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ABSTRACT

This article examines the decisions made by one principal in her first year as a school turnaround specialist in a low-performing urban elementary school. Researchers focused on decisions related to the principal's three high-priority concerns: (1) elimination of an ineffective instructional program; (2) creation of a culture of teacher accountability; and (3) development of an effective reading program. Forty-nine decisions were identified and organized into five categories—performance, policy, program, process, and personnel decisions. The study concludes with a discussion of what principals need to know in order to make the kinds of decisions required of a 'turnaround' principal.

KEYWORDS *decision-making, leadership, principal, turnaround*

Introduction

Under the best of circumstances leading an urban public school presents its share of challenges. When the school enrolls a large percentage of students from poor families and when their performance falls behind their more privileged peers, the challenges multiply. In recent years, considerable attention has been focused on the plight of high-poverty/low-performing schools and how to prepare principals to turn them around. The present study grows out of our research on a joint effort to recruit, train, support and credential a cadre of 'turnaround specialist principals' for troubled public schools. This program resulted from an initiative inspired by Virginia Governor Mark Warner, coordinated by the Virginia Department of Education and the University of Virginia, and supported in part by the Microsoft Corporation. Two units of the University of Virginia, the Curry School of Education and the Darden Graduate School of Business Administration, joined forces in 2004 to form the Partnership for Leaders in Education, which in turn developed the Virginia School Turnaround Specialist Program (VSTSP) to address the needs of high-poverty/low-performing schools in Virginia. In 2006, the program was scaled up to a national enterprise.

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Besides training and credentialing turnaround specialists, the Partnership for Leaders in Education conducts research to increase understanding of what it takes to successfully reverse a school's downward spiral. When investigating the work of the first cohort (2004/5) of turnaround specialists, we discovered that the work of turning around a troubled school entails a great deal of affective effort and symbolic leadership. Turnaround specialists are called upon to inspire students and staff, boost expectations, convey genuine caring, team-build, cheerlead, act tough and sympathize. They also have to make a number of important decisions, beginning with an assessment of the conditions that are holding back student achievement (Duke et al., 2007).

Having gained a good understanding of how the turnaround specialist principals define the problems to be addressed in raising student achievement, our next concern involved identifying the specific problems on which they initially choose to focus and the decisions they make regarding how to address these problems. This article represents the first step in this inquiry. We examine in detail three high-priority problems identified by an urban elementary principal and the decisions she made during her first year to address the problems.

The first section of the article reviews several reasons why it is important to understand more about the decisions associated with the school turnaround process and the literature upon which the present study is based. A description of the methodology of the study then is provided. An overview of the principal's efforts to deal with three high-priority problems comes next. The problems, each regarded by the principal as an impediment to improved student achievement, include (1) how to dismantle an ineffective instructional program, (2) how to establish a culture of teacher accountability and (3) how to develop an effective reading program. The main portion of the article involves a more focused examination of the decisions made by the principal in order to address these three problems. The article concludes with a discussion of implications for leading the school turnaround process and preparing school turnaround specialists.

Leadership and Situated Cognition

Leadership is a multifaceted phenomenon that can be investigated from a variety of perspectives. Students of leadership have attended to the interactions between leaders and the led (Duke, 1998), the symbolic and political dimensions of leadership (Bolman and Deal, 1991), the moral influence of leaders (Burns, 1978), how leaders spend their time (Wolcott, 1973) and the behaviors associated with effective leadership (Northouse, 2004). Given all the interest in these and other aspects of leadership, how leaders think about what they are doing sometimes has failed to receive much attention. Among those to make this point with regard to research on educational leaders are Hallinger and McCary (1990) in an influential article on strategic thinking and instructional leadership. They (1990: 89) argue persuasively that 'the research on instructional

leadership must address the thinking that underlies the exercise of leadership, not simply describe discrete behaviors of effective leaders'. Their concept of strategic thinking corresponds in many ways to what might be considered the components of good decision-making:

> Strategic behavior involves skillful planning and management; it implies fore-thought, an understanding of the interdependence of actions within a social system, and a purposeful coordination of resources. Leaders who engage in strategic thinking consider the interplay between actions and responses in light of a set of purposes, purposes that may be explicitly stated or implicit in a principal's understanding of a school and its needs. (1990: 91)

Strategic thinking obviously does not occur in a vacuum. Recent research by Spillane and his colleagues makes the case that the cognition of school leaders is situated (Spillane et al., 2001). Their thinking, in other words, cannot be understood without taking into account the context in which it takes place. As they (2001: 23) put it, an individual's cognition 'cannot be understood merely as a function of mental capacity because sensemaking is enabled (and constrained) by the situation in which it takes place'. Their definition of leadership suggests the wide range of functions about which school leaders must think:

> Leadership involves the identification, allocation, coordination, and use of the social, material, and cultural resources necessary to establish the conditions for the possibility of teaching and learning. (2001: 24)

A low-performing school constitutes a particularly challenging context, all the more so when there is an accountability-based mandate, monitored by the school division, the state Department of Education and the governor's office, to raise student achievement. Spillane et al. (2002: 732) notes that 'the role of school principals in implementing accountability-based policies has gone largely ignored'. This article focuses on the efforts of one new principal, trained as a turnaround specialist, to respond to the demands of the No Child Left Behind law and her state's rigorous accountability system.

For a new principal charged with turning around a low-performing school, the kind of strategic thinking referred to by Hallinger and McCary might begin with an honest assessment of the local conditions that need to be addressed in order to raise student achievement. These conditions typically are characterized as 'problems'. Two principals conceivably could examine the same school 'situation' and arrive at different conclusions regarding the problems requiring attention. Osterman (1993) notes the importance of problem definition, observing that how problems are defined shapes the solutions that are developed and ultimately influences the success of reforms. She (1993: 59) goes on to note that effective change 'depends on clear understanding of the problem'.

Clear understanding of problems presents its own challenges, however. In their landmark longitudinal study of innovation and retrenchment in one

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school, Smith and his colleagues (1988: 286) argue that a problem involves 'a present state, a preferred state, and a gap between the two'. They then point out that many of the problems faced by school administrators are 'ill-defined problems'. In other words, there is no 'clear criterion for the acceptability of a solution'. In addition, every problem seems to be 'hopelessly entangled with other problems'. This entanglement, they contend, presents additional problems involving the determination of priorities and which problems to focus on first.

