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**A final project presented to the faculty of the Instructional Design Masters Degree
Program University of Massachusetts at Boston**

**It Seemed Like Such a Good Idea:
Making Sense of How Two Schools, a Major Philanthropy, and a Prestigious Teacher
Training Program Agreed on a School Reform Strategy that Was Bound to Fail.**

Submitted by Brian Curtis Clark, PhD.

in partial fulfillment for the requirement of the degree MASTER OF EDUCATION

October 18, 2014


Approved by Steven Schatz, Faculty

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Introduction: Urgently Seeking Transformation

This Capstone project is a reflection on the process through which a major Jewish Philanthropy, two Jewish Day Schools, and a major Teacher Training Program worked together to craft an agenda for school reform and technological progress. That four-month process is carefully narrated in a portion of this document, as is a postscript that explains subsequent events and outcomes. The analytical portion of this document follows, in which concepts drawn from Actor-Network Theory and sensemaking theory are used to make sense of how each institution contributed to the creation of inherently unworkable and impractical plans for school reform.

There would be no narrative to present and no analytical work to do were it not for the fact that a certain Jewish Philanthropy in a medium-sized city in the United States decided that it was concerned about the state of three local Jewish Day Schools. The Philanthropy conceived of a broad plan of long term support to help the schools, but in the short term, it created the Transformational Fund. The specific aims of the Transformational Fund were to create a clearly different, superior instructional and technological climate in the schools over a 3-5 year period.

The Transformational Fund was established in the midst of a growing sense on the part of the local Jewish community and its leaders that something had to be done to ensure that the three local Jewish Day Schools continued to thrive in the face of demographic and competitive threats. The declining number of school age Jewish children in the area has been reflected in a drop in enrollments at two of the three schools. In order to keep enrollment steady or grow it, the Schools will have to attract higher percentages of the shrinking pool of Jewish children and youth. This demographic trough would not be disastrous but for the existence, in most of the area communities, of highly excellent, well-funded Public schools that are welcoming of Jewish children. This competitive reality means that private, tuition-charging Jewish schools are losing potential students to their free, public competitors. The focus of the Transformational Campaign, an effort to update the technology at the three schools and improve their academic quality in secular subjects, directly reflects the perception in the local Jewish community, that the day schools must raise their game in these areas in order to achieve parity, if not superiority, to the free public schools against which they are competing.

Because the narrative of events included in this document and the subsequent analysis contain privileged information that is of potential harm or embarrassment to a number of concerned parties, the identities of the institutions and individuals involved have been suppressed. In regard to accuracy, it must be said that the narrative and analysis presented here constitute the author's best attempt to provide accurate and precise information, and at every stage he has used surviving notes, documents and especially email correspondence to provide precise details that would otherwise elude memory. It must also be said that this is an attempt to provide a cogent and reasonably accurate analysis of a complex and murky series of events, and the author does not claim that it constitutes the sole, authoritative analysis of those events. There is always the possibility

of bias and distortion, but that is inherent in the very essence of the project, since the author was intimately involved in every stage of the investigations, deliberations, negotiations and ultimately recriminations.

Analytical Theory: Actor-Networks and Sensemaking:

In order to “make sense” of the way that an inherently unsuitable school reform strategy came to be agreed upon, we will combine and apply two bodies of sociological theory to the case study. The first, Actor-Network Theory, (or ANT), is a theory that can be applied to organizations attempting to change or adapt. Actor-Network Theory is useful for studying organizational decision making and change because of the concept of “punctualization” which “allows the analyst the flexibility of considering a socio-technical collective as a single actor or as a group of individual actors, depending on the level of analysis desirable. (Sarker, Sarker, and Sidorova, 53). In other words, the theory lets an analyst look at individual people as individual actors or to consider groups of people as though they are individual actors, and then to describe why a group of people may stop acting as though they are a single, unified actor. Whether individual people or groups are being described, they are described as “Actor-Networks.” Actor Network theory has been applied to many different kinds of situations, including large-scale transformations of government and industry (Law, 379). ANT is a complex theory with many facets, but in this analysis, we will only be using its most basic concepts.

While Actor-Network Theory is helpful in thinking about how people come together to act as a single individual, another theory, sensemaking theory, helps explain how people work together to “make sense” of situations and decisions. sensemaking theory makes a number of counter-intuitive claims about how people perceive the world, think and make decisions. sensemaking, as best expressed in the seminal work of Karl E. Weick, sensemaking in Organizations, makes many claims about how people “make sense” of the world and of their place in it. One of the claims of the theory is that the act of sensemaking is always *retrospective*, that is, it always is an activity that looks back into the past and attempts to assign meaning to actions and events that have already occurred. (Weick, 24-30). This entire paper is, of course, an extended exercise in attempting to do just that – to make sense of things that have already occurred. However, the deeper point regarding the retrospective nature of sensemaking is that when people are in the midst of taking action and trying to “think on their feet” they are incapable, almost by definition, of explaining what is really going on, what results will eventuate from their decisions, and what lessons can be drawn from it. The analysis that follows will certainly substantiate that point.

A stronger claim made by sensemaking theory regarding the retrospective nature of the activity is that the eventual result of (what comes to be seen as) a chain of events, shapes our perception of prior events in profound ways. In other words, it is only once we know the “end of the story” that we can retrospectively perceive the “story” that led up to it and see the hints and clues that foreshadowed the conclusion. In order to respond to this profound human tendency, this project is structured in a very interesting way. The narrative sections of this document, including the narrative of events and introduction of

persons and institutions, were written soon after the events transpired and were written with as many references to documents and written communications as possible, so that the author's tendency to understand events in retrospect interfered minimally with the accurate retelling of events. Furthermore, the narrative was written in such a way as to include many areas of concern, including not only negotiations over his own role but also the evaluation and purchase of technology and the discussions over vehicles for school reform.

In contrast with the broader, more inclusive narrative of events, the analytical sections of the document were written with a full knowledge of events that had transpired in the five subsequent months, so that they are inherently and self-consciously retrospective. In other words, as predicted by the theory, the author was only able to "make sense" of events after knowing how they would "turn out." Not only is the analytical portion of this work influenced by knowledge of how events would turn out, it is motivated by a desire to understand "what went wrong" with the process of choosing a vehicle for reform. This kind of retrospective analysis, motivated by a need to understand a problematic event in the past, is exactly the kind of thinking predicted and described by sensemaking theory.

A more subtle claim of sensemaking theory is that the people "making sense" of things are not passive, objective observers of events. They help create, through their words and actions, the environment they are attempting to "make sense of." It is simply not the case that there is a "situation" or "environment" that exists independently of the person who is trying to make sense of it. "Instead, in each case, the people are very much a part of their own environments. They act, and in doing so, create the materials that become the constraints and opportunities they face" (Weick, 31). Since the author of this present analysis was very much a participant in the events narrated, that holds doubly true for the analysis that follows. In fact, the relationship between this analysis and the story that it analyzes is inseparable, given that the very decision to take up this capstone project, as opposed to another one, became a critical, precipitating event in the sequence of events described in the narrative. Of course, such a close relationship between the author, the analysis and the events subject to analysis raises the question of "bias," since it undermines any possibility of claiming perfect "objectivity." However, one fundamental tenet of sensemaking theory is a firm dismissal of both the idea that any single analysis is exhaustive and the fantasy that the possibility exists of an "objective" analysis, since the analyst is always, ineluctably, part of the situation and environment. In keeping with those concepts, this analysis is not offered as definitive, but as helpful.

Several other relevant concepts from sensemaking theory have guided this analysis. The first of these is that sensemaking is "ongoing." That is, that those making sense of the world, or of the course they must take in their organization, are always struggling to catch up with events, always struggling to adapt their perceptions of what is happening to the constant flow of events. The prior, narrative portion of this work is testimony to the constant attempts that all the actors involved made to make sense of events as they occurred. The fact that their work in making sense of events and planning for the future was social is almost too obvious to mention, though this also is a major tenet of

sensemaking theory. Finally, sensemaking theory claims that the perceptions, decisions and judgments that people make are “driven by plausibility rather than accuracy” (Weick, 17). In other words, when people “reach a conclusion” they often end up grasping the conclusion that is within easiest reach, not the conclusion that has the most rigorous thought or the firmest evidential base undergirding it. Hearsay, rumor, impressions and effective persuasion often affect the sense that people make of things far more than any adequate process of research or analysis. That tendency is certainly on display in the narrative of events and the analysis that follows.

Key People, Groups and Institutions:

Veteran Administrator (High School): This veteran educational leader, with more than 40 years experience in leading public high schools, came out of retirement to help lead the school as the Head of General Studies. That position puts him in charge of the teachers teaching all secular subjects at the High School and makes him, in essence, the Vice Principal. During the period under discussion, the Head of School, who would normally represent the school in any dealings with outside parties and set the agenda for school reform, was on his way out. In essence, the lack of influence of the outbound “lame duck” Head of School left the Veteran Administrator in charge of charting the course of reform and the principal responsibility of negotiating with outside parties. The VA also had to head the international recruitment effort that secured a successor for the Head of School during the time covered by the study.

The veteran administrator must provide continuity during the new Head’s first two years of service, which will also be the first critical years of the reform effort. Because he often faced resistance from the outgoing Head in pursuing reform and especially in spending money on updating technology, the Veteran Administrator would like decisions about the direction of reform and technology purchases made before his new superior arrives, especially because he is subject to strong external pressures (from the school board, external funders and internal school needs) that will potentially “repurpose” allocations and undo commitments very quickly.

The Veteran Administrator has become the principal decision maker regarding the High School’s reform agenda and its primary negotiator with all external parties, such as the Jewish Philanthropy, the School Board, and potential partners such as the local university. He brings many strengths to these negotiations, including a warm personal style and clarity of thought and expression. However, his greatest strength is the vast network of strong relationships that he has constructed over decades. He is known, liked and trusted by a wide array of influential people; many of them will simply accept his perspective.

