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ABSTRACT

It has been suggested since the early 80's that America's public schools are not meeting the needs of America's citizenry and that the schools are in need of repair. This paper describes a study conducted at Neville High School (Louisiana) in 1996-1997 and designed to examine the effects of facility renovation on faculty morale. Data collection included comments from 10 teachers along with direct observations, participant observation, and document review. Questions considered participant views of the renovation process; their levels of frustration; their concerns over changes in certain physical properties that may effect school tradition and heritage; and feelings of pride, motivation, and new attitudes. Findings show a wide spread of competing emotions, e.g., participants expressed negative comments about change while indicating how excited they were about the newness of it all. Despite numerous negative comments, overall morale appeared to be higher as a result of the renovations. Teachers were more active, showed greater collegiality, and were interested in showing visitors the newly renovated areas. Appendices describe the participants and present the history of the school. (Contains 4 references.) (GR)

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# A Descriptive Analysis of the Perspectives of Neville High School's Teachers Regarding the School's Renovation

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**Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association in New Orleans, Louisiana**
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Since the early 1980s, pronouncements have been made that America's public schools are not meeting the needs of America's citizenry. Reports claim that the American public school system is in a state of crisis. Some educators have simply denied those accusations, others have expressed angry rejection of them, while others have acknowledged that there is a real need for improvement and have attempted to offer suggestions for addressing the problem.

A very real problem facing America's public schools is her school buildings. In 1989, the Educational Writers Association published a study entitled Wolves at the Schoolhouse Door. The study revealed the deplorable state of public school facilities in America. The conclusion drawn in the study was that nearly one out of every two public school buildings in America was obsolete, and that almost the same number contained environmental hazards (Lewis, 1989).

A study published by the American Association of School Administrators in 1992 reaffirmed most of the findings of the Lewis report of 1989. The report, Schoolhouse in the Red, claimed that at least 74% of our nation's school buildings were overdue for replacement (p. 8). Theodore Kowalski reported in "Chasing the Wolves from the Shoolhouse Door" (1995):

> Interestingly, warnings about the deterioration of America's schoolhouses have generated only limited public reaction. State legislators, governors, federal officials, and corporate executives--all of whom were exceedingly eager to react to earlier education reports such as "A Nation at Risk"--have been amazingly silent. (p. 486)

There could have been several reasons for the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the "powers that be" in addressing the problem of run-down schools. The first reason that comes to mind is a lack of funds. However, it is also possible that the apathy exhibited toward this issue stems from a limited comprehension of the impact of the physical environment on teaching and learning. It is obvious that cost plays a major part in deciding whether or not to repair or renovate schools. It is less obvious that the lack of understanding on the part of the public also plays a major role in the decision. The public may not understand that a critical element of a school's atmosphere or climate is its ecology--the physical and material features of the school.

It was only after two unsuccessful school improvement referendums that the Monroe City School System finally realized how important it is to "educate" its public to the needs of its schools. The public had rejected both referendums, and Monroe City's schools continued to limp along in their dilapidated states.

In 1994 the Monroe City School System again attempted to get the public to pass a much-needed bond issue. The school system was successful that time because it had established and implemented a comprehensive plan to educate the public to the needs for renovating the schools, the costs of those renovations, and the benefits from the renovations that would accrue to the public.

Neville High School is one of the schools that profited from the success of the bond referendum. Because of its success, Neville now has:

* a newly built gym,
* a modern cafeteria (converted from the old gym),
* an auditorium that has been completely restored to its original beauty,

* a relocated, enlarged, and updated library,
* a science department that has been relocated from scattered, individual, third floor science rooms to its new position as a state-of-the-art science wing,
* an administrative office suite,
* renovated classrooms in the main building,
* telephones and intercoms in all classrooms (installation not yet completed),
* wheel-chair access ramps and an elevator,
* a new parking lot,
* a new asphalt delivery area,
* an adequate student lounge (converted from the old girls' dressing room), and
* work stations in each academic department.

## Statement of Problem

The literature suggests that the physical conditions of school facilities affect student achievement and teacher satisfaction. According to Frazier (1993) many of America's public schools are in disrepair, and this situation is negatively affecting the morale, health, and productivity of teachers, as well as the learning of students. This raises the question, "If run-down school environments negatively affect morale, does renovation positively affect it?" This study examined the effects of renovation on faculty morale at Neville High School.

## Review of the Literature

The Importance of the Physical Environment to the Learning Process

"If the American schoolhouse symbolizes public concern for children, millions of today's youngsters are receiving a negative message" (Lewis, 1989, p. 1). An investigation of the condition of public school facilities found that 25% of the nation's school buildings are run-down and inadequate; another 33% are approaching inadequacy because of increasing enrollments; and the remaining forty-two percent are in good condition because their communities can and do support them (p. 1).

