

CHAPTER ONE

Whatever Happened to That Old Gang of Mine?

“Can our students really meet our expectations for each of the six exhibitions for graduation?”

“Well, whom are you concerned about?”

“How about Jill? She is a special education student.”

“I work with Jill every day. She is doing well in all of her classes. She is coachable and is motivated. She will be intimidated at first, and she’ll need extra help, but if her advisor and I work closely with her, she’ll pass all exhibitions.”

“How about Louisa? Her English language skills are still weak.”

“We’ve already agreed that students can do the oral part of the exhibitions in their primary language as long as they do a major part of one in a second language. Louisa can choose to present in Spanish as long as one substantial presentation is in English. We have a rubric in place for second language.”

“You’re right. Louisa will do fine.”

“How about Jack?”

“Jack is my advisee. We all know him well. He is lazy and a behavior problem, but capable. We will work with him and with his parents. Hopefully, he’ll choose to take this seriously in order to graduate. If he does, he’ll do fine!”

2 FOSTERING RESILIENCE

This discussion and others like it take place regularly at Anzar High School. Anzar is a small, rural high school, founded on the principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES). Due to its small size and its commitment to a strong student advisory program, teachers know all students well. Conversations like this occur often and typically involve the entire staff. The conversation you just read included comments from six teachers. The case study at the end of this chapter describes the school in more detail.

Unfortunately, few teachers and administrators know their students and their capabilities as well as the staff at Anzar. However, within most communities you should be able to find an Anzar, a Rosemary, a Cesar Chavez, a LUCHA, a Renaissance, an Adelante, an Edenvale, a Parkview, a Homestead, or a Mission Hill. Hopefully, after reading this book, you will—as a teacher, an administrator, a

Think back to your own schooling. Who cared deeply about you? Who held high expectations for you and supported you to meet these expectations? Who valued your participation?

parent, a community member, a student, a staff member, a grandparent, or school board member—seek out such schools in your community and work to support the deep commitment and hard work that it takes to sustain them. You will hopefully ask why every school is not more like these schools and help remove the obstacles for schools that are striving to be “resilient learning communities.” At the same time, you will better understand how hard it is for these schools to stay resilient for all students when faced with the accountability challenges of No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

DEFINITIONS

Resilience—the ability to bounce back successfully despite exposure to severe risks (Benard, 1993, p. 44).

Resilient community—a community that is focused on the protective factors that foster resilience for its members: (1) caring, (2) high expectations and purposeful support, and (3) ongoing opportunities for meaningful participation.

Schools are often faced with many obstacles that hinder their ability to support resilience. Most schools and most classes are

too large and the school day is too harried for teachers or administrators to know each student well and therefore to care deeply about him or her, set high expectations, offer purposeful support, and value the participation of each student.

You, the reader, are urged to stop and write a brief response to all or most of the questions posed in this book. Even if you take just a few seconds to answer each question, you will find this book to be much more useful.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THAT OLD GANG OF MINE?

As reflected in Abe Maslow's famous hierarchy of needs, all people seek out love and belonging. All people want to know that others care about them, have high expectations for them, and will support them to meet the expectations, and want their voices to be valued. All people seek out groups of people who will foster their resilience. AND these groups come in all sizes, shapes, and forms. My "gang" was a group of friends with whom I walked home from school, played ball at the corner playground, and went with to synagogue, boy scouts, camp, and 88th Street Beach. They were the friends I played with when our parents socialized together. These friends—my gang—were a very positive force in my life.

My other "gang" was my extended family. We spent every Sunday at my grandparent's house, so did my aunts, uncles, and cousins. I was the oldest grandchild, and the only male for many years. I received incredible love, attention, and validation. My family made it clear to me that their expectations were high—the family carpeting store was named Benmor, not Benmor and Son. My father and mother were clear with me—I was to go to college and do something important with my life. It was also made clear to me that, as the oldest, I had certain responsibilities to "be a good boy, a mensch" and to lead by example. I was lucky. My gangs provided a positive resilient community for me.

When I finished my PhD, I moved to California, far from family and friends. I married a woman from Iowa who was divorced with two young sons. We found that the family gang did not exist for us or for our children; family and old friends were too far away. The gang for our children (we added a daughter to the

4 FOSTERING RESILIENCE

world in 1973) became little league, softball, swimming, water polo, music, and scouts. Yes, needless to say, athletic teams, performing arts, and scouting groups are positive forms of gangs. In fact, these constructive activities and “gangs” offer similar attractions: sense of purpose, a hierarchical system of discipline, and a chance to prove loyalty to a group. In all likelihood, when you think positively about your school experiences, you think of relationships that resulted from your involvement in these types of activities.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THAT OLD GANG OF THEIRS?

Children have a need for social affiliation and, in most cases, choose peer relationships that are constructive rather than destructive. Richard Weissbourd (1996) writes that children's

Think about times when the protective factors were missing from your life. How did this feel? What did you do to cope? What did you learn about yourself and others from these experiences?

peer groups tend to become destructive when children lack a basic ingredient for healthy growth: positive sources of recognition, especially meaningful opportunities that extend into relations

with adults. Children have to believe that they can create a better life. If they have this belief, they will strive. Without the perception of meaningful opportunities, children have less reason to be afraid of the repercussions of their destructive behavior.