English Teacher, Author (High School, Local University): The High School English Teacher is the participant-researcher responsible for this study. Like many of the General Studies faculty at the High School, this member of the school community is not Jewish, but he has been warmly accepted into the school community. After having taught English at the school for two years, he has become a valued leader, entrusted with helping to lead the

strategically vital NEASC Program Committee. During the period of time dealt with in the narrative, he also works as an Instructional Designer at the local university, where he provides training and mentoring to university faculty, promoting the effective use of instructional technology.

Though through the entire period narrated, he is officially only a part-time English teacher, this person plays an influential role in the set of decisions regarding technology purchases, the choice of a reform path, and to a much lesser degree, the choice of a new Head of School. All this influence is informal; it accrues only through his willingness to take on responsibilities and roles in relation to the Veteran Administrator, the IT Administrator, and other key people in the school, such as the Faculty Leader. In turn, the incoming draws constantly on the extensive expertise and contacts of his wife, a veteran leader of school reform and Professional Development programs.

While the Veteran Administrator represents the High School in all external negotiations, his strategy for overseeing the reform effort relies on the future role of the incoming Director of Instructional Design, and he often relies on him as a researcher and evaluator of strategies, technologies, and approaches. Their daily conversations constitute the heartbeat of the decision making process regarding all the associated strands of the reform conversation, not least the effort to define the future role of the DIT at both the High School and a K-8 school nearby.

IT Administrator (High School): This person plays a significant role in decisions made about the purchase and setup of computers and other technical equipment. He is directly responsible for performing computer maintenance, and he deals with the contractors who perform duties such as setting up the campus computer network. However, though he is officially paid to do the IT work of the campus, he is also called on to be the Business Manager of the school and to oversee all matters related to the physical plant. Though his official job description calls for him to be a nearly half-time IT person, his real schedule leaves him less than 10 % of his time to spend on IT work.

Though he has gotten used to being ignored in decisions regarding the school and its hardware, he brings vital perspectives and experiences, not only as the resident IT professional, but also as a teacher of programming and various computer-related subjects at the High School and several colleges.

High School Administration Team (High School): This pair of experienced administrators, including the outgoing Dean of Students and the outgoing Head of School, is engaged at key moments in the reform negotiations. Both contribute decisive insights to technical and policy decisions that from their vast knowledge of the High School and its inner workings. Enjoying far less external influence than the veteran Head of General Studies, and less engaged in discussions with outside parties, they are nonetheless critical players in the meetings in which lasting decisions are made.

Incoming Head of High School (High School): This incoming Head of School is expected to lead the High School during the entire period in which the Transformational Fund and

associated reforms will be carried out. However, because he must move internationally to assume his duties and must transition from a completely different educational and cultural context, he is expected to rely heavily on the advice and direction of the Veteran Administrator.

Young Science Teacher, (High School). This young, talented teacher is filling a teaching position at the school that has proven hard to fill for more than two years at a time. He has already tried his hand at an Ed.D. but he did not find it congenial and came to the High School as one of very few near-full-time teachers. The Veteran Administrator pins great hopes on him and tries to keep him local through the possibility of having him gain a free graduate degree through the STEM Fellow program proposed by the Head of the Education Department at the Local University. In that proposed capacity, he would serve a vital link to sources of pedagogical knowledge and a key player in internal curricular reform.

Faculty Leader, (High School, Local University). This senior member of the faculty is responsible for directing the Math Department and teaching many of its classes. Her vision for a “Math Lab” that can serve as a remediation for 1st and 2nd year High School students is a critical driver of decisions regarding what hardware must be purchased by the High School and how it must be set up. As an early adopter of educational technologies and devices, she is willing and eager to employ pedagogical and technological innovations. She has taken the initiative to reach out to the teachers of the Small K-8 School in order to improve the math skills of students coming in from that school. She wields great influence through both informal means, such as her conversations with the Incoming DIT and by chairing the High School’s NEASC Program Committee, the executive committee that provides direction for school improvement efforts. She also teaches at the Local University and is probably the most senior and most influential member of the faculty, though not Jewish.

The School Board (High School): Though treated as a single entity for portions of this analysis, the Board is a highly variegated group of persons, whose interests are focused through the outgoing and incoming Chairmen of the board.

The New Head of School, (Small K-8 School). This experienced Rabbi and businessman was recruited to be a “turnaround” leader of the K-8 Jewish School that serves as the primary “feeder” school for the High School. He was brought in to stem a steady tide of families leaving the school that has depleted current enrollment to roughly half of what it was when the current 8th grade class began their studies. He is eager to move the school decisively toward higher standards of teaching and far more extensive use of technology, but morale is very low at his school, and there is little trust for the administration among the teachers. He feels frustrated by resistance to change that he encounters among his staff, and he is eager to bring in creative leadership to help spark change in his school. Though he is a graduate of the school, he has spent his adult years outside the area, so he is cut off from the contacts he had cultivated in another Jewish community. He compensates in part by relying on the network and guidance of his friend, the High School Administrator.

Incoming and Outgoing Heads of School, (Large K-8 School): Having begun fundraising and reform efforts that precede and anticipate the Transformational Fund, the outgoing Head of School is concerned to gain from the momentum it provides without losing the focus he has already established. Likewise, his successor is concerned to preserve the direction of curricular and technological reform at the school, but she may be more open than her predecessor to wider forms of cooperation. New to the area, she must quickly choose a strategy for engaging the Transformational Fund and work to foster stability. One of the first questions she must address is the degree to which she will engage in partnership with the other schools.

The Fundraiser. The Fundraiser is neither Jewish nor a local, but he was hired to lead the fundraising efforts of the Jewish Philanthropy on behalf of all three day schools. While furthering the aims of the Fund, he must work with its network of contributing donors, the leadership of the schools, and external partners such as the local university. His task is to arrive at a plan for reform that will be willingly funded by the donors, energetically implemented by the schools, and supported by the external partners. To have any hope of success, the Fundraiser must quickly build relationships of trust and understanding with a wide variety of people, negotiating agreements on what shape reform will take, how it will be implemented, and how it will be funded.

For the Fundraiser, success looks like securing a large amount of funding for the Transformational Fund, managing the process through which it is allocated to ensure that it is wisely spent, and funding future Professional Development efforts in a way that is irreversible and durable. Furthermore, his task is urgent, since his tenure as Fundraiser ends in the Spring and early summer of 2014 and he must ensure that by the fall of 2014, demonstrable results have been obtained.

The Jewish Philanthropy: The Jewish Philanthropy is an organization that is committed to ensuring that key Jewish institutions in the area continue to thrive and contribute to the welfare of the metropolitan Jewish community. Concerned with declining enrollments in the local Jewish Day Schools, this organization conceives of a long term fundraising campaign to put them on a sound financial footing; in order to help the schools attract students, the Philanthropy conceives of a Transformational Campaign that will provide money for technological improvements and Professional Development. They hire the Fundraiser to head up the effort.

The Donor Community: The diverse donor community that the Jewish Philanthropy draws on is concerned for different reasons with the decline of the local Jewish day schools. However, most of the concern, especially of top donors, has to do with their relative Strength in the area of General Studies. Though the donor base, in aggregate, can be “punctualized” and represented as a single abstraction, the reality is that the donor base represents a diverse set of viewpoints, especially when the divergences of perspective of key donors are examined. In general, the Donor Community is not deeply knowledgeable of educational reform theories, though they have been exposed to popular buzzwords, such as STEM.

The Education Professor, (Local University): This veteran educator brings a wealth of experience as an inspirational professor of Education and as a leader of a major educational opportunity project. She has the ability to inspire teachers and prospective teachers with inspiring and enlightening displays of pedagogical acumen. Near retirement, she would like to take a hand in the educational reform efforts at both the High School and the Small K-8 School; her decades-long ties with the Veteran Administrator give her privileged access to the High School.

The Head of the Education Department, Local University: As the head of a university that lies just around the corner from the High School, this educational leader is eager to be part of local reform efforts. He runs an academic division that draws relevance and prestige from close engagement with local educators and institutions, and he is trying to launch a new academic program designed to enroll local leaders in his EdD program, sharing the tuition costs with their home institutions. However, his strongest contribution to reform efforts lies in his department's partnership with the Science Museum in a large teacher training and development program.

The Head of Teacher Training Programs (Science Museum): This veteran educator runs a large, well-funded and prestigious program that trains teachers, administrators, and entire schools in a particular pedagogical reform model. Trusted because of his experience and track record in promoting educational reform, he wields tremendous influence on schools attempting to formulate a reform strategy, not least by discouraging a number of seemingly convenient paths of least resistance. Though nearly all his existing clientele is drawn from public schools, he is eager to include the local Jewish schools. The major funding for his teacher-training program has come from a local family of Jewish philanthropists.

Prelude to the Narrative:

The following is an attempt to tell the story of how the High School made its most critical decisions in regard to how pursue school improvement when confronted by the opportunity provided by the Transformational Fund initiative of a local Jewish Philanthropy. Though there is a list of prior events that precede the account proper, the narrative begins on January 6th, 2014, when the Philanthropy formally introduced the Transformational Fund to the leaders of local Jewish Schools, and it concludes on April 11th, 2014, the day on which the High School leadership made several commitments regarding the course of reform at the school. Those crucial decisions included a choice of what school-reform model(s) the school would implement and how it would define the role of the author in that reform effort.

The author was one of the most central actors in the drama, and this account is based on his recollection and perception of events, as stimulated by the rich documentary record contained in the email discussion threads preserved in his email inbox. The process of recording this narrative began approximately one week after the last event narrated, and it concluded less than one month after that final event occurred. However, the subsequent use of the Actor-Network Theory to describe and analyze the series of events took place several months later.

Precipitating Events:

Spring 2012: The Jewish Philanthropy hires the Fundraiser and works with him to draft the outlines of a Transformational Fund planning process.

