke about the unique relationship that exists between teachers and the director when teachers are serving as board members. Both aspects of relationships were generally positive in the schools studied.

Informants indicated that coalitions often formed to strengthen a position or to pressure for a decision. The power struggles that occurred were internal as well as between the schools and external agencies.

Relationships: General State of Affairs

Respondents in two schools (CS 102, CS 104) made frequent and direct comments about the importance of positive relationships at their schools that existed from the earliest start up days. An informant from CS 102 explained that the founder/executive director modeled the importance of relationships in the ways that person interacted with staff, students and parents. This informant said there was a high level of trust because of the strong positive relationships. A respondent from CS 104 also described the importance of building positive relationships at that school. The respondent said, "It's a trust thing, too. Lots of trust." The respondent added, "We all care about each other." Another CS 104 informant said, "it's not a franchise, it's much more like a family and having relationships." In both of these schools the strong positive relationships appeared to exist at all levels, among all stakeholders.

A strong positive relationship among the teaching staff was reported in three more schools (CS 101, CS 103, CS 108). Two of the schools (CS 101, CS 108) made comments about "being lucky" to get likeminded teachers together when the school was being created, and for some reason the teachers "clicked."

The analysis of the remaining three schools (CS 105, CS 106, CS 107) revealed few comments about the presence of positive relationships during the Start Up Stage. Rather, each of these schools encountered tension and power struggles between various groups, both internal and external. These will be discussed in more detail below. A respondent from CS 106 reported there were many negative relationships in the first

years of the school, but the relationship between the teachers and the parents was always positive.

The general state of relationships as inferred from the data is summarized in Figure 5.28. There is slight movement toward improved relationships for several schools as they went from the Start Up Stage to the Growth Stage.

	Start Up Stage	*Growth Stage*
Strong, Positive among most stakeholders	CS 102, CS 104	CS 102, CS 104, CS 108
Strong, Positive among the teaching staff & director	CS 101, CS 103, CS 108	CS 101, CS 103, CS 107
Rough Spots/Ongoing tensions	CS 105, CS 106, CS 107	CS 105, CS106

Figure 5.28 General State of Relationships as Inferred by Respondents

Relationships: Teacher/Board Members and Directors

Minnesota law requires that teachers make up a majority of a charter school's board, unless a waiver has been obtained. Teachers serving as board members create a complicated relationship within the school because as a board member they have authority over the executive director, but as teachers, they are subject to the director's authority. Comments about this relationship dynamic emerged in all eight schools.

Two schools (CS 102, CS 104) reported a high level of trust between the board and the executive director from the earliest days and continuing to the time of the interview. The founder/executive director of CS 102 commented, "I just figured from the beginning, with this kind of a structure, where they [teachers] control the board and the board is my boss, it has to all be completely collaborative."

Three schools (CS 101, CS 106, CS 108) reported to have strong school boards and that there was friction between them and the founder/first executive director during the Start Up Stage. In two cases (CS 101, CS 108) the boards had knowledgeable, experienced members who understood and performed their board roles appropriately. Informants said there was tension when the founders objected to various board decisions and actions. By Year 2, the founders had left these two schools. Both schools reported positive board/director relationships after several years when the schools were into the Growth Stage.

Informants of CS 106 described the first board as inexperienced but "take charge." The board fired the first director at the end of Year 1 because of the failure to get systems into place. It was reported they fired the second director at the end of Year 3 because of perceived incompetence. During Years 2 and 3 the board experienced a major division and one half of the members voted the other half off the board. When the next full-time director was hired there was a lot of tension and friction as that person worked to get systems into place and imposed appropriate roles and practices on the board. Respondents said once all of the "old guard" was gone, the board and the director had a better working relationship.

The experienced founder/directors of CS 105 and CS 107 imposed strong directive guidance on their inexperienced boards in the earliest start up stages. Respondents reported that in the beginning most of the board members were happy to be steered by their director.

However, in Year 2, a parent board member challenged the founder/director of CS 107. This board member wanted to take the school in a different direction (create a new mission). The board member thought the director had too much control and parents should have more control. Informants said a number of parents sided with the board member and teachers tried to stay neutral to maintain good relationships with their students' parents. Interviewees said this incident created tension throughout the entire school before it was concluded. In the end, the parent won concessions, but left the school anyway. The founder/director remained for two more years. The next executive director reported that the board was still used to being directed and heavily guided, so it's been necessary to help them learn to assume board responsibilities.

Respondents from CS 105 reported that as the board members gained experience they were less acquiescent to the directives of the founder/executive director. One respondent described the relationship between the board and the director as "reactive" by the end of the Start Up Stage. As the school continued to grow and new, experienced members were elected to the board, informants reported that the board got even better at exercising their appropriate roles. The founder/director acknowledged there were board members who weren't always in agreement with him. One of the board members said,

"Sometimes we support [the director] and sometimes we don't. I'd say [the director] gets supported more often than not."

Little was said about the relationship between the founder/director and the board of CS 103. The founder left voluntarily after two and a half years. The next two directors only stayed for six months each. Respondents reported that even though they were each experienced administrators, they were not a good "fit" for the school. The board asked the curriculum director to assume executive director duties temporarily. After a year the board made the job appointment permanent. Board members interviewed thought this director was doing a great job and felt the relationship between them was positive.

Even though the relationship between director and school board appeared to be different among the eight schools during the Start Up Stage, by the Growth Stage most had moved into strong relationships reflecting appropriate roles and responsibilities. The chart below summarizes the relationship between the directors and the boards during the Start Up Stage and during the Growth Stage (see Figure 5.29).

	Start Up Stage	Growth Stage
Positive relationship between director and board, appropriate roles/responsibilities	CS 102, CS 104	CS 101, CS 102, CS 103, CS 104, CS 107, CS 108
Tension with director, strong board: appropriate roles/ responsibilities	CS 101, CS 108	CS 105, CS 106
Tension with director, unstable board	CS 106	
Controlling director, inexperienced, acquiescent board	CS 105, CS 107	

Figure 5.29 Summary of Relationships between the Director and the Board

Relationships: Coalitions

The analysis of the data showed that coalitions formed in each of the eight schools, and there was a vying for power or control of something in each of the schools during the Start Up Stage. Four schools (CS 103, CS 104, CS 105, CS 106) engaged in struggles with external groups or agencies. Six schools (CS 101, CS 102, CS103, CS 106, CS 107, CS 108) reported internal power struggles. There were fewer reports of power struggles during the Growth Stage (see Figure 5.30).

The external agencies involved in power struggles with charter schools included sponsoring groups, the neighborhood in which a school was located, and the Minnesota Department of Education. The sponsors of the two schools that experienced rocky start ups (CS 103, CS 106) were close to terminating the contract at the end of the three-year agreement. Each school was given an extension when skilled, experienced people filled the director vacancies. After two years with the new director, CS 103 went on to find a new sponsor. CS 106 continued with the same sponsor but with a less than satisfactory relationship, according to several respondents.

When a neighborhood was defaced by graffiti, the students of CS 104 were blamed. An investigation and several town meetings could not convince the neighborhood of the students' innocence. Rather than staying in a hostile environment, the school chose to relocate at the close of Year 2.

Enrollment accounting differences created a struggle between CS 105 and the Minnesota Department of Education. This occurred three times in three different years. The matter was eventually resolved in the school's favor through legal means.

The internal power struggles during the Start Up Stage all involved founders and founding groups. For three of the four schools (CS 101, CS 107, CS 108) it was a struggle over the school mission. A brief review of each struggle follows.

The founder of CS 101 hired teachers who didn't totally agree with the founder's initial mission. After the first year of operation the founder left and the teachers' mission prevailed.

The founder of CS 107 encountered a parent /board member who wanted to change the governance structure and the school's mission. After formal mediation the governance structure was changed but not the mission. The parent left the school and convinced other parents (and students) to leave, too. The founder remained and rebuilt the enrollment.

The founding parents of CS 108 had only a vague vision and mission for a charter school when they hired the core group of founding teachers. The teachers shaped a well-developed vision and mission based on the requirements of two large grants received by the school. The founding parents were not in complete agreement,

but the teachers prevailed. By the end of the second year of operation the founding parents had left.

The data shows that as the schools moved into the Growth Stage, and organizational and operating systems became more established, the power struggles lessened, but haven't disappeared. CS 106, who has a strong, assertive director, reported they still experience some differences of opinion with their sponsor. Respondents report there are still occasional power struggles between the director and the board even though they are working at being collaborative. Respondents at CS 105, also report periodic power struggles between the board and their strong, assertive founder/director. Even though CS 101 claims to be a school run by teachers and parents, the founding teachers interviewed confessed to having difficulty giving up control and handing some of the decision making power over to parents.