As a high school principal, I always advised new students to be involved in some positive aspect of the school, one in which they could make friends and receive positive adult attention easily. I suggested they become involved in the choir, the band, the school newspaper, athletics, or the student council. Without this positive connection, new students would find the students on the fringes of the campus much more open to making new friends than the students already involved in positive ways within the school community. For many years, I initiated and facilitated a

Whatever Happened to That Old Gang of Mine? 5

school service club, one of the primary functions of which was to welcome other students into constructive activities at the school.

Shame is very common among adolescents and younger children. Weissbourd discusses research with prison inmates indicating that many criminals were chronically humiliated in their youth. In my experience, many high school students do not feel valued and feel shame in the school setting. Often this occurs in one or more of the following three areas:

- Classroom

Many students find classroom learning irrelevant to their lives, and whereas many alienated students are behind in their academic skills, primarily reading skills, they are gifted students bored by the lock-step nature of classes. They feel shamed by their teachers for not doing homework or performing well and by their poor grades, so they attend school less and less regularly.

- Physical Education

Whereas some alienated students are not athletic, many are excellent athletes; in my community, they are often surfers and skateboarders. They dislike the competitive nature of physical education classes and are shamed by teachers and peers for not caring about winning. They dislike the special status given to the school “jocks.” They stop dressing out and stop attending.

- Peers

In any school, it is clear which groups are “in” and which groups are “out.” The in-group usually occupies a central place in the school, physically as well as status-wise. Many alienated students feel hatred and shame when in contact with the in-group of a school. They will not walk in certain areas of campus, feel lack of ownership with and connection to the school, and attend less and less regularly.

For several years while I was the principal of Soquel High School, we offered an afterschool opportunity class for ninth and tenth graders who were not attending school regularly. These students were told not to be on campus until two o’clock daily and to attend school from two to five o’clock. These “non-attendees” came

6 FOSTERING RESILIENCE

to school every afternoon on time. They talked with the teacher and with me about how, for the first time, they felt connected to the school. The students who had disrespected them had already left for the day. They attended classes with students like themselves and were connected to an adult who cared about them, had high expectations for them, supported them, and valued them. I didn't know at the time that these were resilience factors. I viewed the school differently because of these conversations.

MOVING FROM RISK TO RESILIENCE

In every child who is born, under no matter what circumstances, and no matter what parents, the potentiality of the human race is born again.

—Agee & Evans, 1960, p. 289

Practitioners in the social and behavioral sciences often follow a problem-focused “hospital model” to try to address the needs of at-risk people. A problem focus involves identifying the risk factors—dysfunctional family, disease, illness, maladaptation, incompetence, or deviance—and seeking resources to develop programs to work with at-risk populations. This approach is reactive in that programs are designed to help people who are already identified as being in trouble. In schools, many alternative programs are designed for these populations. Staff members can place students who are behind academically in special education classes or in Title 1 classes. They can place truant and behavior-problem students in in-house detention centers, opportunity classes, independent study, and continuation schools.

The problem-focus model offers little help to educational and community leaders who would prefer a more proactive position. These leaders would prefer to build communities based primarily on protective factors that would reduce the need for special programs for at-risk students because fewer students would be at risk. A proactive position is based on building capacities, skills, and assets—building resilience. It emphasizes strengthening the environment, not fixing kids. In fact, we

should use the phrase “students from high-risk environments” rather than “at-risk students,” since being proactive means impacting the environment, not defining the child.

WHAT IS THIS RESILIENCE STUFF?

Based on longitudinal studies, researchers have found that for every child coming from an at-risk background who later needs intervention, there is a higher percentage of children who come from the same background who become healthy, competent adults. Werner and Smith’s definitive research that serves as the foundation for resilience theory (RT) is described in more detail in Figure 1.1.

Talk with someone who overcame great adversity. To what or whom does this person attribute his or her success? What did this person do to cope? What did he or she learn about him- or herself and others from these experiences?

RT is based on defining the protective factors within the family, school, and community that exist for the successful child or adolescent—the resilient child or adolescent—that are missing from the family, school, and community of the child or adolescent who later receives intervention (Benard, 1991; Speck & Krovetz, 1995). Werner and Smith (1992) write that the resilient child is one “who loves well, works well, plays well, and expects well” (p. 192).

Resilient children usually have four attributes in common (Benard, 1991, 1993, 1995):

- **Social competence** (ability to elicit positive responses from others, thus establishing positive relationships with both adults and peers)
- **Problem-solving skills** (planning that facilitates seeing oneself in control and resourcefulness in seeking help from others)
- **Autonomy** (sense of one’s own identity and an ability to act independently and exert some control over one’s environment)
- **Sense of purpose and future** (goals, educational aspirations, persistence, hopefulness, and a sense of a bright future)

8 FOSTERING RESILIENCE

Most people have these four attributes to some extent. Whether or not these attributes are strong enough within the individual to help that person bounce back from adversity is dependent on having certain protective factors in one's life. The

Figure 1.1 The Definitive Research: Emmy Werner and Ruth Smith's Longitudinal Study

Fostering resiliency isn't just putting stuff into an empty box by the teacher, or elder, or whatever else. It's based on countless interactions between the individual child or adolescent or adult and the opportunities (in their) world and the challenges they face.