Late June, 2013. The **Veteran Administrator** and the English Teacher have one of many discussions regarding whether or not he will continue to teach English part-time at the High School. This seems at first unlikely, given his need to finish a graduate degree and the fact that his internship at the Local University has been expanded into a year-long, half-time job. Though his plan is to work in a higher education context, and though he is concerned about becoming overextended, the author decides to continue teaching at the High School because he values participation in its community and wants to preserve ties with the school against the unlikely possibility that the Veteran Administrator can find a way to hire him as an Instructional Designer at some point in the indefinite future.

Early Fall, 2013. The Veteran Administrator hears that the Jewish Philanthropy will be launching some kind of effort to better support and fund the three Jewish schools of the Hartford area. He has already begun reaching out to his new colleague, the New Head of School at the Small K-8 School.

November-December, 2013. The author hears of an Instructional Design job at a prominent university, applies, and obtains an interview. When the Veteran Administrator hears of this, he tells the current Head of School, "We are going to lose him, but maybe we can hire him back in a year or two as an Instructional leader." By the end of December, it has become clear that the university will not hire the author, but the sense of urgency

remains with the Veteran Administrator, who realizes that a similar hiring situation could arise at any time and that the English Teacher is actively looking for full time employment elsewhere.

Narrative of Events and Decisions, January- April 2014.

January 6, 2014.

The Fundraiser has his first meeting with the Veteran Administrator and other representatives of all three Jewish Schools, including the New Head of School at the Small K-8 School and the outgoing Head of School at the Large Jewish Day School. At this meeting the Fundraiser explains that The Jewish Philanthropy has announced the general nature of its development campaign, specifying that it will devote its initial period of fundraising and development to a “Transformational Campaign” that will seek to significantly improve the instructional quality, technology use, and recruiting draw of the three schools. He shocks the school leaders by speaking of making funds for technology purchases available as early as April 1, 2014.

The Large K-8 School’s outgoing Head of School proposes using a major portion of the funds allotted to his school to hire a new “director of applied technology.” The Veteran Administrator at the High School realizes that this closely resembles the idea he has been discussing with the author about hiring him at the High School. He writes a note to the author explaining that there is a real possibility for creating a new position that might be jointly funded by the two schools. He also follows up with the Head of School at the Large K-8 School, who is much less excited about sharing a new hire because he wants to continue funding reform efforts already underway at his school.

The author is informed after the meeting of what has transpired. Given the first true indication that he might actually have a potential job to pursue at the High School, and alarmed by the completely open-ended discussions about pedagogical and technological reform, the author spends hours looking for plausible precedents and models for reform and for his own role. At this stage, his research focuses on the viability of the concept of the High School becoming a provider of online educational programs in the area of Judaics.

January 13, 2014.

The Fundraiser, meeting with representatives from the three schools, presents a school reform plan for all three Jewish schools, based on the concept of STEM education. This STEM model is a highly specific reform model, and the plan that the Fundraiser presents to the schools includes specific ways of implementing the reform model. However, he faces significant resistance from the school representatives, who insist that their schools do not fit his reform model well. The outgoing Head of the High School states flatly that to implement a STEM model would be to change the fundamental mission and ethos of his school.

At this meeting, the Veteran Administrator shares with the group that he already has a wonderful candidate to lead the school in upgrading its use of instructional technology, the author. The representatives of The Large K-8 School remain cool to the idea of a shared position, but the new Head of School at the Small K-8 School, impressed by his friend's portrayal of this inside candidate, suggests that there might be some way for his school to be part of a two-way cost sharing agreement. This is the first clear emergence of the arrangement that will ultimately be implemented in the form of a new Director of Instructional Technology position split between the two schools.

c. January 14, 2014.

The Veteran Administrator, meeting with the author and the current the High School Head of School, explains that the school needs to decide quickly what must be done in regard to hardware purchases. There are a huge variety of proposals being floated, including widely varied schemes regarding 1-to-1 laptop programs and iPad programs. The author shoots down the idea of "providing an iPad to every senior" because the teachers barely know what one is. He proposes that if any iPads are purchased, they should be given to teachers for a while first.

As the Veteran Administrator explains the magnitude of the hardware investment being discussed (in the range of \$ 50, 000) and the need to make decisions regarding what to buy, he does not yet reveal that much of his sense of urgency stems from a desire to use the money quickly, before the School Board or competing priorities siphon away the funds. The author opines that the huge investments being discussed and the large scale hardware purchases being discussed could amount to a tragic waste and loss if not carefully managed.

January 16th, 2014.

The Fundraiser meets with the school representatives and meets the author. The current Head of the High School repeats his insistence that many vital areas of the school, including the entire Judaics department, do not fit well into the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) model. However, as the Fundraiser explains, the goal of most of the funders is to radically increase the visibility and quality of the General Studies aspects of all three schools. In essence, there is a major disjunction of vision between what the philanthropists are excited about creating through their gifts and the realities of the schools, as grasped by those who run them. As a way to resolve the tension, the Veteran Administrator proposes that what is needed is a further modification of the way that other school districts had already sought to broaden the focus of STEM into STEAM through the addition of an "A" for "the arts." He explains that "the arts" could be a broad enough category to hold both the humanities and Judaics. In essence, the Veteran Administrator has provided the Fundraiser with a prospective pitch to donors that contains substantial truth, yet it also leaves the school leaders with the latitude to run their own schools according to their own priorities.

The author says little until near the end of the meeting, but then he delivers a brief soliloquy on the need to empower teachers and the certainty that the flashy expenditures on technology planned as part of the "Transformational Fund" will prove

to be merely window dressing if reform does not “Transform” teachers and their roles. Fortunately, it is eloquent and apt. This short speech has the effect of validating the Veteran Administrator’s choice of the author to lead change and cements the determination of the New Head of School at the Small K-8 School to become an equal partner in employing him. Though the outgoing Head of School of the Large Jewish K-8 School also appreciates the speech, he stands firm with his decision to protect the course of reforms already underway at his school by opting out of a three-way sharing of the author’s time. He explains that his school has already made substantial headway in its own reform effort, which combines a reorganization of science curriculum with a program to equip teachers to make effective use of iPads and other tech tools.

The fact that the fundraiser is deeply impressed by the author’s speech and by the Veteran Administrator’s contributions to the meeting has several vital and immediate effects. He writes several upbeat emails to leaders in both the funding world and the High School’s School Board, including a letter to its new Chairman that urges, “If you want to keep the High School on track for transformation, you absolutely must find a way to keep [the Veteran Administrator] and [the author] there.” In effect, this heads off possible resistance over creating the position from the direction of the High School Board. That is particularly important because the Board is very protective of resources and is not known for paying well. The other critical implication of the Fundraiser’s appreciation of the speech is that it means that he begins to include the author’s role as a prominently featured aspect of the strategies and budgets that he presents to the philanthropic community. In effect, the hiring of the researcher has become a key strategy for pursuing reform, even before other vehicles of reform have been put in place.

The Fundraiser asks for the school leadership teams to create concrete proposals for reform, with concrete budget items. He is trying to create a very large, sophisticated set of print and slide materials that he can use to sell funders on the reform effort, pitching it as one coherent plan.

January 28, 2014.

This meeting between the Fundraiser and school leaders solidifies the understanding that the author would be employed by the Small K-8 School and the High School, but not the Large K-8 School. Many other important ideas are worked through at this meeting, but the greatest excitement generated at the meeting regards a concept put forward by the Head of the Education Department at the Local University. His school is speaking of the creation of STEM Fellowships, which would provide graduate education to members of each school. This individual could then serve as the center of pedagogical reform in the vital STEM areas, and his/her degree program would be funded jointly by the University and by each school. The Veteran Administrator sees the possibility of a particular young science teacher fulfilling this role. This would have the effect of creating a connection with the University and tying the young teacher to the school for up to five years. This seems to be a tremendously promising route of development, since it would, in effect, create a highly knowledgeable teacher inside the school, situated at the heart of STEM education, who would also be bound to the school for

some years. This proposal generates great excitement, not least because of the way that ties to the Local University could provide a flow of educational expertise and prestige to the schools. The “STEM Fellow” concept is immediately included in the internal calculations of the the High School reformers and their budget proposals.

c. February 15, 2014.

The author has a critical morning of decisions that shape events to come. First, he has a conversation with his capstone advisor in which they discuss the fact that a choice must be made between continuing with a MEd capstone project centering on the Local University or switching focus to a project related to the unfolding opportunity at the Jewish schools. Both agree that a University project focusing on the university is far less exciting than the chance to do a project that could help shape the unfolding opportunity at the Jewish Schools. That capstone concept takes a number of forms before eventually becoming this study.

This decision, once shared, immediately begins to shape events. That morning the author feels that he has to inform his boss and coworker at the University that he is going with a capstone at the Jewish schools. This is a disappointment for both of them, and it leads to a temporary cooling of relationships in the office, especially because it sets the author’s long term direction toward the schools and away from the University. However, the same news is greeted with excitement at the High School, especially by the Veteran Administrator, and it leads to a greater intensity of discussion regarding a future role.

February 23, 2014.

The author submits a draft Capstone proposal to both his capstone advisor and the Veteran Administrator at the High School. This proposal, which ends up containing some material eventually incorporated into this document, centers on the creation of a Tech Plan for the High School. However, beyond its significance in the degree program, the proposal ends up providing the Fundraiser with a great deal of material to work with as he imagines the role of the author in the unfolding reform process at the Jewish schools, and this helps cement his determination to write the author’s role into proposals and to sell it to donors as a way of providing meaningful development assistance to the schools over the years to come.

February 26, 2014.