Since the early 1980s, Americans have been demanding school improvement (Kowalski, 1995, p. 489). However, it appears that few of them understand how poor facilities present a barrier to that objective (p. 489). Many of America's public school facilities are in such disrepair that this condition is affecting the morale, health, and productivity of teachers as well as the learning of students (Frazier, 1993, p. 2). According to Kowalski, "Advocates of school reform often criticize educators for being unwilling to try new ideas and methods. Rarely do they mention the fact that rigid and outdated facilities constitute an equally powerful roadblock to action" (p. 489).

A large segment of America's public continues to view school facilities as a relatively unimportant factor in the education process. Many citizens still romanticize the one-room schoolhouses. Those views perpetuate the mistaken belief that a disciplined student and a good, hard-working teacher are the only requirements for quality education (Kowalski, 1995, p. 489). However, Frazier (1993) expressed an opposing view. He contended:

> It has been firmly established that people are influenced and affected by their environment. Children exposed to the environmental conditions in school facilities are

no exception. Deferred maintenance can create an environment of peeling paint, crumbling plaster, nonfunctioning toilets, poor lighting, inadequate ventilation, and inoperative heating and cooling systems. This, of course, affects both the health and the morale of staff and students. (p. 2).

Where Do We Go from Here?

The symbiotic relationship between the school and the community has somehow withered. Now there is a pressing need for the school and the community to unite once again. Kowalski (1995) urged educators to assume the responsibility for showing the public that school reform and school facilities have become inextricably linked (p. 489).

Kowalski wrote, "If the wolves are to be chased from the schoolhouse door, issues related to funding and to public opinion must be addressed simultaneously" (p. 489). Frazier (1993) added her support to Kowalski's position by pointing out that until schools begin to receive more funds for improvement from the state and federal levels, local efforts are the schools' only hope. She continued by observing that parental involvement appears to positively affect the condition of school buildings. Parents can influence the condition of buildings in several ways. They can exert pressure on elected officials in order to obtain funding from the city. They can volunteer their time in various activities to improve the situation. Moreover, they can lend their support to political candidates and to educational measures that favor schools.

Some school districts have been successful in convincing the local taxpayers to pass bond proposals to obtain funding for the renovation of schools. According to Frazier (1993), it is unlikely that a district will successfully pass bond measures without effectively

conveying its needs to the local taxpayers. Without a thorough understanding of the district's pressing needs, taxpayers will likely view its request as unnecessary.

The comments of Frazier and Kowalski strongly suggest that a move toward improved communication between the schools and their communities is a must. The problems with America's schoolhouses constitute a major barrier to school reform. If the American people truly want their schools to move into the 21st century, all of the stakeholders must be willing to communicate and then to take their share of the responsibility. Kowalski ends his warnings thusly:

> Those who have strongly criticized the schools--business leaders, elected officials, and civic leaders--must confront and respond to the barriers that stymie reform. They should objectively assess the growing importance of school environments in an information-based society and a global economy, they should begin to think of education not as a privilege but as an investment in the country's future, and they should work together to create realistic funding solutions. (p. 489)

## Methodology

### The Participants

The 10 participants in this study were purposefully selected from the 67 teachers at Neville High School. The key informants in this project were Mrs. Kyle Glenn, Ms. Sandra Savage, and Mrs. Mary Ann McClelland. Mrs. Glenn assisted with the study by providing the history of Neville and other written documents. Ms. Savage recommended some of the participants interviewed during the project. Mrs. McClelland suggested possible participants and possible avenues to explore.

Mrs. Glenn was selected because she is a Neville graduate with strong feelings about the traditions of the school and because of her position as librarian. Ms. Savage was chosen because she is also a Neville graduate, but from a different generation than Mrs. Glenn, and because she readily voices her opinions. Mr. Richard Wagner became a participant because he is Black, because he is not a graduate of Neville, and because of some comments made by Ms. Savage during her interview. CDR. Willie Allen was selected for this study because he founded the Neville NJROTC program and because I perceived that his expectations for his program from the renovation were not realized.

I selected Mrs. McClelland because she is not a Monroyan, is keenly observant, and is creatively verbal. Mrs. Jennett Hunter was included in this study because she coordinated the transfer of all furniture and equipment during the renovation. Mrs. Maydell Spears was chosen because she is a Black teacher who is nearing retirement and because she will "tell-it-like-it-is," whether one wants to hear it or not.