—Werner, 1996, p. 21

In 1963 Emmy Werner and Ruth Smith began following the lives of 614 eight-year-olds, all born in 1955 on the island of Kauai. For the most part these children were Japanese, Filipino, and part or full Hawaiians. Their parents came from Southeast Asia to work on the sugar and pineapple plantations on the island. Most were raised by parents who were semi- or unskilled laborers and who had not graduated from high school. The primary goal of this longitudinal study was to assess the long-term consequences of prenatal complications and adverse rearing conditions on the individual's development and adaptation to life. The story of these children is told in Werner and Smith's (1992) book *Overcoming the Odds: High Risk From Birth to Adulthood*.

As Werner and Smith report, the majority of the children were born without complications. However, one-third encountered four or more risk factors before the age of two. Two out of three of this latter group subsequently developed serious learning and/or behavior problems by age ten or had a record of delinquencies, mental health problems, or pregnancies by age eighteen. Nevertheless, one out of three of these high-risk children had developed into competent, confident, and caring young adults by age eighteen. Quite impressively, by age thirty-two, two-thirds of the remaining at-risk group were functioning satisfactorily. Assessment of functioning satisfactorily was based on individuals' own accounts of success and satisfaction with work, family, and social life, and state of psychological well-being, and on their records within the community. For the follow-up at age thirty-two, data for 505 of the original 614 individuals was secured.

Highlights of relevant findings:

- 40 percent of the resilient group had at least some college, compared to approximately 17 percent of the total population studied and 13 percent of the cohort with long-term coping problems.

Figure 1.1 (continued)

- Most of the resilient children had at least competence in reading skills; Werner and Smith emphasize the importance of this finding for educators, adding that effective reading skills by grade four was one of the most potent predictors of successful adult adaptation.
- Most of the resilient males came from households where there was structure and rules and had males who served as role models.
- Most of the resilient females came from households that emphasized risk taking and independence, with reliable support from female caregivers.
- For both resilient males and females, their ability to recruit substitute parents was a major feature of how they differed from those found not to be as resilient. These substitute parents unconditionally accepted them as they were.
- Resilient children often were pressed into having to care for younger or older family members. This “required helpfulness” seems to carry over into their adult lives.
- Resilient children had faith that life would work out and a belief that life made sense; this may or may not be linked with organized religion.
- Resilient children were good at making and keeping a few good friends.
- Resilient children took pleasure in interests and hobbies that allowed them to be part of a cooperative enterprise.
- Resilient adults remember one or two teachers who made a difference for them.
- Nowhere were the differences between the resilient individuals and their peers more apparent than in the goals they had set for themselves. Career and job success was the highest priority on the agenda of the resilient men and women, but the lowest priority for their peers with problems in adolescence.

A more recent follow-up at age forty, confirms these findings.

Excerpts from “The Faces of Resiliency” by Mervlyn Kitashima (1997), one of the participants in Emmy Werner and Ruth Smith’s study, is included as Figure 4.1.

following are key protective factors needed within the family, school, and community:

- **A caring environment**—at least one adult who knows the child well and cares deeply about the well-being of that child (Chapter 4)

10 FOSTERING RESILIENCE

- **Positive expectations**—high, clearly articulated expectations for each child and the purposeful support necessary to meet these expectations (Chapter 5)
- **Participation**—meaningful involvement and responsibility (Chapter 6)

DOES THE PRESENCE OF THESE PROTECTIVE FACTORS RELATE TO STUDENT LEARNING?

WestEd conducted a comprehensive, longitudinal study (Hanson, Austin, & Lee-Bayha, et.al., 2004) examining how gains in NCLB test scores are related to health-related barriers to student learning. Results indicate a significant relationship between test score gains with each of the following: caring relationships at school, high expectations at school, and meaningful participation in community. Results also showed a significant negative relationship between gains in test scores and reported sadness/hopelessness. The study found no significant differences related to whether the schools were low or high performing. Does the presence of these protective factors relate to student learning? Clearly, YES!

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Fostering resilience in children is a long-term project involving systemic change within the communities of children. It isn't something we do to kids. It isn't a curriculum we teach to kids. It isn't something added to a school or community with short-term grant money.

Supporting resilience in children is based on deeply held beliefs that what we do every day around children makes a difference in their lives. It is about dedicating our hearts and minds to creating communities that are rich in caring, high expectations, and purposeful support, and opportunities for meaningful participation. It is the understanding that the culture and daily practices of schools need to be redesigned in ways that demonstrate a deep commitment to the potential of all students, and it is the courage to work to create such schools.

As our social institutions have fallen apart—no need to outline here the effects of divorce, mobility, long work hours, poverty, racism, sexism, and so forth on our children and on society—more and more is expected of schools to meet the social and psychological needs of students. At the same time, people constantly criticize schools for not preparing graduates with the academic skills to be productive members of the American workforce. In response to a multitude of conflicting demands, many schools lack clarity of focus, offering a program that resembles a shopping mall—lots of independent shops in which browsing is encouraged and buying is optional (Powell, Farrar, & Cohen, 1985).