	Start Up Stage	*Growth Stage*
Charter school vs. sponsor	CS 103, CS 106	CS 106
Charter school vs. neighborhood	CS 104	
Charter school vs. MN Dept of Ed	CS 105	
Founder vs. founding teachers and board	CS 101	
Founder vs. parent board member	CS 107	
Founding parents vs. founding teachers	CS 108	
Co-Founder 1 vs. Co-Founder 2 and board	CS 102	
Director vs. board		CS 105, CS 106
Teachers vs. parents		CS 101

Figure 5.30 Coalitions and Power Struggles Summarized for the Start Up and Growth Stages

Issues and Pressures

Another dynamic to emerge from the data involved issues and pressures faced by the schools, both during the Start Up Stage and the Growth Stage. The biggest issue facing seven of the eight schools during the Start Up Stage was acquiring adequate funding to get the school up and running, first through start up grants, secondly through enrollment. Other issues included coping with steadily increasing operating costs, obtaining special education services, and meeting accountability requirements from the federal and state governments (see Figure 5.31).

Only CS 108 did not express this specific start up concern, rather they reported that early on they had received two large foundation grants in addition to the state and federal start up money. Two other schools (CS 102, CS 103) mentioned receiving foundation start up grants in addition to the sate/federal money. Respondents from CS 104 said they refused to apply for a number of grants because they would have had to compromise the mission and academic program to meet the requirements of the grants. Two schools reported taking out loans to be able to open the school.

Six of the eight schools (CS 101, CS 102, CS 103, CS 105, CS 107, CS 108) reported being concerned about recruiting enough students for the opening of the school. The other two schools (CS 104, CS 106) said they had to turn students away the first year.

As the schools became established and moved into the Growth Stage, the concern about money did not abate. A concern expressed by several of the schools was that expenses rose each year but state funding did not. Respondents from CS 101 and CS 103 wondered how they could keep their longtime teachers if they couldn't raise the salaries. Some of the longtime teachers at those buildings wondered how long they could stay without salary increases.

Recruiting enough students to meet the budget was a concern mentioned by informants at CS 103 and CS 107. Respondents at CS 104 and CS 108 had a different concern about enrollment. Both of these schools valued their small student population size, however they felt unable to expand their budget for new programming and/or additional space without increasing their enrollment. Both schools felt that any significant increase in the enrollment would negatively impact their program. They were wrestling with this dilemma at the time of the interview.

Another start up issue involved offering special education services. The pressure to do this the first year was mentioned by CS 101 and CS 102. By the time the schools were in the Growth stage this was no longer cited as an issue because services were in place.

A new pressure to surface during the Growth Stage was the accountability demands from No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Four schools (CS 102, CS 105, CS 106,

CS 107) mentioned this pressure. These four schools are located in the core city and serve an at-risk population of students. Respondents at three of the four schools (not CS 106) said part of the frustration with meeting the NCLB targets was the high level of student turnover each year. None of the schools mentioned how the NCLB concerns were being addressed.

	Start Up Stage	*Growth Stage*
Acquiring adequate funding		
Grants	CS 102, CS 103	CS 101, CS 104
Enrollment	CS 101, CS 102, CS 103, CS 105, CS 107, CS 108	CS 101, CS 103, CS 104, CS 108
State funding		CS 101, CS 104, CS 108
Increased costs		CS 101, CS 103
Special Education services	CS 101, CS 102	
Accountability (NCLB)		CS 102, CS 105, CS 106, CS 107

Figure 5.31 Summary of Key Issues and Pressures Expressed by Informants

Longevity of the Adult Stakeholders

Longevity and stability of the adults in the schools was another dynamic found in the data (see Figure 5.32). Turnover of directors and teaching staff can have an effect on start up schools. Four of the eight schools (CS 101, CS 103, CS 106, CS 107) experienced multiple administrative turnovers in their first three years of operation. Two of these schools (CS 103, CS 106) did not get well-functioning systems in place until their fourth year of operation.

CS 107 struggled with establishing an academic program that served the needs of the students. The founder was not skilled in this area and depended on the expertise of others hired for that purpose. The founder reported that a turnover of administrators slowed the development of the academic program.

The greatest stability is seen in the other four schools (CS 102, CS 104, CS 105, CS 108). These schools each still have their founding administrators and have had well-functioning systems since the beginning.

Teacher turnover during the start up stage was reported in three of the eight schools (CS 102, CS 106, CS 107). These same three schools, along with CS 103, reported having a small, regular amount of teacher turnover each year. Respondents in

four of the eight schools (CS 101, CS 104, CS 105, CS 108) made a point of mentioning the stability of the teacher force.

Informants also discussed board member turnover. An interviewee from CS 105 mentioned that the board had enough "old, continuing members" to provide stability, but enough new members to provide fresh perspectives. The current director of CS 106 discussed the importance of the "cleaning house" of the old dysfunctional board members so the school could move forward. One of the respondents from CS 104 appreciated that their community board members tended to stay around for longer periods of time and even get involved with the students in the school.

Respondents from six of the eight schools (CS 102, CS 103, CS 104, CS 106, CS 107, CS 108) mentioned how difficult it was to get parents willing to serve on the board. Only CS 101 and CS 105 said they had true elections each year because more parents ran then there were positions available. An informant from CS 107 said they are returning to a teacher majority board because they cannot get enough parents to serve.

	101	*102*	*103*	*104*	*105*	*106*	*107*	*108*
Founder is current administrator		X		X	X			X
Administrator turnover early years	O		O			O	O	
Administrator stabilized by Year 4	X		X			X		
Teacher turnover early years		O				O	O	
Continual moderate teacher turnover		O	O			O	O	
Founding teachers still there	X			X	X			X
Original board totally replaced						O	O	
Some founding people still on boards	X	X	X	X	X			X
Key: O = turnover, X = stability								

Figure 5.32 Longevity of Founders, Staff, and Board Members

Summary of Dynamics

The dynamics revealed in the data have been presented in this section in a linear manner for ease of explanation. However, in reality they are closely connected, threads woven together and wrapping around the areas of leadership, governance, resources, and processes (systems and communication), to make each of the eight charter schools a unique, complex tapestry. Yet the data shows that the schools share some common characteristics. For the summary of this dynamics section the schools have been

clustered into three groups based on shared characteristics. The first group contains four schools that share strong, positive attributes and characteristics from leadership, governance, resources, processes and dynamics. The second group contains two schools both founded by skilled, hierarchical leaders who established top-down governance systems. They also shared the tension of vision not matching reality and thus detouring mission fidelity. The two remaining schools make up the third group. These schools struggled for their first three years, with weak leadership, governance, resources, processes and dynamics. The three groups of schools and the more complex characteristics they share are described below.

Summary of Dynamics: Group 1 Schools

The dynamics of mission fidelity, collaborative relationships, organization before self, fiscal caution, and longevity were evident in the founders/founding group of the first group of four schools (CS 101, CS 102, CS 104, CS 108). The founder/executive director of two of these schools (CS 102, CS 104) possessed skills from all four frames of the Bolman and Deal model (2002). For one of the other two schools (CS 108), the skills of all four frames can be identified in various members of the founding teacher group. The third executive director of CS 101 showed evidence of all the skills in the four frames.

These four schools each had a strong, clear, well-developed vision and mission that consistently drove decision-making on the teacher-majority school board. The collaborative leaders worked at maintaining open communication with the board and school staff so all decisions were transparent. Two schools (CS 102, CS 104) specifically said that nurturing positive relationships was an essential part of their school culture. Three of the schools (CS 102, CS 104, CS 108) reported having established procedures to resolve conflicts, when needed.

The organizational, operating and academic systems of the four schools (CS 101, CS 102, CS 104, CS 108) were reported to be effective. Respondents in these schools credited the skills and past experiences of the founding leaders, as well as their tireless dedication, for the success of the schools. These fiscally cautious leaders all said they tended to under estimate enrollment when creating the budget, however all four

schools maintained full enrollment of students who were attracted to and served by the mission of the school.

In CS 102 and CS 104 the founders have been serving as the executive directors since the very start of the schools more than ten years ago. For CS 101 and CS 108 the founding teachers have been a part of the school since the pre-operational phase of start up. For all four schools the dynamics and their positive effects were evident from the pre-operational phase of the Start Up Stage and beyond.