Mr. David Marshall is a Black male who is new to Neville; he was chosen for that reason. Mrs. Elizabeth Gore was selected because she is a white female who is new to the school. Mrs. Merrie Jo Robertson became a participant in this project because Mrs. Hunter suggested, during her interview, that I talk to a Special Education teacher. Mrs. McClelland suggested Mrs. Robertson as that teacher.

Note: Appendix A gives a more detailed description of the participants.

The Setting

This study was conducted during the 1996-1997 school year at Neville High School, a school with a rich tradition of pride and accomplishment. Until the late 1960s, Neville was considered a college preparatory school. Today, Neville prepares its students for

much more than entering college. Neville serves its 941 students (approximately 59% Black, 40% White, and 1% Asian and Hispanic) with a varied curriculum and assorted activities such that they are ready to take their places in society--whether they attend college or not.

Note: Appendix B gives a comprehensive history of Neville.

Data Collection for this Study

A combination of oral interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and document review was utilized to collect the data for this study. The major data collection source was the oral interview. During the document review, information was extracted from educational journals and investigative reports.

Purposeful sampling was used to select ten participants for the oral interviews. Each person was asked to choose an interview time and place that best fit his or her schedule. Seven of the interviews were held in the teachers' classrooms, and during those interviews, I took the opportunity to observe the way the rooms were cared for, the decorations used to enhance the surroundings, the sizes of the rooms, etc. I used those observations to assist me in analyzing some of the comments made by the participants.

Snowball sampling was also used in the data collection process. After interviewing Ms. Savage, I not only felt that I should interview Mr. Wagner, I felt that a separate visit (to see what his room was really like) would be useful to my investigation. That observation was done before the scheduled interview.

During the changing of classes I used direct observation to see whether students littered the halls and marked on the walls. Also, through observation, I attempted to

deduce how well teachers monitored the halls to protect the facility I believed they now valued.

After each interview, the interview notes were typed, and the participant was revisited to see whether his or her perceptions were reflected in the report. Many of the participants changed the way they had phrased certain thoughts. They explained that they felt that the changes would better represent their feelings and what they had tried to say.

Data Analysis for this Study

Maintaining a chain of evidence when conducting a case study increases the reliability of the data collected. The use of triangulation increases the validity of the study. A chain of evidence was maintained through field notes and documents, and triangulation was used. Thus, procedures were employed to ensure the reliability and the validity of this study.

## Analysis of the Data

Deterioration

Before the 1996-97 school year, Neville, like many other schools in America, was dilapidated. The paint was peeling, the roof leaked, at least half of the lockers were unusable, the ceiling tiles were hanging from the ceiling (sometimes falling); the list goes on and on.

I believed that the teachers and the students were negatively affected by the condition of the building. They noticed how rundown everything was; they had to work amid those conditions. The statements made by the teachers who participated in this study supported my belief. An example of those comments is the words of Ms. Savage, who said, "It was a

crime to me the way the building had deteriorated. The auditorium and the third floor were the worst. I hated to see it like that; it used to be such a beautiful building."

It was also my belief that if poor working conditions negatively affect people, then good conditions should positively affect them. It was that belief that caused me to undertake this study. I believed that the morale of the teachers had been lifted because of the renovation of Neville.

Of course, with every improvement come some inconveniences. Neville experienced its share of disruptions. The spring of 1995-96 was a catastrophic disruption for everyone and everything on campus.

The Long, Hot Spring

That spring was a trying time for students, teachers, and staff at Neville. Construction on the main building was beginning, which caused the air conditioning system to be shut down. Temperatures in the eighties and nineties compounded the general distress. It was a time of excitement, but it was also a time of raw nerves. A large segment of the school's faculty and staff left the building each day virtually drained--almost to the point of tears.

That period in Neville's history has been described vividly by some of our teachers. Ms. Savage remembers last spring this way, "The heat was the biggest thing. I was still in the annex. It was so hot! Nobody could pay attention--not even me. We didn't have the drilling, though." Mrs. Glenn appeared to feel more strongly about that time, for she complained:

> Last spring the renovation was horribly disruptive. The noise and the lack of air conditioning were terrible. I feel that the students lost one nine weeks of education. They were negatively impacted. I think the teachers accommodated as well as they

> could; they became more flexible in their teaching and in their expectations. However, the students still suffered educationally because of it.[the renovation].

Mrs. McClelland expressed even stronger feelings when she said, "Last spring was the worst semester I've ever had. I feel that I didn't do anything." She went on to say:

> I was in an unusual position. From my room, I heard the hammering and bulldozing in the basement. Across from me was the auditorium, and I heard those 2000 chairs being ripped out as well as the music of the workers. The stairwell next to my room was like an echo chamber; I heard everything that went on there. Outside my windows were jack hammers; I listened to them all day. There was constant noise from all sides of my room. It was horrible! I kept wondering why I wasn't as gung ho about the things that I'm usually that way about. I went home headachy everyday. It [the noise] just wore me out.