Leithwood and Steinbach (1995) have played a significant role in refining a research focus on the problem solving behavior of educational leaders. Their initial research studies focused on the steps undertaken by principals and superintendents as they reasoned through how they would handle particular problems, some of which were 'structured' and others of which were 'unstructured' or ill-defined. Their research on principals finds that those individuals identified as 'expert' principals differ from those identified as 'typical' principals in the way they address various aspects of problem solving, including problem definition and the development of solutions. A major contribution of this work is the recognition that problem solving is a complex construct that needs to be sub-divided into component elements in order to be understood. Leithwood identifies six key elements of problem solving, including interpretation, goals, principles and values, constraints, solution process and affect.

In our initial study of turnaround specialist principals, we focused on the first element in the Leithwood model—interpretation, or problem definition (Duke et al., 2007). We followed 10 elementary and nine middle school principals over the course of their first year in the school turnaround process. Periodically they were asked to identify the problems that they perceived were holding back student achievement. The list of problems was condensed and categorized to create the inventory found in Table 1.

No two principals of the 19 identified the exact same set of problems, but there were many problems mentioned by a large number of principals. Low reading achievement, for example, was identified by all 19 principals, and 18 of the 19 pinpointed personnel problems as a condition contributing to low student achievement.

We feel that we are beginning to understand how the turnaround specialist principals define the problems in their schools, but we still lack detailed knowledge of the fifth element in the Leithwood model—solution process. Specifically, we want to learn about the decisions that a turnaround specialist principal makes once a high priority problem has been identified. We assume that such a study requires close monitoring of the principal and her efforts to understand the context in which she must lead.

The type of investigation represented by the following study promises to improve the process of troubleshooting school turnaround initiatives. By creating an inventory of decisions related to priority concerns, we provide a

Table 1 Problems perceived to be holding back student achievement

	Problems
Student achievement and behavior	1. Low reading achievement 2. Low math achievement 3. Attendance problems 4. Discipline problems
School programs and organization	5. Lack of focus 6. Unaligned curriculum 7. Ineffective instruction 8. Lack of data 9. Lack of teamwork 10. Inadequate infrastructure 11. Ineffective scheduling 12. Dysfunctional culture 13. Ineffective interventions 14. Lack of inclusion 15. Inadequate facilities 16. Inadequate materials 17. Ineffective staff development
Staffing	18. Personnel problems 19. Lack of specialists
School system issues	20. Central office instability 21. Technical difficulties 22. Lack of district support
Parents and community	23. Low parent involvement 24. Negative community perceptions

point of reference for subsequent analysis. If the first year efforts of a turn-around principal do not produce the desired results, for example, the inventory of decisions can be reviewed for possible errors of judgment. If a substantial number of studies of principal decision-making are undertaken, we eventually may be able to compare the nature of decisions made by successful and unsuccessful principals, thereby providing greater understanding of the relationship between decision-making and effective school leadership.

Methodology

In the absence of a large body of research on the decisions of school turnaround principals, we designed an exploratory study focusing on a single principal participating in the VSTSP. By beginning data collection when a principal first was assigned to a low-performing school and by regularly contacting the individual throughout the first year of her principalship, we avoided the problems encountered in retrospective studies in which principals are asked to reconstruct their thinking at some distant point in the past.

The research design for the study is a single-site case study design using a decision-making conceptual framework. A decision, for purposes of data

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collection, is considered to be a conscious choice made after consideration of two or more alternatives (March, 1994). The choice, in the judgment of the principal, had to be related in some way to her efforts to raise student achievement.

According to Yin (1994: 1), a case study is the 'preferred strategy when "how" and "why" questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context'. The general question guiding our inquiry is:

> How does a new principal begin the process of turning around a low-performing elementary school?

The site of the study clearly constitutes a 'real-life context', and the researchers exercised no control over the administration of the elementary school.

To provide additional focus for the study, we concentrate on the decisions made during the principal's first year that, according to her, concerned one or more of her three high-priority problems. One decision often leads to others, a possibility that further justifies the choice of a case study design. Yin (1994: 6) notes in this regard that such a design is well-suited to questions dealing with the tracing of operational links over time.

If an understanding of school turnaround decision-making is to take shape, it is most likely to emerge from rich qualitative data that are systematically collected and analyzed. No preconceived notions regarding the decisions of a turnaround principal are employed in the design of the study or subsequent data collection. The first responsibility of the researcher, according to Strauss and Corbin (1998: 16–19), is to describe as accurately as possible the phenomena being investigated—in the present case, the decisions made by a turnaround principal regarding her most pressing problems and how to address them. In some cases, the decision involved a choice between acting and not acting. In other cases, a variety of possibilities were considered. Situations where the principal acted without weighing alternatives were not coded as decisions. Collection of decision data was facilitated by the use of an interview schedule based on the high-priority problems initially identified by the turnaround specialist.

When Wilma Williams (a pseudonym) commenced her assignment as turnaround specialist at Keswick Elementary School (also a pseudonym), she was asked to assess her school's circumstances and identify the conditions that needed to be addressed in order to raise student achievement. Of the various conditions that she noted, several were regarded as high-priority concerns requiring immediate attention. In order to monitor how Williams handled these and related concerns over the course of her first year at Keswick, a process of monthly data collection was implemented. Plans were made to interview Williams via email or in person, using an interview schedule that covered (1) what had been done since the preceding interview to address each problem, (2) what decisions she had made in conjunction with these efforts and (3) the

consequences of these decisions. Each interview built on responses from preceding interviews.

All interviews and other contacts with Williams were made by the second author, a member of the VSTSP research team and a doctoral student at the University of Virginia. Frequent interactions, assurances of confidentiality and the use of pseudonyms enabled the researcher to establish a relationship of trust with Williams.

When Williams was interviewed for the second time, early in the fall, she was asked to confirm that the problems she originally had defined as critical remained so. She agreed that developing a culture of teacher accountability and implementing an effective reading program continued to be central issues. She went on to note, however, that what she first regarded as her primary problem—dismantling an ineffective instructional program—had been largely resolved. In January, diagrams were created tracking Williams' efforts from August through December to deal with each problem. She was asked to review these diagrams, verify their accuracy, and add any omitted decisions. The same process was undertaken at the end of the 2005/6 school year, thereby providing a measure of trustworthiness in the form of member checking.