Summary of Dynamics: Group 2 Schools

The founders/executive directors of the two schools (CS 105, CS 107) that make up the second cluster shared the dispositions of being entrepreneurial, autonomous, authoritative, and fiscally cautious. Both schools experienced a vision and mission created by the founder that did not match well with the reality of the students who enrolled. The entrepreneurial founders of these two schools each had previous non-profit and educational experience, including co-founding other charter schools. Respondents reported both had excellent structural skills, establishing effective governance and administrative systems in their new schools. They were both described as excellent managers of money and fiscally cautious. Informants portrayed each founder as authoritative and controlling, and needing to be the one in charge. Their skills fell into the structural, political, and symbolic frames of the Bolman and Deal model (2002).

Mission fidelity was minimal in each school because the original visions included specific academic programs that proved to be inappropriate and difficult for the students who enrolled. Respondents reported that addressing the needs of the students overshadowed the need to revise the vision and mission during the first few years of operation. Both schools revised their missions to be less focused on a program. A parent/board member challenged the mission of Charter School 107 during the second year of operation, but the substance of the founder's original mission prevailed.

The governing relationships in these two schools during the Start Up Stage was reported to be top down, with the founder/executive directors at the top controlling the information flow and directing the board in the decision making process. Informants

from CS 105 described the founder/executive director as knowledgeable but intimidating. They said he was rarely challenged by anyone on the teacher-majority board in the early years.

In contrast, the respondents from CS 107 made no mention of intimidation. They said the board was inexperienced and dependent on the founder/executive director for direction. They said the board respected the knowledge and previous experience of the director and trusted his judgment. Then, during the second year of operation, a parent/board member indicated a desire to change the mission, and also challenged the control exerted by the director. Mediation resulted in a change to the board composition, eliminating the teacher majority. Respondents reported that the turmoil on the board during that year also had a negative effect on the morale of the teaching staff.

During the Growth Stage there were efforts made at both schools (CS 105, CS 107) to establish more collaborative relationships at the board level, however, each was rather different. A co-founder/administrator at CS 105 modeled and promoted collaborative behaviors both in the role as an administrator and as a board member. She said she tried to balance out the hierarchical model of the director.

After the founder of CS 107 retired, the next executive director of CS 107 desired a collaborative working relationship with board and worked to increase their knowledge and confidence to take on appropriate board leadership. Informants reported that in both schools, as the boards went through training and gained knowledge and confidence, their ability to assume their appropriate governing roles increased. The relationship between the directors and the boards of these two schools became more balanced and collaborative during the Growth Stage.

Summary of Dynamics: Group 3 Schools

The two remaining schools (CS 103, CS 106) make up the third cluster and share the distinction of being started by the same minimally skilled person. Both schools also had inexperienced, unskilled board members and lacked a well-developed vision and mission, so there was no evidence of mission-driven decision making in the early years. Neither school had effective start up systems established.

The dynamics of mission fidelity, collaborative relationships, fiscal caution, and longevity were not in evidence in the data collected about the start up of CS 106. The dynamics that were mentioned included hostile relationships at every level, secretive board actions, and financial mismanagement. However, strong commitment to the school was evident from the parents and some teachers.

Charter School 103 was the founded by first executive director of CS 106. Interviewees referred to the founder of CS 103 as engaging and visionary as well as hierarchical. They assumed the founder was fiscally careful because a healthy balance remained in savings when the new director arrived. What was missing, however, was a complete written record of anything (financial statements, policies, etc). Respondents reported that teachers formed a collaborative relationship, but it was separate from the founder/director. They also said there was a high level of dedication to the school among the teachers, but they had a difficult time getting parents engaged with the school.

Both schools (CS 103, CS 106) went through a series of directors in the first three years but finally with the hiring of a fourth executive director had a leader with skills capable of getting the schools up and running. The two schools went through a second Start Up Stage once the new leaders were hired.

Informants from CS 106 reported how difficult the process of restarting was because there had been such hostile and negative relationships at the school. The new leader needed to build healthy relationships along with structural systems. In contrast, respondents from CS 103 said it was a relief to finally have someone who could create the structural order that had been missing and the teachers could concentrate on teaching. They thought their collaborative relationship helped make the restart go smoothly.

The dynamics of mission fidelity, collaborative relationships, commitment to the school before self, and fiscal caution were evident in this third group of schools (CS 103, CS 106) during the Growth Stage. These dynamics only began to appear several years after the fourth executive directors had been at the schools and systems were functioning well.

The shared characteristics of each group focused primarily upon the founders. The skills and dispositions of the founders vary from group to group, yet the predominant disposition among all eight schools is the self-less dedication of the founder to the success of the school. Some leaders were better equipped then others to make it happen.

Critical Incidents

Within the data there appeared to be easily identified events, defined critical incidents, that encompassed a variety of problems and issues in the life of each charter school. Some critical incidents occurred during the Start Up Stage, some during the Growth Stage. Both stages are fragile formative periods in the life of a charter school (Cornwall, 2003). Lack of attention to a problem, lack of action, or mishandling of such incidents can undermine the success of a school (Sarason, 1998).

Six schools encountered critical incidents during the Start Up Stage (CS 101, CS 102, CS 103, CS 104, CS 106, CS 108). Four schools experienced critical incidents during the Growth Stage (CS 102, CS 103, CS 105, CS 107). Schools 102 and 103 encountered critical incidents during both stages (see Figure 5.33).

Eight of the critical incidents were in the area of leadership and most involved internal dynamics, but some concerned school climate or public relations. Four incidents occurred in the area of governance, and again, most involved internal dynamics. School culture and climate, mission clarity, and external surroundings were other aspects of some of the governance incidents. Finally, resources account for four incidents. Three of the four appear to have involved external surroundings and public relations. The other involved internal dynamics.

The longest thread running through the critical incidents is internal dynamics. The action for each incident involving internal dynamics showed a movement toward resolution for the benefit of the school, rather than self-interest. For example, founders at significant odds with their school boards resigned rather than remain at the school. (CS 101, CS 102). Respondents reporting this speculated about what might have been a conflicted governance relationship and cause of ongoing tension had they remained. In another example, a director stressed teachers by implementing several accountability

requirements because of No Child Left Behind. Staff morale plummeted, so the director removed some of the requirements, lightening the load on the teachers (CS 102). Informants retelling this incident remarked about the director's concern for staff in doing this.

School	*Stage*	*Description of incident*	*Action & Outcome*
101	Start Up	Didn't have special ed system in place as promised. Parents complained about lack of services.	Scrambled to provide services. Situation did NOT escalate.
	Start Up	Founder overspending	Board took over responsibility for finances. Founder resigned after first year of operation.
102	Start Up	Business-oriented cofounder wanted a specific curriculum implemented & immediate expansion to a 2nd school	Board not supportive of those plans. Co-founder left after Year 2.
	Growth	School needed more income; families wanted more grade levels added	Expanded to add HS; brought in more students/money; needed to add more staff and space
	Growth	Multiple big changes in curriculum, responding to NCLB, pressures/stress on teachers	Some teachers protest to curriculum person, director rescinds some requirements
103	Start Up	Three different directors in the first three years of operation, systems not well established, mission mismatch with students/families	Teachers in survival mode, focus on students rather than the organization/operations; 4th director works to rebuild systems
	Growth	Major "conflict of interest" breach by staff/board member	Staff/board member fired; board worked well together
104	Start Up	Racially motivated accusations against students by neighbors;	Board chose to move the school out of the neighborhood
105	Growth	Disagreements with MDE about enrollment accounting format and totals	Legal action taken; school prevails
106	Start Up	Director 1 fired at end of 1st year; Director 2 fired at end of 3rd year, also half the board fires the other half of the board; sponsor unwilling to renew contract end of Year 3	Competent, confident director hired for Year 4, rebuilds from the ground up; sponsor renews contract
107	Growth	Small parent group tried to "take over the school" by changing the mission and restructuring the governance sys	Mediation occurred; mission remained the same, governance structure revised, no teacher majority on the board
108	Start Up	Conflict of interest: parent board members working as start-up consultants contracted by the school	Sponsor intervenes; contract bought out, parent board member leaves
	Start Up	Unique governance model in danger of collapsing due to staff overload	Big meeting; recommitment from entire staff

Figure 5.33 Details of Critical Incidents at Each School

For the majority of the schools the actions in response to the critical incidents are consistent with the dispositions of "selflessness" discussed above. These exemplary leadership behaviors propelled the schools over the rocky places. The outcome of the actions consistently appeared to move the schools forward in development rather than backward into crisis.

Summary of Findings

The findings of the study are summarized in this final section. The schools are reviewed and the six areas of leadership, governance, resources, processes, dynamics, and critical incidents are reviewed. Finally, the conceptual framework is revisited.