Yes, that spring was noticeably disruptive. Then came the summer and its restfulness. The teachers had three months to relax and to forget the horrors of the spring. Finally, the first day of school arrived. The teachers seemed thrilled with what they now had.

Before this study began, I had the perception that *all* of the teachers were overjoyed by the changes and improvements brought about through Neville's renovation. I believed that they--every one of them--felt as though they were getting a preview of Heaven. It was only when I began to seek the comments of teachers about their feelings that I learned that not everyone was as thrilled as I had believed; not everything was as glorious as I had pictured it. There were several areas that concerned the teachers that I interviewed. These are a few of the concerns that were voiced about the decisions that were made.

Questions of Process

There were a few teachers who registered their complaints about the decision-making process of the renovation. Mrs. Robertson, when describing how inadequate the size of her room is, stated, "I just don't think the kids were considered in the process. This room is the size of a cracker box. How can kids work in here? It's so crowded." Mrs. Hunter questioned several aspects of the process, "Before the renovation began, we thought everyone would have a voice. Now, I don't feel that 100% of the teachers were involved in the planning. We heard bits and pieces from others, but we were not all totally involved." She went on to say, "The final plan did not even reflect the input of those who participated in the plans; they [the plans] did not reflect what they thought." CDR. Allen expressed his feelings with these words:

> I was disappointed about my section. I was here all summer long. I talked to the contractors to see what NJROTC would get. Either they misunderstood or I misunderstood, or those things that I was promised were never really planned. In any event, we didn't get them.

Mrs. Glenn expressed her deeply felt sense of loss for certain symbols of Neville's tradition by saying, "In the process, I wish they had considered the beauty of Neville. I wish there had been more restoration and less renovation." She made a thought-provoking statement when she said, "I am also concerned that the AV [audio/visual] equipment is probably going to be placed in departments rather than in the library. That will be detrimental to the school because it fosters territorialism."

Some of the above expressions indicate mild feelings of dissatisfaction, the ones to follow show stronger ones.

Feelings of Frustration

Mrs. Robertson stated during her interview, "I didn't get a television. I cried when I found that I didn't have one." At first glance that reaction seems petty and childish. However, when one becomes aware of how extensively Mrs. Robertson uses the television and how effective that approach is with her students, one then begins to understand why she reacted so passionately.

Mrs. Robertson, while explaining her distress over the size of her room, stated, "I have an emotional reaction when I see workrooms that are larger than my classroom. The workrooms should be the classrooms, and the classrooms should be the workrooms." She added her sentiments about workmanship by making the following points:

> I think that some of the repairs were half-assed. I was upset when I found that they were going to have to redo the seats in the auditorium. I think that for the amount of money being put into this fine old building, things should be done right. This is a landmark in Monroe. The work should not be slipshod; they should do it right.
>
> I hate the paint job! The paint color is fine, but the job is not. They didn't prepare the walls for the paint. In Mrs. Sharon White's room, there is a hole in the wall and the outlet cover doesn't cover the hole. They didn't repair that. They just put the cover on top of it. In Mrs. Clark's room, there is a half-inch dip in the floor. There are two different floor levels in that room. They just tiled over it. One of the sprinklers in my room doesn't meet the ceiling. You can see it right there. [She pointed to the sprinkler.] For eight million dollars, everything should be perfect.

Mrs. Robertson was not the only faculty member who felt that the workmanship left a lot to be desired. Ms. Savage voiced this opinion:

> In the annex this [past] summer, I was furious! They said it [the renovation] was done, and all they had done to the rooms in the annex was put on a coat of paint! They haven't done anything. School now has started and they are starting to wire for the phones, but they have not done any of the plaster, or the ceiling tiles, and there are no new storage cabinets, etc. In the back parking lot--I don't think that is even standard asphalt. And I'm not sure they've eliminated any leakage to the roof. That should have been fixed first.

CDR. Allen had met on several occasions with Mr. French, the principal, and with the architect to insure that the NJROTC wing of the building would get the amount of storage space required by Naval regulations. That space was not provided, and CDR. Allen showed his frustration. He commented that:

> One thing is that we need a secure storage place for M-1 rifles, pellet guns, and Navy swords. We didn't get the required storage cabinets. We didn't get the racks to hang uniforms, and we didn't get the storage bins for hat covers.