Interview data were content analyzed in order to identify specific decisions that were made by Williams in the course of addressing the three central problems and any 'spin-off' issues that arose during the year. Decisions included assessments of particular conditions and circumstances, scheduling choices, and judgments regarding programs and personnel. A total of 49 discrete decisions were identified. The next step in analysis involved the development of a coding scheme (Patton, 2001). The coding scheme was emergent, in that it resulted from our interpretation of the data on Williams' decisions. Strauss and Corbin (1998) refer to this process as 'open coding' because researchers are expected to remain open to the possibilities presented by the data. Decisions were clustered into five categories based on the primary focus of the decision: performance, policy, program, process and personnel. The categories will be explained later.

Central Problems as Williams Defined Them

Wilma Williams, formerly a middle school teacher and principal, assumed the principalship of Keswick Elementary School in the fall of 2005. The school served 237 students in grades kindergarten through 5, with 67 percent of students qualifying for free or reduced price lunch. The school had barely made adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind Act for the 2005/6 school year (based on tests taken during the 2004/5 school year). In order to make AYP, schools must increase the percentage of students passing standardized tests in reading and math each year. Though each state sets its own expected annual rate of increase, the federal government's expectation is that every school will reach 100% proficiency by 2014. The percentages of

Keswick third and fifth graders who earned a proficient score on the state test the previous spring in reading were 50 and 76, respectively. On the state mathematics test, 68 percent of the third graders and 66 percent of the fifth graders earned a proficient score.

Williams believed that Keswick's marginal track record on state tests could be traced to the school's four-year involvement with Montessori-based instruction; Keswick's previous principal had implemented the program upon beginning her tenure in the fall of 2001. The Montessori method places great emphasis on students progressing at their own pace, a provision that she felt caused many students to fall behind their classmates and remain behind. Putting an end to the Montessori program was job one as far as Williams was concerned. When she was interviewed in October, barely a month after the beginning of school, Williams reported that the Montessori program had been officially terminated. Besides informing teachers that student self-pacing was preventing Keswick from raising academic performance, she removed Maria Montessori's picture from its prominent position at the entrance to the school. Brochures describing Keswick to prospective parents no longer listed the school as a Montessori site. Williams admitted that it was much easier to remove Montessori's picture and change the description in a brochure than it was to alter teacher beliefs. Several Keswick teachers, in fact, recently had earned master's degrees in Montessori education. Williams knew that many of the school's 20 teachers still accepted the precepts of the Montessori method, including extending invitations to students to try new activities, minimizing classroom structure and, of course, self-pacing. Changing their belief system would require time, Williams acknowledged, but she also thought that such change was more likely to occur if she dealt with the other two pressing problems successfully.

Figures 1 and 2 provide snapshots of the decisions made by Williams over the course of the 2005/6 school year in order to re-culture Keswick and build an effective reading program.

In Figure 1 we see that Williams' first step toward a culture of teacher accountability involved the decision to implement benchmark tests aligned to the state curriculum standards and given every four and a half weeks until the spring administration of the state standardized tests. In October, she initiated the first discussions of benchmark test results with small groups of teachers. The No Child Left Behind Act requires that schools meet adequate yearly progress not only in the performance of their entire student bodies, but also in the performance of four sub-groups: student racial/ethnic background and whether a student is economically disadvantaged, receives special education services or is identified as limited English proficient. Therefore, these small groups of teachers were shown how to disaggregate data by student sub-group. Teachers also clustered students into quartiles in order to pinpoint which students were in greatest need of assistance on particular tested items. The following month Williams made an adjustment to the benchmark testing

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Figure 1 Action taken to establish a culture of teacher accountability

SEPTEMBER

Principal establishes benchmark testing at 4½ week intervals.

OCTOBER

Principal discusses first benchmark results with small groups of faculty (K-1, 2–3 and 4–5), which includes disaggregating data into demographic groups and putting students' names into quartiles to track their progress. (This is repeated after all benchmark tests throughout the year.)

NOVEMBER

Principal decides to benchmark social studies and science only at the end of the first semester, as opposed to every 4½ weeks, out of concern it would be too much for the teachers and students to handle.

Principal invites a data expert from a nearby school system to talk with faculty about the previous year's data.

JANUARY

Principal asks district personnel director to re-assign teachers who are 'causing an undercurrent of dissent' to different schools in the district for 2006–7.

MARCH

After school remediation for students struggling with reading and writing begins.

APRIL

Principal attempts to create a sense of urgency among the faculty by counting down the number of days until state testing during morning announcements and in the cafeteria.

Principal completes teacher evaluations. They focus on teachers' responsibility for student success.

Principal purchases and faculty begin to use 'Study Island', an SOL review program that tracks student success on each SOL skill through testing and games.

MAY

Principal notifies faculty of 2006–7 teaching assignments, designed in part to make certain faculty members uncomfortable enough that they will leave the school. This includes some faculty members being slotted to teach different grade levels, and many teachers being moved to different classrooms.

schedule after sensing that teachers were feeling overwhelmed by the data and subsequent remediation efforts. She decided that only benchmark tests in language arts and mathematics would be given every four and a half weeks. Science and social studies tests would be given only at the end of the first semester. November also found Williams inviting an expert on data analysis to help her teachers make sense of the previous year's test results.

As Williams stressed the necessity for accountability, some teachers began to openly question her leadership. In January, Williams decided to seek support from the central office to transfer teachers who did not embrace her initiative. In March, Williams launched after-school remediation sessions for students whose benchmark tests revealed areas of continuing weakness. Teachers were assigned to run these sessions. By April, Williams was using morning announcements to remind students and staff of the impending state tests. Teacher evaluations also were completed in April. The evaluations were used to give teachers feedback on their willingness to assume responsibility for student success on the mandated curriculum. Williams also purchased software based on Virginia's Standards of Learning (SOL) in order to help teachers monitor student progress.

Having failed to get central office support for re-assigning disgruntled teachers, Williams notified staff members in May of their assignments for the 2006/7 school year. By giving the disgruntled teachers assignments they were unlikely to desire and switching their classrooms, Williams hoped to prompt them to transfer to other schools.