The Schools

Eight charter schools in the St. Paul/Minneapolis area were used for this study. Seven of the eight schools are located in the core cities; one school is in a suburb. The suburban school is also the one school with minimal racial or ethnic diversity. Five schools have been in operation for more than ten years. Three schools have been operating for more than six but less than ten years. Two of the schools are large, with more than 500 students. The remaining six schools are of medium size with 100-500 students. One school serves elementary age students; two schools serve students in grades K-8. Three schools serve secondary students and two schools are K-12. One school opened in a newly built facility. One school leases space in a municipal building. Four schools occupy former parochial school buildings. One school leases commercial space. One school occupies both commercial space and a former parochial school.

Two themes emerged from the missions of the eight schools. Preparation for life through the development of the whole person was part of the mission of five schools. A commitment to provide challenging academics appeared in four schools. One school had a cultural competency component in its mission (see Figure 5.34).

Schl ID #	*Location*	*Years in operation*	*Grade levels*	*Facility*	*Mission Theme*
101	suburb	10+	Secondary	New	challenging academics
102	core city	10+	K-12	Parochial	Prep for life/develop whole person
103	core city	6+	Elementary	Parochial	challenging academics
104	core city	10+	Secondary	Municipal	Prep for life/develop whole person
105	core city	10+	K-12	Parochial & commercial	Prep for life/develop whole person
106	core city	10+	K-8	Parochial	challenging academics; culturally competent
107	core city	6+	K-18	Parochial	challenging academics
108	core city	6+	secondary	commercial	Prep for life/develop whole person

Figure 5.34 Demographics of Study Schools

All eight schools were "started from scratch" (not pre-existing schools converting to charter status) and showed evidence of developing in stages, similar to those described in the literature for non-profit organizations (Cornwall, 2003; Simon, 2001; Stevens, 2001; Ward, 2003).

All the study schools had moved through the Start Up Stage (pre-operational and operational phases) and the Growth Stage. Three schools were in the Maturity Stage while the remaining five were in the transition phase from Growth to Maturity.

The greatest amount of data from all eight schools concerned the Start Up and Growth Stages. These were the most active periods of time in the development of the schools. These are also the crucial stages of school development, according to the literature. Charter school researchers (Cornwall, 2003; Finn, et al., 2000; Kimberly, 1984; Ley, 1998; Sarason, 1998) say schools usually will succeed or fail based on what happens during these two stages.

This study found reasons why schools might be so vulnerable in the early stages. The abilities of the leaders to create functioning systems were a significant factor in getting the schools up and running. Six of the eight schools had skilled leaders capable of creating the appropriate systems needed to open and run a school. The two schools with the weakest start up leaders and the most poorly constructed infrastructures were almost closed by their sponsors at the end of three years.

Seven of the eight schools in this study are in the Maturity Stage and the remaining one is getting close to that place of stability. Stable leadership and finances, systems that are well established and running smoothly, and relationships that are collaborative and positive characterize this stage. Respondents from schools that are in the Maturity Stage did not offer much information beyond, "This is where we're at now." They spoke of maintenance and long range planning as well as some of the challenges for the future. None appeared to be working through crises.

Leadership

The importance of leadership was underscored by the stories of these charter schools. Leaders were important whether a single person or a small group of people started the school. Among the eight schools in this study, four were started by individual founders (CS 101, CS 103, CS 105, CS 107) who became the first executive directors of those schools.

Four schools were created as a group effort. Two of the four founding groups (CS 102, CS 104) were comprised of educators who went on to assume administrative roles in the schools. The other two schools (CS 106, CS 108) were founded by groups of parents who hired educators to help with the start up. Founding teachers, those hired to help with planning and creating the school, were key leaders in these schools. Founding teachers played an essential role in the start up of two of the schools (CS 101, CS 108) in this study.

Four elements of leadership – visioning, commitment, knowledge, and skills – were evident in the leaders of these eight charter schools. These elements were found in the descriptions of the various charter school leaders offered by those interviewed. Organizing and presenting the detailed data about these four elements was facilitated by the use of Bolman and Deal's "Four Frames of Organizational Life" (2002). The skills and abilities of the charter school leaders were sorted in the categories of symbolic, structural, human resource and political frames which facilitated the application of the leaders' skills to various areas of school life.

Analysis of the data for the Start Up Stage showed that individual founder/leaders in three schools possessed skills and experience in all four frames (CS

102, CS 104, CS 107) indicating a preparedness to handle many facets of charter school development. As a group, the founding teachers of CS 101and CS 108 showed skills and experience in all four frames. The skills and knowledge were not in equal evidence among the leaders of all eight schools. Their skill levels ranged from strong to weak (see Figure 5.35).

The effect of an absence or weakness in any of the frames was magnified when the data was analyzed for "processes" and "dynamics." This is because structural skills are essential for setting up systems (processes) and human resource skills are essential to developing relationships (dynamics). A summary of these findings is covered below in each of those particular sections about processes and dynamics.

	STRONGEST	→	STRONG	→	WEAKER	→		WEAKEST
	CS102	CS104	CS108	CS 101	CS105	CS107	CS103	CS106
Symbolic: Visioning person	Co-Founder 1 and *Co-Founder 2*	*Co-Founder 1* and Co-Founder 2	Founding Teachers	Founder/ Exec Dir 1; Founding Teachers	Co-Founder 1	Founder	Founder	Founding Parent
Structural: Systems knowledge & implementation person	Co-Founder 1 and *Co-Founder 2*	*Co-Founder 1* and Co-Founder 2	Founding Teacher1 and a Founding Parent	Founding Teachers & Founding Board members	Co-Founder 1 and Co-Founder 2	Founder	Founder	Executive Director 1
Human Resource: communication & relationship person	*Co-Founder 2*	*Co-Founder 1* and Co-Founder 2	Founding Teachers	Founding Teachers	Co-Founder 2	Founder	No one	No one
Political: power building person	Co-Founder 1 and *Co-Founder 2*	*Co-Founder 1*	Founding Parents & Founding Teachers	Founder/ Executive Director; Founding Teachers	Co-Founder 1	Founder	Founder	Executive Director

Figure 5. 35 Continuum of Leadership Skills (Start Up Stage)

The Growth Stage leadership data (see Figure 5.36) shows that founders who stayed in their schools as the leaders were strong and continued to exhibit necessary and appropriate skills for each stage of development. This was true for Charter Schools 101,

102, 104, 105, and 108. The two schools that started with weak leadership (CS 103, CS 106) grew stronger and more established after the new, skilled executive directors had been there a while. The retirement of the founder/director of CS 107 left that school without a mission "champion." The new executive director had skills in three areas, but did not appear to have symbolic strength.

	STRONG		→		→	LESS	STRONG	→
	CS102	CS104	CS108	CS 101	CS105	CS103	CS106	CS107
Symbolic: Visioning person	Co-Founder 2; Board members	Co-Founder 1 and Co-Founder 2	Founding teachers	Founder Teacher/ Exec Dir 3; Founding Teachers	Co-Founder 1 and Co-Founder 2	Executive Director 4	Executive Director 4; Board members; teachers	No one
Structural: Systems knowledge & implemen-tation person	Co-Founder 2	Co-Founder 1	Founding teachers; Board members	Founder Teacher/ Exec Dir 3; Board members	Co-Founder 1 and Co-Founder 2	Executive Director 4; Board member/ teacher	Executive Director 4; Board chair/ teacher	Execu-tive Director 2; Board members
Human Resource: communi-cation & relation-ship person	Co-Founder 2	Co-Founder 1 and Co-Founder 2	Founding teachers	Founder Teacher/ Exec Dir 3; Board members	Co-Founder 2	Executive Director 4	Executive Director 4	Execu-tive Director 2
Political: power building person	Co-Founder 2	Co-Founder 1	Founding teachers	Founder Teacher/ Exec Dir 3; Board members	Co-Founder 1 and Co-Founder 2	Executive Director 4	Executive Director 4	Execu-tive Director 2

Figure 5.36 Continuum of Leadership Skills (Growth Stage)

The founders and founding groups of charter schools serve as the responsible decision makers until the formal governance system is established. The next section summarizes the development and functioning of governance in the schools studied.

Governance

The ideal situation for creating a charter school is to have people in the founding group who possess various areas of expertise needed for the pre-operational phase. Then once the school is in operation, the official board needs to be elected and the roles and responsibilities of the board need to be clearly defined. The data revealed that this

appeared to be the situation for six of the eight schools (all but CS 103, CS 106). It was also evident that this did not happen by accident, but the founders were deliberate in their recruiting for the founding group. For two schools (CS 101, CS 108) the founders were not knowledgeable in the area of governance and they specifically sought out that expertise to include in the founding group.