This day proved to be one of the most pivotal of the early spring. In the evening, the High School’s board votes to invite a candidate from England to become the new Head of the High School, thus securing the transition and eliminating another choice for the position that would have greatly complicated the planning of the author’s job, the use of school technology funds, and the direction of educational reform. (The author had a minor role to play in vetting the candidates and helping to influence the choice between the candidates.) The making of this choice frees up the Veteran Administrator from a major leadership duty, leaving him more free to work on the development of educational reform and technology plans. It also gives him a sense of urgency in implementing decisions, because his tenure as the principal negotiator for the school

and principal architect of reform efforts will end once the new Head of School is in place, and he does not yet know whether the new Head of School will be as hostile to technology purchases and major hires as the outgoing Head of School has been.

Earlier that afternoon, a meeting occurs at the Local University that brings many parties into the discussion. The Head of the Education Department at the Local University hosts the meeting, which includes five heads of schools or departments within the university, representatives from each of the Jewish schools, several education professors, the Fundraiser and the head of the Jewish Philanthropy. A strange, rambling discussion that combined soaring ambition, extravagant posturing, wild schemes, and a bit of honest discussion, this meeting was not one to miss. At its improbable heights, the meeting featured one stretch of nearly thirty minutes in which several people expressed enthusiastic support for a scheme to pour vast financial resources into a partnership between the University and the schools that would result in the creation of a shining, miniature model K-12 school system, run by deeply engaged Education professors and their diligent grad students, harvesting priceless, publishable data and built on the unshakeable pedagogical foundation of Universal Design. (The choice of Universal Design as the pedagogical foundation of the school may well have been the most fanciful element of the scheme!)

The meeting also included stretches of honest and sober dialog, one of which included full disclosure concerning the fact that the only “STEM Fellows” whose degrees the University could possibly co-sponsor with the schools involved doctoral degrees, not the masters degrees envisioned by the schools. This led to some awkward moments where school leaders spontaneously put meeting attendees forward as suitable candidates for the doctoral program or nominated themselves. One critically important suggestion made at the close of the meeting was the urgent scheduling of a meeting with the Head of Teacher Training Programs at the Science Museum, with which Hartford University was partnering to offer teacher training in the STEM fields.

March 1-2, 2014.

The Head of School of the Small K-8 School, the Outgoing Head of School at the High School, and Veteran Administrator go to a NY area conference that highlights the instructional breakthroughs made at some well-funded and highly technological Jewish schools in the New York-New Jersey area. They are impressed with what they see and are excited to implement such ideas in their own schools in the future.

March 3, 2014.

The Fundraiser meets with a large group of prospective donors at the Jewish Philanthropy headquarters, presenting a development plan that highlights the role of the author in development efforts, as well as a number of other elements, such as the role of a “STEM Fellow” that ultimately prove unworkable. The proposal also includes high computer spending requests, including money for both a new the High School Computer Lab and a rolling laptop cart with about 15 laptops.

March 6, 2014.

The author, engaging the High School's IT Administrator in discussions of the unfolding job possibility and new technical purchases for the first time, gets him thinking seriously, if cautiously, about what the new flow of tech money could mean. The IT Administrator, who is also the school bookkeeper, is very reluctant to consider spending any money, since he has endured years of hardship budgets, superiors loathe to spend on technology, and denied requests concerning vitally important items. The author attempts to win him over by capturing his imagination with possibilities.

When asked by the author about the sufficiency of the school network, the IT Administrator reveals that the High School's entire Internet access is being supplied by Comcast with one free, residential-class account, in order to comply with law. When encouraged to investigate the cost of adequate service, the IT Admin learns that an eightfold increase in bandwidth would cost a mere \$ 235 per month, and he immediately presses the Veteran Administrator to purchase this level of access, which would allow his programming students to download needed software without taking turns. However, the problem is that money must be found in either the operating budget or the forthcoming Transformational Fund budget to accomplish the change, and the choice of strategy in paying this bill is no small matter. In the end, the Veteran Administrator decides that the increase must happen at the change of fiscal years, but it must happen as quietly as possible, so as not to create notice by the outgoing Head of School or Board.

Aside from the technical importance of Internet access to all future educational technology plans at the school, the real importance of this event is that the IT Administrator is drawn into the discussions between the author and Veteran Administrator regarding technology purchases, reform plans, and the shaping of the new job title. Initially reluctant, even skeptical, he gradually becomes convinced of the reality of the Transformational Fund and its financial resources and becomes a critically important third party in the ongoing discussions between the author and Veteran Administrator.

March 11, 2014

The Veteran Administrator meets with a longtime colleague and friend, the Professor of Education, whom he had first hired as a teacher some forty years before. Their purpose is to talk about how she might provide Professional Development to the High School, as well as teaching the English class that the author had been teaching for two years. (It had become clear that he needed to give up that duty because of the scheduling conflicts that it would create.) The Professor of Education is a remarkably knowledgeable and charismatic Education professor, and she enjoys immense credibility with the Veteran Administrator. She proposes the use of a curricular reform and teacher training model called "Creative Confidence." She enjoys using that model, has taught it to others, and has a circle of people who support the model in her Education department. She proposes that it serve as a critical component of PD and reform efforts at the High School, and because of her impeccable credentials, this is seen by the Veteran Administrator as an extremely credible suggestion.

The author takes time to investigate the model and report back to the Veteran Administrator. He writes to tell him that the model is fascinating and of potential appeal to teachers, but he also stresses, over the objections of the Veteran Administrator, that it is more of a spur to creativity than it is a pedagogical reform model. The author tries to make it clear that it is not a sufficiently robust pedagogical reform model to serve as the cornerstone of the STEAM effort, and after confirming his views with his capstone advisor, he begins to insist, in discussions with the Veteran Administrator, that the school must come to focus on a single, comprehensive reform model that can undergird the reform of the school.

March 13, 2014.

Given that a consensus is building in the community of decision makers that would provide him a role at both the High School and the Small K-8 School, the author takes the initiative to schedule a tour of the Small K-8 School and a meeting with its new Head of School. This meeting is only the third time the men have ever met, and it provides their first extended discussion. The two-hour meeting gives the author a sense of just how different the Small K-8 School is from the High School and a sense of the inherent challenges of providing PD to teachers who work with children ranging in age from 2-13. This meeting provides the Head of School with a far greater understanding of the author, and it cements his initial decision to hire him based on the recommendation of the Veteran Administrator.

At this meeting, the Head of School confides that he is shutting down his existing two computer labs, letting go the technology teacher who taught computer classes, and turning the classroom space into an Environmental Science lab. This is a shock to the author, who struggles to understand both the decisions and the autocratic decision making style they reveal. It also demonstrates that the most significant source of information concerning the technology and technology use at the school, the current Computer Class teacher and network administrator, is the one person whose motivation to provide help may be the lowest.

March 27, 2014.

An interesting and important meeting occurs between the Veteran Administrator, the New Head of School at the Small K-8 School, and the author. Originally, it is planned as a time to secure a framework for the new position to be filled by the author. Matters on the official agenda include his proposed job description, job title, and basic proposed work arrangements. Though the author anticipated resistance to some of his proposals, there was very little, and in fact, there was very little discussion of the documents he brought to the meeting, including his job description, except for the job title. The one really significant development regarding the structure of his proposed position resulted from the chance that the author took to argue for a mid-April start to his work instead of the July 1st start date that had simply been assumed by both school leaders. That was accepted.

The meeting was much more exciting than planned because the Veteran Administrator had accidentally double-booked his morning. He had scheduled a meeting at the same time and place with an old friend, the Education Professor at the Local University, to talk about her proposal to provide Professional Development to the High School and to teach the English class currently taught by the author. (By this point, it had already become clear that the author could not continue to teach it because of the future scheduling conflicts that it would create.)

Instead of the calm, structured meeting the author had intended, in which he was to reach agreement on how his duties were to be defined with representatives of both schools, the meeting turned into an exciting, but bewildering barrage of forceful suggestions from the Professor that reflected her deep experience in public school teaching, her long experience as a professor, and her desire to prove her usefulness to the school leaders. Her adamant assertions included the idea that the author must arrange his current work during the waning school year as part of a “stipend” instead of beginning his regular salary. She insisted that he pursue inviting work-study students from the University to assist him at the schools. She convinced at least one of the school leaders of the “fact” that the author must obtain the assent of an Institutional Review Board before he began talking to teachers about their current teaching methods. It was very clear that she had slipped into the role of professor at the meeting, placing the author in the role of graduate student. Initially overwhelmed by her personality and suggestions, the author began grateful for her input, but as he digested the meeting and came to understand what had happened, he cooled to the idea of her providing PD for the school, in part because she had proven that she was a kind of force of nature, not easily directed and prone to run over him. To be sure, the Professor also dazzled all present with a nonstop string of clever teaching ideas and anecdotes.

This was a critical juncture in the decision making process of both schools regarding which Professional Development strategies they would pursue, and with this meeting, the Education Professor made a credible case for her involvement at both schools, particularly the High School, as a provider of Professional Development for the teachers, though she had dropped her earlier touting of the “Creative Confidence” method.

March 29, 2014.

This is a critically important day. The author, worn to a frazzle by deep involvement in the High School reform effort while sustaining greater than half time employment at the Local University, decides to leave that position as soon as practical. When he is given the go-ahead by the Veteran Administrator, he gives two weeks of notice, so that his last official day at the University will be April 11th. This puts pressure on all those concerned with the negotiations to work toward implementing the grant in order to accommodate a mid-April start. One of the requirements the Fundraiser articulates is the extension of the Job Description to include measurable performance benchmarks for the author’s proposed job.

The Veteran Administrator, having spoken with the Fundraiser and others who will administer the Transformational Grant funds, learns that monies will be available as early as April 1st to purchase computers for the High School. Given the promised arrival of the funds in the immediate future, and given his desire to get purchases made before others can divert funds or change priorities, he communicates a sense of great urgency to the author, who spends much of his weekend in trying to figure out which computers the school should purchase. The author, despairing of making a good decision without at least some faculty input, sends emails to several senior faculty, asking them for input. He receives some helpful suggestions. Discussions between the author, Veteran Administrator and IT Administrator have already decided that the school will continue to buy Apple computers, and they are making plans based on the technology spending figure they have been given, \$ 50, 000.