Figure 2 tracks Williams' decisions related to improving Keswick's reading program. She started off the school year by requiring all teachers to use the Scott Foresman reading program. The program had been adopted four years earlier, but Williams' predecessor did not insist that teachers use it. By December, Williams realized that Keswick's struggling readers also needed a supplemental reading program. She agreed to implement a program that had been purchased by her school system with Title I funds (money provided by the federal government to schools and districts enrolling a high percentage of children from low-income households). The following month, she asked for and received permission from the superintendent to use her reading intervention specialists and reading specialists in regular classrooms, rather than only in pullout classes. January also found Williams adding more inclusion classes for special education students and placing computers in every classroom from kindergarten through third grade so that struggling readers could use the new supplemental reading program. After-school assistance for low-performing readers and writers was initiated in March to gear up for the state tests in the spring. Williams' last decision related to improving the reading program involved meeting with representatives of another supplemental reading program to determine how best to implement the program in the coming fall.

The decisions summarized above constitute the tip of the cognitive iceberg for Williams. Behind and between each action were a variety of complicated

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Figure 2 Action taken to improve the reading program

SEPTEMBER

Principal mandates Scott Foresman reading program.

Principal contacts the assistant superintendent to get the materials needed to make the program work.

Textbook representative from Scott Foresman trains teachers on reading program during staff development.

DECEMBER

Principal accepts district's offer of a supplemental reading program, Breakthrough to Literacy, that had been purchased using federal funds from Title I.

JANUARY

Principal asks the superintendent for and receives permission to use reading intervention specialists and reading specialists in more flexible ways to support instruction.

Principal adds more inclusion classes for special education students.

Breakthrough to Literacy program implemented. Three computers are installed in every K-3 classroom so that teachers can use program during remediation with struggling students. Teachers are trained to use the program.

MARCH

After school remediation program for students struggling with reading and writing begins.

MAY

Principal meets with SRA representative to begin planning and purchasing materials for corrective reading program that will be implemented in the fall.

judgments and determinations. In the next sections, we identify and discuss some of the more challenging aspects of the decisions made by Williams in an effort to understand her most pressing concerns.

Decisions of a Turnaround Principal

Charged with the responsibility of turning around Keswick, Wilma Williams made a variety of decisions over the course of the 2005/6 school year. Our

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focus is Williams' decisions related directly or indirectly to eliminating the Montessori program, creating a culture of teacher accountability, and implementing an effective reading program.

Five types of decisions were identified: performance, policy, program, process and personnel. We do not presume that this set of categories is necessarily the best or the only basis for classifying Williams' decisions, nor do we claim that certain decisions might not fit under more than one category. We believe, however, that these five categories fairly represent the range of decisions made by Williams as she addressed her three priority concerns over the course of her first year as a turnaround principal. The complete list of 49 identified decisions is presented by category in Table 2. The decisions under each category are listed roughly in the order in which they occurred over the course of the school year.

Performance decisions focus on how well groups, programs, and the school in general are doing. Both students and staff may be the target for performance decisions. Sometimes these decisions are empirical and seemingly objective, while at other times they appear to be relatively impressionistic. Policy decisions concern formal policies, rules, regulations and longstanding conventions that serve to guide the conduct of staff and students at Keswick. Program decisions involve the academic curriculum at Keswick and various formal interventions aimed at supplementing the academic curriculum. Process decisions deal with the day-to-day operation of Keswick, including administration, planning, governance, assessment and resource acquisition. Personnel decisions involve judgments about individual staff members, including their assignments, job status and effectiveness.

In the sections that follow, we look at the inter-play of decisions as Williams sized up Keswick's circumstances and tackled her three priority concerns. Selected decisions will be used to focus the discussion and provide a sense of the complexity with which Williams was faced.

Should the Data Be Trusted?

Soon after being selected as Keswick's principal, Williams began to review the school's track record. This process might seem to be a relatively straightforward undertaking in which student achievement data are compiled and broken down into various categories. No sooner did Williams examine the 2004/5 test data, however, than she made her first judgment regarding performance. The data, she decided, were misleading.

Keswick had made adequate yearly progress, but just barely. When Williams examined which students had been tested and under what provisions, she discovered that 504 plans—which were supposed to be created by school officials and parents for students identified with disabilities—had been written in March and April of 2005, just before the administration of state tests, for 45 Keswick students. She wondered about the timing. Why had her predecessor

Table 2 Wilma Williams' decisions, organized by subject

Decisions

Performance decisions
1. Williams doubts the accuracy of previous year's test results.
2. Keswick's problems are the result of a variety of factors.
3. The reading program is not working well for all students.
4. A 'data expert' is needed to explain to teachers why the previous year's tests results are misleading.
5. Teachers are beginning to change instructional practice in light of benchmark testing.
6. The pacing guide is not working well with the new mathematics series.
7. Some teachers are not implementing the reading program as well as Williams wants.
8. Struggling students are receiving more timely assistance thanks to benchmark testing, but special education students still are not benefiting as much as hoped from new reading program and benchmark testing.
9. Faculty members on the steering committee lack initiative and new ideas. Williams determines that their role will be limited.
10. Kindergarten program remains 'a little weak'.
11. This year's gains on the state tests will be less than originally expected because 'evidence' for special education students was not turned in on time.
12. Keswick will probably make state accreditation, but not adequate yearly progress (because of the problem with special education students' tests).

Policy decisions
13. Williams seeks a waiver from the school system in order to make greater use of reading specialists.
14. Teachers will not be permitted to create their own report cards next year.

Program decisions
15. The Montessori program needs to be eliminated.
16. A culture of teacher accountability needs to be cultivated.
17. An effective reading program is required.
18. Keswick should keep the Scott Foresman reading program, but ensure that all teachers use it.
19. A remediation period is needed during the regular school day.
20. A supplemental reading program is needed for struggling readers.
21. Mid-course changes in the reading program must be based on how students actually perform on reading tests.
22. Accept school system's offer of a computer-based supplementary reading program.
23. Increase inclusion program for special education students.
24. An after-school remediation program is needed to supplement the remediation period during the regular school day.
25. The after-school remediation program should not begin until after students take the state writing test in March.
26. As the time for state tests in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies approaches, the pull-out program for struggling students should be expanded.
27. An alternative 4th/5th grade split class for struggling students needs to be implemented next year.

Process decisions
28. The three top priorities are eliminating the Montessori program, creating a culture of teacher accountability, and developing an effective reading program.
29. A regular process of benchmark testing keyed to the state curriculum standards is needed.
30. Benchmark testing should occur every $4\frac{1}{2}$ weeks, rather than every 9 weeks (which is common practice in other schools).
31. The focus on accountability should be moderated until teachers receive all the materials they need to implement the reading program.