Think about three students who you know well and who are different from each other. What does their school do to foster resilience for each of these students? Specifically, what do people at their school do to help each of them feel cared for, know that expectations are high and support is strong, and know that their participation in the life of the school and classroom is valued? What do each of these students need in order to experience a more resilient learning community at their school? Use these students as a lens as you continue reading this book and as you look at your school.

Special Note

Some researchers differentiate between “resilience,” which is the dynamic process of competence despite adversity and “resiliency,” which is a specific personality trait (Luthar, 2000). In this book, I try to use the words in this way. The Luthar article is an excellent review of the theoretical framework for research on RT.

CASE STUDY: ANZAR HIGH SCHOOL

Written Spring 1998

Merrill Vargo, director of the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative (Hewlett-Annenberg school reform initiative), has said to me on several occasions that one of her fondest hopes for school reform is that there will be at least one high school in Northern California that people view as an exemplary model as

12 FOSTERING RESILIENCE

they do Central Park East (CPESS) in New York. I have told her that Anzar will be that high school.

A School Snapshot

At a staff meeting during the spring of 1997, we made a list of students who might be in need of additional support. We listed sixty students who fell into one or more of the following categories: special education, English learning, migrant, attendance, behavior, and

grades. We quickly eliminated approximately twenty names because they were doing well in school. An individual plan was set and implemented for each of the other students. Many had or would have a community mentor to help them with their school studies, to support them in preparing for their graduation exhibitions, or to offer

Yet, there are schools—the rare schools that exist in each of our communities—that maintain high academic standards and at the same time serve as resilient communities for children and adults. The schools presented in this book are fighting for the hearts and souls of their students. They are places where students feel trusted, accepted, supported, and respected. They are places where adults know students and their work well.

them a career apprenticeship. I know of no other high school where this quality of student focus occurs. When students are known well, they do not “fall through the cracks.” Some students may not be as academically successful as we would like, but every student is treated respectfully, and no student is written off or forgotten.

Background Information

Anzar High School is a new, small, rural high school located in San Juan Bautista, a mission town south of Silicon Valley. All students work closely with a teacher-advisor throughout their four-year high school career. The relationship that develops allows Anzar to implement two important programs: service learning and graduation by exhibition. The school is teacher led; there are no administrators or guidance counselors. Anzar is a member of the Coalition of Essential Schools.

My involvement with the Aromas/San Juan Unified School District began in 1991. The Aromas/San Juan Unified School

Whatever Happened to That Old Gang of Mine? 13

District arose from a grassroots, unification effort initiated by parents seeking student-centered, community-oriented schooling for their children. As part of a unification vote in 1990, a school board was elected to oversee the formation of a new school district and to develop a high school to service the two communities. Previously, Aromas School was part of a large K–12 school district, which has its own comprehensive high schools. San Juan was a single K–8 school, which fed into a neighboring, large comprehensive high school. One of the new board members enrolled in the Educational Administration Program at San Jose State University and was a student in the first class I taught there. We quickly recognized the common vision we had for the schools, and I was hired to facilitate the search for the new superintendent. I have stayed involved with the district as a critical friend for the new superintendent, both for K–8 schools and for Anzar High School. Three of the initial four high school teachers were teachers I had worked with while principal of Soquel High School, approximately forty miles away.

High school classes began in the fall of 1994 with approximately 60 ninth-grade students. An additional 40 students joined Anzar High School in 1995, another 50 in 1996, and another 120 in 1997. It is expected that the school will grow to approximately 450 students in Grades nine through twelve by the year 2000. These students represent a multicultural population (40 percent Hispanic; 50 percent white, not Hispanic; 10 percent other). The clientele includes special education, fluent-English-proficient, limited-English-proficient, non-English-proficient, Title 1, and gifted students.

For its first three years, Anzar met in temporary buildings on the Gavilan Community College campus. The new high school facility did not open until the fall of 1997. During this time, many of the students took college classes for credit. Students continue to do so, particularly for advanced placement course work. Gavilan is approximately five miles from the new campus.

Uniqueness of the School

We know everyone. We know teachers inside out. They are on a first-name basis with you. It isn't by second semester that they are getting to know you; it happens by the second day, or third day max.

—Anzar senior

14 FOSTERING RESILIENCE

Anzar is a special place for students and adults. The smallness of the school and the commitment to a student advisory program means that every student is known well by several adults. The conversation at the beginning of this chapter really is a regular form of conversation at Anzar. I have never been in a school that so consistently makes decisions and has discussions in which the appropriateness of action is so centered on what is best for individual students. Parent and student voices are also important in decision making. In fact, and very unique to this school district, one high school student is elected at Anzar to be a voting member of the school board; on several occasions the student's vote has been the deciding vote on important issues.

In talking with several teachers about how to best present Anzar, we agreed that I should present four important components of the school. We feel that these components demonstrate the uniqueness of the school and are at the core of how Anzar provides the protective factors that foster resilience for its students.