When the transition was made to an elected board in these six schools, training was provided to help them understand their roles and responsibilities. Informants from these schools said that since there was a teacher majority on the board, particular emphasis was placed on understanding "conflict of interest" and looking at the big picture.

Respondents from these six schools reported that as the years passed and their schools moved into the Growth Stage, the board members became more knowledgeable and skilled in governance. Interviewees from all eight schools specifically commented on the importance of their ability to "switch hats" from teacher to board member and maintain objectivity in their board role.

The founding groups of two schools (CS 103, CS 106) were described as having parents and teachers with little or no previous governance experience. The same was said about the creator of these two schools. The start up struggles reported by the informants of CS 106 were more extensive and board-centered than those described by the CS 103 interviewees, which were more operationally centered. Informants from both schools reported that their governance situations improved after they hired their fourth executive directors, leaders who had knowledge and skills in creating organizational and operational systems.

The clarity and importance of the vision and mission varied among the eight schools. Three schools (CS 102, CS 104, CS 108) had strong missions that were reported to drive decision making on the board. Three schools (CS 101, CS 105, CS 107) started with missions that needed to be revised because of a mismatch with the students enrolled, but mission still played a role in decision-making. Informants reported that the missions were not a part of decision-making in the Start Up Stage for CS 103 and CS 106.

Creating systems, especially the decision-making governance body, has been essential to the health and development of charter schools. Decisions about and accountability for resources is a major responsibility for school boards, and a potential problem area when they are starting up. The next section summarizes the experiences related to resources.

Resources

Obtaining start up funds and finding an appropriate facility are the two biggest resource concerns when creating a charter school. Three of the schools (CS 102, CS 104, CS 106) were created before federal and state start up funding was available. Founders of CS 102 and CS 104 reported having to do a lot of work to raise funds to open their schools. They also reported being extremely cautious in managing the money. The other five schools received federal/state start up funds and informants from those schools (CS 101, CS 103, CS 105, CS 107, CS 108) reported that their leaders, too, were extremely cautious about managing the money.

Only CS 106 reported money trouble in the first years of operation. Informants said the director overestimated the enrollment, received overpayment from the state, and ended up in operating debt. The debt was repaid over the next two years. Except for that first director of CS 106, all directors interviewed spoke about underestimating enrollment as a way of building a cushion into the budget.

As the schools moved into the Growth Stage, all reported that finances became more stable. Student enrollment was their primary source of income. Two of the schools (CS 101, CS 104) reported they had waiting lists, but the remaining schools said they were always recruiting. All of the schools said they applied for grants whenever possible and appropriate to their mission. At the time of the interview, six of the eight schools (CS 101, CS 102, CS 103, CS105, CS 106, CS 108) reported they had healthy fund balances.

None of the schools reported having extreme difficulty obtaining a facility in which to open their school. Half the schools (CS 102, CS 103, CS 106, CS 107) opened in former parochial school buildings. Two opened in commercial space, one in a municipal building and one had building constructed for the new school.

Expanding the facilities to accommodate expanding student enrollment was an issue during the Growth Stage for seven of the eight schools (not CS 103) and continues to be a concern. CS 103 needed to address the antiquated condition of their facility.

A system to manage the finances of a school is just one of the processes that needs to be tackled when starting up a charter school. The next section summarizes the findings about processes.

Processes

The biggest task facing a founding group is a structural one – getting the organizational (governance), operational (administrative), and academic systems in place so the school can open and receive students. In this study the five schools with skilled and knowledgeable leaders (CS 102, CS 104, CS 105, CS 107, CS 108) reported that they had adequate systems in place when school opened.

Charter School 101 said they needed the first two years after opening to get their operational systems in place because the pre-operational founding group was lacking a person with structural expertise. The two schools (CS 103, CS 106) reported to have inexperienced, minimally skilled directors and founding groups said they floundered their first three years until they got new, experienced directors (skilled in all four frames) who could put systems into place.

Communication was an essential process skill in effective leaders and contributed to completing tasks and building a school culture. Three schools (CS 102, CS 104, CS 108) reported there was a healthy flow of information and a transparent, decision-making process from the beginning of the start up process. These schools also described their governance systems as collaborative with the mission driving the decision-making. They all said they talked a lot to solve problems, but did have procedures in place to resolve conflicts, if needed. These conditions continued through to the Growth Stage.

Informants in three schools created by reportedly autocratic founders (CS 101, CS 105, CS 107) said the founder controlled the flow of information during the Start Up Stage. The decision-making process was said to be hierarchical, not collaborative. None of these three schools reported having conflict resolution procedures in place at this

stage. As the schools grew and developed (directors changed in CS 101 and CS 107, boards became better trained and more experienced) respondents said the flow of information improved and the relationship between the director and board became more collaborative.

One person was responsible for starting up both CS 103 and CS 106. Informants described her as having poor communication skills and a controller who made all the decisions. Both schools struggled to survive under her tenure and almost had to start from scratch in Year Four when new leaders were hired. The new directors worked at establishing collaborative cultures that shared information freely, promoted discussion to solve problems, and worked toward clarifying the school missions so that would drive the decision-making.

Most of the processes described by informants were affected by dynamics such as leaders' dispositions and mission fidelity. The dynamics uncovered in this study are summarized next.

Dynamics

Dynamics have to do with people's behavior and relationships within each school and how they affect the growth and performance of that organization. The dynamics that emerged as patterns from the data include:

- dispositions of being dedicated to the school/students, being fiscally cautious, being collaborative, being entrepreneurial, and being autonomous
- mission fidelity – the degree to which the mission was important and drove decision making
- relationships – especially those developed at the governance level
- emerging issues and pressures – primarily about money, facilities, and expectations (internal and external)
- longevity – particularly of the staff/faculty
- luck.

The disposition of dedication was clearly evident from the interviews in all eight schools. Informants communicated passion about serving the needs of the students and helping the schools be successful, even if it meant personal sacrifice. They indicated

that working collaboratively allowed them to accomplish more for their students and served as a positive role model of adult behavior.

An attitude of fiscal caution was seen in the data of all eight schools. The careful approach to spending appeared to be one indicator of dedication because all the informants expressed the need to be even more vigilant with their finances with the declining economy, even if it meant doing without. Many respondents mentioned the financial sacrifice they made by remaining at a charter school that paid less than a traditional public school. They felt the trade off for autonomy and a strong mission made the sacrifice worthwhile.

Another indicator of dedication that was seen in data from all eight schools was the ability of teachers to serve as board members and recognize the responsibility of holding dual roles. Many informants indicated they were motivated by the students and the mission of the school, so decisions were not personal, but about the kids. Many also indicated that by being on the board they understood the income and expenses of the whole school and could be more realistic about spending requests.

Relationships, longevity, and mission fidelity all came together in four schools. The strongest evidence of mission-driven decision-making was seen in the schools with the most longevity of founder/administrators and founder/teachers (CS 101, CS 102, CS 104, CS 108). These also were the four schools with a strong collaborative approach to governance from the very beginning. The importance of building relationships and establishing trust were dynamics in strong evidence in the data from these four schools. Several respondents from two of these schools (CS 101, CS 108) commented on how lucky they were that just the right people happen to come together to create their school.

The five key areas of charter schools examined in this study (leadership, governance, resources, dynamics, and processes) each had distinct elements but also interactions that affected each other. The interactions were sometimes strong and unexpected, bringing about critical incidents in the life of each school. The final section summarizes findings concerning critical incidents.

Critical Incidents

Critical incidents, tipping point events, occurred in each of the eight charter schools during their Start Up or Growth Stages. The problems or issues were addressed, not ignored, although some took longer to resolve than others. Half of the sixteen incidents noted in the data involved leadership and internal dynamics. One fourth of them involved governance and internal dynamics (such as relationships). The other quarter of the incidents concerned resources, external surroundings and public relations.

The action taken to resolve each incident involving internal dynamics showed a movement toward resolution for the benefit of the school, rather than self-interest. These actions are consistent with the dispositions of "dedication/selflessness" and "collaboration" previously noted by respondents at each school. The outcomes of the actions appeared to move the schools forward, rather than sinking them into crisis.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Charter schools are a recent phenomenon in the education world, with Minnesota leading the way as the first state to pass legislation and see charter schools open. Creating a school, then nurturing it to a place of stability, is a daunting task and not to be taken lightly. While many people become stakeholders in each new school it's especially important to the students and their families that the schools take root and grow. Since the charter school movement is young (just seventeen years old) the body of research about charter school growth and development as an organization is limited. This study sought to contribute an evolutionary perspective of charter school growth for the benefit of future schools and their stakeholders.