Continued

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Table 2 Continued

Decisions
32. Sufficient time to build faculty consensus is not available. Williams decides she must make a number of unilateral decisions.
33. Big faculty meetings will be replaced by small teacher groups that focus on data analysis and instructional improvement.
34. Implementation of a highly structured, scripted supplemental reading program should be deferred until next year.
35. Benchmark testing every 4½ weeks in all subjects places too great a strain on teachers and students. Only test in science and social studies at the end of semester.
36. The balanced scorecard should be modified to reflect Keswick priorities.
37. Parent involvement will not be a high priority this year.
38. Every grade should take benchmark tests, not just grades 3–5 (which is common practice in other schools).
39. Teachers' goal should be to move students ahead one quartile at a time.
40. Some project funds should be used to pay for entering test data in a computer database so data can be manipulated quickly.
41. Stick with regular benchmark tests, rather than look for alternatives.
42. Curtail steering committee meetings.
43. Next year teachers should be placed in teams.
Personnel decisions
44. Every faculty member will teach reading every day.
45. Several uncooperative faculty members need to be assigned to other schools next year.
46. If uncooperative teachers cannot be moved to different schools, they should be given unattractive assignments at Keswick in the hopes they will apply for voluntary transfers.
47. Certain staff members should be on the steering committee.
48. Delay the announcement of next year's teaching assignments until after state test results have been received.
49. Write a letter of reprimand to the teacher responsible for problem with submitting evidence on special education students' performance.

waited until the last minute to classify students as being disabled? The answer seemed obvious: 504 plans allowed for accommodations on the state test, which meant that these students could have their test questions read to them. Williams explained, 'You can't do that. It's illegal. Not being able to read is not a disability. It's a problem, but it's not a disability.' Had this accommodation not been provided, Williams was certain that Keswick would not have achieved adequate yearly progress. By barely meeting the federal benchmark, Keswick teachers felt as if they had fulfilled their obligation. Williams was concerned that a sense of urgency, so critical to major organizational change, was not felt by the Keswick faculty.

Keswick teachers insisted that Williams' interpretation of the test data was incorrect.

> They deny it. They say, 'No, that's not it! We did not get a 68 [in third-grade math], we got an 84!' Technically, they're right. Because when you add the remediation recovery kids, yes, it was higher than 68. But what I gave them was an unadjusted score. They are in complete denial over their unadjusted scores . . . I think it's very hard for elementary teachers to separate themselves personally from the data; they

take it a lot more personally than middle school teachers that I've worked with in the past.

Adjusted scores for the third and fifth graders included 'remediation recovery' students who retook the tests as fourth and sixth graders. Since remediation recovery students with passing scores were added only to the numerator of the state's proficiency formula, the adjusted scores did not accurately portray grade-level achievement. Williams knew that the scoring system was changing in the spring, with remediation recovery students being added to the denominator of the proficiency formula as well as the numerator, and that the school therefore was unlikely to receive another boost in test scores.

Convinced that Keswick had a problem with student achievement, Williams' next challenge was to ascertain why. No guidebooks or formulas are available to help principals pinpoint the causes of inadequate student learning. Every person familiar with Keswick had their own explanation, or what Stone (1989) refers to as a 'causal story'. A causal story is an opinion, often in the form of a narrative, to account for the performance of a given entity. Interested parties frequently offer competing causal stories, knowing that acceptance of their explanation is likely to influence subsequent decisions regarding what to do to improve the situation.

After sifting through various causal stories offered by central office personnel, community members and several Keswick faculty members; reviewing several years of student test data; and reflecting on her own experience in the school system, Williams decided that no single cause could account for Keswick's relatively low pass rates in reading and mathematics. By early September, when we showed Williams a list of 15 frequently mentioned school-based conditions associated with high-poverty/low-performing schools, she felt that a number of conditions applied to Keswick. These included lack of academic focus, lack of curriculum alignment with test content, lack of timely data on student progress, lack of teamwork, inadequate organizational mechanisms for addressing learning problems, dysfunctional school culture, lack of a viable inclusion program for special education students and a low level of parent involvement. When Williams was interviewed in February, she indicated that two more conditions should be added to her list of contributors to Keswick's problems. These additional concerns included resistance to change by some faculty members and the central office's refusal to support her efforts to re-assign the uncooperative teachers.

What Should Be the Focus in Year One?

Soon after identifying the conditions she believed to be holding back Keswick, Williams began to make a series of decisions concerning which conditions should be addressed first and how best to address them. Having determined that a variety of problematic conditions characterized Keswick, Williams also

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realized that she and her staff lacked the time, energy and resources to handle them all simultaneously. It is likely that her decisions regarding the prioritization of problems were among the most important Williams made during her first year as a turnaround principal. Had she decided, for example, to focus on a problem that defied resolution or to designate too many problems as 'high priority', her turnaround efforts may have stalled.

Williams reasoned that the Montessori program was the primary cause of Keswick's marginal pass rates in reading and mathematics.

> Primarily because of the Montessori approach, there was no defined reading or math program at the school. Each teacher had the freedom to develop their own program that moved students along at their own pace. Needless to say, some students were not moved along as far as others. This lack of progress was attributed to students' developmental differences and tolerated under the Montessori philosophy.

Once Williams announced that Keswick was no longer a Montessori school, she had to reframe her central concerns. She considered the possible conditions that might inhibit effectiveness after the Montessori program was ended and decided that a new school culture was needed. The focus of the new culture had to be accountability.

> Montessori gave teachers an 'excuse' if students were not as far along. It made it okay. As such, to remove the excuse and demand accountability for progress is going to be stressful for teachers who have not had traditional classrooms for four years. To get each teacher following a pacing and curriculum guide. The training on the use of curriculum guides, pacing guides, and standardized tests will be a huge challenge.

While aware that school cultures are not created overnight, Williams also realized that Keswick could not take years to re-culture itself. Teachers needed to embrace new beliefs about student learning and new methods for working with students before much progress could be made on her third priority—developing an effective reading program. Putting such a program into place, however, was a challenge.

> The school previously had an adopted reading program, which was the Scott Foresman program. The school division bought the material and it was brought into the school, but for the past 3–4 years it hasn't been used because of the Montessori program. Everybody kind of did their own thing. So now, I'm finding that no one has the materials that they need. They've been lost over the years because no one ever used them. It's frustrating trying to get those things back together.