Finally, Mrs. Hunter expressed her discontent this way:

> To not even receive better lighting is an insult. They could have given us the basic essentials. The rooms in the main building are all lit up, while the lights over here in the annex were left as they always were. That made me feel bad; I felt leftout.

"The Colors" and Unwelcome Changes

Yes, some teachers were dissatisfied with certain aspects of the renovation. Some of the discontent stemmed from the strong feelings that certain physical properties of the school represented tradition and heritage and, therefore, should not have been changed from their original appearance. These people reflect the views of those in the community

that rally around "The Colors," the symbolic representation of what Neville stands for--its beliefs, traditions, etc. Mrs. Glenn and Ms. Savage expressed some of the comments that demonstrate those deep-seated feelings.

Mrs. Glenn, a 1967 graduate, daughter of an alumnus, and parent of two Neville sons, emphatically expressed her feelings about the changes she noticed upon returning to Neville after being away for several years:

> The building had lost some of its aesthetic beauty and some of its value because of that [previous paint jobs]. The original woodwork was just gorgeous! I was upset over the changes to it. I wish they had stripped the woodwork and restored it. And, you should have seen the wood floors; they were just beautiful! I'm also disappointed that classrooms could not be restored. I wish there had been more restoration and less renovation.

Ms. Savage stated, "I was livid at the choice of accent color! Why did they choose teal? Why did they choose that color? I was angry, and for several reasons. As an alum, I will always be a graduate of Neville. Others [teachers] come in, and it's a job. Grads have a special feeling about 'The Colors'."

There were some unwelcome changes that had nothing to do with "The Colors." Mrs. Hunter mentioned one such change:

> I had a comfortable room. I had spent years fixing it up. I requested to stay there, and I thought that the request was granted. I didn't know until I came up here during the summer that I was moved to this horrible room! If they were leaving me in the same building, then leave me in the same classroom. And to top it off, a P.E. (physical education) person got that classroom! What's the logic in that?

Pride, Motivation, and New Attitudes

Admittedly, there were aspects of the renovation that some teachers did not like. However, the general feeling among all of the participants seemed to be that it was a good thing. Even as they registered their complaints, they continually reiterated that they felt that the renovation had helped renew the spirit around Neville.

There were certain areas of the building that every participant described as "beautiful" or "gorgeous." One of those areas was the auditorium. Mrs. McClelland wrote this metaphor to depict its beauty, "The auditorium is like a concert hall--or even Carnegie Hall--with the beautiful detailed plasterwalls, the impressive size, and the quality of the work." I wonder if other teachers see the auditorium as being quite this grand? They may not picture it on so large a scale, but they do like it a lot.

And, there were those things that touched individual teachers. Even Mrs. Hunter, who made the most negative comments, agreed that:

> The renovation was motivating to the teachers who got new rooms. Most were eager to get started this year. The new environment was inspiring to them. They were happy to come out and decorate their rooms. The transition from old to new was good for them.

Ms. Savage expressed these sentiments, "For the most part I have been pleased with what was done. I think the auditorium is gorgeous! And we are thrilled to have a new gym." When asked if she thought that the renovation process had motivated teachers, she answered, "It seemed that people were excited about fixing up their rooms. They were really decorating their rooms in the main building." Laughingly, she continued, "I got sick

of Ann Pardue talking about the competition to see whose room would be the best one. She [Pardue] finally had to admit that Mr. Wagner's room beat hers and everyone elses."

During my conversation with Mrs. Robertson, she noted:

> I love what they've done with the basement. I didn't realize how much space was being wasted down there. I love the way the halls look. I didn't think everything would look this good, but it does. There were good ideas and planning that went into this project. I'm excited about everything.

Mr. Marshall, who is new to the school, noted that although he had not seen the pre-renovation condition of the school, "I think that the renovation has helped the students behave better. I've talked to other teachers and they've told me that the kids are much better behaved than before."

CDR. Allen expressed positive feelings about several areas that had been touched by the renovation. He complemented the new bathrooms, the gymnasium, the cafeteria, and the auditorium. He then remarked, "The appearance of the rooms is good. The rooms look like learning situations now. I think it encourages students to want to learn more." CDR. Allen also said that he thought that the relocation of teachers into departments had a positive effect on them:

> I'm impressed with areas designed to bring departments and teachers together. I hear from both the students and the teachers that it is a good thing. Teachers are sharing more information about parents and students. Students can talk to teachers other than their classroom teacher about problems they are having. If they cannot find their teachers, other teachers now offer them help. I hear that from math students all the time. They are getting help from all of the math teachers.

(Forming department wings was an integral part of the renovation plans.)