April 3, 2014.

After a crucial meeting between school representatives and the Head of Teacher Training at the CT Science Center, the teacher training model provided by the center becomes a leading contender to serve as the core pedagogical foundation for the STEAM efforts proposed by both the Small K-8 School and the High School. One great virtue of the program is that it looks fantastic to the donor community and the school board because it is prestigious and deals prominently with STEM content, so that it becomes a plausible way for the schools to pursue the goal of STEAM-centered reform. It also appears to be a well-established program with a track record of helping local teachers and schools reform. However, the author, taking time to review it online, is not convinced that it can serve faculty outside the STEM fields. When this is communicated via electronic correspondence to the head of the program, he begins attempting to convince the author and the Veteran Administrator that the Inquiry Program can serve as a viable model for whole-school reform at the High School level.

April 9, 2014.

Having met with other school leaders to discuss the case of an incoming student whose teachers may need help sufficiently differentiating instruction for her, the author investigates PD sources in the area of Differentiated Instruction. These become contenders for inclusion in the mix of PD pursued by the High School.

Around this time, the Veteran Administrator, IT Administrator, and author are involved with Apple sales representatives in a long string of email conversations concerning the pricing of potential purchases. The author and IT Administrator evolve more and more of an appreciative working relationship as they come to agreement on how to advise the Veteran Administrator. However, they cannot truly plan purchases yet because they do not have final numbers related to what they have to spend.

April 11, 2014.

This final day in the narrative settles the most crucial questions regarding how the High School will pursue reform in the ensuing months and years. The day becomes so crucial because of its relation to the Jewish calendar. It is the last day of school before an extended Passover break and vacation for the Veteran Administrator that will bring

developments to a standstill for nearly three weeks. That timing element forces a number of parties to target this day as one on which the course of reform must be set. Decisions are reached concerning all three critical strands of the reform direction, the choice of a principal reform model for the schools, the definition of the author's role at both schools, and the purchase of computers and equipment for the High School.

The first and most important event of the day is a meeting between the Head of Teacher Training programs at the CT Science Center and the representatives of the High School and the Small K-8 School. At this meeting, the Head of Teacher Training presents his case that his three-year program can serve as an appropriate vehicle for whole-school reform at both schools, and he provides many concrete suggestions as to how the schools might best take part in the process. Because he seems to speak with such authority about his institution's training capacity and the usefulness of the Inquiry Method as a "whole school" reform method that is of direct relevance to every discipline, all those present at the meeting believe him, including the future DIT, Veteran Administrator, and the Head of School from the K-8 school.

During his authoritative explanation of how to best implement the Inquiry Program, the Head of Teacher Training explains that only teachers are charged tuition for taking part in the program and that those, such as administrators and "Instructional Coaches" who have supervisory or support roles, are included without cost. This raises the question of who, from the schools, could fill the role of "Instructional Coach." Both the Veteran Administrator and the Head of School from the Small K-8 School agree that the Director of Instructional Technology is the only person available to fill this role, but they also note that to assume such a role would profoundly change the nature of his duties.

By the end of the meeting, both schools have agreed to take part in the Inquiry Program, and they have agreed that the principal role of the DIT at both schools will be to coach teachers in implementing the Inquiry Method of teaching. This decision means, in essence, that the heads of both schools have essentially agreed, without giving the matter great thought, to release the DIT from being a Director of Instructional Technology; instead, he will primarily serve as the coordinator of school reform efforts in both schools, coaching teachers in how to implement the Inquiry Method.

From the perspective of the Fundraiser and his employers at the Jewish Philanthropy, the agreement of the schools to adopt the Inquiry Method and to enroll as institutions in the Science Center program brings relief and a sense of closure. From their point of view, a single "bidder" has won the contract to carry out the Professional Development necessary to ensure comprehensive school reform in both the High School and the Small K-8 School. Because the Science Museum is highly prestigious and because its program is clearly focused on STEM fields, it satisfies the demand of the donor community for a program of school reform that appears progressive, scientific and centered on the secular subjects taught in both schools. From the perspective of the Philanthropic Foundation, this arrangement is admirable because it entrusts the course of reform to a single, capable entity with a strong local presence, while greatly simplifying the process of budgeting for reform efforts. As a bonus, the single position

created by their philanthropic work, that of the Director of Instructional Technology, is positioned in such a way as to ensure the flourishing of the reform effort and the coordination of efforts between the Small K-8 School and the High School.

Another crucial event that occurs on this day is that the Fundraiser provides definite figures concerning the amount of money to be disbursed to both schools during the spring of 2014. It includes sufficient funds to pay the author, significant funds to pay for professional Development, but far less computer purchase money than had been originally promised. Still, the author and IT Administrator agree, in discussions with others at the school, that the school needs to buy a laptop cart and 15 MacBook Pro laptops. They set in motion the process that will result in those purchases.

This is the author's last day at the Local University, so it is both appropriate and timely that before close of business that day, the author comes to agreement with the Veteran Administrator and the Head of School at the K-8 School that he will assume his duties as Director of Instructional Technology at both schools on April 28, 2014. During the break, the author begins drafting the early portions of this narrative.

Though many of the decisions reached on Friday, April 11th, 2014 would require further discussion, debate and confirmation, the basic direction and intentions of the High School had been settled in regard to the author's role, the purchase of computers, and the provision of PD for the High School and its teachers. The author is to be half time at both the K-8 School and the High School. His principal role is to be an Instructional Coach who helps teachers at both schools implement the Inquiry Method. The plan calls for him to receive the vigorous support of both administrations, who have agreed to implement The Inquiry Method as a whole school reform model. That implementation of the Inquiry Method is to be the main vehicle through which both schools pursue reform aligned with the STEAM concept, in part to satisfy the consensus in the donor community and school Board calling for an emphasis on excellence in those areas of study.

What has already been agreed upon is that the Education Professor will also provide the High School, and to a lesser extent, the K-8 School, with supplementary Professional Development. Her work is eagerly anticipated by the veteran teachers of the school, including especially the Liberal Arts teachers, who have been delighted by her creative teaching ideas.

Postscript to the Narrative:

During the month of July 2014, the first cohort of teachers from the High School went through the week-long first session of the Inquiry Program, along with the DIT. The Head of School of the K-8 School also attended the program, along with four teachers from his school. Though the Veteran Administrator had planned to attend, he could not attend because of the overwhelming responsibilities involved with leading the High School during a change in administration and a major accreditation effort.

Reaction to the program among the attendees from the K-8 school was generally positive, and their Head of School was initially enthused about the program. However, the fact that the K-8 school was mired in mutually-reinforcing crises of finances, enrollment, morale, and retention meant that he simply had no opportunity to pursue an ambitious reform agenda of any sort. Given the social and political realities manifest in the K-8 School, it became absurd for the DIT to follow his April 11th mandate and attempt to implement the Inquiry Method as a school reform model there, especially in the absence of any centrally-organized school reform. The crisis atmosphere of the school and lack of effective leadership means that any meaningful implementation of the Inquiry Method remained completely out of reach, even if the Head of School was determined to pursue it, and that was not the case.

At the High School, reaction to the Inquiry Program among attendees was mixed, if generally negative. The science and math instructors somewhat positive in their basic perception of the program, seeing it as relevant to some of their teaching tasks. However, the reactions of the Liberal Arts faculty ranged from grudging acceptance to bitter rejection. The essential thrust of their resistance was that the program was a lengthy process designed to enlighten and equip teachers of an entirely different kind – K-8 generalists tasked with teaching science. When the High School teachers were given a chance to express their reactions to the program during a meeting in the fall, they were vehement in their criticisms, which center on the questionable applicability of the program to their work as high school teachers who do not teach science.

Having undergone a week of Inquiry training, the DIT came to see the Inquiry Method as a highly focused reform model admirably designed to meet the specific needs of K-8 Science educators. The local Science Museum has worked to extend the disciplinary boundaries of the model so that it can serve as a whole-school school reform model for K-8 schools, particularly those with a STEM focus. At the same meeting where the participating educators vented their frustrations regarding the program, it was revealed that only a dozen or so high school instructors had ever been through the program, and that only a single High School is piloting the use of the Inquiry Program as a whole-school reform method, and that school is a specialized Magnet School with a clear STEM focus.

For the DIT, the reactions of teachers to the program, the urgency of other tasks, and the unsuitability of the Inquiry Program as a vehicle for reforming the High School have forced a radical revision of his duties. Instead of serving as the “Instructional Coach” who supervises the use of the Inquiry Method across all disciplinary areas at both the High School and the K-8 School, the DIT has instead served as an IT support person and a promoter of Instructional Technology, in keeping with prior understandings of his job description.

The Agreed-Upon Program of School Reform as of April 11, 2014

- The Jewish Philanthropy has agreed to fund the acquisition of computers and other devices, the provision of Professional Development through the Science Museum, and the salary of the DIT, half of which will be provided to each school.
- The Science Museum has agreed to provide a full set of training and support services that will enable the K-8 School and the High School to implement the Inquiry Method as a whole-school reform model. The plan is for all the administrators and teachers in both schools to complete three summers of training in the Inquiry Method. To begin the program, both the K-8 School and the High School have agreed to send an administrator, the DIT, and a cohort of teachers to a week-long Professional Development session provided by the Science Museum that serves as an introduction to the Inquiry Method.
- The Director of Instructional Technology is to start work as an Instructional Coach, helping both the High School and the K-8 school implement the Inquiry Program as a whole-school reform model. (This represents a change from his earlier “job description” as the DIT, particularly because it centers on support for the Inquiry Method as opposed to Instructional Technology.)

State of Reform Implementation as of Mid-October, 2014.