Williams decided to mandate the Scott Foresman program for all teaches at all grade levels. She and her Title I coordinators met with Scott Foresman representatives to order the necessary materials, and a representative from the company conducted a staff development session with teachers to explain how to use the materials. Deciding to implement a packaged reading program is one

kind of program judgment. Another involves deciding whether or not to supplement a basic reading program with additional programs designed especially for struggling readers.

As the first year progressed, Williams determined that the Scott Foresman program, while a vast improvement over the 'do your own thing' approach that preceded it, was unlikely to provide the kind of intensive intervention needed by Keswick's lowest achieving students. Her decision was based on how some students performed on benchmark tests aligned with the Virginia Standards of Learning. It is interesting to note that Williams never framed the problem as one of low-achieving students. If some students struggled with reading, it was the reading program that was inadequate.

By spring Williams was ready to consider adopting the SRA reading program as a supplement to the Scott Foresman program. She believed that the scripted and highly structured approach of the SRA program would provide teachers with the guidance needed to work with the lowest achieving students. Realizing that her teachers had enough to work on during the 2005/6 school year, Williams elected to wait until the next school year to implement the SRA program. Sometimes decisions about what to postpone may be as important as decisions about what to initiate.

Interestingly, Williams did not undertake a systematic search of possible supplemental reading programs before committing to the SRA program. Her approach seems to epitomize Herbert Simon's (1957: 204–5) concept of 'satisficing'. Faced with a very busy schedule, Williams opted to go with the first program that seemed to provide the structure she judged was needed to supplement the Scott Foresman program.

Program decisions may occasion other kinds of decisions, such as those regarding policy, process and personnel. In the next section, we examine some of the decisions that needed to be made to support Williams' efforts to implement the Scott Foresman reading program and several supplementary reading programs.

Building an Infrastructure to Support Student Learning

To ensure the success of her comprehensive reading initiative, Williams made a variety of process decisions. She sensed, for example, that timely data on how students were progressing in their mastery of reading objectives was essential. Soon after becoming principal, she committed to regular benchmark testing in the four subjects covered by the state standardized tests: reading/writing, mathematics, science and social studies. While other schools in Keswick's vicinity had opted for benchmark testing every nine weeks, Williams decided that Keswick students and teachers needed more frequent feedback.

> Instead of doing it every nine weeks, we do it every four and a half weeks . . . We established a remediation period during the school day. Well, you've got to know

what it is the students need remediation in, so that's why we started doing benchmark tests more often.

Williams also decided that all Keswick students, from kindergartners to fifth graders, should take benchmark tests. Other schools tended to test only those students who were scheduled to take state tests in the spring—third, fourth and fifth graders. Williams reasoned that familiarizing kindergartners, first graders, and second graders with multiple-choice questions, even if their teachers had to read the questions to non-readers, would be useful preparation. By the time these students faced state tests for the first time in the third grade, they would be less likely to be confused and anxious.

The availability of data on student progress was one of two cornerstones of Williams' efforts to develop a culture of teacher accountability. The other involved regular meetings of small groups of teachers to analyze the results of benchmark testing, identify which students were struggling with which test items, and plan interventions to assist these students. Williams arranged for teachers to meet by grade level—K–1, 2–3 and 4–5. She explained:

> Rather than having big faculty meetings we have small group instructional meetings. We try to keep the focus of those on instruction and not administrivia. I always talk about data, in every meeting. I ask the teachers, 'What are you seeing in your benchmark testing?' We do quartile reporting of students—we actually put student names in quartiles and track the student progress through the quartiles. So we talk about data every time we meet.

Another decision related to benchmark testing concerned which benchmark tests to use. Several commercial test options were available to schools in Virginia. Each was keyed to the state Standards of Learning. In another example of satisficing, Williams decided to stick with the benchmark test with which she was familiar, rather than conduct a systematic search of the various alternatives. Her decision was based on several factors, including the lack of time to conduct a thorough search, the purported cost of other options and the fact that the familiar program consisted of banks of test items from which teachers could make selections and design their own tests.

By November Williams had taken stock of how benchmark testing was going and decided that the strain on teachers and students of taking a benchmark test in four subjects every four and a half weeks was too great. She made a process decision to test frequently only in reading and mathematics. Benchmark tests in science and social studies would be deferred to the end of the semester.

Another element in Williams' plan to develop greater teacher accountability and ownership of student learning involved implementing the balanced score-card. Originally designed for use in the private sector, the balanced scorecard constituted a process and a format for tracking progress on designated school improvement targets. A number of school systems had begun to use the balanced scorecard, and the VSTSP provided each turnaround principal with

training on how to use it. Although Williams was expected by VSTSP trainers to implement the balanced scorecard, she decided to modify the format by eliminating objectives that did not fit with Keswick's needs. She also was expected to quickly form a steering committee to monitor progress on the balanced scorecard and meet with its members on a weekly basis to discuss particular objectives. By mid-year, though, she decided to cut back to meeting every two weeks. She was disappointed in the lack of insight and imagination on the part of steering committee members. They had little to suggest when it came to deciding how to address particular issues and concerns on the balanced scorecard. Williams took some of the responsibility for the steering committee's lackluster performance:

> I chose the members of my committee blind. I had to do this during the summer after maybe speaking to them for 10–20 minutes. Some people speak a good game, but when it comes down to it they don't know what needs to be done. I didn't choose wisely, but I didn't know my teachers. These issues didn't raise themselves until later.

Ensuring that Students Get Help When They Need it

The ultimate test of teacher accountability is whether struggling students receive help when they need it. Williams made a variety of policy, program and process decisions related to academic assistance. One of her most far-reaching decisions involved who would teach reading and when it would be taught. In order to provide small-group reading instruction for all students, especially those in need of additional help, Williams required all professional staff members to teach reading every morning from 8:30 to 10:00. Even the librarian and physical education teacher were enlisted. Williams applied for a waiver from the superintendent in order to involve Title I reading specialists and reading intervention specialists in delivering small group instruction. Prior to being granted the waiver, reading specialists were limited to instructing students who were pulled out of regular classrooms, and they were not allowed to provide services to special education students. Reading intervention specialists, conversely, had to work exclusively with special education students and only on a pull-out basis. Increasing the number of staff members involved in reading instruction lowered the student-teacher ratio considerably and fostered a faculty-wide commitment to literacy.