CDR. Allen summed up the effects of the renovation in these words, "The students are excited about the attitudes of their teachers this year. The teachers seem to help more and to listen more. The overall attitudes of teachers have changed $180^0$ according to the students. We have a learning environment."

Mrs. Gore, Mrs. Spears, and Mr. Wagner were just glad to be at Neville. Each of them has taught in other places, and two of them, Mrs. Spears and Mr. Wagner, remember what Neville was like before the renovation. Mrs. Gore told me that where she worked before coming to Neville, she had to walk more than two blocks each day to get to the building where she taught. She said that she appreciates being here where she can "park near the building." Both Mr. Wagner and Mrs. Spears talked untiringly about how glad they are to be here. Mrs. Spears ended her interview with these words, "Out of thirty-one years of teaching, this is the first time I've been able to teach in a gym. I'm glad I caught a part of it." (Mrs. Spears is a physical education teacher.) And Mr. Wagner reinforced my assumption that teachers generally valued the renovation when he told me:

> I like everything about it [the renovation]. There is nothing that I don't like. You know, now I stay here until 5:00 everyday. After the kids leave, I just want to stay around another hour or so. I also come most Saturdays--just to be here.

## Conclusions and Recommendation

### Conclusions

At the outset of this study, I believed that the teachers, students, and staff alike were excited about--and delighted with--the renovation of Neville. As I progressed through the

study, I discovered that I had been somewhat naive in believing that *everything* pleased *everyone*. As I interviewed the participants, they seemed to periodically shift their focus between what they considered "good" outcomes and ones that they considered "bad." Everyone made negative comments, but they also kept saying how excited they were about the newness of it all. Even though I may have been a bit naive, I do not believe that I was completely wrong. I maintain the belief that the morale of the teachers at Neville High School has been elevated by the renovation.

One teacher, Mrs. Hunter, made many more negative comments than positive ones. However, those comments referred to the lack of renovation to some areas of the school, rather than to what was actually accomplished by the renovation. She complained about what was <u>not</u> done to the annex building; she did not complain about what <u>was</u> done to the main building. In fact, she praised the improvements that were made. From her remarks, I have concluded that she was indicating that she was feeling hurt and left out of the process. I think that she just wanted to be a part of the experience. It is normal for one to feel that way.

The other teachers in the study made far fewer negative comments than did Mrs. Hunter and stated those comments with less fervor--except when it came to "The Colors." Even as teachers made their "less than favorable comments," I got the feeling that they were really quite pleased with what had been done and that their morale was high.

My feeling that the morale of teachers is higher now than before the renovation was reinforced as I observed--before and after the interviews--the way these (and other) teachers chatted as they entered the building each morning, laughed and talked in the halls, assisted students in the halls and in classrooms, monitored the hall areas, and decorated

their rooms. As I watched teachers show visitors to areas that had been relocated, I perceived a pride on their faces and in their words as they explained the changes to the building. To me, these are the actions of renewed people.

And, then there is Mr. Wagner, who had only positive comments to make. He proclaimed his gratitude for "just being here" during this exciting time. His actions support his words. It is the consensus of most people at Neville that Mr. Wagner has the most beautiful classroom in the building. He has decorated it with pictures, plants, geometric figures, and even sheer curtains. (He had never decorated his room before this year.) He is at Neville nearly every Saturday and works in his room for hours. He seems truly inspired.

Recommendations

This study was limited by time constraints and by my meager abilities as a qualitative researcher. (This was my first attempt.) This study was conducted within a four-month period; therefore, there were aspects of this project that received only a surface investigation. A longitudinal study would have been beneficial in detecting any lasting effects of the renovation on the school. Additionally, this study focused entirely on Neville High School and cannot be generalized to any other school or social organization. An examination of comparable studies might be helpful in determining whether other faculties have had similar experiences, feelings, and reactions during renovation.

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# Appendix A

## The Participants

## PARTICIPANTS IN THE STUDY

Mrs. Kyle Glenn

Mrs. Glenn is Neville's librarian. She has held that position for nine years. She has two sons, Brodie, who is a 17-year-old senior, and Cameron, a 15-year-old sophomore. She is a White, 1967 graduate of Neville, and she often expresses strong feelings about the school--especially its traditions.

Ms. Sandra Savage

Ms. Savage is also White and a graduate of Neville. She is 38 years old, and graduated in 1975. Like Mrs. Glenn, she has strong ties to--and feelings about--the school. Ms. Savage teaches social studies and is head of that department.