After the first months of the new school year has gone by, some of the intended school reform efforts are continuing as originally envisioned, but all attempts to implement the Inquiry Method as a vehicle for whole-school reform have been abandoned, sidelined, or even repudiated.

The Jewish Philanthropy delivered the first round of funding in late April, 2014, but after the departure of the Fundraiser during the early summer, progress in raising funds for subsequent rounds of funding has been slow, jeopardizing the whole reform strategy. Certainly, the projections originally made for both technology purchases and Professional Development have been cut sharply, and the overall effect is to limit the potential for transformative change in both schools, especially since there appears to be far less funding available to purchase new computers, devices and software than originally promised. This funding shortfall is one factor strongly decreasing the willingness of the High School to cease plans to implement the Inquiry Method.

As for progress in the implementation of the Inquiry Method, it best to state things simply; neither the High School nor the K-8 school has made an effort to implement the Inquiry Method as a vehicle of school reform. Furthermore, the new Head of the High School has no intention of beginning such an effort. As stated earlier, the DIT is not, as agreed upon in April, serving as an Instructional Coach who promotes the method, in either school. Instead, the DIT is providing services in line with his earlier scope of

duties, which focus on the purchase, deployment and effective use of instructional technology.

Though the administration of the K-8 school remains positively inclined toward the Inquiry Program, it has not made any attempt to implement school reform based on the model, nor has it been in any position to do so given other, more urgent priorities. However, since a few teachers and school leaders have been through the initial, week long session of the Inquiry Program, and since no formal plans to withdraw from it have yet been made, there remains a possibility that the K-8 School could continue to participate in the program to some limited degree.

Analysis of Events and Outcomes:

Note: In keeping with the analytical methods of ANT, explained in the theoretical precis, the following, analytical sections of the paper will attempt to name groups of people as Actor-Networks. In other words, collections of individuals and institutional interests that can be understood to function as though they are a single individual.

The Philanthropic Actor-Network:

The Philanthropic Actor-Network consists of the officers of the Jewish Philanthropy, the Fundraiser, and a large number of donors, both minor and major. The Fundraiser represents the Jewish Philanthropy and its interests to the schools and other institutions, while also taking the lead in gathering support and financial donations to the reform effort from the Donor community. The primary goal of the donor community and the Jewish Philanthropy is that the three Jewish Day Schools become thriving institutions that can continue to play an important role in the local Jewish community. The strategies chosen by the Jewish Philanthropy to promote educational reform and organizational stability at the schools reflect this underlying goal.

From the perspective of most donors and the Philanthropy, the most critical need of the schools is to offer secular studies on a par with the excellent local schools, so that the schools can successfully compete against strong local public schools. The popularity of STEM-focused schools and school reform models ensures that the concept is well known and accepted within the donor community, and it is particularly attractive to prominent donors. The popularity of the STEM concept with donors and its widespread name recognition influenced the Fundraiser and the officers of the Jewish Philanthropy to craft their original school reform proposals in terms of STEM education. The embrace of the STEM reform emphasis expresses the interest of the Philanthropic Actor-Network in promoting a secular, scientific, progressive reform agenda that unifies and energizes the donor base.

The Philanthropic Actor-Network also has a strong interest in technology purchase and use, in part because of the need to keep harmony within the Actor-Network. Both the donor base and the Jewish Philanthropy feel that to “update” the Jewish Day Schools in

the area and make them attractive to families required that more and better technology be deployed within them. This is largely because the lavish use of educational technology has come to be seen as a key indicator of educational excellence and progress. The awareness of the widespread use of educational technology in public schools and the tendency to equate technological progress with educational excellence influenced how donors thought about school reform and school recruitment. Partly as a result of donor interest, the educational reform plans created by the Fundraiser and officers of the Philanthropy emphasized the purchase and deployment of technology from the start, in part because it could create the quick perception of progress that would present donors with a tangible proof of their dollars at work. The awareness by the Fundraiser and Philanthropy that technology purchases alone would not improve a school also led them to be open to the hiring of someone, ultimately the Director of Instructional Technology, who would help plan and oversee the deployment of technology and the training of teachers in its use.

The Philanthropic Actor-Network is strongly attracted to providers of Professional Development that have high prestige, visibility, and credibility. One of the goals of the Jewish Philanthropy for the school reform campaign was to find a strong local partner that could be trusted to guide the schools along the path of reform and hold them to reforms over the long haul. The right partner would also have prestige and credibility that would “rub off” on both the schools and the school improvement campaign, generating support for both in the process. The selection of the Science Museum as that external partner was not a foregone conclusion at the start of the campaign, but a fondness for the STEM reform model and technology also predisposed the Jewish Philanthropy to accept the Science Museum as a credible, independent partner with great prestige. The fact that the Inquiry Program offered by the Science Museum has a clear, three-year structure was a bonus, as was the fact that relating to the Science Museum was acceptable to all three Jewish schools. The inclusion of all three schools also excited the strong impulse within the Philanthropic Actor-Network to promote unity within the Jewish community and institutions.

The Philanthropic Actor-Network had a strong interest in securely settling the future of school reform efforts before the summer of 2014. A critical need of the Jewish Philanthropy and its representative, the Fundraiser, was to have the course of reform firmly set by the time the Fundraiser’s contract expired in late spring, 2014. In terms of this goal, the selection of the Science Museum as principal provider of Professional Development to teachers of all three schools appeared to be a godsend, since it meant that a single stream of funding could be set aside for a single-payee contracted to provide assistance to all three schools for years to come.

The Science Museum (Teacher Training) Actor-Network:

The Science Museum Teacher Training Actor-Network (or simply the Museum Actor-Network) consists of the professional development providers in the program, the materials used in the program, and its administrators; the network and its interests are

always represented by the Director of Teacher Training Programs. The Director serves as the primary negotiator of relationships with schools as well as the manager of all of the teacher training programs.

The Museum Actor-Network has a strong interest in gaining momentum as a provider of whole-school, STEM- themed school reform based on its Inquiry Program. The core area of expertise K-8 of the Museum Actor-Network is K-8 science education, since that is the focus of the Inquiry Program and its associated materials, which the Museum has acquired from a national program spearheaded by an older and larger science museum. K-8 Science education is also the core interest and competence of the trainers who are part of the Museum Actor-Network. However, the program has reached the majority of reachable science educators in the city and surrounding suburbs, and in order to grow the program and increase its reach as a reform model, the program has expanded to include whole-school reform efforts at a few K-8 public schools that have a STEM focus. Since the reform efforts envisioned by the Jewish Philanthropy and endorsed by the schools appear to have a STEM, or at least a “STEAM” focus, they appear to be candidates for a STEM-themed whole-school reform based on the Inquiry Program.

The Museum Actor-Network has a strong interest in expanding into private schools. Because of the institutional focus of the training program and the available funding, the client institutions of the Museum Actor-Network have almost exclusively been public schools, and the only schools that have attempted whole-school reform through its guidance have been local public (and charter) schools. In order to expand its client base and funding base, the Museum Actor-Network needs to gain expertise in working with private schools and credibility as a provider of whole-school reform to such schools. Private Jewish Schools constitute a particularly fine opportunity, since they are closely tied to the deep pockets of Jewish Philanthropists, one of whom is already responsible for providing the lion’s share of the funding for all the teacher outreach programs provided by the Museum.

The Museum Actor-Network has a strong interest in expanding to provide whole-school reform at the High School level. Though the training program, training materials, and trainers involved in the Inquiry Program are focused on K-8 Science Education, the program has been expanded to serve as a model for whole-school educational reform for STEM-themed K-8 schools. The program has also been used to provide support and training to small number of science educators at the High School level. In addition, a single Magnet school with a STEM focus is piloting the Inquiry Program, as modified by the Museum, as a whole-school reform model. If the Museum Actor-Network were to implement whole-school reform in another high school, this could help it develop the capacity to foster such reform and the credibility needed to expand into the High School market.

The Museum Actor-Network has a potential interest in expanding to provide district-wide, K-12 school reform. Up to this point, the Museum has been able to work with a few K-8 Schools that have used its Inquiry Program as the basis for whole-school reform, but if it were able to work with both a K-8 school and the High School that its

graduates attend, this would be very similar to providing a unified program of K-12 reform for an entire district. That is exactly the opportunity presented by the chance to implement the Inquiry Program as a whole-school reform model at the three local Jewish Day schools, particularly in the High School and its principal feeder school, the Small K-8 School. Though this interest is not as salient and urgent as the prior interests described, the opportunity for the Museum to grow in capacity and credibility as a provider of district-wide school reform based on the Inquiry Method is a potential advantage of the opportunity provided by involvement with the Jewish schools.

The Small K-8 School Actor-Network

The Small K-8 School Actor-Network includes the teachers and administrators of the school as well as the School Board and leading families. This school is hemmed in by urgent concerns and led by a new Head of School who possesses the power to speak for the institution and represent its interests in negotiations concerning school reform and how it will unfold. The Small K-8 School has historically been the most important single “feeder” school for the High School, but its Middle School enrollment has declined so precipitously that in the spring semester dealt with in this paper, it would fail to graduate students who would go on to enroll at the High School. The Small K-8 School is in serious financial trouble and is seeking to find a buyer for its property, with the hope of gaining enough to build a smaller facility on the grounds of the High School. The financial woes of the school and the decline in enrollment are related to other problems as well, including the perception in the larger Jewish community that it is a “problem” school that offers poor instruction in core academic subjects.

The Small K-8 School Actor-Network has an urgent interest in appearing to take constructive action to improve the quality of instruction. Because of the perception of the school in the wider Jewish community as a school that does not provide strong academic instruction, the school has a serious problem with student retention and recruitment. Furthermore, the Head of School is under great pressure from others in the Actor-Network to demonstrate that he is providing strong, constructive leadership that will improve the academic quality and reputation of the institution. If it is to help the school rebuild, or at least stabilize, enrollment, any school reform model implemented by the school must immediately address both the realities in the classroom and the perception of those realities in the larger community.