Mention already has been made of Williams' decision that the Scott Foresman reading program did not adequately address the needs of Keswick's lowest achievers. She decided to accept the school system's offer of a supplementary, computer-based reading program called Breakthrough to Literacy. In addition, she determined that the following year she would adopt a highly structured, scripted reading program for poor readers.

Williams realized that more assistance was needed for special education students if Keswick was to become an effective school for *all* students. The

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first step, she decided, must be to expand inclusion so that most special educa-tion students would spend most of their time in regular education classrooms. She believed that the more time these students spent in pull-out programs and resource rooms, the further they would fall behind their peers. At the same time Williams acknowledged that moving to full inclusion immediately was risky. Regular education teachers already had their hands full administering benchmark tests, analyzing the results and implementing the reading program. Special education teachers were wary of relinquishing some control over the instruction of their students. Williams decided to undertake inclusion incrementally.

If Keswick was to be 'turned around', the 'proof' would be found in the results of state tests administered in the spring. Williams realized, however, that students cannot spend seven months preparing for tests. She decided that special efforts to prepare struggling students for the state tests should be made just prior to test time. In this way, reviewed material would be fresh in students' minds and they would not be 'burned out' on test preparation. To gear up for the state writing test in March, Williams planned intensive writing workshops in late January and February. The guidance counselor was assigned to help students on test-taking strategies.

After students took the writing test, Williams decided the time would be right to focus on the May tests in reading, mathematics, science and social studies. She organized an after-school program to supplement the remediation period already in operation during the regular school day. The remediation period also was lengthened from 40 minutes to an hour. Drawing on tutors from the community working under the supervision of Keswick teachers, she arranged for students to receive focused assistance based on their performance on benchmark tests. Students, in other words, were not subjected to a review of material that they already understood. Williams believed that unnecessary test preparation was another potential source of student burn-out.

By May, Williams' sights were set on the next school year. She had grown concerned over certain fourth and fifth graders who she believed possessed average to above average ability, but who were not achieving up to their poten-tial. Sensing that they needed a different kind of learning environment, she planned to create an alternative class for these students in the fall. Williams obtained permission from the superintendent to hire a former special educa-tion teacher who she knew to have the skills and temperament to work with these youngsters.

Handling Resistance and Incompetence

Some of the most difficult decisions a principal must make concern personnel matters. When a school has been designated for a turnaround initiative, it is likely that at least some of the staff have not been doing all they could do to promote effective learning. Williams had to confront this fact immediately after

assuming her position and deal with the consequences of such a confrontation. Some teachers became defensive and refused to accept Williams' skepticism regarding the previous year's test results. Williams understood that a number of teachers had invested considerable time and energy in acquiring the skills to run a Montessori program. They had bought into the belief that children should be allowed to progress at their own pace.

Williams gave the faculty several months to adjust to her reforms, but by the end of November she came to the conclusion that several teachers were unlikely ever to accept them. She acknowledged that 'they are good teachers . . . but they are so resistant that they are causing an undercurrent of dissent, and I'm not going to have it. Try as I may to get them with the program and involve them, it's not happening'. Williams approached the school system's personnel director with a request to have two teachers re-assigned to another school. Initially she was confident that the central office would support her appeal. The superintendent, after all, had determined that Keswick needed to be turned around and that Williams was the person to do it. Several months passed, and Williams learned a hard lesson. Her secretary put it succinctly: 'Teachers run this school system.' The personnel director refused to support involuntary transfers. Williams was compelled to make another decision.

As her first year wound down, Williams decided to undertake internal re-assignments of the recalcitrant teachers. Her hope was that moving them to grade levels at which they did not want to teach would prompt them to apply for transfers. She also decided to wait until the last minute, just before school ended in June, to inform them of their re-assignments. That way, the teachers would have less time to lobby the central office for support. Williams was pleased when one of the pair elected to leave Keswick rather than move to a new grade level.

Williams' most significant personnel problem involved a special education teacher. This individual was expected to collect evidence of her students' learning over the course of the school year. The state allowed this evidence in lieu of a paper-and-pencil test for certain students on a 504 plan or an individualized education plan (IEP). When the time came in the spring for her to submit the documentation for her 12 students, however, she was not prepared to do so.

> She didn't have anything done. Nothing. I was livid. It was beyond unprofessional. It was beyond unacceptable. She simply didn't have her stuff together by the deadline. She had known about this since November and she didn't have them ready.

By failing to submit evidence for these students, the teacher jeopardized the entire school's chances of meeting adequate yearly progress and state accreditation requirements. Williams pressed the central office to dismiss the teacher. Once again, she received no support.

Realizing that the special education teacher would remain on the faculty for another year, Williams was prompted to make another decision—to press for full inclusion in her second year. Doing so would mean that regular education

teachers as well as special education teachers would share responsibility for collecting evidence of student learning. Williams hoped that the regular education teachers would be more reliable in carrying out this important task than the special education teacher had been. Her last personnel decision of the year was to initiate a paper trail covering the special education teacher's mistakes. Williams wrote a letter of reprimand to be included in the teacher's personnel file. Perhaps if enough evidence of incompetence was amassed, the central office eventually would support removal of the teacher.

What Can Be Done to Promote Good Decision-making?

The study of Wilma Williams' first year as a turnaround specialist principal supports and extends the research of Smith et al. (1988) on problem solving. As was true with the principals in their study of Kensington Elementary School, Williams encountered a variety of 'ill-defined problems'. In both cases, there were few apparent criteria for determining a 'correct' course of action. The principals had to rely on their judgment. In addition, many problems requiring decisions turned out to be 'entangled' with other problems. As problems proliferated, the systematic search for desirable alternatives grew more difficult.

Hoy and Tarter (1995: 5) observed that, 'Administrators are often overwhelmed and occasionally paralyzed by the sheer volume and complexity of their work.' What is impressive about Wilma Williams' first year as a turnaround principal is the fact that she did not shrink in the face of complex challenges. We cannot claim that every decision she made worked out well, but most were made conscientiously and all were made with the best interests of Keswick students in mind. The fact that student performance on state tests improved during Williams' first year as principal suggests that her decisions had the intended effect. In concluding this study, we ask, 'What does a principal need to know in order to make sound decisions regarding the problems facing a high-poverty and low-performing elementary school?' We realize, of course, that a single case study does not merit sweeping generalizations, but at least we can initiate a discussion regarding how to prepare principals to make the kinds of decisions involved in the school turnaround process.