Everyone Agrees on the Givens

Because the school is new, its culture is being defined every day. However, staff, students, and parents have taken the time to agree on the "givens" for the school (see Figure 1.2). The givens are the principles that the school is based on and that are no longer up for grabs. These principles guide our practice when tough decisions need to be made. When new teachers are hired, we expect that they will come to Anzar because they want to work at a school that is based on these principles. Teachers may not always be sure how to challenge students to use their minds well, develop exhibitions, design curriculum where depth of coverage is stressed over breadth, coach rather than tell, integrate curriculum, and so forth, but they chose Anzar and Anzar chose them because of their desire to be a part of this special school. The teaching staff is truly outstanding! And yet, school life is never easy. One of the givens is the commitment to full inclusion and to heterogeneous grouping of students. Given the wide breadth of student academic background, teachers struggle every day with meeting students' needs. They talk regularly about modifying curriculum for special education students and about expectations for English learning students. They talk regularly about how to motivate and support students who can't or won't read and, at the same time, how to challenge motivated stu-

Whatever Happened to That Old Gang of Mine? 15

dents. Several teachers mention feeling overwhelmed by the demands of differentiating instruction for so many of their students. More students fail classes than we would like. And it is hard to find enough time to collaborate on these issues. Teachers often wonder aloud, **“Can I handle it here?” “Is it worth it?”**

Graduation Is by Exhibition

To graduate from Anzar all students must prepare and present six exhibitions: math, language arts, science, social science, service learning, and post graduate plans. These exhibitions are in addition to more traditional course requirements. The rubric for the exhibitions is based on the “habits of mind” we expect our students to develop. We call our habits EPERRs (evidence, perspective, extension, relevance, reflection; see Figure 1.3). Students often wonder aloud, **“Can I handle it here?”** The following student comments in bold print indicate that, although “stressed to the max,” students recognize the value of the Anzar experience.

These exhibitions are intended to be centered on issues/questions of importance to students that are complex enough for them to explore from multiple perspectives. Students are encouraged to use an interdisciplinary approach and therefore to combine more than one exhibition at a time. All exhibitions have an oral and written component. Since we value the arts and require some second-language proficiency for all students, students are required to integrate both of these into at least one of their exhibitions. Exhibitions are judged by community members who volunteer their time for this purpose. Students know the value of this work: **“At first, one of the hard parts is to take a general subject like math or science and put it into a real-life situation, where if you were just studying out of a textbook you wouldn’t know the difference.”**

16 FOSTERING RESILIENCE

Figure 1.2 Anzar's Givens

1. Community
 - Service learning
 - Responsiveness to the community
 - Community/student input
2. Inclusion
 - No tracking
 - All children can learn
3. Professionalism
 - Site-based management
 - Teachers as administrators
 - Teachers planning/teaching together
 - Communications guidelines
 - Collegiality
 - Teachers as learners
4. Quality
 - Integrated curriculum
 - Small class size
 - Depth over breadth
 - Advisory
5. (High) Expectations
 - Graduation exhibitions
 - Lifelong learners
 - Ability to use EPERR

I have judged exhibitions ranging in topic from capital punishment, to the relationship of favorite music, to how students dress, to why the guitar is the most influential instrument of the twentieth century, to why science fiction literature is more than entertainment, to setting up an afterschool sports program for one of the local K–8 schools as a service-learning project. I observed exhibitions almost totally in English by two bilingual Latinas, one presented on bilingual education and the other on why Mexicans are not welcome in California. I judged a math exhibition done by a Latino student who has been in the United States for only two and one-half years, done totally in English, about the influence of population growth in China; he was able to answer my questions about linear and multiple regression. I judged an exhibition entitled “Is Tree Farming Sustainable in the Future?” that counted for language arts, social studies, math, and science, and deservedly so.

Figure 1.3 Habits of Mind—Anzar’s EPERRs**Evidence: What do I know and how do I know it?**

What are all the choices?
Show the evidence.

Perspective: What are the biases—mine and others?

What do I already know from my past experiences, and what’s my bias?
What is the bias of the research used?
What are alternative points of view?
What did I learn from the experiences of others?
Walk in somebody else’s shoes.

Extension: What are the deeper implications?

How might this affect the future?
What if something changed?
Is there a pattern here?
How does this connect to other ideas/issues?
Going beyond what you know . . .

Relevance: What difference does this make?

Why is this important to me?
How can I use this?
How does this issue influence the community?
How is this important to my community?
What can people do with this information?

Reflection: What did I learn?

What other questions does this bring up?
Has what I’ve done changed my way of thinking?

One of the wonderful benefits of exhibitions is that a student receives very specific and primarily positive feedback, recognition, and praise from the judging panel, as well as constructive criticism as to how the exhibition could have been stronger. One student said to me, **“You get a real sense of accomplishment when you do the first one. You read about exhibitions, and like it’s impossible, but when you do it and pass it, it’s like I did it and didn’t think I could.”**

Students compare their high school experience to those of friends at other high schools and say, **“Our school has a very high bar for achievement that requires that you be on top of things. There is no way to get out of things. There is no way to skate**

18 FOSTERING RESILIENCE

through the system.” One of the main complaints I hear from students is that they do not have a laid-back senior year.