The Study

Eight charter schools in the St. Paul/Minneapolis (MN) area were used for this study. Five schools have been in operation for more than ten years. Three schools have been operating for more than six years but less than ten. The majority of the schools were of medium size enrolling between 100 and 500 students. Two of the schools had larger student enrollment.

The purpose of this study was to describe the growth and evolution of some Twin Cities charter schools, specifically looking at how the factors of leadership, governance and resources contributed to their longevity. Also, how did processes and dynamics interact with those three factors and affect the development of the schools?

In-depth interviews were conducted with 33 people from eight charter schools during the summer of 2007. The group of interviewees included current executive directors, school founder/directors, founding teachers, school board chairs/members, and longtime teacher/staff members.

A limitation of this study is that the schools are all "survivors," continuously operating schools that have endured since opening. Another limitation is that the interviewees were all considered leaders in their schools, had participated in the governance process, and most were still a part of the school. With two exceptions, early

leaders who had moved on were not interviewed. A final limitation is that this was a retrospective look at the eight schools; it was not a longitudinal study, following the development of the schools over time. The data are recollections of participants, making this a study of perceptions and opinions.

This project was guided by three questions designed to understand charter school growth and the relationship among leadership, governance and resources during the development process. The questions were:

4. What happens during that span of time from initial idea to mature reality that enables a charter school to be realized and to persist? What are the key organizational processes and tasks that occur as a charter school is created and grows?
5. What are the key organizational processes and tasks that occur as a charter school is created and grows?
6. What are the dynamics among leadership, governance, and resources that affect the start-up process? How do these change over time, especially moving through the first few years of a school's existence?

Synthesizing the review of literature led the researcher to create a model that captures the developmental stages of charter schools from the initial idea to maturity. The model suggested there were three stages of development, with the factors of leadership, governance and resources forming the core of the charter school organization. The dynamics and processes continually at work within the school affected the relationships among these three factors, and the relationships changed over time as a school moved through stages of development. The interviews provided data with which to explore the proposed model. Therefore, a discussion of the model is a discussion of the three research questions. Leadership, governance, resources, processes, and dynamics are addressed as they related to each other within each particular stage.

Conclusions

The early model proposed three definable developmental stages, Start Up, Growth, and Maturity. After the data gathering and analysis, it appears there are those three stages, but there are also transitional phases between the Start Up and Growth Stages, and the Growth and Maturity Stages. There also appears to be certain processes and tasks occurring at each stage and these might serve as characteristics of that stage.

All the schools engaged in these processes and tasks, but not to the same degree or at the same rate of completion. It appeared that dynamics had an influence on the realization of processes and tasks. The progress through the developmental stages then seems NOT to be defined by length of time (e.g., the Start Up Stage lasts for three years), but rather by engagement in certain processes and accomplishment of specific tasks. The conclusions for this investigation are presented as a stage-by-stage discussion of these processes and tasks and how they are influenced by dynamics.

Start Up Stage

The Start Up Stage is a complex time that can be divided into two phases – pre-operational (before the school opens) and operational (after the school opens). Founders want to create a school and usually gather a small group of people to help them. The founders are leaders, but members of the founding group may also be leaders. Leaders are engaged in tasks; these are processes such as creating administrative, governance, and financial systems, and using communication strategies. Leaders have distinctive characteristics; these are dynamics such as skills and dispositions. The leaders' characteristics have an effect on how the tasks are completed.

Creating and communicating a well-developed vision and mission statement is important during the pre-operational phase. Several schools had leaders who were able to articulate well-developed vision and mission statements, drawing other committed people into the project. These same leaders were consistent and faithful to the mission as they made decisions about establishing systems and using resources.

Several schools had leaders who did <u>not</u> begin with well-developed vision and mission statements in place during the pre-operational phase. In two schools that experienced this, the founding directors sought to reformulate the mission several years

after the school opened. Two other schools experienced rapid turn over of directors for the first three years and reported that the vision/mission statements were largely ignored until the arrival of their fourth directors.

Some schools moved through the Start Up Stage establishing strong systems and flourishing programs within the first three to four years of operation. Other schools were barely able to keep the academic program going and needed to redo many of the basic start up tasks, prolonging their time in the Start Up Stage. Some schools fell in between those extremes. It is the dynamics – leadership skills, dispositions, and relationships – present at each school that appear to affect the rate and quality of development.

Respondents reported that attention during the pre-operational period was focused on creating the operating (administrative) and academic systems first so schools could open. For example, student enrollment and attendance systems were important because state income depended on reporting accurate enrollment data. Curriculum needed to be prepared and ready for students on opening day. In the revised model the "governance" factor is replaced with "systems" to reflect the broader reality of the complete systems work being tackled. Leaders who had well-rounded skills, prior relevant experience, were mission-driven and fiscally cautious, appeared to create adequate systems to get the school opened and under way. This was true of five of the eight schools studied.

Entering the operational phase meant implementing the systems that had been created, fine-tuning them for best results. As mentioned above, two schools encountered difficulty after they opened when the reality of their students' needs did not match the schools' vision and mission. Three schools had weak administrative systems in place when school opened. They spent their first three years of operation working on getting those established.

The core structure of the school is fragile in the Start Up Stage because the connections between leadership, governance and resources are just beginning to coalesce. This, combined with the vast number of essential tasks to be done, may explain why critical incidents were more prevalent in this stage than any other. Critical

incidents are problems or issues that can be viewed as tipping points in the life of a charter school. The critical incidents in the Start Up Stage primarily involved leadership and the internal dynamic of relationships. In seeking to work through the incidents, respondents reported that the adults tried to resolve the issues in the best interest of the students and/or the school. For example, when a collaborative governance model threatened to collapse because of unequal participation, the issue was resolved through communication and recommitment of the staff to sharing administrative duties. This speaks to the staff's selfless commitment to the school and its mission. More broadly, it underscores the strong influence of leadership dynamics on process (conflict resolution) and school development.

Also worth noting about critical incidents was the fact that even though they were reported in all eight schools, the impact of an incident was not comparable across all schools. The schools with the most collaborative leaders and open flow of communication reported minimal long-term impact from their incidents. The schools with more controlling founders and less communication flow reported more trauma and stress related to their incidents. They said a certain amount of staff turnover occurred after the incidents in these schools.

Governance systems did not receive focused attention until the operational phase, after the schools were opened and running. The schools did not move from founding boards to elected boards until they had been operating for one to three years. At that point they began to implement more formal governance structures.

Transition Phase

Toward the end of the Start Up Stage the needs of the school required the founder/leaders to change their role from *creating,* which is intense hands-on-do-everything, to *nurturing,* which means empowering others and delegating more responsibilities. Some founders recognized the need for this role change and handled the transition seamlessly. Other leaders were reluctant to delegate responsibilities or share power. They preferred to maintain the role of creator and controller.

Within this same timeframe the governance system transitioned from a founding group to an elected board. In the best situations, the elected board recognized its role

was no longer that of "worker bees" helping to create a school, but rather they were overseers of the school mission and systems. These boards responded positively to the role change with the help of training from their executive directors. This transition of leadership roles and responsibilities appears to signal the move from Start Up Stage to Growth Stage.

Getting the governance system running appropriately and effectively is a challenge in most charter schools (Cornell-Feist, 2007). In addition to training from executive directors, boards that had experienced, skilled members appeared to make the role transition from founding group to elected board more easily and quickly than those with inexperienced members.

Growth Stage

The development of the formal governance system and the dynamics of collaboration, mission fidelity, and relationship building appeared to be the focus during the Growth Stage. Operating and academic systems were still in need of development, but it was the organizational (governance) system that required the most attention at this stage.

Collaborative dispositions among the board members AND the director facilitated the fastest, smoothest governance development. The dynamics of commitment and mission fidelity were evident in schools with appropriately functioning boards. This level of quality seemed to be achieved over a period of 3-4 years in four schools in the study (CS 101, CS 102, CS 104, CS 108).

Other schools reported (CS 103, CS 105, CS 106, CS 107) that inexperienced people were unaware of appropriate board roles and responsibilities. These schools took a longer period of time (5-6 years) for the board to hone its governance skills. Respondents said their boards were dependent on the executive director for guidance, direction, and training.

Building external as well as internal relationships was important during the Growth Stage because of the pressure caused by demands from stakeholders in both sectors. Calls for accountability came from external sources such as parents, the

sponsor, and the MDE. The strength of the school structure (including the governance system) influenced the ease of response to demands.