A substantial number of Keswick's students struggled with reading. Reading problems, in fact, are the hallmark of many, if not all, low-performing schools (Duke et al., 2005, 2007). Principals of low-performing schools cannot know too much about reading and literacy in general. They need to know how to determine the sources of reading problems. Is the school's reading program, or lack of a reading program, to blame? Are teachers failing to implement the reading program correctly? Are students not getting adequate feedback and assistance? Is a supplemental reading program needed? Does the schedule provide insufficient time for struggling readers to receive additional help? These are the kinds of questions that a capable turnaround principal should be able to answer.

If the school's reading program is judged to be inadequate, the turnaround principal also needs to know how to compare competing reading programs and select the one that best addresses her school's needs. We realize that the choice of a reading program often is a decision made by the central office, but the principal is still in the best position to know whether the reading program is serving her school's students well.

Benchmark testing and other forms of classroom assessment are also subjects about which turnaround principals should be knowledgeable. As the number of commercially produced benchmark tests increases, principals must become informed consumers. How closely are test items aligned to state and local curriculum standards? Does the test format mimic that used on state tests? How frequently should students be tested and in what subjects? Can results be obtained quickly and in a form that permits disaggregation by student sub-group and error analysis by test item? When appropriate commercial bench-mark tests are unavailable or too expensive, can the principal guide teachers in developing their own tests? We know that a key to raising student achieve-ment is ensuring that students get timely feedback on what they are supposed to be learning and equally timely assistance when they experience difficulty. Benchmark testing and regular classroom assessment are essential ingredients in any school turnaround initiative.

Besides knowing how to choose and administer formative assessments such as benchmark tests, principals should know how to interpret test results. Because she understood how the test scores for Keswick were processed, Williams realized that the published pass rate for students was misleading. A turnaround principal must be able to pinpoint sub-groups of students that are experiencing problems with particular content. She must be able to look at performance on particular test items and determine whether errors are randomly distributed across students or if there is a pattern to mistakes, a pattern that could imply inadequate instruction or lack of coverage.

Low-performing schools typically offer a number of interventions intended to help students raise their performance. These interventions may include tutoring, extended learning time and special after-school programs. Turning around low-performing schools is not just a matter of having lots of interven-tions, but making certain that the interventions are effective. Williams realized, for instance, that the timing of interventions was critical. If students spent too much time preparing for state tests and if the time they spent was on material that they already understood, the net effect would be diminished. Turnaround principals should know how to design and schedule interventions that address specific areas of academic need for specific groups of students at times when the likelihood of retaining the necessary information to pass tests is greatest. They also must understand when to eliminate interventions that siphon off scarce resources and have little impact on student performance or welfare.

It is hard to imagine a low-performing school without personnel issues. If teachers are keys to student success, they also must share responsibility for

student failure. Principals charged with turning around low-performing schools need to know the conditions under which teachers are most likely to acquire the skills and beliefs necessary to improve teaching and learning. Williams knew, for example, that an interpretation of the previous year's test results was better delivered by an outside expert than herself. She knew that teachers needed a refresher workshop on the Scott Foresman reading program. In-service training and staff development can provide the necessary impetus for improvement for many, if not most, teachers, but in a few cases, as Williams discovered, individuals lack the willingness or competence to change. Principals must be prepared to decide how much time and energy to invest in trying to bring along resistant and inadequate teachers before initiating other approaches, including re-assignment and dismissal. They must have a firm grasp of local personnel policies and practices, understand the necessary steps in documenting personnel problems and know what to do when central office support for desired personnel actions is not forthcoming.

Increasing our understanding of the decisions involved in launching the school turnaround process promises some very practical benefits. First, individuals engaged in preparing school turnaround specialists might use this information to design cases and curricula the objective of which would be to cultivate good decision-making. A second possible benefit concerns the recruitment and selection of turnaround specialists. The more that is known about the types of decisions required to improve school performance, the better able we will be to identify the potential for good decision-making in prospective principals. While it is hard to find empirical support, the claim that many principals fail because they do not make good decisions has the ring of plausibility. Perhaps one day it may be possible to develop a valid and reliable way to assess an individual's capacity for making sound decisions, including determining the key problems holding back achievement and the best ways to address them.

In the literature review, we noted that of the six elements in Leithwood's model of problem solving, relatively little is known about the fifth element— solution process. Once principals have identified a problem, in other words, how do they go about deciding on a solution? What we have learned in the case of Wilma Williams is that she consistently avoided the path of least resistance. Faced with what she regarded as impediments to improved student achievement, she opted to challenge established practice, confront unproductive staff members and eliminate ineffective programs. It is likely, of course, that Williams felt she was expected to 'shake things up.' She also knew that her progress was being closely monitored by the Virginia Department of Education and the governor. Those seeking to understand how leaders make decisions must never divorce decision-making from the context in which decisions are made (Spillane et al., 2001). In Williams' case, the context encompasses her school, the school division and the state.

There are no short-cuts to sound decision-making. It is not a matter of intuition or lucky guesses. Good decisions are backed up by thorough

knowledge, experience, and reflection. Good decisions also result from a sensitivity to the environment (Spillane et al., 2001) and a talent for anticipating consequences (March, 1994). In these aspects of decision-making, Williams encountered some difficulties, particularly with regard to her efforts to reassign several teachers. She failed to anticipate the intervention of the local teachers association and its influence at the central office.

Questions also can be raised regarding Williams' decision to abandon the Montessori program. Had this decision been made too hastily? She had reviewed Keswick's standardized test data, but otherwise she had not conducted any kind of systematic investigation of instructional practices, teacher strengths, school culture or community preferences. Additional inquiry might have revealed alternative explanations for the school's reading problems. Perhaps the teacher–pupil ratio was too high to permit individualized assistance. Or maybe certain teachers lacked proper training in the Montessori method, while other teachers were able to implement Montessori methods and still address reading instruction effectively. By summarily dismissing the Montessori program, Williams may have missed an opportunity to gain faculty support and preserve certain positive features of the program.

It is the responsibility of those who prepare principals, especially principals charged with turning around low-performing schools, to do whatever they can to promote sound decision-making. One step in this process is to increase understanding of the specific kinds of decisions principals like Wilma Williams must make in the course of addressing the conditions inhibiting student success. In addition, prospective principals need guidance in 'reading' the local context in which they are expected to lead and in anticipating the consequences of their decisions.

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