Be clear—exhibitions are very different from a senior project. Senior projects usually are a research project done in a special class taken during one semester of the senior year; school practices need not be impacted. Exhibitions and our EPERRs are the guiding principles for instructional and student assessment practices throughout the school. All teachers are expected to develop curriculum and to utilize instructional and student assessment practices that prepare students for their exhibitions. Every class is affected.

Of course, a commitment of this magnitude impacts the work life of the teachers. A few teachers are given the class assignment of coaching students for their exhibitions. However, when the coach is an English teacher, the student and coach spend considerable time with the math teacher, for example, working on the math exhibition. The time involved is considerable and a necessity if the student is to be supported to do quality work. In addition, the time to coordinate exhibitions—judge recruitment, judge training, copying student written work for the judges, coaching, setting up the rooms, buying refreshments, entering exhibition results on transcripts, maintaining a written and video library of all exhibitions, etc.—all takes time outside of the regular expectations for teaching. Teachers wonder aloud, “**Can I handle it here?**” “**Is it worth it?**”

The School Is Teacher Led

The school employs no administrator. Currently, three teachers are elected each year and given release time to serve as the leadership team. No one may serve for more than two consecutive years, and leaders must teach for at least 60 percent of the day. The school has hired a classified office manager to oversee many of the management functions of the school. The leadership team makes most schoolwide decisions in a weekly staff meeting by consensus. As a result, teachers feel full ownership and responsibility for decisions made. Many parents and students also feel ownership due to their involvement in school committees, and, for students, based on schoolwide discussions held in advisories (see Barnett, McKowen, & Bloom, 1998).

Whatever Happened to That Old Gang of Mine? 19

Students have spoken with me about the advantages of a teacher-led school. They feel that this encourages teachers to act as a whole. No one authority figure “rules over” the students. And because of the responsibility all teachers have for the success of students and the school, teachers know students better and value their input.

Advisors are the primary contact with and for parents regarding any and all issues affecting students, including school progress, discipline, and post-high school planning. Currently, advisor responsibilities come on top of teaching five classes. We have been unable to figure out a practical way to make advisory part of the regular assignment and still maintain reasonable class sizes. Again, teachers regularly wonder, “**Can I handle it here?**” “**Is it worth it?**”

The governance structure also impacts parents—they are not always sure who to go to for answers to their questions, and they are used to being able to go to “the principal” when they want an issue addressed. The role of the superintendent is also different. He is the primary evaluator of all Anzar staff. Unique to Anzar, the teacher-leadership team, with union approval, participates in the evaluation of all probationary teachers. The superintendent also sits in on many leadership team and staff meetings and knows the school much better than the superintendents of most school districts.

Time for Planning Is Built Into the School Calendar

Being part of Anzar can be a burnout job, and we grapple constantly with how to support the resilience of the adults. We know that time is the most precious resource to support teacher and school renewal, and we have built in time in several ways for this reason.

Students leave campus an hour and a half early every Wednesday. Staff meetings take place during this time and almost always end at 3:30. In addition, the David and Lucille Packard Foundation and the Walter S. Johnson Foundation have provided money for twenty paid planning days, used primarily in the summer, for all staff to collaborate on refining the exhibition process, curriculum development, and other issues of importance to the school. These days are in addition to the eight professional development days provided by the state and approved by the school district. There is never enough time, but at least the staff knows that,

20 FOSTERING RESILIENCE

as professionals, they have time weekly and in the summer time to be reflective and collaborative.

Another School Snapshot: The Students' Point of View

I am sitting with eight seniors. I have told them about my book and have asked them to talk about how Anzar has fulfilled their expectations or not done so. This is Anzar's first senior class. These eight, along with about thirty-five of their friends, have been the oldest students in the school for their entire high school careers—as they said to me, **“We have been seniors for four years.”**

They spoke warmly about the high expectations and support they receive from teachers and each had stories to tell. One of the students had left Anzar for her sophomore year to go to a large high school and had returned. She talked about how at the large high school teachers and counselors did not know her, yet told her what to do. At Anzar, **“Teachers take the time to know me well, to give me choices, and to support the choices I make.”** She also spoke about how at the larger high school, which was 90 percent Latino, she felt that discrimination occurred toward Latinos in terms of school expectations and among Latino students themselves. At Anzar she said that each student is seen as an individual and all students get along. She summed up her thoughts: **“At the large high school, teachers are committed to their jobs. At Anzar they are committed to students.”**

The students spoke at length about how the graduation exhibitions set “a high bar” that all students are expected to meet. It is February and only one of the eight has finished all six exhibitions; she is the only student in the school to have finished. They talked about “feeling cheated” because they are not able to coast during their last semester as their friends at other high schools were doing, and of the stress related to making post-high school plans, finishing required course work, and preparing exhibitions. They spoke of how exhibitions taught them how to set goals and meet them; to research, write, speak, and coordinate information; to see how school content relates to real life; to research things other than what teachers teach; to use the Internet; to interview experts; to use several libraries; and to work independently with the teacher as a guide. They talked about the pride and sense of accomplishment

Whatever Happened to That Old Gang of Mine? 21

they feel as they present their exhibitions, and of their responsibility to be role models to help younger students appreciate the value of the exhibitions and the commitment it takes to do them well.