Some demands escalated into critical incidents. The collaborative founder/directors indicated they viewed the demands as problems to be solved and worked to resolve issues with a focus on the students and the school mission. The founder/directors with a more controlling disposition indicated they felt personally attacked by some of the external demands and became defensive.

Transition Phase

Schools worked to establish and develop their systems and relationships during the Growth Stage. While the transition from the Start Up to Growth Stage is indicated by leadership role changes, increasing stability of systems indicates the transition from Growth to Maturity Stage. What was apparent in the schools studied is that they arrived at the point of stability at different times with different systems and relationships. It didn't occur all at once, like crossing a finish line. Stability came gradually, over time.

Five schools appeared to be transitioning from the Growth to the Maturity Stage at the time of data collection (CS 103, CS 105, CS 106, CS 107, CS 108). They all had stable leadership and stable finances, both key indicators of stable maturity. However, some areas of charter life were still being developed. Among the issues these schools were addressing were revision of the mission (4 of 5 schools) and adequacy of facility (3 of 5 schools). The fact that they were still grappling with these significant issues is one of the indicators of being in transition from the Growth Stage to the Maturity Stage.

At some point schools realize "they have arrived;" they are in a place of stability. They are more involved in maintaining than creating. They are thinking long term rather than "next week." They are satisfied that they are meeting their mission and goals. This is the sense of maturity that was described by three schools (CS 101, CS 102, CS 104).

Maturity Stage

The characteristics of a mature charter school appear to be stable leadership, a mission-driven governance system that works collaboratively with the administration,

and stable resources (money and facility). This stability facilitates the handlings of issues and pressures, both external and internal, which persist even at this stage.

Processes (systems and communication) are stable but changes continue to be imposed from an external source, such as NCLB accountability measures. Changes also might be generated internally, such as the need to prepare for the succession of the founder/director. In mature schools their internal stability allows such changes to be planned for and implemented over time. Some dynamics (dispositions and relationships) are likely to fluctuate as staff and board members change, but there are some processes, such as open communication, and some dynamics, such as selflessness and collaboration, that appeared to have become a part of the culture of the school.

Longevity (especially of founders) is a dynamic highlighted at this stage. Some respondents felt that longevity of their founder-leaders and founding teachers was a contributing factor to the school's stability.

Summary

The big question that started this study was: "What happens from the initial idea to a point of stability, that enables a charter school to be realized and to persist?" After a review of literature, this question grew into a conceptual model of charter school development that was then tested through a study of eight stable Minnesota charter schools.

At the beginning of the Start Up Stage, leadership appeared to be a more important factor then governance and resources because the leaders were responsible for getting those two factors into place. "Leadership" included the founder/director and the founding group then the first elected board. The founder-leaders of six of these schools had well-rounded skill sets, previous relevant experiences, and certain beneficial dispositions. These leaders also were able to recognize that different stages of a school's life required different skills and roles from them, and they responded accordingly.

The common dispositions seen among these charter leaders were dedication, selflessness, and collaboration. What's more they were fiscally cautious and highly mission-driven. These dispositions were significant because they affected how decisions

were made within the governance system. This, in turn, affected the acquisition and use of resources. These dispositions then became the glue that held leadership, governance and resources together creating a stable core at the center of mature charter schools.

An important element in the Start Up Stage, but not included in the original conceptual model, was the vision and mission of a school. A well-developed mission is clear, concise, and easy-to-communicate (Cornwall, 2003). It includes measurable goals and core values/beliefs. It is embraced by all stakeholders and at the heart of all decision-making done by leaders. Missions that were about students and values appeared to be more accommodating to a wide variety of students than ones that included specific academic programming. The schools that chose to include a specific curriculum as part of their mission ran into problems when the new students and the planned curriculum were a poor match. The schools that lacked measureable goals and core values struggled the most in the early years.

Another essential factor during the Start Up Stage was adequate resources. It was the task of the schools' leaders to acquire a facility, start up money to get the school off the ground, and maintain stable enrollment to keep the school going. The leadership in six of the eight schools exhibited cautious and astute management of finances. This allowed a solid launch and allowed the schools to develop and flourish. The adequacy of resources appeared to be intertwined with the skill and experience of the leaders who were driven by the school mission.

Establishment of *systems* – first operational and academic, then organizational – and all mission-driven, created a solid school structure from which to operate. Dynamics that exerted a positive effect on the development of the systems included collaboration, relationship building (trust), and selfless commitment. The presence of these dynamics was particularly associated with the schools that progressed quickly and smoothly through the development process, and with the least significant critical incidents.

Finally, stable schools had longevity of leadership. Schools with a constant turnover of executive directors in the early years struggled to get established. Only when directors with well-rounded skills and certain dispositions came and stayed did

the schools get off the ground. In contrast, the schools who were started by leaders with the aforementioned skills and dispositions had healthy, efficient start ups. These same schools continue to have these founders leading years later, and have entered into the maturity stage before the other schools that changed leaders.

So, what happens that enables a charter school to reach stability? Data from this study revealed it begins with skilled leaders who are collaborative, fiscally cautious and selflessly committed to the mission of the school. A well-developed mission rallies a dedicated group of people who work cooperatively to acquire the necessary resources and create the systems of school. These people remain at the school, building trusting relationships, committed to doing the work necessary to deliver the education promised by their mission.

Implications

Potential charter starters and potential sponsors could benefit from information about the charter school leadership roles and how they change from the initial idea on through school development. The importance of leadership skills and dispositions should not be underestimated.

Minnesota charter school organizations recently began to offer application screening and advising opportunities for potential charter starters. This may be a place to intercept inexperienced leaders early on. Potential sponsors and the Minnesota Department of Education should be aware of the capacity of potential charter school founders for this monumental undertaking. Individuals with an idea but no skills or practical experience in the worlds of education, non-profits, and business are weak candidates for starting a charter school.

New directors and charter school boards could benefit from training about roles and responsibilities. Required training should happen early in the life of a school and be repeated whenever new board members are elected. Clarity about roles and responsibilities help minimize conflict. Minnesota charter school organizations are recognizing this deficiency and are beginning to fill this training need.

Teachers seeking a position at a charter school should understand the dual role and responsibility of teaching and as well as participating in school governance. Teachers serving on the school board were a positive feature in the schools of this study. They contributed to a better understanding among all the staff of where money was spent and why. Teacher board members had a strong sense of school ownership, commitment, dedication, and autonomy. Teachers who did not want to participate in school governance often did not stay long. This teacher turn over affects the stability of the school.

Developing and retaining talented educators willing to assume dual roles of teaching and governing is important. State legislators need to recognize the uniqueness and value of such educators. They need to allow for the cost of retaining experienced individuals in charter schools when allocating funds. Longevity of administrative and teaching staff contributes to the stability of a charter school.

Charter school starters should be aware of the importance of a fully developed vision and mission and spend time toward that end. Schools with clear and consistent missions knew what they were about and recruited staff members with compatible beliefs and dispositions. This screening for "fit," as discussed in schools 102, 104, and 108, helped establish and maintain the desired school culture. A clear mission also allowed recruitment of appropriate students for enrollment. Matching students with the school mission and academic program contributed to the rate and quality of some schools' development. Thus, schools may need to do market research to identify a potential student pool.

Recommendations for Further Research

Expanded research on the developmental stages of a charter school's life could help schools and their sponsors better understand and prepare for what lies ahead. Criteria and benchmarks of various stages might help a school track its progress or question and explore its lack of progress.

A means of assessing leadership dispositions might be beneficial to potential sponsors and founding group members as they are deciding upon their choice of a

leader. Dispositions such as being collaborative, selfless, fiscally cautious, and dedicated to the mission were important to the development of relationships and governance. The absence of one or more of these dispositions slowed the pace and quality of development for some schools. More research in the area of dispositions could possibly lead to assessment tools.

The issue of teacher-majority school boards should be studied further. An evaluation report on charter schools done by the Office of the Legislative Auditor and released June 2008 questions the appropriateness of teacher-majority boards in light of non-profit management best practices. However, for those schools in this study that had teacher-majority boards, they were regarded as a positive element of the governance system. Several schools also mentioned the difficulty of getting parents to serve on the board, so they were happy they had teacher-majority boards. The legislature could be advised to not make changes without studying the issue and recognizing the implications of such a change.

Questions about critical incidents and their impact on charter school development bear further examination and research. Questions to explore might include:

- How do the critical incidents of established stable schools compare with those of schools who have been in operation for a number of years but are not stable?
- What can be learned if the comparison is extended to include schools that have been closed?
- What factors contribute to the occurrence of incidents and what factors contribute to their resolution, both positive and negative?
- What is the relationship between critical incidents (their occurrence and resolution) and a leader's skills and dispositions?