Ms. Savage is the "mother" of the football team. She personally checks the records of each football player to insure that he is making the grades in classes and the scores on standardized tests that will meet NCAA requirements for college football eligibility. She assumed that role as protector of the members of the team because she felt that "someone has to look out for them. Their parents don't really know what they need, and the guidance department has to serve the whole school." In addition to checking on grades and scores, Ms. Savage gives them pizza parties at her home, counsels them about "everything," and stays at school after each home game to help feed them.

Ms. Savage enjoys and attends the activities of other sports as well. She is the score keeper for the basketball and track programs, and she sells tickets for the baseball games. She knows every player that participates in any sport at the school.

Ms. Savage is not only an avid sports follower, she is a promoter of academics as well. Last year, one of Neville's goals w to improve the Graduate Exit Exam scores in social studies. Those scores were improved from 85% of students passing that test in 1994-95 to 93% of them passing it in 1995-96. Her department members credit that improvement to her guidance and constant prodding.

Ms. Savage is actively involved in every aspect of Neville. It was for that reason that she was selected as the Renaissance Teacher-of-the-Year for 1995-96.

Mr. Richard Wagner

Mr. Wagner is Black, 48 years old, and has been teaching mathematics at Neville for twenty-two years. He specializes in teaching geometry, although he has been known to teach Algebra I, Algebra II, and business mathematics. Before coming to Neville, Mr.Wagner taught at Start High School and at Lake Providence Jr. High (one year in each place). His father, Mr. Jack Wagner, was Neville's first Black Assistant Principal. Mr. Wagner was selected as the Neville Renaissance Teacher-of-the-Month for May 1995-96.

CDR. Willie Allen

CDR. Allen is the Naval Junior Reserved Officers Training Corps instructor. He is a Black, 49 year old, Navy retiree, who came to Neville three years ago. During the first two years, CDR. Allen taught mathematics. He founded the NJROTC unit last year, 1995-96. He conducted the program alone for its first seven months, because there was no non-commissioned officer available and approved by the Navy. During those months, CDR. Allen single-handedly outfitted his unit of 105 cadets, disciplined them, taught them military protocol, and tutored them in mathematics, as needed. He was recognized as

January's Renaissance Teacher-of-the-Month during the first month of the NJROTC program.

Mrs. Mary Ann McClelland

Mrs. McClelland is a White, 45-year old English teacher, who is chairperson of her department. She teaches advanced placement English, gifted and talented English, honors English, as well as fine arts survey. She has taught at Neville for 15 years. For four years, she has been assessor of new teachers. (She now conducts the new teacher overview training sessions.) Although Mrs. McClelland is a member of Mensa (an international organization of intelligence), she is a very personable, down-to-earth person who makes those around her feel comfortable. Mrs. McClelland serves on many committees at Neville (many of them she chairs). During the 1994-1995 school year, she was the first recipient of Tulane University's Southern Institute for Education and Research award for her work in promoting tolerance education. In that same year, she was chosen as Renaissance's Teacher-of-the-Year.

Mrs. Maydell Spears

Mrs. Spears is 62 years old, and chairperson of the Physical Education (P. E.) department. She has taught P. E. at Neville for 28 years. Before coming to Neville, she taught P. E. at Carroll High (in the same school district). Mrs. Spears is usually the first teacher on Neville's campus each morning. She monitors the halls of the main building, both before school and at the lunch hour, to discourage any unacceptable behavior by our sometimes overly energetic students.

Mr. French (Principal), Mr. Rankins (Dean-of-Students), and I agree that Mrs. Spears is a most dedicated teacher. We nominated her as Neville's 1995-96 Administrators'

Teacher-of-the-Year. She went on to win the Monroe City School District's Teacher-of-the-Year honors. We are proud of her!

Mrs. Jennett Hunter

Mrs. Hunter is in her 14th. year at Neville. In addition to being the resource teacher, she teaches American History. Each year she chairs the committee that coordinates the Black History Month activities. Because of her work on that project last year, she was honored as Renaissance's Teacher-of-the-Month for February.

Mrs. Elizabeth Gore

Mrs. Gore was hired to teach mathematics in late August (just before Neville's delayed school year was scheduled to begin). She came to us after teaching for 11 years at the junior college level. She taught at Millsaps College for 2 years.

Mr. David Marshall

Mr. Marshall is also new to Neville. He is 33 years old, and teaches keyboarding. He taught 3 years in parochial schools and 1 year at Bastrop High School before coming to Neville.

Mrs. Merrie Jo Robertson

Mrs. Robertson is one of Neville's Special Education teachers. She, her son, Scott, and her daughter, Beth, are all Neville graduates. She has taught here for 2 years. However, she was employed here as an aide for 3 years before she began teaching. She is White, and she is 49 years old.