They also talked about how the smallness of the school brought students together—no cliques, no in-groups or out-groups; they are all friends. They felt relatively safe from violence, gangs, and drugs. One student said, **“The change from junior high school to high school was easy because there were no big classes, and we didn’t get drowned out by the other voices.”** They also spoke about missing some of the school activities that exist at the larger high schools—more sports teams and pep rallies. And they spoke about missing Gavilan College, where they had had more freedom of movement, better food services, a library, and full science and art labs.

They talked with me about the advantages of a teacher-led school. One student said, **“I think the standards are higher here because teachers care about us more. Our relationships are so close that they want the best for us.”**

Anzar is a resilient learning community. Reading the words of students clearly demonstrates that students know that teachers care about them, that expectations are high, that teachers support them, and that their participation in their learning and in the daily life of the school are valued.

Update Written Winter 2006–2007

Anzar is thriving. Anzar is a California Distinguished School that has eliminated the achievement gap between Hispanic and white students. Now in its fourteenth year, Anzar is viewed as the school of its community. For the first ten years, some parents and students behaved as if Anzar was a school of choice. When the work became too hard, when college preparation expectations for all students were high, and when students worked on exhibitions as juniors and seniors instead of coasting like their friends at neighboring high schools, some parents and students requested interdistrict transfers. Some people initially viewed Anzar with suspicion. Anzar’s lack of a principal, graduation by exhibition, habits of mind, service learning, advisories, and lack of a football team were just too different for some community members to initially trust. No longer!

22 FOSTERING RESILIENCE

What changed the perspective? I asked teachers this question in the fall of 2006. Their response was:

- recognition as a California Distinguished School in 2005;
- older siblings and friends graduated from Anzar and were successful in college;
- sports teams being increasingly successful;
- parents recognizing the value of the strong relationships that exist amongst students and teachers, especially tied to the continuing commitment to advisory;
- teachers stay at Anzar; few teachers wonder anymore, “Can I handle it here?” “Is it worth it?”;
- Anzar’s listening to the parents’ desire for a principal and appointing a leader from within the school to serve as principal in 2002.

I am still a critical friend to the high school, but I no longer serve as an official school coach. Sitting and talking with faculty and students is like coming home for me. Please note how clearly the protective factors of resilience are at the heart of this school.

I asked the faculty to tell me what had changed and what had stayed the same since this book originally was published. The first comment from most teachers was that Anzar has a much clearer focus on equity.

Focus on Equity

In 2002 the district hired Glenn Singleton and the Pacific Education Group to work with teachers at the three schools in the district on issues related to race, equity, and white privilege. Following two days of professional development with all teachers, each school selected a team of teachers to receive more intense professional development and classroom coaching, with the understanding that these teachers would then share their learning with the full staff. Anzar took this very seriously. Six teachers spent the next three years engaging and sharing in this learning.

Look at the following data for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), the measure tied to NCLB. For the most recent data, 2005 to 2006, the percentage of students “at or above proficient” in English-Language Arts is basically identical for Hispanic/Latino and white (not of Hispanic origin) students, and Hispanic students

performed slightly better than white students in mathematics. **Anzar has eliminated the achievement gap.** Very few high schools can make this claim.

Percent at or above proficient		
	<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>White (not of Hispanic origin)</i>
English-Language Arts	62.3	63.0
Mathematics	66.7	64.8

A few teachers admit that initially they considered themselves color-blind and had viewed this as a positive trait. Now, after “staggering” self-examination, and regular in-depth conversations about race, every teacher talks about designing instruction with specific target students in mind and how much their instructional strategies have changed. They also discuss how over time many more Latino students “are into making good grades” and that white students as well as students of color talk about equity and racial awareness. The teachers speak proudly of the schoolwide focus on academic literacy and the recent addition of a math lab to help students fill specific gaps in their math skills while enrolled in the college-prep Algebra class. They talk about how as a faculty and individually they use data for decision making and how target students serve as real people when they plan their lessons. The principal talked with me about pulling back layers and not myth making and **“the more we knew, the more we realized what we were doing wrong.”**

Beginning in 2006, the principal decided it was essential to work with eighth-grade Latino students in the two feeder schools as part of a vertical push downward for raised expectations. Once a week for seventy-five minutes, nine Latino high school students go to the two feeder schools and work with Latino eighth-grade students on academic projects. The work is done in Spanish in order to build the academic Spanish literacy of the eighth-grade students and to hopefully give these students a sense of belonging and pride in native language use. This is a powerful way to model for eighth graders that it can be “cool” to be Latino and to be smart and stand out academically.

The rest of the Anzar update is organized around the four components of the school as described in the original case study.

The School Focuses on the Givens

As teachers talked with me about the givens, they focused on five key areas: advisory, communication guidelines, responsiveness to the community, service learning, and inclusion.