As a corollary to the prior point, the Small School Actor-Network has a strong interest in associating the school and school reform efforts with prestigious third parties, such as the Science Museum. Because the “brand” of the Small School is damaged, it is a matter of some urgency for it to associate with very strong institutions that can provide it prestige and status by association. The need to associate with larger and more prestigious institutions is urgent for the school as a whole, but it is even more urgent for the Head of School, who must constantly seek to bolster his own credibility as he leads an institution in crisis.

The Small School Actor-Network has a strong interest in gaining funding from the Jewish Philanthropy, particularly funding that can be of help with technology purchases and Professional Development in the area of instructional technology. Since the Small School is operating at a deficit, it needs outside help to purchase new equipment and train teachers in its use. Not only is this vital in order to improve instruction, but it is just as crucial as a means of demonstrating visible improvement and institutional progress.

The Small School Actor-Network has a strong interest in complying with the expectations set by the Jewish Philanthropy and the leaders of the High School. As the weakest and most troubled of the three Jewish Day Schools, the Small School needs the support of other institutions, particularly the political support of the High School and the financial support of the Jewish Philanthropy. The interests of the school in complying with the demands of other Actor-Networks are felt most keenly by the new Head of School, who must depend on outside help, funding and guidance for his institution to survive. Especially since he depends on the advice and political support of the Veteran Administrator of the High School, he is in no position to take exception to any reform proposals accepted by the High School and put forward by the Jewish Philanthropy.

The Jewish High School Actor-Network.

The Jewish High School Actor-Network consists of the outgoing Head of School, the staff, the teachers, the IT Administrator, the author (DIT), and the Veteran Administrator. The outgoing Head of School has a voice in the negotiations surrounding the future of the school, but throughout the period during which decisions were being made concerning future reforms, his influence was largely eclipsed by the power of the Veteran Administrator, who officially serves as the Head of General Studies. Enrollment at the High School is stable, but it is almost 25% lower than it had been at its height. Though the High School is perceived as a strong, academically respectable institution, it needs to grow enrollment and increase its prestige among potential donors and students.

The High School Actor-Network has an urgent interest in securing funding from the Jewish Philanthropy. The Jewish High School is kept afloat by generous donors, but it needs additional funding for technology purchases, to implement school improvement efforts and to proceed with hiring the author as a Director of Instructional Technology. These desired investments in updating the school's technology and improving its pedagogy are "big ticket" items that could pay dividends in improving both the actual and perceived academic quality of the school.

The High School Actor-Network has an important interest in providing meaningful Professional Development to its teachers. The accreditation process has revealed a need for regular, structured Professional Development for teachers if they are to improve the quality of their teaching and the coherence of the overall academic

program. There is particular concern that the range of competence of teachers is very wide, leaving a substantial minority of teachers below a satisfactory level of effectiveness. The teachers, as a whole, are clear in demanding additional Professional Development and planning time, so its provision seems both vital to teacher morale and integral to the credibility of the school's application for accreditation. Apart from the essential competence of teachers, it is clear that very few teachers at the High School are using Instructional Technology effectively, which poses a problem for both instruction and public relations.

The High School Actor-Network has an interest in associating itself with prestigious institutions and programs, as well as in finding language that it can use in describing school improvement efforts to donors. As a practical corollary, it could be said that for the High School to secure funding from the Jewish Philanthropy, it must develop a plan for academic reform and technological upgrading that is acceptable to the Jewish Philanthropy and its donor base. The High School needs to have a prestigious partner in school reform efforts, since it would be extremely helpful in positioning the school as a progressive, academically excellent institution on a path to school improvement.

The High School Actor Network has a need for a concept or set of terms with which to communicate its reform plans and progress to outside donors and institutions. In order to communicate a vision for the development and improvement of the High School, the High School, above all its Director of Development, must have compelling language with which to describe school reform efforts. Widely known and accepted concepts, such as the STEM concept, are useful since they seem current and relevant to the perceived needs of the school.

The High School Actor-Network has an interest in setting a course of reform quickly, in order to move on with pressing institutional needs. Throughout the period studied, the Veteran Administrator serves as the lead negotiator for the High School in all matters related to the reform and the funding of technology hires and purchases. He is assisted in researching and making all his decisions by the author, the acting Director of Instructional Technology, who has an urgent interest in reaching agreement on all salient matters related to educational reform and technology purchases, because they make it possible for him to buy badly needed computers and to begin paid work. The Veteran Administrator also feels the urgency of making a clear, binding decisions regarding the course of reform and technology purchases. After years of budgets that have left no room for technology purchases, he feels he must use the funds provided by the Jewish Philanthropy before they are re-appropriated by the school board or used for other urgent purposes within the school. He also must make decisions regarding the direction of reform quickly, because he faces the expiration of his mandate at the same time that he is confronted with the overwhelming task of leading the school through a leadership transition, the expansion of the office staff, and a major accreditation effort.

The High School Actor-Network has an urgent interest in protecting itself from school reform programs that would interfere with the mission and core programs of the school, especially its Judaics department. The mission of the Jewish High School is

closely bound up with both its religious identity and its distinctive academic offerings in the Judaics department. As the outgoing Head of School pointed out, it would be quite impossible to actually transform the Jewish High School into a STEM-focused school, or even to implement the slightly broader STEAM model as conventionally understood, while holding to the mission of the school and preserving or bolstering the Judaics department. For that matter, the serious adoption of either of those reform models would interfere with core elements of the school mission, including the policy of admitting students representing an extremely broad range of academic preparation. Despite the popularity of the STEM model with the donor community, there is no real possibility of implementing it, as conventionally understood, without radically reconstructing the school and changing its mission.

Actor-Network Analysis and Summary Table:

In order to understand the fate of the reform efforts at the Jewish High School through the analytical lenses of Actor-Network Theory and sensemaking theory, it is necessary to show how each of the Actor-Networks proceeded with good faith and limited knowledge to form agreements about the course of reform that would ultimately unravel. Given the very different interests and needs of the four Actor-Networks, and given the critical understandings that they lacked at the time, it is not difficult to see how they could reach a fragile commitment to using the Inquiry Program as a vehicle for whole-school reform.

Table Summarizing Actor-Network Analysis.

Actor-Network:	Goals:	Needs and Interests:	Missing Understandings.
Philanthropic	<p>To help the three Jewish schools thrive.</p> <p>To ensure that their secular studies and use of technology become competitive with local public schools.</p>	<p>Needs campaign concepts and programs that energize donors.</p> <p>Needs to be reasonably sure that donor money will be effective in transforming schools.</p> <p>Strongly interested in finding external provider of PD that would safeguard reforms.</p> <p>Strongly interested in settling reform path and reform provider(s) before summer 2014.</p> <p>Interested in supporting technology purchases, in part for donor excitement.</p> <p>Interested in high-prestige relationships that bring credibility to the campaign and schools.</p>	<p>Did not understand the PD needs of the schools.</p> <p>Did not understand that the Inquiry Program would be very difficult to implement at the K-8 School.</p> <p>Did not understand that the Inquiry Program was not relevant to the needs of the High School.</p> <p>Did not anticipate that the funds it raised would be insufficient to fund full participation in the Inquiry Program without sacrificing higher-priority items.</p>
Science Museum (Teacher Training)	<p>To expand its Inquiry Program as a vehicle for “Whole School” Reform.</p>	<p>Strongly Interested in expanding the number of schools using the Inquiry Program for “Whole-School” Reform.</p> <p>Strongly Interested in expanding into the High School reform market.</p> <p>Strongly Interested in expanding into the Private School reform market.</p> <p>Interested in providing “Whole School” reform at the “district” level.</p>	<p>Did not understand the PD needs of either school.</p> <p>Did not understand that the Inquiry Program would be very difficult to implement at the K-8 School.</p> <p>Did not understand how inappropriate its Inquiry Program would seem to High School Participants.</p> <p>Did not anticipate that the funds raised by the Philanthropy would be insufficient to fully fund participation in the program.</p>

Actor-Network:	Goals:	Needs and Interests:	Missing Understandings.
K-8 School	To ensure the survival of the school amidst a crisis.	Needs to be perceived as improving instruction and academic quality. Needs to gain funding from Philanthropy, to update technology and get relevant PD. Needs to improve instruction. Strongly interested in improving its brand by association with prestigious third parties. Strongly interested in securing support from the High School and Philanthropy through compliance with demands and suggestions.	Did not understand the full difficulty of implementing the Inquiry Program as a Whole-School Reform program. Did not anticipate that the High School would back away from implementing the Inquiry Program. Did not anticipate that the funds raised by the Philanthropy would not be sufficient to fund full participation in the Inquiry Program without sacrificing other priorities.
High School	To grow enrollment by improving its academic reputation and quality. To ensure the survival of the K-8 School.	Needs to gain funding from Philanthropy, to update technology and get relevant PD. Needs to provide meaningful PD for its teachers, in order to improve instruction and gain accreditation. Needs a concept or set of terms to sell its reforms to donors and institutions. Needs to protect itself from reform programs inconsistent with its mission and program. Strongly interested in improving its brand by association with prestigious third parties. Strongly interested in setting course of reform in April, 2014.	Did not understand the strong focus of the Inquiry Program on developing K-8 Science educators. Did not understand how much work it would be to adapt the Inquiry Program to High School use, nor that its implementation would constitute a “pilot.” Did not anticipate the fierce rejection of the Inquiry program by some participating faculty. Did not anticipate that the funds raised by the Philanthropy would not be sufficient to fund full participation in the Inquiry Program.