Some of the first charter schools in the nation are still operating and being led by their founders in Minnesota. Researchers should be ready to examine what happens to these schools when the founders leave. How were they prepared for succession? How have they fared after the founder left? As with other charter school matters, these

pioneers will again be leading the way. Their journeys should be recorded for the benefit of all.

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Appendix A

Participant recruiting material

FIRST RECRUITING LETTER BEING SENT TO
KEY PEOPLE OF POTENTIAL CHARTER SCHOOL CANDIDATES

April , 2007

Dear (*name of person*),

HOW DID YOU DO IT?? (*Name of the charter school*) has been in operation for (*# of years*). You, as well as other key individuals in your school, have a story to tell about creating and growing a charter school. I'd like to hear the story of the journey of your charter school.

I am a doctoral student at the University of Minnesota. I am studying Minnesota charter schools that have been in operation for six or more years. This is NOT a study about student achievement or school finances. Rather, this is a study of the conditions, processes, and dynamics that have supported the development and growth of charter schools that are reaching maturity. Your school is a potential candidate for this study because of the school's years in operation.

I will be calling you in the next week or two to discuss the possibility of including your charter school in this study. You and other key people in your school have valuable experiences and advice that could benefit other charter starters. I hope you will consider being a part of this study.

Sincerely,

Sandi Horn

PHONE SCRIPT FOR FOLLOW UP CALL TO CHARTER SCHOOL DIRECTORS AND KEY PEOPLE AFTER FIRST RECRUITING LETTER

Hello _____,

I'm Sandi Horn, a doctoral student at the University of Minnesota. I sent you a letter a week, or so, ago about your school being included in a study focusing on mature charter schools. Do you remember reading that letter? May I take five minutes of your time to discuss it further?

(If "NO") Is there a better time to discuss the study with you or are you not interested in participating?

> (If the timing is not convenient, make an appointment for a phone conversation at another time. If they are not interested in participating in the study, thank them for their time and say good-bye.)

(If "YES") Thank you. As I mentioned in the letter, this is NOT a study about student achievement or school finances. This is a study of the conditions, processes, and dynamics that have supported the development and growth of charter schools that are reaching maturity. Your school was identified as one of 58 Minnesota charter schools that have been in operation for six or more years. I believe your start-up experience and successes can provide valuable information to others desiring to start a charter school. Also, there is little information in the literature about charter schools achieving longevity. Your participation, especially as a pioneer in the national charter school movement, would contribute to expanding the scope of literature about charter schools.

I'm hoping to conduct individual one-hour interviews with the director and at least three other people instrumental in the development of now established charter schools. Each interview will take place at a location of the subject's choosing and will be recorded and transcribed. The results will be part of a formal report.

I am specifically looking to include at least one founder from each charter school in the study. If I cannot interview a founder, the school will not be included in the study.

(If asked about who else is being interviewed, I will say, "Other people I am contacting for an interview are the original board chair, the current board chair, a teacher who served on the board, and a parent who served on an early board. I will possibly interview the sponsor liaison from the start up stage. The longer people have been involved with the school, the better.")

I have obtained information about faculty, staff, and board members from the school's website. I have also consulted the MDE website and archive of annual reports for names of individuals.

Given this information, what questions might you have?

Are you interested in participating in this study ?

(If "NO") Thank you for your time.

(If "YES") I would like to send you an information sheet with details about the study. Would you prefer to receive this by FAX, e-mail, or regular postal service?
(Confirm mailing address, get FAX number, and/or e-mail address if applicable)

May I call you back in two or three days, after you've had a chance to read the letter, to set up a time and place for an interview, or are you comfortable setting up a time now?

(If "now" set up time and place for interview)
At this point, do you have any questions?

Thank you for your time. I look forward to meeting you on __(day, time)__ at __(place)__. What is the best way to confirm this appointment with you the day before, by e-mail or phone? (Get e-mail address if applicable)

(If "later") What would be a good day and time to call and set up an interview appointment?

At this point, do you have any questions?

Thank you for your time. I look forward to talking with you again in a few days.

Appendix B

Consent Information Sheet

CONSENT INFORMATION SHEET

Investigation in the Development and Sustaining of Minnesota Charter Schools

You are invited to share your views as part of a research study about Minnesota charter schools that have been in operation for six or more years. You were selected as a possible participant because you are or have been a key person in such a charter school. This study is being conducted by Sandi Horn, a doctoral student at the University of Minnesota in the Department of Educational Policy and Administration, as part of her graduate work, under the advisement of Dr. Kyla Wahlstrom, Director of the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement at the University of Minnesota. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Background Information

The purpose of this study is to better understand what occurs in a charter school as it moves from being "an idea at the kitchen table," through the chartering process, to opening day, on through the first few years of operation, and finally on to maturity. This is NOT a study about student performance or school finances. Findings from this study will be used to inform others about conditions and practices that contribute to the longevity of a charter school.

Procedures:

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be interviewed by Sandi Horn for an hour, at a location of your choosing, to tell the story of your charter school. The interview will be recorded and this audiotape will be transcribed. You have the option of reviewing the transcript, if desired. We would ask that you be available for follow-up questions and/or clarification after the interview is transcribed. It is anticipated that the interviewing will occur between April and August, 2007.

In addition to you, Ms. Horn is planning to interview at least three other key stakeholders in your charter school that have been part of the schools operations in the early years and possibly continue to be involved. This includes people such as the first director, a founder, teacher, board member, or sponsor liaison.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study

Your responses and the identity of the charter school are confidential. The information from this interview will only be available to Sandi Horn and Dr. Wahlstrom. The information from all interviews will be aggregated within topical areas and will be analyzed to determine the experiences and perceptions about the creation and development of the charter school. At the end of the study, the findings will be included in a formal report. The only potential for risk involves the possibility that some people reading the final report may suspect your participation in the study and might attribute some findings to your charter school, even though that information will never be shared and will always remain confidential.

A benefit to participation is an opportunity to reflect on your charter school experience, highlight the successes, and offer advice about challenges. You will contribute to research knowledge about charter school longevity, particularly conditions, dynamics and processes that help a charter school survive the early years and become a stable, established school. Also, if you desire, you may receive a copy of the findings.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study, both written and recorded, will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Records will be stored for four years after the completion of the final report. After that time they will be destroyed.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota, your charter school, or your sponsor. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The primary researcher conducting this study is Sandi Horn, a doctoral student at the University of Minnesota. *She will be contacting you by phone to confirm your willingness to participate in this study and either set up an interview appointment, or confirm the appointment already made*. You may ask any questions you have at that time. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at 651-638-6343 (office phone) or 651-644-0843 (home phone) or horn0016@umn.edu. You may also contact Dr. Kyla Wahlstrom (612-624-1890, wahls001@umn.edu).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.

Please retain this sheet of information for your records.

Appendix C

Interview questions

Interview Questions

Background Knowledge

- Please tell the story of the creation of this school.
- At what point did you become part of the charter school? What was your role?
- What were the original vision, mission, and goals?
- Was the vision/mission consistently used as a guiding force to school development?
- Have the mission and goals stayed the same or have they changed since the school opened?

Leadership

- Who knew what to do to start a school?
- Did anyone have expertise in business and finance; creating a new organization; school management; academic programming? How do you know this?
- What was your experience with leadership skills exhibited during this school's development - before opening? -during first year or two? –after five years?

Governance

- Describe the evolution of the governance system for your school. (Prompt if needed: How were the various roles and responsibilities assigned?)
- Describe the first board of directors/school board. (Prompt, if needed: Who was on the board? How well did they appear to understand their role and act accordingly?)
- How has this changed over time?
- How did people on the board get along? How well did they work together? (Prompt, if needed: What issues provoked strong agreement? What issues provoked strong disagreement?)
- How were disagreements resolved?
- Describe the relationship between the board and the director. (Prompt, if needed: What effect, if any, did this have on the faculty and staff?)

Resources

- Describe your experience with resources, both time and money. How did the situation change over time? (Prompt, if needed: What were the biggest resource challenges early on, before the school opened? Later on, after the first year of operation?)
- Describe the decision-making process concerning expenditures. (Prompt, if needed: Who were the decision-makers? What input did other stakeholders have?)

Challenges and Rewards

- Overall, what have been the biggest challenges facing this charter school?
- What have been the greatest rewards?

Advice

What lessons have you learned that might be helpful for others starting, or in the early years of a charter school?