# Appendix B

## The History of Neville High School

## THE HISTORY OF NEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

In 1930-31, Mr. Ernest Long Neville, Superintendent of the Monroe City Schools, felt that the time had come to build a high school that would be adequate to accommodate the high school population for years to come. Therefore, Mr. Neville suggested to the members of the Monroe City School Board that a new high school be constructed. At that time Mr. Arnold Bernstein, Mayor of the city of Monroe, was president of the school board. The Board agreed to Mr. Neville's suggestion and purchased 22 acres of land across from the municipal golf course and swimming pool.

The original building was a three-story structure with a tower and a 2,215-seat auditorium. The school, once known as "Mr. Neville's folly," proved to be one of the finest in the state, and the community showed its respect, esteem, and love for Mr. Neville by naming the new school for him. Much credit goes to Mayor Bernstein for Neville's "main building." Through his efforts the original plans for a two-story building with an auditorium seating 880 people expanded and became a building with an auditorium seating 2,215 people. The original building cost $664,000, and was financed by a 40-year bond issue that was paid off in 1969. Landscaping of the grounds was done by a local nursery owner as payment to the city for an unpaid $800 utility bill.

In 1931-32, the new Neville High School opened with an enrollment of 559 students. Of this number, 190 were junior high school students, and 369 were in grades 9-12. The Monroe City school System required 12 years for graduation at that time, although the state of Louisiana required only 11. The scholarship of those students was so outstanding

that those applying for entrance to colleges had little difficulty in being accepted at practically any college they chose. The first principal of Neville was Dr. Charles Kenney. He served as principal from 1931 through 1936. After he left, Mr. Neville became principal. He served as both principal of the school and as superintendent of the Board. Mr. Paul J. Neal, who became principal in the fall of 1937, assisted him. Mr. Neal served as principal until June 1958.

In 1934-35, at the request of the State Department of Education, Neville dropped its twelfth grade. Until that time, Neville was the only high school in the state that required students to complete 12 grades for graduation. The twelfth grade was reinstated at Neville in 1945. At that time, the enrollment was 461 students.

Beginning with the 1955-56 school year, students were assigned to schools as directed by the State Department of Education. Enrollment grew to 474 in the junior high and 681 in the senior high school, a total of 1,155.

In 1957-58, the junior high was removed from the Neville High School campus. Neville became a 4-year high school with grades 9-12 and with an enrollment of 690 students. The highest enrollment of Neville as strictly a high school occurred in 1968-69 when the membership was 1,152 students. The last year the seventh and eighth grades were housed at Neville the registration was 1,309. This figure again showed Mr. Neville's foresight in building an adequate school.

Many additions have been made to the physical plant of Neville High School. The stadium, built with W.P.A. labor during the depression years and completed in 1938, was constructed by hand to provide more jobs. The total cost of the stadium was $90,000. The school board paid $13,000 of the cost and the federal government paid the rest. The old

gym (now the new cafeteria) was built in 1952-53. The length of its floor was shortened to reduce the cost by $25,000. In 1962, the band building was added; and in 1966, the annex was constructed. The Memorial Garden (located in front of the school on Forsythe Avenue) was established in the spring of 1969 in memory of Dorothy A. Hodge, who served as Neville's secretary from 1934-1968.

The Monroe City School Board instituted the Neville Diploma in 1958 to be awarded to graduates who had pursued a solid college preparatory curriculum. Shortly after the establishment of the National Merit Scholarship Testing Program in 1955, Neville began participating in the National Merit Scholarship competition. Between 1958 and 1996, Neville produced 122 Merit Finalist. Only one-half of 1% of graduating seniors nation-wide achieve that honor. The national average is 5 students in a class of 1,000 seniors.

The students of Neville were not only academic achievers but also pioneers in the field of student government. The Neville High School Student Council was organized in the fall or 1931, the first in the state of Louisiana.

From 1955 through 1996, Neville has won a total of 30 Louisiana State Championships in athletics: 6 in baseball, 2 in girls' basketball, 3 in boys' basketball, 8 in football, 6 in golf, 3 in tennis, and 1 each in track and boys' cross-country. This outstanding record was accomplished against the very best competition that Louisiana had to offer. In addition to playing the top teams in Louisiana, Neville has also competed against many well-known athletic powers from the neighboring states of Arkansas, Mississippi, and Texas.

Neville High School is more than a building. It is an institution built on pride, tradition, and love. It holds a special place in the memories of all who have studied or

taught within its walls. It stands as a tribute to those men and women who dared to dream their dreams and pursue their goals with the well-being of the students and the community foremost in their hearts. As a new class of freshmen enters each fall and a fresh class of seniors graduates each spring, new pages are written in the history of Neville High School.