From the perspective of the Philanthropic Actor-Network tasked with funding the initiative, the opportunity to secure the course of reform by entrusting it to a prestigious third party with a proven track record was nearly irresistible. The prestige and prominence of the Science Museum and its Inquiry Program and the plausibility of its claims to offer a secure and well known path to whole-school reform made the Philanthropic Actor-Network disposed to enthusiastically accept its sales pitch. The fact that pursuit of reform through that vehicle appeared progressive, secular, scientific, and technologically sophisticated meant that it seemed ideally suited to excite the donor base. However, the Philanthropic Actor-Network did not understand how irrelevant the program was to the needs of the two schools, and that was the most crucial failure of understanding that it brought to the negotiating table.

The urgency of reaching agreement on the particulars of reform in the spring of 2014, before the Fundraiser stepped out of the process, had an ironic side. On one hand, it made the Fundraiser and Philanthropic Actor-Network more determined to secure binding agreements concerning the path of reform, but the rush to reach those agreements precluded giving the matter sufficient scrutiny and forced decisions through before the incoming Head of School at the High School could participate. In other words, the time frame set by the philanthropy contributed in significant ways to the failure of the reform it was trying to foster. Another function of the timeline was that once the Fundraiser departed in the early summer of 2014, giving toward the fund slowed down considerably; it now appears likely that the Philanthropy cannot supply sufficient funds to allow the schools to participate in the program without taking money away from far more critical expenditures. This funding shortfall was the single biggest unanticipated element of the negotiations contributed by the Philanthropy.

From the perspective of the Science Museum, the chance to acquire two new client institutions seemed wonderful, and not simply because of the revenues involved. Any chance to gain clients attempting “Whole-School” reform via the Inquiry Method would be a win, but the chance to simultaneously expand the presence of the program in private schools while gaining a second school in which to pilot its use at the High School level was highly desirable. This is not to suggest in any way that the Head of the Inquiry Program was being disingenuous when he promised that the program was a highly effective, highly relevant vehicle for whole-school reform; he was simply speaking optimistically of what he could deliver, and he did not understand enough about either of the two schools to realize that his program was unworkable for them and unsuited to their needs. He might have been less enthusiastic in selling the program to both the schools and the Philanthropy if he had known that the Philanthropy might not be able to pay the bill for the schools to take part in the program.

From the perspective of the K-8 School, the adoption of the Inquiry Program paid immediate dividends in institutional credibility at a time when credibility was badly needed. In the midst of an enrollment crisis precipitated by the poor academic reputation of the school, it was even more urgent and vital that the school appear to address issues of academic quality than it was for the school to actually address them. Apart from any actual impact on the quality of instruction, the chance to create a prominent association with both

the High School and the Science Museum was of potentially critical importance. However, the urgent need for the K-8 School and its Head to reach agreement with those external partners in order to secure funding for badly needed PD and technology purchases meant that the school lacked any real say in negotiations over the choice of school reform initiatives. Just as clearly, the K-8 School lacked the institutional stability and capacity to implement an ambitious Whole-School reform effort such as the Inquiry Program. In short, the K-8 School and its head were too politically weak to have shaped the direction of the joint reform program in any significant way, while the functional weakness of the institution made it almost inconceivable that it could implement Whole-School reform along lines provided by the Inquiry Program.

The urgent need to find a reform program acceptable to the Philanthropy, with little time to shop for alternatives, put the High School in a position to be favorably inclined toward the proposals made by the Science Museum. The prestige of the program and the pressure from external and internal voices calling for STEM-related reform made it convenient to set aside nagging questions about the suitability of the program and accept the assurances provided by the Head of the Inquiry Program. The Veteran Administrator, leading the High School at the time, did not understand that the implementation of the Inquiry Program would be a pioneering effort, since only a single, current pilot program of such an implementation had yet been attempted. Not knowing how specifically tailored to the needs of K-8 Science educators the program was, he could not understand how irrelevant the program was to the PD needs of most educators at his school; not knowing that, he could not anticipate the fact that the majority of the faculty who would participate in the program during the summer would reject it, often vehemently.

Apart from the excellence of his sales pitch, what allowed the High School to accept the Inquiry Program as a reform model was that it had not committed to the program in any exclusive way, nor did it need to, since the overall agreement with the Philanthropy made room for two other means of reform – the hiring of the DIT and the employment of the Professor of Education as a provider of PD. In some sense, then, the de-facto course set by the Veteran Administrator was to secure the services of people on whom he knew he could rely for meaningful PD, while placating the interests of the Philanthropy, donors, and others by participating in the Inquiry Program – at least to a degree. Of course, neither the Inquiry Program nor any other path of reform could have a chance of success at the High School apart from the determined support of the new Head of School. Since the Inquiry Program had only the most distant relevance to the High School and its needs, and since he had not been able to participate in choosing it, there was little chance of it gaining his support.

Conclusion:

In retrospect, the adoption of the Inquiry Program as a vehicle for Whole-School reform seems almost inevitable, for reasons that had little to do with its suitability to either the K-8 School or the High School. Furthermore, the reform effort seems to have been as clearly destined to be abandoned as it was to be adopted. These are very troubling conclusions to draw for anyone who was party to the process, since they reveal the striking limits of the insight and foresight of all concerned. Four institutions, each led by well-meaning and highly competent individuals, agreed upon school reform plans that were later revealed to be fruitless and inherently unworkable.

It is even more troubling to consider the fact that it appears, in hindsight, that the ultimate fruitlessness of the attempt to choose a program of school reform was a foregone conclusion. In other words, it appears that the eventual outcome flowed directly from the essential attitudes, needs and interests that each institution brought to the negotiating table. Perhaps to an even greater extent, the eventual outcome was shaped by what each Actor-Network did not understand about the interests and capabilities of the other parties involved. To be sure, sensemaking theory strongly suggests a caveat to that conclusion, given that the observer's perception of the inevitability of any given outcome is often suspect.

Once an outcome has occurred, it can be very difficult to conceive of things happening any other way because of the ineluctably retrospective nature of sensemaking. In fact, since the analytical categories employed in this analysis do not address the probability of counterfactual scenarios, this analysis is not even relevant to a discussion of how probable other outcomes were. The very nature of this analysis, this piece of sensemaking, is simply to reveal details of the problematic, provisional sensemaking done by the actors in the heat of the moment. Their attempts to make sense of things led a group of highly intelligent, well-intentioned people to attempt reform efforts that subsequent events have revealed to be inherently unwise and unworkable. We are left with the question what it would have taken to empower or inform the sensemaking activities of the actors involved to the point that they could have agreed upon a reform strategy that had a realistic chance of success.

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Appendix: Capstone Reflections: Making Sense of Sensemaking

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There are times when comforting delusion that we are special or exceptional is shattered, and this is often most painfully brought home by failure, especially failure that is utterly typical, failure that is utterly blasé, utterly predictable. It is one thing to experience such failure, it is another thing to have your nose rubbed in it, if only by your own insistent drive to understand how and why it occurred. At its best and worst this project has given me the chance to watch, as if in slow motion, the scenes in which I enacted a failure to understand events as they occurred, a failure to act on what I knew, or suspected. I am hoping, perhaps against reason, that the process of both failing and reliving that failure at three frames per second will serve as some proof against future shenanigans of the same kind; perhaps at least I will have that uneasy sense that I have stepped in it when I have stepped in it.

From a different angle, this capstone has provided the gift of memory. So many of our most important transitions in life go by too quickly for us to capture all but the most fleeting of glimpses. The events narrated and analyzed in my capstone were critically important transitions for me. Though the year at the University of Hartford had been an incredible learning experience, it was still never more than half time, and I was usually in the role of learner throughout that time, moving from intern to junior staff. I was almost always trying to catch up with complex processes and learn new systems, always acting as the most junior person in the office. The chance to actually be a director level professional, to be a full time, senior member of school communities was very new for me. In a very real sense, the capstone narrates the months in which I helped to define and begin my first truly professional job.

Aside from capturing that vital slice of life with far greater detail than I would ever otherwise have captured it, the project has deeply informed my sense of sensemaking, helping me take it from an interesting set of concepts to a shockingly practical lived reality.

Through the project, and especially through writing the analysis and conclusions, I came to understand in a visceral way a number of the fundamental tenets of sensemaking. Not least of these experienced realities was my experience of the fact that I was only able to make sense of past events once I knew their outcomes. The retrospective nature of sensemaking, its simplest and most basic tenet, is actually quite difficult to come to grips with, since it makes one aware of the painfully provisional nature of one's own perceptions, attitudes and judgments.

Another sensemaking tenet that came home to me so forcefully was the reality that my social location in the High School and K-8 School have so profoundly shaped the kinds of contributions that I could make to both schools, and that shaping of roles has profoundly affected the kind of thinking that I do and am able to do. In other words, I have actually come to grips with the extraordinary fact that in many ways, I can only be the person and the professional that others grant me the space to be. This might not come as a painful revelation to some, but for someone as devoted as I am to the ideal of the independent judgment of the intellectual, it is almost humiliating, since it demonstrates that my very ability to comprehend, plan and act is profoundly conditioned by social roles and cues others impose upon me. Along with awareness of the failures of shared judgment revealed by the capstone, the most sobering lesson for me is an awareness of the shocking degree to which my awareness of events, perception of events, and understanding of events was shaped by social processes in which I participated but did relatively little to shape. Though I could not address this in the capstone, but I was repeatedly struck by the truth of sensemaking regarding the ongoing, enactive nature of sensemaking and the inextricable links between our actions and that which must be understood. It really is extraordinary to start to break down the false cognitive wall between organism and environment, especially since doing so threatens so many of the narratives that we tell ourselves about the justifications for our actions and attitudes. I do not know what to do with this truth, but for now I am meditating on the fact that I have a degree of choice in helping to emphasize certain aspects of both of my jobs, as well as the fact that the choices I make in prioritizing tasks and relationships give me some genuine leverage in reshaping even situations that seem beyond control or remedy.

I leave the project determined to understand more about sensemaking, because as I become more aware of the theory and the way that the human activity flows all around me, I am convinced that there is actually hope of becoming capable of recognizing the familiar refrains, of feeling the familiar undertow, at least to the extent that we may resist or delay being swept along.