- **Advisories** are at the heart of the school. In 1998 many teachers wondered if the extra student load was worth the time and effort, and a few teachers left because of the workload. In 2006 every teacher agreed that the relationships among teachers and students is what makes Anzar special. It is in advisories that “transparent celebrations of achievement” occur and where students help other students with class work, with graduation exhibitions, and with mini-exhibitions at ninth and tenth grade. It is where teachers share themselves with their students, and how over four years strong “family ties” develop amongst students, parents, and teachers. Over time, much more staff meeting time is being devoted to grade-level planning for advisories.
- **Communication guidelines** have served as the norms for all meetings and, at least as important, for how people have talked with each other for most of the school’s fourteen years. Every faculty meeting ends with all participants filling out a written rating for that meeting in comparison to the meeting norms. Every faculty meeting begins with a summary of the ratings from the previous meeting. For me, more impressive is that one communication guideline in particular is followed conscientiously by staff members: “**I talk directly to any person with whom I have an issue in a timely manner.**” Several people stressed how important this particular guideline is to maintain the strong collegial relationships that exist at Anzar. One teacher said that the guideline does not make it any easier to have the hard conversations with one’s peers, but “at Anzar you just do it.” Another teacher commented about how the guidelines not only make him a better colleague, but also a better person away from school.
- **Responsiveness to the community** led to the appointment of Charlene McKowen, one of the original four Anzar teachers, to the principalship in 2002. In addition, at one time there were concerns within segments of the Latino

community that the uniqueness of Anzar might not be best for its students. Because of these concerns, the staff had to have difficult discussions with the community and students. These discussions led to the focused commitment to practices that assure equitable learning opportunities for all students.

- **Service learning** continues to be a six-semester graduation requirement and part of one of the graduation exhibitions. Over time, more and more opportunities for service learning are provided on campus—in the community garden, as a peer tutor, and by working at the school/community-sponsored farmers market.
- **Inclusion** continues to be a way of life at Anzar. Teachers are expected to differentiate instruction and accommodate all students, while maintaining high standards for all students. Special education teachers coteach with other teachers and model differentiation.

Graduation Is by Exhibition

Whereas the exhibition guidelines are reviewed and revised almost every year, student exhibitions still serve as the culmination for all students to demonstrate the quality and depth of their learning at Anzar. The school's habits of mind (EPERRs) continue to serve as the rubric for exhibitions, and their use is deeply engrained in every teacher's instructional strategies. Over time, students have increasingly chosen to do interdisciplinary exhibitions, a goal from the beginning. And, as teachers have learned to teach in ways that are consistent with the school's vision, students post essential questions and teachers use these questions to guide instruction in class. Increasingly, as teachers have learned to assess in ways that are consistent with the school's vision, performance-based, mini-exhibitions turn into graduation exhibitions, a goal from the beginning.

The School Is Teacher Led

In 2002 Charlene McKowen, one of the original Anzar teachers, was appointed principal. The parents asked for this so that lines of authority were more clearly delineated. In conversa-

26 FOSTERING RESILIENCE

tions with teachers, they agreed that, whereas Charlene now takes care of many routine matters well, important decisions are still made by consensus (fist of five) at staff meetings. One teacher talked about the importance of leadership coming from within the school, how as a result the school's givens continue to drive decision making, and how everyone continues to share leadership responsibilities. A second teacher discussed how the system capitalizes on the various personalities among the staff and how this leads to everyone having a voice and no one being an agitator.

Allied with these comments, four teachers completed the Urban High School Leadership Program (UHSLP) in 2006. This program, offered by the Educational Leadership Department at San Jose State University, my department, leads to a master's degree and an administrative credential. Enrollment is by school teams. The purpose is to prepare high school leaders to be assistant principals in urban high schools, with a focus on collaborative leadership and the importance of school leaders being skillful at staying focused on issues of equity and closing the achievement gap among its students. The four teachers are engaged in important leadership roles at Anzar. Charlene is an earlier graduate of this program.

Time for Planning Is Built Into the School Calendar

It is imperative that teachers have concentrated time to reflect on schoolwide and classroom practices. Initially, grant money was secured that paid teachers for twenty workdays each summer. Later, Gates Foundation monies allowed all staff to have some summer paid days. This money has now run out. For many years Anzar staff meetings have been primarily used for planning. This is particularly important now that money for summer planning will be hard to come by. Students leave early on Wednesdays. In a typical month, one Wednesday is used for advisory planning, one for content area planning, one for a schoolwide curricular focus (i.e., literacy or the intersession curriculum), and one for a general meeting or district inservice or not held due to exhibitions, and so forth.

Whatever Happened to That Old Gang of Mine? 27

In addition, when the Coalition of Essential Schools Fall Forum (national conference) was held in San Francisco in 2004, the school calendar was arranged so that teacher workdays were scheduled during the conference and all teachers attended.

Anzar High School

2000 San Juan Highway
 San Juan Bautista, CA 95045
 408-623-7660
 Web site: www.asjUSD.k12.ca.us

Enrollment: **394**
 Hispanic 44.8%
 White (not Hispanic) 50.3%

<i>API</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>Change</i>
Total	597	707	729	+132
Hispanic	537	644	690	+153
White (not Hispanic)	678	757	762	+84